

Building Reproductive Health Awareness Through Digital Approach for Adolescents in the Social Media Era

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ABSTRACT

Lack of awareness and education on reproductive health among adolescents is a significant challenge, especially due to limited accurate information and strong social stigma. Social media and digital technology offer great potential in improving adolescents' understanding of reproductive health through wider access to information and engaging educational formats. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have become primary sources for adolescents in seeking information related to sexual and reproductive health. However, the main problem that arises is the rampant misinformation that can form erroneous understandings. Low digital literacy makes it difficult for many adolescents to distinguish between valid information and hoaxes. To overcome this, an evidence-based approach is needed by involving health workers in content production and stricter regulation of information on social media. In addition, the development of interactive health applications can be an effective solution to provide access to credible information and create a safe discussion space for adolescents. Collaboration between the government, health institutions, and social media platforms is an important step in increasing the validity of the information disseminated. With the right strategy, social media can be an effective educational tool in building awareness of reproductive health among adolescents.

Keywords: Adolescent Reproductive Health; Digital Education; Social Media

INTRODUCTION

Lack of awareness and education of reproductive health among adolescents is a serious problem that has implications for increasing the risk of risky sexual behavior, unwanted pregnancies, and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. According to a report by Sabilah et al (2024), comprehensive reproductive health education is still not a priority in many countries, including Indonesia, where sexual education is often considered taboo and is only delivered to a limited extent in school environments. As a result, adolescents do not have an adequate understanding of the biological functions of their bodies, the importance of reproductive health, and the psychosocial aspects that accompany it. Without adequate education, they tend to seek information from peers or online sources that are not necessarily credible, which can actually strengthen myths or misconceptions related to reproductive health.

In addition, social and cultural norms are also major obstacles in building reproductive health awareness in adolescents. In many communities, talking



about sexuality is still considered taboo and inappropriate, so adolescents are reluctant to ask or discuss it with their parents or educators. A study by the National Population and Family Planning Board (BKKBN) (2021) shows that more than 60% of adolescents in Indonesia feel uncomfortable discussing reproductive health issues with their parents, resulting in low understanding and minimal access to adolescent-friendly reproductive health services. The unpreparedness of the education system and the lack of support from the social environment further worsen the situation, making adolescents more vulnerable to misinformation and decisions that can negatively impact their health in the future. Therefore, a more open and digital-based innovative approach needs to be developed to address this challenge.

The role of social media as the main source of information for adolescents cannot be ignored, especially in the context of reproductive health. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have become the main space for them to seek information, including about reproductive health. However, this shift also brings new challenges, because not all information circulating on social media has scientific validity. A study by Rahmadini & Ernawaty (2024) showed that more than 50% of adolescents received inaccurate information related to reproductive health from social media, which has the potential to influence their perceptions and decisions in aspects of sexual and reproductive health.

In addition, the lack of regulation and supervision of reproductive health content on social media further exacerbates the spread of misinformation. Many accounts produce content without a scientific basis, some of which even take advantage of adolescents' ignorance to spread myths or clickbait information for commercial interests. Rambe et al (2024) emphasize the importance of a more structured and evidence-based digital approach to the dissemination of health information. For this reason, there needs to be intervention from various parties, including the government, educational institutions, and health workers, in providing educational content that can be easily accessed by adolescents. Collaboration with educational influencers, fact-checking-based campaigns, and the use of artificial intelligence to filter inaccurate information are crucial steps in ensuring that social media functions as an effective and responsible educational tool.

Misinformation spread on social media is often not only misleading, but also has the potential to worsen adolescent health conditions. A study by Dewi et al (2024) revealed that almost 40% of adolescents experience confusion due to the unclear information they find on the internet regarding reproductive health issues, ranging from contraception to sexually transmitted diseases. This phenomenon is further exacerbated by the existence of social media algorithms that amplify sensational and controversial content, without regard to the accuracy of the information. This inaccurate information can worsen adolescents' understanding of their bodies, and in the long term, can influence decisions related to riskier sexual behavior, such as ignoring condom use or risking infection. This shows the need for strict supervision of content circulating on digital platforms so as not to mislead vulnerable young audiences.

In addition, the lack of credible educational content on social media also adds to the challenge of providing comprehensive education to adolescents about reproductive health. Research by Rochimah & Rahmawati (2021) identified that although there are a number of platforms that offer information about sexual and reproductive health, most of the content is not in-depth enough and is more in the form of promotion or entertainment than evidence-based education. To overcome this problem, there needs to be collaboration between health organizations, educational institutions, and social media activists to create and disseminate content that is truly educational and research-based. Susanti & Indraswari (2020) in their writing suggest that a digital approach to health education involves developing a curriculum that is integrated with technology, to ensure that the information conveyed can be accessed comprehensively and is useful for adolescents, and can counter misinformation that is developing on digital platforms.

The use of digital approaches for reproductive health education among adolescents does offer great potential, especially with the involvement of educational influencers who can reach a wider audience. A study by Engel et al (2024) showed that more than 70% of adolescents consider social media influencers as a credible source of information, especially when they talk about issues relevant to everyday life, including sexual and reproductive health. Collaborating with influencers who have a wide audience of adolescents, but are still based on facts and accurate information, can be an effective strategy in building awareness. With an interesting approach, such as short videos, infographics, or Q&A sessions, adolescents can more easily accept and understand the information conveyed, and can motivate them to be more open in discussing the topic.

However, to ensure the effectiveness of this digital approach, careful planning is needed in developing content that is not only interesting but also based on valid scientific evidence. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2022) emphasizes the importance of collaboration with competent medical experts and educators in developing appropriate and developmentally appropriate materials for adolescents. This includes the use of platforms such as Instagram Live, YouTube, or health applications that allow direct interaction with experts, who can answer questions about reproductive health in a way that is easy for adolescents to understand. Incorporating interactive elements such as polls, quizzes, or live discussions into digital campaigns can further increase adolescent engagement in this learning process, ensuring that they not only receive information but can also internalize and apply it in their daily lives.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method with a literature review study to collect, analyze, and synthesize relevant information on the topic "Building Reproductive Health Awareness Through a Digital Approach for Adolescents in the Era of Social Media." The first step is to identify credible literature sources, such as journal articles, books, and health institution reports, that discuss

reproductive health education, the role of social media, and digital utilization in adolescent education. After the literature was collected, a thematic analysis was conducted to group information based on main themes such as the importance of reproductive health education, the role of social media, and challenges in using digital platforms.

After thematic analysis, the next step is to synthesize and interpret the findings to provide a comprehensive picture of how digital approaches can be used to increase reproductive health awareness. These findings are then used to develop practical recommendations, such as the development of interactive platforms and collaboration with educational influencers, to increase the effectiveness of education among adolescents. With this approach, the study is expected to identify proven effective ways to utilize social media to support adolescent reproductive health.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Social Media in Increasing Awareness of Reproductive Health in Adolescents

1. Positive Impact of Social Media in Adolescent Reproductive Health Education

Social media has had a significant positive impact on adolescent reproductive health education, especially through the widespread and easily accessible dissemination of information. With platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, adolescents can gain knowledge about reproductive health quickly and interestingly. Content in the form of short videos, infographics, and live discussion sessions with experts allows them to understand complex information more easily. Amelia (2020) showed that social media has been effective in increasing adolescent awareness of important issues such as contraception, healthy relationships, and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases. This is in line with research conducted by Febyani et al. (2024) which found that social media can be an effective educational tool in increasing health awareness among adolescents. The study showed that the use of social media to convey health information allows active participation from users, which ultimately has a positive impact on changes in their health behavior.

In addition, social media offers a more engaging and interactive educational method. Unlike traditional approaches that tend to be formal and less appealing to teenagers, digital platforms allow information to be delivered in a format that is easier to understand. Educational videos on TikTok or Instagram Reels, for example, present brief explanations in an entertaining yet informative style. Infographics available on various platforms also help simplify concepts that may be difficult to understand, such as the menstrual cycle or safe contraceptive methods. Meanwhile, live session and online discussion features allow teenagers to interact directly with competent health workers or influencers, so they can get direct answers to questions that may be difficult for them to ask in formal settings such as school or home. Research conducted by Lede et al.

(2014) supports this finding by stating that social media has changed the way health information is disseminated, where more participatory and community-based communication can increase audience understanding and engagement in reproductive health issues.

The role of influencers and health workers in social media is also an important factor in increasing adolescents' understanding of reproductive health. Influencers who are close to young audiences can convey messages in more relatable language, making sexual health topics more acceptable and no longer considered taboo. Meanwhile, the presence of doctors or sexual health activists in online discussions increases the credibility of the information conveyed, so that adolescents can sort out which information is valid and which is just a myth or hoax. This is supported by research from Cascini et al. (2024) which states that individuals are more likely to accept and apply health information if it is conveyed by someone they consider a role model or has authority in the field.

One of the biggest benefits of social media-based reproductive health education is its ability to reduce stigma and raise awareness about the importance of maintaining sexual health. Many adolescents who were previously reluctant to talk about contraception or healthy relationships now feel more comfortable discussing them, both with peers and adults they trust. This also encourages them to be more aware of their rights and boundaries in a relationship, including the importance of sexual consent and recognizing the signs of an unhealthy relationship. With more open discussions about reproductive health, adolescents not only become more knowledgeable, but also more confident in making informed decisions about their own bodies and health. A study conducted by Nashrullah et al. (2024) showed that social media-based interventions in sexual health education not only increased adolescent knowledge but also reduced risky behaviors related to sexuality, such as unprotected sex and multiple sexual partners.

Furthermore, the positive impact of reproductive health education through social media can be seen in changes in adolescent behavior. They become more aware of the importance of correct and safe use of contraception, understand the risks of risky sex, and have a higher awareness of preventing sexually transmitted diseases. Several studies have also shown that social media-based education can help reduce teenage pregnancy rates and improve their understanding of overall sexual health. For example, a study conducted by Mahendra (2023) found that social media-based education programs increased knowledge and awareness of contraception in adolescents, which ultimately resulted in a decrease in pregnancy rates in this age group. However, despite its great benefits, social media also has its own challenges, such as the risk of spreading incorrect or biased information. Therefore, it is important for adolescents to have good digital literacy in order to be able to sort out valid sources of information and avoid misinformation that has the potential to harm them.

Overall, social media has become a very influential tool in adolescent reproductive health education, both in increasing accessibility of information,

presenting more interesting content, and reducing stigma towards sexual health. With a more innovative and inclusive approach, social media allows adolescents to get education that is relevant to their needs, while encouraging more responsible behavior in maintaining reproductive health. However, the challenges in the spread of hoaxes and misinformation must still be watched out for, so efforts are needed to ensure that education provided through social media comes from credible and trusted sources. In this regard, further research on the long-term effectiveness of reproductive health education through social media is still needed to understand how digital technology can continue to be optimized in supporting adolescent health more broadly.

2. The Role of Influencers in Disseminating Reproductive Health Information

Influencers play a very important role in the dissemination of reproductive health information, especially among adolescents who rely more on social media as a source of knowledge. Based on Azrian's study (2024), adolescents consider influencers as a more credible source of information compared to books or parents. Another study by Khairani et al (2023) shows that social media has become the main platform for adolescents to seek health information, including reproductive health. In the study, it was found that adolescents use YouTube and Instagram as their main references in seeking health information, which shows a shift in information consumption patterns from conventional to digital sources. With their ability to present content in an interesting and easy-to-understand way, influencers can be an effective liaison between medical information and the public, especially in educating adolescents about reproductive health which is often still considered taboo in various cultures.

In the digital era, the biggest challenge in reproductive health education is the rampant misinformation that can mislead adolescents' understanding. Many myths about reproductive health are widely circulated, both related to contraception, pregnancy, and sexually transmitted infections. A study conducted by Polyzou et al (2023) shows that reproductive health misinformation spread on social media is often more interesting than evidence-based information because it is presented in the form of dramatic stories or emotional personal narratives. Influencers who focus on education can play a role in countering misinformation by presenting evidence-based facts from trusted sources such as WHO or other health institutions. In addition, a study by Aschwanden & Messner (2024) in Digital Health emphasized that adolescents tend to be more receptive to information from individuals they consider relatable and have a communication style that suits their daily lives, so influencers can play an important role in shaping more accurate perceptions about reproductive health. They can also help eliminate the stigma that still sticks to reproductive health issues by conveying information more openly and inclusively, so that adolescents feel more comfortable discussing this topic without shame or fear of being judged.

In addition, influencers can contribute to shaping more positive behavioral changes among adolescents. A study by Gerung (2021) in his book states that health campaigns delivered through social media by credible influencers can increase adolescent awareness up to 40% more effectively than traditional media-based campaigns such as brochures or seminars. By using a storytelling approach or sharing personal experiences, they can make reproductive health information more relatable and easy to apply in everyday life. Interactive educational campaigns, such as Q&A sessions, educational challenges, or collaborations with medical personnel, can also increase adolescents' understanding of the importance of maintaining reproductive health. In this way, adolescents not only get the right information but are also encouraged to take real action, such as having regular health checks, using contraception wisely, and maintaining the cleanliness of reproductive organs.

However, although influencers have great potential in disseminating reproductive health information, there are challenges that need to be considered. Not all influencers have a medical background, so the information they convey must always be validated by experts to avoid misunderstandings. In a study conducted by Assaufa (2024), it was found that 30% of health influencers on social media provide information that is not in accordance with official medical guidelines, which can lead to the spread of myths or misinformation. In addition, the existence of commercial interests in the influencer world can be an obstacle, where some influencers may promote certain health products or services that may not be in accordance with the needs or safety of their followers. Therefore, it is important for influencers to prioritize ethics in conveying information, ensure that their content is evidence-based, and collaborate with medical personnel to increase the credibility of the messages they convey.

Overall, influencers have a very strategic role in disseminating reproductive health information, especially in reaching teenagers in a more interesting and easily accepted way. With the right and responsible approach, they can help raise awareness, change perceptions, and encourage teenagers to adopt healthier habits in maintaining their reproductive health. However, for the impact to be truly positive, it is important for influencers to continue to adhere to the principles of accurate, transparent, and evidence-based education so that the messages conveyed are not only interesting but also true and useful for their followers.

Challenges and Potential of Utilizing Digital Approaches in Reproductive Health Education

1. The Challenge of Misinformation and Content Inaccuracy on Digital Platforms

The challenge of misinformation and inaccurate content on digital platforms is an increasingly pressing issue in the use of digital technology for reproductive health education, especially for adolescents. Based on a study conducted by Parwati & Darmansyah, adolescents access inaccurate information related to sexual health from digital platforms. The spread of this misinformation

often occurs through social media, online forums, and unverified websites, which facilitate the circulation of content filled with myths, speculation, and information that is not based on scientific evidence. This misinformation has the potential to form wrong views among adolescents, which can lead to risky behaviors, such as misunderstandings about contraception, avoiding condom use, or ignorance about preventing sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). In many cases, adolescents are more likely to believe the information they find on social media, even though its truth cannot always be accounted for, because of the proximity and ease of access offered by digital platforms.

The spread of misinformation is exacerbated by the phenomenon of viral content on digital platforms, where interesting or sensational information gets attention faster and is shared by many people, even though the content is unverified. This shows that the speed of the spread of digital information is often higher than the effort to verify the truth of the information. Based on research by Rahmadhanti & Achdiani (2025), adolescents who get health information from unverified sources or from social media tend to have an inaccurate understanding of sexual health issues. The study found that adolescents who are exposed to misinformation often do not have an adequate understanding of the importance of correct contraception use, as well as effective ways to prevent sexually transmitted diseases. This has the potential to increase the risk of risky behavior that not only endangers their health, but can also affect their social and psychological lives.

In addition, the inaccuracy of digital information is often exacerbated by the lack of effective filtering systems by social media platforms and websites. Many digital platforms allow any user to post or share content without any clear verification of the truth of the information shared. Therefore, myths, stigmas, and misunderstandings about reproductive health continue to circulate without clarification from competent parties. Research by Tohit & Haque (2024) revealed that misinformation circulating through social media can exacerbate stigma related to sensitive topics such as contraception and sexually transmitted diseases. Adolescents exposed to this kind of information often develop distorted views, which then prevent them from accessing more accurate sources of information or consulting competent medical personnel.

Addressing the challenge of misinformation requires a more systematic and evidence-based approach. One solution is to provide more comprehensive and evidence-based health education on verified digital platforms. This educational content needs to involve competent health experts to ensure the accuracy of the information disseminated to the public, especially adolescents. In addition, increasing digital literacy among adolescents is essential to help them recognize credible sources of information and distinguish between facts and hoaxes. In this regard, educational programs that teach critical thinking skills and the ability to evaluate sources of information need to be introduced into the education curriculum. It is hoped that with collaboration between the government, educational institutions, and health organizations, adolescents can have a better understanding of reproductive health and avoid the negative

impacts of misinformation circulating on digital platforms.

2. Potential for Development of Interactive Health Applications and Evidence-Based Educational Content

The potential for developing interactive health apps and evidence-based educational content for adolescents offers a great opportunity to improve their understanding of health issues that are often considered taboo or difficult to talk about, such as menstruation, contraception, and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). In society, these topics are often considered embarrassing or too sensitive to talk about openly, leaving many adolescents feeling anxious or confused when faced with these health issues. Evidence-based health apps can help overcome these barriers by providing accurate, clear, and easily accessible information. By utilizing technology, these apps can present information in an engaging and interactive format, such as quizzes, educational videos, or discussion forums, which allows adolescents to learn more actively and enjoyably, and reduce the fear or embarrassment they may feel when discussing personal health issues (Mustofa & Sani, 2024)

Additionally, these apps also play a role in addressing the stigma that often surrounds reproductive health topics. This stigma often prevents teens from seeking the information they need or consulting with health professionals. With digital platforms that provide a safe, judgment-free space, teens can be more open to learning about topics that may be difficult or taboo to discuss with their parents or friends. Research by Kusumaningrum et al (2024) shows that evidence-based apps that provide easy-to-understand explanations of these sensitive topics can reduce teens' anxiety and improve their understanding of their own bodies. For example, apps that provide clear information on how to properly use contraception, the menstrual cycle, and the signs and prevention of STDs can help teens feel more confident in managing their reproductive health and make better decisions about their sexual health.

Research also shows that the use of technology in health education can have a positive impact on increasing adolescents' knowledge about sexual and reproductive health. A study by Nisrin et al. (2024) found that digital-based health applications that provide evidence-based information about contraception and sexually transmitted diseases can significantly improve adolescents' understanding of these topics. Applications that are designed with structured content and involve users in various interactive activities, such as simulations or discussion forums, allow adolescents to more easily understand and absorb the information provided. In addition, Emilia & Prabandari (2019) in their study showed that applications that allow adolescents to communicate directly with medical personnel or health experts can reduce anxiety and fear that are often felt by adolescents when dealing with sensitive health problems. With the direct chat feature, adolescents feel more comfortable asking questions and seeking solutions to their health problems, which in turn helps them to make more informed and evidence-based decisions.

WHO (2021) also emphasizes the importance of using technology to

provide a health information platform that is based on valid scientific evidence, considering that inaccurate or myth-based information can harm adolescent health. Therefore, health applications that are developed must always be based on valid data and compiled by competent health professionals, and updated regularly to stay relevant to the latest developments in health science. This evidence-based health application not only helps improve adolescent knowledge about sexual and reproductive health, but also empowers them to make wiser and more informed decisions regarding their health. In addition, by allowing adolescents to interact directly with medical personnel or health experts through the consultation feature, this type of application can provide a safe space for adolescents to talk and seek solutions without fear or shame. Overall, interactive and easily accessible evidence-based health applications can play an important role in creating a more open, educational, and evidence-based health culture among adolescents, as well as helping them better manage their health and reduce risky behaviors that can harm their health..

CONCLUSIONS

Social media and digital technology play an important role in increasing adolescent awareness of reproductive health through the widespread and easily accessible dissemination of information. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube allow the delivery of education in an interesting, interactive, and more relatable format for adolescents. The presence of influencers and health workers in digital content helps reduce stigma and increase understanding of contraception, healthy relationships, and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases. However, the main challenge in reproductive health education through social media is the rampant misinformation that can form misunderstandings among adolescents. Low digital literacy makes many adolescents vulnerable to invalid information and makes it difficult to distinguish between facts and hoaxes. To overcome this, an evidence-based approach is needed by involving health experts in content production and stricter regulations on information on digital platforms. In addition to social media, the development of interactive health applications can be an effective solution to provide access to accurate information and build a safe discussion space for adolescents. Collaboration between health institutions, governments, and social media platforms is essential to increase supervision and ensure the validity of the information disseminated. Well-designed digital education campaigns can improve adolescent information literacy and encourage healthier and more responsible behavioral changes. With proper and evidence-based management, social media and digital technology can continue to be an effective means of increasing adolescents' understanding and awareness of reproductive health.

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