Reviewer’s report

Title: Reproductive health communication between mother and adolescent daughter in Bangladesh: a cross-sectional study

Version: 0 Date: 05 Feb 2019

Reviewer: Preeti Kudesia

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for providing the opportunity to review this interesting work. My comments are broadly structured around two areas: (i) the aim of the study, methodology used, and conclusions drawn; and (ii) seeking more clarity on some aspects of the study.

The aim of this study, as stated by the authors, is to analyze adolescent girls' communication on SRH issues with their mothers and influencing factors, which may provide evidence for policy makers or program planners to improve the sexual and reproductive health of adolescents in Bangladesh.

The study data and analysis indicate that the overall status of communication on reproductive health between adolescent daughters and their mothers was not good. Based on this, the authors conclude and recommend that incorporating a sexual and reproductive health education program into the textbook and supplying behavioral change communication is essential in Bangladesh.

The findings of the study and conclusion drawn could benefit from substantial strengthening, for the following reasons:

Methodology and study design: the study is based on a self-administered questionnaire to a group of school-going girls. The methodology and study is silent on whether important aspects were explored even through the questionnaire - who initiated the conversation, the mother or daughter; was it always related to menarche; what was the socio-economic status that the girls came from; what was the degree of access to cell phones and social media to the girls? As part of describing the limitations, the authors state that only mother-daughter communication on reproductive health from the perspective of daughters was reported on. Therefore, studies from the perspective of both mother and daughter would provide a representative picture. Moreover, considering the great variety of geographic and cultural backgrounds in Bangladesh, the data in this study may not be representative of the entirety of adolescent students. This is an important limitation, and given this, could this study alone provide the recommendation that it does for policy makers?

The study states that female adolescents in Bangladesh are faced with increasing RH-related risks. Further, Bangladesh ranks amongst the highest in the proportion of child marriages as well as early childbearing globally, with an adolescent fertility rate amongst the highest in the world. Literature is
also quoted that in Bangladesh, social norms and cultural traditions encourage girls to marry at an early age, and that a large proportion of marriages still take place before the legal age of 18 years old. Also, traditionally, daughters in Bangladesh have a trusting relationship with their mothers due to gender homogeneity. They spend more time in the home with their mothers because movement outside of the house is restricted in rural areas due to its patriarchal culture. Moreover, in a girl's adolescent period they usually do not have any credible access to information beyond the family, and they are not allowed to go outside except to school without parents' permission. This is substantiated by the findings of this study where mothers were considered the primary source of reproductive health knowledge for 62% of students. Given this, there seems to be a strong implication that the RH risks to adolescent girls are within the remit of marriage, and deep socio-cultural norms. The study quotes that sometimes mothers think that prior knowledge about sexual health may lead adolescents to become sexually active. Given this, does the study need to explore more in depth the socio-cultural behaviors and attitudes towards RH education in schools. School teachers also come from the same socio-cultural milieu.

Based on this, the authors may want to carefully craft the conclusion and recommendations, and possibly suggest further relevant work and studies before advising the policy makers.

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