

Purpose:

The purposes of this study were to investigate the experiences and knowledge of adolescents living in an urban center in Kenya and to understand how the decisions they make affect their physical and psychological health.

Methods:

A sample of 216 adolescents was drawn and they met weekly in small groups with trained facilitators for a period of 6 months. A research team monitored the developments of the groups and the topics they discussed. The findings were corroborated by the adolescents.

Results:

It was found that adolescents were primarily concerned with developing a coherent and consistent set of personal values which would govern their behavior. Unfortunately, they could not always achieve those values and they resorted to dysfunctional coping strategies which were injurious to their health.

Conclusions:

The role of the adolescent in developing countries is complex and poorly defined. In a period of unprecedented change, an urgent and comprehensive review is necessary by all sections of society if the health of this group is to improve.