

Abstract of Master's Dissertation

No.1

Course	International Health Development	Name	Etsuko Yamaguchi
Thesis Title	Cross-sectional study of stigma related to girls' contraceptive use perceived among unmarried in-school adolescents in rural areas of central Zambia		

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Background:

Stigma perceived by adolescents (aged 10–19) related to their sexual and reproductive health (SRH) should be a critical barrier to their access to contraceptives, which is however focused by few studies. A non-governmental organization (NGO) called JOICFP initiated a five-year program in rural communities of central Zambia in 2018 to improve access to modern contraceptives among sexually active adolescents towards reduction of adolescent pregnancies. The program trained Peer Educators (PEs) and adult volunteers to conduct SRH promotion, distribution of free contraceptives, and referrals of adolescents to health facilities, whose healthcare workers were also trained by the program in adolescent friendly SRH service delivery. Routine data, nevertheless, showed an increase in adolescent pregnancies.

Objectives:

The study aimed to estimate the level of stigma on adolescent girls' contraceptive use perceived among unmarried adolescents in the program sites. The hypothesis was that their stigma precluded them from using contraceptives resulting in the increase in adolescent pregnancies.

Methods:

A school-based cross-sectional quantitative study with self-administered questionnaires was conducted in the program sites in Kapiri Mposhi and Mpongwe districts. The validated scale of Contraceptive Use Stigma among adolescents (CUS) was used to measure adolescents' stigma levels, which consists of seven stigma statements scored on a five-point Likert scale for the extent of respondent's agreement/ disagreement with each statement, thereby the total score ranges from the lowest stigma level of seven to the highest of 35. Data was collected in January and February 2022 from male and female PEs and unmarried students aged 10–19. All the 51 eligible PEs were invited. Two hundred students were selected using the probability proportionate cluster sampling method. Descriptive statistics, non-parametric tests, and logistic regression models were used to estimate the association between CUS scores and sex, age, contraceptive use, and program exposures.

* The abstract, containing background, objectives, methods, results and conclusion should not exceed 300-500 words and printed double sided on A4 paper)

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No.2

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<p>Results:</p> <p>Totally 246 responses (51 PEs and 195 students) were analyzed. The scale demonstrated acceptable internal consistency ($\alpha=0.7029$). PEs' mean CUS score was 16.92 (standard deviation (SD)=6.21) against 25.16 (SD=5.16) among the students. The most significant determinant of lower scores was PEs (odds ratio (OR)=0.09, 95% confidence interval (CI) 0.08–0.095). Among the students, those of Mpongwe showed the highest association with higher scores (OR=4.39, 95% CI 1.85–10.37) while SRH service use was associated with lower scores (OR=0.19, 95% CI 0.10–0.40). As few as 24 respondents (9.8%) reported contraceptive use, composed of 31.4% of the PEs and 4.1% of the students. Higher contraceptive use was strongly associated with PEs ($P<0.001$) and with male students ($P=0.03$).</p> <p>Conclusion:</p> <p>No direct association was established between adolescents' stigma levels and their contraceptive use, which could not however be entirely rejected considering the strong associations of PEs with both lower stigma levels and higher contraceptive use and between students' SRH service use and lower stigma levels. To tackle SRH-related stigma among students, the program should intensify its interventions with more careful attention to the quality through nurturing their self-esteem and addressing gender- and age-related norms. More research is required to identify effective stigma reduction interventions.</p> <p>(Word count: 500 words)</p>			