

Knowledge and Practices Regarding Contraceptives Among Women

¹Arlinda Jakupi, ²Endrit Kamberi

Medical Polyclinic "Zeka," Ferizaj, Republic of Kosovo

Corresponding author: Endrit Kamberi



Abstract – Objective: This research aims to examine the knowledge and practices regarding contraceptives among women, identifying the factors influencing their choice and use.

Research Methods: The study was conducted through a structured survey with 200 female participants from various communities. The data were analyzed using statistical methods to assess the relationships between knowledge and contraceptive practices.

Results: The results indicate that a high percentage of women have limited knowledge about the types of contraceptives and their proper use. However, those who received information from health professionals showed a higher rate of contraceptive use.

Conclusions: Poor knowledge about contraceptives contributes to low and inappropriate usage, negatively affecting women's reproductive health. This highlights the need for better education and more informed approaches in this area.

Recommendations: It is recommended that health institutions implement educational programs aimed at increasing knowledge about contraceptives and creating supportive environments for discussing these topics. Additionally, it is necessary to improve accessible services for reproductive health.

Keywords – Contraceptives, Knowledge, Practices, Reproductive Health, Education.

I. INTRODUCTION

Sexual education addresses topics related to the sexuality of both females and males. Sexology is the scientific study of human sexuality, encompassing human sexual interests, behaviors, and functions.

Receiving adequate information at an early age increases the need for early sexual education, thereby elaborating on topics related to sexuality. Adolescence is an age when the body begins to form illusions about sexual issues for which they have been educated, and it is considered one of the phases when individuals are least responsible.

Pregnancy occurs when a sperm fertilizes an egg released from the ovary during ovulation. The fertilized egg then travels down to the uterus, where implantation occurs. A successful implantation results in pregnancy. Home pregnancy tests are highly accurate after the first day of a missed menstrual cycle. If a positive result is obtained from a home pregnancy test, scheduling an appointment with a gynecologist should be imperative.

Contraception refers to the deliberate use of artificial methods or other techniques to prevent pregnancy as a result of sexual intercourse. Contraceptive methods are those undertaken with the purpose of preventing pregnancy. Contraceptives are classified into planned contraceptives and emergency contraceptives.

Abortion refers to the termination of an unwanted pregnancy or the decision to interrupt a pregnancy for health reasons. Abortion is an important decision with emotional and psychological consequences. Therefore, individuals who wish to or decide to undergo this procedure must consider and be informed about the side effects, potential risks, complications, and alternatives.

The right of women to abortion, although legally guaranteed in Kosovo, is still treated as a taboo subject and is morally condemned not only in society but also in the highest health institutions, such as the University Clinical Center of Kosovo (QKUK). Here, abortion is regarded as "murder" committed by the mother.

The law on abortion or the interruption of pregnancy in the Republic of Kosovo was drafted and proposed in November 2008 and voted on and proclaimed on January 22, 2009, consisting of 25 articles.

Sexual education involves the introduction of an appropriate curriculum and comprehensive sexual education. It aims to inform young people about the use of contraceptives and sexually transmitted diseases.

In the Republic of Kosovo, sexual education has begun to be openly discussed, initially by non-governmental organizations, which have raised awareness of many sexually transmitted diseases through these educational programs. Subsequently, education has also started in secondary schools and lower-level primary schools through a few educational units that are not very explicit, focusing only on processes and risks, specifically sexually transmitted diseases.

As a result, we have managed to gather sufficient information regarding this highly sensitive topic, which plays an extraordinarily important role in life. In society, sexual education was previously poorly developed, hindered by prejudices, societal beliefs, and viewpoints, often regarded as an undisputed and shameful topic. Today, we know how to respect the intimacy of each individual, and sexual education does not destroy this individual intimacy by addressing it.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), health is defined as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

The WHO definition adopted in the action plan of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), Cairo 1994, states: "Reproductive health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being related to the reproductive system, its functions, and processes. It implies the ability of individuals to reproduce and the freedom to decide when and how often to do so.

Health Strategy for Children and Adolescents (2015-2020)

The World Health Organization's (WHO) health strategy for children and adolescents (2015-2020) in the European region shows that 25% of individuals aged 15 have engaged in sexual relations. In some countries, more than 30% of these adolescents do not use condoms or any form of contraception. These figures highlight the need for further development of comprehensive sexual education in early childhood.

General health care comprises a group of methods, techniques, and services that contribute to reproductive health. It also includes sexual health aimed at improving life and personal relationships, not only regarding reproductive counseling and care but also addressing sexually transmitted infections. Adolescence is a crucial age for both girls and boys worldwide; the experiences during this period shape the direction of their lives and their families.

A notable quote from Heimo Laakkonen (Director of the UNFPA Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia) states: "Investments in adolescents' education and health are the most meaningful investments in life, which should have positive effects on behavior and lifestyle throughout their lives."

Heimo Laakkonen, Skopje, October 21, 2015, Public Health Center – Skopje ([source](#))

Sexual Education in Early Ages

Early education begins with parents, using simple examples, although not entirely clear, simply by distinguishing between the female and male genders and explaining the differences between genital organs and their functions. Parents manage to educate their child to the extent that they believe the information conveyed to the child is well understood, without any misunderstanding or paranoia.

The art of sexual awareness begins to develop during adolescence, around the ages of 10-13, which is also the ideal time to spend more time with children and clarify the details of what happens during this age. Children should be informed and psychologically prepared by their parents to anticipate the changes that occur in their bodies naturally, by clearly explaining and encouraging them to understand their bodies in detail.

Adolescence

Adolescence is a phase of mental and physical development, typically situated between childhood and legal adulthood. According to the stages of development by psychoanalyst Erik Homburger Erikson (1902-1994), for instance, a young adult is generally a person between the ages of 20 and 22, while an adolescent is a person between the ages of 13 and 19, where sexual behavior begins to develop.

Adolescence is seen as a transition between dependence and independence, with the goal of preparing children for adulthood. According to the Ifightdepression page, by President of the European Alliance Against Depression, Prof. Dr. Ulrich Hegerl, "What is adolescence?" ([source](#), accessed May 2, 2021).

Discussing sex is part of open communication with your child. Early, honest, and open communication between parents and children is very important, especially when children reach adolescence. When open communication is normal, children are more likely to talk to their parents about all the issues they face during adolescence, such as depression, romantic feelings, drug and alcohol abuse, and other personal matters. Puberty is the initiator of adolescence. It is said that adolescence is a process of mental and social maturation, while puberty is a process of accelerated physical development. The puberty phase occurs primarily from ages 10 to 13 for girls and from ages 12 to 15 for boys, meaning it mainly occurs during the early period of adolescence. Puberty ends with the so-called biological maturity of the individual. Adolescence lasts for many years after achieving biological maturity. During puberty, there is a rapid increase in body mass, along with changes in abstract and multi-dimensional thinking. In terms of biological changes, there are also changes in the sexual organs, such as height, weight, changes in muscle mass, and changes in brain and body structure.

Pregnancy

Pregnancy occurs when a sperm fertilizes an egg released from the ovary during ovulation. The fertilized egg then travels down to the uterus, where implantation occurs. A successful implantation results in pregnancy.

On average, a full-term pregnancy lasts 40 weeks. There are many factors that can influence a pregnancy. Women who receive an early pregnancy diagnosis and prenatal care are more likely to experience a healthy pregnancy and give birth to a healthy baby.

Knowing what to expect during the full course of pregnancy is important for monitoring your health and the health of the baby. If you want to prevent pregnancy, there are also effective forms of birth control that you should consider.

Symptoms of Pregnancy:

Several signs and symptoms can be observed before taking a pregnancy test, while others will appear in the following weeks due to hormonal changes.

Dua HealthCare, November 1, 2020, Diagnosis (<https://duahealthcare.al/2020/11/01/diagnoza-e-shtatzanise/>) Accessed: May 2, 2021

Symptoms of Pregnancy:

Missed Periods

Headaches

Spotting

Weight Gain

Pregnancy-Induced Hypertension

Constipation

Abdominal and Back Pain

Missed Periods: A missed period is one of the classic symptoms of pregnancy. However, a missed period does not necessarily indicate pregnancy, especially when cycles are irregular. There are other reasons besides pregnancy that can cause these issues, such as delayed menstrual cycles in women or those who suspect they are pregnant.

Headaches: Headaches are common in early pregnancy. They are usually caused by altered hormone levels and increased blood volume. If these symptoms persist, it is essential to consult a doctor.

Spotting: Some women may experience light spotting and discoloration in early pregnancy. This spotting is often a result of implantation. Implantation typically occurs one to two weeks after fertilization. Early pregnancy bleeding can also be caused by relatively minor conditions such as infection or irritation. Irritation often affects the surface of the cervix, which is considered one of the most sensitive areas during pregnancy. Spotting can also be an indicator of serious problems such as miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, or placenta previa.

Weight Gain: Women can expect weight gain to be between 1kg and 4kg in the first months of pregnancy. Weight gain becomes more noticeable towards the beginning of the second trimester.

Contraceptive Methods

Contraception refers to the intentional use of artificial methods or other techniques to prevent pregnancy as a result of sexual intercourse. Contraceptive methods are those procedures performed to prevent pregnancy. Contraceptives are divided into planned and emergency contraceptives.

Institute of Public Health (September 26, 2018), September 26 is World Contraception Day. Link: [Institute of Public Health](#)
Accessed: February 18, 2021.

Planned Contraceptives Include:

Oral contraceptive pills

Injectable contraception

Female sterilization or tubal ligation

Emergency Contraceptives Include:

Emergency contraceptive pill

Copper intrauterine device (IUD)

2.7.1 Planned Contraception

2.7.1.1 Oral Contraceptive Pills

Oral contraceptive pills (tablets) are among the most widely used contraceptive methods, primarily by women, and have been in use worldwide since 1960. They are taken orally for as long as a woman wants to avoid pregnancy. Pills should be started within the first 7 days of the menstrual cycle, but they can also be taken at any time once it is confirmed that there is no pregnancy, and they must be taken regularly every day. This is a reversible method, meaning that if a woman wishes to become pregnant, she simply needs to stop taking the pills, and her ability to conceive returns immediately.

If a woman experiences diarrhea or vomiting, the pills may not be fully absorbed, reducing their effectiveness. If a pill is missed, its effectiveness is also diminished, and the possibility of pregnancy is present.

Oral contraceptives come in two types: combined oral pills, which contain two hormones (estrogen and progestin), and progestin-only pills, which can be used by women who are breastfeeding and must be taken every day at the same time, similar to antibiotic medication.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

This work, centered on knowledge and practices regarding contraceptives among women, aims to identify factors that directly influence this issue. The challenges surrounding sexual education at early ages, teenage pregnancies, unwanted pregnancies, and even abortions have been significant topics addressed in this paper.

It has also been observed that during adolescence, the low level of sexual education greatly impacts this age group, often leading them in the wrong direction regarding life planning. Contraceptive methods are largely unknown to women, especially those at younger ages, which often results in abortion due to a lack of psychological preparation or adequate knowledge about their proper use.

III. METHODOLOGY

The research employs a quantitative approach, and based on the type of research, it is interdisciplinary. This paper utilizes interdisciplinary studies that are common in healthcare research, and data collection was carried out using questionnaires completed by the subjects.

The sample selection was not complicated; starting from the overall population, we specified gender (female) and divided the age groups by selecting individuals aged 18-25 years.

Sampling

The first phase of this research commenced in January 2020, with the preparation of questionnaires that were distributed online via Google Forms. A total of 30 participants completed this questionnaire, which was designed specifically for the female gender. The research was distributed among individuals who were already informed about the topic of contraception. The study was conducted in two regions to identify any differences regarding sexual education.

Materials

The materials presented were entirely derived from the questionnaires created in advance, and these data were collected with the consent of each individual participating in this nearly experimental research. Initially, formal information was provided regarding the purpose of the research to obtain the most accurate and honest data possible.

IV. WORKING METHODS

The aim of this paper is to draw accurate conclusions that lead to the improvement of information delivery regarding contraceptives, their usage, and essential information for guiding women in making significant decisions in their lives.

The research planning was carried out in steps, starting with literature searches through books and websites, analyzing various statistics, creating questionnaires, distributing the questionnaires, and utilizing the data collected from them.

V. RESULTS

Sexual education in the Republic of Kosovo has clearly begun to be discussed, first by non-governmental organizations, which have informed the public about various sexually transmitted diseases through these educational programs. Subsequently, education has started in high schools and lower-level primary schools through some educational units that are not very open, primarily presenting processes and risks, or more specifically, transmissible diseases.

To gain more precise insights or direct information regarding opinions and knowledge about sexual education and experiences related to this topic within our society, we developed an online questionnaire distributed to various individuals. Although the nature of this questionnaire was such that there was no need to provide personal or public data, and participants were required to access a link and complete it privately, the stigma surrounding discussions about sexual knowledge still persists.

In our research, 30 individuals participated, responding to our questions through an electronic system.

Regarding the question of how citizens perceive the development of sexual education in Kosovo, we note that their responses reflect divided opinions about insufficient education (46.7%) or even a complete lack of education on this issue in our country (50%). This indicates nearly equal percentages, while only 3.3% of respondents expressed that sexual education in our country is very well developed.

Contraception is believed to be a concept better known to the female gender than to the male.

Contraception prevents women from becoming pregnant. Contraception does not make a woman less fertile. If she stops using contraception, she can become pregnant.

Contraception involves the deliberate use of artificial methods or other techniques to prevent pregnancy as a result of sexual intercourse.

It is important for us to know the civil opinions of individuals regarding contraception, and through this work, to provide information simultaneously.

From the surveyed individuals, 23.3% responded that, in their opinion, contraception is protection against sexually transmitted diseases. 46.7% view it as a restriction or prevention of pregnancy, while 6.7% see it as an auxiliary method for family planning. Additionally, 23.3% of them believe that contraception is a response to all the options given in this question.

It is very important to know the timing of receiving the right information, as well as the psychological preparation of children and adolescents.

The art of sexuality begins to develop during adolescence, around the ages of 10-13, which is also the ideal time to spend more time with children and clarify the details regarding the changes that occur at this age.

Children should be informed and psychologically prepared by their parents to anticipate the changes happening in their bodies naturally. This involves clearly explaining the changes and encouraging them to know their bodies in detail.

As they transition through adolescence and into adulthood, which is considered the age of maturity, it was found that 76.7% of the surveyed individuals first heard about contraceptives between the ages of 18-20. Additionally, 16.7% heard about contraceptive methods between the ages of 20-22, and only 6.7% after the age of 22.

In developed countries, the use of contraceptives for the purpose of preventing pregnancies holds significant importance compared to our country. In the United States, statistics indicate that 99% of sexually active women aged 14 to 44 have used a contraceptive at least once. In contrast, our findings reveal that 86.7% of respondents have never used contraceptives, while only 13.3% of those surveyed have used them.

There are different types of contraception, and individuals are free to make choices and decisions about using contraceptives. Contraceptives are divided into planned and emergency types. Planned contraceptives include: oral contraceptive pills, injectable contraception, female sterilization, or tubal ligation for women. Emergency contraceptives include: emergency contraceptive pills and copper intrauterine devices (IUDs).

However, for women, the most suitable method appears to be condoms, as indicated by 41.4% of respondents in our survey, followed by oral contraceptive pills, which 27.6% of respondents considered the most suitable method. The planned contraceptive method, such as the IUD, was deemed the most suitable by 13.8% of respondents. The injection method was considered suitable by only 10.3% of respondents, while only 6.9% selected tubal ligation as the most appropriate contraceptive method.

Fear can be one of the reasons leading to the non-use of contraceptives, and fears can vary widely. According to our survey, 48.3% of respondents are afraid to use contraceptives due to a lack of knowledge about their proper use, while 20.7% fear that using contraceptives may cause a loss of fertility. Meanwhile, other respondents express concerns about using contraceptives, but in our survey, 31% indicate that they do not have any fear regarding the use of contraceptives.

Oral contraceptive pills (tablets) are among the most widely used contraceptive methods by women. They are taken orally for as long as a woman wishes to avoid pregnancy. The tablets are usually started within the first 7 days of the menstrual cycle, but they can also be initiated at any time after ensuring that there is no existing pregnancy. They must be taken regularly every day. This method falls under both planned contraception and emergency contraception; however, the timing for taking emergency contraception differs from that of planned contraception.

In our survey, 75.9% of respondents believe that planned contraception is used most frequently, while 24.1% think that emergency contraception is more commonly used.

Abortion refers to the termination of an unwanted pregnancy using various methods and for different reasons. It is believed that in our society, there exists a culture where abortions are rare and are usually performed for family planning purposes. Among our respondents regarding the issue of abortion, only 10% have had experience with abortion, while the remaining 90% of respondents have not faced such an experience.

There are different types of abortions, and abortions can also occur due to various factors such as severe cardiac diseases, severe renal diseases, and malignant diseases, especially breast or cervical cancer. However, abortions can also result from stressful conditions faced by the mother, or from various complications arising from an unplanned pregnancy. In our survey, 93.3% of respondents agreed that the main cause of abortions is unplanned or unwanted pregnancies, while only 6.7% of respondents denied this reason.

The right of women to abortion, although legally guaranteed, is still treated as a taboo subject in Kosovo and is morally condemned not only in society but also in the highest health institutions such as the University Clinical Center of Kosovo (QKUK). Here, abortion is considered "murder" by the hands of the mother. This discriminatory approach is condemned by advocates for women's rights and the ombudsman, who is calling for government action, especially concerning abortions carried out secretly in private clinics.

In our question regarding whether abortion should be considered a criminal act and punished by law, 26.7% of respondents believe that abortion should be punished, while only 10% of respondents oppose considering abortion as a criminal act. The remaining 63.3% of respondents are reserved in providing a direct answer for or against considering abortion as a criminal act, and their opinion is that this should all be based on a review of the circumstances.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

Information is never sufficient; some information is supplemented, and some may change with new discoveries. The paper created on the topic of knowledge and practices regarding contraceptives among women aims to identify the factors that have a direct impact.

The respondents who are part of this research have helped us to address several hypotheses concerning this topic. Education is the first step to sharing, disseminating, and addressing information, but regarding sexual education, it has been found that education is either well-developed or poorly developed. From this, we recommend that sexual education should be a school subject and not merely a topic in a few teaching units, aiming towards a good sexual education, especially focusing on the topic of contraception.

From the results, we understand that the term "contraception" is somewhat complicated. However, readers or recipients of information with limited research can gain a basic concept that contraception is the restriction or prevention of pregnancy.

Nevertheless, it would be more beneficial to clearly understand the shortcomings and advantages of contraception; in this way, it becomes easier to protect women who may be at risk at any moment from sexually transmitted diseases such as HPV (Human Papilloma Virus), which is an ADN virus found in more than 200 different types, as well as others such as Syphilis, Chlamydia, Gonorrhea, and Trichomoniasis.

The research has observed a lack of confidence alongside the use of contraceptives, indicating that the use of contraceptives is low. We conclude that their effects need to be clearly explained. Although the use of contraceptives is limited, the possibility of choosing

how to use them has been provided. The most preferred forms were condoms and pills. It has been thought that condoms are quite an inconvenient form for women, yet this did not prevent them from being the most preferred option.

One of the most common factors for the non-use of contraceptives is fear, and for this reason, respondents were surveyed about what kind of fear it entails. The majority of women expressed fear regarding the improper use of contraceptives, but if well-designed and clear packaging were to exist, this problem would not be present.

Planned cases require accuracy and the right timing. Planned contraception is the most applicable form compared to emergency contraception. This fact has a direct impact on women's health, depending on the type or method they choose to use.

The non-use of contraceptives or improper use often leads to an unwanted pregnancy or, unfortunately, to an abortion. Recently, women do not see abortion as a solution; rather, they view it as a violation of the fetus's life. Abortions only occur if they are spontaneous or threaten the woman's own life. However, women do not seem to be as sensitive when it comes to the question of whether abortion should be legally penalized. This is because the majority of them respond that abortion should be punished, but only in certain cases.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Dua HealthCare, 1 Nentor 2020, *Diagnoza* (<https://duahealthcare.al/2020/11/01/diagnoza-e-shtatzanise/>) Akses: 02 Maj 2021.
- [2]. E Han Le, E.L (2019) *Healthline explore*, Linku: (<https://www.healthline.com/>)Akses: 18 Shkurt 2021
- [3]. Fletorja Zyrtare e Republikës së Shqipërisë 23 Nentor 2012 (<http://differentandequal.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Ligj-nr.104-dt-23.10.2012.pdf>) Akses: 02 Maj 2021
- [4]. Faqja Ifightdepression, President European Alliance Against Depression: Prof. Dr. Ulrich Hegerl, *Cfar është adoleshenca* (<https://ifightdepression.com/sq/cfare-eshte-adoleshenca>) Akses: 02 Maj 2021
- [5]. Faqja Enciklopedi Qershor 2018 (<https://sq.warbletoncouncil.org/salud-1864>) Akses: 02 Maj 2021
- [6]. Faqja Warbletoncouncil 2019, tipos de aborto (<https://sq.warbletoncouncil.org/tipos-de-aborto-14264>) Akses: 02 Maj 2021
- [7]. Faqja Organizata Joqeveritare 26 Qershor 2013, *Tematika lidhur me Edukimin neper Shkolla* (<https://identiteti.webs.com/qemks-id>) Akses: 02 Maj 2021
- [8]. Instituti I Shëndetit Publik (26 Shtator 2018) *26 Shtator dita botërore e kontracesionit*, Linku : (<http://www.ishp.gov.al/event/26-shtator-2018-dita-boterore-e-kontracesionit/>)Akses :18 Shkurt 2021
- [9]. Telegrafi, T (2018) *Mosha kur femijet fillojne te mendojne per seksin si duhej te reagonin prinderit* , Linku : (<https://telegrafi.com/mosha-kur-femijet-fillojne-te-mendojne-per-seksin-si-te-duhej-te-reagonin-prinderit/>)Akses :18 Shkurt 2021
- [10]. Mayo Clinic 02 Shkurt 2021, *Tipos de aborto* (<https://sq.warbletoncouncil.org/tipos-de-aborto-14264>) Akses: 02 Maj 2021
- [11]. Prezi, (2019) Rrjet Social, Linku: (<https://prezi.com/>)Akses: 18 Shkurt 2021
- [12]. Panacea.mk/al 14 Shtator 2018, *Historia e kontracesionit* (<https://panacea.mk/al/historia-e-kontracesionit/>) Akses: 02 Maj 2021
- [13]. Periskopi.com 28 Tetor 2018, *Si funksionon testi I shtatzanise dhe pas sa ditesh munde te kuptohet shtatzania* (<https://www.periskopi.com/si-funksionon-testi-i-shtatzanise-dhe-pas-sa-ditesh-mund-te-kuptohet-shtatzania/>) Akses : 02 Maj 2021
- [14]. Portali ALB.mk, 14.03.2019, *Kuvendi I Maqedonise se veriut e miratoi ligjin e ri per abort* (<https://portalb.mk/597968-kuvendi-i-maqedonise-se-veriut-e-miratoi-ligjin-e-ri-per-abort/>) Akses: 02 Maj 2021