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# Knowledge, Attitudes, and Beliefs about Sexual Health and Behavior in Huye, Rwanda

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## **Knowledge, Attitudes, and Beliefs about Sexual Health and Behavior in Huye, Rwanda**

**Introduction:** Pregnancy and its associated complication is the leading cause of death for women aged 15-19 worldwide. Teenage pregnancy is correlated with increased health complications, death, poverty, and societal stigma. Pregnancy in Rwanda has been documented at rates of 7% among teen women.

**Objective:** The objectives of this research study include assessing the attitudes, knowledge, and beliefs of adolescents in the Huye District of Rwanda regarding sexual health and behavior. We hypothesize that gaps in sexual health knowledge may exist and that differing beliefs among male and female adolescents affect adolescent sexual decision making, and, therefore, teenage pregnancy prevalence.

**Methods:** This study recruited men and women aged 15-25 from secondary schools in the Huye District in Rwanda. 270 students completed a survey adapted from Kaiser Family Foundation on adolescent sexual health, and a total of 26 students participated in four gender specific focus groups. The study was conducted by medical students from Thomas Jefferson University partnering with the Rwanda Village Community Promoters, a student run health organization involving students from the University of Rwanda.

**Results:** This study demonstrates that teens have some understanding of birth control methods, but cultural stigma may prevent access and efficacious use of these methods. Additionally, concerns related to sexual health and behavior varies based on gender roles and expectations.

**Conclusion:** To address gaps in sexual health knowledge and consequences of sexual health decisions based on expected gender roles, Jefferson students and RVCP students can work to implement targeted sexual health education programming in secondary schools in Huye, Rwanda.