

LEVERAGING COMMUNITY-BASED INTERVENTIONS TO IMPROVE TEENAGE GIRLS' MENTAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH OUTCOMES IN KIBERA SLUMS

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Introduction

Teenage girls in Kibera Slums face several challenges that threaten both their reproductive and mental health. Poverty, gender inequality, and a lack of youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services contribute to high rates of teenage pregnancy and HIV infection. These adversities are compounded by mental health stressors such as stigma, trauma, anxiety, and depression, often triggered by sexual exploitation, early pregnancy, or lack of support systems. In response, CBOs, NGOs, and government agencies have implemented interventions such as peer education, economic empowerment, and club formation to address both SRH and mental health outcomes. This research aimed to evaluate effective community-based interventions for improving the SRH outcomes of adolescent girls in Kibera Slums that may be implemented in a resource-constrained context.

Objectives;

1. To assess the effectiveness of peer education initiatives on teenage girls' knowledge, attitudes, and mental well-being regarding SRH.
2. To investigate how economic empowerment initiatives improve the SRH and mental health of teenage girls in Kibera Slums.
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of newly established clubs in increasing awareness, changing behavioral beliefs related to contraceptive use, and providing mental health support among teenage girls in Kibera Slums.

Methodology

The study targeted adolescent girls aged 15-24 from five Kibera villages (Gatwekera, Soweto East, Laini Saba, Kisumu Ndogo, and Lindi) who had participated in community-based SRH and mental health initiatives. Using simple random sampling, 500 teenagers were surveyed through structured questionnaires and one-on-one interviews. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and presented in tables and charts.

Results

The adolescents were aged 15-24 years, with 39% aged 24, 30% between 21-23, 18% between 18-20, and 13% between 15-17. Regarding peer education programs, 33% found them very effective and 31% effective in improving attitudes and understanding of SRH and mental health by creating

safe spaces to discuss stigma and emotional challenges; 25% found them less effective, and 11% ineffective. Economic empowerment initiatives positively impacted 32% of respondents who felt more empowered to express their reproductive rights and manage mental health stressors, 25% who felt less likely to be sexually exploited, 27% who made better healthcare decisions including seeking mental health care, and 17% who extended their schooling and gained improved access to sexual education, which contributed to better mental well-being. Newly formed clubs were rated extremely effective by 16% and effective by 26% in raising contraceptive knowledge and supporting mental health awareness, but 40% found them less effective and 18% ineffective, often due to limited resources and inconsistent engagement.

Conclusions

The study demonstrated how different community-based interventions are in terms of their ability to improve the mental and SRH outcomes of girls of adolescent age living in the Kibera Slums. Even while initiatives for economic empowerment and peer education have encouraging outcomes, more work is required to improve the efficacy of newly founded clubs and other interventions.

References

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