



Improving adolescents' HIV/AIDS prevention behavior: A phenomenological study of the experience of planning generation program (GenRe) ambassadors as peer educators

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Abstract

Background: Adolescents face increased vulnerability to HIV/AIDS due to factors such as insufficient knowledge and awareness, stigma, and restricted access to information. The Indonesian government initiated a peer education program through the Planning Generation Program (GenRe) ambassadors. These ambassadors are tasked with educating their peers about HIV/AIDS. However, their experiences are largely underexplored.

Objective: This study aimed to explore the GenRe ambassadors' experience in improving adolescents' HIV/AIDS prevention behavior.

Methods: This study employed a qualitative phenomenological approach, with in-depth and semi-structured interviews of GenRe ambassadors who had served for at least three to six months within the South Jakarta Health Sub-Department, Indonesia. Purposive sampling and data saturation techniques were utilized. Data were collected from 13 May to 31 August 2022, and Colaizzi's steps were used to guide the data analysis.

Results: Nineteen GenRe ambassadors participated, predominantly female university students ages 18–22. Six themes were developed: 1) the impact of GenRe ambassadors' roles in improving HIV/AIDS prevention behavior, 2) activities to improve HIV/AIDS prevention behavior, 3) enhancement of self-concept as GenRe ambassadors, 4) obstacles to activities for improving HIV/AIDS prevention behavior, 5) support for activities to improve HIV/AIDS prevention behavior, and 6) hope for improving the GenRe ambassador program's implementation.

Conclusion: GenRe ambassadors are influencers who play a critical role in promoting HIV/AIDS prevention behaviors and fostering positive change in the broader youth community. Despite their positive self-concept, they encounter challenges in fulfilling their roles. Utilizing their insights, community health nurses can create effective peer-led HIV/AIDS prevention programs and contribute to a model of health promotion for adolescents. Leveraging the role of GenRe ambassadors as peer educators is recommended to enhance HIV/AIDS prevention efforts among adolescents.

Keywords

GenRe ambassadors; HIV/AIDS; health promotion; Indonesia; peer education; adolescents; students; community health nurses

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Background

HIV/AIDS cases among Indonesian adolescents have become a serious problem, with 18.2% of individuals ages 15–24 diagnosed ([Directorate General of Disease Prevention and Control, 2018](#)). Data on DKI Jakarta Province, Indonesia's capital, have indicated that the number of new HIV cases in adolescents has risen steadily, from 1,092 in 2017 to 1,549 in 2018 ([Department of Health, n.d.](#)), with the highest incidence

observed in South Jakarta, attributed primarily to risky sexual behavior and drug abuse ([Department of Health, n.d.](#)). This alarming trend emphasizes the urgency of implementing effective interventions to curb HIV/AIDS' detrimental impact on adolescents' quality of life, as well as its implications for the nation's future human resources. This aligns with priorities outlined in the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) 2020-2024 and the National Development Priorities (NAWACITA), which focus on enhancing the quality of life

through promotive and preventive actions, improved health services, and national health insurance (Pettifor et al., 2018).

Adolescents often face emotional instability, significant physical and social changes, exploring their identities, and seeking validation within peer groups, which can influence their behaviors, including engaging in risky sexual activity and substance abuse, potentially exposing them to HIV/AIDS (Stanhope & Lancaster, 2015). Previous studies from Sub-Saharan Africa (Joorbonyan et al., 2022; Mwale & Muula, 2017; Siddiqui et al., 2020) have highlighted peer relationships' influence on adolescents' behavior, emphasizing the need for effective interventions to promote healthier lifestyles. Peer education has emerged as a promising approach to improve adolescents' preventive and health behaviors so that they avoid risky sexual behavior and promote healthy sexual behavior among their peers (He et al., 2020). Moreover, peer educators have demonstrated the efficacy of altering adolescents' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to HIV/AIDS prevention, including safe sexual practices and avoidance of illicit drugs, alcohol, psychotropic substances, and other addictive substances (Farahani et al., 2020).

In Indonesia, the Planning Generation Program (GenRe), under the National Population and Family Planning Agency (BKKBN), utilizes peer educators, known as GenRe ambassadors, to promote reproductive health and life skills among adolescents (Aziza & Itcianday, 2018). However, while GenRe primarily focuses on family planning and reproductive health (Pebrianti, 2020), its role in addressing the critical issue of HIV/AIDS prevention among adolescents remains largely underexplored. Exploring the strategies that GenRe ambassadors employ in facilitating HIV/AIDS prevention behaviors within the program's framework is imperative due to the continued rise of new HIV/AIDS cases, largely attributed to insufficient knowledge transfer among adolescents.

Given community health nurses' critical role in promoting adolescent health and their involvement in behavioral interventions, understanding GenRe ambassadors' experiences as peer educators is essential in enhancing HIV/AIDS prevention initiatives' effectiveness. Community health nurses provide behavioral intervention strategies at the individual or group level using community outreach methods to provide information, motivate behavioral changes, teach skills, and offer resources to change risky behavior to safer behavior (Nies & McEwen, 2015). These goals align with the vital role that nurses play in monitoring and managing nursing care and supporting the government's efforts to control the transmission of infectious diseases (McEwen & Wills, 2019). Thus, this study aimed to explore the GenRe ambassadors' experience in improving adolescents' HIV/AIDS prevention behavior. This is the first qualitative study in Indonesia to provide a comprehensive exploration of the perspectives and strategies employed by GenRe ambassadors, offering valuable insights into the facilitation of HIV/AIDS prevention behaviors among Indonesian adolescents.

Methods

Study Design

This study employed a qualitative methodology, taking a descriptive phenomenological approach to explore GenRe

ambassadors' experiences while performing their role to improve adolescents' HIV/AIDS prevention behavior. The approach emphasized in-depth descriptions of participants' experiences with natural and real phenomena or situations within naturalistic settings without imposing predetermined hypotheses or theoretical frameworks (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Husserl, 2012). The manuscript complied with the consolidated standards for reporting qualitative research (COREQ) checklist (Tong et al., 2007).

Participants

The research participants were comprised of GenRe ambassadors from the South Jakarta Health Sub-Department who had served for at least three to six months and willingly agreed to in-depth interviews to explore their experiences. Participants were selected through a purposive sampling technique. Those chosen actively participated in the study and clearly understood the investigated phenomenon during the in-depth interview process (Polit & Beck, 2017; Streubert & Carpenter, 2011). Participant selection commenced by identifying each participant, explaining the research aims, and asking their willingness to participate. Following qualitative research principles for phenomenological types, the study aimed for a minimum of 8 to 10 research participants or until no new themes emerged (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Polit & Beck, 2017). All participants remained engaged throughout the research process. Data were transcribed and subsequently coded, adhering to the research code of ethics to maintain participant confidentiality. Therefore, this research used codes in the report, e.g., Participant 1 was written as P1.

Data Collection

The data were collected from 13 May to 31 August 2022 in the South Jakarta Health Sub-Department. The area was selected due to its alignment with the research objectives and a higher prevalence of HIV/AIDS cases among adolescents. The GenRe ambassadors' experiences were explored through a combination of in-depth and semi-structured interview techniques. The interview guidelines were developed based on a thorough literature review. Our research team, comprising experienced professionals, collaboratively developed the interview guidelines from Ratnawati et al. (2014). A pilot session was conducted with two GenRe ambassador participants in North Jakarta in April 2022 to ensure the interview guide's validity and reliability. Our research supervisor scrutinized the results, leading to effective refinements.

The following questions were asked during each interview in the Indonesian language: 1) Can you explain your perception of HIV/AIDS and its prevention in adolescents? 2) What is your role and experience in performing your GenRe ambassador duties in the Generasi Planning program? 3) Can you provide detailed insights into the Planning Generation program's implementation? What activities, particularly in improving HIV/AIDS prevention behavior among adolescents, are involved? What motivates you to perform your role as a GenRe ambassador? 4) Please share any obstacles or challenges you encountered while fulfilling your role as a GenRe ambassador; 5) What support do you need to perform your GenRe ambassador role?

During the interviews, probing techniques were employed to obtain comprehensive responses regarding the GenRe ambassadors' experiences. The probing questions included: "What is your experience in improving HIV/AIDS prevention behavior?" and "What does it mean and why?" No participants were excluded during the data collection process. The tools utilized for interviews included a Sony IC recorder, Logitech C270 HD Webcam, and field notes. The primary researcher interviewed the participants directly and had no previous special relationship with them. The interviews lasted between 60–90 minutes each. To enhance the data's reliability, participants were invited to review interview transcripts and analyses and make corrections, adding to the credibility of the findings. Consultations with experts in qualitative research and HIV/AIDS were sought to strengthen the data's reliability. The triangulation method, incorporating field notes and observations, enriched the research findings by cross-verifying information from multiple sources. The data collection process concluded when data saturation was reached, i.e., when new major themes were no longer emerging. This approach ensured that the study captured a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of GenRe ambassadors' experiences in the HIV/AIDS prevention context.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis—namely, the interview results were analyzed using Colaizzi's original seven-step method (Colaizzi, 1978). Streubert and Carpenter (2011) refined and simplified it into five steps, but this study adhered to Colaizzi's original, comprehensive, seven-step process. The analytical process unfolded: First, the phenomenon was described verbatim based on the participants' opinions or statements in the transcript. Second, the researchers read the entire description of the phenomenon, reread the transcript, and quoted the statement. Third, the researchers described the meaning in the form of keywords. Fourth, the researchers organized the keywords into a collection of meanings arranged into categories, subthemes, and themes. Fifth, the researchers wrote a comprehensive report on the results. Strict adherence to original seven-step method was maintained throughout this analytical process, ensuring a thorough exploration of GenRe ambassadors' experiences in facilitating HIV/AIDS prevention behaviors. The duration of the audit process was one month.

Trustworthiness/Rigor

To ensure our study's comprehensive trustworthiness, the parameters outlined by Lincoln and Guba, as recommended by Polit and Beck (2017), were followed. The validation process involved confirming data with all participants and incorporating validation data into the analytical findings. The participants were allowed to read the transcript results to boost the data's credibility, as they helped ensure the data were accurate. The researcher did not re-interview any participants; however, this research only confirmed the data, which four participants felt was unclear, and the researchers clarified the data again. These steps were crucial because we sought further insights into GenRe ambassadors' roles and activities. To gain dependability, two external reviewers conducted the inquiry audit process. They were lecturers from the Doctoral Program of the Faculty of Nursing of Universitas Indonesia.

Their expertise in qualitative research ensured a thorough check of the data processing and analytical method and results. This scrutiny aimed to ensure that themes, subthemes, categories, and keywords aligned with the research objectives. Confirmability was proved by testing suitability, data accuracy, relevance, and meaning derived from interview transcripts, field notes, theme categorization tables, and theme analysis tables that three research supervisors created.

Ethical Considerations

The research ethics committee of the Faculty of Nursing at Universitas Indonesia approved this study and granted ethical permission number KET-173/UN2.F12. D1.2.1/PPM.00.02/2022. The participants were all over the age of 18 and provided written informed consent. Before the participants provided written informed consent, the researchers explained the study's aims, benefits, and stages. The researchers observed and asked about the participants' current condition during the interviews. If the participant appeared distracted or tired or looked unwell, the researcher gave them time to rest or ended the interview. During the research process, the researchers did not discriminate regarding equal treatment and opportunities while respecting participants' rights and maintaining data privacy and confidentiality. The participants were free to withdraw at any time during data collection.

Results

Participants Characteristics

This study explored 19 GenRe ambassadors' characteristics as research participants and their experiences performing their role to improve adolescents' HIV/AIDS prevention behavior. Table 1 provides an overview of the participants from the South Jakarta Health Sub-Department, comprising ten females and nine males ages 18–22: one participant was 18; four were 19; five were 20; four were 21; and five were 22. The sample comprised 18 university students and one high school student. All participants had served as GenRe ambassadors for six months.

Table 1 Study participants' characteristics

Code	Age (Years)	Education	Gender
P1	21	University student	Female
P2	19	University student	Female
P3	20	University student	Male
P4	20	University student	Female
P5	20	University student	Female
P6	20	University student	Male
P7	19	University student	Female
P8	19	University student	Female
P9	22	University student	Female
P10	21	University student	Male
P11	21	University student	Female
P12	18	High school student	Male
P13	21	University student	Male
P14	19	University student	Female
P15	22	University student	Female
P16	20	University student	Male
P17	22	University student	Male
P18	22	University student	Male
P19	22	University student	Male

Thematic Findings

Six themes were developed: 1) the impact of GenRe ambassadors' roles in improving HIV/AIDS prevention behavior; 2) activities for improving HIV/AIDS prevention behavior; 3) enhancement of self-concept as GenRe ambassadors; 4) obstacles to activities for improving HIV/AIDS prevention behavior; 5) support for activities to improve HIV/AIDS prevention behavior; and 6) hope for improving implementation of the GenRe ambassador program. These main themes were generated from the participants' comments and collected as a single data set, as illustrated in **Figure 1**.

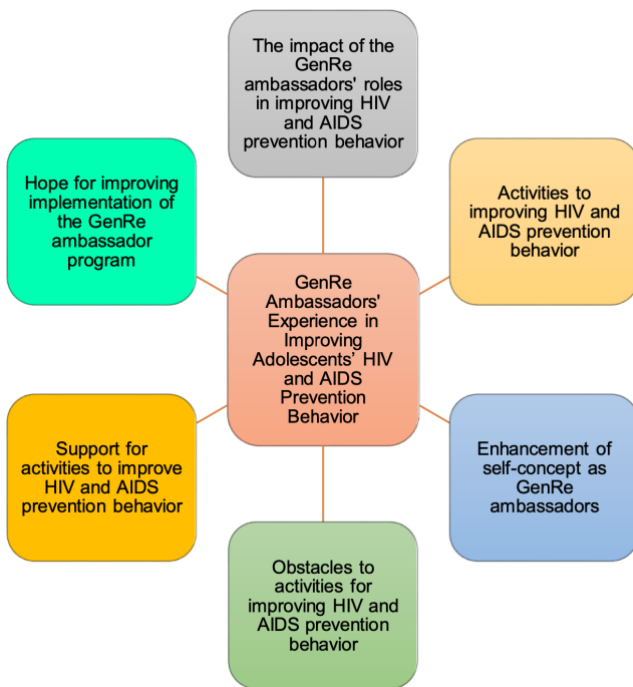


Figure 1 Thematic findings

Theme 1: The impact of GenRe ambassadors' roles in improving HIV/AIDS prevention behavior

Subtheme 1.1: Positive impacts of being GenRe ambassadors

The positive impacts of being GenRe ambassadors who improve HIV/AIDS prevention behavior entail being role models. The GenRe ambassadors perceive these positive impacts when performing their roles, e.g., they become more critical in dealing with problems and more trusted to provide positive role models. As two participants described it:

"When facing problems, I become more thoughtful and learn to manage emotions and mentality" (P18)

"I feel more credible (setting) a positive example because we have knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors to prevent HIV/AIDS" (P5)

Subtheme 1.2: Positive changes in peer conditions

The first category explained positive changes in peer conditions, namely, conducting positive activities. As one informant described it:

"I hope my teenage friends have a positive socialization and possess life skills, such as the ability to schedule positive activities every day" (P13)

The second category concerned adolescents' positive acceptance. One participant exemplified this category in the following statement:

"I am really enthusiastic when taking part in games, especially about effective communication. The adolescents really try to simulate techniques for refusing early sex and drug abuse" (P10)

The third category involved adolescents' positive behavioral changes, as the following participant described it:

"My friends changed their attitude. They wanted to discuss useful topics, for example, studying in groups and talking about favorite sports" (P9)

Theme 2: Activities to improve HIV/AIDS prevention behavior

Subtheme 2.1: Providing health education

Several participants stated that available health education included ABCDE knowledge and information to prevent HIV/AIDS, three adolescent reproductive health (TRIAD KRR), and communication, information, and education (KIE) about HIV/AIDS. As several participants described them:

"Health education provides knowledge of the ABCDE to prevent HIV/AIDS—the letter A stands for 'Abstinence,' or not having sexual intercourse before marriage. B stands for 'Be faithful,' or (fidelity) to your partner. C stands for 'Condom,' or using condoms during sexual intercourse. D stands for 'Don't use drugs,' or (not using) injectable drugs. Lastly, E stands for 'Equipment,' or using sterile equipment for invasive procedures" (P10)

"Health education also discusses the three adolescent reproductive health (TRIAD KRR), sexuality, HIV/AIDS, and drug abuse prevention" (P3)

"Health education provides communication, information, and education (KIE) on reproductive health and HIV prevention. We also campaign for health education on social media, such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube" (P15)

Subtheme 2.2: Providing counseling

All participants stated that the counseling program explains HIV/AIDS, strategies for dealing with the HIV/AIDS stigma, and strategies for maintaining health and emotional stability. As several participants noted:

"Counseling explains the meaning of HIV/AIDS, the causes of HIV/AIDS, the transmission of HIV/AIDS, and solutions for treating this disease" (P18)

"I provide counseling on steps to deal with stigma, for example, the stigma of being excluded" (P15)

"I provide counseling to stay healthy according to current conditions" (P2)

"I help adolescents keep their emotions stable by listening to their stories" (P7)

Subtheme 2.3: Conducting early detection

The GenRe ambassadors do not conduct special early detection or use special instruments, but they listen to adolescents' stories and ask them about their problems. Early detection should be performed to prevent adolescents' conditions from worsening and to prevent the disease from destroying their future. As one participant explained it:

"My friends and I have not conducted early detection. In my opinion, we should be trained and conduct screening to detect risky sexual behavior early" (P14)

Subtheme 2.4: Visiting schools and communities

The GenRe ambassadors also visit schools and communities. As one of the respondents explained it:

"The GenRe ambassadors carry out outreach at schools, adolescent associations, and government agencies at the regency levels. Moreover, they invite adolescents not to do activities that trigger HIV/AIDS" (P4)

Subtheme 2.5: Making referrals to health workers

The GenRe ambassadors also referred adolescents to health workers because they are at risk of HIV/AIDS due to sexual intercourse with their partners. As one participant explained it:

"When an adolescent consults (us with) their problem, and we cannot solve them, we will refer them to a public health center (Puskemas) because it has an adolescent center managed by nurses" (P2)

Theme 3: Enhancement of self-concept as a GenRe ambassador

Subtheme 3.1: Increasing social self-concept

The participants argued that their social self-concepts had increased after becoming GenRe ambassadors. Several participants stated that before becoming GenRe ambassadors, they had felt inferior, were afraid of making mistakes, rarely left the house to socialize, and were called a "mama's boy":

"I often felt inferior to my friends" (P6)

"I rarely left the house to hang out with friends" (P2)

"They called me a "mama's boy" who was always around with mom everywhere" (P14)

The participants said they now confidently deliver information to others, independently participate in activities alone or outdoors, and have broader social relationships. As some participants explained it:

"I became more confident in delivering information to friends" (P3)

"I became independent when I had to do activities alone and leave home" (P19)

"I have a wider association so that I know many people" (P13)

Subtheme 3.2: Improving positive personal self-concepts

Participants have a more positive personal self-concept when serving as GenRe ambassadors. Most stated that serving as GenRe ambassadors has increased their self-esteem for three reasons:

"I feel needed because I could positively direct my adolescent friends" (P9)

"I am honored to be a GenRe ambassador" (P12)

"I am proud to be useful (to) others" (P5)

The participants increasingly developed positive self-control because they participated in positive activities, helped other adolescents improve their healthy behavior, and filled

their free time with positive activities. As several participants noted similarly:

"I can do positive activities" (P7)

"I can help my friends improve their health behaviors" (P3)

"I have free time to do positive activities" (P8)

Theme 4: Obstacles to activities for improving HIV/AIDS prevention behavior

Subtheme 4.1: Internal obstacles

GenRe ambassadors face some internal obstacles due to internal factors. The participants stated they had limitations in reaching all regions to socialize in the program. Moreover, their communication could have been more effective, but they were reluctant to convey taboo information:

"We still educate adolescents, conduct counseling, and communicate (the) program less effectively because we have not been able to reach all areas of South Jakarta to detect adolescents with risky behavior" (P15)

"It is difficult to avoid using sexually explicit language to educate them, isn't it? I am worried that the more they want to know, the more they also want to do sexual behavior" (P17)

Subtheme 4.2: External obstacles

As GenRe ambassadors, the participants face external obstacles from the surrounding environment, e.g., the stigma around HIV/AIDS stems from adolescents' fear of it. Parents still view sex education as taboo, and the GenRe ambassadors feel neglected by some adolescents while socializing because these adolescents are less interested in HIV/AIDS education:

"There are still many adolescents who do not know how HIV/AIDS is transmitted. As a result, they sometimes become paranoid when talking about HIV/AIDS" (P6)

"Some parents disliked the topic of sex education, so we felt that we better skip the discussion. They worry that the sex education program will trigger adolescents to learn more about sex and imitate what they learn from the program" (P19)

"During the sex education program, adolescents passively participated in the program, were busy with their thoughts, and did not respond to our questions" (P4)

Theme 5: Support for activities to improve HIV/AIDS prevention behavior

Subtheme 5.1: Social support

Social support motivates GenRe ambassadors to promote HIV/AIDS prevention behaviors continuously. Social support comes from adolescents' positive responses from family, peers, and community. One participant described adolescent groups' support:

"We need the support from other adolescents. They should not just remain silent, but energetically explain and willingly put into practice what they have learned" (P13)

The participants suggested that families also should support adolescent activities, motivating adolescents to improve HIV/AIDS prevention behavior:

"Family and parents are our closest environments. Therefore, families must provide correct HIV/AIDS knowledge" (P14)

The participants also affirmed that peers could encourage adolescents to practice HIV/AIDS prevention behaviors emotionally, which can increase adolescents' motivation to implement HIV/AIDS prevention behaviors:

"Many peers still have toxic effects, such as inviting adolescents to have free sex or abuse drugs. Therefore, adolescents should choose friends (and) invite them to positive activities, such as academic and non-academic achievement competitions" (P7)

The participants said community support was necessary to improve HIV/AIDS prevention behavior, provide a space for adolescents to express their energy in positive activities, activate adolescent organizations (Karang Taruna) to provide a forum for positive actions, and campaign against the dangers of HIV/AIDS. Two participants described this phenomenon:

"We must activate adolescent organization (Karang Taruna) in the community to carry out positive activities" (P11)

"The community's support to the campaign (about) the dangers of HIV/AIDS is crucial. This campaign can increase adolescents' understanding and comprehensive knowledge of HIV/AIDS" (P9)

Subtheme 5.2: Support from government and health services

Government and health services support includes bureaucratic assistance from the Sub-agency of Children's Empowerment and Protection and Population Control (PPAPP) and involvement by public health centers, health workers, and schools. Bureaucratic assistance from the Sub-agency of PPAPP includes licensing, regional division into districts, training of GenRe ambassadors under National Population and Family Planning Agency (BKKBN) guidance, and life skills training to avoid risky sexual behavior:

"The Sub-agency of PPAPP holds training for GenRe ambassadors with the assistance of BKKBN. This training aims to educate adolescents or their peers to be able to plan for their future" (P16)

"We have participated in training for GenRe ambassadors. The Sub-agency of PPAPP is responsible for filling (in) the material on teaching adolescents about life skills to avoid risky sexual behavior" (P17)

Public health centers' involvement includes assistance from nurses as healthcare workers who educate students at schools and socialize them into the program before the GenRe ambassadors' campaign for the HIV/AIDS prevention program begins. The nurses help GenRe ambassadors convey effective communication techniques and life skills:

"Nurses from public health centers accompany us to visit schools to deliver education" (P1)

"Experts, namely dermatologists, explain knowledge about sexually transmitted infections or HIV/AIDS" (P3)

Schools' involvement is also pivotal in improving HIV/AIDS prevention behavior, and this can include counseling guidance teachers and school nurses:

"I think we should continuously provide sex education or HIV/AIDS health education. Afterward, schools, especially counseling guidance teachers, can continue this education" (P11)

Theme 6: Hope for improving implementation of the GenRe ambassador program

Subtheme 6.1: The GenRe ambassador program's sustainability and partnership with other programs

The participants expect that the GenRe ambassador program will be implemented more significantly. The selection of GenRe ambassadors does not guarantee the continuity of the GenRe ambassador program. Therefore, the research participants expect that the GenRe ambassador program will not stop but rather continue. Specifically, they expect that the HIV/AIDS prevention program that has been implemented will continue and that teachers and parents will manage it:

"It is crucial that this program continues because GenRe ambassadors must be able to guide adolescents and their environment. As a result, they will not be at risk of HIV/AIDS, as this disease can instantly destroy their future" (P9)

Furthermore, building partnerships with other HIV/AIDS prevention programs is necessary so that the GenRe ambassador program can achieve its target appropriately, e.g., the Health Department can conduct training on screening at-risk adolescents. Simultaneously, BKKBN, the National Narcotics Agency (BNN), and other institutions can train GenRe ambassadors about HIV/AIDS prevention programs for adolescents:

"Yes, I hope that the BKKBN, BNN, and other institutions build partnerships to prevent HIV/AIDS in adolescents" (P8)

Subtheme 6.2: Engaging online methods for HIV/AIDS prevention programs

Advanced IT technology can be used as communication media, including online, to inform and disseminate HIV/AIDS prevention programs. The participants stated that they use Android handheld devices as an education medium:

"So far, prevention programs are often conducted offline. The prevention programs should also be conducted online because we have limited space and time. Moreover, utilizing a cellphone or Android to facilitate adolescents more is good" (P6)

Subtheme 6.3: Creating healthy adolescents

The participants expected to create healthy adolescents by motivating them to conduct HIV/AIDS prevention behavior:

"Adolescents who receive HIV/AIDS education and life skills from us live healthy because they can implement HIV/AIDS prevention behavior, such as not having sexual intercourse before marriage and obeying religious values and norms" (P1)

Discussion

The present study emphasizes the pivotal role of GenRe ambassadors' experiences in enhancing adolescents' HIV/AIDS prevention behavior. Our findings provide valuable insights into the facilitation of HIV/AIDS prevention behaviors among Indonesian adolescents. Although no singular factor was identified universally across all participants, many respondents deemed the identified themes significant. Six themes emerged from our study: the impact of GenRe ambassadors' roles in improving HIV/AIDS prevention behavior; activities to improve HIV/AIDS prevention behavior;

enhancement of self-concept as GenRe ambassadors; obstacles to activities for improving HIV/AIDS prevention behavior; support for activities to strengthen HIV/AIDS prevention behavior; and hope for improving implementation of the GenRe ambassador program.

The first theme indicated that the GenRe ambassador role within the HIV/AIDS prevention program is vital and makes a positive impact. The ambassadors serve as role models, actively helping to improve HIV/AIDS prevention behavior among adolescents and making them feel more empowered. They also develop life skills, garner trust as positive role models, and inspire positive changes among peers. GenRe ambassadors are adolescents who have matured and continue to improve due to willpower and the development of self-control (Zondervan-Zwijenburg et al., 2020). The process of shaping adolescents into GenRe ambassadors involves education and training to ensure that they can communicate the program's objectives effectively (Demirezen et al., 2019; Mohapi, 2020; Suharyanti & Devinta, 2022; Yulianti, 2017). GenRe ambassadors, as influencers, utilize their role to attract audiences and promote HIV/AIDS prevention behavior (Pebrianti, 2020). Peers also play a vital role as influencers, offering positive support and knowledge on HIV/AIDS prevention (Tiranda et al., 2018). A recent study indicated that peer educators trained within programs such as the Adolescent Friendly Center Smoking Quit Program improve students' cognitive and behavioral change processes to quit smoking (Orsal & Ergun, 2021). As a peer education strategy, GenRe ambassadors focus on encouraging adolescents to postpone early marriage and prioritize school and work to create a bright future while comprehensively providing reproductive health information to prevent HIV/AIDS (Akuiyibo et al., 2021; Benton et al., 2020; Sari et al., 2021). Peer education, leadership characteristics, and role models make health programs preferable for students.

The second theme revealed that the GenRe ambassadors play an essential role in HIV/AIDS prevention by providing information, support, and counseling for adolescents through various communication strategies, including social media. Their responsibilities include early detection and referral of at-risk adolescents to appropriate health services, as well as active outreach in multiple environments to spread HIV/AIDS awareness. GenRe ambassadors' role as motivators for the younger generation, according to Croes and Bartels (2021), includes sharing information about cool and new trends, casual entertainment, games, and positive habits while spending time and searching for accurate information. GenRe ambassadors' effectiveness as peer influencers is evident in HIV/AIDS prevention, with peer-based approaches gaining popularity in schools as adolescents often turn to their peers for support in overcoming health problems (Dodd et al., 2022). The GenRe program, primarily through the Adolescent Information and Counseling Center (PIK-R), has disseminated information to prevent risky behavior, e.g., risky dating and premarital sex (Aulia & Tan, 2020; Fatmawati et al., 2019; Siswantara et al., 2022). They also can invite adolescents to join USAID's Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-free, Mentored, and Safe (DREAMS) program (USAID, 2022), which aims to reduce HIV/AIDS by promoting prevention through reproductive and sexual health information. They function as unique personal role models, in line with Boyd et

al. (2021). Moreover, they apply peer education methods, enabling adolescents to adopt HIV/AIDS prevention behaviors based on their knowledge (He et al., 2020; Saragih et al., 2022).

The third theme illustrated that being a GenRe ambassador positively affected their self-concept. They feel more confident in providing information, participating in activities, and developing broader social relationships. This reflects how becoming a GenRe ambassador helps these adolescents develop social skills, increase self-esteem, and provide positive self-control. A positive self-concept functions as a protective factor against risky sexual behavior (Glanz et al., 2008). Self-concept is a vital aspect of increasing HIV knowledge because adolescents from different backgrounds can work together to change individual behavior and overcome sociocultural norms that impact their lives and well-being (Tulza et al., 2020). Thus, GenRe ambassadors with a positive self-concept are better equipped to navigate challenges related to HIV/AIDS prevention (Adigun, 2020; Bialecka Pikul et al., 2019).

The fourth theme indicated that the GenRe ambassadors have an excellent self-concept, confidence, and self-esteem, but they frequently encounter internal and external obstacles to improving HIV/AIDS prevention behavior. Ineffective communication poses an internal challenge, particularly when educating adolescents about sensitive topics. Training in persuasive communication skills becomes crucial for GenRe ambassadors to influence healthy behaviors effectively. GenRe ambassadors must have compelling communication skills. Persuasive communication is a process that persuades, invites, and directs another person to change their attitudes, actions, or behaviors consciously (Koester et al., 2021). They also should implement a well-designed national communication strategy by considering crucial input from all stakeholders, e.g., healthcare providers. As a result, messages can be disseminated effectively, efficiently, and sustainably (Durosini-Etti et al., 2021).

External obstacles that participants experienced as GenRe ambassadors included HIV/AIDS stigma, neglect of adolescents, and parents' concerns when discussing sex education. The controversies surrounding sexual education, rooted in cultural differences, also pose challenges. To address this, flexibility and adaptation of programs to accommodate cultural, social, and scientific nuances are essential (Zheng et al., 2020a; Zheng et al., 2020b; Zimmerman, 2015). Overcoming these challenges requires community, government, and health services support. Social support—particularly positive responses from adolescents, families, peers, and society—proves essential (Ratnawati & Anggraini, 2021; Zakiei et al., 2022). Family members' support significantly motivates adolescents to prevent HIV/AIDS transmission, emphasizing the need for social assistance in fostering maturity, friendliness, and trustworthiness among adolescents (Camara et al., 2017).

The fifth theme unveiled that the GenRe ambassadors play a vital role in improving awareness and preventing HIV/AIDS among adolescents by providing education, information, and support. Social support—including positive responses from adolescents, families, peers, and the community—is essential in motivating them in these roles. Successful HIV/AIDS prevention requires collaboration across sectors, and involving

the government, health services, and various other parties is also crucial in preventing HIV/AIDS among adolescents. A comprehensive approach through training, mentoring, and education in schools—as well as support from community health centers, specialist doctors, and psychologists—proves effective in tackling this issue. Moreover, community involvement and support, particularly from religious leaders, significantly help promote healthy behavior (Wati et al., 2017; Winarni & Martiningsih, 2019). Active support from health services, schools, extracurricular coaches, and the government is critical to the GenRe program's efforts to decrease negative adolescent behaviors, particularly pornographic exposure, addiction to risky sexual behavior, online gaming, and smoking (Hastuti, 2019; Sari & Indrawadi, 2019).

The sixth theme showed that the GenRe ambassadors expressed optimism for improvements in the GenRe program, focusing on two critical aspects of its sustainability in preventing HIV/AIDS among adolescents. First, they emphasized the importance of continuity beyond the current GenRe ambassador selection process, calling on teachers and parents to ensure continued efforts in HIV/AIDS prevention. Second, the participants highlighted the role of advanced information technology, mainly using Android devices as an educational medium in disseminating effective HIV/AIDS prevention programs for adolescents due to their broad and flexible accessibility. Hope for increased HIV/AIDS prevention behavior includes sustainability and the GenRe ambassador program partnering with other programs, online promotion of prevention programs, and efforts to foster healthy adolescent development. HIV/AIDS prevention's decentralized nature requires policy action and effective implementation by regional HIV/AIDS Commissions (KPA), necessitating creativity and collaboration across sectors and institutions (Fauzi & Rahayu, 2018; Sukatemin et al., 2023). The findings of the study by Nurhidayah and 'Aini (2019) are in line with this approach, i.e., that implementation by GenRe ambassadors is good enough in terms of strategy, meeting adolescent needs, improving understanding, increasing knowledge, enhancing adolescent behavior in daily life, and establishing a significant relationship between planning and success in GenRe programs in the National Population and Family Planning Board (BKKBN) of West Sumatra province.

Furthermore, leveraging online media, particularly Android-based platforms, is crucial for successful program promotion and education, aligning with the On-the-Fast-Track-to-End AIDS approach (Cort et al., 2023). Extant media research has highlighted audiovisual and IT-based content effectiveness in changing adolescent behavior and providing practical knowledge acquisition tools (Haruna et al., 2021). The GenRe ambassadors' collaboration with community partners to use smartphone devices can enhance decision-making, adaptability, productivity, and supporting theories further to reduce social stigma, improve HIV healthcare-seeking behavior, boost HIV testing, and engage in HIV care (Øgård-Repål et al., 2023). Creating healthy adolescents requires comprehensive HIV/AIDS and sex education to navigate religious values and moral standards (Leung et al., 2019; Pranawati et al., 2020). Therefore, health workers, particularly nurses, should advocate for and educate adolescents about sex education to optimize health outcomes,

reduce sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), prevent unwanted pregnancies, and curb the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Implications for Nursing Practices

Realization of the GenRe ambassadors' hopes will encourage nurses to advocate for adolescents to modify their behavior to prevent HIV/AIDS through HIV/AIDS prevention programs. Moreover, related parties' empowerment, motivation, support, and hope can increase GenRe ambassadors' confidence and ability to improve HIV/AIDS prevention behavior among adolescents. This study's results are expected to enrich the literature on adolescents' roles as GenRe ambassadors who develop adolescent health promotion programs to strengthen protective factors, as well as individual and socio-cultural aspects of HIV/AIDS risk behavior. Furthermore, this study's results apply to developing adolescent, family, and community empowerment interventions through education, counseling, and coaching to improve HIV/AIDS prevention behavior and promote health among community nurses. The study's results also provide essential information that will allow academics to compile a community nurse learning curriculum so that nursing students can create innovative intervention designs for adolescent, family, and community development to prevent HIV/AIDS. Adolescents require this guidance to improve their ability to adapt to challenges, solve problems in their internal and external environments, and learn healthy behavior, particularly HIV/AIDS prevention behavior.

Limitations

This study's limitations include the possibility that the sample size was too small and limited diversity among participants, which may hinder the findings' generalizability. Data collection methods can introduce bias, mainly if they rely on self-report measures. Furthermore, limitations in qualitative designs may prevent the establishment of causality or tracking of long-term changes. Ignoring contextual factors that may influence the program's effectiveness, e.g., cultural variations or program implementation nuances, is also a limitation. To address these limitations, future research should employ more extensive and diverse samples, use longitudinal or mixed designs, consider contextual factors when exploring technology-based interventions, and conduct ongoing program evaluations to increase the impact and relevance of the GenRe ambassadors' program in HIV/AIDS prevention among adolescents.

Conclusion

This phenomenological study explored GenRe ambassadors' experiences and roles in increasing HIV/AIDS prevention behavior among adolescents. GenRe ambassadors play a role as peer educators in health promotion programs, particularly HIV/AIDS prevention programs. The study's results indicate that GenRe ambassadors' role in HIV/AIDS prevention programs positively impacts their personality and peer adolescents. GenRe ambassadors function as role models and active contributors to improving HIV/AIDS prevention behavior among adolescents. They also help adolescents develop life skills, feel more confident, and become positive role models in the community. Furthermore, they actively use various communication strategies, including social media, to

spread awareness about HIV/AIDS to educate their peers. Based on GenRe ambassadors' experiences, this program makes a positive impact. Further enhancements are recommended to sustain and refine the GenRe ambassador program in its role in preventing HIV/AIDS. Advanced information technology, e.g., using Android devices as an education medium, is also viewed as an effective tool in adolescent health promotion programs, offering broader and more flexible access.

Recommendations based on the research findings include integration of the GenRe program into nurses' health promotion initiatives. Moreover, cross-sectoral coordination between the Health Office, Education Office, and schools should involve GenRe ambassadors to prevent HIV/AIDS. Peer education can also be conducted by providing more comprehensive training to help GenRe ambassadors deliver HIV/AIDS prevention messages to their friends more effectively. Furthermore, exploring the types of support adolescents receive as GenRe ambassadors is also necessary. Consequently, they can adapt to the surrounding environment and independently implement HIV/AIDS prevention behaviors. This study's results can also optimize GenRe ambassadors' roles and strengthen adolescents' HIV/AIDS prevention efforts. A robust understanding of the GenRe ambassadors' contributions will create more effective and relevant prevention programs that cater to the needs of today's younger generations.

Declaration of Conflicting Interest

No conflicts of interest to declare.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors contributed to this manuscript publication. This substantial contribution to the conception and design of the study, data collection, data analysis, and the interpretation of data: DR and AS; reviewing the article, checking about analyzing data, giving criticism, and editing for important intellectual content: JS, WW, and AYN; drafting the work and revising it critically for important intellectual content: DR and TS. The revised manuscript was reviewed, and all authors finally approved the version to be published.

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Data Availability

The datasets generated and analyzed during the study are not publicly available due to completed publishing but are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Declaration of Use of AI in Scientific Writing

There is nothing to declare.

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