

Barriers to Reproductive Health Education Among Adolescents in Rural Sindh, Pakistan

Rabial Memon¹, Nida Bibi Soomro¹

The aim is to highlight the existing barriers to reproductive health and hygiene awareness among adolescents in rural Sindh and to emphasize the contributing educational and communication gaps, considering their possible outcomes in preventable health care problems.

A comparative study was performed in rural and urban government schools in District Khairpur. According to the study, there were informational barriers to reproductive hygiene among adolescent girls. Most students were unaware about it before menarche, with the highest portion being rural girls. The primary source of information was mothers. In addition, a considerable proportion of mothers had limited formal education and were generally homemakers, reflecting sociodemographic factors that may impact health communication within homes. Students reported receiving few or no menstrual-related sessions in school. Roughly two-thirds of students considered school sanitation and disposal installations inadequate, particularly in rural settings. Regarding hygiene operation, rural students showed less information about menstrual hygiene management. These findings emphasize not only informational deficiencies but also infrastructural limitations that may limit the effective hygiene management in teens (1).

Another cross-sectional study conducted in public colleges of Kambar Shahdadkot in rural Sindh demonstrated that adolescents had low knowledge and attitudes about reproductive health. More than half of the adolescents, including boys and girls, had misconceptions regarding reproductive health issues, especially STDs including AIDS. And therefore, it is being emphasized to enhance adolescent's reproductive health awareness and autonomy to enable informed decision-making to protect and improve their health and well-being. Only a small percentage of student population had awareness regarding contraceptive methods, the use of condoms, and their protective coverage against STDs. The main source of reproductive health knowledge was teachers. These findings highlight the need of Gender-based ethnically amenable sex education curricula in educational institutions to improve the awareness among the adolescents in rural areas (2).

Evidence from research study conducted in rural region of Thatta, highlights the socioeconomic barriers affecting sexual and reproductive health. Additionally, the strong cultural and religious hindrance regarding discussion of normal physiology and development were considered sensitive issues and has also played an important role in lack of awareness and hence the adolescents of rural areas are found more indulged in vulnerable unsafe practices. One of the challenges seen in adolescent girls across rural areas is early pregnancies before 18th year of age, despite the advancements in global maternal health the adolescent pregnancy remains prevalent especially in developing countries. In 2022 the recent records have reported HIV cases among the adolescent girls in the rural areas indicating limited resources of information and access to proper health care services. Addressing these challenges would give a foundation for accurate knowledge and significant improvements in adolescent sexual reproductive health. Gender disparity also directly affects the empowerment of adolescents in making effective decisions. The foremost step to make the adolescent population of rural areas empowered, it is important to uplift their knowledge related to reproductive health which will subsequently affect their attitude and

How to cite this article: Memon R, Soomro NB. Barriers to Reproductive Health Education Among Adolescents in Rural Sindh, Pakistan. Pak J Public Health. 2026;16(2):47-8.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32413/pjph.v16i2.2132>

Copyright © 2026 The Author(s). Published by Health Services Academy. This is an Open Access article under the CC BY-NC 4.0 license.



¹ People's University of Medical and Health Sciences for Women, Nawabshah, Pakistan

Correspondence:

Rabial Memon
rabyalhajiahmed@gmail.com

Submitted: 10-03-2026

Accepted: 05-05-2026

Published: 30-06-2026

practices. Providing better access to information and resources on sexual and reproductive health to adolescents, therefore, plays a critical role in improving the knowledge, attitudes and behaviors towards sexual and reproductive health (3).

The findings demonstrate that present knowledge in rural areas of Sindh reflects a lack of adequate and appropriate knowledge of sexual and reproductive health, because of which adolescents face multiple barriers. Cultural norms associated with discussing reproductive issues, lack of formal curricular resources, and gender inequalities contribute to adolescent's knowledge deficit as well as high-risk health behaviors. It is necessary to reinforce reproductive health education through schools, community awareness programmes, and adolescent-friendly health services. By taking these measures, better outcomes can be achieved in reproductive hygiene management, and preventing infections like STDs, PIDs, UTIs, and encouraging positive attitudes and behaviors about reproductive health, which ultimately lead to improved health outcomes.

Author Contributions:

RM: Conception, literature review and critical revision

NB: Literature review and critical review of the final article

The authors used AI assistance (Claude, Anthropic) for editorial review and language refinement of this manuscript. All intellectual content, arguments, and conclusions are solely the authors' own.

References

1. Aziz A, Memon S, Aziz F, Memon F, Khawaja BM, Naeem Zafar S. A comparative study of the knowledge and practices related to menstrual hygiene among adolescent girls in urban and rural areas of Sindh, Pakistan: a cross-sectional study. *Womens Health*. 2024;20:17455057241231420.
2. Shahid A, Pirzada AG, Memon AA. Perception regarding reproductive health among adolescents of rural Sindh, Pakistan. *South East Asia J Public Health*. 2012;2(1):39-45.
3. Ali AI, Azam I, Tikmani SS, Saleem S. Sexual and reproductive health knowledge, attitudes and practices among adolescents in rural Thatta, Pakistan: a cross-sectional study. *BMJ Open*. 2025;15(4):e096404.