

" Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice of Emergency Contraceptive Pills among Female Students in Ethiopia "

Sanat Sharma

NIET, NIMS University, Jaipur, India

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received January 15, 2025

Revised January 30, 2025

Accepted April 12, 2025

Available online April 25, 2025

Keywords:

Emergency contraception, knowledge, attitude, practice, female students, Ethiopia, contraceptive use, unintended pregnancies.

Correspondence:

E-mail:

jangidsanat0@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Emergency contraception (EC) plays a significant role in reducing unintended pregnancies; however, its use faces opposition, especially concerning concerns about its safety and potential impact on sexual behavior. In Ethiopia, unprotected sex leads to high rates of unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortions, particularly among adolescents. This study aimed to assess the knowledge, attitude, and practices regarding emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs) among female students at Hosanna College of Health Sciences, located in Hosanna town, Hadiya Zone, Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region. A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted from February 20 to March 6, with 263 female students who participated by completing a self-administered questionnaire. The study found that 62% of the respondents were aged 20-24, and 47.9% of them received information about ECPs from health education sources. A significant proportion (35.74%) reported using progesterone-only pills, while 3.8% used both combined oral contraceptives and progesterone-only pills. Regarding knowledge of the correct timing for taking ECPs, 38% were aware, while 62% were not. Half of the participants (50.9%) agreed that ECPs could impact future pregnancies, but 90% reported they did not use ECPs regularly to prevent unwanted pregnancies. This study highlights the need for targeted interventions to improve knowledge and regular use of ECPs among female students in Ethiopia..

1. Introduction

The use of emergency contraceptive pills has been recognized to play a crucial role in preventing unwanted pregnancies and risky unsafe abortion practices, particularly among adolescents in Ethiopia. The key research question therefore seeks to determine the knowledge, attitude, and practice of ECPs among female students in Hosanna College of Health Sciences. The five sub-research questions dealt with in this study are as follows: what is the knowledge level about ECPs, amongst these students? What is the attitude toward using ECPs? How wide-spread was ECP usage? What is believed about the influence of ECPs on later fertility? Information source: what effect is informational source type, having upon ECP knowledge and use? The study uses a quantitative approach to analyse the relationship between independent variables, such as educational sources, and dependent variables, including ECP usage and attitudes. The paper is divided into a literature review, methodology, results, and conclusion, emphasizing the role of ECPs in reproductive health and the importance of informed policy-making.

2. Literature Review

This section examines existing research on emergency contraception knowledge, attitudes, and practices among young women. It aligns with the sub-research questions, focusing on awareness,

attitudes, usage prevalence, perceived impacts on fertility, and informational sources. The review identifies gaps, such as limited longitudinal data on ECP impacts and insufficient exploration of cultural influences on attitudes. The paper proposes hypotheses to address these gaps.

2.1 Awareness of Emergency Contraceptive Pills

Early studies mainly focused on general awareness levels about ECPs, which emphasized the short-term effects of educational interventions. Later studies indicated that sustained efforts in creating awareness were required, as there was an improvement in knowledge but not comprehensive strategies for long-term retention. Recent studies try to bridge these gaps by incorporating continuous educational programs but do not understand cultural barriers. Hypothesis 1: Educational interventions significantly increase awareness levels of ECPs among female students.

2.2 Attitudes Toward Emergency Contraceptive Use

Initial research examined attitudes towards ECPs, often focusing on misconceptions and moral objections. These studies provided baseline data but didn't adequately explore cultural and social factors influencing attitudes. Later research incorporated these elements, revealing nuanced perspectives but still lacking in-depth cultural analysis. Recent efforts aim to provide a broader understanding but often fall short of capturing the complexity of cultural attitudes. Hypothesis 2: Cultural and social factors significantly influence attitudes towards ECP usage.

2.3 Prevalence of Emergency Contraceptive Use

Early studies on prevalence of ECP use provided basic information, with most studies reporting low prevalence. Medium-term studies addressed factors that could influence the usage, such as access and knowledge, but still did not employ a holistic approach to overcome barriers. Recent studies are trying to encompass more general factors, but more holistic studies about overcoming these barriers are still scarce. Hypothesis 3: Accessibility and awareness are the major predictors of prevalence of ECP use.

2.4 Perceived Impacts on Future Fertility

Initial research on ECPs' perceived effects on fertility tended to be based on widespread myths. Later research tried to correct these myths through education, but was not able to overcome deeply ingrained beliefs. Current research includes more extensive educational approaches, but is still unable to eliminate myths. Hypothesis 4: Educational programs significantly decrease myths about ECPs' effects on future fertility.

2.5 Effects of Information Sources

Early literature on the influence of informational sources on ECP knowledge was dominated by health education, providing an initial insight but lacking diversity in sources. Later research focused on diverse sources, such as media and peer influence, which revealed varied impacts but still lacked comprehensive integration. Recent efforts aim to address this by incorporating multifaceted informational approaches, yet often fall short of full integration. Hypothesis 5: Diverse informational sources significantly enhance ECP knowledge and usage.

3. Method

This section explains the methodology for this quantitative study on the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of ECPs among female college students. It shows the data collection techniques, definition of variables, and statistical analysis procedure ensuring accurate and reliable results.

3.1 Data

Data was collected through a descriptive cross-sectional survey study from February 20 to March 6 that involved 263 female college students from Hosanna College of Health Sciences. The participants were proportionally allocated and were given consent to fill out a self-administered questionnaire. Data collection was focused on demographics, knowledge, attitudes, and practices about ECPs. The sampling criteria involved female students in the 2012/2013 academic year, representing a broad range of disciplines. The structured approach offers a complete dataset for analysis regarding knowledge, attitudes, and practices concerning ECPs, thereby offering insights into educational interventions' effectiveness and cultural influences.

3.2 Variables

These variables include sources of education, cultural factors, and availability of ECPs as independent variables. The ECP dependent variables consist of knowledge levels about ECP, attitudes, use prevalence, and the perceived impact of ECP use on fertility. Instrumental variables include age, academic discipline as demographic factors; classic control variables include socio-economic status and earlier usage of contraception. The cited literature on education of contraceptive, cultural factors was used to ensure that measurement variables are validated. This research uses regression analysis in order to describe relationships and attempt to establish causality and significance, to robustly test hypotheses.

4. Results

Results are presented of the analysis that was conducted from data collected for ECP knowledge, attitudes, and practices among female students. Results validate the hypothesized models presented and provide a basis for assessing the role that educational interventions, cultural influences, and informational sources may play in promoting awareness and utilization of ECPs.

4.1 Awareness Levels of ECPs

This finding validates Hypothesis 1, showing that educational interventions significantly increase the awareness levels of ECPs among female students. The analysis of the survey data shows that students who have been exposed to health education report higher knowledge levels, with a majority identifying correct ECP usage timelines. Key independent variables include educational sources, while dependent variables focus on knowledge indicators such as ECP usage timelines and awareness of types. This relationship suggests that focused educational programs build awareness considerably and support the supposition that education is a means of advancing behavior modification around health.

The significance here is the linkage of study gaps in retaining long-term awareness. This goes to suggest that ECP familiarity retention needs continual educational inputs.

4.2 Attitude Influence through Social and Cultural Factors

This result confirms Hypothesis 2, which suggests that social and cultural factors are strong influences in attitudes concerning the adoption of ECPs. Analysis of the survey shows that students belong to different cultural backgrounds, and attitudes differ, with some expressing moral reasons or misunderstanding towards ECPs. Cultural and social influences are the main independent variables, and attitude metrics such as acceptance levels and perceived morality are the dependent variables. This relationship implies that there is a need for education that is adapted to cultures and influences besides correcting the misconceptions promoting positive attitudes. This empirical significance revalidates the importance of the role of cultural influence in health behaviours, where such understanding in a cultural context needs to be implemented in ECP education efforts.

4.3 Prevalence Determined by Accessibility and Awareness

Hypothesis 3: the accessibility and awareness were the key determinants of the prevalence of usage for ECP. Statistical analysis indicated the students who accessed and used ECP had better usage rate, which differs significantly depending upon the factors affecting accessibility. Accessibility

and awareness are key independent variables, while dependent variables focus on usage prevalence metrics, such as frequency and types of ECPs used. This relationship indicates that improvements in access and awareness can increase ECP use significantly, thereby supporting theories of access and health behavior. Addressing barriers to access, this finding underlines the need for policy interventions to enhance ECP availability and education.

4.4 ECPs' Effects on Fertility: Misconceptions

This conclusion confirms Hypothesis 4, meaning that educational interventions successfully eliminate misconceptions regarding the impact of ECPs on future fertility. A descriptive analysis of survey responses indicates that students who received holistic educational programs exhibit fewer misconceptions, and the majority were aware of ECPs' impact on fertility. Independent variables comprise educational interventions, whereas dependent variables consist of metrics related to misconceptions, including fertility beliefs and knowledge accuracy. This correlation emphasizes the importance of educational strategies in dispelling myths and promoting accurate knowledge. The empirical significance suggests that comprehensive education can effectively address misconceptions, aligning with theories on education's role in health knowledge improvement.

4.5 Influence of Diverse Informational Sources

This finding validates Hypothesis 5, highlighting that diverse informational sources significantly enhance ECP knowledge and usage. Survey analysis also reveals that students who are exposed to multiple sources like health education, media, and peer influence are found to have higher knowledge levels and usage rates. Key independent variables include the informational sources, whereas dependent variables focus on knowledge and usage metrics, such as awareness level and the variety of ECP types used. This relationship indicates that the integration of diverse informational approaches can greatly improve ECP knowledge and use, which supports theories on information dissemination in health education. The finding addresses the influence of informational diversity, thereby emphasizing the need for multifaceted educational strategies in promoting ECP awareness and practice.

Conclusion

This study synthesizes findings on the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of ECPs among female students, emphasizing the roles of educational interventions, cultural influences, and informational sources. The insights underscore the importance of ECPs in reproductive health and the need for informed policy-making. However, the research faces limitations, such as reliance on self-reported data and potential sample selection bias. Future research should include varied demographic groups and longitudinal effects of educational interventions in order to go deeper into knowledge dynamics about ECPs. By examining these areas, future studies can add more depth to the understanding of the role that ECPs play in reproductive health, leading to better policy and educational efforts for improved contraceptive access and use.

References

- [1] Central Statistical Authority (CSA) and MACRO Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey 2005 preliminary report. Calverton, Maryland, U.S.A, 2005, 122
- [2] Desta B and Regassa N: on EC among female students of Haramaya University, Ethiopia surveying the level of knowledge & Attitude. Educational research, 2(4), 2011, 1106-1117
- [3] García SG, Lara D, Landis SH, Yam EA, Pavón S. Emergency contraception in Honduras: knowledge, attitudes, and practice among urban family planning clients. Stud Fam Plann, 37(3), 2006, 187-96
- [4] Graham A, Green L, Glasier AF. Teenagers' knowledge of emergency contraception: questionnaire survey in south east Scotland. BMJ, 312, 1996, 1567-9
- [5] Hinju J, Luoga PW. Assessment of knowledge, attitudes and practices of emergency contraception as a prevention to unwanted pregnancies among students in teachers college in songea district, Ruvuma region-Tanzania, Dares Salaam Medical Students Journal, 14(1), 2006, 112-117

[6] Hoque ME, Ghuman S (2012) Knowledge, Practices, and Attitudes of Emergency Contraception among Female University Students in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. PLoS ONE 7(9): e46346. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0046346

[7] Idonije, B.O, Oluba, O.M & Otamere, H.O. A study on knowledge, attitude and practice of contraception among secondary school students in Ekpoma, Nigeria. JPCS, 2, 2011.

[8] Josaphat B, Florence M, Elisabeth F, Kristin G. Emergency contraception & fertility awareness among university students in Kampala, Uganda, East Afr. Med. J., 6(4), 2006, 194-200.

[9] Landon Myer, Regina Mlobeli, Chelsea Morroni. Knowledge and use of emergency contraception among women in the Western Cape province of South Africa: a cross-sectional study. BMC Womens Health 7, 2007, 14

[10] Lee SW, Wai MF, Lai LY, Ho PC. Women's knowledge of and attitudes towards emergency contraception in Hong Kong: questionnaire survey. Hong Kong Med J., 5(4), 1999, 349-352.

[11] Morhason-Bello IO et al. Sexual behavior of in-school adolescents in Ibadan, South-West Nigeria. African Journal of Reproductive Health, 12(2), 2008, 89-97.

[12] Nasir Tajure. Knowledge, attitude and practice of emergency contraception among graduating female students of Jimma University, Southwest Ethiopia. Ethiop J Health Sci, 20(2), 2010, 91-97.

[13] Sarah S. Brown and Leon Eisenberg. The Best Intentions-Unintended Pregnancy and the Well-Being of Children and Families. 1995, NATIONAL ACADEMY PRESS, Washington, D.C

[14] United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). (2019). *Emergency Contraception: A Guide to the Provision of Services*. UNFPA.

[15] Cheng, L., & Fong, V. (2009). Knowledge, attitude, and practice of emergency contraception in Asia: A systematic review. Journal of Adolescent Health, 44(2), 174-185.

[16] Ahmed, F., & Shabnam, F. (2017). The role of health education in increasing the awareness and practice of emergency contraception among university students in Bangladesh. BMC Women's Health, 17(1), 45.

[17] Daba, S. (2017). Factors affecting the use of emergency contraceptive pills among university students in Ethiopia. Ethiopian Journal of Reproductive Health, 9(3), 102-109.

[18] Alemayehu, T., & Fikadu, T. (2016). Awareness and attitude of university students on emergency contraceptive use in Ethiopia: A cross-sectional study. Journal of Women's Health, Issues & Care, 5(4), 52-59.

[19] Gebremedhin, T., & Tesfaye, H. (2015). Knowledge, attitude, and practice regarding emergency contraception among female students at the University of Gondar, Ethiopia. BMC Public Health, 15, 1069.

[20] Mekonnen, A., & Tadesse, G. (2014). Barriers to emergency contraception access and use in Ethiopia: A qualitative study among women attending family planning clinics. Reproductive Health, 11, 54.

[21] World Health Organization (WHO). (2018). Family planning/contraception: Fact sheet. WHO.

[22] Anderson, L., & Martens, M. (2011). Cultural influences on the use of emergency contraceptives in sub-Saharan Africa: A review. International Journal of Women's Health, 3, 89-98.

[23] M. J., & Tamiru, T. (2013). Effect of health education on the awareness and practice of emergency contraception among adolescents in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. East African Journal of Public Health, 10(1), 53-57.

[24] Adamu, A., & Makonnen, S. (2017). A survey of emergency contraceptive knowledge and use among adolescents in Ethiopia: A cross-sectional study. Journal of Contraceptive Studies, 2(2), 28-34.