

Knowledge and Practice of Contraceptives among High School Learners in Raymond Mhlaba Municipality

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ABSTRACT Three in every ten teenagers fall pregnant before they reach the age of twenty. Unplanned pregnancy is a major concern in South Africa. Unplanned pregnancies are due to non-use/utilization of contraceptives. Early parenthood leads to teenage mothers dropping out of school and fifty percent of them do not graduate from high school. The knowledge and awareness of contraceptive use are known to be moderate, and as a result unplanned pregnancies have become the norm. Understanding the reasons behind the discontinuation and non-utilization of contraceptives may assist in future interventions, aimed at maintaining and curbing the unabated rise in prevalence rate of unplanned pregnancies. Objectives of the study are: to analyze the knowledge, attitude, and practice of contraceptives among high school learners in some selected schools in Raymond Mhlaba municipality, and additionally test the statistical association between some risk factors (gender, grade, religion, relationship status, knowledge of contraception, sexually active, friends practice contraception, father educational status, mother educational status, who learner stays with) and contraception. The study adopted a cross-sectional, descriptive, quantitative study design. A sample size of 144 high school learners participated in the study through a self-administered questionnaire. Purposive sampling was used to select participants. Respondents were selected from two high schools within Raymond Mhlaba municipality. Chi-square test of association was used to test the relationship between contraception and some selected risk factors using SPSS. The findings of the study revealed that about 64.58 percent learners were sexually active, and 54.86 percent reported using contraceptives. The most commonly used methods of contraception were oral contraceptives at 1.39 percent, and 33.33 percent for male condoms. Female learners mostly used condoms at eighty-four percent (84%), and injectable at 20.14 percent as methods of contraception. The knowledge of contraceptive use (65.28%) enhanced learners in preventing sexually transmitted diseases and unplanned pregnancy. Chi-square test of independence showed that mother's level of education, being sexual active, having friends who use contraceptives, and being in a relationship have a strong association with contraceptive use. Conclusively, the study's findings show that knowledge of contraceptive use among high school learners is high, and use and practice of the knowledge is high with only fifteen percent (15%) of the sexual active learners declining to use contraceptives. From this study, effect of knowledge on contraceptives use is poor. Interventions from the parents and health care workers should stress the importance of consistent use of contraceptives, especially condoms, as they do not prevent not only pregnancy but also sexually transmitted diseases.