

Effective Counselling Strategies to Address Commercial Egg Donation among Female Undergraduates in Nigerian Universities

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Abstract: Egg donation has become an increasingly discussed issue among female undergraduate students in Nigerian tertiary institutions due to reports of growing participation driven largely by financial hardship and aggressive recruitment by fertility clinics and agents. Nigerian media have reported cases in which female students are offered financial compensation in exchange for donating their eggs, raising concerns among healthcare professionals, education stakeholders, and policymakers about the potential health and ethical implications of the practice. Although egg donation remains an important component of assisted reproductive technology that has enabled many infertile couples to achieve parenthood, repeated donation and inadequate regulation may expose donors to medical complications, including ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome, hormonal imbalance, surgical complications, reproductive health concerns, and psychological distress. This paper examines the concept of egg donation among undergraduate students and analyses the major medical negative implications associated with the practice. The paper argues that while egg donation has legitimate medical value, the increasing involvement of financially vulnerable students requires urgent public health attention. It recommends comprehensive counselling, stricter regulation of fertility clinics, institutional awareness campaigns, and stronger government oversight to safeguard the health and welfare of female undergraduate students.

Keywords: Egg donation, undergraduate students, tertiary institutions, reproductive health, assisted reproductive technology, fertility clinics, medical complications, Nigeria.

Introduction

Hepatitis Egg donation has emerged as one of the most significant developments in assisted reproductive technology, providing hope for women who are unable to conceive with their own eggs. Through this procedure, healthy women voluntarily donate mature eggs that are fertilized through in-vitro fertilization (IVF) and transferred to recipients seeking pregnancy. Over the past decade, the growing demand for donor eggs has increased the recruitment of young women, particularly undergraduate students, because they are generally considered to be healthy and within the most suitable reproductive age. In Nigeria, local media organisations have reported an increasing involvement of female undergraduate students in egg donation programmes. Investigative reports by newspapers and television stations, including Punch, The Guardian Nigeria, Premium Times, and BBC News Pidgin, have highlighted concerns that many students are attracted to egg donation primarily because of financial challenges, rising tuition and living costs, and unemployment. The Nation Newspaper noted that the University of Ibadan reportedly issued a health advisory warning students against viewing egg donation as a regular source of income [1]. The university emphasized that while egg donation serves legitimate medical purposes in assisted reproductive technology, repeated participation may expose donors to medical and psychological risks.

The Capital report that the growing prevalence of the practice raises important questions regarding student welfare, reproductive health, ethics, and the commercialization of human biological materials within tertiary institutions. This review therefore examines newspaper reports on egg donation among female undergraduates and discusses the implications for tertiary education in Nigeria [2]. These reports further revealed that some fertility clinics and intermediaries actively recruit students through social media advertisements and informal networks, with repeated donations becoming a growing concern among medical experts. Health professionals have warned that although egg donation is generally safe when properly regulated, repeated ovarian stimulation and egg retrieval procedures may expose donors to short-term and long-term health risks.

The increasing reports of egg donation among female undergraduates have generated public debate regarding the adequacy of existing regulations governing fertility practices in Nigeria. Questions have also been raised concerning informed consent, ethical recruitment, medical follow-up, and the protection of young women who may not fully understand the potential consequences of repeated egg donation [3], [4]. The situation has attracted the attention of reproductive health specialists, university administrators, parents, and policymakers who advocate stronger oversight and improved public awareness. The need for this study arises from the increasing participation of undergraduate students in egg donation despite limited public knowledge of its possible medical implications. While numerous studies have examined assisted reproductive technology from the perspective of infertility treatment, relatively few have focused on the health risks faced by young egg donors within Nigerian tertiary institutions. This study therefore seeks to examine the concept of egg donation among undergraduate students and discuss the major medical negative implications associated with the practice [5]. Findings from the study will contribute to public health education, inform institutional policies, support government regulation of fertility services, and encourage evidence-based counselling programmes for female students. American Society for Reproductive Medicine (ASRM) defines egg donation as the process by which a woman voluntarily donates her oocytes for use in assisted reproductive treatment or biomedical research after undergoing medical evaluation, ovarian stimulation, and egg retrieval. According to World Health Organization, egg donation is a component of assisted reproductive technology involving the collection of mature eggs from a healthy donor for fertilization and subsequent transfer to an individual or couple requiring donor gametes to achieve pregnancy. Practice Committee of the American Society for Reproductive Medicine describes egg donation as a medically supervised reproductive procedure in which a donor undergoes controlled ovarian stimulation and transvaginal oocyte retrieval to provide eggs for another individual seeking fertility treatment. Egg donation refers to the voluntary process in which a healthy woman donates one or more of her eggs (oocytes) for use in assisted reproductive technology, particularly in-vitro fertilization (IVF), to enable women who cannot produce viable eggs to conceive. The procedure involves careful medical

screening, hormonal stimulation of the ovaries, and the surgical retrieval of mature eggs, which are then fertilized and transferred to the recipient or preserved for future use [6]. Among undergraduate students in Nigerian tertiary institutions, egg donation has increasingly become a subject of concern due to the growing demand from fertility clinics and agencies. Many female students are recruited through social media advertisements, intermediaries, and fertility centres, with financial incentives serving as the major motivation. Some students view egg donation as a legitimate means of earning income to offset tuition fees, accommodation costs, and other educational expenses. While egg donation is legally and ethically accepted under regulated medical conditions in many countries, repeated or poorly regulated participation may expose young donors to significant health, psychological, and ethical challenges. Consequently, health professionals and educational stakeholders have advocated for increased awareness and counselling to ensure that students make informed decisions based on a clear understanding of the potential benefits and risks [7], [8].

Methodology

Five Medical Negative Implications of Egg Donation Practice

1. Ovarian Hyperstimulation Syndrome (OHSS)

One of the most common medical complications associated with egg donation is Ovarian Hyperstimulation Syndrome (OHSS). The fertility drugs administered to stimulate the ovaries may cause excessive enlargement of the ovaries and abnormal fluid accumulation in the abdomen and chest. Mild symptoms include abdominal pain, bloating, nausea, and vomiting, while severe cases may result in blood clots, kidney dysfunction, breathing difficulties, and hospitalization. Although modern fertility protocols have reduced the incidence of severe OHSS, it remains a significant medical concern, particularly where monitoring is inadequate.

2. Surgical and Anaesthetic Complications

Egg retrieval is an invasive procedure carried out under sedation or anaesthesia using a transvaginal ultrasound-guided needle. Like all surgical procedures, it carries risks such as excessive bleeding, pelvic infection, injury to surrounding organs including the bladder and bowel, adverse reactions to anaesthetic drugs, and postoperative pain. Although these complications are uncommon, they may require emergency medical intervention when they occur.

3. Future Reproductive Health Concerns

Although current scientific evidence has not conclusively shown that egg donation causes infertility, repeated ovarian stimulation and frequent egg retrieval procedures may raise concerns about future reproductive health. Some researchers suggest that repeated procedures could increase the risk of ovarian damage, pelvic adhesions, or reduced ovarian reserve if not properly managed. These uncertainties underscore the importance of limiting the frequency of donations and ensuring appropriate medical supervision.

4. Hormonal and Menstrual Disturbances

The hormonal medications used during egg donation temporarily alter the body's normal hormonal balance. As a result, some donors experience menstrual irregularities, headaches, mood swings, fatigue, breast tenderness, abdominal discomfort, and weight changes. While these symptoms are usually temporary, repeated exposure to fertility medications may increase the likelihood of prolonged hormonal disturbances in some individuals.

5. Psychological and Emotional Health Challenges

Although egg donation is primarily a medical procedure, it may also produce psychological consequences with health implications. Some undergraduate donors experience anxiety before the procedure, emotional distress during treatment, regret after donation, or concerns about the existence of genetically related offspring. Inadequate counselling and insufficient post-donation support may worsen these emotional reactions, thereby affecting students' overall mental well-being and academic performance.

Result and Discussion on Counselling Strategies to Address Egg Donation Practices

among Female Undergraduate Students in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

The increasing involvement of female undergraduate students in egg donation has become a growing concern in Nigerian tertiary institutions. While egg donation is a legitimate medical procedure that supports assisted reproductive technology, reports indicate that some students participate primarily because of financial hardship, inadequate awareness of potential health implications, peer influence, and aggressive recruitment by fertility clinics or agents. Repeated or poorly regulated egg donation may expose young women to medical, psychological, ethical, and reproductive risks [9]. Consequently, professional counsellors in tertiary institutions have a significant responsibility to provide preventive education, psychosocial support, and informed decision-making guidance. The following counselling strategies can help address egg donation practices among female undergraduate students.

1. Comprehensive Health Education and Awareness Programmes

Professional counsellors should organize regular seminars, workshops, public lectures, and awareness campaigns to educate female students about the medical, psychological, legal, and ethical aspects of egg donation. Such programmes should present evidence-based information on ovarian stimulation, egg retrieval procedures, possible complications, informed consent, and long-term reproductive health [10]. Health education enables students to distinguish between verified medical information and misleading advertisements circulated through social media or recruitment agents. Continuous awareness campaigns also empower students to make informed decisions rather than acting out of ignorance or misinformation.

2. Individual Counselling Services

One-on-one counselling provides a confidential environment where students can discuss their motivations, concerns, financial challenges, and emotional struggles. Many students who consider egg donation are driven by economic hardship, tuition fees, or family responsibilities. Counsellors should assess each student's circumstances, explore alternative solutions, and help them evaluate both the immediate benefits and possible long-term consequences [11]. Individual counselling promotes informed decision-making and strengthens students' confidence to resist undue pressure.

3. Financial Counselling and Economic Empowerment Guidance

Financial hardship remains one of the strongest motivations for egg donation among undergraduates. Counsellors should provide financial literacy education covering budgeting, savings, scholarship opportunities, student grants, entrepreneurship, work-study programmes, and responsible financial planning [12]. They should also connect financially vulnerable students with institutional support services, alumni assistance programmes, or government intervention initiatives. Reducing financial stress decreases students' vulnerability to engaging in risky income-generating activities.

4. Peer Counselling and Peer Education Programmes

Students often trust information received from their peers more than formal institutional communication. Institutions should therefore train selected students as peer counsellors to disseminate accurate information about egg donation and reproductive health [13]. Peer educators can organize informal discussions, awareness campaigns, classroom sensitization, and hostel-based educational sessions. Their close relationship with fellow students enhances credibility, encourages open communication, and facilitates early identification of students who may require professional counselling.

5. Reproductive Health Counselling

Counsellors should collaborate with medical professionals to provide comprehensive reproductive health education. Topics should include fertility preservation, menstrual health, hormonal balance, sexually transmitted infections, family planning, reproductive rights, and safe medical practices [14]. Students should understand that repeated hormonal stimulation and egg retrieval procedures may carry health risks requiring careful medical supervision. Increased reproductive health knowledge enables students to prioritize their long-term wellbeing over

immediate financial rewards.

6. Psychological Support and Mental Health Counselling

Some students experience emotional distress, anxiety, depression, or low self-esteem due to academic pressure, family expectations, or financial insecurity. These psychological conditions may increase their willingness to participate in egg donation without fully considering the consequences. Counsellors should provide mental health assessments, emotional support, stress management techniques, resilience training, and coping strategies. Strengthening students' psychological wellbeing reduces susceptibility to impulsive or financially motivated decisions.

7. Ethical and Values Clarification Counselling

Values clarification helps students critically examine their personal beliefs, cultural values, religious convictions, and ethical responsibilities regarding reproductive health decisions. Counsellors should facilitate reflective discussions that encourage students to weigh personal autonomy alongside health, future reproductive goals, family expectations, and societal implications [15]. Rather than imposing personal opinions, counsellors should support students in making informed choices consistent with their values and long-term aspirations.

8. Family Involvement and Collaborative Counselling

Where appropriate and with the student's consent, counsellors may involve parents or guardians in addressing financial and emotional challenges influencing students' decisions. Family counselling can improve communication, strengthen emotional support, and identify alternative solutions to financial difficulties. A supportive family environment often reduces students' dependence on potentially risky income-generating activities, including commercial egg donation.

9. Collaboration with Healthcare Providers and Regulatory Agencies

Effective counselling requires multidisciplinary collaboration. University counselling centres should partner with healthcare professionals, reproductive specialists, public health agencies, and relevant regulatory bodies to provide accurate medical information and referral services. Joint seminars, health screening programmes, and educational campaigns can ensure students receive balanced, scientifically accurate information. Such collaboration also discourages unethical recruitment practices targeting vulnerable students.

10. Policy Advocacy and Campus-Based Preventive Programmes

Professional counsellors should advocate for institutional policies that regulate the promotion and recruitment of students for egg donation within campuses. Universities should establish guidelines restricting unauthorized advertisements by fertility agencies and provide clear procedures for reporting unethical recruitment activities. Counsellors should also advocate for improved student welfare, expanded scholarship schemes, emergency financial assistance, and accessible mental health services. Institutional support reduces the economic pressures that often drive students toward commercial egg donation.

Conclusion

Egg donation is an important component of assisted reproductive technology that has enabled many infertile couples to achieve parenthood. However, the increasing participation of undergraduate students, particularly when driven by financial pressures, raises important medical concerns. Complications such as ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome, surgical risks, hormonal disturbances, potential reproductive health concerns, and psychological distress demonstrate the need for comprehensive counselling, strict regulation of fertility clinics, and continuous health monitoring of donors. Nigerian tertiary institutions and health authorities should strengthen awareness programmes to ensure that female students understand both the immediate and long-term health implications before participating in egg donation programmes.

Counselling remains an indispensable strategy for addressing egg donation practices among female undergraduate students in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Through comprehensive health education, individual counselling, financial guidance, peer education, reproductive health services, psychological support, values clarification, family involvement, multidisciplinary collaboration, and policy advocacy, counsellors can promote informed decision-making and protect students' health and wellbeing. Effective implementation of these strategies requires the collective

commitment of universities, government agencies, healthcare professionals, parents, and counsellors.

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