Breaking Barriers in Ghana: Impact of Reproductive Health Curriculum and Cultural Activity Sessions on Adolescent Girls

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The Problem

- Every year, approximately 16 million adolescent girls (ages 15 to 19) give birth and 3 million adolescent girls experience unsafe abortions (WHO, 2015).
- In Ghana, 1 in 3 adolescent girls (ages 10-24) are at risk for unplanned pregnancies or sexually transmitted infections (Guttmacher Institute, 1996-2015).
- Staff in one school within Central Region of Ghana, reported high pregnancy and dropout rates among girls in the 2013-2014 academic year.
- Effective sexual and reproductive health programs: promote health-enhancing change among peers (Brieger et al., 2001)
  - Include a health-drama program (Harvey et al., 2000)
  - Adapt to community traditions (Erulkar et al., 2004)

Research Question

A culturally appropriate after-school girls club was formed. The effectiveness of the club was evaluated by two research questions:
1. Is there a significant impact on academic self-perception, self-efficacy, civic responsibility, and sense of school membership for girls in the club?
2. Did girls gain knowledge on contraceptive methods and sexually transmitted diseases?

Recruitment of Participants

- Club facilitators invited girls who may be at risk of teen pregnancy.
- 27 girls (ages 12-18) were selected to participate in the program.

Measures

Girl-Child Survey
- 55-item Likert-Questionnaire pre and post intervention
- Measures girls academic self-perception, social and self efficacy, civic responsibility, and sense of school membership
- Higher scores indicate higher levels

Activity Log Forms
- Documented topics covered, activities performed, and girls’ engagement levels

Reproductive Health Test
- 18-item questionnaire assessed girls knowledge on male and female reproductive systems, pregnancy, and contraceptives

Procedures

- The girls met twice a week for 46 weeks (one academic year).
- Club activities focused on:
  - Sexual and reproductive health (SRH)
  - Cultural activity (CA) sessions designed to supplement the reproductive health curriculum and challenge cultural norms

Conclusion

- Anecdotal midterm reports from girls indicate that they valued learning reproductive health topics not typically discussed in schools and gained confidence from engaging in cultural activities traditionally reserved for boys, such as drumming.
- Preliminary midterm results suggest that the club may significantly increase girls’ self-efficacy and confidence, and decrease pregnancy rate.