



IMPACT OF SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS ON REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AMONG FEMALE TEENAGERS IN NIGERIA.

Abimbola AFOLABI

Department of Social Work

University of Ibadan

drafolabiabimbola@gmail.com

afolabi.abimbola@dlc.ui.edu.ng

And

Eleanor Hendricks

North-West University, South Africa

ehendricks81@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This research investigates how socio-cultural influences affect reproductive health among adolescent girls, particularly focusing on the impact of cultural traditions, religious beliefs, and family interactions. The adolescent phase, characterized by swift developmental changes, is significantly shaped by socio-cultural pressures that can affect reproductive health choices. Through detailed interviews with teenage girls from various cultural settings, the study uncovers that cultural restrictions, religious doctrines, and social expectations frequently obstruct open conversations about sexual health. This leads to misinformation and restricted access to appropriate resources. The study finds that these influences negatively impact adolescents' knowledge and management of reproductive health, increasing the risks of unintended pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, and unsafe abortions. The research underscores the necessity for comprehensive, culturally aware interventions and open discussions to provide teenage girls with accurate information and supportive resources. Recommendations include enhancing inclusive reproductive health education, encouraging transparent communication between parents and teenagers, challenging restrictive cultural norms, and improving access to confidential health services. Tackling these challenges is essential for better reproductive health outcomes and empowering young women to make informed and independent decisions regarding their bodies and futures.

Key Words: Social Factors, Cultural Factors, Reproductive Health, Female, Teenagers

INTRODUCTION

Reproductive health plays a vital role in the overall well-being of individuals, especially among adolescents who are in a crucial developmental stage. The reproductive health of female teenagers has gained significant global attention due to its far-reaching effects on their future health, education, and economic opportunities. Adolescence is marked by rapid physical, emotional, and social transformations, placing young females at increased risk of reproductive health issues. These issues often include unintended pregnancies, which can result in unsafe abortions, a leading cause of maternal mortality and morbidity in this age group. Additionally, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are common among adolescents, exacerbated by inadequate access to comprehensive sexual education and healthcare services. The psychological effects of early sexual activity, such as stigma, shame, and lowered self-esteem, further increase the vulnerability of female teenagers, making it harder for them to make informed reproductive health decisions (UNFPA, 2020; WHO, 2018).

In recent times, there has been a growing awareness of the need for focused interventions to address these reproductive health challenges among female teenagers. Programs that emphasize comprehensive sexual education, access to contraceptives, and youth-friendly health services have proven effective in significantly reducing unintended pregnancies and STIs. Such interventions are crucial in empowering female adolescents to take charge of their reproductive health, thereby improving their educational and economic opportunities. However, cultural norms and gender inequalities continue to present major obstacles to the successful implementation of these programs, particularly in low- and middle-income countries (Gutmacher Institute, 2017; UNICEF, 2019).

Socio-cultural factors significantly influence the reproductive health behaviors and outcomes of female teenagers in Nigeria. Cultural norms, values, and beliefs shape attitudes towards sexuality, contraceptive use, and access to reproductive health services. Traditional values often stigmatize sexuality, leading to misinformation and lack of awareness. Early marriage and childbearing are culturally accepted, reducing educational opportunities and increasing the risk of reproductive health issues. This pressure results in limited access to contraceptive methods and reproductive health services, as unmarried girls may view these services as unnecessary or inappropriate (Akinwale, 2021; Adebawale et al., 2020; Nwagwu, 2019).

Gender roles and expectations significantly influence female teenagers' reproductive health decisions, often establishing acceptable behavior and decision-making limits. Traditional gender norms, which stress female submissiveness and motherhood, can pressure young girls into early sexual initiation, leading to risks of premature sexual activity. Societal expectations often link a girl's worth to fertility and marriage prospects, resulting in limited control over reproductive choices. This can heighten the risk of unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions, and sexually transmitted infections. Lack of comprehensive sexual education and the intersection of religious beliefs with cultural norms can create a complex environment for female teenagers' reproductive health, reinforcing traditional gender roles and stigmatizing contraception or sexuality discussions (Okonofua et al., 2019).

Nigeria's diverse socio-cultural factors significantly impact female teenagers' reproductive health experiences, influencing their behaviors, beliefs, and outcomes. Cultural taboos and community norms often hinder open conversations about sexuality, leading to limited information about sexual behavior, contraception, and reproductive rights. This vulnerability makes young girls vulnerable to risks like unintended pregnancies, STIs, and unsafe abortions. The absence of comprehensive sexual education and cultural barriers heighten the vulnerability of female teenagers, leaving them unprepared for informed decisions. The stigma associated with seeking reproductive health services discourages many girls from accessing necessary care, leading to social exclusion, judgment, or punishment. This fear of stigma and lack of youth-friendly services prevent female teenagers from obtaining necessary care, perpetuating cycles of poor reproductive health outcomes (Ezeanolue et al., 2019).

Sociocultural influence on adolescent reproductive health

A study conducted by Omolara and Adebisi (2017) which offers a thorough exploration of how cultural norms impact adolescent sexual and reproductive health in Nigeria, emphasizing the way traditional beliefs and practices influence young girls' access to and use of reproductive health services. In numerous Nigerian communities, cultural expectations often shape adolescent behavior, particularly for females, with a strong focus on maintaining chastity and adhering to societal norms regarding sexuality. These traditional beliefs can create significant obstacles to accessing reproductive health services, as topics related to sexual health are frequently stigmatized, leading young girls to avoid seeking information or assistance. The hesitation to engage in open conversations about sexual and reproductive health can result in a lack of awareness and understanding, making many adolescents more vulnerable to reproductive health risks, such as unintended pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and complications from unsafe abortions. Furthermore, the fear of being judged and facing social repercussions often prevents young girls from accessing the necessary services, exacerbating the challenges they encounter in effectively managing their reproductive health.

Smith et al., (2016) revealed in a longitudinal study that gender norms are crucial in shaping adolescent reproductive health behaviors, as societal expectations around gender heavily influence how teenage girls manage their sexual and reproductive health. In many cultures, girls are raised to follow specific gender roles that emphasize modesty, obedience, and submission, which can limit their autonomy in making informed sexual health decisions. These gender norms often pressure young girls to conform to societal expectations, such as early marriage or avoiding

contraceptives, which can have serious consequences for their health and well-being. This research examines how societal expectations and gender norms intersect to influence sexual behavior and contraceptive use among teenage girls. The pressure to adhere to these norms can lead to early sexual initiation, often without the necessary knowledge or resources to protect against negative outcomes. Consequently, teenage girls may face increased risks of unintended pregnancies, STIs, and other reproductive health issues, compounded by limited access to reproductive health services and education. The study highlights the need for gender-sensitive strategies that address these deeply ingrained norms and empower young girls to take control of their reproductive health.

In a study conducted by Ibrahim, (2017), religious beliefs are another significant factor in shaping teenage reproductive health practices, as explored in this study. In many communities, religious teachings significantly influence attitudes toward sexuality and reproductive health, often creating a conflict between religious doctrine and the realities of adolescent sexual behavior. Many adolescents struggle to reconcile their faith, which may promote abstinence or oppose contraceptive use, with the pressures of navigating their sexual identities in a rapidly changing world. This conflict can lead to confusion, guilt, and fear, preventing young people from seeking the reproductive health services they need. The study investigates how religious beliefs intersect with cultural norms to create a complex environment in which adolescents must navigate their reproductive health decisions. The findings suggest that these religious influences can significantly hinder teenagers' ability to access and utilize reproductive health services, as the fear of religious or social condemnation may deter them from seeking the care they require.

Nwankwo and Ezeani, (2018), cultural taboos around sexuality and reproductive health further complicate adolescents' access to effective sexual health education. In many communities, discussing sexual health is considered taboo, and there is often reluctance to provide comprehensive sexual education to teenagers. This cultural hesitation to openly address issues related to sexuality and reproductive health can lead to significant gaps in knowledge and understanding among young people. The study explores how these cultural taboos prevent effective sexual health education, resulting in widespread misinformation and increased health risks for teenagers. Without accurate information and education, adolescents are more likely to engage in risky sexual behaviors, unaware of the potential consequences. This lack of education not only increases the risk of unintended pregnancies and STIs but also leaves young people unprepared to make informed decisions about their reproductive health. The study stresses the importance of overcoming these cultural barriers to equip teenagers with the knowledge and resources they need to protect their health.

Adamu, (2020), early marriage, deeply rooted in cultural and religious practices, poses a significant threat to the reproductive health of teenage girls. This study examines the serious health risks associated with early marriage, highlighting its long-term impact on young girls' health, education, and overall well-being. Girls who marry at a young age are more likely to experience complications during pregnancy and childbirth, as their bodies may not be fully developed to handle the demands of childbirth. Moreover, early marriage often limits access to reproductive health services, as young brides may be isolated from healthcare facilities or lack the autonomy to seek care independently. The disruption of education due to early marriage further exacerbates these issues, as girls who leave school early are less likely to have the knowledge and skills needed to make informed decisions about their health. The study underscores the need for comprehensive strategies to prevent early marriage and support the reproductive health of young girls, ensuring they have the opportunity to lead healthy and fulfilling lives.

According to Hassan and Ali (2021), peer dynamics significantly influence young individuals' decision-making processes related to their reproductive health. Adolescents often seek guidance, validation, and acceptance from their peers, which can lead to adopting behaviors that align with the norms and attitudes of their social groups. Peer pressure may encourage early sexual initiation or experimentation, especially in environments where discussing sexual matters is



stigmatized or where accurate information is limited. This study highlights the importance of considering the social environment when addressing adolescent reproductive health, suggesting that interventions should include strategies to mitigate negative peer influences and promote positive, health-focused peer interactions.

Oluwole and Adeyemi (2022) identify several key challenges that prevent adolescents from effectively accessing and using contraception in their study. These challenges include societal norms that stigmatize contraceptive use among unmarried girls, misconceptions about the side effects of contraceptives, and a lack of privacy in healthcare settings. Additionally, the fear of judgment or shame from healthcare providers often deters young girls from seeking the necessary reproductive health services. The study suggests that overcoming these barriers requires a comprehensive approach, including education to dispel myths about contraception, enhancing the youth-friendliness of health services, and fostering community support for adolescent reproductive health initiatives. By addressing these challenges, the likelihood of teenage girls making informed and autonomous decisions about their reproductive health can be significantly improved. Afolabi, 2019, in her study on the role of social workers in the prevention of adolescent pregnancy in Oyo East Local Government Area of Oyo State, she found poverty, child abuse, child abandonment, early sexual initiation, low educational attainment, peer pressure and lack of sex education as factors that make teenagers victims of early or unwanted pregnancy.

Social work interventions and suggestions to curb the escalation of adolescent pregnancy

Teenage pregnancy is very common in Africa. Hendricks (2020) emphasizes that numerous preventive measures, such as peer education programs, school-based sexuality education, adolescent-friendly clinic initiatives, mass media interventions, and community-level programs, have been established by social workers throughout the continent. Because the majority of schoolgirls drop out, teenage pregnancy continues to generate socioeconomic and health related issues as well as impede their access to education. Girls are getting pregnant at the tender age of ten in recent years. Social workers note that adolescent pregnancy is caused by a variety of individual, familial, and societal reasons, such as lack of support systems, culture, and religion (Masuku, 2021).

It is rare that teenage moms will complete their high school education. This prevents them from achieving their objectives, which may lead to intergenerational destitution (Masuku, 2021). Teenage moms are now blamed by society for either creating or facilitating unfavorable sociopolitical and economic issues. Hendricks (2020) claims that this guilt is common in prevailing discourses that are purportedly motivated by "moral" worries about adolescent sexuality, single parenthood, the dissolution of the nuclear family, and reliance on others. To comprehend to aid in the reduction of adolescent pregnancies rates, healthcare professionals and other community stakeholders such as parents, teachers, religious leaders, and students need to have a sociocultural perspective. As a result, adaptation and development of psychosocial interventions are desperately needed.

METHODOLOGY

The research adopted a qualitative approach, using in-depth interviews (IDIs) to investigate the socio-cultural factors impacting reproductive health among teenage girls. A purposive sample of ten girls aged 13-19 from various cultural backgrounds in selected communities participated in the IDIs. The interview guide was semi-structured, featuring open-ended questions that allowed for an in-depth examination of the participants' experiences, beliefs, and views concerning reproductive health. Data were gathered through in-person interviews, which were audio-recorded with the participants' permission and subsequently transcribed verbatim for analysis. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which enabled the identification and interpretation of key themes and patterns, offering comprehensive insights into the socio-cultural influences on reproductive health among the study population.



Result and Discussion of Findings

The interviews reveal that cultural norms, education, peer influence, and family guidance significantly influence female teenagers' perception and decision-making regarding reproductive health. These elements interplay, affecting their understanding, attitudes, and actions, offering insights into the challenges and opportunities in promoting informed reproductive health decisions among female adolescents.

Parental Influence

Parental influence is crucial in guiding teenagers' reproductive health, as it provides information, direction, and values during a crucial developmental stage. Open, truthful conversations about reproductive health can help teenagers understand topics like contraception, sexually transmitted infections, and responsible sexual conduct. However, neglect or inadequate coverage can lead to risky behaviors. Parents' cultural, religious, and personal beliefs also influence the extent and nature of reproductive health education. Effective communication and values conveyed during discussions are crucial for teenagers to make informed and healthy choices about their reproductive health. Most respondents indicated that their parents provided some level of guidance on reproductive health, although it varied in depth:

Respondent 1 mentioned that her parents emphasize education and provide general information, but the discussions are not detailed.

Similarly, Respondent 6 noted that her parents are conservative and avoid discussing the topic, leaving it to the school.

Insufficient parental guidance on reproductive health can significantly impact teenagers' sexual behaviors and health outcomes. White and Evans (2017) found that teenagers who experienced limited communication with their parents about sexual health were more likely to engage in early sexual activity and less likely to use contraception, thereby increasing the chances of unintended pregnancies and STIs. Moreover, research by Green and Walker (2023) shows that a lack of comprehensive parental discussions on reproductive health is linked to higher levels of anxiety and confusion among teenagers concerning sexual issues. This lack of knowledge often results in uninformed decisions that could adversely affect their health and well-being. Thus, it is essential for parents to be actively and consistently involved in reproductive health education to provide teenagers with the necessary knowledge and skills for making responsible and healthy choices. On the other hand,

Respondent 3 and Respondent 7 described a more open relationship with their parents, where reproductive health is discussed in detail, and they are encouraged to ask questions and stay informed.

Recent research highlights the crucial role of parental communication in shaping teenagers' understanding and behaviors related to reproductive health. Jones et al. (2020) emphasize that open and honest conversations between parents and teens are essential for providing accurate information about sexual health, contraception, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). These discussions help to clarify reproductive health topics and enable teenagers to make informed choices. Similarly, Smith and Thompson (2022) point out that parents who actively engage in educating their children about reproductive health can significantly lower the chances of risky sexual behaviors by offering practical advice on safe practices and the consequences of unprotected sex. Martinez et al. (2018) found that when parents neglect or inadequately address these subjects, teenagers might turn to unreliable sources for information, leading to misconceptions and a higher risk of negative reproductive health outcomes. Together, these studies highlight the essential role of parental communication in guiding teenagers toward making healthy sexual decisions.



Peer influence

Peer influence significantly influences teenagers' reproductive health choices and behaviors, often more than parental guidance or education. Adolescents are sensitive to their peers' attitudes, behaviors, and opinions, which can influence their decisions about sexual activity, contraceptive use, and overall reproductive health.

Respondent 1 mentioned that these discussions are often based on myths or incomplete information.

Respondent 2 echoed this sentiment, stating that it's not a regular topic among friends.

On the other hand, Some respondents, like

Respondent 2 and Respondent 3, acknowledged feeling pressured by peers to behave in certain ways, particularly when friends share their experiences. However, they also expressed a determination to stay true to their own values.

According to Hassan and Ali (2021), peer dynamics significantly influence young individuals' decision-making processes related to their reproductive health. Adolescents often seek guidance, validation, and acceptance from their peers, which can lead to adopting behaviors that align with the norms and attitudes of their social groups. Peer pressure may encourage early sexual initiation or experimentation, especially in environments where discussing sexual matters is stigmatized or where accurate information is limited. This study highlights the importance of considering the social environment when addressing adolescent reproductive health, suggesting that interventions should include strategies to mitigate negative peer influences and promote positive, health-focused peer interactions.

Teenage pregnancy is significantly influenced by peer pressure. Research indicates that the probability of teenage pregnancy might be influenced by the influence of their peers. Adolescents who are accompanied by peers who are teen parents are more likely to become pregnant, suggesting a strong peer effect. Positive social pressure from friends and family that discourages pregnancy can also lower the likelihood of teenage pregnancy. Furthermore, it is commonly accepted that the concept of "peer pressure" plays a role in examining the variables that impact young people's experiences with sex and pregnancy, underscoring the need for a more thorough comprehension of the ways in which peer dynamics impact teenage actions. The general consensus is that peer pressure shapes societal norms and behaviors around teenage pregnancy, underscoring the significance of addressing peer effects in treatments meant to prevent unintended pregnancies.

Access to Information

Teenagers now have widespread and diverse access to media information on reproductive health, which varies greatly in quality and reliability. They can find information through various channels such as online platforms, social media, educational websites, and health apps, ranging from accurate, comprehensive content to less reliable sources. This easy access can offer valuable education on sexual health, contraception, and disease prevention, helping teens make informed choices. Most respondents relied on the internet and school for information about reproductive health.

Respondent 2 highlighted that the information from school is often basic, leading her to seek more detailed information online.

Respondent 1 also noted that health centers are not very accessible.

Respondents generally felt that while they had some information, it was not always enough to make fully informed decisions. This sentiment was shared by Respondent 6, who felt there was still much to learn.



Cultural and Religious Factors:

Cultural beliefs, such as the importance of preserving virginity until marriage, significantly influence how respondents approach reproductive health.

Respondent 1 and Respondent 2 mentioned that these beliefs make them more cautious in their actions and decisions regarding reproductive health, but also more secretive. They elaborated on how cultural and religious expectations have instilled in them a heightened sense of responsibility and awareness about the potential consequences of their choices. However, this caution comes at a cost. Both respondents shared that the pressure to uphold these values often leads to a fear of judgment, making them reluctant to openly discuss their concerns or seek advice, even from close family members or friends. This secrecy, they admitted, stems from a desire to avoid disappointment or shame in the eyes of their community or family, which in turn can lead to feelings of isolation and anxiety. The respondents highlighted the internal conflict they experience, balancing the need to adhere to the beliefs they've been taught with the natural curiosity and questions that arise during adolescence. This tension makes it difficult for them to navigate their reproductive health confidently, as they struggle to reconcile their personal needs with the expectations imposed by their cultural and religious upbringing. (IDI 2024)

Szirom (2017) states that cultural norms and values can influence perceptions of sexuality, gender roles, and family planning. The author went on to explain that in societies where conservative norms prevail, discussions about reproductive health, contraception, and sex education might be taboo, leading to misinformation and limited access to accurate information. This can result in teenage girls being less likely to seek help or guidance. Ezenwaka, Mbachu, Ezumah, Eze, Agu, Agu, and Onwujekwe (2020) added that in societies where open discussions about sexuality are discouraged or stigmatized, teenagers might lack the knowledge and skills necessary to make informed decisions about their reproductive health. A lack of comprehensive and accurate information about reproductive health, contraception, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and healthy relationships can lead to risky behaviors, unintended pregnancies, and the spread of STIs among teenage girls. Thus, the availability and quality of sexual education programs in a society can have a significant influence on teenage girls' reproductive health.

Religious Teachings: Religion plays a vital role in shaping respondents' views on reproductive health. Respondents like

Respondent 3 and Respondent 6 emphasized the teachings of chastity and modesty as central to their upbringing, which deeply influence their decisions and approach to relationships. They explained that these values are not just rules but foundational principles that shape their views on intimacy, self-respect, and how they interact with others. The respondents noted that these teachings instill a sense of discipline and self-control, encouraging them to prioritize emotional connections over physical ones. However, they also acknowledged that this focus on chastity and modesty sometimes creates internal conflicts, especially when faced



with peer pressure or societal messages that contradict these values. Despite these challenges, both respondents remain committed to upholding these teachings, viewing them as essential to maintaining their integrity and aligning their actions with their cultural and religious beliefs. (IDI 2024)

Cultural and religious beliefs play a significant role in how parents discuss reproductive health with their teenagers. Research by Alabi (2024) indicates that in communities where conservative cultural norms prevail, conversations about sexual health may be minimal or entirely absent, leaving teenagers without adequate knowledge about reproductive health. This lack of communication can lead to a higher risk of engaging in unsafe sexual practices due to a lack of information or exposure to misinformation. On the other hand, studies like those by Branca et al (2015) suggest that when parents integrate their cultural and religious values into open discussions about reproductive health, they can effectively communicate important messages about responsibility and respect in sexual relationships, which encourages healthier behaviors among teenagers. These cultural and religious frameworks influence both the content and delivery of parental communication, significantly shaping teenagers' understanding and behavior regarding reproductive health. Cultural expectations of gender roles also impact access to reproductive health services. Respondents like

Respondent 6 mentioned that women are expected to be modest and not openly discuss these issues, making it difficult to seek information or services.

(IDI, 2024)

Teenagers face numerous reproductive health challenges, including limited access to sexual education, societal stigma, and lack of open communication. They are exposed to fragmented information, leading to misunderstandings and risky behaviors. The stigma surrounding contraception and STIs discourages open discussion. Peer pressure, privacy concerns, and cultural norms further complicate access to accurate information. These factors hinder teenagers' ability to make informed decisions and maintain their reproductive health effectively. A common theme among respondents was the fear of being judged by others in their community, which serves as a significant barrier to accessing reproductive health services.

Respondent 2 and Respondent 6 both expressed significant concerns about the stigma associated with seeking help. They described how the fear of being judged or labeled by their peers and community often prevented them from reaching out for the support they needed. Respondent 2 mentioned that this stigma made them feel isolated and hesitant to discuss reproductive health issues even with close family members, which left them grappling with unanswered questions and uncertainties.

(IDI 2024)

Similarly, Respondent 6 noted that the societal pressure to maintain a certain image or adhere to cultural expectations further compounded their reluctance to seek advice or assistance, fearing that doing so might lead to gossip or social exclusion. Both respondents emphasized the urgent need for more open, supportive environments where young people can access help without the fear of being stigmatized, as this would greatly improve their willingness to engage in conversations about their health and well-being.

(IDI 2024)

Akanbi, Ope, Adeloye, Amoo, Iruonagbe, and Omojola (2021) argue socioeconomic status plays a crucial role in the reproductive health of teenage girls. Adolescents from lower-income families might have limited access to quality healthcare services, including reproductive health services, family planning, and STI testing. Flack, Walker, Bickerstaff, and Margetts (2020) further state that the cost of contraceptives and healthcare appointments, along with transportation and time constraints, can become barriers to seeking timely and appropriate care for teenagers from lower-income families. These barriers can contribute to higher rates of unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions, and poorer reproductive health outcomes among economically disadvantaged teenage girls.

Teenagers often lack adequate support regarding reproductive health, leading to insufficient education and guidance. This lack of information can lead to confusion and risky behaviors. Lack of support from parents, schools, or community resources can worsen these issues, preventing teens from gaining essential knowledge about sexual health, contraception, and safe practices. This gap in support contributes to higher rates of unintended pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, and emotional issues. A strong support system is needed to ensure teenagers make safe and informed decisions.

Respondent 6 relied heavily on online resources to navigate their questions and concerns about reproductive health, primarily because they lacked trusted adults or professionals to turn to for guidance. He expressed that while the internet provided a wealth of information, it was often overwhelming and difficult to determine which sources were reliable. This reliance on digital platforms arose out of necessity, as he felt isolated and unable to openly discuss these topics with family members or community figures. The absence of a supportive and knowledgeable adult to confide in made him more dependent on forums, articles, and videos to find answers, even though he recognized the limitations and potential inaccuracies of online information. Despite the convenience of accessing information at any time, He further mentioned the challenges of interpreting conflicting advice and the anxiety that comes with not knowing if they were making the right decisions based on the information they found. (IDI 2024)

Desired Changes

Respondents expressed a desire for more open discussions and education on reproductive health, without fear of judgment.

Respondent 1 and Respondent 7 both suggested that community leaders and religious figures could play a role in promoting better understanding and access to information. (IDI 2024)

Respondent 7 highlighted the importance of leveraging community resources and leaders to promote awareness and education, which could better support reproductive health among female teenagers. (IDI 2024)

Bello, Bello, and Olufunmilayo (2023) conducted an extensive review of various educational strategies aimed at improving adolescent reproductive health knowledge and behaviors. Their study found that programs incorporating interactive and participatory methods, such as peer



education, role-playing, and discussion groups, are particularly effective in engaging adolescents and promoting healthy behaviors. These programs are most successful when they are culturally sensitive, addressing the specific beliefs, values, and practices of the target population. The review also highlighted the importance of integrating reproductive health education into the formal school curriculum, ensuring that all students receive accurate and age-appropriate information. The study concludes that ongoing support and reinforcement of educational messages, both in and out of school settings, are crucial for maintaining the positive effects of these programs.

Conclusion

Socio-cultural influences, such as cultural norms, religious values, family interactions, and societal expectations, significantly impact female teenagers' reproductive health. These factors can lead to misinformation, secrecy, and feelings of shame, making it difficult for teenagers to seek help and make informed decisions. Family dynamics also play a crucial role, as their guidance is influenced by their beliefs. Societal pressures further limit teenagers' autonomy by reinforcing harmful stereotypes and restricting access to reproductive health resources.

Recommendations

To address the issues highlighted in the conclusion, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Create and promote reproductive health education that is mindful of and incorporates cultural and religious values while ensuring it delivers accurate and thorough information.
2. Promote and support open and honest discussions between parents and teenagers regarding reproductive health.
3. Work actively to challenge and reform societal norms and stereotypes that limit teenagers' access to reproductive health information and services. Foster positive and empowering perspectives on sexuality and reproductive health to diminish stigma and support personal autonomy.
4. Increase the availability of reproductive health services and information for teenagers, especially in underserved areas and ensure that these resources are confidential, non-judgmental, and easily reachable to overcome barriers imposed by socio-cultural factors.
5. Develop initiatives that aid families in offering guidance on reproductive health. Provide resources and training that focus on how family dynamics impact reproductive health and equip families with the tools necessary to offer effective support to teenagers.
6. Advocate for policies that address the socio-cultural influences on reproductive health among female teenagers and ensure these policies promote culturally sensitive education, enhance access to health services, and work to reduce stigma and misinformation.



REFERENCES

- Adamu, M. (2020). Early marriage and reproductive health outcomes among adolescent girls in Northern Nigeria. *Journal of Global Health*, 10(2), 150-159.
- Adebowale, A., Fagbamigbe, A. F., & Bamgboye, E. A. (2020). *Socio-cultural Determinants of Adolescent Pregnancy in Rural Nigeria*. *International Journal of Public Health*, 65(2), 234-245.
- Afolabi, A., 2019. The role of social workers in the prevention of adolescent pregnancy in Oyo East Local Government Area, Oyo State. *Jos Journal of Social Issues* 12 (1), 113-127
- Akanbi, M. A., Ope, B. W., Adelaye, D. O., Amoo, E. O., Iruonagbe, T. C., & Omojola, O. (2021). Influence of socio-economic factors on prevalence of teenage pregnancy in Nigeria. *African Journal of Reproductive Health*, 25(5s), 138-146.
- Akinwale, O. (2021). *Cultural Influence on Adolescent Reproductive Health in Nigeria*. *African Journal of Reproductive Health*, 25(4), 45-59.
- Alabi, A. (2024). Family structure and its influence on adolescent reproductive health: Evidence from Nigerian households. *Family Relations*, 73(1), 87-95.
- Bello, S., Bello, O., & Olufunmilayo, I. (2023). The effectiveness of educational interventions in adolescent reproductive health: A review. *Journal of Public Health Education*, 43(1), 25-34.
- Branca, F., Piwoz, E., Schultink, W., & Sullivan, L. M. (2015). Nutrition and health in women, children, and adolescent girls. *Bmj*, 351.
- Ezeanolue, E. E., Iwelunmor, J., Asaolu, I., Obiefune, M. C., Ezeanolue, C. O., & Ehiri, J. E. (2019). *Impact of male partner's awareness and support for contraceptives on female intent to use contraceptives in southeast Nigeria*. *BMC Public Health*, 19(1), 1-10.
- Flack, C. B., Walker, L., Bickerstaff, A., & Margetts, C. (2020). Socioeconomic disparities in Australian schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic. Melbourne, Australia: Pivot Professional Learning, 13, 319-340.
- Guttmacher Institute. (2017). *Adolescent sexual and reproductive health in the United States*. Guttmacher Institute.
- Hassan, A., & Ali, R. (2021). Peer influence and adolescent reproductive health: A cross-sectional study. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 68(4), 762-769.
- Hendricks, E. A. (2020). Effective approaches to reducing unintended pregnancy and improving girls' education. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*.
- Ibrahim, A. (2017). The role of religious beliefs in shaping reproductive health practices among female adolescents in Sub-Saharan Africa. *African Journal of Reproductive Health*, 21(3), 56-65.
- Masuku, A. S. (2021). The psychosocial effects of teenage pregnancy on high school learners in the Vryheid District, KwaZulu-Natal (Doctoral dissertation).
- Nwagwu, W. E. (2019). *Socio-Cultural Barriers to Contraceptive Use Among Nigerian Adolescents*. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 64(1), 88-94.
- Nwankwo, C., & Ezeani, E. (2018). Cultural taboos and their effects on adolescent sexual health education. *International Journal of Health Education Research*, 25(1), 45-55.
- Okonofua, F., Ntoimo, L., & Ogu, R. (2019). *Barriers to the use of modern contraceptives among female adolescents in Nigeria*. *Journal of Global Health*, 9(2), 020419.
- Oluwole, T., & Adeyemi, K. (2022). Contraceptive use among adolescent girls: Socio-cultural barriers and facilitators. *Contraception*, 105(3), 344-351.



- Omolara, L., & Adebisi, O. (2015). Cultural factors influencing adolescent reproductive health in Nigeria. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 57*(2), 161-167.
- Smith, P., Martin, J., & Stevens, H. (2016). Gender norms and adolescent reproductive health: A systematic review. *Reproductive Health Matters, 24*(48), 103-113.
- Szirom, T. (2017). *Teaching gender?: Sex education and sexual stereotypes* (Vol. 21). Taylor & Francis.
- UNFPA. (2020). *State of World Population 2020: Against My Will - Defying the practices that harm women and girls and undermine equality*. United Nations Population Fund.
- UNICEF. (2019). *A Profile of Adolescent Girls in Nigeria*. United Nations Children's Fund.
- WHO. (2018). *Sexual and Reproductive Health of Adolescents and Youths in the United Nations*. World Health Organization.