

Public Abstract

First Name:Andrew

Middle Name:Mburu

Last Name:Muriuki

Adviser's First Name:Marjorie

Adviser's Last Name:Sable

Co-Adviser's First Name:

Co-Adviser's Last Name:

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Title:THE ROLE OF HOUSEHOLD ENVIRONMENT ON HEALTH OUTCOMES FOR FEMALE ADOLESCENTS IN KENYA

Chronic illness has a profoundly negative impact on the welfare of households, especially for the adolescents who live there. Those who lack a social welfare safety net, particularly youth, are much more dependent on the capacities of individuals within the household. This dissertation reports on a study of how the capacities of Kenyan households impact the capacity of female adolescents to cope with chronic illness in the household. The study focuses on Kenyan adolescents aged 15 to 24. The average age for this population was 19.39 years; those between the ages of 20 and 24 comprised nearly half (over 47%) of the sample. Nearly 38% of the female respondents reported some form of illness, with significant positive correlation with age. Therefore, the study tested a number of relationships between the environmental factors and health status for this population, such as their exposure to life shock (death, chronic illness of family member) and their relationship to vulnerability to risk behaviors. This study found a strong association between reported illness and environmental factors in the household. Age and marriage were highly significant factors, producing a sevenfold increase in the chance of illness. Risky sexual behavior, sexual abuse and violence were risk factors that were also significantly associated with illness in this adolescent population. Violence and abuse were related to a 14-fold increase in illness. Living in a rural area and limited household coping resources were also significantly associated with illness.