

A STUDY TO ASSESS KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS ABOUT CONTRACEPTION AND EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTIVES IN YOUNGER GENERATION

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Abstract

Introduction: Adolescents' understanding of sexual and reproductive health is essential for their well-being. However, many young individuals lack accurate and comprehensive knowledge about contraception and emergency contraception leading onto unforeseen complications like unsafe abortions. This gap in understanding contributes to unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions, and the spread of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Although some awareness exists, misinformation and stigma remain prevalent, especially due to limited formal education on the topic in schools and communities.

Objectives: The primary aim of this study was to assess the knowledge, awareness, and attitudes of students aged 10–18 years toward contraception and emergency contraception. Specific objectives included identifying sources of information, examining attitudes, and evaluating misconceptions that may hinder effective contraceptive use.

Materials and Methods: A cross-sectional survey was conducted using a structured questionnaire with "Yes" or "No" responses. The study included 75 students (out of 100 approached) from a local school. Participants represented both genders and various age groups between 10 and 18 years.

Results: The study found that 60% of participants were familiar with basic contraceptive methods such as condoms (58%) and birth control pills (52%). However, fewer than 30% had knowledge of long-acting methods like IUCDs or implants. Around 40% had heard of emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs), but only 10% understood the correct timeframe for their use. School programs (45%) and the internet (30%) were the most common sources of information. Female students showed higher awareness and responsibility regarding contraceptive use than males, who often viewed it as the female partner's responsibility.

Conclusion: There is a clear need for improved, evidence-based sexual education in schools to bridge knowledge gaps and address misconceptions. Promoting open discussion and access to accurate information can empower adolescents to make informed decisions about their reproductive health.

Keywords: Adolescents, Contraceptive knowledge, Emergency contraception, Sexual health education, Awareness, Gender differences

INTRODUCTION

Sexual and reproductive health education is an essential aspect of adolescent development, yet knowledge gap persists regarding contraception and emergency contraception. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), one of the factors affecting females health and empowerment in society is the frequency of contraceptive use. Contraceptives are methods to control pregnancies and space out births [1]. The main purpose of contraceptive use is to help avoid unexpected pregnancies. Many young people are aware of contraceptive methods but they lack detailed knowledge about how to use them effectively. This gap between awareness and accurate knowledge can have serious consequences, including unplanned pregnancies, unsafe abortions, and the spread of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Schools and colleges serve as crucial platforms for educating youth, yet comprehensive and inclusive sexual education is still lacking in many regions. Cultural taboos, social stigma, and lack of open communication further prevent young individuals from seeking or accessing reliable information. As the younger generation steps into adulthood, it is essential that they are empowered with correct and practical knowledge about contraception. Doing so not only supports their physical and mental well-being but also fosters a more

informed, responsible, and health-conscious society. In many countries, young people, especially those aged 10-18 years, often lack accurate and comprehensive information about these topics. The growing importance of understanding contraceptive methods, including emergency contraception, has prompted a need to assess the level of awareness among adolescents.

This study aims to explore the knowledge, attitudes, and misconceptions surrounding contraception and emergency contraceptives among students aged 10-18 years in order to identify areas where improved education is needed.

Aim

Primary aim of the study is to assess the knowledge and awareness of contraception and emergency contraceptives among students aged 10-18 years.

Objectives of the study

To assess the knowledge and awareness of contraception among students aged 10-18 years.

To identify the sources of information about contraception for young people.

To examine students' attitudes towards contraceptive methods among emergency contraceptives.

To evaluate the misconceptions or gaps in understanding that may affect the use and effectiveness of contraception.

METHODOLOGY

Study design

The study is cross-sectional and uses a structured questionnaire to collect data from students aged 10-18 years. The survey is designed to be simple and quick to answer, using "YES" or "NO" questions to ensure clarity and ease of response.

Study Setting

The study was conducted at the Adichunchangiri Hospital (AIMS), B.G. Nagara, a well-established medical institution located in a rural part of Karnataka, India. This hospital and research centre serves as a referral center for neighbouring rural communities, providing a wide range of healthcare services, including reproductive health and family planning services.

Study Population

The study included 100 students from a local school, aged 10-18 years.

Of these 25 students declined to participate, leaving a total of 75 students for analysis.

The sample included both male and female students across various age groups to ensure a representative view of younger population.

Inclusion criteria:

Students aged between 10-18 years.

Who are willing to provide informed consent.

Who are enrolled in educational institutions affiliated with tertiary care Centre at B.G. Nagara, Karnataka.

Students who could understand and answer the questionnaire on their own without any help.

Exclusion criteria:

Students below 10 years of age and above 18 years of age.

Who declined to participate/ whose parents or guardians did not provide consent.

Students with cognitive or learning disabilities.

Incomplete or improperly filled questionnaires.

Data Collection:

Data collection was conducted using a structured questionnaire developed based on validated tools used in previous studies on contraceptive awareness and practices. The questionnaire was pre-tested in a pilot study involving 10 participants to ensure clarity, relevance, and cultural appropriateness. Feedback from the pilot study was incorporated to refine the final questionnaire.

Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee (IEC) of Adichunchanagiri Institute of Medical Sciences.

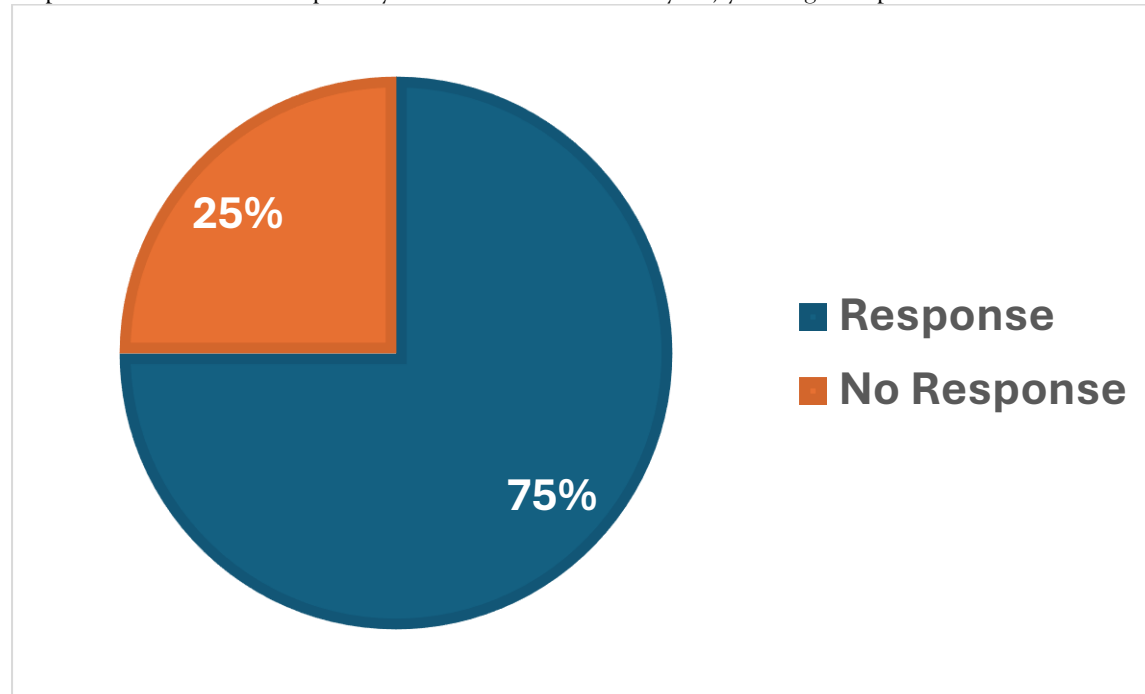
All participants were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses.

No personally identifiable information was collected to ensure participant privacy.

Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. Post-interview counselling on contraceptive options was provided, especially to those who expressed interest or demonstrated misconceptions regarding contraception

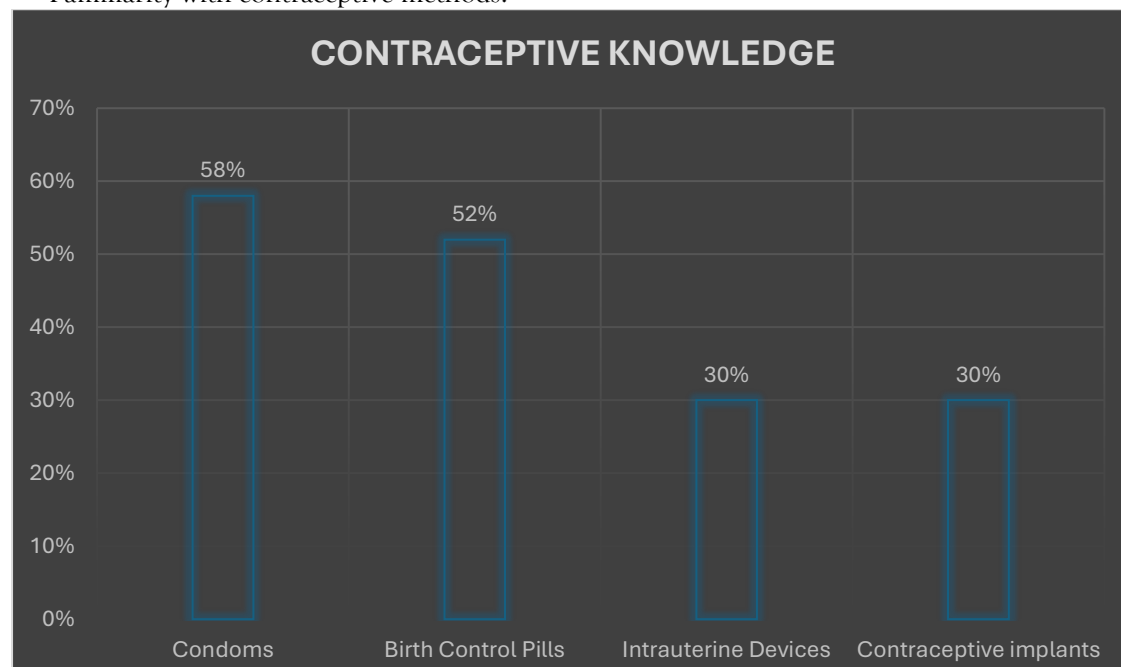
Results

Out of the 100 students approached, twenty five percent of participants failed to provide appropriate responses and were subsequently excluded from the analysis , yielding a response rate of 75%.



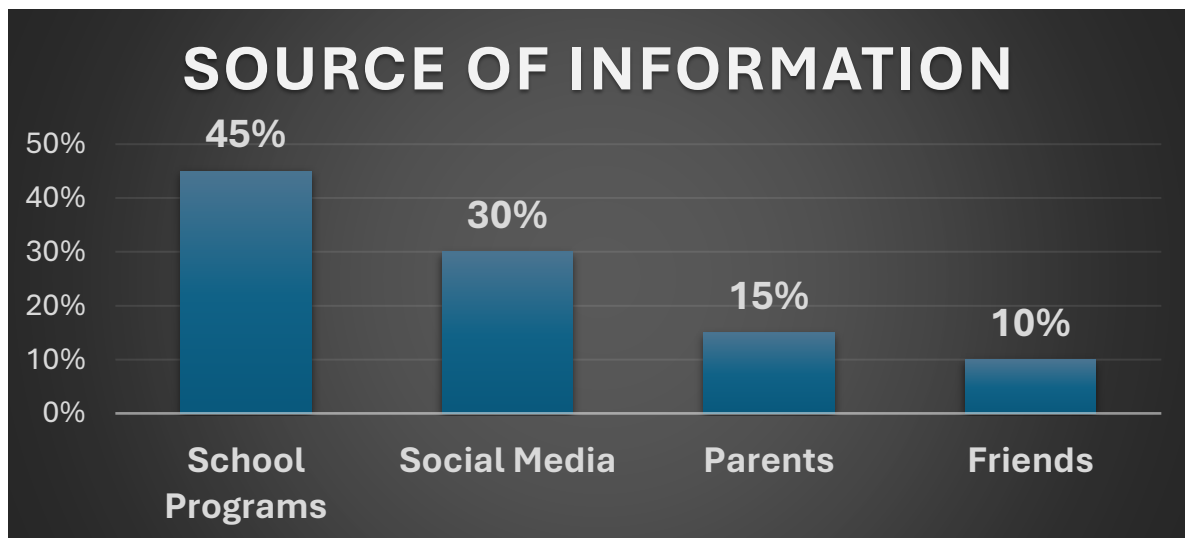
Contraceptive knowledge:

Familiarity with contraceptive methods:



60% of the students were familiar with basic contraceptive methods such as condoms (58%) and birth control pills (52%). However, less than 30% of students were aware of more advanced methods, such as intrauterine devices or contraceptive implants.

Source of information:



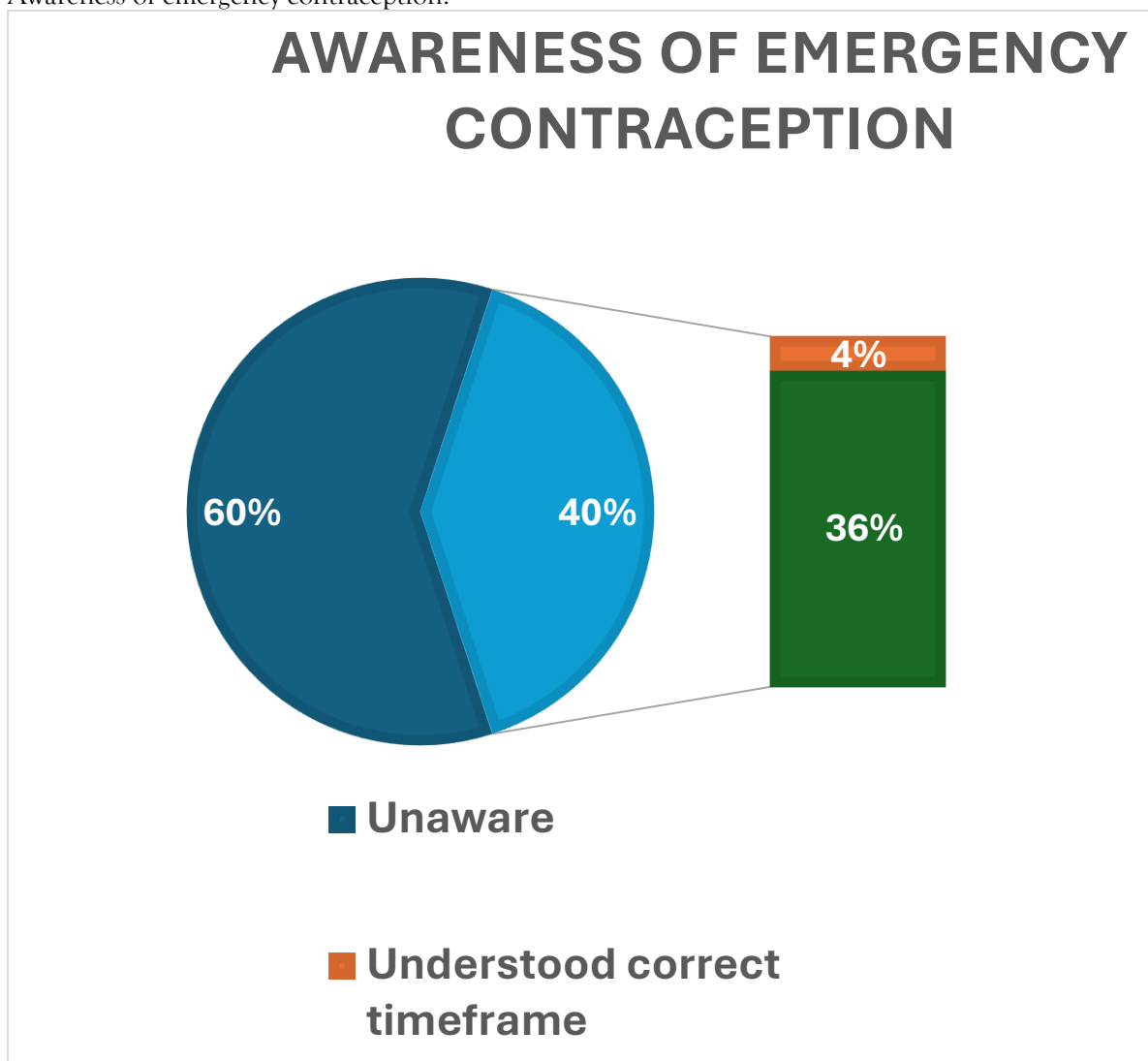
45% of students reported learning about contraception through school programs or health education classes,

30% cited the internet and social media as their primary source of information.

15% mentioned their parents as a source of information.

10% referred to peers or friends.

Awareness of emergency contraception:

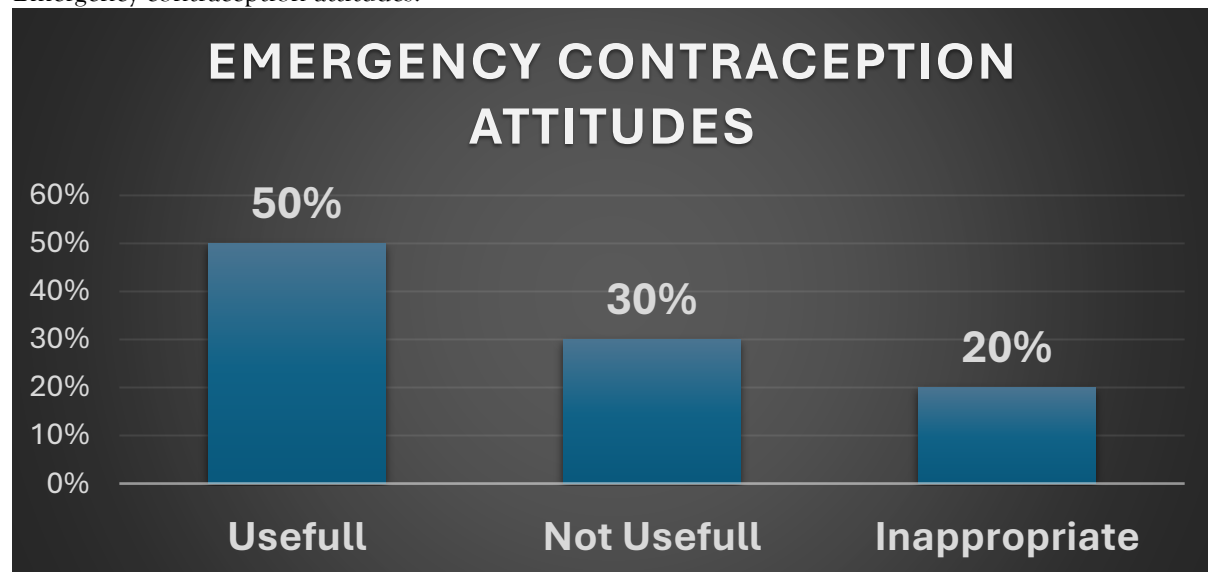


Knowledge of emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs):

Around 40% of students were aware of emergency contraceptive pills

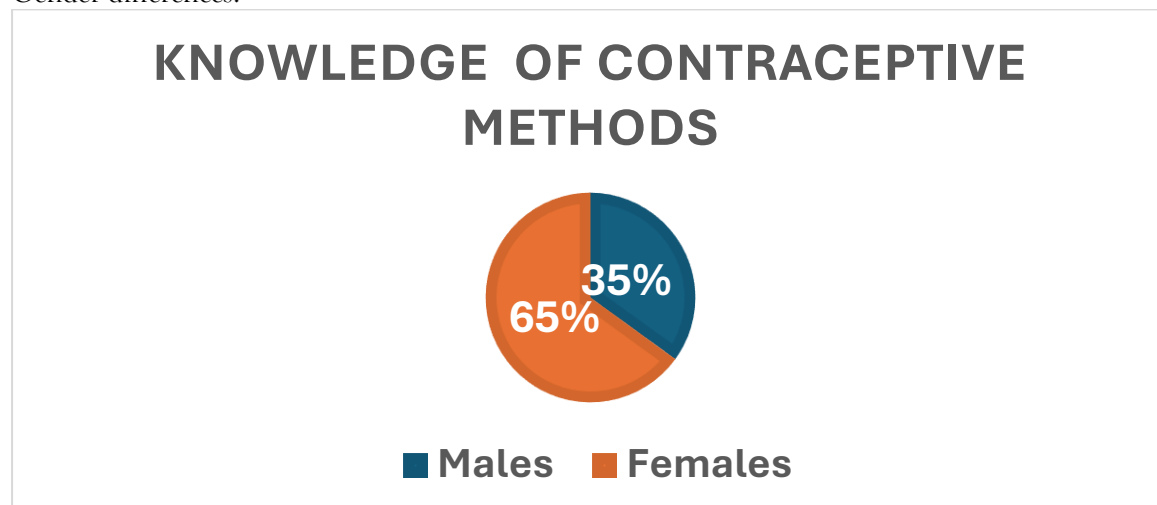
However, only 10% understood the correct timeframe for using ECPs (within 72 hrs. after unprotected sex), The remaining students either had no knowledge of ECPs or misunderstood its function.

Emergency contraception attitudes:



Student's view on emergency contraception were mixed, while 50% of students acknowledged its usefulness, 20% viewed it as inappropriate or a “last resort” method, reflecting a social stigma around its use.

Gender differences:



Male vs female knowledge: female students generally had higher knowledge of contraceptive methods (65%) compared to male students. Attitudes: Males were less likely to view contraception as personal responsibility and more likely to depend on female partners for contraceptive use.

This suggests that gender dynamics in sexual health education might influence attitudes towards contraception.

DISCUSSION

The finding of this study reveals several key insights into the knowledge and awareness of contraception and emergency contraception among young students: Knowledge gaps: while most students had basic knowledge of contraception, their understanding of emergency contraception was more limited. Misconception about its effectiveness and purpose highlight the need for more comprehensive education

Sources of information: The reliance on the internet and social media for information suggests that while these platforms can be valuable, they also pose a risk of misinformation. It is crucial to ensure that students are provided with accurate, evidence-based resources in their educational settings.

Attitudes and cultural factors: Attitudes towards contraception and emergency contraception were influenced by cultural, religious, and social beliefs. In this study we found that men across all racial/ethnic groups had substantial knowledge deficits as compared to women; with regard to awareness of the full range of available contraceptive methods as well as correct understanding about the use, effectiveness, and facts about specific methods. Misunderstandings about the correct use and safety of effective contraceptive methods could compromise proper use. These studies had participants with similar levels of education, and prior research has shown that as education levels rise, the understanding also rises considerably. The study identified a need for open discussions about reproductive health in schools and homes as these can shape student's perception and decision-making.

Strengths and limitations of the study

Strengths

Targeted a sensitive and important age group: By focusing on 10–18-year old, the study addresses a critical developmental window where sex education is most impactful.

Real-world data: Conducted in a tertiary care centre, explaining about current awareness levels among adolescents in a healthcare setting in a developing country.

Cross-sectional design allows for quick assessment of awareness levels in a relatively short time frame.

Limitations

Small sample size (n=100) limits the generalizability of findings to the wider population.

Single-centre study: Conducted only in one tertiary care centre in Karnataka, which may not reflect the awareness levels of adolescents in different regions or educational settings.

Self-reported data: Subject to response bias, especially due to the sensitive nature of questions related to sexual health and contraception.

Limited exploration of influencing factors such as socioeconomic status, parental education, access to media, or peer influence, which could affect knowledge levels.

Cross-sectional nature: Does not allow assessment of changes over time or establish causal relationships between variables.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to provide a clear picture of the knowledge and awareness of contraceptives among adolescents aged 10-18 years. It will contribute valuable insights into how sexual health education can be improved in schools and communities to fill the knowledge gaps identified, ultimately helping young people make more informed decisions regarding their sexual and reproductive health.

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