

## **Permissive parenting and sexual behavior Among balinese adolescents: An empirical analysis**

**Desak Putu Puspa Dewi Saraswati<sup>1\*</sup>, Juwandi<sup>2</sup>, Santi Esterlita Purnamasari<sup>3</sup>**

1,2,3 Universitas Mercu Buana Yogyakarta, Indonesia

210810600@student.mercubuana-yogya.ac.id

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### **ABSTRACT**

Adolescent sexual behavior has emerged as a growing public health and developmental concern, particularly in regions experiencing increasing rates of unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. In Bali, recent reports indicate a rise in adolescent sexual health problems, underscoring the urgency of identifying family-related factors that may contribute to risky sexual behavior. From a developmental perspective, parenting style plays a central role in shaping adolescents' self-regulation and decision-making, yet empirical evidence examining this relationship within the Balinese context remains limited. This study aimed to examine the relationship between permissive parenting and sexual behavior among adolescents in Bali. A total of 114 adolescents were recruited using a non-probability purposive sampling technique based on specific inclusion criteria. Data were collected online using two validated instruments: the Sexual Behavior Scale (19 items; Cronbach's  $\alpha = .795$ ) and the Permissive Parenting Scale (24 items; Cronbach's  $\alpha = .914$ ). Pearson's correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between permissive parenting and adolescent sexual behavior ( $r = .316$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating that higher levels of permissive parenting are associated with increased sexual behavior. Regression analysis further showed that permissive parenting accounted for 10% of the variance in adolescent sexual behavior ( $R^2 = .100$ ). These findings contribute to developmental and family psychology by providing context-specific evidence on the role of permissive parenting in adolescent sexual behavior. Practically, the results highlight the importance of parent-focused interventions that emphasize supervision, boundary-setting, and open communication, as well as collaboration between schools and community organizations to promote healthy sexual decision-making among adolescents.

**Keywords:** permissive parenting style, adolescent sexual behavior, family factors, parenting practices, Bali adolescents

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### **Introduction**

Adolescence is a critical developmental period characterized by rapid biological maturation, emotional variability, and increasing autonomy in social decision-making. During this stage, cognitive control and moral reasoning are still developing, which may heighten adolescents' engagement in exploratory and risk-taking behaviors (Hardian et al., 2023). In the absence of consistent guidance and supervision from significant adults, such behaviors may compromise adolescents' physical, psychological, and social well-being.

Sexual behavior represents a salient domain of risk during adolescence. Sarwono (2016) defined sexual behavior as actions motivated by sexual desire occurring outside of legally recognized marriage, including various forms of physical intimacy such as kissing, petting, oral sex, and sexual intercourse. In addition, Herwandar and Nirmawati (2020) emphasized that adolescent sexual behavior encompasses both physical and emotional dimensions and may lead to adverse outcomes when adolescents lack adequate sexual knowledge, self-regulatory capacity, and parental support.

In Bali, adolescent sexual behavior has increasingly emerged as a public health concern. Reports from the Badung District Health Office indicate a substantial rise in adolescent reproductive health problems in recent years. Specifically, Radyani et al. (2019) reported 57 cases of unintended pregnancy among adolescents in the Tibubeneng area in 2023, while cases of sexually transmitted infections increased from 21 in 2022 to 88 in 2023. These findings suggest an escalation in risky sexual behaviors and inadequate protective practices among Balinese adolescents, with consequences extending beyond physical health to psychological distress, social stigma, and educational disruption.

Despite the recognized importance of comprehensive sexuality education, discussions of sexual issues in Bali remain culturally sensitive and limited within family and educational contexts. Consequently, adolescents may rely on peers or digital media as primary sources of sexual information, which may be inaccurate or misleading (Yuliana et al., 2025). Within this sociocultural context, family influences particularly parenting practices play a critical role in shaping adolescents' sexual values and decision-making.

From a developmental and socialization perspective, parenting style constitutes a primary mechanism through which adolescents acquire behavioral regulation, moral standards, and decision-making frameworks. Desmayanti and Argasiam (2024) classified parenting styles into authoritarian, democratic, and permissive categories. Permissive parenting is characterized by high warmth and autonomy combined with low levels of control, supervision, and rule enforcement (Hurlock, 1993). Parents who adopt this style may assume a non-authoritative role, potentially limiting adolescents' internalization of behavioral norms and self-regulatory capacities (Ursula & Nisaa, 2023).

Theoretically, permissive parenting is expected to increase adolescents' vulnerability to risky sexual behavior through two primary mechanisms. First, low parental monitoring and weak boundary enforcement may reduce adolescents' ability to regulate impulses and evaluate long-term consequences. Second, the absence of clear behavioral standards may lead adolescents to rely on peer norms and situational cues when making sexual decisions, particularly during a developmental period marked by heightened sensation-seeking and social influence. Within contexts where sexual communication is limited, such as in Bali, this lack of parental guidance may further amplify adolescents' exposure to risk.

Empirical evidence supports this theoretical expectation. Jannah and Cahyono (2021) reported that permissive parenting was associated with premarital sexual behavior due to insufficient parental monitoring. Similarly, Ungsianik and Yuliati (2017) found that excessive freedom without supervision increased adolescents' engagement in risky sexual practices.

However, most existing evidence has been derived from non-Balinese populations, limiting its applicability to the Balinese sociocultural context. Given the increasing prevalence of adolescent sexual health problems in Bali and the limited availability of context-specific research examining family-related mechanisms, further investigation is warranted. Therefore, the present study aims to examine the relationship between permissive parenting and adolescent sexual behavior among adolescents in Bali, grounded in a developmental and family psychology framework.

## **Methods**

This study employed a quantitative correlational design to examine the relationship between permissive parenting and adolescent sexual behavior. Participants were 114 unmarried adolescents aged 12–24 years who were currently in, or had previously experienced, a dating relationship. This age range was selected to capture late adolescence and emerging adulthood, developmental periods during which romantic involvement and exploration of sexual behavior are more likely to occur within the Indonesian sociocultural context. Participants were recruited from several regions in Bali using a non-probability purposive sampling technique. This approach was chosen to ensure that participants met specific inclusion criteria relevant to the study objectives. However, the use of purposive sampling limits the generalizability of the findings to the broader adolescent population. Additionally, data were collected online, which may have introduced self-selection bias and excluded adolescents with limited internet access.

Adolescent sexual behavior was assessed using the 19-item Adolescent Sexual Behavior Scale developed by Sari (2025), grounded in Sarwono's (2016) conceptualization of sexual behavior as encompassing a range of physical and expressive sexual activities. Responses were measured using a Likert-type scale. In the present study, the instrument demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .795$ ). Permissive parenting was measured using the 24-item Permissive Parenting Scale developed by Devi (2023), which assesses parental behaviors characterized by high levels of autonomy granting and low behavioral control. The scale demonstrated excellent internal consistency in the current sample (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .914$ ). Prior to hypothesis testing, item–total correlation analyses were conducted to evaluate construct validity. Assumption tests for normality and linearity were also performed and met the criteria for parametric analysis. Pearson's product–moment correlation was then used to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between permissive parenting and adolescent sexual behavior.

## **Results**

### **Descriptive Statistics**

Descriptive statistics for permissive parenting and premarital sexual behavior are presented in Table 1. Overall, permissive parenting was reported at a moderate level, whereas premarital sexual behavior showed greater variability among adolescents.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Mean (M)	Min	Max	SD
Permissive Parenting (X)	114	54,25	33	72	7,41
Premarital Sexual Behavior (Y)	114	50,36	19	76	12,77

## Assumption Testing

### Normality Test

The assumptions of normality and linearity were met. Kolmogorov–Smirnov test results indicated that both variables were normally distributed ( $p > .05$ ), and scatterplot inspection showed a linear relationship between the variables.

Tabel 2. Normality Test

Variable	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Sig.	Shapiro-Wilk Sig.	Category
Premarital Sexual Behavior	0.094	0.012	Normal
Permissive Parenting	0.143	0.570	Normal

### Linearity Test

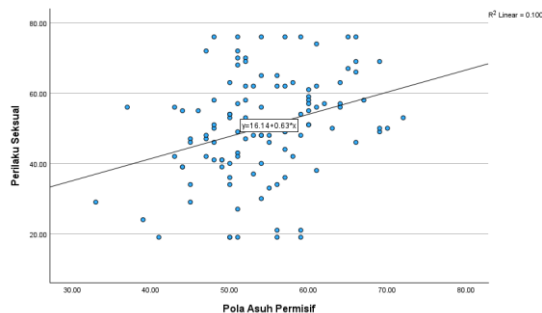


Figure 1. Linearity Test

The results of the linearity test shown in Figure 1 indicate a tendency that an increase in the score of the permissive parenting variable is followed by an increase in the score of the sexual behavior variable. This means that there is a linear relationship between the permissive parenting variable and sexual behavior.

## Hypothesis Test

Pearson's correlation analysis showed a significant positive relationship between permissive parenting and premarital sexual behavior,  $r(112) = .316$ ,  $p < .001$ . This indicates that higher levels of permissive parenting are associated with higher levels of premarital sexual behavior.

Table 3. Hypotesis Test

Variable Relationship	Correlation (r)	Significance (p)	N
Correlation X-Y	.316	< .001	114

## Regression Analysis

Table 4. Model Fit Measures

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
Regression (X → Y)	.316	.100	.092	14.07

Regression analysis indicated that permissive parenting explained 10% of the variance in premarital sexual behavior ( $R^2 = .10$ ).

## Discussions

This study found a significant positive association between permissive parenting and adolescent sexual behavior among adolescents in Bali. Although the correlation was moderate ( $r = .316$ ), permissive parenting explained 10% of the variance in sexual behavior, indicating a meaningful contribution of parenting practices within a multifactorial developmental framework. From a developmental perspective, permissive parenting may increase adolescents' engagement in sexual behavior by weakening behavioral regulation and limiting the internalization of social norms. Low supervision and unclear boundaries may reduce adolescents' capacity to manage impulses and evaluate behavioral consequences, increasing reliance on peer influence during sexual decision-making. Within the Balinese context, cultural constraints on open discussions of sexuality may intensify these effects. When high autonomy is not accompanied by guidance or monitoring, adolescents may turn to peers or digital media for sexual information, increasing exposure to risky norms. The absence of gender differences suggests that permissive parenting influences sexual behavior similarly among boys and girls, reflecting shifting social norms and widespread access to sexual content across genders.

## Conclusion

This study indicates that permissive parenting is positively associated with adolescent sexual behavior among adolescents in Bali. Although the relationship is moderate, the findings highlight permissive parenting as a meaningful contextual factor influencing adolescents' sexual decision-making. High autonomy combined with limited supervision may weaken behavioral regulation, particularly within cultural contexts where open sexual communication is constrained. These results underscore the importance of parenting

approaches that balance warmth with clear boundaries and monitoring to support healthy adolescent sexual development.

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