



ATTITUDE OF FEMALE STUDENTS TOWARDS ABORTION AND CONTRACEPTION

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Abstract

This research critically examined the attitude, knowledge and practice of abortion and contraception among female Nigerian tertiary institution students using Federal Polytechnic, Nekede as a case study. A primary data was collected using a multiple-choice structured questionnaire administered to three hundred and eighty-five (385) respondents. Descriptive statistics of the data was obtained and Chi square test of independence were used to analyze the data. The study shows that although a significant proportion of students resort to abortion to solve their problem of unwanted pregnancy, liberalized abortion was opposed by a majority (82.3%). Although majority of the students are sexually active, the knowledge of contraception is very low and that explained the reason for the increasing rate of abortion among them. It was also discovered that students' attitudes towards the practice of sex, abortion and the use of contraceptives is independent on their age and relationship status. Nigerian adolescents generally have low levels of contraceptive use, but their reliance on unsafe abortion is high, and results in many abortion-related complications. From the findings, it can be concluded that students' attitudes towards abortion and contraceptive usage are not influenced by their age, sex and relationship status. It is recommended that abstinence from sex is indeed the best way of preventing abortion. However, government should review the laws that forbade abortion in the country.

Keywords: Abortion, female students, contraception, relationship status, attitude of female students.

INTRODUCTION

The issue of abortion in the world is increasing at an alarming rate. The issue has become a major concern of international organizations, individuals and governments, which had generated controversies. Abortion had long been practiced in human society and for more than thirty (30) years, most of the researches had focused on the attitude of adults towards abortion and contraception. Stayton, (1985).

Worldwide 42 million abortions are estimated to take place annually with 22 million of these occurring safely and 20 million unsafely. While maternal mortality seldom results

from safe abortions, unsafe abortions result in 70,000 deaths and 5 million disabilities per year. The adolescent who consist more of students have recorded the highest victims of abortion. So many have lost their lives and career to abortion practices. These are because students do not have proper knowledge on abortion and its resultant effects, the use of contraceptives and its consequences. (Otoide, et al, 2001)

However, it is of great concern to evaluate the attitudes of female student towards the issue of abortion and contraceptive usage. Religion has a great influence on sexual and reproductive behaviour and this had affected their attitude towards the action. (Stayton, 1985) There is the saying that students encourage and recommend abortion, thus, promoting sexual immortality among them. Others say, though abortion practice is common with students, not very many of them encourage it. Few are of the opinion that abortion should be legalized while many are against it. It is of great importance to analyze these arguments and pinpoint the real position or attitudes of students, their responses to the issues of abortion.

The vast majority of all abortions performed today are done for social and not for medical reasons. These range from a woman not ready for a baby at the time to the decision of a partner to have abortion. (Otoide, et al, 2001)

The research takes a look at the following questions;

- i. Does female students have positive or negative attitude towards abortion?
- ii. What is the knowledge and attitude of female students towards abortion and contraceptive use?
- iii. To what extent does female students' attitude towards abortion differ with respect to level of education?
- iv. What is the attitude of urban and rural students towards abortion and contraceptive use?
- v. To what extent does female students' attitude towards abortion differ with respect to age?
- vi. What is the attitude of married and unmarried female students towards abortion and contraceptive use?

This research aimed at:

4. determining female students' attitude towards abortion.
5. examining the knowledge and attitude of female students towards abortion and contraceptive use.
6. determining the dependency of female students' attitude towards abortion on their level of education.
7. determining the attitude of urban and rural students towards abortion and contraceptive use.
8. determining the extent to which female students' attitude towards abortion differ with respect to age.

9. determining the attitude of married and unmarried female students towards abortion and contraceptive use.

METHODOLOGY

Data were collected through the use of multiple-choice questionnaire administered to female students of Federal Polytechnic, Nekede. A primary data was obtained from three hundred and eighty-five (385) respondents.

A scientific method was used to determine the sample size for the study. Taro Yamane (1967) used this formula for finite population as:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where

- n = Sample size
 N = Population
 e = error margin (0.05)
 I = Constant

Thus, n= 385 sample size, which is 3.85%

The major research instrument used as earlier stated was the questionnaire. Structured questionnaire and oral interview schedules were administered to the respondents through the direct contact approach. The purpose of this approach was to reduce the incidence of bias responses and unwillingness on the part of the respondents.

The validity of the research instrument was carried out using criterion-related validity which was carried out by comparing it with a measure that is already known to be valid. All were asked what they knew about abortion and contraception, and each method of contraception was discussed in detail. In particular, they were asked about contraceptive availability, perceived advantages of method use, side effects, methods of abortion, reasons for abortion and students' reasons for using or not using contraceptives.

DATA ANALYSIS

In this study, we used both the descriptive and inferential method of data analysis. Chi-square (χ^2) test of Independence was used to determine if the variables considered are independent or otherwise on each other.

The following tables show some of the data obtained

Table 1: Number of responses by 'Age of the students':

Age	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35 ≥	Total
Number	65	89	91	96	44	385
Percentage	17	23	24	25	11	100

Source: sample survey 2022.

Table 2: Number of responses by 'marital status of the students':

Marital status	Single	Married	Total
Frequency	212	173	385
Percentage	55	45	100

Source: sample survey 2022.

Table 3: Cross tabulations of Attitude of students and educational level, age and marital status

	Attitude	Positive	Negative	Indifferent	Statistics
Educational Level	ND 1	30	40	7	19.20
	ND 2	43	78	14	
	HND1	26	29	14	
	HND 2	51	34	19	
Age	15 - 19	47	10	8	77.31
	20 -24	19	55	15	
	25 - 29	37	31	23	
	30 - 34	27	66	3	
	35+	20	19	5	
Marital status	Single	100	67	45	49.42
	Married	50	114	9	

In Table 3,

- (i) Educational level of respondents and respondents' attitude towards abortion were cross tabulated. The independency of the variables was examined and tested. It was discovered that educational level of respondents is independent on respondents' attitude towards abortion.
- (ii) Relationship status of respondents and respondents' attitude towards abortion were cross tabulated. The independency of the variables was also examined and tested and it was discovered that the relationship status of respondents was independent on their attitude towards abortion.
- (iii) Marital status of respondents and attitude towards abortion was also cross tabulated as shown in the table. It was also discovered that marital status of respondents is independent on respondents' attitude towards abortion.

Table 4: t-test on mean rating

S/N	Item Statement	N	Group	mean	SD	tcal	p-value	Remark
1	ECP should be used immediately after unprotected intercourse during the unsafe period	77	ND 1	4.45	0.701	-1.71	0.091	NS
		135	ND 2	5.48				
		69	HND 1	4.5				
		104	HND 2	4.89				
2	The ECP is safe:	77	ND 1	4.52	0.84	0.048	0.962	NS

		135	ND 2	4.52				
		69	HND 1	4.52				
		104	HND 2	4.52				
3	I would recommend ECP to a friend:	77	ND 1	4.33	0.68	-1.42	0.157	NS
		135	ND 2	4.44				
		69	HND 1	4.37				
		104	HND 2	4.98				
4	EC is necessary to prevent abortion and its complications	77	ND 1	4.08	0.52	0.554	0.58	NS
		135	ND 2	4				
		69	HND 1	4.22				
		104	HND 2	3.66				
	Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation	77	ND 1	4.03	0.71			
		135	ND 2	4.51				
		69	HND 1	7.8				
		104	HND 2	4.7				

The t-test analysis on hypothesis one presented in Table 4 above showed the result of the means, the standard deviation, t-calculated, degree of freedom and the associated probability value (p-value) of the first cluster. The result showed an overall probability value of 0.780 which is greater than the 0.05 level of significance that was set to test the hypothesis.

Table 5: Mean and standard deviation ratings of the respondents on the attitude of female students towards abortion.

S/N	Item Statement	mean	SD	Remark
1	ECP should be used immediately after unprotected intercourse during the unsafe period	4.83	0.701	SA
2	The ECP is safe:	4.52	0.84	SA
3	I would recommend ECP to a friend:	4.53	0.68	SA
4	EC is necessary to prevent abortion and its complications	4.17	0.52	A
	Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation	4.51	0.71	SA

- ECP – Emergency Contraceptive Pills
- EC – Emergency Contraception
- SA – Strongly Agree

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The main purpose of this research was to statistically examine the attitudes of students to the issues of abortion and contraception. At the end of the study, we discovered the following;

- As shown in table 1, 17% of the students are between the ages 15-19 years, 23% of the students are between the ages `20-24years, 24% of the students are between the ages 25-29, 25% of the students are between the ages 30-35years years while about 11% of the students are above 35 years.
- From table 2 above, 55% of respondents are single while 45% are married

Table 6: Reproductive History of Respondents

Variable	Response	Number	Percent
Sexually Active (n=385)	Yes	236	61
	No	149	39
Age at first sexual Intercourse (n = 236)	Less than 11 years	12	5
	11 - 14 years	38	16
	15 - 19 years	177	75
	20+ year	9	4
Ever been pregnant (n=236)	Yes	106	45
	No	130	55
Ever heard of Abortion before? (n=385)	Yes	375	97
	No	10	3
Unwanted Pregnancy (n=106)	Yes	88	83
	No	18	17
Reason for unwanted pregnancy (n = 88)	Contraceptive failure	15	17
	Pressure from partner	25	28
	Rape/Forced Sex	20	23
	Ruptured Condom	15	17
	Lack of Knowledge of EC	13	15
Ever Experience Induced abortion (n = 88)	Yes	58	66
	No	30	34

Source: sample survey 2022.

From the table 6 above, it was also discovered that 61% of the respondents are sexually active (have had sex before).

Of the 236 the respondents who were sexually active, 106 (45%) students had an experience of pregnancy at least once Majority, 88 (83%) of the pregnancies were unwanted and 58 (66%) of pregnancies were ended with induced abortions. Amazingly, 3% of the respondent have not heard of abortion before.

Table 7: Knowledge, attitude and practice of abortion among the students

Variable	Response	Number	Percent
Ever heard of Emergency Contraception before? (n=385)	Yes	320	83
	No	65	17
Your preferred method of Contraception (n=320)	Pills	92	29
	Injectables	75	23

	IUCD	65	20
	Condom	50	16
	Withdrawal	38	12
Source of contraception (n=320)	Pharmacy	80	25
	Private Clinic	65	20
	Government institution	25	8
	Shop	58	18
	I don't know	4	1
Knowledge of Contraception (n=320)	Very poor	42	13
	Poor	65	20
	Average	50	16
	Good	76	24
	Very Good	87	27
Time EC should be taken after unprotected sex (n=320)	Any time	50	16
	within 72 hours	104	33
	within 24 hours	85	27
	Within 5 days	65	20
	I don't know	16	5
Attitude towards EC (n = 385)	Positive	251	65
	Negative	134	35
Will recommend ECP to a friend (n =385)	Strongly agree	203	53
	Agree	81	21
	Indifferent	46	12
	Disagree	31	8
	Strongly Disagree	24	6

From the table 7 above, of the total participants, 320 (83%) ever heard about Emergency Contraception, EC. When asked about preferred method of contraceptives, among those who have ever heard of EC, only 92 (29%) chose pills, 75 (23%) preferred injectables, 65 (20%) chose IUCD, 50 (16%) preferred to use condom while 38 (12%) will prefer withdrawal method

Among those who are aware of emergency contraception, 80 (25%) said they get their contraceptives from the pharmacy, 65 (20%) get it from private clinics, 25 (8%) get it from government owned institutions and 58 (18%) get it from shops

Also, among those who were aware of emergency contraception, only 104 (33%) and 65 (20%) correctly identified 72 hours and 120 hours as the time limit for the ECPs and IUCD, respectively. When asked about the indication if they will recommend Emergency

Contraceptive Pills, ECP, to a friend, 203(53%) strongly agreed, 81(21%) agreed, 32(8%) disagreed and 24(6%) strongly disagreed

Although 251 (65%) participants had positive attitude towards emergency contraceptives, the prevalence of ever use of emergency contraception among was only 5%.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMENDATION

Nigerian adolescents generally have low levels of contraceptive use, but their reliance on unsafe abortion is high, and results in many abortion-related complications. From the findings gotten from the study, we can make the following conclusions. Students' attitudes are not influenced by their age, educational level and relationship status. Fear can cause someone to commit abortion. Fear of future infertility was an overriding factor in adolescents' decisions to rely on induced abortion rather than contraception. Ignorance is the major cause of students' pregnancy.

Abortion causes death and increases the number of death rates in the country, and if it is stopped will reduce it. Condom remains the best contraceptive, but cannot save one from sexually transmitted diseases.

Finally, adolescents (students) want abortion to stop and that abortion should not be legalized.

Based on the findings, it is strongly recommended that the laws that forbade abortion in the country should be reviewed. Abstinence from sex is indeed the best way of preventing abortion. For married couples and singles who may not be able to practice strict abstinence, use of condom and the various existing family planning measures is highly recommended.

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