



AWARENESS OF METHODS USED IN PREVENTING UNWANTED PREGNANCY AND SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STI) AMONGST FEMALE STUDENTS OF TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN PORT HARCOURT.

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Abstract

Unwanted pregnancies and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) are common and pose significant public health problems. This study aimed to explore the awareness of methods used in preventing unwanted pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Infections amongst students of tertiary institutions in Port Harcourt. This is a cross-sectional study involving 139 female students with ages between 16 to 40 years and they are between first and fifth year of their studies. The study shows that 96.4% of the participants are aware of methods used in preventing unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infection. 66.2% of the participants have used one among the methods used in preventing unwanted and STI and 72.7% have used barrier method (condom or diaphragm) to prevent unwanted pregnancy and STI during sexual intercourse. Majority of the participants have their male counterpart used male condom during sexual intercourse and they also preferred the male condom. Participants who used oral contraceptives have adverse effect from using the method and 31.1% have pains, while 25.9% have spotting. A well - structured self-administered questionnaire was issued to each participant. Data was analyzed using Excel and P value < 0.05 was considered significant.

Key words: Awareness, Methods, Unwanted Pregnancy, Infections, Students

Introduction

Reproductive process is an important activity that women of reproductive age engaged in at different levels of relationship. However, pregnancy must be agreed by parties involved before the process of fertilization could be carry out (Gbaranor et al, 2022). Continuity in the family is the key reason why a male and a female come together as couple in accordance with their customs, tradition or religion. This coming together can only be achieved when they have attained reproductive age (Gbaranor et al, 2022). Unwanted pregnancy in married couple could be due to certain factors like, unexpected sexual intercourse, economic, medical, epidemic, academic

pursuant, famine and cultural factors (Gbaranor et al, 2022). Unintended pregnancy is a mistimed, unplanned or unwanted at the time of conception (Belay *et al*, 2020). It is an important public health issue in both developing and developed countries (Cherie et al. 2018). Unintended pregnancy has several adverse outcomes (Adhikari, *et al*, 2009) and from these adverse outcomes, unsafe abortion is a major outcome which could cause infection, haemorrhage, reproductive organ perforation, infertility and even death (Sedgh *et al*, 2014). Previous study shows that inability to use contraceptive methods such as condoms, oral contraceptives, injections, implants and Intrauterine Devices (IUD) was associated with unintended pregnancy (Cherie *et al*. 2018). Also, study carried out by Ma *et al*, (2008) revealed that having multiple sexual partners, non-use of condom and non-consensual sex and sexual intercourse before high school were the potentiating factors of unintended pregnancy (Ma *et al*, 2008).

The problems and risks of unprotected sex, unintended pregnancy, and infection are inextricably linked. Discriminatory cultural practices such as early marriage and dowry, sexual violence and coercion, and women's economic dependence on men leave many women, particularly young women, vulnerable (Martha Brady 2003). Dual protection, as currently articulated, means concurrent protection against unintended pregnancy and STI/HIV. Only male and female condoms have been proven effective on their own against both (Stone, et al, 1999).

Globally, over 40 million people are estimated to be living with sexually transmitted infection/diseases (STI/Ds), including HIV/AIDS (Nzopotam et al, 2022). It is said that sub-Saharan Africa accounts for over a half of that figure, making it the continent most affected with HIV/AIDS and other STI/Disease. Indulging in unprotected sexual intercourse suggests a high-risk predisposition to unintended and unwanted pregnancies and STIs, including AIDS, among adolescents and young people (Abdissa et al, 2017; Arega et al, 2019). Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) constitute a huge health and economic burden for developing countries: 75–85% of the estimated 340 million annual new cases of curable STIs occur in these countries, and STIs account for 17% economic losses because of ill health. Interventions that may decrease the incidence and prevalence of STIs are primary prevention (information, education and communication campaigns, condom promotion, use of safe microbicides, and vaccines), screening and case finding among vulnerable groups (Mayaud and Mabey 2004).

Material and methods

A cross-sectional study was carried out among students of Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State, Port Harcourt and the study lasted for a period of six weeks. Participants were between the ages 16 to 40. Well-structured questionnaires were administered to the students. Each student had one questionnaire to fill appropriately and independently after instructions were given to them by the researchers. Statistical analysis of data was done using Microsoft Excel. P value < 0.05 was considered significant for data.

Results

The results shows that the participants ages were between 16 to 40 years (Table 1) and most of them were single (Table 2). 96.4% awareness of methods used in preventing unwanted pregnancy and STI (Table 3).72.7% of the participants always use barrier method to prevent unwanted pregnancy and STI during sexual intercourse (Table 4) and most preferred method was male condom (Table 5). Oral contraceptives is the method that give the participants most adverse effects (Table 6). Some of the effects are pains 31.1%, spotting 25.9%, headache 20.6%, delayed monthly period 11.8%, bleeding 5%, irregular monthly period 2.6%, unwanted pregnancy 1%, sexually transmitted infection 1%, unsatisfaction 0.7%, and urinary tract infection 0.3% (Table 7).

Table 1: Age of participants

16-20	21-25	26-30	30-40
33	80	25	1

Table2: Marital status

SINGLE	MARRIED	DIVORCED	COHABITING
127	9	0	3

Table 3: Awareness of methods used in preventing unwanted pregnancy and STI

YES	NO

134	5
96.4%	3.6%

Table 4: Participants who always use barrier method to prevent unwanted pregnancy and STI during sexual intercourse

YES	NO
101	38
72.7%	27.3%

Table 5: Most prefer method used

Methods	Frequency
WITHDRAWAL SYSTEM	14
MALE CONDOM	80
FEMALE CONDOM	0
ORAL CONTRACEPTIVE	26
INTRAUTERINE DEVICE	2
INJECTABLE CONTRACEPTIVE	1
IMPLANTS	3
CALENDAR METHODS	13
TUBAL LIGATION	0
BASAL BODY TEMPERATURE	0

Table 6: Methods that have adverse effects on the participants

Methods	Frequency
WITHDRAWAL SYSTEM	9
MALE CONDOM	10
FEMALE CONDOM	0
ORAL CONTRACEPTIVE	56
INTRAUTERINE DEVICE	3
INJECTABLE CONTRACEPTIVE	35
IMPLANTS	29
CALENDAR METHODS	3
TUBAL LIGATION	0
BASAL BODY TEMPERATURE	0

Table 7: Some of the adverse effects on the participants

ST I	UTI	Delay Period	Irregular Period	Unwanted Pregnancy	Spotting	Bleeding	Pains	Headache	Satisfaction
3	1	36	8	3	79	15	95	63	2
1 %	0.3%	11.8%	2.6%	1%	25.9%	5%	31.1 %	20.6%	0.7%

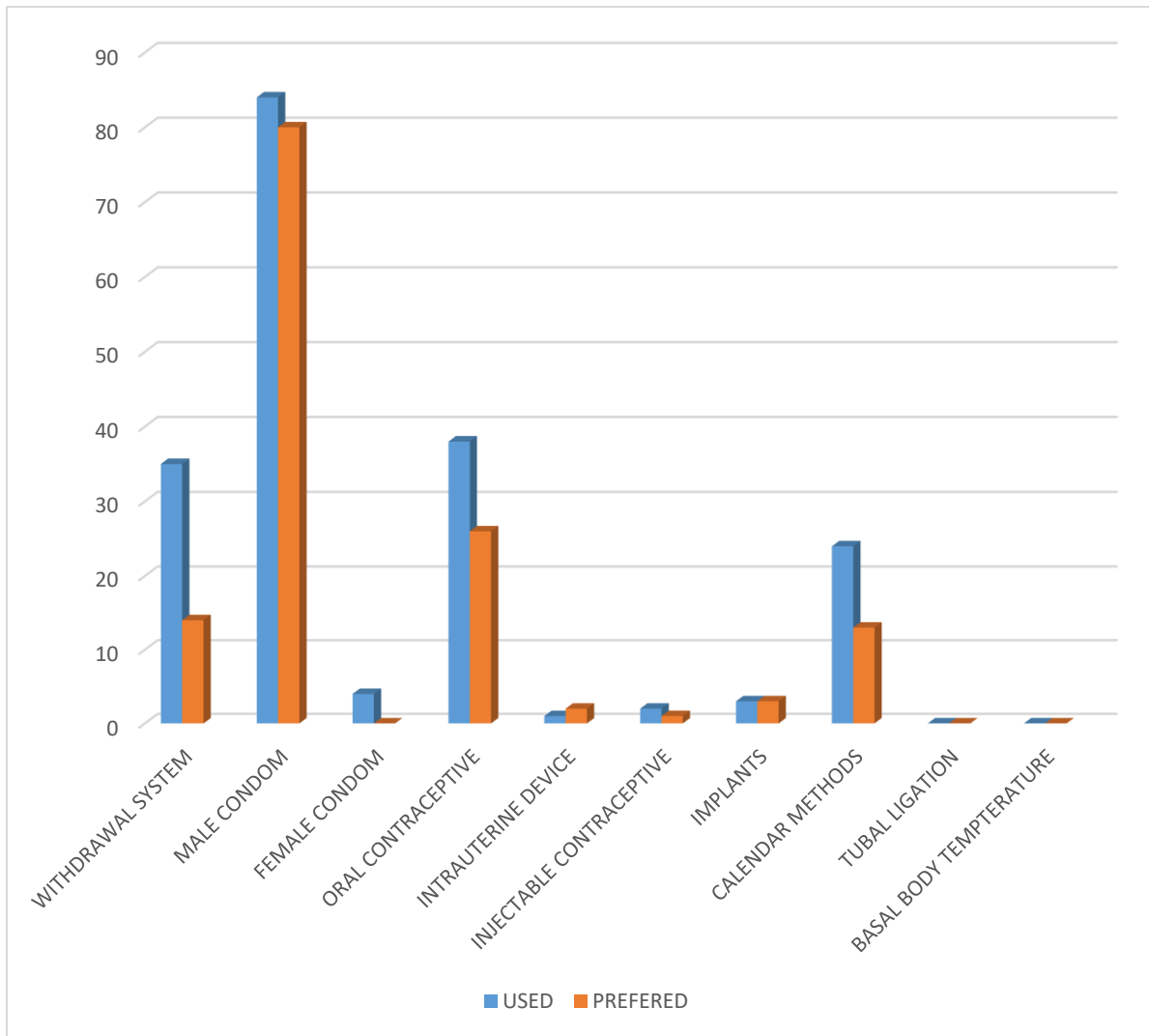


Figure 1: Used methods of pregnancy prevention and preference
Discussion

Unwanted pregnancies and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) are common and pose significant public health problems. This study aimed to explore the awareness of methods used in preventing unwanted pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Infections amongst students of tertiary institutions in Port Harcourt. However, despite the awareness of methods used in preventing unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections among female students.

Most (96.4%) of the participants are aware of at least one of the methods used in preventing unwanted pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Infections, with the male condom being the most commonly known method, which is in line with the findings of a study on Awareness and opinions regarding contraception by women of reproductive age carried out in North-West Nigeria (Adefalu et al, 2018).

This result is also in line with the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 2018 report which reported a high level of contraceptive awareness, with male condoms being the most used method (Avisah et al, 2003). The high level of awareness of the methods used to prevent unwanted pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Infections among the participants may be because they are in an academic environment where information is readily available. There have also been several campaigns on Contraceptives on campus.

Thirty-eight per cent (38.0%) of the respondents use oral contraceptives, while thirty-five use the withdrawal method. Only one per cent used Intrauterine Device, and none had tubal ligation. Again, this is concurrent with other studies carried out in other parts of the country (Bolarinwa et al, 2019). However, 72.7% of the participants have used barrier method in preventing unwanted pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Infections. This could be as a result of the level of awareness about the preventive methods and also because the barrier method is more accessible, available, affordable and portable. The study revealed that most of the participants preferred male condom, follow by oral contraceptive, withdrawal and calendar methods are also used even if they are not so effective (Table 5) and the results also, shows that implants and injectable contraceptives are only used by the married or cohabiting population.

The study also revealed the effects the participants experienced due usage of the those preventing methods and these effects are pains 31.1%, spotting 25.9%, headache 20.6%, delayed monthly period 11.8%, bleeding 5%, irregular monthly period 2.6%, unwanted pregnancy 1%, sexually transmitted infection 1%, unsatisfaction 0.7%, and urinary tract infection 0.3%. These effects may be due to defectiveness of some of those protective devices such as condom. However, oral contraceptives tend to have more adverse effects on the participants when used (Table 6).

Conclusion

The study revealed that majority of the population are aware of methods used in preventing unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infection and only about 3.6% are not aware of possible pregnancy and STI prevention methods

The study also, shows that male condom is the most used and most preferred method of preventing unwanted pregnancy and STI, followed by oral contraceptives, withdrawal and calendar methods are also used even if they are not so effective. The results shows that implants and injectable contraceptives are only used by the married or cohabiting populations and delayed monthly period, pains, headaches, and spotting are the most common effects of the preventive methods used by the participants

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