



Do unplanned pregnancies have an effect on pregnancy complications in a rural population of South Africa?

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Abstract

Background: The problem of unplanned pregnancy continues to be a burden in many countries in the sub-Saharan Africa region. Women who have unplanned pregnancy face significantly more hurdles such as domestic violence which subsequently increase risk of pregnancy complications, both maternal and child mortality.

Objectives: The aim was to determine the association of unplanned pregnancies and pregnancy complications in the Agincourt Health and Demographic Surveillance Site (**AHDSS**) South Africa

Methods: Secondary data extracted from the longitudinal AHDSS database were used to study the relationship using logistic regression in 10225 single pregnancies that occurred between 01 January 1998 and 31 December 2002. Multivariate

analysis were run controlling for confounding factors such as mother's age and education status, antenatal attendance and other variables.

Results: Aggregated unplanned pregnancies for the entire period was 3898(50.19%) and 2458(24.04%) out of the 10225 had missing information about the status of the pregnancy. Unplanned pregnancies in **AHDSS** in 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2002 were 722(45.93%), 762(46.52%), 832(51.71%), 781(50.68%) and 801(56.93%) respectively. Factors that were protective against pregnancy complications were planned pregnancy (OR: 0.79, 95% CI 0.67-0.94), antenatal clinic attendance (OR: 0.36, 95%CI 0.15-0.89), former Mozambican refugee women (OR: 0.66, 95%CI 0.55-0.80), mother's age (OR: 0.98, 95% CI 0.96-0.99), none first time mother (OR: 0.75, 95%CI 0.59-0.97) and household head female (OR: 0.79, 95%CI 0.66-0.94). In contrast the women with tertiary education were more likely to have pregnancy complications (OR: 2.12, 95%CI 1.45-3.12).

Conclusion: Results from this study suggest that unplanned pregnancies increase the likelihood of pregnancy complications. Pregnancy complications are also associated with biological factors for instance mother's age and parity, and health seeking behaviour of women such as utilization of antenatal services offered by health facilities. There are also proxies for socio-economic status such as education and refugee status of the mother. The unexpected results of the risk of unplanned pregnancies increasing in women with tertiary education may be a result of due to work related stress. Educated women are likely to be involved in full time jobs that are more demanding compared to less educated women. To reduce the number of unplanned pregnancies and subsequently complications, programmes like Family planning and education should be made available to all women. Findings also call for future in-depth research to explore the major risk factors associated with unplanned pregnancies in order to draw effective public health intervention programs to reduce their effect on both the mother and infant.

And hence, move towards making progress in achieving millennium development goals.