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Effectiveness of a parent-based intervention to improve adolescents' sexual and reproductive health knowledge: a pilot study

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Abstract

Objectives: Adolescents continue to demonstrate uneven sexual and reproductive health (SRH) knowledge, particularly in applied domains such as contraception, gender identity, and digital safety. While school-based education emphasizes biological aspects of reproduction, structured family-based SRH education remains limited. This study examined whether empowering parents with structured, culturally sensitive SRH content and professional guidance may improve adolescents' SRH knowledge through parent- adolescent communication on sexual issues (PACS). Methods: A quasi-experimental single-arm pre-post pilot study was conducted among Malaysian parent-adolescent dyads. Parents received a six-week structured SRH module delivered via a website, supported by healthcare professionals through digital platforms, and engaged in PACS. Adolescents completed a validated 30-item SRH knowledge questionnaire at baseline and post-intervention. Results: Fifty adolescents with a mean age of 14.45 (SD=1.50) years completed the study (completion rate: 89.3 %). Median knowledge scoresincreased significantly from 19.0 (IQR=11.5- 26.5) to 23.0 (IQR=17-29) ($p<0.001$, $r=0.62$). Significant improvements were observed across several knowledge domains, including contraception misconceptions, oral sex and pregnancy risk, gender identity, digital safety, grooming awareness, and abortion ($r=0.28$-0.40, $p<0.05$). Conclusions: This pilot study provides preliminary evidence that empowering parents with digitally delivered, structured SRH education and professional support can enhance parent-adolescent communication and improve adolescents' knowledge, particularly in sensitive and underaddressed domains. This family-based approach offers a feasible and scalable complement to school-based SRH education, especially in culturally sensitive and resourcelimited settings. © 2026 the author(s), published by De Gruyter, Berlin/Boston.

Author keywords

adolescent health; family communication; parents; sexual health; telemedicine

Indexed keywords

MeSH

Adolescent; Female; Health Knowledge, Attitudes, Practice; Humans; Malaysia; Male; Parent-Child Relations; Parents; Pilot Projects; Reproductive Health; Sex Education; Sexual Behavior; Sexual Health; Surveys and Questionnaires

EMTREE medical terms

adolescent; attitude to health; child parent relation; education; female; human; Malaysia; male; pilot study; procedures; questionnaire; reproductive health; sexual behavior; sexual education; sexual health

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