A Grant Proposal to the Federal Government on Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive health

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**Introduction**

There are approximately 1 billion individuals between 10 and 19 years living the world today. Nearly 70 per cent of them are living in developing countries under different conditions from the previous generations. They have greater access to formal education, technology and social media, which exposes them to more exposure to new ideas at a young age. A combination of these factors results in engagement in sexual activity at a young age, causing early marriages or even unplanned pregnancies. The dangers of engaging in early sexual activities could also have health concerns in the era of HIV/AIDS. The government should be at the forefront of promoting health education to reduce the impacts of sexual activity among adolescents.

**Background**

Adolescent sexual and reproductive health involves the development of initiative that educate individuals on the benefits of abstinence as a method of birth control. Nevertheless, those who cannot abstain should be taught the various family planning techniques available so that they can prevent unplanned pregnancies. Vázquez-Nava et al. (2014), estimate that unplanned pregnancy constitutes between 33 and 82% of the adolescent pregnancies across the world. The impacts of unplanned pregnancy vary depending on the family support of the individual with a majority of the students dropping out of school to take care of their newborns. This is common for students from low-income families and they are more likely to transfer poverty to future generations. A significant portion of the adolescents who get pregnant end up getting married. According to the Science Daily (2017), some of the adverse effects of early marriages include pregnancy-related complications associated with the young body. Adolescents engaging in early marriages may also be susceptible to malnutrition, poor mental health and domestic violence. They may also have limited access to contraception and therefore having many children which increases poverty levels. Even worse is the fact that the trend may follow for their daughters, who may also marry young resultantly expanding the level of poverty along the family line.

Adolescents who find themselves pregnant may end up aborting their unborn children. While most states in the United States have legalized abortion, many developing nations continue to term abortion as illegal. This often sees pregnant teens resulting in unsafe mechanisms to abort their unborn children. A study conducted by Ushie, Izugbara, Mutua and Kabiru (2018), reveals that the complications associated with unsafe abortions are some of the leading causes of mortality in mothers in sub-Saharan Africa. The research utilized a sample of 1145 adolescents with a diagnosis of incomplete, missed, inevitable, complete or septic abortion for the past one month. The results revealed that eight per cent of the participants had a previous induced abortion. 46% of the participants sought abortion at an advanced age, and this contributed to a high rate of post-abortion complications. The Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (2018), acknowledges that youths between the ages of 15 and 24 years are at a high risk of acquiring sexually transmitted diseases such as chlamydia and HPV for females. Despite these high rates of STDs among the youths, it remains difficult for them to receive STD prevention services due to long waiting lines, inadequate funds for the services, method of specimen collection, embarrassment associated with seeking treatment for STDs and the conflict between the clinic and school hours.

**Strategic activities**

The factors discussed above reveal that there is an urgent need to develop strategies directed towards the promotion of adolescent sexual and reproductive health. The government should offer resources geared towards the promotion of sexual education in schools to ensure that adolescents understand the risks associated with early sexual activity so that they can change their behavior to avert these risks (World Health Organization, 2009). Health and reproductive education should also focus on the various contraceptives available so that girls can protect themselves from unplanned pregnancies. The government could even distribute free condoms to students so that they can adopt responsible sexual behavior. The government should also collaborate with the health sector for the development of friendly health services for adolescents. These could include interventions to reach the marginalized, responses to generate community acceptance, and facility and out of facility-based interventions (Denno, Hoopes and Chandra-Mouli, 2015). Positive Youth Development programs are also necessary for increasing the awareness of the youths of the dangers associated with irresponsible sexual activity. Gavin, Catalano and Markham (2010), acknowledge that the introduction of such strategies in schools will help students to apply the knowledge acquired in sex education programmes. Positive Youth Development programs also encourage youths to have a positive approach towards the developmental challenges other than engaging in irresponsible sexual activity.

**Conclusion**

Advancements in technology have enabled youths to access new ideas and eventually engaging in early sexual activity. The implication is that there is an increase in adolescent pregnancy, and this affects their academic performance. Most of the students from low-income families are forced to drop out of school for the lack of family or financial support. Others result in early marriages that subject them to a myriad of problems including mental disorders, violence and a lack of access to contraceptives. Some of the youths may seek unsafe abortion practices that may result in death or complications during subsequent pregnancies. The government should intervene in the development of public education programs geared towards addressing the problem of irresponsible sexual activity among youths. Collaboration with the health sector is also necessary in the development of safe mechanisms for accessing reproductive healthcare among adolescents.

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