

A STUDY ON AWARENESS AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS FAMILY WELFARE PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

The lack of education and family planning services led to increased rates of unwanted pregnancy at tremendous social, economic and emotional costs. Prevention involves making wise sexual choices and access to contraceptive services and counseling to discourage premature sexual activity until education is completed. The study is aimed to assess awareness and attitude towards family welfare program among students. A sample of 100 respondents was randomly selected from arts faculty in Annamalai University. Schedule through personal interview was used for data collection and analysis was done through frequency and percent. The result revealed all the respondents had knowledge about tubectomy method and above 90 percent of the respondents had known oral pills, IUD, condom, and vasectomy. It has been observed that majority of respondents got awareness through books/literature (95%) and mass media (92%). Majority of the respondents (74%) had showed favorable attitude towards compulsory sterilization and majority of (94%) the respondents had suggested to undergo abortion when the conception occurs due to rape (94%). It has been suggested to include population education in the school curriculum in order to increase their awareness on problems of higher growth of population and to reduce the fertility level by wider adoption family welfare methods in future.

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Introduction

The high fertility rate leading to the rapid growth of country's population is a major hindrance towards the development of a nation. To solve this issue, family planning is best solution to achieve it. Actually, Family planning allows individuals and couples to determine and ascertain the desired number of children as well as the spacing of their pregnancies. Contraceptive methods and the treatment of involuntary infertility are used to achieve the purpose. Spacing and limiting pregnancies has a direct impact on women's health and well-being as well as on the outcome of each pregnancy. Short birth spacing has significant health effects on both mothers and children. Low birth weight, premature birth and small for gestational age are among its consequences to babies. To women, they are more likely to suffer from third trimester bleeding, premature rupture of membrane and anemia (**Conde-Agudelo A, Belizán JM, 2000**).

Attitudes towards fertility regulation, knowledge of birth-control methods, access to the means of fertility regulation and communication between husband and wife about desired family size are essential for effective family planning (**Dabral and Malik 2004**). Various factors governs the acceptance of contraception e.g., religion (**NFHS 1998-99, 2002**), number of sons in family (**Bhasin and Nag 2002**), and education of husband and wife (**Basin and Nag 2002**), etc. Besides, spousal communication also increases the likelihood of contraceptive use (**Kamal 1999; Ghosh 2001**). Sterilization is usually accepted when the couple is sure that they have completed their family size and gender preference (**Bhasin and Nag 2002**).

In a study of sexual behaviour and attitude of unmarried urban youths in Geneva, **Gorgen, Yansare, Marx and Millimounour (1998)** reported that young people are exposed to health hazards through sexual behaviour and attitude. The study recommends that timely gender specific sexuality education must be made available. This recommendation results from the finding that majority of young men and women are sexually very active and have limited knowledge with respect to the use of contraceptives.

Current research refutes some of the more traditional views regarding abortion, and proposes other possible theories for what drives individual attitudes toward abortion. Such factors as beliefs about sexual morality and religious beliefs certainly shape abortion attitudes. Religiosity has traditionally been one of the most predictive factors in explaining attitudes toward abortion (**Modi, 2002; Sahar & Karasawa, 2003; Cook, Jeler & Wilcox, 1992;**

Wilcox, 1990; Zucker, 1999) as have moral traditionalism and political conservatism (Granberg & Granberg, 1980; Zucker, 1999). The more religious, morally traditional or politically conservative individuals are, the less they approve of abortion (Sahar & Karasawa, 2003).

The contraceptive prevalence rate in Meghalaya is just 4.7 (2.8 for sterilization and 1.9 for other temporary methods), which is lowest in the whole India. This drew the attention towards the need to carry out a study in Meghalaya. So, the present study was conducted with an objective to study the extent of awareness of women with regard to family planning, i.e., birth control measures and awareness level regarding the Government schemes on family planning among the Khasi women of Easi Khasi Hills, Meghalaya (Santhya, 2003).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the socio-economic and demographic profile of the respondents.
2. To assess awareness and attitude towards family welfare program among students.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

For this study by adopting simple random sampling technique 100 respondents were selected. The respondents were the students of arts faculty in Annamalai University. The data required for the study was collected using a detailed survey schedule through personal interview with the respondents. After the field survey, all the schedules were thoroughly scrutinized to check the inconsistencies in responses and were edited. Then all the data collected were coded and entered into the computer and processed to get the required tables, and analysis was done through tools such as frequency, percent and mean.

Table 1. Distribution of the respondents by socio-economic and demographic characteristics

Social characteristics of respondents	
Place of residence	No of respondents/percent
Rural	63
Urban	37
Total	100
Marital status	No of respondents/percent
Single	100
Total	100

Religion	No of respondents/percent
Christian	81
Muslim	19
Total	100
Family type	No of respondents/percent
Nuclear	77
Joint	23
Total	100
Family size	No of respondents/percent
3-4	35
5-6	48
7-8	17
Total	100
Father's education	No of respondents/percent
Primary	30
Secondary	46
Degree	24
Total	100
Economic characteristic of respondents	
Father's occupation	No of respondents/percent
Farmer	38
Labourer	20
Business	42
Total	100
Annual family income	No of respondents/percent
30,000-60,000	19
60,000-90,000	48
90,000-1,20,000	10
1,20,000-1,50,000	23
Total	100

Receiving any financial aid	No of respondents/percent
Loan scholarship	8
Parents	62
Relatives	30
Total	100
Demographic characteristic of the respondents	
Current age	No of respondents/percent
20-24	38
25-29	40
30-34	13
35-39	9
Total	100
Birth order	No of respondents/percent
1	12
2	28
3	22
4	13
5	15
6	10
Total	100

Average household size = 5.1

Mean annual income =Rs 86,100

Mean age= 26.7years

Average birth order=3. 2

Regarding social characteristics, it has been observed from the above table that majority of (63%) the respondents were living rural area while 37 percent were living in urban area. Regarding marital status, all the respondents (100%) were unmarried. Regarding religion, majority of the respondents (81%) were Christians while 19 percent were Muslims. Regarding family type, majority of respondents (77%) were living in nuclear family while 19 percent were living in joint family. It has been noticed that 48 and 35 percent of the respondents were

belonged to the family size of 5 to 6 and 3 to 4 respectively, while 17 percent of them were belonged to the family size of 7 to 8. The mean family size is found to be 5. Regarding fathers' education, it has been observed that 46 and 30 percent of the respondents had studied up to secondary & primary level respectively, while 24 percent were degree holders.

Regarding economic characteristics, it has been found that 42 percent and 38 percent of respondents' fathers were business men and farmers respectively, while 20 percent were laborers. Regarding family annual income it has been observed that 48 percent of the respondents belonged to the income group of Rs 60,000-90,000 while 23 percent and 19 percent were belonged to the income group of Rs.1,20,000 -1,50,000 and Rs 30,000-60,000 respectively. The remaining 10 percent of them belonged to Rs 90,000-1, 20,000 income group. The mean annual income is found to be Rs. 86,100. Regarding the support of any financial aid, it has been observed that 62 percent and 30 percent of respondents had got support from their parents and relatives respectively, while only 8 percent of them had got scholarship.

Regarding demographic characteristics, it has been observed that 38 percent and 40 percent of the respondents were in the age group of 20-24 years and 25-29 years respectively, while 13 percent and 9 percent were in the age group of 30-34 years and 35-39 years respectively. The mean age of respondent is found to be 27 years. Regarding birth order, 28 and 22 percent of respondents were in the order of 2 and 3 respectively, while 10 and 15 percent of them were in the order of 4 and 6. The remaining 12 percent were in the first order of birth. The mean birth order is found to be 3.

Table 2. Distribution of respondents by awareness about family welfare methods

Awareness on methods of family planning	Yes	No	Number of respondents/percent
Tubectomy (sterilization)	100	-	100
Vasectomy (sterilization)	92	8	100
Condom	95	5	100
Oral pills	90	10	100
IUD	92	8	100
Withdrawal	42	58	100

Diaphragm	38	62	100
Jelly	35	65	100
Source of awareness	Yes	No	Total/percent
Books/literature	95	5	100
Friends /relatives	52	48	100
Mass media	92	8	100
Opinion on minimum interval between children	Yes	No	Total/percent
2 years	15	-	15
3 years	74	-	74
4 years	11	-	11
Total	100	-	100
Attitude towards compulsory sterilization	Approve	Disapprove	Total/percent
	72	28	100
Attitude towards abortion	74	26	100
Opinion on safe period to undergo abortion	Yes	No	Total/percent
1-2 month	84	-	100
3 month	16	-	100
Total	100	-	100
Suggestion to undergo abortion	Yes	No	Total/percent
If the mother is mentally retarded	85	15	100
Conception due to rape	94	6	100
Conception before marriage	82	28	100
To space between children	21	79	100

Regarding the awareness of the family welfare methods, it has been evident from the above table that all the respondents had possessed knowledge about family welfare methods. All the respondents had known Tubectomy method of sterilization, while 92 percent of them had known about vasectomy. Regarding contraceptives, majority (90 to 95%) of them had known

condom, oral pills & IUD methods, whereas 35 to 45 percent of them had known the methods such as jelly, withdrawal & diaphragm.

Regarding the source of knowledge on family welfare methods it has been found that majority (90 to 95%) of the respondents had got knowledge through books and mass media while only 32 percent of them had got it through friends and relatives. It has been found that majority of the respondents (72%) had shown favourable attitude towards compulsory sterilization. Regarding the opinion about the minimum interval between two children, it has been observed that 74 percent of the respondents had suggested 3 years as the minimum interval between two children while 15 and 11 percent of them had suggested 2 years and 4 years respectively as the minimum interval between two children.

Regarding abortion, majority of the respondents (74%) had showed favorable attitude towards undergoing abortion due to various reasons whereas 26 percent of them did not favour it. Regarding suggestion to undergo abortion, majority of them had suggested to undergo abortion if conception occurs due to rape (94%) whereas 80 to 85 percent of them had suggested to undergo abortion if conception occurs before marriage and also when mother is mentally retarded. Regarding the opinion on safe month to undergo abortion, majority of respondents (84%) had mentioned first to second month as safety period while 16 percent of them had mentioned 3rd month as safety period for abortion.

CONCLUSION

It has been concluded from the above analysis that all the respondents had awareness of the methods by which pregnancy may be delayed or avoided. All the respondents had knowledge about tubectomy method and majority of (90 to 95%) the respondents had known vasectomy method and contraceptives such as condom, oral pills and IUD methods of family planning. Regarding source of awareness on various methods, it has been found that majority of respondents got awareness through books/literature (95%) and mass media (92%). Majority of the respondents (72%) had shown favourable attitude towards compulsory sterilization. Regarding the attitude towards abortion, majority of the respondents (74%) had showed favourable attitude towards abortion. Majority of them had suggested to undergo abortion when conception occurs due to rape and before marriage and also when mother is mentally retarded.

Majority of the respondents (84%) had stated that it is safe to undergo abortion during the first or second month of conception.

It becomes evident that among the students, attitude towards family welfare methods was highly favourable. Regarding awareness of these methods majority of them had known condom, oral pills, IUD and sterilization, but about other methods they had poor knowledge.

Hence, it has been suggested to include population education in the school curriculum in order to increase their awareness on various family welfare methods. It has been expected that increasing such awareness among young population will lead to considerable decline in fertility in future.

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