

How do male students perceive their role in contraception and the protection against STDs?

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BACKGROUND

A lot of research has been done on women and contraception. How men perceive their role regarding contraception is largely unknown. Previous research (*The Integrative Model of Behavior Change¹*) shows that factors like intentions, communication and knowledge are of importance. The aim of this study is to get more insight that could provide us with more starting points for preventing unwanted pregnancies and STDs.

METHOD

Eight semi-structured interviews with male students from Amsterdam, The Netherlands (aged 18-25, different study programs) were conducted based on a, previously developed, topic list. Convenience sampling was used to select respondents. The interviews were processed with thematic content analysis. Open, axial, and selective coding was used to analyze the interviews.

RESULTS

Four themes emerged from the data: openness of parents, making an informed decision, prevention of pregnancy and STDs and duration of relationship (Figure 1). Men do not have a clear view on their role in contraception regarding responsibility and are still struggling with the autonomy of their partner, also in relation to the length of the relationship. When in a relationship, they feel their role should be to support and communicate with their partner, but not to make the final contraceptive choice. When not in a committed relationship, men feel their role is solely to protect themselves against fatherhood and, to a much lesser extent, STDs.



DISCUSSION/ CONCLUSION

Communication is key in preventing unwanted pregnancies and STDs, and working towards a shared responsibility. Following up on the role of parents in communicating well about these subjects, both men and women should take their responsibility in communicating. Furthermore, fear of unwanted pregnancy seems much larger than fear for STDs for male students. These subjects can be addressed in a university institutional context in a variety of ways (f.i. via flyers, projects, student counselors, student health services and eHealth)

MAIN MESSAGES

1. More attention for the role of both men and women in communicating about contraception and STDs is necessary in a student population within the university institutional context.
2. More attention for the dangers of STDs and the importance of protection against STDs is necessary in a student population within the university institutional context.

REFERENCE

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Figure 1: Themes and quotes