

Menarche in African girls in some post-secondary institutions in Kenya

Abstract:

Researchers administered a questionnaire to 457 female students (mean age, 22 years) in 4 teacher and 1 agricultural training colleges in Kenya to examine adolescent fertility. The average age at menarche for these post secondary female students stood at 14.4 years with a range of 9-16.5 years. This mean age was 13.9 years for secondary school girls in another similar study in Kenya. The leading source of information about the menstrual period was a friend (36.2%), followed by a teacher/nurse (23.3%) and then the mother (21.6%). Menstruation lasted between 3-4 days for 75.6% of the students. 64.8% experienced moderate to severe pain during their period which may have an impact on school performance. Almost all believed that family life education should be part of the school's curriculum and 58% said it should be taught to students between 12-15 years old. 35.9% felt it should be taught to those 12 years old. 98.7% said a woman should teach the course. 71.1% believed it should be taught to both sexes in the same room. 58.2% reported no access to family planning services. 40.2% did not practice any family planning (some of these may not have yet had sexual intercourse, however). Only 19.1% used modern contraceptives, e.g., oral contraceptives and the diaphragm. The results of this study revealed that the schools need to better inform females about menstruation and family planning. Further, family planning professionals must target female officials and family planning leaders need to review those regulations that prohibit family planning services to post secondary schools.