



Contribution ID: 106

Type: **Poster Presentation Only**

Knowledge, attitude and practice of adolescents on sexuality in public secondary schools in the city of Yaoundé

Friday, September 19, 2025 3:27 PM (3 minutes)

Background: Sexuality refers to the set of biological, physiological, morphological and psychological conditions that characterize the male and female sexes. According to the World Health Organization, adolescence is a period between 10-19 years old. It is characterized by major transformations of the organism associated with the development of primary and secondary sexual characteristics, morphological and psychological changes. Given the increasing rate of STIs in young people aged 15-24 years old and the increase in early pregnancy rate and its complications in adolescents.

Methods: We carried out a descriptive cross-sectional study over 5 months (from February to June 2020) assessing knowledge, attitudes and practices of adolescents with regards to sexuality in 7 public secondary schools randomly selected in the city of Yaoundé using a pretested questionnaire.

Results: A total of 1399 adolescents were recruited. The mean age was 16 ± 2 years. The most represented age group was 14-16 years old, females made up 63.5% of the population, 99.57% were unmarried. Regarding knowledge, the commonest known STI was HIV / AIDS (92.78%) while the other STIs were little known. Only 16.08% of adolescents talked about sexuality with their parents and 27.88% did not know the exact use of the condom. Regarding attitudes, 56.83% of the adolescents did not accept the systematic use of condoms during sexual intercourse. The mean age at first intercourse was 15.2 ± 2 years old with an intercourse frequency of 34% and 59.98% of the adolescents had at least 2 sexual partners while 34.04% did not use condoms the last time they had sex. Anal sex was practiced by 8.5%, oral sex by 16.18% and sexual masturbation by 7.65% of the population.

Conclusion: At the end of our study, it was observed that most adolescents had insufficient knowledge on sexuality, only half had good attitudes, and many had harmful practices which led to physical and psychosocial complications. Campaigns for behavioral changes, intersectoral and interdisciplinary education on sexuality are essential for improving knowledge, attitudes and practices of adolescents.

Keywords: Sexuality, Knowledge, Attitude, Practice, Adolescents

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Session Classification: Poster SRHR

Track Classification: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights