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Perceptions and Preferences of Female Youths towards Post-Abortion Family Planning Counselling in Kampala.

The study was conducted in Kampala, to determine perceived benefits, to determine perceived challenges and to assess preferences of female youths towards post abortion family planning counselling. Kampala has the highest abortion rates compared to other regions in Uganda. With the legal status of abortion still contested in religious, moral, cultural, and political dimensions, many unsafe induced abortions go unnoticed and thus putting lives of many women at risk. Provision of post abortion family planning counselling and services to all post abortion clients is one way of preventing repeat abortions. The main objective of the study was to assess the perceptions and preferences of female youths towards post abortion family planning counselling among health facilities in Kampala in order provide research-based evidence and methods that would help improve sensitisation and access of female youths towards post abortion family planning counselling and services in Kampala. A descriptive cross sectional and non-interventional study design was used in which a qualitative technique was applied for data collection in order to explore a wider range of views of female youths towards post abortion family planning counselling in Kampala. In-depth interviews were conducted using audio devices and disc tapes with guidance of an in-depth interview guide. Data was analysed manually using a thematic approach of qualitative content analysis in which transcribed information was arranged into codes, themes and sub themes. Prevention of unwanted pregnancies and enhanced contraceptive use were the most repeatedly mentioned benefits of family planning counselling across interviews. However, prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and child spacing were also attributed to post abortion family planning counselling. Respondents' perceived challenges in accessing post abortion family planning services included lack of privacy, lack of confidentiality, poor attitude of health workers, lack of time by health workers, stigmatisation, long waiting time, religious influence, fear for legal implication, myths and misinformation about family planning, and past experiences with family planning methods. All the above highlighted challenges played a role in influencing access to post abortion family planning counselling. Respondents also expressed preference for private health facilities, getting both abortion and family planning counselling at once, as a single service and need for more time for counselling. Generally, the perceived challenges in accessing post abortion family planning counselling, are still many among the youths and these outweigh the perceived benefits. However, some challenges were accelerated by lack of adequate information and awareness about the benefits of post abortion family planning counselling among female youths in Kampala. This coupled with myths and misinformation makes it necessary to create awareness about the importance of post abortion family planning counselling through sensitisation of the youth.

Furthermore, given that some respondents had never used any family planning method, yet they expressed need for counselling, also makes it worthy to conclude that there is low sensitisation about family planning counselling in the communities, which may lead to more unwanted pregnancies and more abortions if the sensitisation mechanism is not improved. There is need for increased sensitisation of women especially the youth on the importance of family planning counselling and the dangers of unsafe abortion, especially, in areas where abortion is still high.

This can be done through media, youth education, and local drama to enlighten the youth about the importance of family planning counselling. In addition, family planning policies need to be revised to further emphasise the importance of post abortion family planning counselling so that both clients and health workers can comfortably embrace post abortion family planning counselling without any worries of being implicated by the law on abortion.

Key Words: Female Youths towards, Post-Abortion, Family Planning Counselling, Kampala