

P3.10. Factors Influencing Access and Utilization of Adolescent – Friendly Preventive Reproductive Health Services in Nigeria · Tolulope Monisola Ola, University of Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria
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Background/Significance: Adolescence is a period of rapid growth and development. Globally, this is a period that has unique potentials for new sexual ideas, experiences and opportunities that affect their behaviour. The period of adolescence is plagued by vulnerabilities to biological and socio-cultural problems compounded by the realities of the nation's economy. Lack of adequate health information and services, inadequate life building skills, lack of access and utilization of preventive reproductive health services, underlie the above consequences.

As a result, the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) emphasized that solutions are needed to assist adolescents manage their sexual and reproductive health transitions into adulthood. It described the need for recognition, commitment to and implementation of sexual and reproductive health rights and services by Governments, International organizations, the Community and families for adolescents.

Despite this declaration, adolescent-friendly preventive reproductive health services (PRHS) and programmes remain largely inadequate in most of the sub-Saharan Africa countries. Adolescent reproductive health services are categorized into preventive and curative services. Health education and health guidance are terms used to describe preventive health. Elster and Kuznets (1994) in the Guidelines for Adolescent Preventive Services (GAPS) use the term health guidance as one that encompasses health education, health counseling and anticipatory guidance. Preventive care broadly refers to care that would prevent an illness. This study emphasizes prevention of STIs, HIV/AIDS, pregnancy and early sexual initiation.

Methodology: Ado Ekiti is the capital city of Ekiti State and the most urban and populous community in Ekiti State, Nigeria. 240 adolescents in schools, 30 health workers and 15 key informants were selected using a multistage random sampling technique. The respondents were interviewed using a structured questionnaire containing both open- and close- ended questions. The questionnaire raises questions on adolescents' sexual and reproductive health needs and concerns, affordability and availability of adolescents preventive reproductive health services, accessibility and level of utilization of preventive reproductive health services, and challenges faced by adolescents in accessing and utilizing the services. Analysis of the quantitative data was done with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 11 and the information from focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were transcribed and organized under broad headings that depict different aspects of the discussions. The transcribed information were analyzed descriptively (qualitatively) and used to explain results of quantitative analysis where and when necessary.

Findings: The findings revealed that Ekiti State did not have specific adolescent friendly preventive reproductive health services while adolescents in the State had unmet need for contraception, abortion, access to health information and preventing sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS. The level of access and utilization of preventive reproductive health services by adolescents was low. This was due to the following factors: lack of adolescent-friendly services, lack of relevant and appropriate service delivery-centered approaches which can recommend the improvement of access to family planning services for adolescents, and lack of school-based health services. The study has further established that communication gaps existed that affected the accessibility and utilization of adolescent-friendly preventive reproductive health services between families, health workers and the community.

Knowledge Contribution: It is recommended that the following areas should be improved for adolescents' to better access and utilize health services: securing that reproductive health services are adolescent friendly, regularly create opportunities for promotion and strengthening of the technical capacity of health workers, teachers, school counselors to deal with special adolescent health needs and problems, and increasing adolescents access to information based on the assumption that knowledge will lead to behavioral change.