

# Sexual and reproductive health literacy among adolescent girls attending a menstrual health seminar at a Malaysian tertiary hospital: A descriptive cross-sectional study

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Sexual and reproductive health (SRH) education provides individuals with essential knowledge and skills to make informed decisions regarding sexuality and reproduction, which are pivotal in preventing adverse health outcomes such as unintended pregnancies, HIV/AIDS, and other sexually transmitted infections. We aimed to assess SRH awareness, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours among adolescent girls attending a menstrual health seminar at a tertiary hospital in Malaysia. **Materials and Methods:** A cross-sectional study was conducted among 341 female secondary school students aged 13-16 years who attended a one-day menstrual health seminar. Participants completed a pre-tested, self-administered questionnaire evaluating four domains: awareness of SRH topics, factual knowledge, attitudes towards SRH issues, and related behaviours. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and bivariate analyses to examine associations between SRH literacy domains and educational levels. **Results:** The mean SRH awareness score among participants was  $3.13 \pm 1.45$  out of 7, indicating moderate awareness across assessed topics. While knowledge related to menstrual health was high, knowledge of other SRH topics, such as contraception and HIV/AIDS was lower. Attitudes were predominantly conservative, and reported engagement in SRH-related behaviours, such as exposure to pornographic material, was minimal. Statistical analysis revealed significant associations between educational level with awareness, knowledge, and attitude scores ( $p < 0.001$ ). **Conclusion:** The study revealed that while adolescent girls demonstrated substantial knowledge in certain aspects of sexual and reproductive health (SRH), there were notable gaps in awareness, particularly concerning contraception and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), with attitudes influenced by cultural norms. These findings highlight the need for Malaysia to implement comprehensive, accurate, age-appropriate, and culturally sensitive SRH education programs while also addressing prevailing cultural stigmas and empowering adolescents to make informed decisions.