

## Research Article

# The Interaction of Attitude, Intention, and Behavior During Sexual Communication

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**Abstract.**

Parents need to have a positive attitude in establishing sexual communication with adolescent. Sexual communication in this study is a principal means of transmitting sexual values, beliefs, expectations, and knowledge from parents to adolescent. A representative and eligible sample was randomly obtained with a total of 315 respondents. The respondents of this study were parents (41–50 years old) who had teenagers between the ages of 14 and 17 years, and had to live together for at least 6 months before the survey was conducted. Three instruments were used; scale of attitudes toward sexual communication, intention to engage sexual communication, and sexual communication behavior of parents–adolescents. Based on the results of mediation tests, it shows that parental attitudes influence parent–adolescent sexual communication behavior through the intention to engage in sexual communication ( $P = 0.013$ ). A positive attitude toward sexual communication is recommended to encourage parents to conduct sexual communication with adolescents to prevent adolescents from engaging in risky sexual behavior.

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**Keywords:** attitude, intention, risky sexual behavior, sexual communication

## 1. BACKGROUND

Parents have a crucial role in supervising adolescents' relationships, especially with the opposite sex, and initiating adolescents' social lives. One of the most significant duties of parents in raising adolescents is to oversee them in all of their activities [1]. One effective technique to satisfy the position requirements is through communication. Adolescents will feel valued, cared for, and respected if communication is created efficiently. Parents are supposed to be good listeners so that their adolescents feel cared for, to engage in active interactions, to place themselves in various settings such as being friends, and to play an active role in creating communication with adolescents [2].

According to Rogers [3], one of the elements that influence adolescent sexual behavior is parental-adolescent communication. Adolescents will be more comfortable discussing sensitive issues like sexuality with their parents if communication is created appropriately and pays attention to the state of the adolescents. Parents-adolescent

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communication is the process of conveying messages or information in the form of beliefs, attitudes, values, expectations, and knowledge. Furthermore, good communication is a protective factor against adolescents participating in premarital sexual behavior. As a result, strong communication between parents and adolescents, particularly sexual communication, is essential.

Sexual communication, in general, can be defined as communication with a primary focus on sexual themes. According to Jaccard and Dittus [4], parents-adolescent sexual communication is communication between parents and adolescents that focuses on sexual issues. The sexual theme in question is the dissemination of information regarding masturbation, menstruation, homosexuality, sexual physiology, the reproductive system, and birth control procedures. According to Jerman and Constantine [5], sexual communication is a crucial process in which parents transfer ideas, values, beliefs, hopes, facts, and knowledge to their offspring. There are shortcomings in both definitions, so when added together, balance each other out. German and Constantine just talk about the procedure without providing any specific description of the sexual communication content, whilst Jaccard and Dittus solely address the issue of sexual communication without process of communication. Thus, in this study, sexual communication behavior is defined as the frequency of acts, actions, or activities performed by parents in adolescents to convey information and knowledge, transmit values, and establish positive expectations.

Unfortunately, talking about sexual issues in Indonesia is still considered taboo, vulgar and inappropriate, especially when it comes to adolescents. Most parents still think that talking about sexual problems is a negative thing that doesn't need to be done. This negative opinion has been built because the community lacks information about sexual issues, so the stimulus that parents get about sexual information is taboo that is inappropriate to talk about with their children [6]. Most parents do not want to talk about sexual issues because they feel ashamed and are afraid of misunderstanding with their adolescents [7].

According to several research studies, tendencies in parent-adolescent sexual communication behavior are influenced by parents' attitudes towards sexual communication [8,9]. There are differences in parents' attitudes regarding sexual communication, namely parents who consider sexual communication to be part of their responsibility and they must be involved in it [10,11] and parents who underestimate their existence as primary educators of sexual health [12]. These differences in attitudes are predicted to have an impact on parents' intentions and behavior in engaging in sexual communication. Parents' reluctance to have the intention and willingness to carry out

sexual communication with adolescents is predicted to have an impact on the lack of appropriate and correct sexuality information among them. This is one of the triggers for increased risky sexual behaviour among adolescents.

The Indonesian Demographic and Health Survey found that among adolescents aged 15-19 years, about 59% of women and 74% of young men reported having had premarital sex. There are a variety of reasons why boys have sex, three reasons by percentage the biggest reason is the reason of mutual love as much as 46.1%, curious / inquisitive as much as 34%, and just happened as much as 15.4%. At this age, adolescents do not have adequate life skills and are at risk of engaging in unhealthy courtship behaviour, including premarital sex. There is a need for communication and guidance on sexuality, especially from parents, to minimise the occurrence of risky sexual characteristics and behaviours among adolescents [13].

Not all parents are willing to have sexual communication. A positive attitude towards sexual communication and an intention to carry out sexual communication are needed which ultimately leads to the realization of a behavior, namely parents' adolescent sexual communication behavior. Theoretically, this can be explained in behavioral theory. The behavioral theory used as a reference in this study is the Integrated Behavior Model (IBM) [14]. This theory emphasizes that the most important determinant of a behavior is the intention to perform the behavior, without any intention of the individual less likely to engage in the intended behavior. While a factor that is the determinant of intention is attitude toward behavior [15].

According to Vega [9], a person's attitude will influence the way the individual is in performing an action because attitudes are related to the belief that a behavior will lead to a certain outcome. It is anticipated that attitudes may influence behavior directly, but they may also influence conduct indirectly by acting as a mediator. One mediator that can connect attitudes and actions is intention [14].

Intention is a determinant of behavior. Therefore, intentions must be strong so that parent-adolescent sexual communication behavior can be realized. The stronger the intention that parents have, the greater the possibility for parents to carry out sexual communication behavior. The intention to carry out sexual communication first begins with attitudes towards sexual communication itself. Parents' attitudes towards sexual communication can be determined by evaluating the hopes and perceptions of those closest to them regarding sexual communication in adolescents. Positive evaluation results can confirm the intention to engage in parent-adolescent sexual communication. There are research results that show that attitude is a predictor of intention. Vega et al. [9] stated that attitudes towards sexual communication are a determinant of sexual

communication intentions. Attitudes are directly and indirectly the strongest predictors of sexual intentions and behavior in adolescents. Positive attitude beliefs consistently and significantly correlate with sexual intentions and behavior in adolescents [16].

Fishbein & Ajzen [17] argue that a person's attitude toward predicting behavior depends on the compatibility between attitude and behavior. The compatibility refers to the fact that specific attitudes can only predict specific behaviors, while general attitudes can only predict general behaviors. A person's behavior can also be accurately predicted if it is based on attitudes toward the behavior itself, not attitudes toward the target of the behavior. There are two aspects of attitude: experiential attitude and instrumental attitude. An experiential attitude can be interpreted as a response to individual beliefs about a behavior. This response is more directed at the individual's own experiences, such as pleasant and unpleasant experiences or interesting and unattractive experiences. Instrumental attitude is an emotional response that results from an evaluation of the feelings felt when doing or not doing an action, such as feeling dangerous and beneficial or useful and useless [18]. Therefore, before parents engage in sexual communication, they will first experience a process that leads to a belief, and this belief will form an output: the intention to engage in sexual communication.

Fishbein & Ajzen [17] explained that behavioral intention is an indication of a person's willingness to do something. [19] argues that behavioral intention is also defined as a self-instruction to perform certain actions aimed at achieving certain outcomes. He also explained that the relationship between intention and behavior is divided into two parts: intention to act and intention not to act. The greater a person's intention to perform a behavior, the more likely it is that the behavior will be performed. Intention is also considered to be the single best predictor of behavior; therefore, people are considered to do something because they intend to do it; in other words, they have expectations and wills and good intentions and actual control of behavior [18]. According to Fishbein & Ajzen [17], there are 3 aspects of intention, namely: (a) expectations: the willingness to achieve the goal of performing a behavior. (b) Desire: the feeling of wanting to perform a behavior either near or immediately, as well as in the future. (c) Intention: the will to achieve the goal of producing a form of behavior.

Parents' intentions for sexual communication determine whether they engage in it or not. A positive parental attitude towards sexual communication ideally encourages the intention to communicate sexually, which leads to behavior, namely engaging in sexual communication with adolescents. However, it does not rule out the possibility that parents who have a positive attitude towards sexual communication still have no intention of engaging in sexual communication. Therefore, this study aims to determine

the role of parental attitudes on sexual communication behavior in adolescents by using the intention to engage in sexual communication as a mediating variable. Thus, the hypothesis in this study is that attitudes towards sexual communication influence parents' sexual communication behavior towards adolescents both directly and indirectly (through intention as a mediator variable).

## 2. RESEARCH METHODS

### 2.1. Research subject

Respondents in this study were parents aged 41-50 years, had children aged 14-17 years, parents and adolescents lived together for at least 6 months before the survey was conducted. As for the number of respondents were 315 parents from several cities in Indonesia. The strategy for recruiting research participants was carried out by spreading the scale through electronic media with the help of the Google Form application. Researchers also distributed the scale directly through community associations of parents who have teenage children, such as student parent associations at schools.

### 2.2. Research Instruments

This research uses three instruments. These instruments are used to investigate attitudes toward sexual communication: attitudes toward sexual communication as the independent variable, parent-adolescent sexual communication as the dependent variable, and intention to communicate sexual communication as a mediator variable.

Attitudes toward sexual communication are a collection of beliefs about the benefits and harms as well as the results of evaluating the affection or feelings felt toward sexual communication. There are 2 aspects of attitude, namely experiential attitude and attitude instruments. The research instrument for attitudes toward sexual communication was prepared by the researcher. The number of items on the attitude towards sexual communication scale is 10 items, consisting of 5 items on the instrumental attitude aspect and 5 items on the experiential attitude aspect. On this scale, the reliability index is 0.854 and the item validity index is 0.236-0.680. This measurement tool uses a semantic scale differential, that is, a scale arranged in a row with interval values of 1-7, where the most positive answers are located on the right and the most negative answers are located on the left.

Intention to engage in sexual communication is defined as the desire, intentions and expectations that indicate the willingness of parents to do or not to do sexual communication with adolescents. There are three aspects of intention ie expectations, desires and intentions research instrument on the intention scale to engage in sexual communication compiled by researchers. The number of items on the intention scale is 9 items, consisting of 3 items on the expectation aspect, 3 items on the desire aspect, and 3 items on the intention aspect. The reliability index was 0.940 and the item validity index was 0.757-0.862. This measuring instrument uses a Likert scale that includes favorable and unfavorable items. Each item has five response options. Response scores range from 1 to 5 with an inverse concept for each favorable and unfavorable item.

Parent-adolescent sexual communication behavior is the frequency of actions, behaviors, or activities that parents engage in with adolescents to provide information and knowledge, teach values, set positive expectations about sexuality, and engage in conversations about sexual topics. There are four aspects measured on this scale, namely information, values, expectations, and sexual material/themes. The research instrument on the parent-adolescent sexual communication scale is a scale created by the researcher. The total number of items on the Parent-Youth Sexual Communication Scale is 23, which consists of 4 items on the information aspect, 4 items on the values aspect, 3 items on the expectations aspect, and 12 items on sexual material/themes. On this scale, the reliability index is 0.930 and the item validity index is 0.930.

### 2.3. Data analysis technique

Researchers used statistical analysis software Jeffreys's Amazing Statistics Program (JASP) in this study. The analysis used by researchers is mediation test analysis to see the effect of attitude and intention variables on variables sexual communication behavior in parents-adolescent.

## 3. RESULT

The findings of the researchers' research, which took place between June 29 and August 8, 2022, yielded data for 349 samples. A total of 34 samples were discarded because they did not fit the research criteria, resulting in a total sample of 315 samples that were 40% male and 60% female, with an average age of 41-42 years. The outcomes of each variable are detailed in table 1 below:

TABLE 1: Results of each variable's category.

Variable	Mean	Deviation Standard	Category	Interval	Frequence	Percentage
Attitude towards sexual communication	0	10	Negative	<-10	5	1.7%
			Neutral	-10-10	114	36.3%
			Positive	>10	196	62.2%
Parents-Adolescent Sexual communication	69	15.3	Low	<53.7	32	10.2%
			Medium	53.7-84.3	192	61%
			High	>84.3	91	28.9%
Intention	27	6	Low	<21	4	1.3%
			Medium	21-33	32	10.2%
			High	>33	279	88.6%

Based on the categorization table above, the parental attitude variable shows that there are three categories of attitudes towards sexual communication behavior, namely the low category if the score is <-10, the medium category if the score is between -10 – 10, and the high category if the score is > 10. The percentage is that 1.7% of respondents have a negative attitude, 36.3% of respondents have a neutral attitude, and 62.2% of respondents have a positive attitude towards sexual communication behavior.

In the parent-adolescent sexual communication behavior variable, the total score obtained is divided into three categories, namely the low category if the score is <53.7, the medium category if the score is between 53.7 - 84.3, and the high category if the score is > 84, 3. Based on the table in

above, there are 10.2% of respondents who tend to never have sexual communication, 61% of respondents who rarely have sexual communication and 28.9% of respondents who often have sexual communication. Whereas on the intention variable, the total score obtained is divided into three categories, namely the low category if the score is <21, the moderate category if the score is between 21-33, and high category if the score > 33. There were 1.3% of respondents tended to have no intention of having sexual communication, 10.2% of respondents had sufficient intention of having sexual communication, and 88.6% of respondents had a high intention of having sexual communication.

### 3.1. Normality and Linearity Test

The normality test was carried out to see whether the data used in this study were normal or not. In addition, the normality test is also used as a condition for conducting mediation analysis tests. The results of the normality test show that the data used follows a diagonal line, so it can be concluded that the data on all variables are normal. In the linearity test, the data is said to be linear if the significance value is  $> 0.05$  which means there is a linear relationship between variables, and vice versa if the significance value is  $< 0.05$  then there is no linear relationship between variables. Based on the results of the linearity test, on the attitude variable towards sexual communication with parent-adolescent sexual communication behavior has a significance value of 0.616, which means that there is a linear relationship between these variables. Meanwhile, on the attitude variable towards sexual communication with intentions, values The significance obtained is 0.268 which is a linear relationship between the two variables But on the relationship between parents' sexual communication behavior variables – adolescents with intention variables showed insignificant results (0.001).

### 3.2. Mediation Test

TABLE 2: Direct effects.

Estimate	STD. Error	z-value	p	ATSC	ÿ	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower	Upper
PASC	0,102	0,066	1,539	0,124		-0,028	0,231

Note. Delta method standard errors, normal theory confidence intervals, ML estimator.

TABLE 3: Indirect effects.

Estimate	STD. Error	z-value	p	ATSC	ÿ	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower	Upper
INT PASC	0,064	0,026	2,481	0,013		0,013	0,114

Note. Delta method standard errors, normal theory confidence intervals, ML estimator.

TABLE 4: Total effects.

Estimate	STD. Error	z-value	p	ATSC	ÿ	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower	Upper
PASC	0,166	0,062	2,659	0,008		0,044	0,288

Note. Delta method standard errors, normal theory confidence intervals, ML estimator.

Based on the results of the mediation test conducted by the researcher, the results were not significant with a p-value for the *direct effect* of 0.124. This explains that



the attitude variable towards sexual communication cannot have a direct influence on the parent-adolescent sexual communication behavior variable. Whereas in the *indirect effects* the p value obtained is 0.013, which means that the resulting value is significant, because  $p < 0.05$ . These results state that there is the influence between the variables of attitudes towards sexual communication with behavioral variables parent-adolescent sexual communication mediated by communication intention variables. When totaled as a whole, the p value shows a result of 0.008 which means the resulting value is significant. In conclusion, attitudes toward sexual communication mediated by high intentions to engage in sexual communication will affect the behavior of parent-adolescent sexual communication.

## 4. DISCUSSION

In general, this research has succeeded in proving that there is influence attitudes towards parent-adolescent sexual communication behavior an influence by intention engage in sexual communication. This is similar to research conducted by Byers [8] that attitudes have an indirect influence on communication parents' sexual relations with adolescents, meaning that attitudes require a connecting variable, namely the intention to engage in sexual communication to obtain significant results on parent-adolescent sexual communication behavior. On the other hand, it was also found that attitudes toward sexual communication have a direct influence on sexual communication behavior. In contrast to this study, attitudes towards sexual communication did not directly influence communication behavior sexual parents – adolescents.

The conditions mentioned above can be caused by various factors such as factors demographics, attitudes, individuals, and personality [15]. Parents' concerns regarding the results obtained after communicating Sexual intercourse with their adolescents is also one of the factors in the disconnection of behavior the sexual communication. Parents who have more abilities and high expectations are more able to be positive and carry out sexual communication [10]. Therefore it can be concluded that there are many factors that cause parental attitudes to not directly influence sexual communication behavior.

According to Glanz, Rimer, and Viswanath [15], a person will conduct the desired activity if he has: 1) A strong desire to engage in the behavior. 2) There are no difficulties. 3). The individual's behavior stands out. 4). Habitual behavior. One of the accomplishments of people is the ability to carry out a new or current activity, namely by developing the individual's own intention. Individuals who have goals or wishes to do an action will

tend to be able to embody that behavior. The greater the hope or desire for the goal's achievement, the more likely the behavior will be accomplished. According to Byers' [20] research, parents have no intention of discussing about sexual health to their children tend to get lower scores than parents who have the intention to discuss it. This proves that parents who have the intention to establish sexual communication, will be more likely to be able to carry out the behavior.

Based on this study, the intention to engage in sexual communication is seen as a variable that underlies a behavior performed or not performed. This intention to determined by the existence of a positive attitude possessed by the individual when carrying out the behavior. Parents who have a positive attitude will influence their intention to have sexual communication with their teenagers. The results of this study are related to research conducted by Vega [9], that intention is considered a close predictor of behavior. An individual will have certain intentions when they have a positive attitude to perform a behavior. In other words, people's intentions parents to engage in sexual communication with their teenage children is determined by attitude they have.

In research conducted by Byers [8] it produced positive results when these mothers had sexual communication so that this had an impact on their desire to talk about sexual health topics for the next 6 months. This relates to research conducted by researchers that parental attitudes based on high intentions will have an impact on intensity parents in carrying out sexual communication with their adolescents, the higher the intention, the higher the intensity of the parents in carrying out the communication. Based on this research, there are 315 successful respondent data collected, 196 of them had a positive attitude, 116 respondents had a neutral attitude, and 6 respondents negative attitude. This shows that most parents have a positive attitude towards sexual communication. This attitude is based on the parent's response to a behavior. Dai et al. [16] found that positive attitudes were consistently and significantly related to sexual intentions and behavior in adolescents. Suleiman et al. [21] also stated that when parents have confidence in their abilities and have a positive attitude towards sexual communication, they are more likely to have sexual conversations with their children.

Based on the series of explanations above, the results of the study show that having a positive attitude alone is not strong enough to encourage parents to engage in sexual communication with adolescents, high intention is still needed so that sexual communication will be carried out by parents. So that parents are expected to have a positive attitude towards sexual communication, and initiate themselves to foster the intention to engage in sexual communication, so that it will manifest into a behavior. The behavior in question is carrying out parent-adolescent sexual communication,

which according to several previous studies it is known that parent-adolescent sexual communication can prevent risky sexual behavior in adolescents and help adolescents make the right decisions regarding sexual behavior. The weakness of this research is the imbalance in the number of respondents from a variety of different values and cultures which are predicted to affect the research process and results.

## 5. CONCLUSION

According to the findings of the research, attitudes toward sexual communication influence parents'-adolescent sexual communication behavior via the mediation of intention to sexual communication. In this study, the intention to sexual communication as a mediating variable has a significant impact on the behavior of sexual communication between parents and adolescents. Attitudes toward sexual communication cannot have a direct effect unless there is a intention to sexual communication.

This study has implications or benefits for parents to be able to initiate sexual communication by first having a positive attitude toward sexual communication and instilling an intention to be willing to engage in sexual communication given the importance of this in protecting adolescents from risky sexual behavior.

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## Ethics Policy

Ethical policies include the conflict-of-interest statements, informed consent procedures, and ethical committee approval. Requirements can vary by discipline. If you are unclear about the requirements for your study, check with your colleagues and advisors, and also the Conference Organizer(s).

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