

Factors that Determine How Suburban Women Approach their Sexual and Reproductive Health

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Abstract

Background: Evidence confirms that young women in Albania are exposed to risky sexual behaviors: the age of the first sexual intercourse has lowered, abortion rates and prevalence of STIs have increased. Yet, national health surveys data disclose that the use of modern contraceptives and the use of health care services for reproductive health issues is very low.

Aim: The aim of this qualitative study is to explore how young women in peri-urban areas take decisions and engage with health care services on issues related to sexual and reproductive health.

Methods and Results: About ten focus groups with 100 young women confirmed that while knowledge and information on reproductive and sexual health are relatively high and accurate, the

low utilization of contraceptives and lack of engagement with the health care personnel are the major issue. The women confirm that they ‘are embarrassed’ or ‘have difficulties’ engaging with Health Care Personnel on issues of reproductive and sexual health. The women seem to be unable to affect the decision on which contraceptive method to use, as this is a mainly male-dominated decision.

Conclusion: The findings of this study do suggest that lack of self-efficacy is usually the main barrier for young women when it comes to making important decisions for their sexual and reproductive health care services. Therefore, programs should be designed appropriately to build the confidence of young women and promote positive examples. Health care

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personnel should be trained with proper communication skills on top of their professional education. Additionally, in areas like those targeted in this study, community outreach events might be organized when women can gather and discuss together and help and support each other take the right decisions.

Keywords: motivating factors, reproductive health, health-seeking behavior.