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THE ROLE OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN COUPLES ABOUT CONTRACEPTIVE USE

Hamid Hussain[1], Iqbal Wahid[2], Ali Ahmad Khan[3], Zia ur Rehman[1], Bushra Iftikhar[1], Tauseef Ismail[3]

[1]Department of Community Medicine, Khyber Medical College Peshawar - Pakistan

[2]Department of Community Medicine, Pak International Medical College, Peshawar - Pakistan

[3]Department of Community Medicine, Khyber Girls Medical College, Peshawar - Pakistan

ABSTRACT

Objectives: To determine the attitide and effective communication of men towards family planning services.

Material and Methods: It was a cross sectional study involving 400 men leaving in urban slum district Peshawar. The sampling technique was multistage cluster sampling. Married men were interviewed through structured questionnaire.

Results: Mean ages of respondents were 38.3 $\pm$ 9.0 years and respondents wives were 32.7 $\pm$ 8.4 years. Fifty-two married men were illiterate and 77.5% of the wives were illiterate. Most married men (62.2%) had negative attitudes towards family planning. Nearly 73.2% of married men did not allow their wives to practice family planning.

Conclusion: Married men, who were illiterate and young did not allow their wives to practice family planning nor even discussed family planning with their wives. Most of married men had good knowledge about contraception but they had negative attitudes towards family planning.

Key words: Communications, Couples, family planning.

INTRODUCTION

Family planning programs have traditionally focused on women as the primary beneficiaries and men have been considered as the silent partners of the services. In Pakistan it is generally believed that men are not in favor of family planning and that men want more children particularly more sons. Reproduction is a dual commitment, but so often in much of the world it is seen as totally women's responsibility[1]. Demands for more children and for son preferences were the leading reason for not using any methods followed by being afraid of side effects and health problems. There are many factors like religion, type of family, household income, number of living children and mother's level of education which affect pattern of contraceptive use. Important factor that restricts use of contraceptive is the fear of side effects. The women with sons only desired fewer children and were more likely to use contraception[2]. Men are constantly described as the forgotten reproductive health clients; particularly in family planning services[3]. The role of males in family planning has been receiving greater attention recently as population planners have begun to recognize the importance of men's influence over reproductive decisions around the world. Men have a direct and major role in contraceptive decision-making, but also an indirect role as a dominant factor in women's life concerning their own economic, social, and family needs[4]. The role of men has always been considered to dominate in the decision making processes belonging to women's fertility and birth spacing[5]. United State Agency for International Development has addressed the issue of male involvement in family planning from many angles like condoms promotion through social marketing or community-based distributors, vasectomy education and promotion, and Information Evaluation and Communication (IEC) campaigns to raise awareness and knowledge and effect behavior change[4]. Getting men involved in the family planning program will lead to increasing the use of contraceptives methods as a result will improve the continuous use of male method[6]. The root of the problem is that it has traditionaly been accepted that man's main role in the family is that of the economic provider and women's main role is in reproductive work-child bearing, housework and contraception. In Pakistan's male dominated society this division of work is based on the belief that the sexual or biological difference between men and women means that they have to play different role with women being subordinate to men. Men are not using male contraceptives more frequently because they do not believe that they have a responsibility to do so[7].

Address for Correspondence:
Dr. Hamid Hussain
Department of Community Medicine,
Khyber Medical College, Peshawar - Pakistan
Cell: 0333-9112885
E-Mail: hamidhussain22@hotmail.com

Though in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa culture, decision making authority rests with men, family planning programme planners have focused their attention largely on women's attitude and behaviours, rather than men. Lack of separate clinics for men, absence of male staff in clinics and little awareness among men about family planning all contribute barriers towards male contraceptives use. Certain contraceptive methods, such as pills and injections are used by women, but their use depends on approval from their husbands. Use of contraceptives is much higher among women who have their husband's support and permission[8]. Rationale of this study is that spousal communication about family planning should be developed as a component of family planning program and spousal communication does indeed predict contraceptives behaviors even when other factors are controlled.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

A cross sectional study was conducted in urban slums of district Peshawar and interviewed married men. All married men 25-60 years old and permanent members of the area were eligible to be enrolled. Severely ill patients were excluded from the study. Data was collected by semi-structured Questionnaire pre-tested in another area. Data was collected by Multi Stage Cluster technique. Each selected person who fulfilled the inclusion criteria and who consented in writing was interviewed in utmost privacy. Before collecting data, purpose of the study was explained and informed written consents were obtained. Data was analyzed using statistical package for social sciences version 16.0. Continuous variables like age, spouse age, spouse age at marriage, duration of experience were described as Mean ± Standard Deviation and categorical variables like Number of children, Number of male and female children, son preference and husband's approval for family planning services utilization were described as percentages.

RESULTS

This study included 400 married men from the urban slums of Peshawar. The age ranged from 25-60 years with median age of 38.3 ± years (Table 1). The association of age of respondents with contraceptive use is shown in Table 2. In study population 92.8% were illiterate and 7.2% were literate. Out of illiterate the decision regarding spousal communication was only 8.3%, where as in literate group it was 46.9%. Only 37.8% of patients accepted the use of condoms.

DISCUSSION

About 97.0% of respondents had knowledge about contraceptives methods. Our study results are in accordance to DHS survey which was done in sub-Sahara Africa, knowledge of family planning in 11 out of 15 countries, more than three in four married men recognized at least one modern method. Pill was the most-recognized method, followed by the condom[9]. Contraceptive prevalence rate in Pakistan is male methods 45% withdrawal methods are 19%, Pills are 7% Inject able are 9%. IUD is 13% female sterilization is 24% male sterilization is 0%[9]. Our study results are in accordance to study done in Yemen in 2007 which showed that more than 90% of husbands knew about pills, intra-uterine devices and condoms.[11] Our study showed 62.2% of respondents attitudes were negative about contraceptives methods, they did not accept contraceptive methods and also did not allow their wives to do practice because most of the study respondents and their wives were young and they were interested in large family size. 37.8% of respondents had positive attitude towards contraceptive methods. Study done in Yemen attitude towards modern contraceptives study finding showed that 89.3% of the husbands have positive attitudes towards family planning and agreed that modern methods are more effective than traditional methods. The majority of husbands (51.3%) agree that husbands should also practice family planning[11].

Table 1: Respondents Population Characteristics

Mean age of married men	38.3 ± 9 Range 25-60 years
Mean age of their wives	32.7±8.4 Range 18-59 years
Illiteracy among married men	52.0%
Illiteracy among their wives	77.5%
Monthly income	Rs. 6000-15000
Occupation of married men	52% were laborers

Table 2: Association of age with contraceptive use

Age of respondents	Yes	No
25-30 Years	11 (11.4%)	86 (88.6%)
31-35 Years	24 (27.3%)	64 (72.7%)
36-40 Years	51 (52.6%)	46 (47.4%)
41-45 Years	25 (61%)	16 (39%)
46-50 Years	10 (25.7%)	29 (74.3%)
51-60 Years	3 (7.9%)	35 (92.1%)
Total	124(31%)	276 (69%)

According to our study results 73.8% did not allow their wives to practice family planning and 26.8% allow their wives for family planning practice. In Pakistan men are dominating in decision making power especially in family planning[11].

Our study showed that there was strong relationship between respondents contraceptive use with increasing age, literacy, spousal communication, decision making to permit wives for use of contraception, total years of marriage, total number of children and total number of male alive children. Those married, educated men between 30 to 40 years of age were using contraceptive methods and allow their wives to practice family planning and also discuss family planning with their wives and those married men who had more than 5 children were also using contraception. Our results are in accordance with a study done in Pakistan in 2003, which showed that significant factors that determine men's contraceptive use behaviour are the approval of family planning, the communication with wife on family planning matters, and the desire for children. It may be noted that husbands with secondary and higher education and with educated wives show the highest percentage of approval for family planning use. Those men approve family planning who desire no more children, and communicate about family size with their wives[12].

There was also strong relationship between wives contraceptives use with wives age, education and spousal communication. Those wives who had education and were between 35 to 40 years were using common types of family planning, this is in accordance with the study by Kiani which showed that women's autonomy in the household decisions is uneven, i.e., somewhere between considerable and highly restricted. If women's autonomy in terms of their mobility and decision-making is enhanced through their education and by encouraging communication with the spouse, its effects on use of contraception and limitation of family size can be far greater than it is now.[12]

CONCLUSION

Married men, who were illiterate and of young age did not allow their wives to practice family planning nor discussed family planning with their wives. Most married men had good knowledge about contraception but they had negative attitudes towards family planning.

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