

Abstract 23:

Knowledge on how advanced maternal age affects fertility and pregnancy outcomes among students of the Faculty of Science, University of Jaffna

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Background and objective: The trend of delayed marriage and childbearing among women in Sri Lanka has raised concerns regarding the implications of such delays for fertility and pregnancy outcomes. The level of knowledge on advanced maternal age (AMA) and its implications for fertility and pregnancy outcomes among young people depends on various factors. This study aimed to describe the level of knowledge on how AMA affects fertility and pregnancy outcomes among students of the Faculty of Science, University of Jaffna.

Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 427 Science Faculty students at the University of Jaffna from November 2023 to March 2024. Participants were selected using proportionate stratified random sampling. Data were collected with a self-administered questionnaire developed by the researchers. Chi-square tests and one-way ANOVA were performed using SPSS, with $p < 0.05$ considered significant.

Results: Among 427 participants, 230 (53.9%) were male and 197 (46.1%) female, with 226 (52.9%) and 201 (47.1%) in their first and second years, respectively. Overall, 52.5% were unaware of AMA, while 47.5% had some knowledge. Less than half (45.4%) correctly identified 35 years as the threshold age. The mean knowledge score was 7.37 (SD 3.9), with most scores ranging between 6 and 12. Knowledge was significantly associated with academic year ($p=0.003$), age ($p=0.001$), and ethnicity ($p=0.009$); first-year students, younger participants, and Sinhala students showed higher knowledge levels. Gender was not significantly associated with knowledge ($p=0.137$), nor was the course of study ($p=0.545$). Social media was the most common source of information (44%), followed by books (27%). Only 8% had participated in formal educational programmes on this topic, indicating gaps in structured learning.

Conclusions and recommendations: Findings reveal inadequate awareness on AMA among Science Faculty students. Integrating reproductive health education into the university curriculum and conducting awareness programmes about AMA may improve awareness and promote informed reproductive choices.

Keywords: Advanced maternal age, Reproductive health, Fertility, Pregnancy outcomes, Knowledge