

# Knowledge and use of contraceptives among secondary school girls in Dar es Salaam Tanzania

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## ABSTRACT

Use of contraceptives is one of the ways which can help to reduce unwanted pregnancy in adolescent girls. Adolescent pregnancy has been identified as one of the reasons for girls dropping out from school in Tanzania, however the knowledge and practice of secondary school girls regarding contraceptive methods is not well documented. This descriptive study was therefore undertaken to assess knowledge and use of contraceptives among secondary school girls in Dar es Salaam region. It was found out that majority (97%) of the girls knew at least one contraception method but only (40%) used any of the methods. The major source of information on contraceptives was from schools and media. Majority of the participant (87%) were aware of unwanted pregnancies prevailing among school girls and problems associated with it. Educational interventions are still needed in order to increase use of contraceptives by adolescent school girls.

## INTRODUCTION

Unwanted pregnancy is one of the problems facing adolescent girls. In Sub Saharan Africa it is estimated that 10% of girls become pregnant at the age of sixteen (WHO, 2008). Teenage girls who get pregnant are likely to drop out from school and are unlikely to have the social and economic means to raise their children. In Tanzania adolescent pregnancy has been identified as one of the reasons for girls dropping out from school (MoET BEST, 2009). It has been reported that many young people become sexually active at an early age, when most of them have no knowledge on reproductive health. (Reina *et al.*, 2010). A study on adolescents in the rural area of Tanzania reported that school children lack credible knowledge about safe sex (Mushi *et al.*, 2007). Unintended pregnancy is also associated with increased risk of morbidity for women, and with health behaviors such as delay in prenatal care which may affect the health of the infant. Educational programs on reproductive health have been conducted in Tanzania, however knowledge and practice of secondary school girls regarding safe days and contraceptive use is not well documented.

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The purpose of this study therefore was to assess knowledge and use of different contraceptive methods among adolescent secondary school girls in Dar es Salaam region.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

This was a cross sectional study done in secondary schools in Dar-es-salaam region. It involved interviewing secondary school girls using a questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed and pretested in 20 girls. The researcher visited the selected schools and collected data by using self administered semi structured questionnaire. Consent was obtained from each participating student. To ensure confidentiality, neither the name nor the form of any participating student was written on the questionnaire. Ethical clearance was obtained from Muhimbili University of Health and allied Sciences ethical review committee. Data was analyzed using SPSS v.13 Software.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 395 students participated in the study. Their age groups are shown in table 1. Out of 395 participants 390 had attained menarche and 5 had not. About 87% of respondents were aware of teenage pregnancy prevailing in school girls. While 1.3% said they did not know (Table 2).

**Table 1:** Age distribution of the study population.

Age group	Percent
14-17	33.4
18-20	61.3
>21	5.3

**Table 2:** Awareness of teenage pregnancy in schools and associated factors.

	Percent
<b>Awareness of teenage pregnancies in schools</b>	
Present to a large extent	87.6
Present to a lesser extent	10.9
Does not exist	0.3
I do not know	1.3
<b>Factors associated with teenage pregnancy</b>	
Ignorance	40.4
Desire of luxury	56.8
Poverty	10.6
Peer pressure	5
others	10
<b>Ways to avoid pregnancy</b>	
Abstain	88.0
Use of condom	10.2
Others	1.8
<b>Problems of teenage pregnancy</b>	
Drop from school	30
Stigma	30
Problem on delivery	15
HIV/AIDS	20
Psychological problems	15
Chased from home	10
becoming sick	10

The factors associated with teenage pregnancy as mentioned by participants are shown in table 2. About 40% of the participants said ignorance was one of the factors while 56% mentioned desire to live a luxurious life as one of the factors. Regarding consequences of unwanted pregnancies, dropout from school, stigma and contacting HIV/AIDS were the major problems mentioned (table 2). Similar problems have been identified by (Panday *et al.*, 2009). About 97% of participants were aware of contraceptives methods with each one knowing at least one contraceptive method. The methods mentioned are shown in table 3.

**Table 3:** Contraceptive methods mentioned by participants.

Contraceptive method	Percent
Condom	84.6
Pill	79
Injectables	60
patches (Intradermal)	35
Loop	35
Surgical	29
Safe days	20
Spermicide	16.3
Diaphragm	4.3

Condom was mentioned by 84.6%. This may be attributed to constant media and public campaigns and advertisements of condom as well as its high accessibility and comparatively low cost. When participants were asked whether they used any of the contraceptive methods only 12.4% said yes while 87.6% said they did not use any of the methods Table 4. Similar results of high knowledge but low usage have also been reported by (Tayo *et al.*, 2011) where in their study only 5% of

respondents who had knowledge on contraceptives actually used them. Our results show a disparity between contraceptive knowledge and practice, indicating that knowledge does not always constitute practice. Regarding safe days 48.1% said they know about the days but when they were asked to indicate the safe days only 12.4% indicated the correct days indicating that only these few would be in a position to use safe days and avoid unwanted pregnancy.

**Table 4:** Knowledge and practice regarding contraceptives and safe days.

	YES(%)	NO(%)
Do you use contraceptives	12.4	87.6
Do you know methods that can be used	75.2	24.8
Visited reproductive health centre	6.3	93.7
Do you know safe days if no contraceptive used	48.1	51.9
Chose the correct safe day on the cycle	18.7	81.3
Had sex before	15.4	84.6
Will use contraceptives if educated/informed	40	60

**Table 5:** Sources of contraceptives and advice on use.

Sources of contraceptives	Percent
Part II	51.2
Pharmacy	37.2
Health facility	11.6
<b>Sources of advice on contraceptive use</b>	
Self	28
boyfriend	39.5
Friend s	23.3
others	9.2
<b>Source of information on contraceptives</b>	
School	60
Magazine/news paper	40
Radio/TV	38
Parents	12.9
Others	5

The source of information on contraceptive use was mainly from school (60%) and media 40% while parents featured less as the source of this knowledge Table 5. Similar findings were reported by (Adeyinka *et al.*, 2009) where only 10.5% of undergraduates heard about contraception from parents. Other studies have shown that parents did not communicate with their children about reproductive health due to cultural barriers and lack of knowledge (Wamoyi *et al.*, 2010; Tesso *et al.*, 2012). On the other hand boyfriends were the main advisers on contraceptive use, mentioned by 39% while 28% of participants who used contraceptives, made decisions on their own to use contraceptives (Table 5). Regarding sources of contraceptives, participants mentioned Part II shops (51.2%) and Pharmacies (37%) to be the major sources of contraceptives (table 5) similar findings were reported by (Obiechina *et al.*, 2010).

## CONCLUSION

Students in secondary schools know about contraceptive methods but the percentage of those using the contraceptives is relatively low. Parents contribute less towards educating their children about reproductive health and contraception. Educating young girls on ways of preventing pregnancy including use of oral contraceptives is necessary so as to avoid unwanted pregnancy.

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