

KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICES REGARDING FAMILY PLANNING IN A GROUP OF MEN IN ERBIL CITY

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ABSTRACT

Background

Men plays an integral role in the process of family planning (FP), but in spite of that the studies are scarce in Kurdistan region.

Objectives

To find out: the proportion of knowledge regarding FP in a group of men; the rate of utilization of FP methods; and the association of rate of utilization of FP methods with age, level of education, and occupation.

Methods

A cross-sectional study was conducted at Rizgary teaching hospital in Erbil city for the period from January 2, 2012 and ends in December 31, 2012. Convenience method of sampling was used to collect 500 married men attending Rizgary teaching hospital consultation clinics. An interview was done, using a questionnaire designed by the researchers.

Results

Majority of men (60.8%) has heard of the term 'family planning' and almost all (95.5%) had unacceptable answers regarding definition of FP. Nearly all husbands (96.8%) were aware of the common types of FP methods. The prevalence of utilization of F.P. methods was 71.2 %, more than one third of users (37.1%) used withdrawal, 32% used condom, 16.9% used Intrauterine Contraceptive Device (IUCD) and 11.2% used oral pills. There was significant association between the high rate of utilization of FP methods with age (≥ 40 years), and high rank occupations of men.

Conclusion

The majority of the sample had an acceptable knowledge about FP methods except for the definition of FP term. The study revealed high rates of utilization of FP methods. Older ages, and high rank occupations were associated with high rate of utilization of FP methods.

Keywords: *Family planning, Knowledge, Practice, Prevalence.*

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INTRODUCTION

Family planning (FP) allows couples to anticipate and attain their desired number of children and the spacing and timing of their births, it is achieved through use of modern or traditional contraceptive methods ⁽¹⁾.

Most of the studies in the field of FP that were done in Iraq involved women, a study conducted in Erbil showed that the prevalence of utilization of family planning methods was 89.4% in the urban group and 86.9% in the rural group ⁽²⁾. Another study carried out in Erbil governorate revealed that condom use was low (12%) ⁽³⁾. According to a study done in Dohuk district, the prevalence of contraceptive use was 60.6% among 668 non-pregnant women ⁽⁴⁾. A study done in Baghdad showed that husbands had limited role in FP ⁽⁵⁾. Another study conducted in Baghdad revealed that the utilization of FP methods was 69% among women ⁽⁶⁾.

A study done in Egypt showed that men have rarely been involved in either receiving or providing information on sexuality, reproductive health or birth spacing ⁽⁷⁾. A study done in Yemen showed that the prevalence of family planning practice among the husbands was 39.0% and among their wives 44.3% ⁽⁸⁾. A study in Jordan showed that nearly all men (98%) had heard about births spacing, but only 40% could correctly define the term, while two-thirds of respondents knew of male contraceptives ⁽⁹⁾. Study done in Kurdistan, Iraq showed that there are no systematic, efficient family planning programs in Iraqi Kurdistan ⁽¹⁰⁾.

These studies did not cover all aspect of role of men in FP thoroughly and there is a gap in information toward involvement of men in FP programs, so it is important to assess the knowledge and practices of men regarding FP and up to the researchers' knowledge this is the first study in Erbil that considers men knowledge and practices about family planning methods.

Objectives

To find out: the proportion of knowledge regarding family planning in a group of males; the rate of utilization of family planning methods in the study sample; and the association of rate of utilization of family planning methods with sociodemographic characteristics like age, level of education, and occupation.

SUBJECTS AND METHODS

A cross-sectional study was conducted at Rizgary teaching hospital in Erbil city for the period from January 2, 2012 and ends in December 31, 2012.

Convenience method of sampling was used to collect 500 married men attending Rizgary teaching hospital consultation clinics.

This study included all married men (to alive wives) of age 15-49 years old. Mentally disabled men, men married to more than one wife and men whose wives were pregnant at the time of the interview were excluded from the study.

Official permission was taken from the Erbil directorate of health; verbal consent was taken from each participant after explaining (by the researcher) the purpose of the study and the importance of subject.

A questionnaire designed by the researchers was used to collect information about socio-demographic variables, and details about FP.

The occupation was categorized as follows ⁽¹¹⁾:

Group1 (G1): High professional (high rank) jobs as doctors, dentists, pharmacists, engineers, lawyers, large business directors and / or owners, company directors, managers, ...etc.

Group 2 (G2): Non-manual skilled or semi skilled occupations as school teachers, clerical workers health care workers (other than doctors, dentists and pharmacists), small business owners, military and policemen.

Group 3 (G3): Manual partly skilled or unskilled occupations as labor workers, casual workers, unemployed, housewife and retired.

The questionnaire was originally designed in English language, for the purpose of interview of the study, the questionnaire translated into Kurdish language.

Statistical analysis and data management

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS of version 18) used for data entry and analysis. Chi square test of association used to test the significance of association between utilization of FP methods and different variables. A 'p' value of ≤ 0.05 was considered as statistically significant.

RESULTS

The mean age (\pm SD) of sample was 33.89 ± 6.27 years ranging from 20 to 48 years. Table 1 shows that around half (47.8%) of the sample aged 30-39 years, and 25 % aged 40 years and more. The majority (81.8%) lives in urban areas.

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Table 2 shows that the majority of husbands and wives were of group 3 occupations (60.2% and 84.2% respectively) who were either manual workers or unemployed/housewives. Only 2% of husbands and 0.2% of wives were working in high rank occupations. The same table shows that 40% of husbands were of primary education or less, compared with 65.4% of wives.

Results showed that around two-thirds of the sample (60.8%) have heard about FP term but only 4.5% had acceptable answers about FP, while the majority (95.5%) had unacceptable answers; they thought that FP term means good relationship between family members and care of their children.

Table 3 shows that the majority of sample (96.8%) had knowledge about oral pills (96.8%), condom (89%), IUD (75.6%), and withdrawal method (72%), while only 14.2% have heard about injection as a method of FP.

Results showed that the prevalence of utilization of FP methods was 71.2 % (356 out of 500). Table 4 shows that 37.1% of users were using withdrawal type as the current FP method, while 32% used condom, 16.9% used IUCD and 11.2% used oral pills.

Table 1. Distribution of sample by age and residency.

Variables	Categories	No.	%
Age (years)	<30	136	27.2
	30-39	239	47.8
	≥ 40	125	25
Residency	Urban	409	81.8
	Rural	91	18.2
Total		500	100

Table 2. Distribution of sample by husband and wife occupation and educational level.

Variables	Categories	Husband		Wife	
		No.	%	No.	%
Occupation	G1 (High rank)	10	2	1	0.2
	G2 (Non-manual)	189	37.8	78	15.6
	G3 (Manual)	301	60.2	421	84.2
Education	Illiterate	27	5.4	127	25.4
	Read and write	81	16.2	74	14.8
	Primary	92	18.4	126	25.2
	Intermediate	130	26	63	12.6
	Secondary	63	12.6	40	8
	Higher	107	21.4	70	14
	Total		500	100	500

Table 3. Distribution of sample by knowledge about family planning methods.

	Knowledge about FP methods	
	No.	% N = 500
Oral pills	484	96.8
Condom	445	89
IUCD	378	75.6
Withdrawal	360	72
Injection	71	14.2
Vaginal suppository	9	1.8
Sterilization	7	1.4
Safe period	6	1.2
Lactation amenorrhea	0	0

Table 4. Current users by type of family planning methods.

Types of F.P. methods used	No.	%
Withdrawal	132	37.1
Condom	114	32
IUCD	60	16.9
Oral pills	40	11.2
Injection	3	0.8
Sterilization	2	0.6
Vaginal suppository	2	0.6
Lactation amenorrhea	2	0.6
Safe period & withdrawal	1	0.3
Total	356	100

The choice of FP methods was by agreement between husband and wife in 52% of users, and it was according to husband decision in 27.2% of the users. The decision according to wife wish only was in 6.7% of cases (Table 5).

Table 6 shows significantly higher prevalence of utilization of FP (81.6%) among those aged 40 or more years, compared with 61% among those aged less than 30 years ($p = 0.001$). The table shows no significant association between educational level ($p = 0.078$) with the utilization, but it is clear that the prevalence of utilization was highest (79.4%) among those with

higher educational levels. Significant association was detected between high rank occupations ($p = 0.01$), with the higher rates of utilization.

Table 7, shows higher prevalence (75.7%) among those with higher educational level compared with the others but the differences were not significant ($p = 0.954$). Regarding occupation, only one woman was working in a high rank occupation, and she was non-user, but it is evident that the rate among non-manual workers (79.5%) was significantly higher than the rate (69.8%) among housewives and manual workers ($p = 0.064$).

Table 5. Distribution of users by the person who choose the FP methods.

The choice FP methods	No.	%
Wife and husband	185	52
Husband	97	27.2
Doctors	48	13.5
Wife	24	6.7
Non medical personnel	2	0.6
Total	356	100

Table 6. Prevalence of utilization of FP methods by age, education, and occupation of men.

Variables	Categories	N	Prevalence of utilization of FP methods		p
			No.	%	
Age	< 30	136	83	61.0	0.001
	30-39	239	171	71.5	
	≥ 40	125	102	81.6	
Education	Illiterate	27	16	59.3	0.078
	Read and write	81	59	72.8	
	Primary	92	59	64.1	
	Intermediate	130	88	67.7	
	Secondary	63	49	77.8	
	Higher	107	85	79.4	
Occupation	High rank	10	8	80.0	0.01
	Non-manual	189	148	78.3	
	Manual and unemployed	301	200	66.4	
Total		500	356	71.2	

Table 7. Prevalence of utilization of FP methods by education, and occupation of wives.

Variables	Categories	N	Prevalence of utilization of FP methods		p
			No.	%	
Education	Illiterate	127	89	70.1	0.954
	Read and write	74	53	71.6	
	Primary	126	89	70.6	
	Intermediate	63	43	68.3	
	Secondary	40	29	72.5	
	Higher	70	53	75.7	
Occupation	High rank	1	0	0	0.064
	Non-manual	78	62	79.5	
	Manual and housewives	421	294	69.8	
Total		500	356	71.2	

DISCUSSION

Family planning is considered as one of the cornerstones of reproductive health; men constitute important part of FP as they share the responsibility of FP with their wives. Up to the researchers' knowledge this is the first study in Erbil that considers knowledge and practices regarding family planning methods in a group of men.

Results showed significant association between older ages and the higher rate of FP utilization. This coincides with an Egyptian study done in 2005, where 57.9% of women in the age 40-49 years use FP methods, compared with 25.5% among those aged less than 20 years (7).

More than half (60.8%) of the sample have heard about the term 'family planning' and only 4.5% gave a correct definition which could reflect the poor role of health education programs in addressing the term 'family planning' instead of the term 'contraception'. A study done in Erbil revealed that the majority of women were not aware of the proper definition of FP, only 7.7% in urban group and 14% in rural group had given accepted answers (2). A study conducted in Jordan regarding FP revealed that nearly all men (98%) had heard of birth spacing, but only 40% could correctly define the term.⁹ A study conducted in Iran in 2006, involving 247 Iranian and 231 Afghans men, showed that only 3.6% gave a correct definition of family planning, while 42.5% had no knowledge about the term (12).

Majority of sample in this study had knowledge about oral pills (96.8%), 89% about condom, 75.6% about IUD, and 72% about withdrawal method. A study done in India showed that 86% of the subjects were aware of condoms, 50% of oral contraceptive pills, 32% of abstinence and 6% of intra-uterine contraceptive devices. The reasons for preferring condoms were as follows: easy availability, comfortable use, and no ill effect on health (13). A study in Yemen showed that more than 90% of husbands knew about pills, intra-uterine devices and condoms (8). A study done in Uganda showed that the majority of respondents (71.7%) had knowledge about family planning (14).

The prevalence of utilization of FP methods in this study was 71.2%, the methods used (among users) were as follows: withdrawal (37.1%), condom (32%), IUCD (16.9%) and oral pills (11.2%), in addition to other rare methods. A study done in Erbil city in 2008 regarding prevalence of FP use showed that out of 400 women who attended family planning unit, they used IUCD,

condom, contraceptive oral pills, and lastly injection in a rate of: 36.5%, 29.2%, 27.2% and 2.5% respectively (15). A study conducted in Erbil Governorate revealed that the rate of condom use was 12%, and the sample was combined from single and married subjects, 91.7% of condom use was for FP purposes and 2.8% used for prevention of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) (3). A study carried out in Erbil governorate showed that the prevalence of utilization of FP methods was 89.4% in the urban group and 86.9% in the rural group, the currently used FP. methods were as follows: 39.4% used withdrawal type, 42.3% used IUCD, 10% used condom and 9.2% used oral pills (2). A study in Dohuk governorate in 2003, on 668 non-pregnant women showed that the prevalence of contraceptive use (any method) was 60.6% among all respondents (4).

A study conducted in Nineveh on 1302 mothers living in Mosul district showed that almost half of the participants (51.9%) were using a certain method of contraception, since 42.9% of contraceptive use was attributed to independent wives decision (16). A study done in Baghdad in 2003 showed that 70.4% used oral pills, 19.8% used IUD, 6.5% used injection and 3.1% used male condom, also result revealed the husband had limited role in family planning (5). Another study conducted in Baghdad revealed that the utilization of FP methods was 69% among women (6). A study carried out in United Arab Emirates showed that 41.5% used condoms, 31.9% practiced coitus interruptus, 25.5% practiced the rhythm method and 1.1% had been sterilized (17). A study conducted in New Delhi showed that the condom use was the most popular method (53.8%) among men followed by natural method (22%) (18). In I-WISH survey in 2012 (Iraq Woman Integrated Social and Health Survey); 50.6 % of ever married women 15-49 years have already used family planning methods. Almost 51 % of these women used pill, 25.5% has used IUCD and 21% used isolation methods, while in Kurdistan region the prevalence use of FP methods was 53.2% (any methods) and half of them had used the new method of family planning (19). A Yemeni study showed that the prevalence of FP practices among the husbands were 39% and 44.3% among their wives. Among users, the condom was the most common method used by the husbands (88.6%), while the pill was the most common method used by wives (54.2%) followed by intra-uterine devices (43.4%) (8). A study in Uganda revealed that men were found to participate in practicing FP using the following methods with their spouses: condom (64.1%), withdrawal (3.9%), abstinence (7.7%) and safe period (6.4%). In addition,

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they assisted, and supported spouses to use methods like pills (26.9%) and diaphragm (6.4%)⁽¹⁴⁾. A study conducted in India showed that the condoms (54%) were considered as temporary method practiced by the subjects followed by abstinence (28%). All couples who completed their family practiced tubectomy as the permanent method of sterilization⁽¹³⁾.

The results of this study showed high proportion (32%) of condom use among users of FP methods. This rate is consistent with the rates obtained from Erbil DOH (personal communication done at Jan 9, 2013 in Erbil city with Dr. Berevan Adnan, Head of PHC department in Erbil DOH). This result is consistent with results of a study done in Erbil city regarding prevalence of FP use which showed that 29.25% of users were using condom as a FP method⁽¹⁵⁾. While a study done in Erbil Governorate revealed that the rate of condom use was 12%. The reasons for non-use for condom includes: perceived no need (44.5% of respondents), using other FP methods by their wife, decrease sexual pleasure, and religious reason was also reported, while 29.4% would consider using them in future⁽³⁾. Another study carried out in Erbil governorate showed that the condom use in the two study groups (urban and rural) was 10.5% and 9.5% respectively⁽²⁾. A study done in Baghdad showed that the male condom use was 3.1%, this result could be due to limited role of husband in family planning⁽⁵⁾. Results of the Iraq Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey done in 2011 (MICS-4) revealed that the prevalence of contraceptive use among married women (or their husbands) is about 51%. Modern methods of contraception are practiced by 33% of the women, while 18 % are using traditional methods. The pill is the most common modern contraceptive used in Iraq (15%), followed by IUCD (10 %). Among the traditional methods, the most common contraceptive is withdrawal (14 %), and only 2% of women rely on the lactational amenorrhea method (LAM) as a contraceptive. The use of female sterilization, periodic abstinence or injections is used among 1% and 3% of women respectively. The use of male or female condoms is limited to about 2 % of women⁽²⁰⁾.

In this study the prevalence of use of FP methods was 79.4% among those with higher education compared with 59.3% among those who are illiterate and 80% was among high level of occupation compared with 66.4% among those with low level of occupation. Results of (MICS-4) survey revealed that women's educational level is associated with the use of contraceptives. The percentage of women using any method of contraception

rises from 45% among women with no education to 51% among women with primary education and to 57% among women with secondary or higher education.³¹ A study done in municipality of Nis revealed that the prevalence of use of FP methods was 59.6% and 40.4% for traditional and modern methods respectively among those who were highly educated compared with 73% and 27% for traditional and modern methods respectively for those with primary education⁽²¹⁾.

Conclusion

The majority of the studied sample were unfamiliar with the term 'family planning', albeit, 71.2% were users of FP methods. The majority had knowledge about the pills, condom, IUCD, and withdrawal methods. More than one third of the users were practicing the withdrawal method, and around one third were condom users. Significant association was detected between the high rate of utilization of FP methods with the husband age (≥ 40 years), and husbands working in high rank occupations.

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