

What do service providers in Southern Ethiopia say about barriers to using youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services for adolescents?:

# Qualitative study

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RESEARCH

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# What do service providers in Southern Ethiopia say about barriers to using youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services for adolescents?: Qualitative study

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## Abstract

**Background:** In Ethiopia, the utilization coverage of adolescent-friendly health services (AFSRHs) ranged only from 9 to 55% and it was the lowest of all Sub-Saharan African countries in 2016. Little is known why adolescents were not accessing the existing services to the side of healthcare providers.

**Objective:** The aim of this study is to explore contextual perceived and actual barriers to accessing AFSRHs by adolescents in Southern Ethiopia.

**Methods:** Phenomenological study design supplemented with observation was used to explore perceived and actual barriers to accessing AFSRHs in 2020. Criterion sampling was used to select study participants. In-depth interviews with healthcare providers and non-specialist sexual and reproductive healthcare providers were conducted. Transcribed interviews and observations were imported to Open Code 4.02 for coding, categorizing, and creating themes. Finally, barriers to accessing existing services were explained using thematic analysis.

**Results:** The study explores contextual barriers to accessing sexual and reproductive health services in five emergent themes. According to providers' points of view, the barriers include ranging from providers (e.g. poor providers' competency), health facilities (e.g. supply constraints and unsupportive environment), adolescents (e.g. perceived lack of information and attitude towards SRHs), community (e.g. lack of parental and social support), and broader health system (e.g. poor implementation and multi-sectoral engagement).

**Conclusion:** As to providers, adolescents face multiple barriers to accessing youth friendly sexual and reproductive health services. Healthcare facilities and all levels of the healthcare system should implement varieties of approaches to increase access to the services for adolescents. Given the lack of progress in utilization of adolescents' youth friendly sexual and reproductive services, the existing strategy should be re-evaluated and new interventions at all levels of the healthcare system are needed. Moreover, implementation research is required at system level factors.

**Keywords:** Barriers, Providers' perspective, Adolescent, Friendly-sexual and reproductive health service

## Background

One in six people worldwide is 10 to 19 years old (adolescents). About 90% of them live in the low- and middle-income countries [1]. In Ethiopia, 24.9% of the population is made from adolescents [1]. Many of them engage in behaviors and experiences that may unknowingly endanger them. Most of the preventable health risk

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