

**KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES OF FEMALE STUDENTS REGARDING  
EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION AT MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY, ZIMBABWE**

BY

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Unintended pregnancy constitute a serious public health problem with WHO (2012) estimated global abortion rate to be 35 per 1 000 women aged from 15 to 45 years, and that twenty million of the abortion procedures were deemed unsafe with Africa having twenty-five percent of the illegal abortions. However, the introduction of emergency contraception (EC) has served as the last chance for women to avoid unintended pregnancies, though in countries like Zimbabwe the cause for underutilisation of emergency contraception has been hardly investigated.

**Purpose:** The main purpose of this study was to assess the knowledge, attitudes and practices of female students regarding emergency contraception in preventing unintended pregnancy.

**Methodology:** A quantitative approach using descriptive cross sectional survey design was conducted among 319 stratified random sampled female university students of Midland State University, Zimbabwe. A self-administered closed-ended questionnaire was used to collect the data for the study. The instrument was test-retested for reliability and the responses were compared using Cronbach's alpha which yielded high reliability alpha ( $\alpha$ ) value of 0.84. Data was coded and entered into a computer using Microsoft Excel 2010 and analysed using Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) version 22.0. Descriptive statistics was used to analyse data in the form of cross tabulation and the results were presented in tables, graphs and pie charts.

**Results:** The results indicated that among all sources of information about EC which includes health workers, leaflets and college clinic, only mass media (41%) has shown to be the most famous. Although female students know about EC, the knowledge about effective level and correct use of EC is poor. The attitudes of female students at MSU are unfavourable for EC as they gave reasons like EC promotes promiscuity (71.1%) and it can pose health risks (59.9%). The practice of EC at MSU is low with only 47% of respondents indicating that they have once used EC.

**Conclusion and recommendations:** The study concluded that there is lack of actual knowledge about EC which has directly influence attitudes and practices, and this has resulted in negative attitudes towards EC with low EC practices. The study therefore