

Dynamics of Parent to Adolescent Communication on Sexual and Reproductive Health in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Focus on Barriers and Policy Implications

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Abstract : Communication of sexual matters between the parents and adolescents has been seen as one of the strategies that could play a cardinal role in encouraging adolescents to be responsible and delay sexual debut or avoid unprotected sexual intercourse. The increasing rate of teenage pregnancies and new HIV/AIDS infections among adolescents in Sub-Saharan Africa makes the phenomenon worth analysis. The purpose of this paper is to interrogate the dynamics of parent-adolescent communication on sexual and reproductive health in Sub-Sahara. Specifically the paper focuses on barriers to communication between parents and adolescents on sexual and reproductive health and its policy implications. It emanates from the paper that communication on sexual and reproductive health at household level is triggered by death of a relative from a sexual related illness, suspicion on sexual activity, radio programmes and in some instances fliers. Literature engagement reveals that communication between parents and adolescents on sexual and reproductive health is made difficult by economic factors (poverty, lack of privacy and low self-esteem), household demographics (age, sex, class, death), socio-cultural factors (beliefs and religious values) as well as social media. We argue that there is need to use broadcast media to come up with radio and television programmes that create family environments in which sexual and reproductive health issues are discussed. We also recommend that government departments and Non-Governmental Organisations concerned with sexuality issues need to undertake studies that can help dismantle taboos, prejudices and stereotypes that impede sexual and reproductive health communication between parents and adolescents.

Keywords : parent, adolescent, communication, sexual and reproductive health

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