

**ESCALATION OF UNPLANNED PREGNANCIES IN  
THE PRESENCE OF CONTRACEPTIVES AT A  
SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITY**

**BY**

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**In pursuit of excellence**



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

- Unplanned pregnancies are a concern for university students, and the number of unplanned pregnancies among students at higher education institutions continues to rise, despite the government introduction of contraceptives and other preventative methods (Kgarose et al .,2023).
  
- It has a negative impact on women's personal life, their families, and society.
  
- Globally, 74 million women living in low and middle-income countries had unplanned pregnancy every year. Evidence from sub-Saharan Africa indicates that 35% of pregnancies among 15–19-year-olds were unplanned (*Mutinta, 2022*).



## INTRODUCTION Cont,'

- The issue of unplanned pregnancy, in South Africa poses a serious public health concern among youths as it expose young women and their new-borns to potential adverse health and social outcomes.
- Adverse outcomes include the likelihood of maternal depression and anxiety, unsafe abortion, premature birth and low birth weight.
- Furthermore, unplanned pregnancy is socially disruptive and impact negatively on educational progress and future career prospects.
- Literature suggest that women with unplanned pregnancy are likely to be less well educated and poorer than women without such pregnancies (Mutinta, 2022).



## 2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

- During clinical practice, the researchers observed an increase in unplanned pregnancy while contraceptives are available at the clinic.
- According to STATS SA, (2022) the registered live births were 106 383 that occurred among adolescents between 10-19 years in 2019.
- Among registered live births that occurred among adolescents, KZN recorded a higher percentage than other provinces at 24,7%, followed by the Eastern Cape and Limpopo, both at 14,4%, Gauteng at 13,7% and Mpumalanga at 10,0%.
- Hence this study focused on the escalation of unplanned pregnancy in the presence of contraceptives among university students.



### 3. PURPOSE AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The purpose was to identify and explore factors associated with an increase in unplanned pregnancy in the presence of contraceptives at a higher education institution.

#### RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

- To understand factors which contribute to an increase in unplanned pregnancy in the presence of contraceptives.



#### 4. LITERATURE REVIEW

- Evidence shows that unplanned pregnancy takes place mainly because of inconsistent or non-use of contraceptives including condoms, contraceptive failure, and rape.
- Unplanned pregnancy among youth is attributed to the factors, which are demographic, behavioural and socioeconomic that include poor socioeconomic status, living arrangements, age, sexual coercion, peer pressure, ignorance, unprotected sex, sex socialisation, and negative attitudes towards contraception (Mutinta, 2022).
- Such pregnancies can have various causes, including contraception failure due to inconsistent or incomplete use of contraceptive methods, failure of family planning methods, and, less commonly, instances of rape and other factors (Adjorlolo, et al 2024).



## LITERATURE REVIEW Cont.'

- On the other hand, contraception is the act of preventing pregnancy. This can be a device, a medication, a procedure or a behavior. Contraception allows a woman control of her reproductive health and affords the woman the ability to be an active participant in her family planning (Kgarose et al .,2023).
- Unplanned pregnancies may result from contraceptive failure, inconsistent or incorrect use of contraception, lack of access to contraceptives, or engaging in sexual activity without using any form of contraception (Adjorlolo,et al 2024)..





## 5. METHODOLOGY

- Qualitative cross sectional research design using explorative phenomenological approach.
- Conducted at Walter Sisulu University, Mthatha Campus.
- Semi-structured in-depth interview guide, face-to-face was used. Voice recorder and note taking were used.
- A purposeful and snowballing sampling method was applied to 6 participants.
- The data analysis process followed Colaizzi's seven step method and a theme and subthemes emerged.



## 6. FINDINGS

Major Theme	Sub-themes
1. Factors exacerbating Unplanned pregnancy	1.1 Age group
	1.2 Drunkenness and unprotected sex
	1.3 Knowledge about contraceptives
	1.4 Intolerance to contraceptives side effects
	1.5 Improper use of contraceptives



## **THEME 1: Factors exacerbating Unplanned pregnancy**

### **Sub-theme 1.1 : Age group**

Most participants were aged between 20-24 years which is the age that is affected by unplanned pregnancy and very few were aged 25-29 years.

### **Sub-theme 1.2 : Drunkenness and unprotected sex**

Participants mentioned that:

*“Because I was not using any contraceptives and then I had unprotected sex, so that was my mistake.”*

*“I was not using contraceptives and then I engaged myself in an unprotected sex.”*

The other participant added and said:

*“I was drunk and was not on any contraceptives”*



CONT,'

**Sub-theme 1.3 : Knowledge about contraceptives**

Few participants seem to have knowledge, and some were not aware of what contraceptives are let alone using them. Below is what participants said:

*“Well, I did not have adequate knowledge about other contraceptives other than a condom.”*

*“I use injectable contraceptive which is petogen.”*

Another one added:

*“ I only used Nuristerate injection”*



CONT,'

**Sub-theme 1.4 : Intolerance to contraceptives side effects**

Some participants did not use contraceptives because they cannot tolerate their side effects.

Participants alluded that:

*“No, I do not use contraceptives because I react to them, I bleed non-stop and when using a pill, I get nauseous, and I am allergic to condoms.”*

*“I used to take Depo provera, then changed to oral contraceptive pills but I had headaches which were intolerable.”*

*“I do not know but most of the contraceptives have side effects which I could not endure, I had to change from one contraceptive to another.”*



**CONT,'**

**Sub-theme 1.5 : Improper use of contraceptives**

Few participants lacked efficient knowledge and proper instructions on how to use contraceptives effectively.

The excerpt below explains:

*“ Sometimes I will forget to go to the clinic on the prescribed date to collect contraceptives.”*

Another one added:

*“We should also be taught on how to use condoms properly because ziyaqhuma(burst).”*

*“....my partner refuse to use a condom.”*



## 7. DISCUSSION

- This paper highlighted, identified and explored contributing factors associated with an increase in unplanned pregnancy in the presence of contraceptives among university undergraduate students.
- Most participants who had unplanned pregnancy in the study were due to the following factors:

### **Age**

- Most participants were between the ages 20-24 years, and few were between 25-29. Kgarose et al, (2023) & Maphie, (2023) concur with these findings and said age, culture and religion at which university students engage in sexual intercourse is another contributing factor.



## DISCUSSION CONT.'

### Drunkenness and unprotected sex

- Participants responses revealed that unprotected sexual intercourse and drunkenness were contributing factors to unplanned pregnancy. These findings are confirmed by Kgarose et al.,(2023) that alcohol and substance abuse contribute to unplanned pregnancy, among other things. This is a challenge for many young people.
- Maphie (2023) added that students engage in unplanned and unprotected sexual activities easily which is thought to be attributed to lack of strict parental environment.
- Contrary to the above findings Wang et al., (2015) revealed that women are disadvantaged and had unequal status as compared to men when negotiating sexual encounters and adopting contraceptive methods.





## DISCUSSION CONT.'

- In addition, some unmarried female students get nervous when they do not engage in sexual intercourse, that would affect their relationships; and they do not have a good communication with their partners, which result in unsafe sexual intercourse (Wang et al., 2015).

### **Knowledge about contraceptive**

- Some participants did not use contraceptives due to lack of knowledge about them. Maphie, (2023) agree with these findings and added that university students do not have enough knowledge about reproductive health.



## DISCUSSION CONT.'

- In addition, Kgarose et al., (2023) & Ajayi et al, (2021) identified a lack of access and a lack of knowledge and awareness about contraceptives among university students as other contributing factors.
- Wang et al, (2015) had similar findings where 63.5% of female students in China did not know how to use contraceptives.
- Another study conducted in Pakistan university suggest that low levels of knowledge and insufficient information regarding contraceptive use for Family Planning contribute to a high fertility rate and other factors like early marriages, lack of empowerment, and low female education (Kumar et al, 2024).



## DISCUSSION CONT.'

- According to Kumar et al, (2024) majority of research studies emphasised that knowledge is a critical factor in contraceptive use among the young population.
- Hence, it is crucial to increase knowledge about contraceptives among reproductive age groups to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's). Especially Goal 3 (Good health and Well-being) and Goal 5 (Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment).



## DISCUSSION CONT.'

### Improper use of contraceptives

- Lack of efficient knowledge on contraceptive use was evident in participants who were not taking contraceptives as prescribed and missing their appointment dates.
- The above findings are supported by Adjorlolo, et al, (2024) that contraception failure due to inconsistent or incomplete use of contraceptive methods, failure of family planning methods, and, less commonly, instances of rape and other factors contribute to unplanned pregnancies.



## DISCUSSION CONT.'

### Intolerance to contraceptive side effects

- Not taking contraceptives was evidenced in participants who could not tolerate contraceptives side effects such as nausea, allergic to condoms and bleeding non-stop.
- Wang et al, (2015) agree concerning the side effects and said 68.5% of the students believed that oral contraceptive pills could affect the regularity of their menstrual cycle, 62.2% believed OCPs could affect fertility, 39.6% believed OCPs could cause nausea or vomiting, and 38.2% believed OCPs might cause weight gain.



## 8. CONCLUSION

- This study identified numerous factors that contribute to the escalation of unplanned pregnancy among university students despite the presence of contraceptives.
- The issue of knowledge about contraceptives, improper use, their side effects and unprotected sexual intercourse among others need a concerted effort from all the stakeholders in the institution.
- Intensification of health education and awareness campaigns to inform and educate student about importance of using contraceptives to reduce unplanned pregnancies can not be over emphasised.



THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR LISTENING

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