

Perceptions and Experiences of Unplanned Pregnancies among University Students: A Case study at Paro College of Education

Ugyen Tshomo;¹ Sonam Dorji W; Dorji Wangchuk; Karma Tshering

Abstract

The unintended or unplanned pregnancy is statistically increasing among young women around the world, and in most cases they undergo significant physical and psychological effects. The record at Paro College of Education indicates certain evidences of unplanned pregnancy and yet no formal studies is carried out to understand the perceptions and experiences of unplanned pregnancies among the female student teachers. This study carried out document analysis, particularly the record of pregnancies among female student teachers in the college and condensed the sampling to five cases of the unplanned pregnancies. All five cases identified were based on the preliminary finding of unplanned pregnancy – while three cases had given live birth and two cases are currently pregnant. These five cases show significant difference of how they perceive pregnancies between pre-marital pregnancies and married student teachers. There is also significant difference of stress experiences between them. The moral support from the family and society implicates a strong correlation with the pregnant student teachers' mental nad physical wellbeing.

Introduction

Several studies found that unwanted or unplanned pregnancy's effects on the mothers and infants' health are considerable (Akbarzadeh, Yazdanpanahi, Zarshenas and Sharif, 2016; Bahk, Yun, Kim, and Khang , 2015; Isumi and Fujiwara, 2017; Lanre, 2010). The cognitive impairments, psychological risks, physical health consequences due to abortion and social-stigmatization are some of the problems young women, especially university students, faces as a consequent of unplanned pregnancies. For instance, Out of 210 million pregnancies worldwide each year, approximately 22 percent, or 46 million, end in abortion (Irvin, 2004). It is difficult to find the exact worldwide figure on the cases of abortion that is related to unplanned pregnancies because many countries consider it as illegal by law. However, countries like India has found that abortions accounted for one third of all pregnancies, and nearly half of pregnancies were unintended (Singh, Shekhar, Acharya, et al 2015). On the other the studies shows that women who have births resulting from unintended pregnancies may be at higher risk of postpartum depression (Steinberg and Rubin, 2014).

Nonetheless, the unwanted or unintended pregnancy among young women in the developing countries is increasing statistically every year (UNICEF, 2013), of 182 million pregnancies each

¹ Ugyen Tshomo is the assistant professor at Paro college of Education (PCoE)

2. Dr Dorji Wangchuk is the assistant professor of PCoE

3. Sonam Dorji W. is the Dean of Research and Industrial Linkages of PCoE

4. Karma Tshering is the chief Programme officer of UNFPA

year, 76 million are unintended (Lule, Singh and Chowdhury, 2007). Bhutan is no exception within the prevalence of unintended or unplanned pregnancies among young women. The unplanned pregnancy and perspective study at Nganglam town setting, southeastern Bhutan, found that one in five women experienced unplanned pregnancy (Choden; Pem and Pathak, 2015). Studies have also found that socio-economic background and sexual behaviours are some of the contributing factors to unplanned pregnancy (UNICEF, 2008).

Even within the young university students, there is growing incidences of unplanned pregnancies, and the sexual behaviour is likely the contributing factor. The study on the responsible sexual behaviours among Royal University of Bhutan (RUB), found that around 20.4% of the female respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they experienced their first sexual intercourse after joining the college (Gurung, Tshomo, Wanghcuk and Nidup, 2017). However, the issue of college students' experiences of unplanned pregnancies is not discussed sufficiently. For this study, five cases of unplanned pregnancies from Paro College of Education, RUB, were selected to study its causes and effects. Through this case study, certain modalities could be identified to lower the incidences of unplanned pregnancies among university students in Bhutan.

Background of the study

Instances of unplanned pregnancies in Paro College of Education (PCE) are nothing new. In 2005, results for six girls from B. Ed (Pry) Programme were withheld for two years for breaching the College rules, i.e. getting pregnant while still in the College. (NIE-P/ADM(19)2005-2006/739 dated December 13, 2005). The situation of some female student-teachers getting pregnant in PCE has not changed much. The records maintained with the Dean of Academic Affairs, PCE indicate that three students took 1-year academic leave in 2017 alone, one of whom was asked to take academic leave on compulsory basis. There had been similar cases in the past too where student got pregnant while still studying in the College. These students were specifically briefed of the consequences of pregnancies during the Orientation Week in the beginning of the first semester of the first year. The students' handbook which is available on the VLE clearly state that "if any student teacher is found to be pregnant during the academic session, she would be asked to take a year off (one year academic leave) immediately" (2017, p.12). The issues of pregnancies are also discussed in the Life Skills lessons. But the unplanned pregnancies seem to continue in the College although it mostly go unreported.

What is more worrying is that during pregnancy, young mothers tend to hide the pregnancy by wearing tight clothe, often binding the womb which might restrict the growth of fetus and the ante natal care might not have also been adequately sought or compromised. Further, after delivery, they take only a day's leave for delivery after which they are back in the class. While it is understandable that they do not want to miss classes and fall short of attendance, it is quite inhuman on the part of the mothers to leave their newborn babies home, unattended. Such a practice not only denies the new born babies of their mothers' breast milk, it also poses a huge

risk on the long-term health of mothers. Besides, the young mothers can neither give adequate care to their newly born babies, nor can they concentrate on their studies. Hence these mothers suffer from anxiety, depression and fatigue, all of which need to be properly studied. The findings from the studies conducted by Gipson, Koenig and Hindin (2008) also clearly show the need to assess both depression and anxiety in new and expectant parents.

It is imperative to carry out in-depth study on why such phenomenon at the college persists. Five cases are identified – particularly two different type of cases. The student-teachers who have given birth to a child and those who are currently pregnant, and all of them admitted that their cases are unplanned or unintended. This case study intends to provide insights on the occurrence of unplanned pregnancies, and to find out in what ways they were/are affected within their social and personal lives – in terms of psychological and physical hazards. More importantly this study will provide insights on their perception and decisions on unplanned pregnancies within the parameters of student-life situations.

Case Description

Five cases of unplanned pregnancy have been selected for this study. Case 1, 2 and 3 are the cases of student-teachers who have given live birth recently and cases 4 and 5 are those student-teachers who were pregnant when this study was carried out.

Case 1 – It was a pre-marital pregnancy case, and unplanned. The student conceived during her 1st Year of study in the B.Ed Primary Programme. She lives with her mother, and her husband is a student of another college under Royal University of Bhutan. The husband is abusive toward her, which made her go through stressful life leading to develop suicidal thought.

Case 2 – This student knew that she was 22 weeks pregnant. It was an unintended or unplanned pregnancy. Her husband lives in the eastern Bhutan, and visits her as when he gets time. She gave live birth and did not avail academic leave for a year.

Case 3 – She is married to the student from the same college, but it was a pre-marital pregnancy. They now live together in a small rented apartment near the college. She availed academic leave for a year soon after she learned about her unplanned pregnancy.

Case 4 - She is currently pregnant, and the parents know about their relationship. However they have not informed their parents about their unplanned pregnancy, and they are waiting for the right time to break the news. Her husband is a graduate from the same college and their relationship is stable.

Case 5 - She is married to the man who is employed in the capital, Thimphu, but it was an unplanned pregnancy. She has relatively good family support and lives with them. She is currently on academic leave for a year.

Literature Review

As of autumn 2017, Paro College of Education had a total of 1011 full-time pre-service student-teachers enrolled on five different programmes. Records maintained with the Student Record Section, PCE (2017) revealed that 530 were females and 481, males. This indicated that more than half of the student-teachers in PCE were young women of child bearing age. However, the Women's Hostel in the College had only the 212 beds, ladies' self-catering hostel included. What it meant is that about 328 of the girls had no alternative but to stay in the rented rooms outside the PCE campus.

Studies done by the National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC) and World Bank (2013, p.16) suggested that "the adolescent fertility rate of Bhutan was 47 per 1,000 in 2010, more than twice the East Asia average". The same study also pointed out that "early pregnancy was a major contributing factor to the gender gap in tertiary education in Bhutan" (NCWC & World Bank, 2013, p.15).

Contextualized to PCE, once the student-teachers lived on their own, i.e. without any direct supervision from the Hostel Matron, they shared same rooms with their male counterparts. They openly said they 'live-in together'. As a result, a few of the girls usually got pregnant when they were still studying on the programme. The consequence- they had to take one year academic leave of absence from the college to nurse their newborn children as well as regain their health. Although they could pursue their teacher training a year later, it meant that they had to relinquish their aim of completing their education in the stipulated time frame. Also the possibility to continue and complete their training depended on the support from their parents and relative to take care of their baby which further makes the young mother dependent.

In the study conducted by Cheizom and Choden (2014, p.9), it was found that "women think more collectively than men and certain social and women-related issues were better understood by women". However, looking from the persistent pregnancy cases in PCE, it appeared that more advocacy programmes were necessary for young women. For one, unplanned pregnancy was still rampant in the College. Two, pregnant women never reported their pregnancy to the College authorities with the fear that they would be asked to take one-year academic leave of absence from the College on mandatory basis. But this did not mean that the young mothers did not undergo problems. As per the studies conducted by Shahry, Kalhori, Esfandiyari and Alavijeh (2016), unwanted pregnancy induced adverse attitudes regarding pregnancy and facing increasing mental and socio-economic difficulties. The same study also found that if a pregnant woman did not receive support well, not only would she experience low maternal parental self-efficacy, but the well-being of both the mother and her child might be affected. Some of the other low sides of unwanted pregnancy also included stress, low self-esteem, depression and suicidal tendencies.

Researches such as the one conducted by Barton, Redshaw, Quigley and Carson (2017) found that unplanned pregnancy was common worldwide and indicated that an estimated 30 million births occurred globally in 2012. The findings of the study also pointed out that such pregnancies could result in adverse health outcomes for both mother and child- the claim which Mauldon and Delbanco (1997) perceived as 'true and serious'. The same concern was echoed by Gipson, Koenig and Michelle (2008, p.30) that "unintended pregnancy also may affect negatively the breastfeeding and nutritional status of children who resulted from unwanted pregnancies".

This is particularly true in PCE since pregnant mothers seldom reported pregnancy case to the College authorities. Inexperienced and young women gave births at homes or in hospitals and as soon as deliveries were over, mothers attended regular classes in the College. Perhaps they lacked adequate education on unplanned pregnancies and their consequences. Research showed that even in the developed countries, education to that effect was vital. For instance, Delbanco, Lundy, Hoff, Parker and Smith (1997) found that there was a need in the US, Canada and Denmark for "better education about reproductive physiology and the risk of pregnancy" (p.74). Findings of the studies conducted by Gipson, Koenig and Hindin (2008) also concluded the need to assess for both depression and anxiety in new and expectant parents, be it in terms of postpartum anxiety or prenatal care.

Studies by Callegari, Zhao, Schwarz, Rosenfeld, Mor and Borrero (2017) indicated that because some young women lacked partner involvement in contraceptive decision making, it resulted to low contraceptive self-efficacy which again resulted to inconsistent contraceptive use and the use of less effective methods. The ultimate consequence was that young women become pregnant although neither 'they' nor 'their partner' had planned for it.

Given the fact that unwanted pregnancies did occur in young women student-teachers of PCE, and they underwent mental trauma, social problems and run into financial difficulties, it was imperative that we first examined the self-efficacy beliefs among students on unplanned pregnancies and its psychological effect on the unprepared parents. After all, the construct of self-efficacy could be employed as an intervention to prevent sexually active women student-teachers of PCE from unplanned pregnancy (Chan, 2009). The findings from this study would also be instrumental in understanding preferences, beliefs, and practices of young girls in PCE pertaining to the contraceptive use and unplanned pregnancies. On this note, the entire study was guided by the following research questions:

Research Questions

This case study intends to answer the questions:

1. What are the contributing factors to unplanned pregnancies among students at Paro College of Education?
2. How do female student-teachers perceive unplanned pregnancies?
3. What are their experiences of unintended pregnancies as a student teacher?
4. In what ways do unplanned pregnancies impact personal and academic lives of the female student-teachers?
5. What psychological impact do unplanned pregnancies have on young mothers?
6. What can the College Management do to prevent unplanned pregnancies in the College?

Methodology for Case studies

This study adopted qualitative approach to researching and used an interpretative paradigm since this study was concerned with understanding the world of student-teachers from emic point of view. The Case Study was particularly suitable in this research since the study was qualitative in nature and dealt with individual cases of young adolescent student-teachers' pregnancies. Besides, in Case Study different methods could be combined with the purpose of illuminating a case from different angles.

Since this study was underpinned by an interpretivist paradigm, this study focused on the individuals' interpretation of beliefs and experiences among students on unplanned pregnancies and its psychological effect on the unprepared parents. Interpretivist holds that there is no single view of the world; rather, people interpret the world in widely different fashions (Sheppard, 2006). They produced and reproduced the meaning of the world as a part of their everyday activities (Blaikie, 2004). To understand this subjective meaning, researchers considered participants' perspectives with due care. Further, the case study had the ability to reveal multiple perspectives and present a unique case (Simons, 2009) pertaining to their beliefs on unplanned pregnancies.

The study has done the document analysis, particularly the record maintained by the college and then chose five cases of unplanned pregnancies. These cases are from are currently studying at the PCE. They were chosen as samples since their pregnancies were all unplanned and happened during their stay in PCE. Data collection tools included face-to-face semi-structured interviews, field notes, anecdotal records, and document analysis. Data collection was done in the month of November, 2017.

Findings and Discussions

The five cases of unplanned pregnancies at Paro College of Education are divided categorically for this study. Case 1, 2 and 3 are the cases of student-teachers who gave live birth recently and cases 4 and 5 are those student-teachers who were pregnant when this study was carried out. The five cases of unplanned pregnancies analysis process yielded three major themes: i) how they perceive unplanned pregnancy and their decisions ii) Impact on mother-child health, and iii) how

they respond to the polices/rules of the college. The central overarching theme of this study is the “impact supposition’ of unplanned pregnancies while studying at the college. Table 1 shows the summary of the findings with the themes of arising from this case study.

Table 1. Summary of the findings:

| Point at Issues | Themes | Main Theme |
|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------|
| non-use/improper use of contraceptives Alcohol-use Certainty/uncertainty over marital life Living environment Financial burden Academic studies | Perception on unplanned pregnancies | Impact supposition |
| Abortion panic Antenatal care Early-signs of depression | Psychological and physical effects | |

1. Perception of unplanned pregnancies among student-teachers and their decisions

Fears to cope with academic studies, financial burden and uncertainty/certainty prospect over the marital life are some of the remarkable perceptions of unplanned pregnancies among student-teachers at Paro College of Education. This study also found that the participants have gone through different level of stress and threat depending on the status of their relationships with partner, family, and colleagues at the college. Their perceptions on unplanned pregnancy are explained under three themes; cause of unplanned pregnancy, support from friends and family and professional life – College studies course.

1.1.Causes of unintended or unplanned pregnancies

The five cases of unplanned pregnancies among student-teachers were observed and interviewed; they expressed rather range of beliefs about unplanned pregnancies while as a student-teacher. It is very clear from their experiences that alcohol-use or improper/non-use or inconsistency use of contraceptives among student-teachers could be a significant cause of unintended pregnancies.

case#1: one time sex was a consensual though both of us were drunk and we had forgotten all about contraceptives. But I heard after you (I) have had period within one week, I was told it is safe...

case#2: my husband doesn't like condom, he would know when to ejaculate the sperm so he used only that time

case#3: we did not use any contraceptives

case#4: I did not know, we took every precaution, after some ... few months I have started missing my periods...

case#5: usually we use condom, but that month we did not use.

Furthermore, independent living environment such as living in the rented apartment away from guardians and parents is often viewed as contributing factor to sexual behaviour among student-teachers. College has hostel accommodations limited to fewer number of students, and majority of the student-teachers have to study as day- schooler. For instance, student-teachers expressed that; *“if they (students) are in relationships and staying as day-schooler, there is no restriction, as in hostel there is matron and timing.”* On further probing, the timing connotes to rules and regulations of the hostel – such as reporting and outing time.

1.2.Acceptance and support from family and society

All five cases view their pregnancies as “accidental”. They expressed negative reaction to have become pregnant unexpectedly, indicating significant stress level. For instance, their marital status had detrimental effects on them. Three cases confessed premarital pregnancies, indicating anxiety and pregnancies worries. They were mainly worried about continuing with unintended pregnancies because of uncertainty over the prospect of marital life. One particular case reported that her boyfriend was unsupportive and often physically assaulted her causing trauma. She said, *“to be honest he (boyfriend) hit me more than ten times.”* It also indicated the lack of moral support and acceptance from her boyfriend, at one instance he refused to acknowledge the child as his own. She also reported that her boyfriend threatened to commit suicide if abortion is not sought as a solution to the unplanned pregnancy. Moreover given the social stigma attached to unmarried women’s pregnancies, coping with their pregnancies was rather very difficult – especially the fear of public ridicule. For instance case 1 & 2 reported that:

case# 1: After I got the result of gonadotropin, which was positive.... I cried in the hospital and cried the whole night.

case # 2: if you are married they (college friends) think it is okay but if we are not married then they say like without husband you are pregnant.. they tell so many bad things about ‘that woman’.

Although for those students who had stable relationship (married) and support from immediate family members perceived pregnancies as acceptable, they expressed that getting pregnant while

studying is not the right time. However, the case there subtle sings of disapproval in the beginning. For instance cases 1, 2, 4 and 5 expressed shock and surprises in the initial stage but gradually the family and society started to accept it. While case 3 is waiting for the suitable time to break the news to her family, but she is confident that her family will accept her pregnancy. However, the fear to reveal the pregnancy to their parents indicates significant stress level, she said *“I don’t know how to reveal it to my parents and I don’t know how they will react so I am so stressed out”*.

Another remarkable belief on the unintended pregnancy among student teachers’ daily lives was inability to fulfill parental commitments and responsibilities. They require support from their immediate family members, usually parents, to help them look after their children. They expressed that support from husband, family members and friends are crucial for safety of the newborn child. For instance, two cases reported that:

case#2: when I first gave to live birth that time I was very worried about how to handle the baby – like wiping toilet. I was worried if I drop the baby so I was always seeking help. My mother helped me to handle my baby, most of the time.

The study reveals that there is positive correlation between support provided by the family/society/partner and the pregnant student teachers’ mental wellbeing.

1.3. Professional life – the college studies course.

The professional life relates to the student teachers’ perception of continuing their education/studies in the college even after learning that they were/are pregnant. The data analysis showed that PCE students are aware of the College rules and policy regarding pregnancies since all of them admitted that they knew about the “one-year mandatory academic leave they have to take” should they become pregnant during their study period. However, none of those pregnant student teachers had come forward to declare their pregnancies to the College Management. It is clear that they did not avail academic leave voluntarily, and given the choice they would have preferred to continue the studies at the college. Moreover, they perceived that continuing the study course will enable them to acquire job on time and become financially independent. One particular case reported that *“I will be left behind, my friends will be ahead of me, and I will be wasting a year repeating...”*

The data reveals that two out of five pregnancies cases did not avail academic leave for a year. However, the three unplanned pregnancy cases who had/have taken academic leave were either counseled by their family and faculty member or were asked by the college management to take a year of academic leave. For instance, Case 3 reported that one of the faculty members knew about her unplanned pregnancy and urged her to take an academic leave. She said *“maam X knew about my pregnancy and told me that I must avail academic leave...”* Despite advised by the faculty member, she continued to attend the classes. The college management has to finally

issue the formal leave letter asking her to take a year of academic leave. Case 4 who is currently pregnant asserted that *“I might have to beg (to the college management) because there is only one and half month left before graduation... but I might have to take leave after the delivery’*. Another case reported that *“I am ready to take leave if they (college management) find out that I am pregnant but then if they don’t find out I am going to continue my studies at the college”*.

They were more worried about the completion of their studies on time, indicating financial costs. To conceal the fact that they are/were pregnant from colleagues and college management was felt necessary to complete their studies on time. For instance, they were worried that they need to bear tuition fees and living expenses on their own to repeat the course after a year of academic leave. However, students’ misconception on the regulation of tuition fees is indicative; as students need not pay the tuition fees for the approved academic leave. Nonetheless if a pregnant student teacher takes an academic leave starting from the month of May (mid-semester) this year; she shall not be entitled for monthly stipend till the May month of the following year. This pertains to those student-teachers who are studying under the government scholarships, but the self-finance students need to bear daily expenses on their own upon resuming their studies. One such case reported, *“If I take a year off, we are left behind, again we have to pay on our own which is a huge amount”*.

The five unplanned pregnancies cases in the college reveals significant inclination towards continuing their study courses despite going through physical and mental trauma. They perceive that hiding their pregnancies from class/college mates and faculty are crucial for them to continue their study course at the college.

Effects on Mother-Child Health

The child care and protection rules and regulation of Bhutan 2015, Domestic violence prevention rules and regulation 2015, Breastfeeding policy, are some of the related mother and child policy in Bhutan and this specific parameter pertain to their knowledge and awareness on the components of the above rules and regulations. Findings from this case study involving four female student teachers indicate that they have very little knowledge pertaining to Bhutan’s mother-child policy. For instance, some of the participants even tried to abort the child when they discovered that they were pregnant. They had no idea that abortion was illegal in Bhutan unless *“the pregnancy was due to rape or incest, or abortion was done to preserve the woman's mental health or to save her life”* (Bhutan Penal Code, 2004). Two cases reported that abortion was first sought as a solution to their unintended or unplanned pregnancies. One student teacher had even attempted the abortion.

The female student teachers selected for this study were not able to find out their pregnancies until the period ranging from 4 weeks to 22 weeks. Case 2 was halfway point to full-term pregnancy. The analysis of three cases also shows significant negligence of antenatal care during their pregnancies. Antenatal care (ANC) is a preventive public health intervention to ensure

healthy pregnancy outcomes and improve survival and health of newborns. Case 1 did not visit ANC due to unsupportive partner, case 2 visited ANC after 22 weeks of pregnancy and case 3 only after 28 weeks, but they did not receive ANC on a regular basis. Although, case 4 and 5 reported that they have registered for the antenatal care in the nearby mother-child unit, they are mostly likely unaware of its importance. It is beyond the scope of this study to find out the outcome and effects of non-use of ANC, particularly the low-weight birth and neonatal death among student teachers with unplanned pregnancies in the colleges. Another study could be carried out to find out its impact.

On the other hand, effect of the mother-child health is implied due to negligence of post-natal care and continuation of their studies at the college soon after the delivery of the child. Three cases reported that soon after the birth of a child they attended the regular classes without the knowledge of the college management. This could have a serious complication on the mother's health as they would require abundant rest at this crucial stage. Further, their child was either looked after by their friends or family members whereby timely breastfeeding was often missed. This is because in many of week days the mother had to attend the classes the whole day. The 0-7 year of age is critical phase of the child's life- the time when bones are formed, and when habits, principles, patterns, experiences, relationship with others, and relationship with self were shaped in relation to what a child saw in the immediate environment (Razo, 2013).

The study concludes that the unplanned pregnancies among student teachers have implications on the effects on the mother-effect health. Less or non-use of ANC, improper post-natal care and no rest for the new mothers are significant indications of effect to their health.

Physical and psychological impact supposition

The physical and psychological impact for this study looks at two aspects, the physical strain, and the stress level, which transmutes to mental trauma during the pregnancies and after the delivery of a child. Given the scope of this study, it does not delve into finding the behavioural pattern during and after their pregnancies.

The unplanned pregnancies among five student teachers consistently reported they had gone through a range of stress level. For instance, suicidal thoughts and attempts to abort the child manifested from the stress are prevalent amongst female student teachers with pre-marital pregnancies. For instance, case 1 and 3 developed suicidal thoughts; even worst was that case 1 had once attempted it. Case 1, 2 and 3 indicated suffering from insomnia for several months after they knew about their pregnancy. Moreover, their apprehensiveness about the acceptance of pregnancy by the family and society aggravated stress level. For instance, their classmates making fun of them had contributed to develop low-esteem and embarrassment. On the other hand, even the married student teachers with good family support indicated going through stress in terms of completing their studies on time, this was common to all the cases however.

One of the significant findings of this study is that all the five cases of unplanned pregnancies had negative reaction to have become pregnant while as a student, as they were shocked and surprised when their pregnancies were confirmed by the test. Nonetheless, the marital prospects had significant differences in stress level between married and unmarried at the time of conception. Case 1 reported that she had gone through psychological trauma to the extent of attempting suicide- as her case was a pre-marital pregnancy. She said, *“I cried from the hospital then went to college and then I cried whole night. I nearly tried to commit suicide; I tried to cut my nerves.”* While another findings shows that they stressed out on how to reveal about their pregnancy to their parents, but this was mainly found among married student teachers. They feared for negative reaction on their pregnancy from their parents.

Owing to their commitment to complete their studies on time, all of them had attempted to attend the classes during the pregnancies period and 3 cases even after the delivery of the child. The data reveals that they often skipped classes due to discomfort and laziness. However, in most cases they had to force themselves to attend the classes, as the attendance of 90% is mandatory as per the college policy. This also indicates significant physical strain to sit upright the whole day, and concealing pregnancy from classmates and faculty was yet another stress level they had to undergo. However, it is very interesting to learn that despite their physical and psychological situations there was no adverse affect on their academic performance. Case 1, 2 and 5 reported that they did not feel academic pressure, and they were able to cope with any tasks given to them. They had relatively performed as same as they were not pregnant. In the case of 3 and 4 they realized that their academic performance was affected. Nonetheless, significant stress level to cope with academic pressure and the college policy was found in this study.

Support from the College Management

The college management support for the unplanned pregnancy is reflected in its policies, such as a year of academic leave. This is aimed at providing abundant rest for the mother and for the proper care of the newborn child. However, the support in its real sense is viewed from more of preventive measures, as the unplanned pregnancies occurrence is assumed due to irresponsible sexual behaviours among students. The college has structured programme and polices and counseling unit services. The non-credited module, Life Skills is offered to sensitize the sexual behaviours and to cope with real-life problem. Although college counseling unit which has the capacity to counsel the pregnant student teachers going through stress, there is not much of such cases coming forward to seek its services. Another initiative of the college in the recent time has installed condoms boxes near and around the college premises, which is aimed at preventing the unplanned pregnancy.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The unplanned pregnancy issues have not been formal study carried out, particularly to understand the perceptions and experiences among the student teachers at Paro College of

Education. This study looked at the cases of the unplanned pregnancies so far recorded in the college, and then condensed to five cases to study its perceptions and experiences of unplanned pregnancies. It is overwhelming to find that there are many cases of pregnancy cases yet only fewer numbers of such cases are recorded in the college. This is because the recorded cases are those who had availed a year of academic leave and most of them had gone unnoticed in the past.

This case study found that the unplanned pregnancy among five female student teachers perceives their pregnancies as 'accidental' and rather indicates negative reaction. They expressed to have gone through a range of stress level. However, there is a significant difference of stress level between pre-marital pregnancies and married student teachers. The student teachers how had conceived before the marriage seemed to have gone through higher level of stress than those student teachers who are married at the time of conception. They feel that becoming pregnant during their study period is not the right time however. On the other hand, there are good evidences of the going through the experiences of physical and psychological effects for both mother and child in the college. This study proposes the following recommendations based on its findings:

- Provide hostel facilities to the female student teachers or the alternative ways to negotiate with private apartment to be monitored by the college management.
- Initiate mechanism to detect pregnant student teachers, such as creating linkages with the hospitals in and around the country for information dissemination to the college management.
- Awareness on mother-child health must be initiated consistently, such as inviting guest speakers, health personnel.
- Continue to offer CSE and counseling unit to play vital role by being proactive to counsel the pregnant student teachers, which in turn would relatively offer moral support to them.

References

- Akbarzadeh M., Yazdanpanahi, Z., Zarshenas, L. and Sharif F. (2016). The Women'S Perceptions About Unwanted Pregnancy: A Qualitative Study in Iran. *Global Journal of Health Science*. 8(5):189-196. doi:10.5539/gjhs.v8n5p189.
- Bahk, J., Yun, S-C., Kim, Y. and Khang, Y-H. (2015). Impact of unintended pregnancy on maternal mental health: a causal analysis using follow up data of the Panel Study on Korean Children (PSKC). *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth*. 2015;15:85. doi:10.1186/s12884-015-0505-4.
- Barton, K., Redshaw, M., Quigley, M.A. & Carson, C. (2017). Unplanned pregnancy and subsequent psychological distress in partnered women: a cross sectional study of the role of relationship quality and wider social support. *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth*, 17(44)
- Bhutan: Abortion Law (n.d.). Retrived from <http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/abortion/doc/bhutan1.doc>
- Blaikie, N. (Ed.). (2004). *Interpretivism* (Vol. 2). New Delhi: Sage.
- Callegari, L.S., Zhao, X., Schwarz, E.B., Rosenfeld, E., Mor, M.K. and Borrero, S. (2017). Racial/ethnic differences in contraceptive preferences, beliefs, and self-efficacy among women veterans. *American Journal of Obstetrics Gynecology* 216(5), 504.e1-504.e10.
- Chan, D.S.K. (2009). *Contraceptive self-efficacy and contraceptive knowledge of Hong Kong Chinese women with unplanned pregnancy*. Retrived from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/26682934> Contraceptive self-efficacy and contraceptive knowledge of Hong Kong Chinese women with unplanned pregnancy [accessed Dec 16 2017].
- Cheizom, P. & Choden, T. (2014). *Role of rural women in sanitation and hygiene: A gender study from Bhutan*. Thimphu: SNV.
- Choden, J., Pem, R., Pathak, A. (2015). Prevalence, determinants and outcomes of unplanned pregnancy and perspectives on termination of pregnancy among women in Nganglam, Bhutan. *Bhutan Health Journal*, 1(1), 30-38.
- Delbanco, S., Lundy, j., Hoff, T., Parker, M. & Smith, M.D. (1997). Public knowledge and perceptions about unplanned pregnancy and contraception in three countries. *Family Planning Perspectives*, 29 (2). p.70-75.
- Gipson, J. D., Koenig, M. A., & Hindin, M. J. (2008). The Effects of unintended pregnancy on Infant, child, and parental health: A review of the literature. *Studies in Family Planning*. 39(1), p.18–38.

Gurung, A. Wangchuk, U., Tshomo, D. & Nidup, Y.T. (2016). College Youth and the Prevalence of Responsible Sexual Relationships: A Mixed Mode Study of the Development, Challenges and Prospects of Youth Sexual Behaviour in the Colleges of the Royal University of Bhutan. *Journal of Bhutan Studies, Vol.35, p. 42-81.*

Isumi A., Fujiwara T. (2017). Synergistic Effects of Unintended Pregnancy and Young Motherhood on Shaking and Smothering of Infants among Caregivers in Nagoya City, Japan. *Frontiers in Public Health. 2017;5:245. doi:10.3389/fpubh.2017.00245*

Lule E., Singh S. and Chowdhury S. A. (2007). Fertility regulation behaviors and their costs: Contraception and Unintended Pregnancies in Africa and Eastern Europe & Central Asia. *The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank 1818 H Street, NW Washington, DC 20433.*
<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/13783/427950wp01no0p1lityregulationsfinal.pdf?sequence=1>

Lanre, O. O. (2010). Perception of university students on unwanted pregnancy in south west Nigeria. *American journal of social and management sciences, 1(2), 196-200.*

Irvin, A. (2004). *Positively Informed: Lesson Plans and Guidance for Sexuality Educators and Advocates*, International Women's Health Coalition, New York.
http://makeeverywomancount.org/images/stories/documents/IWHC_LessonPlansGuidanceforSexualityEducatorsandAdvocates.pt1_2004.pdf

Matthey, S., Barnett, B., Howie, P. & Kavanagh, D.J. (2003). Diagnosing postpartum depression in mothers and fathers: whatever happened to anxiety? *Journal of Affective Disorders, 74(2). p.139-147.*

Mauldon, J & Delbanco, S. (1997). Public perceptions about unplanned pregnancy. *Family Planning Perspectives, 29(1). p. 25-29.*

National Commission for Women and Children & World Bank (2013). *Bhutan gender policy note 2013*. Thimphu: World Bank.

Paro College of Education (2017). *Student handbook*. Paro: Author.

Razo, M. V. D. (2013). *Why are the first seven years of a child's life so important?* Retrieved from <https://www.quora.com/Why-are-the-first-seven-years-of-a-childs-life-so-important>

Steinberg, J. R., and Rubin, L.R. (2014). Psychological aspects of contraception, unintended pregnancy, and abortion. *Policy Insights Behav Brain Sci, 1(1), 239-47.*

Shahry, P., Kalhori, S.R.K., Esfandiyari, A. & Alavijeh, F. Z. (2016). A comparative study of perceived social support and self-efficacy among women with wanted and unwanted pregnancy. *Int J Community Based Nurs Midwifery. 4(2), 176-185.*

Singh S., Shekhar, C., Acharya, R., *et al* (2015). The Incidence of abortion and unintended pregnancy in India, *Lancet Glob Health*, 6 (2018), pp. e111-e120

UNICED (2008). Fact sheet: World population day.
https://www.unicef.org/malaysia/Teenage_Pregnancies_-_Overview.pdf

UNICEF (2013). *UNICEF Annual Report 2012 for Bhutan, ROSA*. Retrived from https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Bhutan_COAR_2012.pdf