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## Research Article



### Knowledge, Attitude and Practice of Emergency Contraception among Adolescents in South East of Nigeria

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#### Abstract

Unintended pregnancy poses a major challenge to young adults in developing countries. With decreasing age of menarche and early onset of sexual activity, adolescents are exposed to unplanned and unprotected sexual intercourse leading to unwanted pregnancy and induced abortions. Emergency contraception prevents unwanted pregnancy in unprotected sex. This study was carried out to determine the knowledge, attitude and practice of emergency contraception among female undergraduates of a Federal University, South East of Nigeria, in view of providing information on issue. Information gathered will guide in planning health programmes to arrest the ugly trend. Stratified random sampling technique was employed to select a sample of 218. Ethical approval was obtained from the ethical committee of the institution. Instrument was validated through a pilot study and data was collected using 17 item questionnaires that were self administered. Descriptive analysis was done using SPSS version 20. Result was presented in tables and graphs. The study revealed that 184 (84.4%) of the respondents knew about emergency contraception. Positive attitude towards emergency contraception was elicited. Level of practice was poor. Reasons for use of Emergency Contraceptive include missed pills, forced sex, and condom breakage. Recommendations on measures to prevent unplanned pregnancy and its sequel were made.

**Keywords:** Emergency Contraception, Adolescents, Knowledge, Attitude and practice.

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#### Introduction

Unintended pregnancy poses a major challenge to the reproductive health of young adults in developing countries. With decreasing age of menarche and early onset of sexual activity, young people are exposed to unplanned and unprotected sexual intercourse leading to unwanted pregnancy and induced abortions (Akani, Babatunde and Eyinda, 2008). Similarly, the rate of induced abortions is a good indicator of the current state of medical care and family planning in any country. Adolescent pregnancy is a common occurrence in many countries. An estimated 14 million women aged 15-19 years gave birth each year in 1995-2000, with 12.8 million births occurring to adolescents

in developing countries (UN, 2004). Half of all pregnancies are unintended and nearly half of these ends in abortion (Finer and Zolna, 2006). Given increasing adolescents' sexual activity and decreasing age at first sex in developing countries, the use of contraception to prevent unwanted pregnancy and unsafe abortion becomes imperative. In South West of Nigeria, contraceptive use among adolescents was how ever low (Okonofua, 1995, in Atthir, 2010 and Oladapo, 2005). It was also low State tertiary institutions in the South East (Nworah, 2010). It is important to investigate if there is a change in the situation otherwise measures to scale up its use will be

proffered. Emergency Contraception (EC) refers to group of birth control modalities that, when used after an unprotected intercourse within defined time limits (usually within 72 hours after an unprotected sex) can prevent an unwanted pregnancy (Bayamugisha, 2006). The study therefore investigates the knowledge, attitude and practice of emergency contraception among female undergraduate of a Federal University in South East of Nigeria with the aim of providing information for planning intervention programme.

## Methods

The study is a descriptive survey of non experimental design that took place at the College of Health Science of the institution. The target population was the female students of the three faculties of the college; a sample size formular (Akuezuiilo, and Agu, 2004) was used to compute a sample size of 218. Sample was drawn using simple random technique. Instrument was structured questionnaire constructed to draw out responses appropriate to the objectives of the study. The questionnaire was in 4 sections. Section A contained the demographic data of the respondents; Section B had information on knowledge while Section C and D were on perception and practice of emergency contraception respectively. Face and content validity was carried out by peers. Pilot test was done and Correlation coefficient computed (0.78). Data was collected through self administration after obtaining ethical approval from the ethical committee of the institution and each respondent. A total of 218 questionnaires were distributed with 100% return. Descriptive analysis was done using SPSS version 20 and result was presented in tables.

## Results

There were 481 female students in the seven departments of the four faculties. Thirty - three (15.1%) of the respondents were in 200 level, 50 (23.0%) in 300 level, 80 (36.7%) are in 400 level and 55 (25.2%) in 500 level (Table 1). The age range was 18-30 years. One hundred and ninety - three (88.5%) were single while 25 (11.5%) were married. Out of the 218 respondents, only 184 were aware of Emergency Contraceptives while 84 acknowledge to have used it. Respondents' perception and reasons for use of emergency contraceptive revealed that 180 (97.8%) were of the opinion that emergency contraception refers to backup methods for contraceptive

emergencies which women can use within the first few days after unprotected intercourse to prevent an unwanted pregnancy. One hundred and forty three (77.7%) stated that it is a measure used to prevent pregnancy in a woman when a barrier method has failed while 4(2.2%) identified that it is the use of a drug or device to prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex. One hundred and forty four (78.3%) stated that it can be used in cases of sexual assault when the woman was not protected by an effective contraceptive method. Nobody stated that it is a method used to achieve menstruation when a woman misses her period. On knowledge of emergency contraceptives, 170 (92.3%) knew progesterone-only contraceptive (postinor 2) as a type of contraception. Sixty (32.6%) identified combined oral contraceptives, 40 (21.7%) identified IUCD, 20 (10.9%) post coital douching, 18 (9.8%) menstrogen and 25 (13.6) gynaecosid. It was found that 5 (2.7%) chose alcohol mixed with lime while 30 (16.3%) chose lime mixed with potash and salty water and then 3 (1.6%) identified antibiotics as emergency contraceptive (Table 2). One hundred and eighty -four (84.4%) have correct knowledge. Attitude on emergency contraceptive use showed that 159 (86.4%) of the respondents were positive about emergency contraception, 20 (10.9%) were negative while 5 (2.7%) had no response. 131 (60%) respondents have had unprotected sex. On practice 84 (45.7%) agreed that they have used emergency contraception while 100 (54.3%) have never. (Fig 1). Use after protected sexual intercourse was 18 (21.4%), before unprotected sex, 4 (4.8%) and after unprotected sex, 62 (73.8%) (Fig 2). Emergency contraceptive was found to be effective in preventing pregnancy among 62 (73.8%) respondents while it was not for 22 (26.2%).

## Discussion

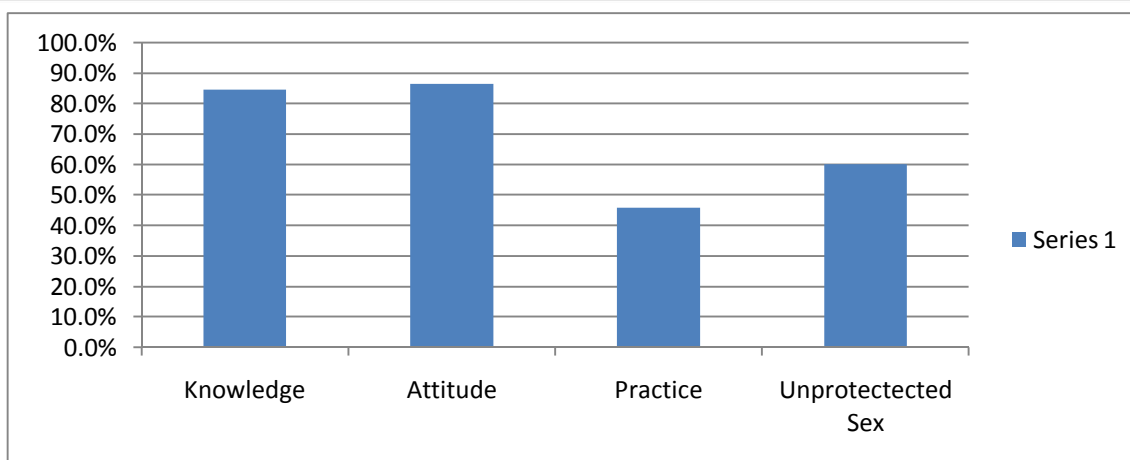
Majority, (84.4%) of the respondents have heard about emergency contraception, while minority (15.6%) has not heard of it. This may be because respondents are in health and may have come across the word in the course of their study. Finding is in line with Tamire and Enquellasi, (2007) on knowledge, attitude and practice of emergency contraception among female undergraduate students of Addis Ababa University Ethiopia which reviewed that majority (82.3%) have heard about emergency contraception. Majority (98.3%) also defined emergency contraception as backup methods for contraceptive emergencies which

**Table 1:** Showing the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

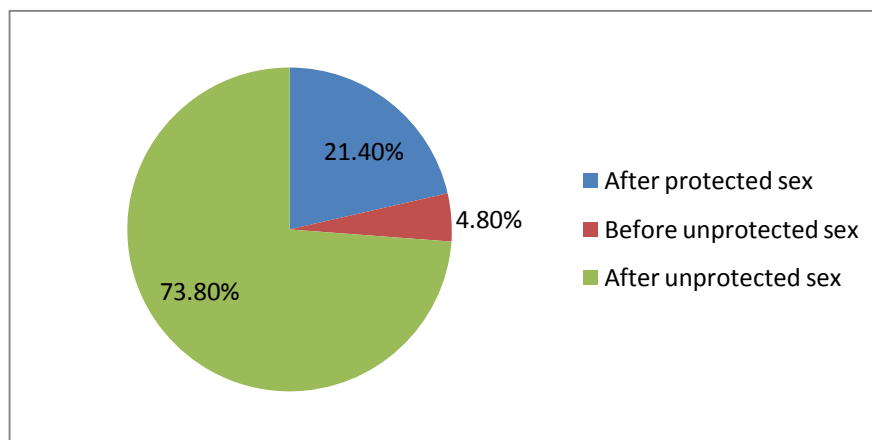
Parameters	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
<b>Age</b>		
15-19 years	56	25.7
20-24 years	73	33.5
25-29 years	54	24.7
30 and above	35	16.1
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	193	88.3
Married	25	11.5
Divorced	-	-
<b>Level of Study</b>		
200 level	33	15.1
300 level	50	23.0
400 level	80	36.7
500 level	55	25.2

**Table 2:** Showing knowledge of various types of emergency contraception.

Respondents	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage
<u>Progestogen-only contraceptive (postinor 2)</u>				
Combined oral contraceptive (microgynon)	60	32.6%	124	67.4%
Intra-uterine Contraceptive Device (IUCD)	40	21.7%	144	78.3%
Post coital douching	20	10.9%	164	89.1%
<u>Menstrogen</u>	18	9.8%	166	90.2%
<u>Gynaecosid</u>	25	13.6%	159	86.4%
Alcohol mixed with lime	5	2.7%	179	97.3%
Lime mixed with potash and salty water	30	16.3%	154	83.7%
Antibiotics	3	1.6%	181	98.4%



**Fig 1:** Percentage knowledge, attitude, practice of EC and unprotected Sex



**Fig 2:** Respondents purpose of Emergency Contraceptive use.

women can use within the first few days after unprotected sexual intercourse to prevent an unwanted pregnancy while only 2.2% defined it as the use of a drug or device to prevent pregnancy after protected sexual intercourse. This is in agreement with the study carried out by Tesfaye, Tilahun and Girma (2012) on knowledge, attitude and practice of emergency contraception among women who seek abortion care at Jimma University Specialized Hospital South West Ethiopia which revealed that 89.9% defined it as a back-up method that is used after intercourse has taken place and before implantation has occurred. Positive perception towards emergency contraception and its effectiveness was in line with the study carried out by Celik, Ekerbicer, Ergun and Tekin (2008) on knowledge and perception of emergency contraception among Turkish nursing and Midwifery students which revealed that majority (76%) of the respondents have positive perception towards the use of emergency contraception and its effectiveness. Less than half (40.2%) of the respondents have used emergency contraceptive. This could mean that majority of the students do not always indulge in unprotected sexual activities or are carefree about consequences. Findings show there has not been change in usage based on study carried out by Nworah (2010) on knowledge and practice of emergency contraception among 600 undergraduate students selected from four tertiary institutions in Anambra State, South East Nigeria which revealed that the practice of emergency contraception is low and postinor 2 was the commonest used and contrast with a study carried out

by Akain 2008 on knowledge and perception of female undergraduates in Niger Delta of Niger Delta of Nigeria towards emergency contraception which revealed that the practice is high (98.4%). In this study the number using emergency contraceptive was less than the number that have had unprotected sex. This implies high risk of unwanted pregnancy.

### Recommendations

1. Indepth investigation on barriers to practice
2. Family planning programme for adolescents
3. Awareness programme in higher schools on benefits of Emergency contraceptives

### Conclusion

This is a descriptive study to determine the knowledge, perception and practice of emergency contraception among female undergraduates of College of Health Sciences of a Federal University, East of the Nigeria. Findings showed that the students have good knowledge of emergency contraception and positive attitude towards it but their practice of emergency contraception is low. Barriers to use need to be investigated. Meanwhile health intervention programmes to scale up the practice of emergency contraception among the students should be put in place. **Institution – based family programs and awareness campaign** should be organized on the importance of emergency contraception which

when utilized will help to reduce the overall national statistics on morbidity and mortality associated with unwanted pregnancy and unsafe abortion. The product should be made acceptable, available and affordable. Accessibility of drug through school-based health centers, pharmacies, or other environment where students are comfortable seeking health care services would help many female undergraduates avoid unplanned pregnancy and its sequel.

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