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INTRODUCING SEXUAL DECISION MAKING (SDM) TO ADOLESCENCE TO ANTICIPATE SEXUAL RISK BEHAVIOR

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ABSTRACT

The amount of Indonesian Adolescents, who engage in sexual risk behavior such as premarital sexual, (unsafe) abortion, (unwillingness) pregnancy or HIV/AIDS diseases, is increased in recent years. One contributing factor is the weakness of youth to make decision in their sexual life.

This paper discuss SDM from many aspect: definition, internal and external factors, several dominant condition where adolescents should make the decision, importance teaching SDM to adolescents, what work must counselor do, and the target of giving SDM material to adolescents.

Perhaps, by knowing SDM, school counselor can give various guidance counseling programs or services about making sexual decision for adolescence. The purpose of sexual decision-making material is to improve the ability of teens to keep themselves away from risky sexual behavior. By exploring their situations with them, the school counselor encourages the adolescents to think about many factors that may influence how they feel and therefore helps them to come to a more thorough understanding of what they want in sexual relationships.

Key words: adolescence, sexual decision making, self anticipate, sexual risk behavior

A. Background

One of the goals of Indonesia national strategy is to improve adolescents's capability as human resources to be the future generation and backbone of the nation, but these efforts may face a tough challenge. One obstacle is the increasing tendency of adolescents to perform risky behaviors. Syndrome risk behavior in adolescents according to Kagan (in Heaven, 1996) include risky sexual behavior, juvenile crime, and drug abuse.

In general, the majority of normal adolescents tend to be more able to engage in risky sexual behavior compared to other risky behaviors. An increase in risky sexual behavior syndrome should be anticipated and addressed given the considerable risks faced by both the perpetrators and the surrounding environment. Based on several studies (Ungki, 2008; Damayanti, 2007; Aliyah, 2006;

Gusmiarni, 2000; Aminudin, et al: 1997)) revealed the forms of risky adolescent sexual behavior include the following: the style of dating that does not fit the norm, forced/corced sex, unwanted pregnancy, (unsafe) abortion, Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) and the use of contraceptives that do not fit the rules.

Teenagers are beginning to experiment with risky sexual behavior at younger ages, in part due to the mass media, peer pressure, and the lack of supervision by parents and other adults. experimenting with drugs and alcohol, which may also lead to unplanned sex. The disturbing reality is that this is happening with increasing frequency. It is important for school counselors to be aware of the increase in promiscuity and plan to include the topic in appropriate guidance lessons that raise awareness of the consequences.

The issue of decision-making becomes increasingly important during adolescence because teens are developing greater autonomy and encountering more choices independent of adults. The choices teens make may drastically affect not only their own lives, but the lives of others as well (Ganzel, 1999). Some of these choices may include which career to pursue, dating abstinence, whether or not to have sex or use contraceptives, whether or not to use alcohol, cigarettes, or other drugs, or whether or not to engage in violent or risky behaviors (Fischhoff et al., 1999; Ganzel, 1999). Concern about these "risk behaviors" has led to the development of prevention and intervention programs that strive to help teenagers better protect themselves with effective decision-making skills (Fischhoff et al., 1999). So, it is important for educator to teach adolescence to make good decisions and responsibility choices about sexual activities during their teenage years.

B. Sexual Decision Making in Adolescence

The definition of decision-making is the process of choosing what to do by considering the possible consequences of different choices. Sexual Decision Making in adolescence is thought process of selecting a logical choice from the available options in adolescence sexual life (Beyth-Marom, Fischhoff, Jacobs-Quadrel, & Furby, 1991; 1993). When trying to make a good decision, a young person must weight the positives and negatives of each option, and consider all the alternatives. For effective decision making, a person must be able to forecast the outcome of each option as well, and based on all these items, determine which option is the best for that particular situation.

Why are sexual decision-making skills important to the adolescence? Brookman and Russel (2009) describe the challenges that

adolescents should make healthy decisions because they:

- may see only either-or choices rather than a variety of options;
- may lack the experience, knowledge or feeling of control over their lives to come up with alternative choices
- may misperceive certain behaviors as less risky, and may be overly optimistic about their ability to recognize and avoid threatening situations
- may favor their own experience over probabilistic evidence when determining the likelihood of the consequences of their actions
- may focus more on the social reactions of their peers when deciding to engage in or avoid risky behaviors
- may not be able to accurately estimate the probability of negative consequences
- may have a hard time interpreting the meaning or credibility of information when making decisions and
- may be influenced by their emotions and fail to use decision-making processes.

Adolescence is a time of physical, cognitive, social, and emotional growth and change. It is generally asserted that, during adolescence, there is an increasing capacity for abstract reasoning, counterfactual reasoning, reasoning from premises that are not true, systematic reasoning, and a growing capacity for probabilistic reasoning. These abilities are all relevant to decision making. An increased ability to grasp the concept of probability should encourage a more realistic understanding of the chance of various outcomes occurring. An increased capacity for systematic reasoning should provide teenagers with the ability to imagine future outcomes and transpose them into the present, thereby enabling them to assess the consequences of their actions. An increased ability to coordinate independent pieces of

information should encourage teenagers to attend to all relevant aspects of choices.

Adolescence sexual decision-making is a complex issue that has received much attention in the literature. The concept that positive self-esteem, problem-solving, and reasoning skills served as probable protective factors for a variety of adolescent risk behaviors, including sexual activity, has been documented, as well as the findings that lower levels of problem-solving skills, health-promoting behaviors, and education were all possible predictors of early intercourse.

Many research in Western has pointed that youth development programs are successful to promote positive behavior and to prevent problem behavior when these programs help young people learn how to make right decision; to solve their problems; to improve social and self-regulation skills; and encourage refusal, resistance, and coping strategies (Fischhoff et al., 1999). Programs that incorporate sexual decision-making skills building have been demonstrated to delay the onset of sexual activity, reduce the frequency of sexual activity, and increase safer-sex behaviors.

C. Factors Influence Sexual Decision Making of Adolescence

Two different factors that influence how adolescents make decisions are internal and external factor. Several conditons influence internal factors of adolescents (refer to cognitive, affective and behavior) to engage in sexual activity. The most dominant of these conditions (Ministry of Health Jamaica, 2000) are:

a. Being in love

Being in love can influence adolescents to say yes to sex, wheter they do not fully think through what being in love means and how their potential sex partner may feel about them.

b. Not Assertive to Peer Pressure

Peer pressures can affects how adolescence behave. Sexual intercourse is often perceived as an activity that adolescents should be involved in, in order to be part of a popular social group.

c. Transactional sex

Transactional sex is sex in exchange for goods, services, money and other tangible or intangible objects. Some adolescents engage in transactional sex to fulfil some basic needs and the others engage in this type of sexual activity to fulfil their wants/desires for less essential things such as brand name clothes and shoes and a flashy lifestyle.

d. Forced/Coerced sex

Sometimes peers, family members, other relatives or strangers force them into sexual activity. Often adolescents do not readily disclose that they have been forced into sexual activity so the counselor would need to probe for this information.

e. Unplanned sexual activity

It is not uncommon for adolescents to say "it just happened" since adolescents do not always plan to have sex. They, therefore, do not think about how to protect themselves from unplanned pregnancies and from STIs including HIV.

f. Lack of power in their relationship

Since adolescents may often have little power or no power in their sexual relationships, sexual decision-making may not involve them. In such situations, the adolescents may be unable to say no to sexual activity and are unable to negotiate or initiate condom use.

g. Inability to say "no" to sex

It is important to recognise that some adolescents will choose to continue

having sexual intercourse even while the caregiver/counselor think it would be better to delay sexual activity. There may be various reasons for them refusing to stop, which the counselor should seek to explore with them.

h. Attitude towards sex

Adolescents have varying attitudes towards sex. Some feel that sex is a means to get things, while other may feel ashamed of their sexual involvement. It is vital that counselors are very sensitive and careful with their approach to the issue of sexual activity in counseling sessions with adolescents.

Parents, peers, the media, access to education and services are the external factors that influence adolescent decisions (NASW, 2001).

- The Role of Parents and Family Dynamics

The role of parents in the lives and decision-making processes of youths is often underestimated. A significant number of teenagers express a strong desire to have more information on how to talk to their parents about sex and relationships.

- The Role of Peers

Peer group have two side effect for adolescents, negative or positive. Peer group attitudes about sex influence the attitudes and behaviors of teenagers. Adolescents (ages 13 to 18) report that they are most likely to get information about sexual health issues from their peers (Kaiser Family foundation, 2000a).

- The Role of the Media

The images that pervade the media (television, music videos, the Internet, and the like), are increasingly more explicit in sexual content. Although media images of sex and sexuality may be

socially defined as a negative influence on teenage sexual decision-making, there is considerable potential for the use of media in conveying messages about responsible sexual behavior.

- The Role of Communities, Schools, and Social Policy

Schools have unique opportunities to provide education and information, as well as structured activities that discourage unhealthy risk taking. We must make link and consensus between communities, schools, and social policy to work together not separately and design an integrative frame work to prevent adolescents risky behavior.

C. How School Counselor Improve Sexual Decision Making of Adolescence

Some educators are researching ways to help adolescents during the decision making process. The main consideration for more research is that teenagers are often foreigners in their own bodies during adolescence and puberty. They not only are confused about what is going on in their bodies, but they are confused and trying to fit in with others around them. Watching media, TV, Internet access and listening to music may all contribute to the conflict many teens experience about what is right and wrong.

Beyth-Marom et al., (1991) describe the basic process that decision-makers use when confronted with a decision involves:

- a) listing relevant choices,
- b) identifying potential consequences of each choice,
- c) assessing the likelihood of each consequence actually occurring,
- d) determining the importance of these consequences, and
- e) combining all this information to decide which choice is the most appealing

So, what work must school counselor do ? School counselor may include the decision making processes in personal-social guidance and counseling services with various activities namely: games, guidance classroom activities, role play, sociodrama, watching film, discussion, etc.

The school counselor role is divided into numerous categories but to help inform teens about risky decisions, the roles of advocate, consultant, collaborator and developer are encouraged. School counselors should consider developing guidance curriculum based on the standards and comprehensive school counseling model. One main topic that could be included is awareness of our own bodies and making decisions that help teens stay healthy and active while avoiding risky behaviors.

The parent and school counselor's roles in this topic area are vital to the adolescence's future. Partnerships with parents and educators may lead to developing a program to teach adolescents about early sexual activity and the risks and consequences. One major problem is that parents, teachers, and counselors need to be more informed with further training to be able to discuss these topics.

How can school counselor promote the development of sexual decision-making skills in their school? Research has not yet answered how best to teach decision-making skills to adolescents (Fischhoff et al., 1999) but some concrete methods (Brookman and Russel, 2009) include:

- teaching young people about how their emotions may influence their thinking and behavior
- encouraging young people to search for new information when making decisions and helping them to avoid overestimating their knowledge and capabilities
- providing accurate information to teens about the actual number of young people

engaging in risky behaviors to counteract media messages

- utilizing concrete situations and decision problems that reflect young people's interests and have relevance to their lives
- using a general heuristic framework to help teenagers learn how to think critically about decision problems
- assisting young people to recognize their own biases
- providing adolescents with opportunities to practice and rehearse decision-making skills
- having teenagers work in pairs or small groups on relevant decision problems
- helping young people understand how their choices affect others

Decision making programs may be provided by the school and the curriculum is based on the value or mission of the school: healthy dating only for example. However, the school counselor must adapt and modify the curriculum based on the students and their needs while adhering to the school policies. Helping students to understand themselves sexually and to become comfortable with the idea of romantic relationships is crucial to the development of adolescent romantic relationships in the future. Another emphasis is placed on the importance of connectedness and honesty and trust when talking about sex education. When adolescents feel that they can trust an adult or advocate, or health education teacher, they know that their feelings are being considered and understood.

The purpose of programs is to improve adolescents responsibility of their sexual life. Adolescence responsibilities (NASW, 2001) include :

- understanding and awareness of one's sexuality and sexual development
- respect for one's self and one's partner
- avoidance of physical or emotional harm

- to either oneself or one's partner
- ensuring pregnancy occurs only when welcomed
- recognition of tolerance and diversity of sexual values.

School counselors who wish to be proactive could begin prevention strategies

rather than intervention. Interventions can begin to open up communication about sex where students can freely discuss topics, risks, and risky behaviors or consequences of those decisions. Using biology or religion classes and guidance curriculum to teach decision making and healthy life choices is a good starting place.

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