



ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY ON CONTRACEPTIVE PRACTICES AMONG MOTHERS IN BELHARA VDC OF DHANKUTA DISTRICT, NEPAL

RB Rayamajhi^{1*}, A Ghimire¹, SR Niraula¹, SS Budhathoki¹, VK Khanal¹, PK Pokharel¹

¹ School of Public Health and Community Medicine, B. P. Koirala Institute of Health Sciences, Dharan, Nepal.

*Correspondence to : Dr Rajan Bikram Rayamajhi, School of Public Health and Community Medicine, B. P. Koirala Institute of Health Sciences, Dharan, Nepa
Email: rayamajhi.rajan@hotmail.com

ABSTRACT

Nepal, having a predominance of patriarchal society, contraceptive is used by of the females in most cases. Utilization of the family planning services is vital for reduce maternal and neonatal morbidity and mortality in an underdeveloped country like ours. The objective of the study was to assess the awareness and practices of various modes of family planning methods present among the mothers in Belhara VDC of Dhankuta district. A descriptive cross sectional study was carried out among 291 mothers with door to door visit using random sampling. 92% of the participants were aware about the use of family planning methods but only 87% of them were current family planning users and Depo (92.6%) was found to be the most popular mode of contraception among users. Despite vigorous social marketing about family planning methods, about 8% of the women weren't aware about it and Depo (92.6%) was found to be the most popular mode of contraception with husband's desire (84.7%) being the main reason behind the uptake of the service.

Key Words: *Contraceptive methods, Male child syndrome.*

INTRODUCTION

In the twenty first century, population over growth has surpassed the challenge of infectious disease from the world. With course of time, significant changes and progress has been achieved in the field of family planning methods. Women particularly in underdeveloped countries like Nepal are economically and emotionally depended on their male counterparts. Currently, 63% of the women in developing countries use some form of family planning methods.¹ Family planning programmes have always focused on women from service provider's perspectives. It is thought that they are the ones who become pregnant; therefore it is their responsibility regarding correct and consistency use of family planning methods.² Use of family planning method is important to ensure sound maternal and neonatal health as they can do very little to protect themselves from unwanted pregnancy and its consequences. It is to be noted that married women have unmet needs of family planning but aren't using it due to various reasons.³ It is reported that 76 million women have unintended pregnancies due to inconsistent use of family planning methods and 19 million of them choose unsafe abortions.^{4,5} Involvement of men regarding use of family planning is a must among the couples for consistent and effective result. Men are considered to be a neglected potential consumer of family planning method. Their involvement is found to be only 10.2% against a total of 40.6%.⁶ Nepal government has made family planning services an integral part of health service and developed the concepts of small family (two children per couple). Family planning has been considered a basic human right among the eligible

couple. This program is running smoothly with successful results and success. Female contribution is an integral part for successful outcome of this programme. This study in this area will help to assess the family planning awareness and practices present among the women with various background and level of knowledge and understanding. This will further give family planning service providers a gross idea about the present status.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A descriptive cross sectional study was carried out among 291 mothers in reproductive age group of Belhara VDC of Dhankuta district, eastern Nepal. The sample size was calculated based on a similar research conducted nearby Kathmandu.¹ With the help of the female community health volunteer of that VDC, data was collected by door to door visit with pretested questionnaire to find out the awareness and practices of family planning methods among the participants. This study was carried out with the third year medical students of BP Koirala Institute of Health Sciences during their residential posting in epidemiological skills in health management under school of public health and community medicine for two weeks. In order to ensure the validity of the study, students were oriented and trained about the data collection and analysis. Data collection was conducted under close scrutiny by the community medicine residents and faculty supervisors. Proper data collection skills and entry in the software was ensured prior to conduction of the research. Data was entered in excel software and analyzed

using SPSS 17.0 software. Study approval was taken from the school of public health and community medicine, B. P. Koirala Institute of Health Sciences and informed understood consent was taken from them prior to the study and acknowledged their participation.

RESULTS

A study was done among 291 respondents to assess the practice of contraceptives among married women of reproductive age group.

Common socio demographic variables like age distribution, ethnicity, religion, educational status, occupation and poverty line were enumerated

Table 1: Distribution of sociodemographic characteristics among the respondents (n=291)

Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage
Age (Yrs.)	< 20	145	49.8
	20-34	97	33.3
	35-49	49	16.8
Ethnicity	Hill Brahmin	53	18.2
	Hill Chettri	61	21.0
	Newar	26	8.9
	Hill Janajati	151	51.9
Religion	Hindu	91	31.3
	Buddhist	45	15.5
	Kirat	147	50.5
	Christian	8	2.7
Educational Status	Illiterate	167	57.4
	Literate	124	42.6
Occupation	House maker	197	67.7
	Service	10	3.4
	Business	8	2.7
	Farmers	76	26.1
Poverty Line	Below poverty line	247	84.8
	Above poverty line	44	15.2

Among the respondents, it was found that private clinic (53.8%) and female community health volunteers (41.6%) were found to be the major source of information regarding use of family planning methods respectively. It was also noted that, only 24.4% of them reported government health facilities to be the source of information.

Table 2: Sources of family planning methods among the respondents (n = 291)

Source of information about family planning methods	Percentage*
Private Clinic	53.8
Female Community Health Volunteer	41.6
Outreach Clinic	33.9
Government Health Facilities	24.4

*Multiple responses

Study revealed that, about 8% of the respondent weren't aware about the use of family planning methods despite wide social marketing of family planning methods in the country.

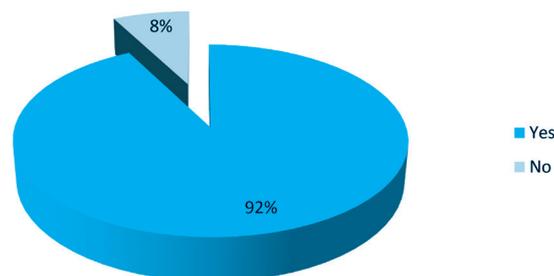


Fig.1: Proportion of respondents aware about family planning methods (n = 291)

Regarding the status of current use of family planning methods among the respondents, it was reported that only 87% were using family planning methods currently.

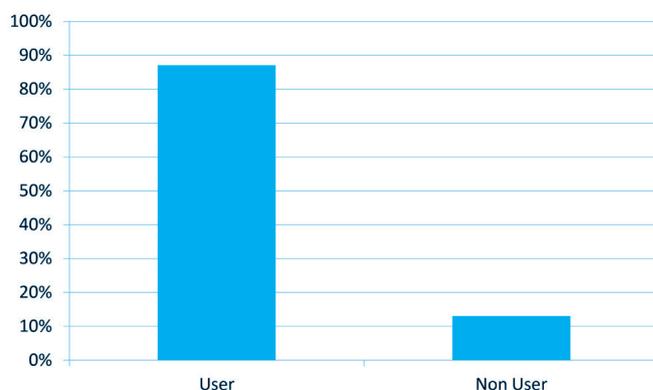


Fig. 2: Proportion of current contraceptive users and non-users among the respondents (n = 291)

Among the users, depo was found to be the most used one followed by oral pills (3.9%) and male condom (3.5%)

respectively among the participants.

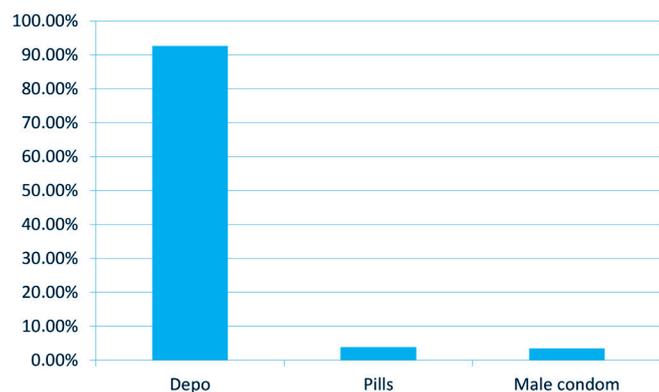


Fig. 3: Types of contraception used by the respondents or their spouse currently. (n = 253)

Husband's desire (84.7%) played the major role followed by peer pressure (7.4%) respectively were common reasons behind the use of family planning methods among the users.

Table 3: Various reasons behind the current use of family planning methods (n=253)

Reasons behind using contraceptive methods	Percentage
Husband's desire	84.7%
Peer Pressure	7.4%
Mother in law's pressure / advice	5.1%
FCHV advice	2.8%

DISCUSSIONS

Almost half of the respondents (49.8%) were below twenty years of age and the mean age was found to be 23 years which is low as per the young age group in Nepal demographic and health survey 2011 due to which majority of the respondents were found to be using temporary family planning methods.⁸ It showed that many of the respondents were married even before the legal age of marriage set by the government in Nepal and more than half of them (51.9%) were Hill Janajati by ethnicity and Kirat (50.5%) by religion which was also reported in the study done by Bhattarai D in Khotang.⁷ Similarly, 57.4% of the respondents were illiterate which is comparable with the literacy rate of Eastern hills of Nepal.⁹ 67.7% of them were house makers (house wives) and most of them (84.8%) were below poverty line.

Regarding the source of information about the use and importance of family planning methods among the respondents, private clinics (53.8%) and female community health volunteers (41.6%) were reported to be the major source. It was noted that female prefer to visit private clinics run by nurse/female community health volunteer of local government health center for family planning methods as privacy was ensured there. Government health centers had more male health workers and husbands were reluctant to send their wives to male health workers for family planning methods and even the women

felt discomfort to inquiry about contraception. This scenario is common in Nepali patriarchal society. Besides that, female community health volunteers, being a part of local mothers group had an influence over local women for health information and advice.

Among all the respondents, only 92% of them were found to be aware about the use of family planning methods despite vigorous social marketing done by the government. This clearly showed that the message about the importance of family planning methods hadn't still penetrated the rural areas where high unmet need of family planning is present. This finding was lower than the report from NDHS 2001, 2006 and 2012 in which it was reported that the knowledge of family planning methods was almost universal among the women.^{9, 10, 11}

Among them, only 87% were found to have used family planning methods currently. This showed that though the women were aware about the various modes of family planning methods, less than that practiced it in reality. Among the users, it was reported that Depo-Provera (Injectable) (92.6%) was the most popular mode of family planning method followed by oral pills (3.9%) and male condom (3.5%) respectively. This finding was consistent with the study done by Bhattarai D in Khotang, Nepal in which depo was the most used method followed by oral pills.⁷ This finding was also observed in studies conducted in other developing countries and demographic survey.^{9, 12} Depo was the most popular one as one shot of it worked for three months; privacy was ensured about the use, easily availability of it and can be used secretly without even asking husband or family members. Only few types of family planning methods were found to be used as there weren't any trained health man power for family planning methods that needed skill to administer and these varieties were easy to sell or administer. Use of implants and IUDs were not reported as they were not available there and was also reported by Bhattarai D.⁷

The type of family planning used also showed that females were the ones who used family planning methods to plan a family rather than the husband. Nepal, having a patriarchal society influenced by male child syndrome required females to use family planning methods as per the advice of their husbands and take the responsibility for the family; though the decision making right resided among the husbands.

Our study also showed that husband's desire (84.7%) was the main reason behind the use of family planning methods followed by peer pressure (8.4%). This predominance of husband's desire and influence over their wives uptake of family planning method was also found in other studies done by Family Health International and Poudel IS.^{13, 14} Vasectomy wasn't reported in our study which showed low male participation and was a normal social attribute in south asian region.¹³

CONCLUSION

Study showed that some of the mothers were not even aware about the use of family planning methods despite the vigorous social marketing done by government for family planning methods. Depo was found to be the most popular mode of contraception and husband's desire was the main reason behind

the uptake of the contraceptive method. Besides that husbands were reluctant to send their wives to male health workers in government health centers for family planning methods which pushed them to private clinics run by female health workers and even the women were concerned about the lack of privacy in health centers. This eventually pushed them to private pharmacy for purchase.

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