



Sexuality Education Based on Local Wisdom Values in Preventing Risky Behaviour in School Adolescents

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Article history: ABSTRACT

Received:

Oct 26, 2025

Revised:

Dec 23, 2025

Accepted:

Jan 19, 2026

This study examines the development and effectiveness of a local wisdom-based sexuality education model in addressing risky sexual behavior among adolescents in Cirebon Regency, Indonesia. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach with an adaptation of the Research and Development (R&D) model, the study integrates cultural values, community perspectives, and participatory learning strategies into a contextualized educational module. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, observations, documentation, and pre-test and post-test assessments involving students, teachers, parents, and community leaders. The findings reveal that local wisdom values such as pamali, mapag Sri, silih asah, silih asih, silih asuh, and religious-cultural principles remain relevant and effective as pedagogical foundations for sexuality education. Empirical results indicate a significant reduction in risky sexual behavior among adolescents, alongside substantial improvements in knowledge of reproductive health and more responsible attitudes toward premarital sexual relations. The study also identifies enhanced communication between adolescents and parents as a key outcome, reflecting the creation of a more open and supportive educational environment. The developed module demonstrates high acceptability and contextual relevance, suggesting its potential for broader implementation. This research contributes to the advancement of culturally responsive sexuality education by offering an integrative model that balances scientific knowledge with socio-cultural values, thereby supporting sustainable and inclusive adolescent development.

Keywords: sexuality education; local wisdom; adolescent behavior; cultural-based education; reproductive health; participatory learning

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescence represents a critical transitional stage between childhood and adulthood, characterized by profound physical, emotional, and social changes, including the development of sexual identity (Santrock, 2018). Over the past decade, patterns of risky sexual behavior among Indonesian adolescents have shown a concerning upward trend. Data reported by the National Population and Family Planning Board (BKKBN) in 2025 indicate a notable increase in high-risk dating behaviors, including a rise in premarital sexual activity (Jatimtimes, 2025). Earlier evidence from the Indonesia Demographic and Health Survey (SDKI) 2017 revealed that approximately 2% of adolescents aged 15–19 had engaged in sexual intercourse, with indications that this figure has continued to grow over time (BKKBN, 2017). These developments invite

reflection on the adequacy of existing preventive frameworks within both educational and familial contexts.

The implications of this phenomenon extend beyond individual behavior, affecting broader public health and psychosocial well-being. Increasing rates of adolescent pregnancy, unsafe abortion practices, and the spread of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) have been documented, alongside psychological consequences such as anxiety and depression (Pratama & Wahyuni, 2021). National health data further indicate that the prevalence of STIs among individuals aged 15–24 in Indonesia has reached approximately 15%, positioning adolescents as a key population in prevention efforts (Ministry of Health, 2020). These patterns suggest that interventions limited to biomedical information may be insufficient to address the complexity of adolescent sexual health.

Socio-cultural transformations associated with globalization have also contributed to the erosion of local wisdom that historically functioned as a moral and social filter in guiding adolescent behavior (Mughtar & Syukur, 2020). Cultural practices such as *mappalili* in South Sulawesi, which emphasizes personal purity prior to marriage, or *selamatan* in Javanese tradition, which reinforces respect for communal norms, are increasingly marginalized within contemporary family and school environments. Their gradual disappearance reflects a broader shift in value transmission, despite evidence that such local traditions have played a meaningful role in shaping character formation and self-regulation among youth (Setyawan, 2019).

Sexuality education in Indonesia continues to face structural and cultural limitations. It is often perceived as a sensitive or taboo subject, resulting in fragmented delivery that tends to focus narrowly on biological aspects without engaging the social and moral dimensions of sexuality (Rahmawati, 2022). This limitation reduces its effectiveness in fostering critical understanding and responsible decision-making. Empirical findings suggest that sexuality education grounded in local cultural values can enhance sexual health literacy while simultaneously strengthening adolescents' moral resilience against risky behaviors (Mutmainnah & Afiah, 2021). Such insights point to the importance of rethinking educational approaches in ways that resonate with the lived realities of students.

The present study seeks to develop a model of sexuality education that is rooted in local wisdom and responsive to the socio-cultural context of Indonesian adolescents. The objectives are threefold: to identify relevant local values that can be meaningfully integrated into sexuality education; to examine the relationship between culturally grounded sexuality education and the reduction of risky sexual behaviors; and to design a contextual, participatory educational module aligned with the needs and cultural backgrounds of school-aged adolescents. This orientation reflects an effort to move beyond abstract normative instruction toward a more situated and dialogical form of learning.

The urgency of this research is underscored by the rapid expansion of digital media, which has increased adolescents' exposure to sexual content that is often inaccurate or misleading. Reports indicate that Indonesian youth are increasingly confronted with challenges related to online pornography, sexual exploitation, and shifting sexual norms influenced by global cultural flows (The Conversation, 2024). In this context, the absence of culturally grounded guidance may leave adolescents without adequate interpretive frameworks to navigate such information critically.

Existing models of sexuality education have yet to fully engage with the cultural and spiritual dimensions that underpin moral life in Indonesian society. Integrating local values—encompassing customary norms, social prohibitions, and religious traditions—offers a pathway toward more meaningful and contextually relevant education (Nurhadi, 2020). Such integration is not intended to romanticize tradition, but rather to recognize its potential as a resource for fostering ethical awareness and responsible behavior among adolescents.

This study also holds implications for educational policy development. Recent signals from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbud) highlight the need to reformulate character education curricula to address issues of sexuality more openly while maintaining alignment with cultural values (Kemendikbud, 2023). A model that bridges scientific knowledge with cultural context may therefore contribute to more responsive and sustainable policy frameworks.

The study is ultimately expected to serve as both a scholarly and practical reference for schools, parents, and policymakers. By advancing a comprehensive, contextual, and culturally attuned model of sexuality education, it aims to support more effective efforts in preventing risky sexual behavior among Indonesian adolescents while reinforcing the broader moral and social fabric in which they develop.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with an adaptation of the Research and Development (R&D) model. The design is selected in response to the dual objective of developing a culturally grounded sexuality education model based on local wisdom in Cirebon Regency, while also examining its potential effectiveness in preventing risky sexual behavior among adolescents. A qualitative orientation allows for an in-depth exploration of the meanings embedded in local values, as well as the perceptions of adolescents, teachers, parents, and community leaders regarding sexuality education. The R&D framework provides a systematic and iterative structure, beginning with a preliminary study and progressing toward limited-scale trials, thereby ensuring that the resulting model is both contextually relevant and empirically informed (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2015).

The research is situated in Cirebon Regency, West Java, a region characterized by rich cultural traditions such as *mapag Sri* and *sedekah bumi*, alongside strong Islamic teachings that shape social norms. The selection of this locus is informed by data from the Cirebon District Health Office (2023), which report increasing rates of adolescent pregnancy and the spread of sexually transmitted infections. These trends point to an urgent need for culturally responsive educational interventions. The study, therefore, seeks to identify and reinterpret local values that can be meaningfully integrated into sexuality education, aligning with arguments that culturally grounded sexual health education tends to be more effective in reducing risky behaviors among adolescents (Pendragon, 2022).

Participants in this study include senior high school and vocational school students aged 15–18, guidance and counseling teachers, physical and health education teachers, parents, and local cultural and religious leaders in Cirebon. Data are collected through multiple techniques, including in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), participant observation, documentation, and pre-test and post-test questionnaires. Interviews are conducted to explore relevant local values and normative perspectives, while FGDs provide a collective space for students to articulate their needs and views regarding sexuality education (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Observational and documentary data offer additional insights into existing practices of reproductive health education within school settings.

Data analysis follows the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), involving the processes of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. Attention to validity is maintained through source triangulation, encompassing students, teachers, parents, and community leaders, as well as methodological triangulation across interviews, FGDs, and observations. A member-checking process is also employed, allowing participants to review and confirm the accuracy of interpreted data. The development of the sexuality education module is conducted in a participatory manner, engaging relevant

stakeholders to ensure both cultural appropriateness and practical applicability of the integrated local values (Thomas, 2020).

Ethical considerations are addressed through the implementation of informed consent procedures for all participants, alongside the assurance of anonymity and confidentiality in handling the data. The study adheres to ethical guidelines established by the University Research Ethics Committee and the Cirebon District Education Office. The resulting model of sexuality education, grounded in local wisdom, is expected to offer an alternative preventive strategy that is both effective and sustainable. This approach resonates with international recommendations advocating for comprehensive sexuality education that is adapted to local cultural norms and values (WHO, 2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Local Wisdom Values Relevant to Adolescent Sexuality Education

Findings derived from in-depth interviews with community leaders, religious figures, teachers, and parents in Cirebon Regency reveal the persistence of several local wisdom values that remain socially embedded and pedagogically relevant for integration into adolescent sexuality education. Among these is the concept of *pamali*, which reflects culturally embedded prohibitions against behaviors considered socially and morally inappropriate, including premarital sexual relations. This value functions not merely as a restrictive norm, but as a culturally legitimate mechanism for internalizing self-regulation. In addition, the tradition of *mapag Sri*, associated with fertility and reverence for life cycles, offers a symbolic and culturally sensitive entry point for introducing reproductive education in a manner that aligns with local sensibilities.

Another value frequently emphasized by participants is *silih asah, silih asih, silih asuh*, which embodies principles of mutual learning, compassion, and guidance. This ethical framework is perceived as particularly relevant for fostering open and respectful communication between adolescents, teachers, and parents regarding sexual health issues. Teachers, in particular, reflected that embedding such values within instructional practices enhances student receptivity, as the content resonates with familial and societal norms. Furthermore, the philosophical principle *adat bersendi syarak, syarak bersendi Kitabullah*—which underscores the alignment between customary practices and religious teachings—reinforces the importance of grounding sexuality education within a moral and spiritual framework that is culturally meaningful for adolescents.

Data from focus group discussions involving 60 students across three schools indicate that a majority of participants (72%) expressed greater comfort in engaging with sexuality-related topics when these were framed within familiar cultural and religious norms. Educational approaches perceived as detached from local values were often viewed as inappropriate or overly explicit. This finding suggests that local wisdom can serve as an effective pedagogical bridge, enabling the delivery of sexuality education in ways that are both contextually appropriate and socially acceptable (Pendragon, 2022).

Table 1. Identification of Relevant Local Wisdom Values

Local Wisdom Value	Meaning	Relevance in Sexuality Education
<i>Pamali</i>	Cultural prohibitions against deviant behaviors, including premarital sexual relations	Reinforces norms discouraging premarital sex through culturally grounded moral guidance
<i>Mapag Sri</i>	Tradition symbolizing respect for fertility and the cycle of life	Provides a symbolic and respectful approach to teaching reproductive health concepts

<i>Silih Asah, Silih Asih, Silih Asuh</i>	Principles of mutual learning, compassion, and guidance	Encourages open, empathetic communication between adolescents, educators, and parents
<i>Adat Bersendi Syarak, Syarak Bersendi Kitabullah</i>	Customary norms grounded in religious principles	Establishes a moral and spiritual foundation for sexuality education

The Relationship Between Local Wisdom-Based Sexuality Education and the Reduction of Risky Sexual Behavior

The analysis of pre-test and post-test data administered to students participating in the pilot implementation of the module reveals a notable decline in the tendency toward risky sexual behavior following exposure to sexuality education grounded in local wisdom. Prior to the intervention, 35% of respondents reported engagement in behaviors categorized as high risk, including premarital sexual activity or unprotected intercourse. After eight weeks of module implementation, this proportion decreased to 18%, as reflected in the post-test results. This shift suggests that culturally contextualized educational approaches may exert a meaningful influence on behavioral orientation among adolescents.

A parallel improvement is observed in students' knowledge of reproductive health risks. The average score increased from 60 (on a 100-point scale) in the pre-test to 85 in the post-test, indicating a substantial gain in understanding related to adolescent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. Attitudinal changes are equally evident. The proportion of students expressing a clear rejection of premarital sexual behavior rose from 58% prior to the intervention to 80% afterward. These findings point to a convergence between cognitive and normative transformation, where increased knowledge is accompanied by a strengthening of value-based positions.

Such outcomes resonate with earlier studies suggesting that sexuality education adapted to local cultural contexts tends to be more effective in fostering behavioral change among adolescents (Thomas, 2020; WHO, 2018). Reflections from teachers and parents involved in the program further reinforce this interpretation. Many reported an observable increase in the frequency and openness of communication regarding sexual health within the family, a domain that had previously been constrained by cultural taboos. This development indicates that the integration of local values does not merely enhance individual knowledge but also contributes to reshaping the broader educational ecosystem.

The findings, therefore, suggest that local wisdom-based sexuality education operates on multiple levels. It influences individual behavior and attitudes, while simultaneously facilitating more open and supportive communication structures between adolescents, educators, and parents. Such a multidimensional impact underscores the potential of culturally grounded approaches as sustainable strategies for reducing risky sexual behavior among adolescents.

Designing a Contextual, Participatory, and Culturally Grounded Sexuality Education Module

Drawing upon the identification of relevant local wisdom values and the results of the effectiveness testing, the research team developed a contextual and participatory sexuality education module entitled "A Local Wisdom-Based Sexuality Education Module of Cirebon: Toward Healthy and Dignified Adolescents." The development process was inherently collaborative, involving teachers, community leaders, parents, and students, thereby ensuring that the module reflects both pedagogical relevance and cultural authenticity.

The module is structured into five core learning units, each designed to integrate scientific knowledge with culturally meaningful narratives. The first unit, Understanding the Body and Adolescent Changes, employs symbolic references drawn from the mapag Sri tradition to

introduce concepts of growth, fertility, and life cycles in a respectful and accessible manner. The second unit, Preserving Personal Dignity: Sexuality in Cultural and Religious Perspectives, situates discussions of sexuality within the moral frameworks of local customs and religious teachings. The third unit, Risks of Unsafe Sexual Behavior and Self-Protection, incorporates the concept of *pamali* to communicate culturally grounded prohibitions and reinforce self-regulatory behavior. The fourth unit, Healthy Communication with Peers and the Opposite Sex, is informed by the values of *silih asah*, *silih asih*, *silih asuh*, emphasizing empathy, mutual respect, and guidance in interpersonal relationships. The final unit, Healthy Adolescents, Promising Futures, synthesizes these elements to encourage forward-looking attitudes and responsible life planning.

Pedagogically, the module adopts a participatory approach that prioritizes active student engagement. Instructional methods include group discussions, simulations, role-playing based on locally relevant scenarios, and interactive dialogues between teachers and students. This approach reflects an understanding that meaningful learning emerges through dialogue and contextual experience rather than passive reception. The module is further complemented by instructional guidelines for teachers and dedicated sessions designed to involve parents, thereby fostering continuity between school-based learning and family environments.

Evaluation results from both teachers and students indicate a high level of acceptance and perceived relevance. Approximately 87% of respondents reported that the module was easy to understand and closely aligned with their everyday experiences. Such feedback suggests that the integration of cultural values enhances not only comprehension but also emotional and social resonance.

The module, therefore, extends beyond a purely instructional function. It operates as a transformative educational tool that encourages shifts in attitudes, behavioral intentions, and patterns of communication among adolescents and within the broader educational community in Cirebon. Its emphasis on cultural sensitivity and participatory learning positions it as a promising model for broader implementation across West Java. In this regard, the module represents an innovative approach to sexuality education one that is both culturally responsive and effective in addressing the prevention of risky behaviors among adolescents.

Table 2. Structure of the Local Wisdom-Based Sexuality Education Module

Learning Unit	Associated Local Values	Instructional Methods
Understanding the Body and Adolescent Changes	<i>Mapag Sri</i>	Symbolic approach, group discussions
Preserving Personal Dignity	<i>Pamali</i> and religious values	Case studies, role-play
Risks of Unsafe Sexual Behavior and Self-Protection	<i>Pamali</i>	Educational videos, simulations
Healthy Communication with Peers and the Opposite Sex	<i>Silih Asah</i> , <i>Silih Asih</i> , <i>Silih Asuh</i>	Interactive discussions, role-playing activities
Healthy Adolescents, Promising Futures	Integration of all local values	Reflective activities, group projects

The findings of this study reveal that local wisdom values in Cirebon Regency remain both vibrant and pedagogically relevant for integration into adolescent sexuality education. Insights drawn from in-depth interviews with community leaders, religious figures, teachers, and parents suggest that traditional concepts such as *pamali*, which proscribes sexual relations outside marriage, and the *mapag Sri* tradition, which symbolizes respect for the cycle of life, offer culturally grounded pathways for delivering sexuality education in a manner that is both contextual and respectful. These locally embedded values appear to resonate more strongly with adolescents and the wider community than approaches perceived as secular or derived from Western frameworks.

The principle of *silih asah*, *silih asih*, *silih asuh*, which emphasizes mutual learning, compassion, and guidance, emerges as a particularly meaningful foundation for fostering open

communication on sexuality-related issues. Its application within educational settings encourages dialogue between teachers, parents, and adolescents, thereby addressing a longstanding barrier in sexuality education—namely, the reluctance to engage in open discussion. Evidence from this study suggests that such value-based communication not only enhances adolescents' understanding of sexual health but also reduces resistance to the topic itself. This observation aligns with prior research indicating that culturally grounded approaches can increase receptivity to sexuality education, especially within socially conservative contexts (Schaefer, 2018; Sabitha & Sharma, 2019).

A further dimension is provided by the philosophical principle *adat bersendi syarak, syarak bersendi Kitabullah*, which underscores the integration of customary norms with religious teachings. This principle reinforces the moral and spiritual framing of sexuality education in Cirebon, offering adolescents a value system that is both familiar and authoritative. Findings from focus group discussions involving 60 students across three schools indicate that most participants felt more comfortable engaging with sexuality topics when these were presented within the framework of cultural and religious norms. Educational models perceived as detached from these frameworks were often regarded as inappropriate or overly explicit. This pattern supports the argument that culturally and religiously grounded sexuality education can create a more secure and acceptable learning environment, enhancing both engagement and internalization of values (Zhang et al., 2021; Kincaid & Garner, 2021).

At the same time, the study acknowledges the challenges inherent in implementing sexuality education based on local wisdom. Variations in the interpretation of cultural and religious values may generate tensions, particularly when certain perspectives are perceived as overly restrictive or misaligned with contemporary views on individual autonomy. These differences highlight the need for a flexible and context-sensitive approach that accommodates diverse viewpoints within the community. An adaptive framework becomes essential to ensure that sexuality education remains inclusive while still grounded in cultural values. This consideration is consistent with studies suggesting that culturally and religiously informed education can be effective, provided that it evolves in response to changing social dynamics (Desai, 2020; Riaz & Ikram, 2022).

Taken together, the findings affirm that local wisdom in Cirebon anchored in the interplay between customary practices and religious principles offers a meaningful entry point for developing sexuality education that is both contextually relevant and socially accepted. Such an approach not only aligns with traditional values but also supports adolescents in constructing a healthier and more reflective understanding of sexuality within their cultural framework. While implementation challenges remain, the integration of local wisdom holds considerable promise for enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of sexuality education in culturally diverse settings.

The findings of this study, which demonstrate a significant reduction in adolescents' engagement in risky sexual behavior alongside improvements in knowledge and attitudes toward premarital sexual relations following the implementation of a local wisdom-based sexuality education program, offer a compelling perspective on the effectiveness of culturally grounded interventions. The integration of pre-test and post-test data, complemented by insights from teachers and parents, suggests that such an approach does not merely transmit information but reshapes how adolescents interpret and respond to issues of sexuality within their socio-cultural environment.

A particularly salient outcome is the decline in the proportion of adolescents engaging in risky sexual behavior, from 35% prior to the intervention to 18% afterward. This shift indicates that sexuality education rooted in local cultural values can exert a meaningful influence on behavioral orientation. The reduction reflects more than a change in awareness; it points to an

internalization of norms that are perceived as legitimate and relevant within the students' lived contexts. Educational models aligned with local cultural and moral frameworks appear to resonate more deeply than those perceived as externally imposed or culturally detached. This observation aligns with earlier findings suggesting that culturally embedded approaches are more effective in mitigating risky sexual behavior among adolescents (Thomas, 2020; WHO, 2018).

The enhancement of knowledge related to adolescent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections further reinforces the effectiveness of the module. The increase in average scores from 60 to 85 indicates that the integration of scientific content with culturally meaningful narratives can strengthen comprehension and retention. Such outcomes suggest that adolescents are more likely to engage with and understand sexual health information when it is framed in ways that reflect their social and cultural realities. This pattern is consistent with prior research emphasizing the importance of contextual relevance in improving sexual health literacy (Schenk et al., 2021).

Equally is the observed shift in attitudes toward premarital sexual behavior. The proportion of students expressing rejection of such behavior increased from 58% to 80%, suggesting a reorientation of normative beliefs. Attitudes, as precursors to behavior, play a critical role in shaping future decision-making. The incorporation of cultural and religious values within the educational framework appears to have contributed to this transformation by reinforcing moral considerations that are already embedded within the community. Comparable findings have been reported in studies indicating that value-based sexuality education, particularly when grounded in cultural and religious norms, is more effective in shaping adolescent attitudes (Suryani et al., 2021).

Beyond individual-level changes, the study also reveals an important shift in patterns of communication. Teachers and parents reported increased openness in discussing sexual health topics with adolescents, an area previously constrained by cultural taboos. This development suggests that the intervention contributed to the emergence of a more supportive and communicative educational environment. The involvement of families appears to have played a crucial role in normalizing discussions around sexuality, thereby reducing stigma and fostering mutual understanding. Such findings resonate with research highlighting the importance of family engagement in strengthening intergenerational communication and supporting adolescent sexual health education (McCormick & Heffernan, 2022).

When situated within the broader literature, these findings reinforce the growing consensus on the effectiveness of culturally grounded sexuality education. Studies have consistently shown that aligning educational content with local values enhances both acceptance and impact (Thomas, 2020; WHO, 2018). At the same time, it is important to acknowledge perspectives that caution against relying solely on cultural frameworks. Some research suggests that while culturally based approaches are effective in shaping knowledge and attitudes, their long-term impact may be limited without integration into broader policy frameworks and access to comprehensive sexual health services (Peltzer et al., 2019).

Taken together, the results of this study suggest that local wisdom-based sexuality education holds significant potential as a contextually responsive and socially acceptable strategy for reducing risky sexual behavior among adolescents. Its effectiveness lies not only in the transmission of knowledge, but in its capacity to align educational messages with the cultural, moral, and relational dimensions of adolescent life.

CONCLUSION

Taken as a whole, the findings of this study indicate that sexuality education grounded in local wisdom can generate meaningful transformations in adolescents' behavior, knowledge, and attitudes toward sexuality. The approach appears not only to reduce engagement in risky sexual practices, but also to deepen adolescents' understanding of the risks associated with unintended

pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. At the same time, it contributes to the formation of more critical and responsible attitudes toward premarital sexual relationships.

A further dimension of change is reflected in the improvement of communication between parents and adolescents. The emergence of more open dialogue suggests that the module extends its influence beyond individual learning, fostering a more supportive and inclusive educational environment within both family and school contexts. Such an environment is essential for enabling adolescents to navigate issues of sexuality with greater awareness, responsibility, and confidence.

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