

EXPERIENCES OF CONTRACEPTIVE INTERFERENCE AMONG MEN: QUALITATIVE FINDINGS FROM THE THIRD AUSTRALIAN STUDY OF HEALTH AND RELATIONSHIPS

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Background:

Men report experiencing contraceptive interference (CI) at rates higher than women, however, the nature of these experiences remains largely unexplored. This research aimed to address significant gaps in understanding CI as it affects men, seeking to uncover the emotional, relational, and social complexities of their experiences.

Methods:

Participants were part of the third Australian Study of Health and Relationships, a population survey of 12,833 adults aged 16–69 years. Men were asked, “Has a sexual partner ever tried to get pregnant when you did not want them to be, including by interfering with contraception or stopping you from using it?” To gain in depth insight into experiences, semi-structured interviews were then conducted with 13 men who reported having experienced CI. Data were analysed using an inductive thematic analysis approach guided by the seven-step Framework Method.

Results:

Three key themes were identified: diverse experiential patterns of CI, multidimensional vulnerabilities that impacted CI experiences, and varying immediate and enduring impacts. Men's experiences of CI predominantly involved deceptive rather than overtly abusive and coercive tactics. These experiences were reported along a continuum, ranging from isolated incidents of contraceptive deception with minimal lasting effects, to more serious violations within abusive relationships that participants linked to unintended fatherhood and significant long-term personal, relational, and financial consequences. Participants' vulnerability was influenced by multiple factors including limited knowledge of (un)healthy relationships and communication difficulties, while gendered social norms minimised these violations, creating barriers to recognition and support.

Conclusion:

While men's experiences typically differ from women's, particularly in the absence of fear-based dynamics and systematic control patterns, some men do experience CI

within abusive relationships. These findings highlight the need for frameworks that recognise reproductive autonomy violations in men, while acknowledging the differences in underlying power dynamics and impacts across gender.

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None.

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