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*Review*

# Strengthening the Role of Peer Counselors for Reproductive Health among Adolescent: From Philosophy into Practice

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**Abstract:** The serious impact of Adolescent's Free Sex Behavior will affect their developmental task. Having proper education and having optimal sex counseling are related to sexual behavior in adolescents. The alternative for this phenomenon recently has involved adolescents participating as peer counselors because they are more susceptible to peer influence. Online peer counselor programs may promote progression into depth understanding of sexual behavior among adolescents. This paper provides an overview of the effect of peer counselors on reproductive health among adolescents. It describes many conceptual frameworks about free sex behaviors, risk factors among adolescents, and the role of peer counselors in improving health reproductive behavior among adolescents.

**Keywords:** adolescent; health reproductive; peer counselor

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## 1. Introduction

Adolescence is a maturation period from children to adults. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines adolescents as individuals with an age range of 10-19 years, while based on the Regulation of the Minister of Health of the Republic of Indonesia in 2014, the age range of adolescents is between 10-18 years old. The National Population and Family Planning Agency (BKKBN) defines youth as unmarried individuals aged 10-24 years (Nurhayati et al., 2017).

Adolescence is a period of rapid growth and development both physically, psychologically, and intellectually. The characteristics of teenagers have a great curiosity, love adventure and challenges and, tend to dare to take risks without careful consideration (Qomariah, 2020). One of the problems that occur during adolescence is the problem of sexuality, unwanted pregnancy (KTD) and abortion, infection with sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and drug abuse. (Hamzah & Hamzah, 2021).

Adolescence is one of the most rapid development periods in the course of human life. The process of biological maturation generally precedes psychosocial maturity in adolescents. The development of the pre-frontal cortex, which is responsible for executive function, decision making, organization, impulse control, and future planning, occurs more slowly than the development of the limbic system, which is responsible for pleasure and reward processing, emotional response, and sleep regulation. This causes teenagers to tend to be interested in exploring and experimenting without considering the consequences (Sariyani et al., 2020). Therefore, adolescents are one of the age groups that tend to be at risk of experiencing the adverse effects of free sex or free sex.

Data from the National Family Planning Coordinating Board (BKKBN) in 2010 noted that 51% of Indonesian teenagers had had sexual intercourse. Data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) noted that as many as 32% of adolescents aged 14-18 years in 3 major cities in Indonesia (Jakarta, Surabaya, Bandung) had sexual intercourse before marriage, and proved that 62.7% of adolescents lost their virginity while still sitting in junior high school, and 21.2% of them had forced abortions (KPAI, 2013).

The high prevalence of sexual intercourse before marriage in adolescents is caused by several factors, and the most dominant factor is the lack of knowledge of adolescents about the dangers of free sex. Other factors that influence the incidence of free sex, namely the permissive attitude of adolescents, easy access to pornographic media, and parenting patterns are factors that cause pregnancy in adolescents (Permata & Indriani, 2021). Therefore, efforts are needed to overcome adolescent problems regarding free sex, one of which is by providing health education to increase the level of adolescent knowledge about reproductive health.

In connection with the Covid-19 pandemic, people are not encouraged to congregate with many people or apply physical distancing and follow health protocols. Educational activities can be carried out online or using telemedicine as an alternative that is considered the safest to prevent virus transmission for both researchers and respondents. Based on a study conducted by Yessi Andriani 2020, providing education on reproductive health to adolescents online still shows a significant effect on the level of knowledge of adolescents to be higher. Therefore, researchers are interested in conducting a literature study on the effect of telemedicine on changes in the level of knowledge about reproductive health in adolescents.

## **2. Causes of free sex behavior among adolescent**

Adolescence is a period that requires appropriate assistance in the search for identity in order to be in a positive direction. In adolescence, emotional conditions become very unstable and easily influenced by their environment. Adolescence is a period of change in the phase of sexual energy or libido which was initially latent in pre-adolescence into life, so that curiosity becomes high and there is a desire to be curious about anything, especially about sexual activity (Purnama, 2020).

### *2.1. Self control*

It relates to how individuals control emotions and impulses from within themselves. Lack of self-control that triggers the speed of adolescence make decisions that are detrimental to him, because there is no fortress inside self so that someone will quickly fall into promiscuity.

### *2.2. Self awareness*

Lack of awareness of adolescents about the association that is being lived is the implication of the lack of knowledge of the youth which will have an impact on against promiscuity.

### *2.3. Religion values*

The lack of religious education that is not given since childhood results in teenagers not understanding the norms that apply in society, not understanding good behavior in accordance with religious teachings and if the teenager's personality is filled with religious values, the teenager will be avoided from inappropriate bad behavior.

### *2.4. Lifestyle*

Teenagers' lifestyles that have the potential to lead to bad sexual behavior include often staying up late at night due to chatting with girlfriends, opening social media to access pornographic content, looking inappropriate to attract the attention of the opposite sex, spending money by hanging out with friends until late at night.

### *2.5. The level of family education*

The low level of family education that has a big influence as a cause of promiscuity where parents cannot provide more knowledge about the impact that occurs when children fall into promiscuity.

### 2.6. Broken home

Family situation is very influential on the behavior or psychological development of adolescents which is the condition of the parents who not harmonious which makes the psychological development of children disturbed and children tend to pleasure outside to feel happy, and forget the things that happened in his family because parents do not give love, so the child is looking for fun outside the tail on promiscuity.

### 2.7. Parent's attention

Lack of attention by busy parents with work so that the child gets less attention so that the child is free in activities and children tend to rarely tell the problems that occur.

### 2.8. Economic factor

The low economy in the family makes children feel lack of financial and material adequacy and usually a lot who dropped out of school that made the child's association with teenagers who sinasip that makes the child's behavior worse.

### 2.9. Living environment

The surrounding environment is a forming factor a person's personality, if in the environment is an environment that is less conducive, then the child will fall into free association where we know that a person's development is more determined by the environment than the family.

### 2.10. Technology

Information technology is a device that helps humans to create, change, store, communicate and disseminate information through gadgets and computers. The purpose of information technology is to solve problems, foster creativity, increase effectiveness and efficiency in carrying out a job. So the existence of information technology makes it easier and more efficient for humans to do work. One of the most obvious and damaging weaknesses of the internet is that immoral immoral items are easily accessed on the internet and indirectly cause teenagers to violate applicable norms (Anwar et al., 2019).

## 3. Risk factor of free sexual behavior among adolescent

### 3.1. Peers and free sex behavior among adolescent

The negative influence of peers is bad society. Peer behavior in the group becomes a reference or behavioral norm expected in the group. Peer dating style becomes a model or reference used by a teenager in dating. For example, if a friend usually kisses his girlfriend, then it is justified that he also kisses. Peers will usually often talk about their experiences, especially in love experiences. So that when they tell each other here, a desire will arise to feel or try the things that are felt by their friends (Fauziyah et al., 2021).

Adolescents tend to develop their own norms that are contrary to the generally accepted norms. Adolescents are very open to peer groups. They discussed romance, philosophy of life, recreation, jewelry, clothing, for hours on end. The influence of peers becomes a very strong bond. Peers/friends are friends who are the same age and they are usually close friends. The role of friends / peers in adolescents is very large in the daily lives of teenagers. Adolescents are more outside the home with their peers as a group, the influence of peers on attitudes, conversations, interests and behavior is greater than the influence of family (Mesra & Fauziah, 2016).

Having peers who are delinquents increases a adolescence's risk of being delinquent. Adolescents really value friendship, communication with peers is better when compared to parents. Being an excuse with friends tends to keep secrets, is more open with the opposite sex (about intelligence, personality, good looks or beauty) and can solve problems faced with parents or family. Because neither of them knew correctly, the result was that the information received was misinterpreted, even deliberately distorted.

Adolescences tend to look for friends in common with themselves. The similarity between them is important for adolescences because at this time adolescences are trying to get an identity. Adolescences spend a lot of their free time with their peers. In this case, close friends or friends often act as a place to exchange experiences or a place to exchange experiences or a place to just pour out their hearts (Wati, 2017).

### *3.2. Sex education and free sexual behavior among adolescent*

Sex education for adolescences is part of the overall education. The definition of sex education can be seen from the words that make up the terms, namely education and sexuality. Pendidikan here has the meaning of guidance or help intentionally by adults. Furthermore, sex is an important aspect of life that emphasizes the physical, social, emotional, spiritual and ethnic aspects experienced by humans. After the two terms are combined into one is a transfer of knowledge and attitudes about sex. Or efforts to teach awareness and information about sexual problems given to children, since he understands problems related to sex.

Sexual education can help adolescences avoid free sex behavior. Adolescents who have been taught about sex and its dangers or impacts both psychologically and on health will avoid free sex behavior. However, a adolescence who was not given sex education at all did not know about the impact of this sexual behavior on him, so he could have free sex without any worries.

The importance of sex education in adolescents is one solution in dealing with the problems experienced by adolescences today. Sex education will teach and provide understanding and explain issues related to sexuality, instincts and marriage to children from an early age, since their minds begin to grow and are ready to understand things about sex and irresponsible behavior.

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### *3.3. Social media and free sex behavior among adolescent*

The phenomenon in the field is that almost all teenagers use Android phones, even most of them have cellphones with very sophisticated specifications. Teenagers who have cellphones, on average, download various social media applications such as YouTube, TikTok, Facebook and others. Through this application, teenagers sometimes access negative content that can increase sexual desire and lust which is eventually channeled to their partner. In addition, several teenagers also said that some of them opened pornographic sites at school during their break.

We often see reports about the increasing number of free sex among teenagers, one of which is caused by the easy access of these teenagers to things that smell like pornography. The social network in addition to bringing positive benefits also has a negative impact on adolescents. The positive benefits, apart from strengthening the relationship, can also get the latest information from other people's statuses, while the negative impact is that it can interfere with privacy, create addiction so that it can interfere with time to study and can influence teenagers to have free sex (Wati, 2017).

Social media allows teenagers to access various kinds of information including those that present implicit sexual scenes. Existing media, both electronic media and print media, often present presentations that are too early or not suitable for consumption for children and adolescents. Social media can create opportunities for teenagers to obtain wrong sexual information, gain access to pornographic sites that support teens to engage in sexual behavior. Social media can provide access to interact freely and widely without limits, if teenagers interact with inappropriate people, it will also plunge them into free sex

behavior which begins with sex chat, video call sex until finally meeting and having sex (Sarah, 2018).

#### *3.4. Gender and free sexual behavior among adolescent*

Bad sexual behavior is more experienced by men than women, because men are more aggressive and have high sex hormones. The differences between men and women are seen in terms of social, cultural and anatomical biological influences. Gender can be divided into two meanings, namely sex and gender. The process of a child's growth to become a man (being safe) or become a woman (being a woman), the term gender is more widely used. The term sex is generally used to refer to problems of reproduction and sexual activity. This is due to differences in the pattern of free sex hormone production between male and female adolescents. Adolescent girls have a production pattern according to the monthly cycle, while boys produce sex hormones continuously so that young men are more aggressive (Wati, 2017).

#### *3.5. Age and free sexual behavior among adolescent*

The older they get, the more they are at risk of having bad sexual behavior. Based on study by Wati at 2017, older teens show sexual behavior that tends to be bad compared to early teens. Age is very supportive of free sex behavior because at the age of teenagers in general always want to try and always want to know, this is what triggers the curiosity of teenagers in terms of free sex. And at the age of teenagers, they are also easily influenced by the environment and do not understand the impact of what they are doing

#### *3.6. Education and free sexual behavior among adolescent*

Free sex behavior can occur because of the lack of knowledge and understanding of adolescents about healthy life skills, the risks of sexual relations and the ability to refuse relationships they do not want. Adolescents with a good level of knowledge tend to have good sexual behavior. While adolescents with a poor level of knowledge tend to have bad actions as well.

Contrary to the above theory, a person's level of knowledge will not change that person's behavior if he is not equipped with real intentions. People who know are not necessarily willing, and people who are willing are not necessarily able to do this not because of their lack of knowledge about free sex, but because of the opportunity to have free sex and the support from the surrounding environment such as the availability of cafes or places to hang out. lonely or specially designed for couples who want to have free sex (Fauziyah et al., 2021).

#### *3.7. Religion value and free sex behavior among adolescent*

Religion is one of the value systems adopted by individuals because religion contains beliefs and beliefs held by individuals which are then internalized into themselves which will affect their daily behavior. Religious values are very influential on free sex behavior in adolescents. Adolescents who have been equipped with religious values since childhood will form individuals who behave well in accordance with religious teachings and demands, so that they do not dare to do anything that is prohibited in their religion. But on the contrary, teenagers who have not been equipped with religion since childhood cannot distinguish between actions or actions that they can and cannot do. So that when they behave in free sex, the teenager feels not afraid and is not burdened.

Based on a study conducted by Fauziyah at 2021, most teenagers in Indonesia have good religious values, because of the culture of society that requires their children to study religion from a young age, even starting from kindergarten age these children have been escorted to the place of study by their parents. However, when they start to grow up to be teenagers, there are other factors that influence teenagers to engage in free sex behavior, so that even among those who already understand religious values, there are also those who fall into free sex behavior.



### *3.8. Family relation and free sex behavior among adolescent*

The association of students came from different backgrounds will certainly produce interesting behavior patterns to observe. Adolescents who live outside their main environment with more different supervision from students who live in their main environment or family environment. In the family environment, parents become the guide and role model for students in attitude and teaching about the norms that apply in society. Parents will give a warning if their teenager or child violates these norms (Naviah, 2016)

The family relationship can be a factor in the risk of free sex behavior among adolescent. Adolescence is a period of change in the phase of sexual energy or libido which was initially latent in pre-adolescence into life. There is a very close relationship between the family relationship and sexual acts. The better the family relations, the better sexual behavior in adolescents. The worse the adolescent's relation with his family, the worse his sexual behavior. In this case, if the control from parents and family is lacking, it can affect the behavior of adolescent to having bad sexual behavior (Fauziyah et al., 2021).

## **4. Impact of free sexual behavior among adolescent**

Free sex behavior has the potential to cause various negative impacts on adolescents, including psychological symptoms such as feelings of anger, fear, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, guilt and sin. In addition, the physiological impact can lead to unwanted pregnancies and abortions, sexual abuse, sexual transmitted disease, etc. Then there are also symptoms of social impacts that arise due to sexual behavior that is carried out prematurely, including being ostracized, dropping out of school for pregnant teenage girls, and changing the role of motherhood. There is also the potential for pressure from the community to criticize and reject these situations and conditions (Arikhman et al., 2021)

### *4.1. Early-age married*

Free sex behavior in adolescents can lead to pregnancy outside of marriage. The existing culture encourages marriage in cases of pregnancy out of wedlock. while the minimum age for marriage is 19 years. so that teenagers with free sex are vulnerable to experiencing early marriage (Suhaida et al., 2018)

### *4.2. Decreasing academic achievement*

Free sex behavior can cause many problems that make teenagers less focused in learning. Bad associations can reduce students' learning motivation, causing academic achievement to decline. Of course this can be self-defeating because academic achievement plays an important role in the future of teenagers (Suhaida et al., 2018).

### *4.3. Dropout from school*

Free sex behavior in adolescents can result in pregnancy outside of marriage. Many schools implement dropout regulations for students who are pregnant outside of wedlock. Adolescent girls who are pregnant will feel major changes in their psychological and physiological conditions. The condition of being pregnant did not allow her to continue studying at school, so many cases of teenage girls who were pregnant chose to leave school. Young men who marry early will also focus more on earning money than going to school, so they prefer to quit school (Suhaida et al., 2018).

### *4.4. Poverty*

Free sex behavior in adolescents can lead to pregnancy outside of marriage. The existing culture encourages marriage in cases of pregnancy outside of marriage in adolescents. This causes teenagers who are still in school age to be able to find their own money to meet their own needs. The ability of adolescents is considered not ready to work like adults so that the income they get is often not able to meet their daily needs so they are vulnerable to poverty.

## 5. Solution to improving sex behavior among adolescent

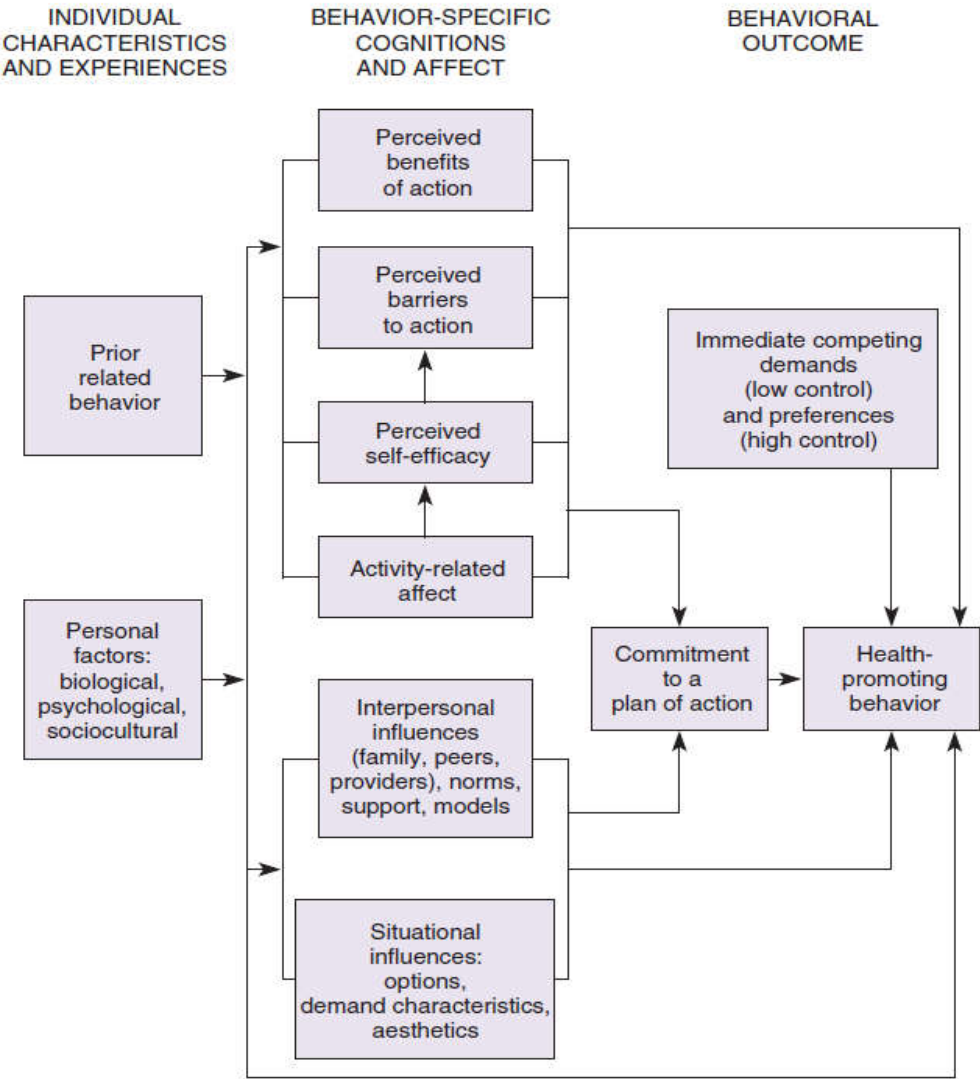
Peer counselor health promotion is one of the efforts to solve problems regarding bad adolescent sex behavior. This is in line with Nola J Pender's theory, here is the explanation:

### *Nola J Pender Health Promotion Model*

Health Promotion Model (HPM) is a middle range theory introduced by Nola J. Pender. HPM was developed by Pender in 1982 and the model was revised in 1987, 1996, and 2002 (Alligood, 2018). At the heart of this health promotion model is Albert Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory, which is an important postulate of cognitive processes in behavior change. This health promotion model integrates several constructs such as self-beliefs, self-attribution, self-evaluation, and self-efficacy.

HPM is a model that describes that every person is a bio-psycho-social being who is partly shaped or influenced by the environment. According to this model, humans as bio-psycho-social beings also have the ability to try to create an environment where their potential can be fully expressed (Pender et al., 2015). HPM was originally developed to target individuals, but the model framework can also be used in families, groups, or communities. HPM is also proposed as a holistic predictive model of behavior to promote health that can be used in research or practice (Aqtam & Darawwad, 2018).

HPM focuses on the determinants of health-promoting behavior. This revised model identifies concepts relevant to health promotion behavior and facilitates the formation of testable hypotheses. The HPM in the revised model consists of three main components that nurses can use to assess health promotion behavior: 1) personal characteristics and experiences; 2) behavioral-specific cognition and affect; and 3) behavioral outcomes (Pender et al., 2015). The theory can be seen in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Middle-Range Theory – Pender’s Health Promotion Model. Source : *Nursing Theorists and Their Work* (9th ed.) (Alligood, 2018).

Individual characteristics are personal factors that include biological factors, psychological factors, and socio-cultural factors. Meanwhile, experience is an aspect that will shape behavior. Behavior-specific cognition and affect include perceived usefulness of action, perceived inhibition to action, perceived self-efficacy, activity-related affect, interpersonal influence, and situational influence. All of these factors will influence health-promoting behavior through commitment to an action plan. In addition, competing demands and preferences are rapidly becoming factors that influence health promotion behavior (Alligood, 2018).

In explaining the major concepts in HPM, the following is a definition of each concept is (Alligood, 2018; Pender et al., 2015) :

- 1. Prior related behavior**  
Prior linked behavior refers to the frequency of the same or similar behavior in the past. This behavior has direct and indirect effects on the likelihood of health promotion behavior.
- 2. Personal factors**  
Personal factors are categorized as biological, psychological, and socio-cultural factors. These factors predict a particular behavior and are shaped by the behavioral traits of the target being considered



### 3. Personal biological factors

Personal biological factors include age, gender, body mass index, pubertal status, menopause status, physical capacity, strength, agility, and balance.

### 4. Personal psychological factors

Personal psychological factors include self-esteem, self-motivation, personal competence, perceived health status, and health definitions.

### 5. Personal sociocultural factors

Socio-cultural factors such as race, ethnicity, acculturation, education, and socioeconomic status.

### 6. Behavioral-specific cognitions and affect

Cognitive and affective factors are factors that have a significant motivation to shape behavior. These factors can be modified through nursing actions.

### 7. Perceived benefits of action

The perceived benefits of the action are anticipated positive outcomes that will result from the health behavior.

### 8. Perceived barriers to action

Perceived barriers to acting are anticipated, imagined, or real barriers and personal efforts to perform certain behaviors.

### 9. Perceived self-efficacy

Perceived self-efficacy is an assessment of one's ability to regulate and carry out health-promoting behaviors. The self-efficacy affects the perceived barriers to action, so that higher efficacy results in lower perceived barriers to behavioral performance.

### 10. Activity-related affect

Activity-related affect describes subjective feelings that are positive or negative. These feelings can occur before, during, and after the behavior which is influenced by the nature of the stimulus of the behavior itself. This activity-related affect affects perceived self-efficacy. So the more positive the subjective feeling, the greater the self-efficacy. In turn, increased self-efficacy can produce further positive effects.

### 11. Interpersonal influence

These influences are cognitions about the behavior, beliefs, or attitudes of others. Interpersonal influences include norms, social support, and modeling (representative learning through observing others engage in certain behaviors). The main sources of interpersonal influence are family, peers, and health care providers.

### 12. Situational influences

Situational influences are personal perceptions and cognitions of any given situation or context that can facilitate or inhibit behavior. These influences include perceptions of choice, demand characteristics, and aesthetic features of the environment in which health-promoting behavior is proposed. Situational influences may have a direct or indirect influence on health behavior.

### 13. Commitment to a plan of action

Commitment to behavior describes the concept of intention and identification of planned strategies that lead to the implementation of health behaviors. When it comes to public health, community commitment can be assessed through two aspects, namely 1) belonging (a sense of belonging) and 2) socializing (socialization). These two aspects were found to be able to describe the extent to which the community's behavior change commitment was found.

### 14. Intermediate competing demands and preferences

Competing demands are alternative behaviors over which the individual has low control, because there are environmental contingencies such as work or family care

responsibilities. Competitive preference is an alternative behavior over which the individual exerts a relatively high level of control.

#### 15. Health-promoting behavior

Health-promoting behavior is the end point or outcome of actions directed at achieving positive health outcomes such as optimal well-being, fulfillment of personal needs, and productive living. Examples of health-promoting behaviors include eating a healthy diet, exercising regularly, managing stress, getting adequate rest, increasing spiritual needs, and building positive relationships with others.

### 6. The role of peer counselor in improving health reproductive behavior among adolescent

To discussing about reproductive health, adolescents tend to choose their peers as opponents of discussion because they are considered comfortable. A comfortable discussion partner will make teenagers able to explore the problems of their peers. This causes problems that occur will be quickly found a solution. Therefore, the role of peer counselor is considered important in improving reproductive health among adolescents (Trisiswati et al., 2022).

### 7. Conclusion

Bad adolescent sexual behavior is a serious problem that is currently happening. This is caused by several factors such as self control, self awareness, religion values, lifestyle, the level of family education, broken home, parent's attention, economic factor, living environment and technology. Bad sexual behavior has bad impacts such as early-age marriage, decreasing academic achievement, dropout from school and poverty. One of the efforts to solve this problem is to take advantage of the role of peer counselors to conduct health promotions to increase sexual behavior in adolescents in order to avoid the bad effects of free sex.

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