

Identifying barriers effecting young and adolescent male accessibility to Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) services in India for age group 10-24

Narrative Review

1. INTRODUCTION

Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) services are crucial for the overall well-being of individuals, particularly in the context of India where reproductive health issues are prevalent. Despite the importance of SRH, men in India often face significant barriers in accessing these services, which can have far-reaching consequences for their health and the health of their partners. Adolescents constitute a vulnerable population for both mental and physical illnesses, and yet their SRH care needs and delivery systems are neither well defined nor developed. Many of the mental, reproductive and nutritional health needs of this population are required to be address through health programs for this age group.

Despite global efforts and guidance to improve access to SRH services for young and adolescents, challenges persist in many settings, including India. These barriers stem from various factors such as social stigma, lack of youth-friendly services, inadequate healthcare provider attitudes, and cultural, societal, and religious influences (1) . Specially the absence of specialized young and adolescent clinics, negative behaviours of healthcare workers, and personal determinants like poor knowledge and skills in SRH services contribute to the inadequate provision of services. (2). Additionally, factors like lack of privacy, unavailability of services, and discomfort in health facilities hinder adolescents from utilizing SRH services. (3,4)

Societal norms and taboos around male sexuality and sexual health create a significant barrier, as men are often discouraged from openly discussing or seeking care for SRH issues. (5). This stigma is further compounded by a lack of privacy and confidentiality in healthcare settings, as well as the overall shortage of youth-friendly, non-judgmental SRH services tailored to the needs of young males.(5,6). The healthcare system in India has struggled to provide accessible, comprehensive SRH services for men, with a historical focus on maternal and child health services. This has left many young men without the knowledge, resources, and support they need to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health.(5)

Previous studies have highlighted the limited knowledge and awareness of SRH issues among men in India, particularly in rural areas where access to healthcare services is often limited. The National AIDS Control Organization in India estimates that only 5-10% of patients with STIs present to public sector healthcare, indicating a significant gap in SRH service utilization among men.(7). Moreover, the lack of access and availability of SRH services, poor health-seeking behaviour among men, and the perception of SRH facilities as not being "male-friendly" contribute to the low uptake of services by young males(8)

Efforts to address these barriers require a multi-faceted approach, including the implementation of contextually relevant and culturally sensitive interventions, investment in adolescent-friendly services, and the promotion of gender equity in SRH services.(9). Through this study we aim to understand and address these barriers. By doing this it is possible to enhance young adolescent SRH, prevent unintended pregnancies, reduce unsafe abortions, and promote overall well-being among young males in India.

2. RATIONALE

Limited knowledge of SRH, associated policy gaps and systemic barriers to SRH Care makes men reluctant to engage with SRH services that impacts their overall health and well-being. To improve young adolescent men's access to SRH care it is essential to understand and address these barriers. The review aims to identify the gaps and provide comprehensive insights by examining existing literature, defining these barriers and recommending the possible solutions.

3. OBJECTIVES

To identify the health system barriers hindering access to youth and adolescent male-friendly sexual and reproductive health (SRH) care services in India and to examine the gaps in existing policies and strategies for youth and adolescent SRH services.

4. METHODOLOGY

- **STUDY DESIGN:** Secondary data analysis retrieved through literature.
- **SEARCH STRATEGY:** A comprehensive search will be conducted in electronic databases (e.g., PubMed, Google scholar, Scopus) using relevant keywords related to SRH, males, adolescents, young adults, SRH Service, Infrastructure and India. Additional sources, such as grey literature and reports from governmental and non-governmental organizations, will also be searched.
- **INCLUSION CRITERIA:** Studies involving Male participants, both married and unmarried, within the reproductive age group (typically 10-24 years).
- Participants residing in India, covering both urban and rural areas to capture the diversity of the population in Indian context will be included. All types of studies including qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-method designs will be included. Past ten years studies will be included.
- **EXCLUSION CRITERIA:** Studies which do not align with the objective of the study will be excluded. Studies with vague or inconclusive results will not be considered. Studies which are not in English language will be excluded. Blogs, white paper, news reports, editorial and opinion papers will be excluded.

- **SEARCH STRATEGY:** Search on articles related to “India” and “reproductive health” in combination with “men” and “male involvement” and “barriers” and “accessibility” in combination with “sexual health” and “SRH services” and “healthcare” and “health outcomes” will be utilized.
- **PERIOD OF STUDY:** Starting from 2010 till now.

5. EXPECTED OUTCOME

The narrative review aims to identify the barriers hindering young and adolescent male accessibility to Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) services in India. The review seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the specific challenges faced by men, both married and unmarried, in accessing SRH services. It aims to highlight the impact of policy frameworks, and health system-related factors on male engagement with SRH services. The review will identify key barriers, explore their implications on men's health outcomes, and offer insights and possible recommendation aimed at enhancing male accessibility to SRH services in India.

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