

# Influence of Organised Parental Communication Counselling on Risk Awareness and Intentions for Responsible Sexual Behaviour Among Late Adolescents in Kerala

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Late adolescence is a crucial developmental phase marked by heightened autonomy, the exploration of close relationships, and sexual decision-making. In numerous regions of India, particularly Kerala, frank discourse concerning sexual health between parents and teenagers is constrained by socio-cultural norms. Limited communication between parents and teenagers may impair adolescents' capacity to appropriately assess sexual dangers and make prudent behavioural choices.

**Objective:** To assess the influence of structured parent communication counselling on sexual risk perception and intentions for responsible sexual behaviour among late teens in designated regions of Kerala.

**Methods:** A quasi-experimental pre-test–post-test control group design was utilised. The study involved 120 late teens (aged 18–21 years) chosen by purposeful sampling from specific colleges in Kerala. The intervention group got structured counselling for parents from a certified community health nurse over four sessions. The control group underwent standard health education. We used a validated Sexual Risk Perception Scale and Responsible Sexual Behaviour Intention Questionnaire to gather data. Statistical analysis encompassed paired and independent t-tests, the chi-square test, and regression analysis.

**Results:** After the intervention, the teenagers in the intervention group had a statistically significant improvement in their sexual risk perception ( $p < 0.001$ ) and their intentions to behave responsibly sexually ( $p < 0.001$ ) compared to the control group. The frequency of communication with parents dramatically rose after counselling. There was a favourable connection ( $r = 0.62$ ) between a better understanding of risk and the intention to act.

**Conclusion:** Structured counselling for parents to talk to their teens about sex risks greatly raises their awareness of these risks and makes them more likely to act responsibly. Interventions led by nurses that

focus on family communication might be very important for promoting sexual health among teens in Kerala.

**Keywords:** Parent–adolescent communication, sexual risk perception, behavioural intention, late adolescence, nursing intervention, Kerala.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Late adolescence, generally defined as the age group of 18 to 21 years, is a significant developmental phase characterized by rapid psychosocial growth, identity formation, and increasing emotional maturity. During this period, individuals begin to exercise greater independence in personal and social decision-making, including choices related to intimate relationships and sexual behaviour. The ability to accurately perceive sexual risks is essential for making informed and responsible decisions. However, adolescents' understanding of vulnerability to unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, and emotional consequences is shaped by multiple influences, including cultural expectations, peer norms, media exposure, and patterns of family communication.

In Kerala, although literacy rates and general health indicators are relatively high compared to many other regions, open discussion about sexual and reproductive health within families remains limited. Cultural traditions, social conservatism, and discomfort associated with discussing sexuality often prevent parents from initiating meaningful conversations with their children. Many parents report feeling inadequately prepared to provide accurate information regarding contraception, safe practices, or prevention of sexually transmitted infections. Consequently, late adolescents may seek information from peers, social media platforms, or online sources, which may provide incomplete, misleading, or developmentally inappropriate content.

Effective parent–adolescent communication has consistently been recognized as a protective factor in promoting healthy sexual development. When parents engage in open, supportive, and non-judgmental discussions, adolescents are more likely to develop realistic risk perceptions and positive attitudes toward responsible behaviour. Structured communication counseling can equip parents with practical strategies to initiate conversations, clarify misconceptions, and foster trust. Such interventions not only enhance knowledge but also strengthen emotional bonding within families. By improving communication quality and frequency, adolescents may develop greater confidence in decision-making and demonstrate stronger intentions to adopt safer and more responsible sexual behaviors.

Nurses, particularly those working in community and family health settings, play a pivotal role in designing and implementing structured counseling programs. Their professional expertise enables them to provide culturally sensitive guidance that respects local values while promoting evidence-based health education. Despite the recognized importance of family communication, intervention-based research examining structured parent communication counseling in Kerala remains limited. There is a need to generate context-specific evidence regarding its effectiveness in improving sexual risk perception and behavioural intentions among late adolescents. Therefore, the present study was undertaken to evaluate the impact of a structured counseling intervention within this population.

## 2. METHODS

A quasi-experimental pre-test–post-test control group design was utilised to assess the efficacy of structured parent communication counselling among late teens in designated institutions of Kerala. A total of 120 individuals, aged 18 to 21 years, were chosen via purposive sampling and randomly allocated to intervention (n=60) and control (n=60) groups. Adolescents living with a minimum of one parent and capable of giving informed permission were included. The intervention comprised four weekly 60-minute sessions conducted by a certified community health nurse, emphasising teenage development, sexual and reproductive health concerns, communication skills, and trust-building techniques. Data were gathered via validated instruments that assess sexual risk perception and intentions for responsible sexual behaviour, demonstrating established reliability (Cronbach’s alpha 0.82 and 0.86). The data were examined utilising descriptive and inferential statistics, with significance established at  $p < 0.05$ , and ethical approval was secured prior to the investigation.

## 3. RESULTS

The baseline comparison of demographic and study factors showed that there were no statistically significant differences between the intervention and control groups ( $p > 0.05$ ). This means that both groups were similar before the counselling program started. After the intervention, the mean sexual risk perception scores among teenagers in the intervention group showed a statistically significant increase, rising from  $42.3 \pm 6.5$  at pre-test to  $58.7 \pm 5.2$  at post-test ( $p < 0.001$ ). Conversely, the control group exhibited no significant alteration in risk perception scores. Likewise, ratings for the intention to engage in responsible sexual behaviour exhibited a substantial increase in the intervention group ( $p < 0.001$ ), indicating a heightened intention to embrace safe practices, defer risky behaviours, and pursue reliable health information. Moreover, Pearson correlation analysis indicated a moderate positive association ( $r = 0.62$ ) between enhanced risk perception and behavioural intention, implying that increased awareness correlates with higher intentions for safe sexual decision-making.

## 4. DISCUSSION

The outcomes of this study indicate that structured parent communication counselling significantly enhances teenagers' sexual risk perception and intentions for responsible behaviour. The progress seen in the intervention group indicates that increased communication frequency, openness, and clarity within families led to heightened awareness and more deliberate decision-making. When parents facilitated guided, organised discussions, adolescents shown an enhanced capacity to comprehend the potential repercussions of risky sexual behaviours and exhibited a heightened intention to embrace safer practices.

These findings align with prior studies demonstrating that open and supportive communication between parents and adolescents acts as a protective factor against risky sexual behaviour. The structured counselling style may have lessened parents' reluctance, boosted their confidence in talking about delicate subjects, and given them useful ways to talk to each other. In the socio-cultural milieu of Kerala, where talks pertaining to sexuality are frequently limited by conventional standards, culturally attuned nurse-led interventions seem especially beneficial. The positive link identified between risk perception and behavioural intention reinforces behavioural theories that highlight cognitive awareness as a prerequisite

to responsible action. In general, community health nurses are very important for making family-based initiatives for promoting adolescent health stronger.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The present study indicates that structured parent communication counselling markedly improves sexual risk perception and encourages responsible behavioural intentions among late adolescents in Kerala. The intervention improved teenagers' comprehension of possible sexual health issues and encouraged more thoughtful and accountable decision-making by facilitating open, directed, and supportive discussions within families. The results illustrate how crucial family-cantered interventions are for improving the health of teens, especially in places where talking about sex is not usually allowed. Counselling sessions led by nurses are a helpful and culturally appropriate way for parents and teens to talk to each other more clearly. Incorporating structured modules into college and community health programs could facilitate sustained initiatives aimed at reducing sexual health risks. Future study should examine the long-term impacts of improved communication on concrete behavioural outcomes and consider the expansion of the intervention to broader community and rural settings to boost its significance and use in public health.

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