

IDENTIFICATION OF PERCEPTION, EXPERIENCES, AND PREFERENCES ABOUT FAMILY PLANNING METHOD: A COMPARATIVE METROPOLITAN STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Pakistan is developing country and it has second highest fertility rates in South Asia, due to population growth it faces many problems in terms of development and topic of family planning is controversial issue in Pakistan. The study explored differences in choices, preferences and experiences along with knowledge of married educated, highly educated and employed/un-employed women regarding family planning methods. This research was a mix method study and divided into two phases quantitative & qualitative methods. Data was collected through survey type self-constructed questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into 6 sections with open ended and closed ended questions. 320 married women were selected for data collection through purposive sampling from different employment sectors. In phase I, data was collected through questionnaire based on likert scale and T-Test were applied to analyze the results. The findings of the research stated that employed and un-employed women had different preferences and experiences. It was observed that employment has no effect on choices and knowledge regarding family planning methods. In phase II, data obtained through open ended questions and then analyzed through thematic analysis, six major themes were identified i.e. Reasons of adopting FPM, Obstacles to choose FPM, Disadvantages of FPM, Advantages of FPM, Stereotypical perception of FPM, and Experiences & preferences about FPM. It was also observed that un-educated women had different preferences and experiences than educated and highly educated. The current study will help the upcoming researchers working in the area of choices, preferences and knowledge about family planning.

Keywords: Knowledge, choices, preferences, experiences, educated, highly educated, employed, unemployed, family planning methods.

INTRODUCTION

“Birth control”, “child space/gap” and “contraceptive methods” are collective and world wide used terms for family planning methods. The term “contraceptives or contraception” are the materials and methods (designed technologically) used by the couples to reduce the risks of unintended child births. They interact with acts of sexuality and overcome the process of reproduction such as pills, condoms, injections, sterilization, tubes, and contraceptive rings that enables the married couples to reduce unwanted pregnancies.

The uses of these methods are sensitive topic among the public health concerns (World bank, 1993). The use of family planning is highly effective and efficient way to improve the maternal and child health and lowers the risks of diseases. It allows an individual or couple to decide the number of children, space or gap between them and control the fertility. As the lower fertility, limits population growth (World bank, 1993).

Family planning methods provide the ability of person to decide or determine the desired number of children, space and time of child births or reproduction by using contraceptives that delay and prevent the pregnancies and child births. Family planning methods are important for the well-being as it allows the women the freedom to decide that whenever to get pregnant and from the risks of unsafe abortions and pregnancies. It

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also acts a tool to enhance the reproductive health status of married couples and enables them to choose the right time of child bearing and spacing (Hakim & Mahmood, 2001).

In the history of birth control movements and family planning, there are many opinions and efforts by the activists that emerged to bring the agenda of family planning at national level. After the period of World wars, many conferences were held by the US at international levels. As a result, World league of sexual reforms WLSR was formed, with the goal to combine all the policy makers to discuss the matters related to reproduction and family planning. After that, International Federation of birth control league was formed at the time of Sixth International conference to conduct the meetings in order to create awareness about family planning and sex education among public masses (Claeys, 2010).

According to World family planning highlights (2017), all over the world there is continuous increase in the utilization of family planning methods and adoption of contraceptives since 1970 and the ratio is increased from 35 to 63% from 1970 to 2017. The use of contraceptive methods helps the couples to freedom to decide about the number and time of child birth. Family planning services are cost effective and has positive health outcomes. Across the world, women of reproductive age (15-49) years uses contraceptives. According to statistics in 2017, contraceptive usage was more than 70 percent in Europe, Latin and North America and Caribbean. However the rates are less than 25 percent in Western & Middle Africa.

Benefits and importance of adopting family planning methods varies from individual. Addition of family planning methods is beneficial and has positive outcomes as it increases birth gap/space between children and reduces the child mortality. Adoption of contraceptives in an effective can improve the well-being of mother and child when the death rates are high due to unsafe abortions (Prata, 2007). The use of family planning methods has been increased from the last two decades. Family planning brought about several health benefits for both mother and child. It causes socio-economic advancement to married women as by delaying pregnancies they can maintain their careers in job fields. Adoption of family planning methods can also reduce the maternal mortality and morbidity as the use of family methods can limits the risks of unsafe pregnancies and abortions (Mutombo, Bakibinga, Mukiira, & Kamande, 2014).

Low level of knowledge, less education and awareness, misinformation about family planning methods, afraid of contraceptives side effects, familial attitudes, spouse disapproval and religious implications are the main factors of unmet needs regarding family planning (Bongraats & Bruce, 1995). Limited accessibility to correct information and knowledge, lack of education, limited availability of family planning services in rural areas and fear of side effects of family planning methods are the main reasons of unmet needs (Casterline & Sinding, 2000). Globally, there are higher rates of unwanted and unintended pregnancies which are the basic reason of unmet needs regarding family planning. The percentage of women who desire to prevent and delay their pregnancies but not using family planning methods are higher in developing and under developing countries, in rural and urban areas. The unmet needs are most common among women who are living in rural or slum areas. This alarming situation not only affects the women and their reproductive health but also their families all over the world (Singh, 1999). Urban poor women have high rates of unmet needs regarding family planning and face poor health conditions such as overpopulated living situations, domestic violence on women due to less financial resources, urban poverty and less decision making power (Yadav, Agarwal & Shukla, 2020).

Family planning perspectives and programs in Pakistan

In world, Pakistan is ranked as 4th largest nation, and 7th most populated country. With the highest population growth rate, many economic expenditures spend on family planning programs and policies but with no gain. On average, basic health units by ministry of population welfare and ministry of health care centers are established to provide family planning services in rural and urban areas in Pakistan (Carneda, Rob, Ameen & Ahmad, 1993). The use of family planning methods is sensitive topic among public masses and especially in Islamic countries such as Pakistan where the family planning concerns are always under the debate and critique. Pakistan Demographic & Health Survey (2006-2007), stated that most of the women can't access the family planning services due to religious implications and values in both rural and urban areas of Pakistan (Shaikh, Azmat & Mazhar, 2013).

By 2012 to 2015, Government of Pakistan developed family planning projects to achieve its national development goals. The 1st project was executed by Marrie Stopes Society MSS, the 2nd was executed by Green star social marketing GS to enhance the effectiveness, access and use of family planning services for maternal child health MCH (Azmat, Ishaque, Mustafa & Hameed, 2015). In order to create and enhance the level of knowledge and education regarding family planning methods. The private sector of Pakistan provide 35% of family planning services and information to girls and women in rural and urban areas through female health visitors, midwives, attendants and nurses (Ali, Azmat, & Hamza, 2018).

In the light of the above discussed perspectives in Pakistan regarding family planning methods the present research explores that women choices, attitudes, experiences and preferences towards family planning methods in terms of their education level and employment.

Objectives

- To explore knowledge, preferences and experience of women towards family planning.
- To explore various experiences of women regarding the use of contraceptives
- To explore differences in preferences of educated/highly educated and un-educated women towards family planning methods.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Despite of several discussions, very limited literature is present to explore the impact of women education and employment on their choices towards family planning. According to literature, there are many socioeconomic, cultural, familial and religious factors that affect the women choices of contraceptive use. The present research was conducted among educated/uneducated and working/nonworking married women to explore their personal perspectives, knowledge, experiences and preferences along with the impact of their education level and employment status towards the use of family planning methods.

A survey was conducted by Jiang (2013) in India with focus on education and fertility. The researcher took different educational trends of women and divided in illiterate, primary, secondary and tertiary educational categories and derive the baseline sample by single year of age according to the data of Indian population census (2001). The result of survey showed that contraceptive use was more in educated women than illiterate indicated that higher level of education linked with more contraceptive use and with lower fertility rates. Bongaarts (2003) stated that female education is closely linked with the use of contraceptives. Women with higher level of education have more knowledge about contraceptive methods, use of family planning methods to control the child birth and delays their pregnancies as compared to women with low level of education.

Hannum and Buchmann (2003), investigated the impact of women high schooling on their child bearing behavior. The result of their research showed that individuals with high qualification have better healthier lives throughout the world. Educated individuals can make better choices about their life and reproductive health. They have longer life expectancies and more capable to decide the gap between child births. In 2016, Kim conducted a longitudinal study to investigate the impact of female education on their fertility. Data was collected from 221 surveys, from 75 countries in 1985 to 2014 with the purpose to find out the relationship between women education and fertility. Women education was divided into three groups (primary, secondary and no schooling). The results of this research showed that less educated women had more children as compared to educated. However, educated women were more linked with contraceptive use and family planning methods.

A recent cross sectional study was conducted by Simoni and Collins (2017) to explore the attitudes of career oriented women towards the use of family planning to delay and prevent the pregnancies. The researcher selected highly representatives, office-holders and employed women of US. The results revealed that among all married women majority were career focused and they wanted to advance their careers by planned pregnancies. A descriptive exploratory study was conducted by Mustafa, Azmat, Hameed and Ali (2015) in Pakistan with the aim to know the personal perception and knowledge of married couples about the use of family planning methods. The findings showed that the participants from rural areas were facing the lack of education and basic health facilities. Mostly were not using contraceptives due to limited knowledge in rural areas. In urban areas, most of the couples were using modern contraceptives. Same study found that approval of husband, mother-in-law and family, influence the women decision making regarding the use of family planning. However the common barriers were religious norms, fear of negative impact, disapproval of husband/in laws and limited mobility of women to health care centers.

A cross sectional survey was conducted by Ling and Tong (2017) in Malaysia to find men role and involvement in women family planning methods. Response rate was 83.5 percent and showed that most of the couples made combine choice towards family planning methods. Same study also found that men have less knowledge about the contraceptive methods. The factors that influenced men involvement in practicing family planning were their high income and educational level.

Chekole, Kabsay, and Medhanyie (2019) conducted another community based cross sectional survey in Ethiopia to find out spouse involvement in contraceptive use of women. Data was collected through structured pre-tested questionnaire by interviews. The majority of women reported that their husbands showed active participation in decision making towards the use of family planning methods.

Rationale

It is a common observation that in the period of rapid population growth family planning methods provide the gap between child births. But practices and choices of individuals regarding birth control methods vary from person to person. Vast amount of researches are present in foreign literature that focus on the attitudes and practices of individuals towards family planning methods. In Pakistan, there are limited studies being conducted on women and family planning perspective. The aim of the study was to examine the impact of women education and employment on their choices towards family planning methods. So this research will help to gain a better understanding about the women experiences and preferences regarding family planning.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Health Belief Model (HBM) supports the fact that human beings adopt specific approaches and health behaviors that influence their choices and experiences. It is widely used model to understand the behaviors related to health (Janz & Backer, 1984)

Health Belief Model (HBM)

It view the individuals as rational beings who use multidimensional approach towards decision making regarding whether to perform a health behavior such as family planning. It is a comprehensive social cognitive and well tested framework by social psychologist Rosenstock and his colleagues in 1950's for predicting and explaining the contraceptive behavior among women. This model is derived from social psychology theory that focus on cognitive factors oriented towards goal attainment such as motivation to prevent the pregnancy by adopting family planning or birth control methods (Janz & Backer, 1984).

METHOD

The present research was consisted of two phases. The quantitative method was used to find out the difference in choice, attitudes, knowledge, experiences and preferences of employed and unemployed women regarding family planning methods. Whereas, qualitative method was used to interpret the responses in order to explore the rich detail about the family planning methods.

Research Design

Phase I was comprised of quantitative method, a self-developed questionnaire was used by the researcher through rigorous study of the review of literature. Phase II was comprised of qualitative method to explore the perception of participants towards the family planning and contraceptive uptake in terms of their education level and employment. Open ended questions were asked to order to get the detailed information from participants regarding family planning outcomes.

Sampling technique

All data was collected purposively from educated/highly educated/uneducated and employed/un-employed women. The sample in this research was consisted of 320 participants. The women of reproductive age range (18-45) were selected in this research. Educational level of the respondents was classified in three categories as educated with qualification (Middle, Matriculation & Intermediate), as highly educated with qualification (Bachelors, Masters & Above Masters) and third category was for uneducated married women with no education and schooling. Occupation of participants were classified as employed married women (government or private) and unemployed women (housewives) 161 were employed and 159 were not employed in any work sector.

Tool/measures

In phase I all data of this survey research was collected through self-constructed questionnaire titled as "family planning attitudinal scale". The items of the scale were constructed on the basis of pilot study and with the help of literature review. There were 6 sections and 42 items in scale. In 1st section demographic information about participant's age, family structure, qualification, occupation and family income was asked. 2nd section was about the personal reproductive history of the participants. 3rd section was about contraceptive awareness in which responses were gathered in Yes/No format. In 4th section information was obtain about their personal experiences regarding family planning, which scored as Agree (1), Agreed to some extent (2), Disagree (3). 5th section was about family planning and decision making of married women about contraceptives scored as, All of time (1), Most of time (2), Sometimes (3) Rarely (4) and Never as (5). In last section, questions were asked about preferences of participants regarding family planning methods. In phase II, the opinions, experiences, perspectives and preferences of the married women about family planning were obtain through self-developed questionnaire through the study of literature review. Open ended questions were asked in order to elaborate the perspectives of respondents through themes and sub themes in qualitative phase. Following research questions were used:

1. What is the influence of education on women choices regarding family planning methods?

2. What is the influence of education on women approaches towards contraceptives?
3. What is the influence of education on women knowledge regarding birth control methods?
4. What is the influence of education on women experiences regarding family planning methods?
5. What is the influence of education on women's preferences regarding family planning methods?

Hypotheses

- There will be significant difference between the choices of employed and un-employed women towards family planning methods.
- There will be significant difference in attitude of employed and un-employed women towards family planning methods.
- There will be significant difference of family planning knowledge between employed and un-employed women.
- There will be significant difference of experiences between employed and un-employed women towards family planning methods.
- There will be significant differences in preferences of employed and un-employed women regarding family planning methods.

Sample

The participants were selected from different socio economic backgrounds in Lahore. The sample was about 320 participants, in which 65 were educated, 218 were highly educated and 37 were uneducated.

Inclusion Criteria

- Married educated, highly educated, un-educated were the part of research.
- Employed and un-employed married women were included
- Women of age group (18-45) were included.
- The participants living in Lahore city were selected.

Exclusion Criteria

- Single, widow and divorced women were not included.
- Men were not the part of this research.
- Women below 18 and above 45 years of age were not included.

Procedure

First of all, pilot study was conducted in order to check the feasibility and quality of scale from 20 participants. Ethical consideration were followed and further permission was taken from participants to fill the questionnaire and ensured them confidentiality. Participants were also informed by the purpose of research. Some respondents refused to take the participation in research due to personal reasons and few were not comfortable to disclose their personal information. In order to collect information from uneducated married women all the questions were translated into Urdu.

Analysis

In phase I, Independent sample T-test was used to analyze data. In phase II, thematic analysis was carried out on the responses.

RESULTS ANALYSIS

Phase I

To explore the impact of employment on choices, awareness, experiences, and preferences towards family planning methods, independent sample T-Test was used to compare the significant difference between two groups (employed and un-employed).

Table 1 Demographic characteristics of participants (N=320)

<i>Demographic Variables</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Age		
18-25 years	86	26.9%
26-35 years	189	59.1%
36-45 years	45	14.1%
Age at time of marriage		
Less than 18 years	43	13.4%
18-25 years	218	68.1%
26 years to above	59	18.4%

Marriage duration		
Less than 1 years	50	15.6%
1-8 years	204	63.8%
9-17 years	43	13.4%
18-26 years	20	6.3%
27 years to above	3	.9%
Family Structure		
Joint	197	61.6%
Nuclear	123	38.4%
Qualification		
Educated	65	20.3%
Highly educated	218	68.1%
Uneducated	37	11.6%
Occupation		
Employed	161	50.3%
Unemployed	159	49.7%
Professions of working women		
Private job	50	15.6%
Government Employee	23	7.2%
Employee of education department	16	5.0%
Medical field	21	6.6%
Media person	6	1.9%
Teacher/Lecturer	20	6.3%
Reacher/Scientist	2	.6%
Sweeper	16	5.0%
Cook	3	.9%
House keeper	4	1.3%
Monthly income of employed women		
Less than 10000	26	8.1%
10000-20000	22	6.9%
20000-30000	40	12.5%
30000-40000	30	9.4%
40000 to above	44	13.8%
Family income		
10000-20000	17	5.3%
21000-30000	38	11.9%
31000-40000	27	8.4%
41000-50000	59	18.4%
51000 to above	179	55.9%

Table 2 Independent sample *t*-test measuring the difference in choices of employed and unemployed participants towards family planning ($N = 320$)

	Employed ($n = 161$)		Un-employed ($n = 159$)		<i>t</i> (<i>df</i>)	95% Confidence interval of the Difference		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>	<i>P</i>
Choices	7.55	2.03	7.32	1.96	1.06(318)	-20106	.67756	.287

* $p > .05$

Identification of Perception, Experiences, and Preferences about Family Planning Method

Results showed that there was no significant difference $t(318) = 1.06, p = .287$ in scores for employed women ($M = 7.55, SD = 2.03$) and for un-employed women ($M = 7.32, SD = 1.96$). On the basis of choices employed women had slightly higher mean score ($M = 7.55$) as compared to the un-employed women. ($M = 7.32$).

Table 3 Independent sample t-test measuring the attitudinal differences of employed and unemployed participants towards family planning ($N = 320$)

	Employed (n = 161)		Un-employed (n = 159)		t(df)	95% Confidence interval of the difference		
	M	SD	M	SD		LL	UL	P
Approaches	7.20	1.81	6.98	1.79	1.07(318)	-17992	.61501	.282

* $p > .05$

Results showed that there was no significant difference in attitudes of employed ($M = 7.20, 1.81$) and unemployed women ($M = 6.98, 1.79$) on family planning attitudinal scale which shows that attitudes of women towards family planning is not influenced by their employment.

Table 4 Independent sample t-test measuring the difference in awareness level of employed and unemployed participants towards family planning ($N = 320$)

	Employed (n = 161)		Un-employed (n = 159)		t(df)	95% Confidence interval of the difference		
	M	SD	M	SD		LL	UL	P
Awareness	8.69	1.94	8.93	1.87	-1.102(318)	-65535	.18502	.272

* $p > .05$

Results showed that in awareness level, there was no significant difference but for un-employed women ratio is slightly higher ($M = 8.93, SD = 1.87$) than employed ($M = 8.69, SD = 1.94$).

Table 5 Independent sample t-test for preference and experience occupation wise ($N = 320$)

	Employed (n=161)		Un-employed (n = 159)		t (df)	p	95% Confidence interval of the		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
Preference	15.17	3.35	14.05	2.21	.336(318)	.000	.599	.846	0.48 s
Experience	22.99	6.31	20.08	4.97	1.32(318)	.000	.439	2.26	0.21 s

* $p < 0.001$

The first part of this table showed the preferences of employed and un-employed women towards family planning methods and there was significant difference between the two groups occupation wise. Preference level regarding family methods is higher in employed women ($M = 15.17, SD = 3.35$) than un-employed ($M = 14.05, SD = 2.21$) which means employment influence the women preferences towards family planning methods. There was significant difference in experiences of employed ($M = 22.99, SD = 6.31$) and un-employed married participants ($M = 20.08, SD = 4.97$) on family planning scale. Employment status influenced various experiences of employed and un-employed women towards family planning methods.

Discussion

Phase I

Married couples and individuals all over the world have different practices and behaviors regarding the use of birth control methods. Choices of individuals also vary from culture to culture. Similarly, in literature we found that there are many socio-cultural factors that influence women choices and preferences towards family planning methods.

The 1st hypothesis revealed that there is no significant difference between the choices of employed and un-employed women regarding family planning methods. Similar literature also showed that employment is not associated with the greater spacing between births (Potasse & Yaya, 2021).

The 2nd hypothesis showed that there is no difference between the approaches of employed and un-employed women towards family methods. It was observed that a working and housewives had similar attitudes regarding the use of birth control methods.

The 3rd hypothesis identified no significant difference of knowledge employed and un-employed women. Mustafa, Afreen & Hashmi (2008) found that awareness and knowledge about the contraceptives practice is more associated women literacy rate than their employment. In results, no significant difference was found but it was observed that mean difference of employed was higher as compared to the mean difference of un-employed in terms of their knowledge regarding birth control methods.

The 4th hypothesis found that there were significant differences of experiences between employed and un-employed participants. Literature also found that family planning is more significant among employed women as its affect their experiences than non-working house wives. Female employment and their fertility are also closely linked. The participation of women in work force is associated with low pregnancy rates and hence employed women less involve in child bearing as compared to un-employed (Michael, Simoni & Stephen, 2017).

The 5th hypothesis was proved and employment found to influence the preferences of employed women towards family planning methods. This finding are supported by study that found that family planning methods are more beneficial for women in work force as they help them in maintaining their careers, work and family. The preferences of working women regarding family planning methods are different as they are more interested to seek family planning knowledge and awareness to gap between the child births because of their careers (Draper 2006).

RESULTS

In this part of present research, data was analyzed through thematic analysis to extract the following major themes and subthemes from the qualitative data.

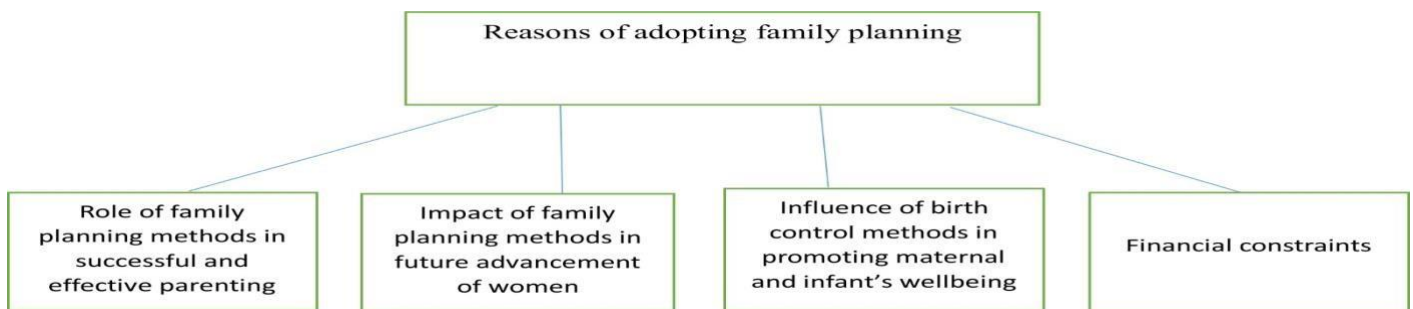


Figure 1: Represents the major theme and subtheme of adopting family planning methods

Participants were asked about the reasons of adopting family methods. The purpose was to explore the several aspects of married women of adopting contraceptives. Some of the participants mentioned that family planning promotes successful parenting as family planning methods allow the women with freedom to decide the number and space between child births hence beneficial to give more care, attention and love of current children. They stated that that family planning methods and use of contraceptives allows the parents with the best opportunity for better upbringing of children and less chances to neglect the present children by allowing gap between their births. In fact, family planning methods are beneficial for the child survival by increasing the birth intervals. Long birth intervals also play an important role for better education opportunities of children rather than more children with higher educational expenses.

Participants also stated that family planning methods are important to maintain the careers of women even after marriage. Family planning is central to bring about women empowerment and better job opportunities. Access of women to safe and reliable family planning methods allows employed women to

maintain balance between work and children and explores more career possibilities, employment opportunities after child birth, better work experience and insures the bright future after marriage hence the source of life style modification of married women. Furthermore, family planning methods provide women with more chances to get education after marriage and child birth and hence also beneficial for better economic opportunities.

Some of participants stated that child spacing methods plays an important role in promoting maternal and child health as they allow women with ability to control or postponed the child births hence promote the better health of both mother and infant. Family planning methods insures the better health status of women and improved child survival. It helps to regain health after delivery and allow women to make better health choices about children and themselves. It also influence the better reproductive health and nutritional status of mother and their children. Respondents stated that spacing is good for maternal health and brings better health outcomes for mother and infants.

Most of respondents stated that upbringing of children requires significant amount of financial resources to fulfill the educational and other requirements of children so adoption of family planning methods are important in the situation of less financial resources and income crises.

Reasons for not choosing family planning methods

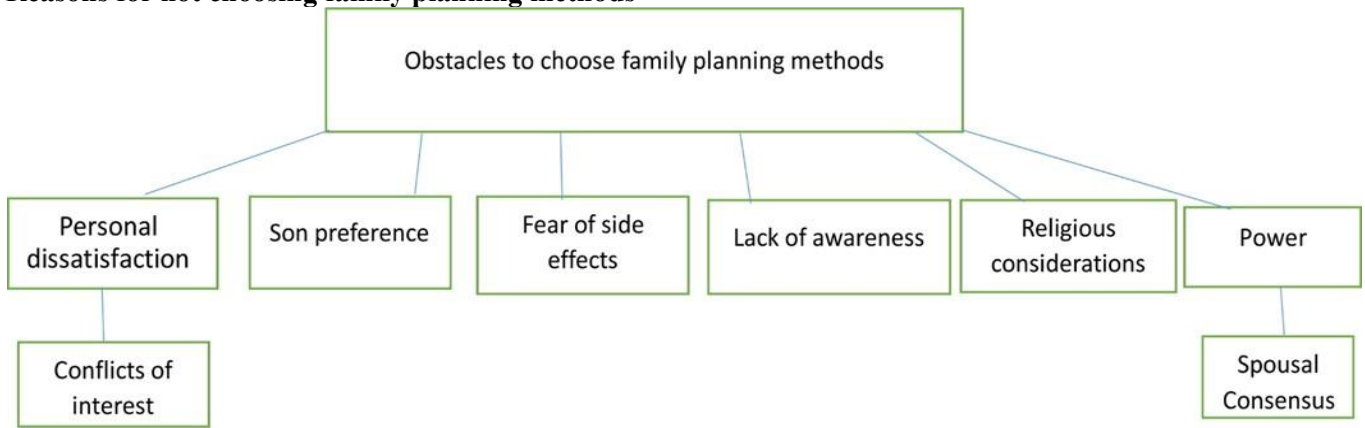


Figure 2: Represents the major theme and subthemes of not choosing family planning methods

Different perspectives were given by participants about not choosing family planning methods as some of respondents reported that family planning methods as unsuitable. Some participants considered it as bad thing due to following factors such as weight gain, loss of weight in some cases, disturbance of menstruation and increase of breast size. Conflicts in interest level regarding the family planning methods were also seen as some of respondents reported that they preferred the natural gap and some were uninterested by the use of contraception and reported these methods as strange methods of birth control. Further participants stated that they were not using family planning methods due to likelihood to have son or more number of son in their family.

Some of participants mentioned the fear of side-effects as the major reason of not choosing family planning methods as they may cause several health related problems. They reported their different fears about contraceptives such as fear of infertility, fear of obesity, fear of negative impact of pills/ medicines and fear of child birth complications after the use of birth control methods. Some stated that these methods may be the cause of ovarian cysts, hair loss, skin issues, heavy bleeding and spotting. Majority of women stated that due to insufficient information and misconceptions about contraceptives they were unable to use the family planning methods. They reported that lack of appropriate knowledge and less familiarity with modern contraceptives were reasons of not adopting family planning methods.

Some women recognized the family planning methods as against religious norms or values and abortions are prohibited by religion. Most found it as un-Islamic, sin and bad thing from religious perspective. They stated that child/children as blessings of God, their creation is by God so use of contraceptive is wrong and evil act.

Participants also reported that the main reason of not choosing family planning method is domination of mother in law in the decision making regarding the birth of children. Others also mentioned that dissatisfaction, disapproval and domination of husband as main factors of not choosing family planning methods.

Advantages of birth space or birth control methods

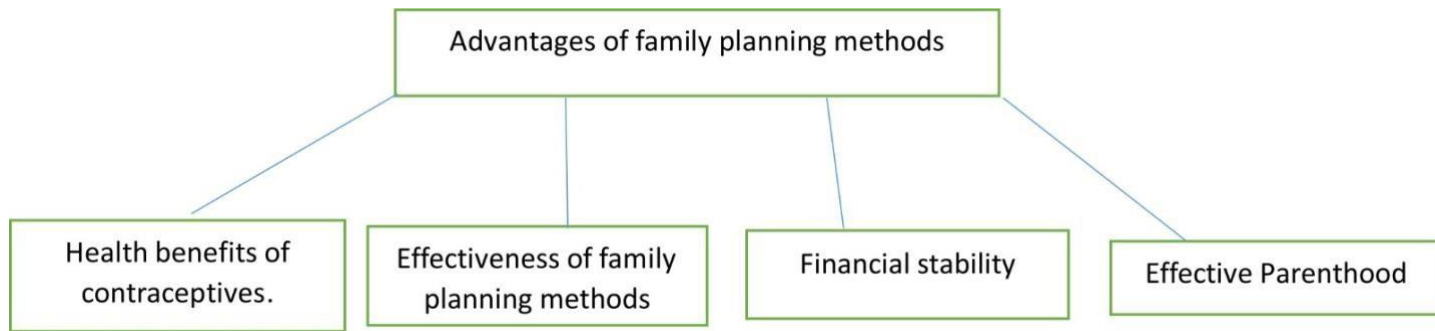


Figure 5.3: Represents the major theme and subthemes of advantages of birth control methods

Participants reported many advantages of birth space and birth control methods. Some satisfied users stated that contraceptives brought about many health benefits such as protect couples from sexually transmitted infections and ensures maternal mental and reproductive well-being. Family planning methods allow couples to live a healthy life by provide the ability to gap or space between child births. They recognized contraceptives as important to lower the risk of un- safe abortions as well. Some participants mentioned that gap is necessary to maintain health status after delivery and also produce healthy babies if pregnancies are properly spaced.

Participants also reported that gaps are beneficial to postpone unwanted pregnancies and delayed the time period of being pregnant. They further reported that family planning methods are helpful to control family size. Access to secure and safe methods also provide freedom for couples to have safe sex. Some stated that contraceptive methods are convenient, affordable, safe methods for couples to live a balanced life. They considered it the helpful methods as require no planning before sexual activity hence ensures the best future and increase the quality of life.

Many participants considered that family planning methods provide a medium for effective parenthood. As the proper use of these methods allow a gap between children and mother can give better care, attention and love to current children. They are also beneficial to build better mother and child relationship and allow the mother to give proper attention to family and husband as well. Some stated that contraceptives provide the women with opportunity to best grooming and better upbringing of children. Some reported that these methods save more energy and time of mother for current children and family.

According to participants more children have more educational and other expenses to fulfill the basic needs. When parents have limited financial resources then the use of contraceptives can be the source of financial stability. As they reported that the use of family planning methods can limit the family size and put less financial burden on couples. Some stated that by the use of family planning methods couples can limit the number of children and can put more investment to the future of less children rather than more and influence the better future, better educational opportunities of current children.

Disadvantages of birth space or birth control methods

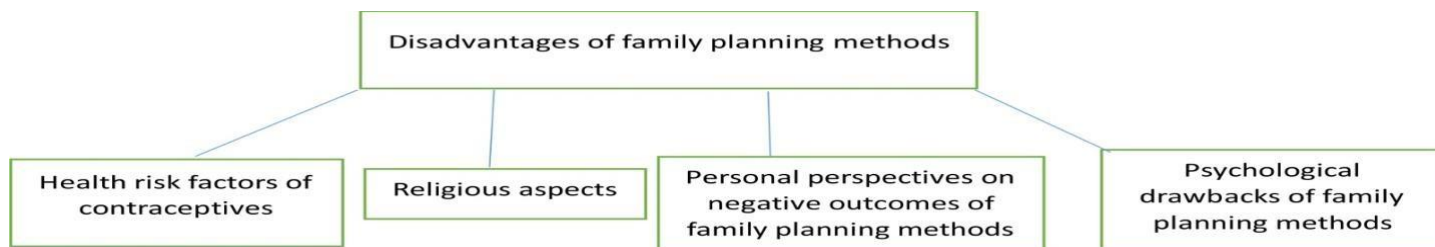


Figure 5.4: Represents the major theme and subthemes of disadvantages of birth control methods

In contrast to advantages, participants were also asked about the disadvantages of birth space and birth control methods. The non-users and unsatisfied respondents reported that contraceptives have many health hazards and side effects as they caused blood deficiency, muscles pain, weight gain and weakness. Some also stated that they affect the reproductive system of women and disturbs the menstruation cycle and delayed

pregnancies. Some also recognized that family planning methods caused cervical polyps and uterus infection hence poor health status of women. Some participants recognized that contraceptives caused hormonal imbalance, vomiting and also the reasons of acne and other skin problems.

Most of them stated that family planning methods is wrong act. They were overwhelmed with religious beliefs that use of contraceptives is forbidden in Islam. Most of the women were affirmed with their faith that it is their responsibility to give birth to as many children as they are God blessings. However, the contraceptives are evil acts and bad thing in religion.

Among all respondents, some dissatisfied women stated that family planning methods are incorrect, inaccurate and painful methods. They recognized that family planning methods caused infection of reproductive organs, child birth complications and also major complications after delivery. The respondents stated that these methods are difficult method for couples and also disturb husband/wife relationships. Some respondents mentioned that birth control methods exerts negative impact on health and poor working leads to infertility and difficulty to conceive another child in future.

In the review of disadvantages, many women stated that use of contraceptives exerts effects on mental health of women and caused mood swings, stress, tension, depression and anxiety. Among them some stated that use of family planning methods also caused eating disorders. Others reported that adverse side effects caused anger, suicidal thoughts and negative thoughts on self- image. Some also mentioned that side effects of family planning methods also create extensive phobias and person may felt insecure and lonely.

Opinions of participants about family planning methods

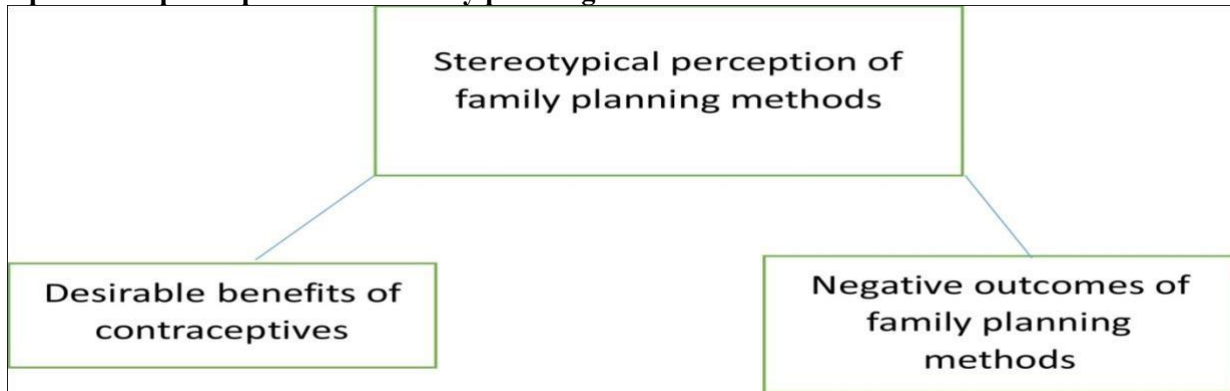


Figure 5.5: Represents the major theme and subthemes about opinions of participants about family planning methods

Participants were asked about their personal opinions regarding family planning methods. Most of participants stated that birth control methods allows women to decide the gap or space and desire number of children. They mentioned that family planning methods reduces the rates of maternal deaths and unsafe pregnancies. In response to the opinions towards family planning methods some reported that family planning methods are safe, useful reliable and good to use that protect women health and provide freedom to women especially for employed women. Some respondents stated that family planning method are always good for health and beneficial to live a balanced marriage life.

In contrast to desirable effects, some participants stated that family planning methods also associated with some hilarious effects such as health problems, infertility, and irregular menstruation. Some women also mentioned that among many side effects, family planning methods also caused some serious infections of reproductive tract as well.

Experience of women about birth control methods



Figure 5.6: Represents the major theme and subthemes about experiences of participants about birth control methods

In response to the question about the experiences of family planning methods some participants respond that family planning methods caused obesity, hormonal disturbance, missed menstruation and sometimes extreme effects on women mental health. Some respondents reported that they also faced painful and heavy bleeding and missed periods after the use of contraceptives. Some stated that they faced mood swings, migraine, breast tenderness and nausea in some cases.

According to some participants, along with side effects use of family planning methods are good way to heal body after delivery and effective way to control un-desirable pregnancy. Some reported that contraceptives are beneficial, safe, easy less harmful and satisfied methods that helps the women to mental their mental, physical and reproductive health. Participants also stated that birth control methods are helpful for women as by spaced child births they can give more time, care, attention and love to current children. They also reported that contraceptives are important to build healthy relation with current children.

From the overall responses major themes were extracted and then themes were used in bar chart to show the different choices, attitudes, preferences and experiences of educated, highly educated and un-educated participants towards family planning methods:

DISCUSSION

The phase II of present study dealt with the wide range of opinions of married women in terms of family planning methods. About six themes generated i.e. Reasons of adopting FPM, Obstacles to choose FPM, Disadvantages of FPM, Advantages of FPM, Stereotypical perception of FPM, and Experiences & preferences about FPM. Most of the married educated/highly educated and employed/un-employed women considered family planning methods as beneficial and helpful means to birth control as it allows freedom to married women with ability to decide the number, space or gap between child births. Literature agreed with these findings that family planning enables the individuals and couples to anticipate and attain their desired number of children, spacing and timing of their births (Barnett, Konate, Mhloyi & Mutambirwa. 1999).

Findings showed that all participants have different perspectives, opinions and experiences towards family planning methods that vary from person to person. Some participants who were employed and satisfied preferred family planning methods as it helped them to improve maternal and infant's health outcomes and maintain their careers and education even after their marriage.

Literature also stated that family planning methods have many beneficial effects, some are specific to mother and child's health and abled them to advance their education and job careers by limiting child births or reduce the number of un-wanted pregnancies (Mutombo, Bakibinga, Mukiira & Kamande , 2014).

In the current research findings also reflected that participants were familiar with the advantages of family planning methods because they stated that contraceptives are safe, affordable and convenient methods for couples who wanted to place gap or space between child births. Mostly educated and highly educated considered it as the need of modern era because the use of contraceptives helped them in successful and effective parenting. Literature also supports our findings which stated that adoption of contraceptive methods ensures the quality of life of married women. Use of family planning methods reduce the emotional burden of parenthood because the parents with less children can fulfill the basic needs, provide better schooling and other facilities properly to the existing children (Agarwal, 2011).

In contrast to satisfied users of contraceptives, some participants also stated that family planning methods has many drawbacks too. Participants reported that family planning methods cause hormonal

imbalance, blood deficiency, menstruation disturbance, mood swings, anxiety and infertility. Some negative experiences such as obesity, infertility, child birth complications, muscles pain, skin issues and infections of reproductive tract were also reported by participants. Similar findings were observed in the research of Barnett and Konate (1999), in which they found that among many desirable effects of contraceptives there are also negative consequences of family planning methods that influence the women decision to continue or discontinue their use of birth control methods.

Fear of negative impact or side effects were also reported by participants. Many of fears were their real experiences, misconception and understanding about contraceptives. This suggests that fear of side effects are the factors that prevent women not to adopt family planning methods. Some also reported they were not using family planning methods due to their the negative impacts such as heavy bleeding, menstruation disturbance and psychological drawbacks such as anger, stress, frustration and mood swings etc. In literature we also found that negative impacts caused by family planning methods anticipated or experienced are the common reasons through which women either not adopt or discontinue the use (Shrumph, Stephens & Nasarko, 2020).

It has been widely documented in literature that presence and participation of mother in law influenced couples decision about number of children (Chaar, Saavala & Kulmala, 2010). The findings of present study also suggested that power relations, influenced the women choices towards family planning methods such as son preference by family, and role of mother in law in decision making regarding use of contraceptives.

Un-educated women also reported that they have less education and awareness regarding family planning methods. We found that majority were not using family planning methods due to son preferences because their husbands and family prefer more sons in family. Some consider that family planning methods are against religious values and the use of these methods is sin in Islam. Mahmood and Ringheim (1996) also found that there are many socio-culture factors that influence the women choices towards family planning methods and they are lack of awareness, son preference, disapproval by husband and religious beliefs.

Educated, highly educated and employed women also consider that family planning methods can provide future advancements to women as by adopting these methods women can maintain their careers even after marriage. Literature supports this finding as Bailey (2006) in his stated that spacing and gap between the child births allowed the married women with more career opportunities and it resulted the higher participation of married women in work force.

In this qualitative study, an effort was made to understand the perspectives, preferences and experiences of women in terms of their education and employment. Lots of other factors also emerged from the findings that effect the women choices regarding family planning methods. They were religious beliefs, conflicts of interest, spousal consensus, personal dissatisfaction, lack of knowledge, fear of side effects and power relations that affect the choices, preferences and experiences towards family planning methods.

CONCLUSION

Phase I of the present study highlighted the differences in choices, preferences, approaches and experiences of family planning methods among married educated/highly educated/un- educated and employed/un-employed women. Results showed that knowledge of employed/un-employed women towards family planning are the same but difference in experiences and preferences of employed/ un-employed women regarding the use of birth gap or family planning methods.

More insightful findings were came out about women's perception, preferences and experiences regarding family planning methods through open ended questions. Majority of educated/highly educated and employed women considered that family planning methods are helpful as these methods provide them with options to manage the size, number and spacing between child births, have desirable effects and maintain good health status. Some reported reasons of not using family planning were fear of side effects, lack of personal interest, domination of family and mother in law in decision making regarding child births, spousal dissatisfaction. In contrast, majority of uneducated revealed that son preference or wish for more son by their husband and family is the reason of not adopting family planning methods. Results also showed that majority of un-educated women had lack of awareness about the contraceptive methods. Most of the un-educated women were not using these methods because of their religious beliefs. All these findings showed that education level of women influences their preferences and experiences regarding family planning methods.

LIMITATIONS

In the present research selected sample was not very large and collected only from Lahore. It was difficult to obtain the data from participants because of sensitivity of the topic.

Future Suggestions

This study will help to explore the impact of education and employment on women choices, knowledge, preferences and experiences towards family planning methods. Researchers can explore about different opinions of women regarding family planning methods. Future researchers can increase the sample size in their research. Researches can add men in their study to explore their choices and opinions regarding birth control or family planning methods.

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