

Reused Cups, Shame, and Gossip, Raising Pregnancy Fears

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On Thursday, 2 July, a study group was held with Khanya College staff at the House of Movements. The discussion focused on why many young girls do not want to go to government clinics because of unhygienic conditions and judgemental nurses. Participants said this could also be contributing to South Africa's high teenage pregnancy rate.

Clinics are supposed to be safe and clean spaces for everyone, especially young girls who need healthcare services. Instead, many feel unheard and that their privacy is not respected. During the discussion, participants raised concerns that nurses make everyone use the same cups when providing urine samples. It was claimed that the cups are only rinsed and reused, which participants described as unhygienic and a possible health risk.

One participant said that using the same cups could even lead to incorrect test results. "You go to test for an infection, but then you are told you tested positive for pregnancy," the participant said. They added that receiving an incorrect result could have serious emotional consequences for some people.

Participants also said nurses should make patients feel comfortable and offer advice instead of making them feel ashamed. They argued that healthcare workers should respect patients' privacy rather than embarrass them or turn their situations into gossip.

Kyla McPherson said, "I don't want to go to the clinic anymore because of the way I was embarrassed by the nurse who was helping me. I went for prevention because I am sexually active and cannot afford to pay for it at a private doctor. While helping me, the nurse started making comments like, 'Ja, you are doing adult things. Where are your parents? You should be in school.' She then called another nurse, and they continued to embarrass me."

McPherson continued by saying, "They even spoke in a language I didn't understand, which made me feel very small. In my mind, I thought preventing pregnancy was something good because I am young and don't want a child at my age."

Another community member, Mary, said, "The nurses at the clinic are very sly. They don't even examine you properly. They just assume what type of sickness you have."

Participants said these concerns should be addressed before they affect even more young people. They believe fear of judgment and poor treatment discourages people from visiting clinics, which may contribute to higher rates of teenage pregnancy and untreated infections. They also said healthcare workers should be passionate about their work, answer patients' questions respectfully, and treat everyone with dignity.

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