

Factors contributing to termination of pregnancies among teenagers in Vhembe district of Limpopo province: South Africa

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Background: The grounds for legal Termination of Pregnancy (TOP) have been liberalized according to the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act, No. 92 of 1996 (CTOP) which became operative in February 1997. According to this Act, all women have been accorded the right to decide whether to terminate their pregnancies or not, before 12 weeks gestation without any consent from anybody. Since the implementation of the Act, total number of legalized TOPs performed among teenagers in the Republic of South Africa (RSA) continues to rise.

Objective: To identify factors contributing to TOP among teenagers in Vhembe district, and therefore describe the strategies to minimize such.

Method: A quantitative, exploratory and descriptive design was used. Population of the study comprised of all pregnant women (including) teenagers, who terminated their pregnancies at a selected community hospital. Data was collected by means of questionnaires.

Results: Major inferences drawn from this study included that teenagers' knowledge of reproductive health issues was inadequate and that they have nothing tangible because of their low educational and economic status that put them at risk of being involved in sexual activities at an early age leading to unwanted pregnancies that end up in termination.

Conclusion: From the findings, it is clear that teenagers are not getting adequate reproductive health information hence their needs are not met. The low response to level of accessing contraceptives from their local clinics as well as the reasons they advanced, indicated that the respondents were not in regular contact with the nursing personnel. This would appear to indicate that more deliberate strategies are needed to attract teenagers closer to the nursing personnel.

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