

Educational Support of Parents and Adolescent Precocious Pregnancy Risk Prevention

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Abstract

Original Research Article

In the Ivorian urban context, female adolescent in school are adopting high-risk sexual behavior that leads to a high number of unwanted pregnancies. The occurrence of a pregnancy is feared by parents. Such a situation calls for greater vigilance and preventive action. In this context, this study examines the educational dynamics provided by parents during puberty to prevent early pregnancy. A qualitative survey was conducted in the city of Yopougon with 17 families. The results show that the interviewed parents are aware of the threats of sexual risk that await teenage girls. In their attempts to prevent these risks, they provide educational support to adolescent girls who are not very effective. For the most part, we note that girls are not sufficiently prepared by parents to face the sexual challenges of teenage. The lack of communication between parents and children, the insufficient consideration of adolescents' sexual needs and expectations, and the non-transmission of behavioral attitudes explain the lack of family's educational support to teenagers at puberty.

Key words: Education to sexuality - adolescent - prevention - risky sexual behavior - early pregnancy.

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INTRODUCTION

Youth sexual and reproductive health is one of the main state concerns faced Governments in developing countries. There are several reasons to dwell on the situation of adolescent girls who are a vulnerable social stratum. Adolescence is perceived as a transitional stage between childhood and adulthood [1] and a risky step. It raises many questions regarding its complexity [2]. This period of human evolution is relatively characterized by a psychological instability often marked by a feeling of "invulnerability"[3]. During this period, adolescent girls aspire to more autonomy, adopt attitudes of defiance of the established parental rules and are animated by a will to discover sexuality.

In Côte d'Ivoire, during the last decade, the phenomenon of early pregnancy in schools became a worry. Despite the observed gains (overall decline in pregnancy cases), the number of early pregnancies is still worryingly high. According to the data of the National Program of School and University Health (PNSSU), 4276 cases of pregnancy including 139 cases in primary education and 4137 cases in secondary school were recorded during the academic 2016/2017 against 5076 cases in 2012/2013. The same source

indicated that girls under the age of 18 are affected by the phenomenon of early pregnancy during schooling. For the academic year 2016/2017 period, the analysis of the situation in high school indicated that the phenomenon was developed in urban areas (91.7% of cases) headed by the district of Abidjan which records 353 cases of pregnancies. Under the effect of rapid urbanization, we are witnessing a relaxation of morals [4] and a change in traditional = ways of introducing young people to sexuality. The early sexuality that results is likely to accentuate the extent of early pregnancy.

This set of facts is consecutive to the risk behaviors adopted by Ivorian teenagers. The 2016 multiple indicator survey in Côte d'Ivoire indicates that the majority of girls (56.7%) aged between 15 to 19 had already had sex. This adolescent sexual precocity is characterized by unprotected sex and multiple sexual partners [5].

In such a context of high risk of unwanted pregnancies, the conduct of specific actions in terms of prevention [6] aimed at young people and particularly adolescent girls is imperative. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines prevention as "all measures to prevent or reduce the number and severity

of diseases, accidents and disabilities" [7] (p 100). To achieve this goal, WHO recommends intervention at three levels: primary prevention, secondary prevention and tertiary prevention [8]. With regard to these three levels of intervention, the so-called primary intervention responds best to the prevention of early pregnancies. Primary prevention is defined as "*all acts designed to reduce the incidence of a disease, thus reducing the occurrence of new cases or delaying the age of onset*" [7]. It therefore contributes to the protection of health and the assurance of well-being against all preventable risks [9]. Implementation of this type of prevention can prevent or delay the occurrence of early pregnancy in young girls [10].

As part of this type of prevention, several strategic approaches are advocated, including the implementation of educational programs on sexuality. In order to promote the health of young people and adolescents, WHO advocates comprehensive sexuality education [11]. It is defined as "*a curriculum-based teaching and learning process that addresses the cognitive, emotional, physical, and social aspects of sexuality*" [12]. It focuses on sexual health information and education with a view to improving the level of knowledge and changing attitudes and behaviors about sexuality. The goal is to empower children and adolescents to be more empowered and to establish more responsible social and sexual relationships.

Although school is the framework where this form of education is mostly given [13], WHO recommends more parental involvement. They have an important role to play in preparing girls for puberty so that they have responsible sex with as little risk as possible. The priority involvement of parents in adolescent sexuality education is aimed at the transmission of skills and behavioral skills that enable adolescent girls to have the means to make informed choices about sexuality. This supposes in this situation, that they are sufficiently prepared to avoid or prevent any risk of contraction of an early pregnancy in adolescence. In this perspective, the role that parents must play is more of an accompaniment of young girls at puberty. Accompaniment is understood here as an aid, an indispensable assistance to a person in a situation that allows him to make choices in a conscious and thoughtful way [14]. It is a process in which parents have a special relationship with their daughter. They receive useful information, adapted education and ongoing support for better health development and promotion. The goal is to guide an individual to a desired situation. The aim of this work is to examine, in the Ivorian urban context, the process of parental educational support in the prevention of unwanted pregnancy risks during adolescence.

METHOD

This study was conducted in the district of Abidjan, specifically in the city of Yopougon, where the

number of pregnancies at school is high. It is considered as a social framework favoring the emergence of risky sexual practices because of its configuration marked by the flowering of the flow of drinks [15]. In this city, we have selected 17 family units; each unit is composed of father, mother and teenager (s) aged from 11 to 16 years. The choice of these units was based on the snowball sample techniques and the volunteer sample. This qualitative and descriptive study used interview guides as data collection instruments. These guides made allow to understand the teenagers' sexual knowledge, needs, the parents' view of their behavior and the dynamics of educational support during puberty. The data processing was done manually. Through a content analysis, we have been able to identify the significant elements which permitted to describe the situation in relation to the themes addressed.

RESULTS

Adolescent girls' needs and expectations in terms of educational support from parents

Adolescence is a time of change, challenge and experimentation for girls. At this stage of evolution, she is animated by a feeling of curiosity and raises many questions related to the changes she undergoes. Not always knowing what to do, they are faced with constant pressure. They look for answers to their concerns in their environment with relatives, especially parents. They need educational support that results in the acquisition of knowledge and behavioral skills to facilitate the adoption of responsible sexual behavior.

The concerns of adolescent girls are varied in terms of sexuality. For the most part, they are more concerned about the relationship with the opposite sex. Precisely, they wonder about: the best way to succeed in their first sexual intercourse, sexual impulses and pleasures, the effective use of contraception, recognition and the management of risky situations. The adolescent girls interviewed expressed their sexual needs in a variety of ways: "*When we say that a girl is in love there, how does it happen? I've heard about menstrual calculus, but if I tell Mom to show me, she'll get angry. She'll say I want to look for boy.*" "*I want to know, the first time (sexual intercourse), how it goes ...*".

In this quest for information about sexuality, adolescent girls, as a family, have more recourse to the mother. She remains the person of trust. They would like to address all sexual issues with her, but this is not always the case when dealing with sensitive topics. This situation is a limit in meeting the information needs of adolescent girls.

With dad, we cannot talk about these things. Mom, at least she understands me. When i have problems like that, it is with her that i exchange and she gives me advice. (Teen, 14 years old).

Often when i ask weird questions, like, mum how do we make love to a boy, she gets angry, and she does not answer me and asks me to leave her alone. While i want to understand. (Teen, 16 years old).

My 15-year-old daughter asks me a lot of questions especially about sexuality. But, i do not answer all his questions. Do you think that the last time in our exchanges, she asks me mom how do we make babies there? How's it going? i asked her why do you ask me all these questions ... what is it for? (Mother of the family, 36 years old).

Although the information and advice given by parents can play an important role in the prevention of risky sexual behavior, the teenage girls interviewed also want their parents to transmit behavioral skills to them. They teach them to recognize risk situations and strategies to avoid them. It is know-how acquired allowing teenage girls to be autonomous, equipped and responsible enough to adopt the desired behavior. This implies more parental involvement alongside teenage girls in the educational process. The teenage girls interviewed indicate that this type of support is lacking at the parent level.

Often, when I go out, I'm told my darling, you're pretty you have to stop." It's not always easy with the boys. Maybe if I could talk about these things with my mother, she would teach me how to behave so that the boys outside stop bothering me. (Teenager, 14 years old).

Me, I do not know. For example, if someone tells you the first time ... you have to come, we will have sex. How are you going to avoid getting pregnant? (Teenager, 16 years old).

Adolescence is a crucial step in the development of the girl. When this period occurs, the girl gets more attention from the parents. Due to puberty, adolescent girls undergo transformations that draw the attention of parents. Regardless of the peculiarities, the interviewed parents are unanimous on the fact that the manifestations of puberty observed at the level of their children are of a physical and physiological order. These visible signs in the girl call the parents to revise their eyes and to pay more attention to her now.

The age of puberty is a period of transformation at all levels, but especially at the physical level because that's what is visible eh ... at the physical level girls will start to develop chest. That's what's visible huh! We do not need a magnifying glass to see them. They develop curves that begin to interest boys. (Father, 46 years old)

Since my daughter was 13 years old, she started having her periods. It shows that she goes from the stage of child to the stage of woman ... with the appearance of everything we know ... breasts ... curve ... curves ... etc. (Mother, 29 years old).

These multiple upheavals bring to the girl in adolescence new experiences and induce unexpected behavior. She makes efforts of adaptation and unconsciously, she now adopts a behavior that is not always understood by the neighbourhood. In the majority of cases, parents admit that their teenage daughters adopt new behaviors that they still do not understand.

Observations made at the level of behavior are most often expressed by self-assertion and transgression of rules established by parents. In addition, the change in behavior of the teenager is also noticeable in terms of dress. Parents also denounce the fact that teenage girls are more interested in sexy outfits that highlight their feminine strengths. At this age, they are likely to have more neat gaits. Everything suggests that the girl wants from his neighbourhood recognition its maturity and some consideration. Faced with this situation, parents' helplessness in managing the adolescent's new behavior is often a source of conflict in families.

Since my daughter started having these periods, she has become something else in the house. I do not understand her anymore; I do not know what she ate. She thinks she's grown up. She speaks to me as if I have become her comrade in the house. When I speak one, she says three. I do not know what to do. (Mother of the family, 36 years old).

My 13-year-old daughter now thinks herself great. She tends to do what she wants. For example at the level of dress, for a while, I realize that it tends to wear short clothes and make out its curves. What I do not like much ... when this situation occurs in my presence I ask him to go change. What she does not like very much. (Mother of the family, 36 years old).

At this level of reflection, it is not so much the physiological manifestations that concern parents but rather the attitude and behavior of adolescent girls that result. The observations made by the parents about the development of the girl at puberty arouse more concern than admiration on their part. Parents are most afraid that their daughters will engage in risky behaviors and fall into the trap of sexuality that can lead to irreversible consequences. This concern, acknowledged by the majority of parents interviewed, reflects their awareness of the dangers girls face during adolescence.

My fear is that my daughter is kidding ... I mean, I'm afraid she'll get wrapped up by a boy. Unfortunately, these are things we see today. Often, they are adults. Especially since my daughter has a lot of curves and she is not her age, I'm afraid that someone goes to put other things in her head ... and suddenly it quickly returns to sexual practice early. Here is ... that side scares me a lot ... I'm afraid she sends me a pregnancy one day ... if it happens, it'll heat up even his dad will mix, my daughter and me. (Mother, 42 years old).

As a father, of course I can not hope that she is currently sexually active to bring me back here one morning pregnancy ... The fact that she is 14 years old and that she is big worries me a lot. Even the most unconscious parent can not hope that such a situation will happen to his teenage daughter. (Father, 45 years old).

Several determinants base parents' fears. For some, the elements implicated in risky sexual behavior are to be sought at the level of the adolescent herself and also in terms of her environment and environment. They admit that adolescence is a period characterized by the naivety of girls. The psychological immaturity they display, very often pushes them to adopt an attitude marked by instability, impulsiveness and the taste of risk especially in terms of sexual conduct. Also, with parents that the perverse effects of modernization are important factors to take into account. These different factors can negatively influence the behavior of the girl especially in a social context in full mutation where she spends a large part of her time outside the family.

Its fear there can be explained huh ... it's really difficult but it's the reality. In town, we do not spend enough time with our children. We are always running. In the morning, you parents, go to work. Your daughter, take the path to school alone so many things can happen there without necessarily being the result of what you gave them as education .. When you're not in the house, there is also the media that are there. (Father, 49 years old).

Another parent adds

For me it's the environment that underpins my fear. In Abidjan, there is too much seduction: young people, alcohol and all that. Even if we parents, we try to give advice to children, they are more influenced by what they see and hear around them. In these conditions, we do not master anything and it is worrying. (Father, 41 years old)

Other parents fear that their daughters will be influenced by bad companies and the media. They also

question the behavior of some parents who have difficulty assuming their responsibility as educators. By their attitudes of laissez-faire, they allow to develop bad habits in girls which are likely to be transmitted by freindship.

There are so many things that get kids interested in sex fast ... and I'm scared of it. Today, in movies that go on TV, there are a lot of erotic scenes in it. A friend of the child can tell him something like that I have a boyfriend. And my daughter whom I know there, she is very child in the head. A boy may like him. She can decide to do like her classmate without our knowledge (Mother of the family, 30 years old).

I know children who wear indecent clothes to go out ... but as a mother, I feel very bad. I find it scandalous that girls come out of the house half-naked to go for a walk. If you let your girl hang out with these kinds of friends, do not be surprised by the rest. I'm wondering if parents are looking at things Maybe they do not have the time too. Do not have time too for her child, I find it irresponsible on the part of these parents. (Mother of the family, 43 years old)

In such a context, where many factors are the source of risky sexual behavior, it is imperative for parents to conduct educational activities with teenagers.

Educational support of parents at puberty

In the context of parent-child communication at the family level, parents' mission is to transmit sexual knowledge to adolescent girls. When this transmission of information is well conducted, it offers the possibility of acquiring knowledge useful for a good orientation of the behavior of the girls. The analysis of the interviews carried out shows that there is a consensus on the need to provide educational support to girls during their adolescence. Parents recognize that they need to help their children during puberty to prevent them from engaging in risky behaviors that can lead to situations such as early pregnancy. To help teenagers experience this sensitive period with the least possible risk, they provide assistance that is essentially the transmission of information on sexuality and monitoring of adolescent behavior.

At the level of the transmission of information, it is noted that the exchanges in family especially for the questions related to the sexuality remain weak. Unlike parents, mothers are more open and supportive of exchanges with teenage girls. They initiate and encourage exchanges with their children to allow them to express themselves and to express their concerns related to sexuality. This opening of mothers is appreciated by girls who make them confidants.

As a mother I try to be the confidante of my daughter. I tell her what she can not tell her friends ... she would have to tell me. Today, when I feel that she hesitates to ask me a question, I myself try to open the gap for her to express herself. And she appreciates this step. Because I tell myself that I am his mother, I am better placed to give him advice. When she asks me questions, I try to answer her because I know she is in a sensitive period. If I do not give her the information she needs, she will listen to the truths of others. And eventually it can be complicated. (Mother of the family, 33 years old)

Another mother adds this:

Accompanying my daughter in this period, for me it's important. When she goes out, I know that she hears and sees a lot of things outside with her classmates. For example by exchanging, she can tell me this is what my friend said or did. When I see that what his friend has said can negatively influence him, I try to prove him, to show that there is bad information in there. Like this, it can itself gauge the information received. (Mother of the family, 30 years old)

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to examine the educational dynamics of parents (father, mother) to prevent the risk of teenage pregnancy. Interviews with several families show that parents in this educational process do not sufficiently prepare girls to face the challenges of adolescence.

Indeed, the development of puberty that characterizes adolescence gives rise to the needs of girls in terms of assertiveness, curiosity and explores the unknown. The results showed that adolescent girls are more likely to be concerned about sexuality. Their high desire to discover the opposite sex causes them to be more concerned about the best ways to go about their sexual experience with as little risk as possible. The search for adequate answers to the parents, the first actors of their socialization, remains without favorable consequences because of the divergences in the aspirations of the two generations. Adolescent girls aspire to discover sex early, while parents want to delay sex initiation as long as possible. They develop contrary values. In this regard, Dayoro [15] conducting a study on the issue of sex education in the home, notes that this opposition of ideas is justified by the fact that parents have not yet integrated the new dynamics of the sexual culture among young people. In this context, the opportunity for adolescent girls to develop useful knowledge about sexuality with parents is reduced and the level of vulnerability of girls remains high due to their exposure to the adoption of risky sexual behavior.

This situation raises concerns among parents who fear premature entry of adolescent girls into sexuality with dramatic consequences. They are anxious to prevent these risks without, however, putting in place an effective educational strategy that prepares teenagers to face these realities responsibly. In puberty, the approaches taken by parents are improvised as opportunities arise and are not clearly defined to prepare and "arm" teenage girls. For the most part, these approaches are based on the transmission of information and the monitoring of adolescent behavior. While UNESCO [16] advocates that, in order to be effective in preventing the risk of unwanted pregnancies in adolescence, puberty education should be conducted with a focus on skill acquisition. Essential condition for modifying behaviors towards a desired situation. This inadequacy noted in the adoption of adequate pedagogical approaches by the parents raises the problem of their preparation to adequately ensure the role of assistant educator for adolescent girls. At this level of the question, Vandenhout *et al.* [17] point out that the success of such an action first requires providing parents with protective knowledge and skills; thus, they can better help children to prevent sexual risks. The parents' training deficit [15] justifies their approach by trial and error.

In relation to the transmission of information, our results reveal that the parent-child communication is deficient. It is infrequent in families and when it is conducted, takes the form of parental direction, leaving little room for adolescent girls to express their needs. Doudou [18] confirms the accidental nature of parent-child exchanges in many families. While adolescent girls aspire to benefit from sexuality education [19] that guarantees them behavioral skills for responsible sexuality. Good parent-child communication has the beneficial effect of reducing the risk of early pregnancy [20]. It assumes that parents succeed in establishing a relationship of trust and openness in which the young person feels comfortable to confide more easily [21].

CONCLUSION

Through this study, we show the value of conducting quality puberty education in preventing the risk of unwanted teenage pregnancy. In urban areas, girls are not adequately prepared by parents to cope with the difficulties of adolescence. This deficiency, which results in a high number of unwanted pregnancies, is dependent on the adolescent skills gap to assume responsible sexuality with the least possible risk.

To remedy this problem, it is more than necessary to initiate a training project for parents to ensure that their child's sexual education is properly carried out. Thus, they will be able to provide adequate responses to their sexual knowledge needs, instilling in them values and behavioral skills to make wise choices and responsible sexuality.

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