

Reproductive health and rights of young women in Ethiopia: the need for sexual health education

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Introduction: Access to reproductive health services for young women is limited in developing countries and their rights for quality reproductive and sexual health are violated, and are increasingly becoming behavioral, societal and developmental challenges. Ethiopia with more than 100 million people ranks the second most populous country in Africa. It is estimated that the country's young people to be 21.7% of its population by 2020 (UN, 2017).

Objectives: This study assesses the use of reproductive health services among young women (age 15-24).

Methods: Women fertility history data from the Ethiopian Demographic and Health Survey (EDHS, 2016) were used to describe the utilization and distribution of reproductive health services by young women (age 15-24) in Ethiopia. The factors associated with fertility preference, contraceptive practice, and knowledge about HIV prevention will be examined by binary logistic regression.

Results: Nearly 24% of maternal deaths occur among young women. The descriptive statistics show some of the important reproductive health indicators: unmet need for family planning, 19.5%; contraceptive prevalence rate, 35%; and unintended pregnancy (wanted later or wanted not at all), 48% among young women. Similarly, unmet need for family planning is high among young women i.e. 22.1% for urban and 31.2% for rural counterparts. On the other hand, knowledge about HIV prevention is disproportionate among young people in terms of gender (39.8% males' vs 24.3% females') and only 28% rural residents and 20% young women in the lowest wealth quintile are aware of HIV prevention. The observed differences in SRH services utilization by residence, wealth quintiles and gender indicate that young women are unfairly disprivileged and their reproductive health and rights are not met in Ethiopia.

Conclusion: Continued investment is essential to reduce or eliminate gaps in access to and utilization of SRH services by young women in Ethiopia. Lack of focus in SRH services for young women may be considered as denying for their SRH rights.