

The Psychosocial Experiences of Unintended Pregnancies among University Students: A Case of University of Dar as Salaam Female Students.

Emanuel Ismael Maphie,

Lecturer,

Department of Sociology and Anthropology,

University of Dar as Salaam.

Email: maphie4@gmail.com

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Abstract

Unexpected pregnancies have been reported to increase among youths particularly those in universities. The increase of unintended pregnancies among university students has culminated in a number of challenges including psychological problems. Several studies have been done on the matter but no one has trapped the psychosocial experiences particularly among university female students. The current study aimed to fill this gap by exploring the psychological experiences of unintended pregnancy among female students at the University of Dar as Salaam in Tanzania. A socio-ecological theory applied to sketch and lead the study. To achieve this, the research study used qualitative techniques particularly interviews, focused group discussion as well as documentary review to gather data from 25 participants. The sample generated using three sampling techniques which are snowball, convenience and purposive sampling. The study findings revealed a number of psychosocial experiences faced by female students after they acquire unintended pregnancies. They experience stigmatization, social isolation and exclusion, limited support systems as well as societal negative judgments. The study suggests that in addressing the experiences of female students with unexpected pregnancies, universities are required to create supportive and inclusive environments that prioritize their well-being. This includes implementing comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education, improving access to quality reproductive healthcare services, establishing support systems for pregnant female students and addressing societal attitudes and norms that perpetuate stigma and discrimination.

Introduction and Study Background

Unintended pregnancy is among the most troubling public health problems and a major reproductive health issue including accidental pregnancy (Hall et al., 2016). Unintended pregnancies refer to pregnancies that occur when individuals either did not desire to become pregnant or did not plan the timing of the pregnancy or pregnancies that occur when individuals or couples do not intend to have a child at that particular time (Sonfield et al., 2011). These pregnancies may result from contraceptive failure, inconsistent or incorrect use of contraception, lack of access to contraceptives, or engaging in sexual activity without using any form of contraception. Unintended pregnancies can occur in various population groups, including university students, and can have significant implications for individuals' lives, relationships and overall well-being (Hall et al., 2016).

Globally unplanned pregnancy is a health-related problem that affects most girls, their families and the social order. According to World Health Organization (2022), approximately 210 million pregnancies occur each year worldwide of which 87 million are unplanned and 41 million continue to birth. The same report shows that a total of 21-22 million of unsafe abortion took place worldwide and there were 22 unsafe abortions per 1000 women aged 15-44 years. While the report on mortality due to unsafe abortion estimates 47000 maternal deaths (that is 13% of maternal mortality in 2008. Sonfield et al. (2011) show that approximately fifty percent of pregnancies in the United States of America for example are unintended and about 48% of reproductive-age American women have experienced at least one unintended pregnancy.

According to the United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA] (2022) unplanned pregnancy is a risky health problem that most female students practice in recent years. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2022) indicated that unintended pregnancy in sub-Saharan Africa ranges between 49 and 145 in every 1,000 women. The UNFPA report (2022) further shows that from 2015-2019, Tanzania recorded 105 unintended pregnancies annually in every 1,000 pregnant women aged 15 to 49.

However, Elizabeth et al. (2019) suggests that Tanzania recorded a total of 2.93 million pregnancies annually between 2015 and 2019 out of which 1.34 million were unintended with

482,000 ending in abortion. Furthermore, according to the institute's data, in East Africa, the share of unintended pregnancies that ended to abortion rose from 24 percent to 35 percent.

In Tanzania, the prevalence of unintended pregnancies is very high in higher learning institutions where the victims are the people considered to be in the future community of the elite. AMREF (2015) shows that 47 female students out of 1000 in higher learning institutions had pregnancy under the age of 21 years in Tanzania. Several studies have attributed unintended pregnancies to higher learning education students to several factors including girl students' desire for money, lack of reproductive education and peer pressure (Kibusi et al., 2019). It is further a cause of sexual intercourse which students at universities initiate at an age that they do not have enough knowledge on reproductive health (Ongwen et al., 2020). Studies conducted in various developed and developing countries are centred on the reason for unplanned pregnancies, health, social and economic consequences. The negative consequences of unwanted pregnancies include increased low birth weight, and of being born prematurely; as a result, infants have a risk of mortality (Motuma & Amene, 2015).

Further, studies have shown how the born child from unplanned pregnancies suffer psychological experiences. The study by Hall et al. (2016) showed for example that Children born after unintended pregnancy showed a cognitive delay at 3-years-old, more behavioural problems at 5- and 7-years-old, and increased problem behaviours and substance use at 14-years-old than their counterparts. Ongwen et al. (2020) suggested that psychologically, unwanted births may also cause poor relations between mother and offspring, even after the child has become an adult. Based on these negative consequences of unintended pregnancies, it is worth carrying a study on the psychosocial experiences of unintended pregnancies among female university students in Tanzania. No studies particularly in Tanzania have carried out to study the psychosocial impact of unintended pregnancies among female university students. The current intended to fill this gap by exploring the psychosocial experiences among female university students and put forward strategies to improve the situation. The study is significant as its finding will help to set appropriate strategies to help and support female university students who found themselves in a limbo of unexpected pregnancies while faced with a task of excelling in their academics.

Literature Review

Unintended pregnancies among university students have emerged as a significant concern globally posing various challenges for individuals, educational institutions, and societies at large. The population of universities is alarming as more than 90% are youth. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines youth as the phase in which an individual is no longer a child but not yet an adult. Age wise, adolescence is regarded from 10 to 24 years. Globally, 1.2 billion out of the estimated 3 billion young population are aged less than 25 years in sub-Saharan Africa, nearly 1 in every 3 individuals is aged between 10 to 24 years (UNFPA, 2022). According to WHO (2022) young girls are the most vulnerable group as they do not use sexual reproductive services including family planning and yet they are given little attention especially in sub-Saharan Africa (Kibira et al., 2019). This is due to the fact that they are the victims of early marriage, teenage pregnancy, unwanted and unplanned pregnancy, and sexual transmitted infections associated with early debut to unsafe sexual behaviours (Ongwen et al., 2020).

Globally, unintended pregnancies among youth counts to half of 121 million annually and the trend poses a huge challenge (UNFPA, 2020). UNFPA (2020) estimated that 11% of the births occur among adolescents worldwide whereby more than 90% of these births occur in low- and middle-income countries. Sub-Saharan Africa is among the regions with highest teenage pregnancy rates but with the lowest rates of family planning. In Tanzania, particularly, adolescents comprise almost one quarter (24%, or 12.8 million) of the total population (NBS, 2022). The issue of health services provision such as reproductive health, nutrition services and screening services to young people is a concern which requires attention of all stakeholders. Increasing utilization of sexual and reproductive health services (SRHs) among adolescents is a crucial strategy in averting teenage pregnancies, unwanted and unplanned pregnancy, unprotected sexual intercourse which can result to reduction of maternal morbidity and mortality and STIs risks.

With respect to studies conducted among youths in higher learning institutions in Tanzania, the coverage of health services is still low, irrespective of all the initiatives taken. For example, Mahande et al. (2015) found that only 47.4%, 33.2% and 16% of the youths were using family planning services at St John's University of Tanzania, Universities from Dar as Salaam and the universities from Kilimanjaro region respectively. Evidence from studies

conducted outside Tanzania also reported a similar trend: Uganda (46.6%) and Ethiopia (16.2%) (Mekonnen et al., 2018).

In addition, evidence from other studies among youth from universities reveals that students from higher learning institutions tend to engage in unplanned and unprotected sexual activities easily which is thought to be attributed to lack of strict parental environment (Motuma et al., 2015). The behaviour subjects the youth to unintended pregnancies, abortions and sexually transmitted infections. Similarly, unintended pregnancies resulted to different education consequences to the students such as school dropout, economic hardships, social abandonment and neglect (Pourheydari et al., 2007). Moreover, evidence from the study conducted in universities in Dar as Salaam region revealed that unwanted pregnancy rate was 27% and abortion rate was 54.6% (Msuya et al., 2018).

Unintended pregnancies among university student has been attributed to insufficient knowledge about contraception methods, reproductive health, and family planning as well as inadequate use or non-use of contraceptives, including condoms and oral contraceptives, increases the risk of unintended pregnancies (Mpembeni et al., 2018). Others cause are engagement of students in risky behaviours such as excessive alcohol consumption and substance abuse which impairs judgment, leading to unprotected sexual encounters and higher chances of unintended pregnancies. According to Msuya et al. (2018) suggest that financial constraints, limited access to affordable contraceptives, and inadequate healthcare services contribute to higher rates of unintended pregnancies among economically disadvantaged university students. Cultural and societal norms that discourage discussions about sex and reproductive health as well as stigma surrounding premarital sex or the use of contraceptives may prevent individuals from seeking information and taking necessary precautions contribute to unplanned pregnancies Mekonnen et al. (2018). Moyo et al. (2020) also showed that university environment can expose students to peer pressure and risky behaviours. Engaging in unprotected sex due to peer influence, experimentation, or lack of assertiveness in negotiating safe sex practices can increase the chances of unplanned pregnancies

In addressing these factors Msuya et al. (2018) show that it requires comprehensive approaches that involve improving access to accurate sexual education, promoting awareness of reproductive rights, ensuring affordable and accessible contraception methods, challenging cultural and societal norms that hinder reproductive health discussions, and addressing gender

inequalities and power imbalances. It also involves fostering a supportive and inclusive environment that empowers students to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health

In addition, unplanned pregnancy among students can consequently cause problems which affect their life generally. Studies such as that of Msuya et al. (2018) and Mpembeni et al. (2018) have mention that unplanned pregnancies often impose additional financial burdens on students who are already struggling to meet their educational expenses. The cost of prenatal care, childbirth, childcare, and other related expenses can strain limited financial resources and make it harder for students to continue their education. Also, university student who fall into unintended pregnancies tend to experience scarcity of health risks and access to healthcare. According to Mekonnen et al., (2018) some girls face health risks associated with unplanned pregnancies, particularly if they lack access to quality healthcare services. Limited access to prenatal care, safe delivery facilities, and postnatal support can increase the likelihood of complications and negatively impact their health and well-being.

Furthermore, Tura et al. (2019) suggests that unintended pregnancy is a risk factor for poor maternal mental health including perinatal depression, stress, and lower levels of psychological well-being and life satisfaction.

From the review carried in this study, it is obvious that student who experiences unintended pregnancies suffers a range of problems. There have been several studies conducted on unintended pregnancies among students in Tanzania universities. These studies highlight the prevalence of unintended pregnancies among university students and identify various factors associated with this issue, such as lack of knowledge about contraception, low contraceptive use, and social stigma surrounding sexual activity. Other have identified the consequences of unintended pregnancies to university students including financial difficulties, drop out of schools as well as experiencing health service shortages and insecurity (Tura et al., 2019). Others including Mekonnen et al., (2018) has focus on factors of unplanned/unwanted pregnancies. Nevertheless, no studies that has been carried in developing countries particularly in Tanzania and the University of Dar as Salaam to explore psychosocial experiences among female university student who encounter unintended pregnancies. It is unimaginable on how these students manages to carry out these big roles (pregnancy and academics) and the way are affected in their psychosocial aspect. The current study focus is to explore their psychosocial

experiences and establish proper strategies and proper service to students with unintended pregnancies while at the universities.

Theoretical Framework for the Study

Several theories have been proposed to explain the occurrence of unplanned pregnancies among female university students. These theories provide different perspectives on the underlying factors contributing to this issue. The current study is about exploring psychosocial experiences of the female university students who experiences unexpected pregnancies. In addressing the study, two theories have been used to guide it. The theories are ecological systems theory and economic theory.

The ecological systems theory by Urie Bronfenbrenner seems important in this study as it considers the influence of multiple levels of the environment on individuals' behaviours. Unplanned pregnancies among university students is impacted by various ecological factors including individual characteristics, interpersonal relationships, university policies, cultural and societal norms, and the broader socio-economic context (Renn & Arnold (2003); (Gary et al., 2000). These factors interact to shape students' experiences in the process of taking care of themselves and the children born as a result of unexpected pregnancies (Edwards & Young, 1992). The ecological characteristics demarcate on key important factors which are likely to be experienced by university female students who encounters unintended pregnancies. The theory helps to answer both sociological and psychological factors which are experienced by female university students experiencing unintended pregnancies.

The second theory used to guide the study is socioeconomic theory. Socioeconomic theory in this study informs how individuals' socioeconomic status have an influence on their lives and taking care of unintended pregnancies. In African settings particularly universities, students from low-income backgrounds face financial constraints that limit their healthcare services (Delanty & Turner, 2011). In the scenario, when students get pregnancies unexpectedly they are affected economically (Deeg & Jackson, 2007). The situation is worse for the students coming from a low-income family. They found themselves in a situation they lack financial preparation for themselves and their babies. This lack of resources increases difficulties in taking care of themselves and the kids and therefore raise an alarm of psychosocial difficulties (Delanty & Turner, 2011). The theory helps to address the financial

aspects among university students who experiences unintended pregnancies and how it led to psychosocial difficulties.

Research Methodology.

A total of 25 participants were sampled using three different sampling techniques. Purposive sampling was used to sample 20 female students while convenience used to sample and 5 male students consented to participate in the study. Documentary review were used to sample female students before being subjected to purpose sampling technique. In-depth interview and focus group discussion methods were used to collected data. Data were analysed thematically in which each emerging theme from the collected data was presented and discussed deeply. All the steps of analysing qualitative data that is familiarization, coding, generating themes as well as reviewing themes were strictly adhered. Further defining and naming themes and presenting and discussing the emerged theme were carried and are presented.

The qualitative approach was employed to guide the study. The design was selected as it helps to provide the researcher a means of understanding the phenomenon (unintended pregnancy experiences) and interacting with the participants (sampled students). It further enabled the researcher to study unintended pregnancies in its natural setting (University of Dar as Salaam), attempting to make sense of, or interpret, and phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them (Newman& Benz, 1998). Through the approach, the researcher was supplied with rich description of the participant's thought towards the concepts/processes and provide the reasons why unintended pregnancies occur among university students. (Creswell, 2003). This allowed the collecting in-depth data from the information and opinions collected from students on their experiences on psychosocial factors as a result of unintended pregnancies.

Before they participation in the study, all participate were informed of the purpose of the research and requested for their consent of participation. They were informed of their right to withdraw at any point when they feel to do so. They were also assured of their privacy and confidentiality and that the data they were to provide will be used for the purposive of the current study as informed earlier on its objective (Creswell, 2020).

Study Limitations

During data collection, there were unwillingness and negative attitudes of respondents participating in the study. Some respondents hesitated to provide information which according to them they were very sensitive. Assurance of the information confidentiality and the use of convenient sampling reduced and solved the problem.

Results

This chapter presents the findings of the study as they emerged from the analysis. The study aimed to explore psychosocial experiences of among the female university students who experience unintended pregnancies. The presentation is in the form of themes as they emerged from the analysis. The themes as emerged from the analysis are presented.

Psychosocial Experiences

The study findings indicated that unintended pregnancies among university students pose several psychosocial challenges. However, the study findings inform that the psychosocial consequences of unplanned pregnancies vary widely depending on individual circumstances and personal choices. From the study, several psychosocial experiences were addressed by the respondents. They include stigma and negative social judgment, limited support systems, limited access to reproductive healthcare, gender inequality and power dynamics, social isolation and exclusion as well as educational disruption.

Stigma and negative social judgment

The study finding informs that university female students with unplanned pregnancies in universities often carry a significant social stigma as they are seen as a deviation from societal expectations and norms. University students with unintended pregnancies indicated that they suffer negative judgment, discrimination, and ostracism from their peers, faculty, and even family members. In an interview with a participant of this study, one of them had this to say:

“Having pregnancy here at the university is a disaster. The first thing they see in you when you’re pregnant is that you’re immoral. This led to experience stigma and discriminations. Fellow students will label you as a prostitute. It is also worse when it comes to treatment in classrooms. Lecturers consider students who are pregnant as having low abilities intellectually. They never consider them as the able one. They treat them very negatively and when there is any mistake in undertaking their course

they link directly with you having pregnancy. This is a community with stigma and negative perception to students who conceive pregnancy while here studying.

Further, the study shows that students with unintended pregnancies suffer criticism from their peers, friends, family, and community members who view pregnancy outside of marriage or without planned-parenthood as a moral transgression. The study shows that no any pregnancy out of wedlock which is perceived positively by the community. The study for example reports that students with unintended pregnancy receives many negative criticisms from their fellow students. They view them as irresponsible and without focus particularly with academics. Further, they also receive negative criticism from their parents and even the nearby relatives. The study findings further inform that for female students who get pregnancy are viewed by their parents as being unfocused and immoral. From the focus group discussion, one group wrote the following:

There a lot of suffering for students who get unintended pregnancy. One of the worst experiences is the criticism received from the closest persons. They feel that unintended pregnancy is an indicator of irresponsible person. Parents feels like they have a child who is not focused. Most of the times, soon as one gets pregnancy what follows from parents is strong criticisms. The criticisms given aims to stigmatize the victims and show them as wrong doers of the community

Social isolation and exclusion

Social isolation and exclusion is another theme that emerged out the study findings. The study findings informed that the social stigma and judgment surrounding unexpected pregnancies lead to social isolation and exclusion. The study finding indicted that for the university female students who get unintended pregnancy face discrimination, lose friendships, and experience strained relationships with family members and partners. The study shows that isolation of the female students with unintended pregnancy happens in a range of situations. It was for example noted that soon as the pregnancy happens, the partner (a boy) opts to distance himself and that he never wants to be linked with the pregnancy. This tendency increases a chance of a female who has pregnancy to experience a series of psychosocial pains including anxiety and stress. Further, the study shows that girls with unintended pregnancies experience isolation and exclusion from friends, family members and even the parents. It was evidenced from the participants that many friends for students with unintended pregnancies distance

themselves as way to avoid disturbances that may arise during the period of pregnancy. The disturbances which were mentioned that are likely to happen includes financial, social and academic support/dependence. The study findings reveal that isolation and exclusions further impact female students with unintended pregnancies emotional well-being and contribute to feelings of loneliness and vulnerability.

In one of the interviews with those who had experienced unintended pregnancies, one commented as follows:

Soon as they see you with pregnancy, the first thing they do is to isolate you. Isolation happened even from my close friends. For friends, been with one with pregnancy means you may need some help from them. Some friends are not ready to bear this cost and therefore what is best for them is to distance and isolate you. We are also isolated even by our parents. Parents have a feeling that we have failed to show a respect and therefore in the sense of trying to distance themselves from the situation, they find themselves distancing from us.

The information collected from respondents revealed that many students with unintended pregnancies lack proper support and love which is required to encourage them academically and health wise as many of them are stigmatized by their fellow students and family members because they are angry with them and this creates conflicts between the parent and the daughter as well as the society and friends too. The tendency hurt them psychologically and emotionally as they become lonely and isolate themselves from their friends. From an interview with participants, one of them commented as follows on this:

"I felt shy that I got pregnant, I felt embarrassed to be pregnant because my friends would not want to be friends with me again. For the first time in my life I felt lonely and finally I hated myself because I see myself as ignorant, and I even tried to commit suicide "

Increased depression and parenting stress

Depression and parenting stress is another experience from female university students who encounter unplanned pregnancies. The study findings inform that unplanned pregnancies often cause emotional distress, anxiety, and depression among university students impacting their overall well-being and mental health. From the study findings respondent revealed that most

of students who get unintended pregnancy are experiencing the high risk of maternal depression and parenting stress, maternal life and transition to parenthood. The findings noted that the scenario represents an important life event which increases vulnerability to psychological and social disturbances a crisis characterized by anxiety, stress, and mood alterations. Transition to parenthood is a complex process characterized by personal and family changes requiring adjustment as pregnant can change lifestyle and identity. The study findings show that, for students, when they get unintended pregnancy the risk of getting maternal depression and stress increases as they are not prepared to be parents. This is because the issue of pregnancy needs a person to prepare for it and be willing to have it. Hence, without preparations and willingness, unintended pregnancy lead to several mental problems. One of the respondents from the interviews commented the following on the matter:

At first time when I got unplanned pregnant I was so depressed and stressed because I didn't seek myself being a mother at the age 18. I was experiencing psychological tension but when my parent promised to support me and my unborn child I felt that my life will be good again. I will finish my studies and be a good mother to child.

Poor academic performance in academics

The study finding shows that unplanned pregnancies disrupt a student's educational journey. The study findings revealed that most of incidents of unwanted pregnancy increases the risk of poor academic performances. It was learned from the study findings that it is difficult for a university student to graduate if they become pregnant and therefore to some degree the pregnancy affects the graduation rates. Further, unintended pregnancies result in delays in completing coursework or even dropping out of university altogether. The findings show that as a result of unintended pregnancies many students postpone their studies so that they can continue with maternal care as it is difficult for them to concentrate with the studies at the same time taking care of her pregnancy. The study findings noted that most of female university students ends up taking care of their pregnancies and loosing concentration on academic matters hence poor academic performances and even some dropout from studies.

Generally, the study finding indicates that pregnancy-related health issues, childbirth, and childcare responsibilities emerged from the findings as factors that lead to absences from classes, missed assignments, and therefore reduced academic performance.

In an interview with female university students who take part in the study, one commented as follows:

“I was hurt so much seeing my best friend dropping out because of pregnancy after her boyfriend refused to take care of her and the baby she was expecting. She decided to drop out of school and find a job that could assist her for the mean time”

Limited access to reproductive healthcare

Apart from the psychological experiences of unintended pregnancy to the university female students there are other experiences they encounter in the due process. The study informs that as a result of unintended pregnancies university female students' experiences limited access to reproductive healthcare. The result from the study show that female students who experience unintended pregnancies suffers limited access to quality reproductive healthcare services. The study findings noted that in the universities involved in the study they lack comprehensive support systems for pregnant students. It was observed for example that there were inadequate facilities for childcare or breastfeeding on campus, limited counselling services to address the emotional and psychological needs of pregnant students, and a lack of flexible academic policies to accommodate their unique circumstances. In addressing this challenge, one of the interviewed female students who has experienced unintended pregnancy had this to say:

Environment of our university is another challenge that we experience in the times of our pregnancies. Health services particularly knowledge on how to take care of ourselves and the baby is limited. Insufficient knowledge about reproductive health, and family planning is also a factor that affects most of us with unintended pregnancies. Psychological and psychosocial services are also limited. There is a need for the university to establish proper system to support and help female students who experiences unintended pregnancies both socially, academically and psychologically.

Financial burden

Financial burden is another theme that emerged out of the findings as another experiences for female university students who face unplanned pregnancies. The study findings show that financial constraints add difficulties to access affordable healthcare services among economically disadvantaged university students with unintended pregnancies. The study findings noted that unplanned pregnancies impose financial burdens on students who are already struggling to meet their educational expenses. The cost of prenatal care, childbirth, childcare, and other related expenses strain limited financial resources and make it harder for students to continue with their education.

Generally, the study finding revealed that the financial responsibilities associated with pregnancy, childbirth, and childcare create significant financial strain for students which affects their ability to pursue higher education. In one of the interviews with female university students who had experienced unplanned pregnancies, one of the commented as follows:

I am coming from a family with a very poor background economically. To finance my education cost, I depend on the money I get from the student's higher education loan board. The money I receive from the students' loan board are not enough as it is the same money which I also use to support my parents in the village. It becomes harder when the issue of pregnancy comes inn. Costs related to prenatal care, childbirth, childcare, and general living expenses strain my resources and make it challenging to continue with studies. It is unfortunately that there are no established systems in the university to make sure students who get pregnant are supported socially and economically.

Health risks

Female university students with unintended pregnancies experiences potential health risks, particularly when proper prenatal care is delayed or inaccessible. The finding indicates that given the fact that university students with unplanned pregnancy are not planning to get pregnant, they experience unhealthy behaviours or delay in getting health care during the pregnancy. The study findings further show that female university student with unplanned pregnancies are in the risks of their own and the lives of their new born. This is because most of university female students are unaware that they are pregnant and for those who discovers early they don't want to accept it. The scenario exposes them to many health risks including

pre-natal and post-natal diseases. In an interview with one of the respondents, she commented the following:

Having unplanned pregnancy while you're a student is very dangerous. In my time I went through bad experiences. Firstly, it was very difficult to accept that I'm pregnant. Because of the denial, it took me a cup of days before agreeing that I'm pregnant and therefore attend health services. I also felt ashamed to directly disclose my situation to my relatives who would help me know how to go through given the fact that this was my first time to have pregnancy. It was also bad experience that I didn't receive warm service in our health centre. Some of the service providers had a negative perception towards the students' pregnancy mothers. There is time I wanted to stop attending clinic but I got an advice from my friend that I look for a health centre outside the campus. All the situations surrounding female university students who have conceived unintentionally is very risk for their health and even for the new born babies.

Discussion

The study finding has informed on different psychosocial experiences female university students went through when they conceive unintended pregnancies. The findings informed that unintended pregnancies among female students in universities can have significant negative effects, including decreased educational attainment, reduced economic opportunities, increased risk of maternal and child health problems, and social stigma. The findings are the same to that of Tura et al. (2019) who informed that among the effect of unintended pregnancy among youth is poor health services as well as maternal risks and deaths. It was further noted from the findings that as a result of unintended pregnancies, female students are affected much. In his study on the reasons for unintended pregnancies among adolescents Tura et al. (2019) noted that the students who encounter unintended pregnancies while in studies suffers negatively from economic difficulties to social alienation. The observation by Tura et al. (2019) concurs with the current study finding whereby it has indicated that students who encounter unintended pregnancies suffers penalties from their surrounding such as stigma, financial difficulties, social isolation as well as having the sense of depression as a result lack of support emotionally from the surrounding communities. These effects can perpetuate cycles

of poverty and inequality, highlighting the importance of access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services.

Further, the study finding observed unfriendly environment in the university campus to support the needs and requirement of the pregnant students. Both psychological services such as (counselling) and health services were mentioned by the participant as among the potential component missing in university life to support themselves and their pregnancies/babies. Addressing on the experiences of girls with unexpected pregnancies in African universities Ongwen et al. (2020) suggested that it requires to create supportive and inclusive environments that prioritize their well-being. This includes implementing comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education, improving access to quality reproductive healthcare services, establishing support systems for pregnant students, promoting gender equality and empowerment, and addressing societal attitudes and norms that perpetuate stigma and discrimination.

On the same, Kibira et al. (2019) suggested that in order to have safer environment for students who experiences unintended pregnancies it requires a multi-faceted approach that includes implementing comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education, providing accessible and affordable reproductive healthcare services, establishing support systems for pregnant students, promoting gender equality and addressing power imbalances, and creating flexible academic policies to accommodate the needs of pregnant students.

The study finding is also at odd with that of Hall et al. (2016) who showed that an unintended pregnancy was associated with 20–22% greater odds of maternal depression, 0.28–0.39 greater depression score, and 0.85–1.16 greater parenting stress score. Relations between pregnancy intention and maternal depression, maternal depression score and parenting stress score were moderately explained by marital conflict and fathers' participation in childcare.

Basing on the study findings it is arguable that implementing evidence-based, age-appropriate sexual education programs within university curricula can equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary for responsible sexual behaviour and contraception use. Also establishing peer-led support groups, counselling services, and access to reproductive healthcare professionals can provide students with a safe and confidential space to discuss sexual health concerns and receive guidance on contraception. Further, universities should

conduct awareness campaigns that address the specific needs and challenges faced by female university students, promoting responsible sexual behaviour, contraceptive use, and family planning. Implementing supportive policies, such as flexible academic arrangements, parental leave options, and child-friendly facilities, can assist pregnant and parenting students in continuing their education.

In addition, the study has indicated how female students experience psychosocial as well as health and financial problems. On the other hand, the male students who are part of the problem escape from all these burdens, blames and responsibilities. In this regard, all the costs fall on the shoulders of the female students. The situation is like it has been normalised by the surrounding community and therefore it can be connected to gender roles. It is therefore important that another study is carried out to see how psychosocial implications of unintended pregnancy on the female students revolve around how society constructs a man and a woman.

Conclusion

Unintended pregnancies among university students have far-reaching consequences for individuals and societies. Pregnancy intention affects attitudes and behaviours in parenting and has an impact on child development. Pregnant female university students without pregnancy intention had greater exposure to risk health behaviours such as cigarette smoking, drinking alcohol, taking medications and illicit drugs during pregnancy. Unintended pregnancy among female university students contributes to increased risks of maternal depression and parenting stress. By addressing the challenges that arise as a result of unintended pregnancy among female university students and implementing targeted interventions (investing in comprehensive sexual education and reproductive health services, and addressing the cultural and social barriers that prevent female students from accessing the services), universities can play a vital role in supporting students' educational goals, and promoting their overall well-being.

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