

# Exploring the Barriers to Accessing Sexual and Reproductive Health Information for Young Black Girls: Challenges and Solutions

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## Introduction

- Young African American women often face systemic barriers in accessing sexual and reproductive health (SRH) information due to inadequate education, cultural stigmas, and systemic inequalities in healthcare.
- Many rely on their peers or the internet for SRH education, which increases the risk of misinformation and results in inadequate SRH knowledge about contraception, pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and ultimately poor health outcomes.
- Misinformation reinforces health inequities and hinders access to the necessary SRH care women need to make informed decisions about their reproductive health.

## Methods

- This study used a convergent mixed methods parallel design to examine the barriers 26 Black girls between the ages of 18-23 face in accessing sexual and reproductive health (SRH) information and identify potential solutions.
- Quantitative surveys measured participants' SRH knowledge, self-efficacy, and communication experiences.
- Qualitative focus groups explored challenges in obtaining accurate SRH information from caregivers, schools, and healthcare providers. This approach integrated both quantitative surveys and qualitative focus groups to provide an understanding of participants current SRH knowledge, self-efficacy, and communication behaviors (Harvard Catalyst, 2025).
- Participants also evaluated Zuri, a culturally tailored mobile health (mHealth) application, as a potential tool to bridge SRH knowledge gaps. Findings will inform strategies for healthcare providers, educators, and youth advocates to improve SRH education and access.
- IRB approval was obtained from the State of Connecticut Department of Children and Families and UConn. Participants provided informed consent and received a \$50 Visa Gift Card for their time.

"My friend got their period for the first time and didn't know what to do. And I'm like, "Wait, you don't know what to do? Nobody taught you what to do?" So, not judging them, but I was surprised because I never had that encounter. And I'm like, okay. I'm going to have to be the one to tell her what to do. So, things like that. There's a lot of girls out here who don't have the guidance, who don't have parents to teach them how to put on a pad, or if you're bleeding, what to do with that, how to dispose of things."

—Moon Marie, 19 years old



"I feel like education is the number one step in prevention, and I feel like things like this app and just getting the word out there are really important."

—Betty, 19 years old

## Purpose

- To identify barriers adolescents encounter in obtaining SRH information.
- To develop a mobile app that aims to empower young Black girls to better understand their anatomy and access reliable SRH education.

## Results/ Findings

- 4 themes emerged; Family support, cultural influences, internet access, and effective learning
- 26 participants, an average age of 19.
- Significant gaps in SRH education exists.
- Schools provided basic reproductive anatomy lessons.
- Lacked comprehensive information on STI prevention, healthy relationships, and contraceptive use.
- Many participants reported cultural and familial beliefs influenced conversations with trusted adults.
- Conservative households noted guardians were often avoidant about discussing sexual activity.
  - Focus on abstinence
- Young women frequently turned to peers and the internet, resulting in access to inaccurate SRH knowledge

## Conclusions

- Many young Black women face barriers in obtaining SRH information leading to misinformation or lack of knowledge pertaining to their health.
- Having a scientifically supported mobile app can allow women of all religious, cultural, and minority backgrounds to safely learn the details of their sexual and reproductive health.
- The app offers accessible ways of learning

## References

Basic Mixed Methods Research Designs. (2025). Harvard.edu

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