

## Investing in Adolescent Health: Strategies for Addressing Adolescent Health in Nigeria

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### **Abstract:**

*Adolescent health is a crucial but often overlooked aspect of public health in Nigeria. Poor adolescent health can lead to long-term consequences for both individuals and society. This study examines the factors affecting adolescent health in Nigeria, including cultural and social factors, economic factors, and environmental factors. It also explores various strategies for addressing adolescent health, including government policies and programs, community-based programs, school-based programs, and private sector initiatives. The study highlights the importance of investing in adolescent health, as it not only has significant health benefits but also social and economic benefits. Improving adolescent health outcomes can lead to a healthier and more productive adult population, reducing the burden of disease and improving the country's economic growth. The study also emphasizes the need for a multi-sectoral approach to addressing adolescent health in Nigeria, involving stakeholders from the government, healthcare providers, educators, and the community. This study underscores the urgent need for Nigeria to prioritize adolescent health and implement evidence-based strategies to improve health outcomes. With effective interventions and investments in adolescent health, Nigeria can build a healthier, more prosperous future for its youth and the country as a whole.*

**Keywords:** Adolescent health, Community-based programs, School-based programs, Government policies, Private sector initiatives, Economic benefits, Social benefits, Health benefits, Cultural factors, Social factors, Environmental factors.

## **1. Introduction**

Adolescence is a period of development that begins with the onset of puberty and ends when an individual reaches adulthood. It is characterized by physical, cognitive, and emotional changes that prepare the individual for the challenges and responsibilities of adulthood (Steinberg, 2014). During adolescence, individuals begin to form their identities, establish relationships with peers, and develop a sense of autonomy and independence from their parents (Arnett, 2000).

Adolescence is also a social construct that varies across cultures and historical periods. In some societies, adolescence is a brief and unremarkable transition to adulthood, while in others it is a prolonged and complex stage of life (Lerner, 2016). Adolescents are expected to conform to the norms and values of their society, while also navigating the tensions between conformity and individuality (Erikson, 1968).

Adolescence from a biological perspective, is a period of biological development that is driven by hormonal changes and brain maturation (Dahl, 2004). The onset of puberty triggers a cascade of hormonal changes that lead to physical changes, such as growth spurts and the development of secondary sexual characteristics. At the same time, the adolescent brain undergoes significant changes in structure and function, including increased myelination, synaptic pruning, and the development of higher-order cognitive processes (Casey et al., 2008).

Adolescence is shaped by cultural beliefs and practices that influence the ways in which young people navigate this stage of life. In some cultures, it is a period of initiation and ritual, in which young people are initiated into adulthood through ceremonies and traditions (GarcíaColl et al., 1996). In other cultures, it is a period of exploration and experimentation, in which young people are encouraged to question authority and explore different identities (Santrock, 2016).

The health of the Adolescents is something that should be considered critical in Nigeria, considering it is one of the countries in the world with its largest populations as young people. Despite the importance of adolescent health for the overall well-being of the population, there are significant challenges in addressing this issue in Nigeria. These challenges include limited access to health care services, low levels of awareness about adolescent health issues, and cultural and social factors that hinder effective interventions (Fatusi&Hindin, 2010).

Nigeria is also facing a significant burden of disease among adolescents, with high rates of HIV/AIDS, unintended pregnancies, and sexually transmitted infections (UNICEF, 2021). In addition, there is a growing recognition of the importance of mental health among adolescents, with increasing rates of depression, anxiety, and other mental health disorders (Gureje et al., 2020).

Given these challenges, there is a need for research and interventions that can improve adolescent health in Nigeria. Such efforts must be informed by a thorough understanding of the cultural, social, and economic factors that affect adolescent health, as well as the best practices for addressing these factors in a Nigerian context.

## **1.2 Importance of Adolescent Health**

Adolescence is a critical period of physical, psychological, and social development, and ensuring good health during this period is crucial for future well-being (World Health Organization, 2021). In Nigeria, where nearly half of the population is under the age of 18, adolescent health is a key determinant of the country's overall health and development (National Population Commission & ICF, 2019). There are several reasons why adolescent health is particularly important in Nigeria. First, poor health as a result of engaging in some risky sexual behaviour during adolescence can have long-lasting effects on individuals' physical and mental health, as well as their social and economic outcomes (Patton et al., 2016). For example, adolescent girls who become pregnant are more likely to drop out of school and have limited economic opportunities, which can perpetuate a cycle of poverty and poor health outcomes (Nwosu et al., 2021).

Secondly, investing in adolescent health can have significant benefits for public health and development. For example, reducing the burden of HIV/AIDS among adolescents can help to reduce the overall prevalence of the disease, while improving access to sexual and reproductive health services can contribute to a demographic dividend and improved economic outcomes (National Population Commission & ICF, 2019). Finally, prioritizing adolescent health is a matter of human rights and social justice. Adolescents have the right to the highest attainable standard of health, and addressing the health needs of this population is critical for ensuring equity and fairness in society (United Nations, 1989).

Investing in adolescent health in Nigeria is crucial for the overall health and development. Efforts to improve access to health care services, increase awareness of adolescent health issues, and address social and cultural barriers to effective interventions are needed to ensure that all adolescents in Nigeria have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

## **2. Adolescent Health in Nigeria**

### **2.1 Overview of Adolescent Health in Nigeria**

In Nigeria, the health status of adolescents has been a growing concern, as this population faces a range of health challenges that can have long-lasting effects on their health and well-being. These challenges include poor sexual and reproductive health as a result of risky sexual behaviour, high rates of sexually transmitted diseases, substance abuse, mental health problems, and malnutrition.

Sexual and reproductive health is one of the major health challenges facing adolescents in Nigeria. Many young people lack access to information and services related to reproductive health thereby resulting in unintended pregnancy, unsafe abortion, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are common among adolescents. According to the 2018 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS), about 15% of women aged 15-19 have begun childbearing, and the age-specific fertility rate for this age group is 123 per 1,000 women. In addition, the prevalence

of HIV among adolescents is high, with an estimated 240,000 adolescents living with HIV in Nigeria (UNICEF, 2020).

Substance abuse is another major challenge facing adolescents in Nigeria, use of alcohol and tobacco is common among young people as well as the use of illicit drugs, such as cannabis and opioids, is on the rise. According to a national survey conducted in 2018, about 10.6% of young people aged 15-24 reported using a psychoactive substance in the past year (National Bureau of Statistics & United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2019).

Mental health problems, including depression, anxiety, and suicide, are also common among adolescents in Nigeria. Stigma and lack of access to mental health services are major barriers to addressing these issues, and many young people are not able to receive the care they need. Malnutrition is another challenge facing adolescents in Nigeria, with high rates of stunting and wasting among this population. The NDHS found that 37% of children aged 0-59 months are stunted, while 7.2% are wasted.

To address these challenges, there is a need for comprehensive interventions that address the physical, psychological, and social needs of adolescents in Nigeria. This includes improving access to sexual and reproductive health services, increasing awareness of mental health issues, and providing support for substance abuse and malnutrition. It also involves addressing the social and cultural factors that contribute to poor adolescent health, such as gender inequality and poverty.

Adolescent health is a critical issue in Nigeria, and addressing the health needs of this population is crucial for the country's overall health and development. Efforts to improve adolescent health must be comprehensive and address the wide range of challenges facing young people in the country.

## **2.2 Common health issues among adolescents in Nigeria**

Adolescents in Nigeria face a range of health issues that can have long-term consequences for their well-being. Sexual and reproductive health is a major concern, with high rates of unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). According to the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) 2018, around 15% of women aged 15-19 have begun childbearing, and the age-specific fertility rate for this age group is 123 per 1,000 women. STIs are also prevalent among adolescents, with a prevalence of 3.3% for chlamydia and 2.6% for gonorrhea.

HIV/AIDS is another significant issue among adolescents in Nigeria, with an estimated 240,000 adolescents living with HIV in the country. The prevalence of HIV is 1.1% among those aged 15-19 and 1.3% among those aged 20-24. Substance abuse is also a concern, with alcohol and tobacco use common among adolescents, and the use of illicit drugs on the rise. According to a national survey conducted in 2018, about 10.6% of young people aged 15-24 reported using a psychoactive substance in the past year.

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Mental health is another area of concern, with depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation being common among adolescents. However, many young people do not have access to mental health services, and stigma surrounding mental illness prevents many from seeking help. The prevalence of depression among adolescents in Nigeria was found to be 23.5%, while the prevalence of anxiety was 18.6%.

Finally, malnutrition is a major health issue among adolescents in Nigeria, with high rates of stunting and wasting. The NDHS found that 37% of children aged 0-59 months are stunted, while 7.2% are wasted.

Addressing the health issues facing adolescents in Nigeria requires a comprehensive approach that takes into account the physical, psychological, and social needs of this population. Efforts to improve adolescent health must address the unique challenges facing young people in Nigeria, such as poverty, gender inequality, and cultural barriers to accessing health services.

### **2.3 Challenges in addressing Adolescent health in Nigeria**

Addressing adolescent health in Nigeria faces a range of challenges. One of the biggest challenges is the lack of access to quality healthcare. Many adolescents in Nigeria live in rural areas with limited access to health facilities, and even those who live in urban areas may face challenges accessing healthcare due to poverty or other social factors (Olapegba et al., 2019). Additionally, there is a shortage of healthcare professionals with specialized training in adolescent health (Federal Ministry of Health, 2016).

Another challenge is the lack of comprehensive sex education in schools and communities. Adolescents in Nigeria often lack information about sexual and reproductive health, which can lead to risky behaviors and negative health outcomes (Okigbo et al., 2015). Stigma surrounding sexuality and reproductive health also contributes to this problem, as many young people are hesitant to seek information or services due to fear of judgment or discrimination.

Gender inequality is another barrier to addressing adolescent health in Nigeria. Girls and young women often face discrimination and unequal access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. This can have a significant impact on their health outcomes, particularly in relation to sexual and reproductive health (National Population Commission & ICF, 2019).

Finally, there is a lack of political will and investment in adolescent health in Nigeria. This is reflected in the low budget allocation to health and education sectors, as well as the absence of comprehensive adolescent health policies and programs (UNICEF, 2018). This lack of investment undermines efforts to improve the health and well-being of young people in the country.

Addressing the challenges in adolescent health in Nigeria requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses the social, economic, and political determinants of health. This includes improving access to quality healthcare, expanding comprehensive sex education programs, promoting gender equality, and increasing political will and investment in adolescent health.

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### **3.1 Why Adolescent Health Matters in Nigeria**

Adolescent health is a critical component of public health in Nigeria. The adolescent population in Nigeria constitutes a significant proportion of the country's population, making up about 20% of the total population. Adolescents are the future of any society, and their health is crucial for the country's development. However, adolescent health in Nigeria is often neglected, and this has adverse effects on the country's social and economic development.

Investing in adolescent health has several social benefits. Healthy adolescents are more likely to become healthy adults, which, in turn, has a positive impact on the society's health. They are more productive, better educated, and have higher earning potential, leading to a reduction in poverty and an improvement in the standard of living. Healthy adolescents are also less likely to engage in risky behaviors, such as drug abuse, violence, and early sexual activity, which are often associated with negative social outcomes, such as crime, unplanned pregnancies, and sexually transmitted infections.

In addition to social benefits, investing in adolescent health also has economic benefits. Healthy adolescents are more productive and contribute more to the country's economy. Investing in adolescent health can lead to significant cost savings in the long run by reducing the burden of disease and healthcare costs. For instance, preventing just one case of HIV in an adolescent can save up to \$8,000 in lifetime medical costs.

Furthermore, investing in adolescent health is critical for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nigeria. SDG 3 aims to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. Investing in adolescent health is essential for achieving this goal as healthy adolescents are more likely to become healthy adults, which is crucial for sustainable development. Investing in adolescent health is crucial for Nigeria's social and economic development and achieving the SDGs. It is imperative that stakeholders prioritize adolescent health and develop and implement policies and programs to address the challenges facing adolescent health in Nigeria.

#### **3.1.1 Economic Benefits of Investing in Adolescent Health**

Investing in adolescent health in Nigeria can have significant economic benefits. The health and well-being of adolescents are important determinants of their productivity, which in turn impacts economic growth (Das Gupta, 2003). Therefore, improving adolescent health outcomes can have positive ripple effects on the country's economy. One way investing in adolescent health can yield economic benefits is by reducing healthcare costs. Many of the common health issues affecting adolescents in Nigeria, such as sexual and reproductive health problems and mental health disorders, can be costly to treat if left untreated (UNICEF, 2018). By investing in preventive measures and early interventions, healthcare costs can be reduced in the long run. Improving adolescent health can also lead to increased productivity. Poor health can negatively impact an adolescent's educational attainment and future employment prospects (Das Gupta, 2003). Addressing health issues and promoting healthy behaviors among adolescents can

lead to better educational outcomes and increased earning potential in adulthood, contributing to economic growth and development.

Investing in adolescent health can also have broader societal benefits. Improving the health and well-being of young people can lead to decreased rates of crime and violence, reduced rates of teenage pregnancy, and improved social cohesion (UNICEF, 2018). All of these factors can contribute to a more stable and prosperous society. Investing in adolescent health in Nigeria can have significant economic benefits. By reducing healthcare costs, increasing productivity, and contributing to broader societal benefits, addressing adolescent health can have positive impacts on the country's economic growth and development.

### **3.1.2 Social Benefits of Investing in Adolescent Health**

According to the World Health Organization, addressing adolescent health can reduce the prevalence of risky behaviors such as substance abuse, early sexual initiation, and unprotected sex, which can lead to unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV/AIDS (WHO, 2021). Research has shown that depression and other mental health disorders are prevalent among adolescents in Nigeria and can have long-term social consequences (Atilola, Ayinde, and Lawal, 2016). Addressing mental health can improve overall wellbeing and promote social cohesion.

Investing in adolescent health can also promote social cohesion and reduce disparities in health outcomes (Nwokocha, Nwankwo, and Ugwu, 2021). Adolescents from disadvantaged backgrounds are often at a higher risk of poor health outcomes due to limited access to health information and services. By investing in adolescent health, it is possible to reduce disparities in health outcomes and promote greater social equity.

### **3.1.3 Health Benefits of Investing in Adolescent Health**

Investing in adolescent health in Nigeria can yield significant health benefits for individuals and communities. By prioritizing the health and well-being of adolescents, various positive outcomes can be achieved that contribute to their overall health and development. One crucial health benefit of investing in adolescent health is the prevention and reduction of health risks. By addressing common health issues among adolescents, such as sexual and reproductive health problems and substance abuse, interventions can be implemented to minimize risks and promote healthier behaviors (UNFPA, 2016). This can lead to decreased rates of unintended pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, and substance-related disorders, resulting in improved overall health outcomes for adolescents.

Investing in adolescent health also provides opportunities for early detection and intervention for various health conditions. Adolescence is a crucial period for the identification and management of mental health issues, as well as the early signs of chronic diseases (WHO, 2017). By ensuring access to comprehensive health services, including mental health support and regular check-ups, potential health concerns can be identified and addressed promptly, leading to better health

outcomes and long-term well-being. Another health benefit of investing in adolescent health is the promotion of healthy lifestyles and behaviors. Adolescence is a formative period where habits and behaviors are established, and interventions during this stage can have a lasting impact on future health choices (UNFPA, 2016). By providing education, counseling, and support for healthy nutrition, physical activity, and mental well-being, positive health behaviors can be fostered, reducing the risk of non-communicable diseases and promoting a healthy lifestyle throughout adulthood.

Furthermore, investing in adolescent health contributes to building a strong foundation for lifelong health. Addressing health issues during adolescence sets the stage for better health outcomes in adulthood, leading to reduced healthcare costs and improved quality of life (WHO, 2017). By promoting preventive measures, early intervention, and health promotion activities, investments in adolescent health can have a lasting impact on individuals and communities. Investing in adolescent health in Nigeria provides various health benefits, including the prevention and reduction of health risks, early detection and intervention for health conditions, promotion of healthy lifestyles, and the establishment of a strong foundation for lifelong health. By prioritizing the health of adolescents, individuals and communities can experience improved overall health outcomes and enhanced well-being.

#### **4.1 Factors Affecting Adolescent Health in Nigeria**

There are several factors that affect adolescent health in Nigeria. These factors can be categorized into cultural and social factors, economic factors, environmental factors, and individual factors.

##### **4.1.1 Cultural and social factors**

Cultural and social factors include traditional beliefs and practices, gender norms and stereotypes, and social stigma. In many communities in Nigeria, traditional beliefs and practices still influence health-seeking behaviors and can hinder access to modern healthcare. For example, some traditional beliefs discourage the use of contraceptives, leading to higher rates of unintended pregnancies among adolescents. Gender roles and expectations can significantly impact adolescent health outcomes in Nigeria. For instance, societal norms that promote early marriage can lead to unintended pregnancies and increase the risk of maternal and child health complications (Adeniyet al., 2017). Adolescent girls may also face discrimination and gender-based violence, which can negatively impact their physical and mental health.

Religion is an integral part of Nigerian culture and can influence adolescent health outcomes. Some religious beliefs may promote practices that are detrimental to adolescent health, such as opposing immunization or encouraging early marriage (Kandala et al., 2017). Conversely, religious organizations can also play a positive role in promoting health-seeking behavior and supporting adolescent health programs.

Social stigma associated with certain health conditions can impact adolescent health-seeking behavior in Nigeria. Stigma related to mental health, sexual and reproductive health, and HIV/AIDS can discourage adolescents from seeking medical help, which can lead to poor health outcomes (Adeniyi et al., 2017). Peer pressure is also a common social factor that affects adolescent health in Nigeria. Adolescents may engage in risky behaviors, such as substance abuse or unprotected sex, to fit in with their peers (Oladokun et al., 2018). Peer influence can also impact adolescent attitudes towards health and healthcare-seeking behavior.

Parental attitudes and behaviors towards health can influence adolescent health outcomes in Nigeria. Parental communication, support, and supervision can promote healthy behaviors among adolescents, such as practicing safe sex and avoiding substance abuse (Adebayo et al., 2019). However, parents may also hold cultural or religious beliefs that discourage health-seeking behavior, particularly related to sexual and reproductive health.

#### **4.1.2 Economic factors**

Economic factors can also have a significant impact on adolescent health in Nigeria. Poverty is a major economic factor that affects the health of adolescents, as it limits access to basic needs like healthcare, education, and nutrition. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, over 40% of Nigerians live in poverty, and this disproportionately affects adolescents who come from low-income families. The lack of access to healthcare services and information, inadequate nutrition, and poor living conditions contribute to poor health outcomes among adolescents from low-income families.

Furthermore, adolescents from low-income families may be forced to work to support their families, often in dangerous or hazardous environments, which puts them at risk for injury and illness. This can also lead to early school dropout, which has long-term implications for their overall health and well-being.

On the other hand, the economic status of some families can also lead to the adoption of harmful cultural practices that negatively impact adolescent health. For example, the practice of early marriage is often driven by economic factors, as parents may see it as a way to reduce their financial burden by transferring the responsibility of their daughters to their husbands. Early marriage can lead to adolescent pregnancy and childbirth, which increases the risk of maternal and child morbidity and mortality. Investing in adolescent health can improve economic outcomes in the long run. Healthier adolescents are more likely to complete their education and become productive members of society, which can lead to increased economic growth and development. Additionally, investing in the health of adolescents can lead to reduced healthcare costs in the future.

#### **4.1.3 Environmental factors**

Environmental factors can also have a significant impact on adolescent health in Nigeria. Poor environmental conditions can increase the risk of various diseases and health problems among

adolescents. For example, exposure to air pollution from industrial activities and vehicle emissions can increase the risk of respiratory diseases such as asthma, bronchitis, and pneumonia. In addition, poor water and sanitation conditions can increase the risk of waterborne diseases such as cholera and typhoid fever. According to UNICEF, about 60 million Nigerians lack access to safe water sources, and more than 100,000 children die each year from preventable waterborne diseases.

Climate change is another environmental factor that can have a significant impact on adolescent health in Nigeria. Climate change is expected to increase the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, such as floods, droughts, and heatwaves, which can affect the health of adolescents in various ways. For example, floods can lead to the spread of waterborne diseases and injuries, while heat waves can lead to heatstroke and dehydration.

Furthermore, environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity can affect the availability of food and essential nutrients, which can have long-term implications for adolescent health and development.

Addressing environmental factors that affect adolescent health in Nigeria requires a multi-sectoral approach that involves the government, civil society, and other stakeholders. This includes investing in sustainable development, promoting clean energy, improving water and sanitation infrastructure, and implementing climate adaptation and mitigation strategies.

#### **4.1.4 Individual factors**

Individual factors such as lifestyle choices and genetics, also play a role in adolescent health. Poor lifestyle choices, such as a lack of physical activity and unhealthy eating habits, can contribute to the development of chronic diseases. Genetic factors can also increase the risk of certain health conditions.

It is important to address these factors to improve adolescent health outcomes in Nigeria. This can be achieved through a multi-sectoral approach that involves government policies, community-based programs, and private sector initiatives. By addressing the underlying factors that impact adolescent health, Nigeria can ensure that its young people have the opportunity to live healthy and productive lives

### **5.1 Strategies for Addressing Adolescent Health in Nigeria**

There are several strategies that can be employed to address adolescent health in Nigeria. These strategies include:

#### **5.1.1 Government Policies and Programs**

Government policies and programs can play a crucial role in addressing adolescent health in Nigeria. The government has a responsibility to promote the health and well-being of its citizens, particularly vulnerable populations such as adolescents. Here are some examples of government policies and programs that can help improve adolescent health in Nigeria:

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- i. **National Adolescent Health Policy:** In 2016, the Nigerian government launched the National Adolescent Health Policy, which aims to improve the health and well-being of adolescents in the country. The policy focuses on several key areas, including sexual and reproductive health, mental health, nutrition, and substance abuse.
- ii. **National Reproductive Health Policy:** The Nigerian government also has a National Reproductive Health Policy that addresses the sexual and reproductive health needs of adolescents. The policy includes provisions for comprehensive sexuality education, access to contraception, and prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections.
- iii. **Universal Basic Education Program:** The Universal Basic Education Program, launched by the Nigerian government in 1999, aims to provide free, compulsory education for all children, including adolescents. Education is a key determinant of health, and ensuring that adolescents have access to education can help promote their health and well-being.
- iv. **National Health Insurance Scheme:** The National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) provides access to affordable healthcare for all Nigerians, including adolescents. The scheme covers a range of health services, including preventive services, primary care, and hospitalization.
- v. **Youth-friendly health services:** The Nigerian government has also established youth-friendly health services that are designed to meet the specific health needs of adolescents. These services provide confidential, non-judgmental care and counseling for adolescents on a range of issues, including sexual and reproductive health, mental health, and substance abuse.

In addition to these policies and programs, the government can also work to improve the overall healthcare system in Nigeria by investing in healthcare infrastructure, strengthening healthcare workforce capacity, and ensuring that essential medicines and medical supplies are available and accessible.

### **5.1.2 Community-Based Programs**

Community-based programs can play a significant role in addressing adolescent health in Nigeria. These programs are often designed to be locally tailored and culturally sensitive, with the aim of improving access to health services and promoting healthy behaviors among adolescents. Here are some examples of community-based programs that can help improve adolescent health in Nigeria:

- i. **Peer Education Programs:** Peer education programs involve training and supporting young people to act as peer educators, providing education and support to their peers on a range of health issues. Peer education programs have been shown to be effective in improving adolescent health outcomes, including sexual and reproductive health.

- ii. Youth Clubs and Associations: Youth clubs and associations can provide a safe and supportive environment for young people to socialize, learn, and engage in healthy activities. These clubs can be organized around a range of interests, such as sports, music, or drama, and can also include educational sessions on health topics.
- iii. Community Health Workers: Community health workers are trained to provide basic healthcare services and health education in their local communities. These workers can be particularly effective in reaching underserved populations, including adolescents, who may have limited access to healthcare services.
- iv. School Health Programs: School health programs can provide a comprehensive approach to promoting adolescent health, including education on healthy behaviors, access to healthcare services, and supportive school environments.
- v. Community-Based Health Campaigns: Community-based health campaigns can be used to raise awareness about specific health issues and promote healthy behaviors among adolescents. These campaigns can be organized through local health clinics, community centers, or other community-based organizations.

In order to be effective, community-based programs should be designed in collaboration with local communities and should be culturally sensitive to the needs of adolescents in Nigeria.

### **5.1.3 School-Based Programs**

School-based programs are one of the strategies that have been employed to address adolescent health in Nigeria. Schools serve as an important platform for providing health education and promoting healthy behaviors among adolescents.

One example of a school-based program in Nigeria is the Nigerian School Health Policy, which was launched in 2006 to improve the health and wellbeing of school-aged children, including adolescents. The policy provides guidelines for the provision of health services in schools, including health education, screening, and referrals.

Another example is the Comprehensive School Health Program (CSHP), which was developed by the Federal Ministry of Education in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) and other stakeholders. The CSHP aims to promote healthy behaviors among students, such as healthy eating, physical activity, and sexual and reproductive health.

Several studies have shown the effectiveness of school-based programs in promoting adolescent health in Nigeria. For example, a study conducted in Lagos State found that a school-based intervention that included health education, health screening, and referrals led to improved knowledge and attitudes towards sexual and reproductive health among adolescents. Another study conducted in Ibadan found that a school-based program that included peer education and counseling was effective in promoting condom use among adolescents.

School-based programs can be an effective strategy for addressing adolescent health in Nigeria, but there are challenges to their implementation, such as inadequate funding, inadequate training for teachers and health workers, and lack of parental involvement. Therefore, it is important to address these challenges and scale up school-based programs to improve adolescent health in Nigeria.

#### **5.1.4 Private Sector Initiatives**

Private sector initiatives are also being employed as a strategy for addressing adolescent health in Nigeria. Private sector organizations, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and corporate organizations, can provide funding, expertise, and resources to support adolescent health programs and services. One example of a private sector initiative in Nigeria is the Adolescent 360 (A360) program, which is a partnership between the private sector and the Nigerian government. The program aims to increase access to sexual and reproductive health services for adolescents in Nigeria through innovative approaches, such as mobile clinics and social media campaigns.

Another example is the Youth Empowerment and Development Initiative (YEDI), which is an NGO that provides health education and services to adolescents in underserved communities in Nigeria. YEDI's programs focus on promoting healthy behaviors, such as physical activity, nutrition, and sexual and reproductive health. Private sector initiatives can provide valuable support for addressing adolescent health in Nigeria, but there are challenges to their implementation, such as sustainability and accountability. Therefore, it is important to ensure that private sector initiatives are evidence-based, aligned with national policies and priorities, and integrated into the health system.

#### **6.1 Conclusion**

In conclusion, adolescent health is an important issue in Nigeria that requires urgent attention from all stakeholders. Nigeria has a large and growing adolescent population, and the health of this population is crucial for the country's future development. However, adolescent health in Nigeria is affected by a range of factors, including cultural and social norms, economic factors, and environmental factors.

To address these challenges, a range of strategies are being employed in Nigeria, including government policies and programs, community-based programs, school-based programs, and private sector initiatives. These strategies have the potential to improve the health and well-being of adolescents in Nigeria, but there are also challenges to their implementation, such as sustainability, accountability, and integration into the health system.

Investing in adolescent health in Nigeria can have significant economic, social, and health benefits. It is important for all stakeholders to work together to address the challenges facing adolescent health in Nigeria and to ensure that adolescents have access to the information, services, and support they need to lead healthy and productive lives.

### **6.1.1 Summary of Key Points**

Adolescent health is a critical issue in Nigeria that demands immediate attention from all stakeholders. Various factors, such as cultural and social norms, economic factors, and environmental factors, affect adolescent health in Nigeria. Investing in adolescent health in Nigeria can have significant economic, social, and health benefits. Strategies for addressing adolescent health in Nigeria include government policies and programs, community-based programs, school-based programs, and private sector initiatives. However, there are challenges to implementing these strategies, such as sustainability, accountability, and integration into the health system. It is essential for all stakeholders to work together to ensure that adolescents have access to the information, services, and support they need to lead healthy and productive lives.

### **6.1.2 Call to Action for Improving Adolescent Health in Nigeria.**

It is crucial for all stakeholders, including the government, civil society, private sector, parents, and adolescents themselves, to take action to improve adolescent health in Nigeria. This can be achieved by addressing the cultural, economic, and environmental factors that affect adolescent health. Additionally, investing in adolescent health can have significant economic, social, and health benefits.

To improve adolescent health, stakeholders must work together to implement evidence-based strategies such as government policies and programs, community-based programs, school-based programs, and private sector initiatives. It is also essential to address challenges to implementing these strategies, such as sustainability, accountability, and integration into the health system.

Furthermore, it is vital to prioritize adolescent health in policy and budget decisions and increase awareness and education about adolescent health among parents, adolescents, and the general public. This can be achieved through media campaigns, community outreach programs, and school-based health education.

In conclusion, all stakeholders must take action to improve adolescent health in Nigeria. By working together and implementing evidence-based strategies, we can ensure that adolescents have access to the information, services, and support they need to lead healthy and productive lives.

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