

The Interplay between African Moral Values and the Effectiveness of Adolescent Family Planning Programs

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Abstract : In many African societies, family planning programs designed for teenage girls face significant challenges. These challenges are the result of the deeply rooted moral and cultural values that shape societal attitudes towards sexuality and reproduction. This study examines the interplay between African moral values and the effectiveness of family planning initiatives targeted at teenage girls. Using a multidisciplinary approach, the research explores how traditional beliefs about premarital chastity, familial honor, and community norms oppose teenage contraception. Though important to community cohesion, these cultural values inadvertently limit contraceptive education and services for teenage girls. Parents were interviewed to collect perceptions about contraception for their teenage daughters. The questionnaire was administered to reproductive health and family planning personnel to obtain data on the cultural challenges faced by adolescent family planning programs. The findings of the study reveal that, in most African cultures, there exists the widely held belief that sex is for married people. As a result, family planning programs are not considered important for teenagers, who are mostly unmarried and are not expected to be sexually active. The study also found that the African society's disapproval of family planning initiatives for unmarried adolescents is fueled by perceptions that such initiatives promote promiscuity and undermine moral values. These perceptions or beliefs are found to be reinforced by parental and community gatekeeping and religious influences. The study underscores the need for culturally sensitive approaches that integrate family planning education with respect for local values and the engagement of key stakeholders such as parents, religious leaders, and community elders. Thus, the study advocates a balance between cultural preservation and public health goals.

Keywords : Africa, contraception, family planning, moral values

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