

FAMILY PLANNING: KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES AMONG MARRIED MEN IN SELECTED BARANGAYS IN LEGANES, ILOILO*

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Abstract: *This study was conducted to determine men's family planning (FP) knowledge, attitude and practices. Using a structured questionnaires, randomly selected 320 married men were interviewed. The findings show that the majority of the married men in Leganes had adequate knowledge about and had favorable attitudes towards FP. The men's FP practice, however, was poor, as most couples (50%) were not practicing FP. The men from urban areas and those who were educated had less knowledge about FP than their counterparts. Knowledge about FP and attitudes towards it were significantly correlated but both variables were not significantly associated with FP practice.*

INTRODUCTION

Research findings about family planning (FP) are derived almost exclusively from women, and policies and programs based on these findings have not been successful in increasing contraceptive prevalence rate (Mbizvo and Adamchak, 1991, p.31). Although the importance of male involvement in family planning has been recognized in recent years, still only a few studies on the subject have been conducted in the Philippines. Most studies on family planning practice have focused on women, the general population or couples.

Women have also been the main source of information even about men's responses and decisions regarding family planning. Studies

with men as sources of information are very rare.

The fact that in the Philippines, the men's role in reproductive decisions is still very pronounced (David, 1996), it is important that men are also involved in family planning studies as source of information. This will help pave the way for a more active involvement of men in family planning endeavors. It is important therefore, to know how much men know about family planning, what their attitudes are towards it, and what their family planning practices.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study was conducted to determine the men's knowledge about FP, attitudes toward FP and their FP

*Based on the author's thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master in Nursing at Central Philippine University.

practice and whether these three variables are associated with each other. The study further determined whether men's knowledge about and attitudes towards FP and their FP practices vary according to their age, residence educational attainment and work status and their wives' educational attainment and works status.

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The assumed link between men's knowledge about FP, their attitudes towards it and their FP behavior may be explained by the Gender Schema, introduced by Sandra Bern (Myers, 1986). The theory suggests sex differences in behavior, that social expectations mold the experience of men and women and when social expectations vary, a person's role behavior also change. Men's lack of participation in FP may be traced to social "gender conditioning," and the roles and responsibilities they learn

as children from their parents and other role models, from the mass media, schools and other institutions.

The theory of Reasoned Action and Planned behavior by Fisbein and Ajzen (Clifford, 1979) also guided this study. Fisbein argues that human beings are rationale and use information available to them in deciding what to do. Specific attitudes combined with social factors are assumed to produce behavior. Fisbein asserts that change in beliefs can produce change in attitudes which can also lead to change in behavior. What men knows about FP (independent variable) is expected to affect their attitudes towards it (intervening variable) and may lead them to practice or not to practice FP (dependent variable). Variations in men's FP knowledge, attitudes and practices, are also expected, particularly according to their age, educational attainment, residence and work status. Figure 1. shows the assumed flow of relationship among the variables of the study.

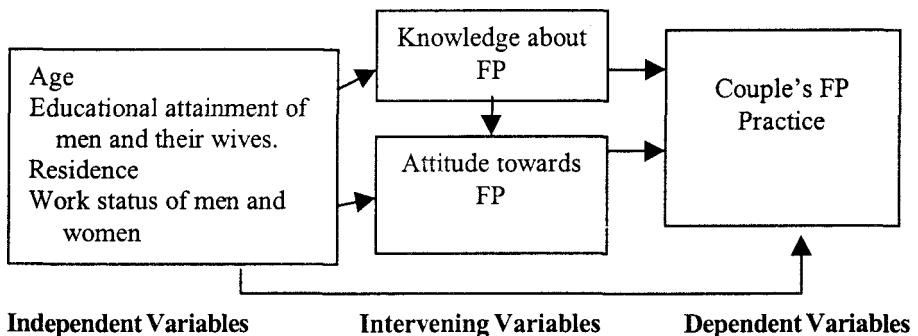


Figure 1. Assumed flow of relationship among the variables of the study.

METHODOLOGY

This is a one shot survey involving personal interviews of 320 men who were married to women of reproductive age (15-49). The men were identified based on a list of women of reproductive age in randomly selected urban and two rural barangays (one coastal and one agricultural), in the Municipality of Leganes, Iloilo. Barangay Poblacion represented the urban areas, while Barangays Guinobatan and Camangay represented the rural sector. The sample respondents were drawn using systematic sampling with a random start (Parel, et. al., 1979). A structured interview schedule translated to "hiligaynon," the dialect of the people of Iloilo was used to

collect the data. Interviews were conducted by registered nurses who underwent training on interviewing.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Characteristics of the Men and their Wives

The men in this study were 37 years old on the average. Four in ten of them (41.6%) had high school/vocational education, while slightly more than one-third (35.6%) were college-educated. Their wives had about the same education as their husbands had. Almost all of the men were gainfully working (94.1%), but only 16.5 percent of their wives were. On average, the couples had three to four children (Average = 3.7).

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents According to Selected Characteristics

| Characteristics | Number (n=320) | Percent |
|--|----------------|---------|
| Mean Age | | 37.3 |
| Men's Educational Attainment | | |
| Elementary or lower | 83 | 25.9 |
| High School/Vocational | 132 | 41.3 |
| College/Post Graduate | 105 | 32.8 |
| Wives' Educational Attainment | | |
| Elementary & lower | 73 | 22.8 |
| High school/Vocational | 133 | 41.6 |
| College and above | 114 | 35.6 |
| Men's Working Status: Working | 301 | 94.1 |
| Wives' Work status of wife: Working | 54 | 16.9 |
| Number of Children | | |
| 0 | 12 | 3.8 |
| 1 - 2 | 101 | 31.5 |
| 3 - 4 | 114 | 35.6 |
| 5 or more | 93 | 29.1 |
| Mean = 3.7 | | |

Men's Knowledge about Family Planning

The married men of Leganes had "average" to "high" level of knowledge about FP. Most of them knew what FP is (80 %), where they can avail of FP services (94.4%) and why couples should practice FP (81.9%). Most of them were also familiar with the different FP methods, and were able to identify the male-oriented contraceptives (88.4%), the

female-oriented methods (93.8%) and the methods that require surgery (95%).

Most of the men, however, still had misconceptions about FP methods, particularly on the side effects of male FP methods. A high majority (95.7%) of them believed that a vasectomized male could not carry heavy loads. Most of them (93.7 %) failed to identify any side effects of condom, while only a few (6.35%) knew that it can cause allergic reactions.

Table 2. Distribution of Respondents m According to their Knowledge About Family Planning

| Questions About FP Knowledge | Number (N=320) | % |
|--|-------------------|------|
| <u>A. FP Awareness:</u> | | |
| What is FP? | 256 | 80.0 |
| Where can you avail of FP services? | 302 | 94.4 |
| Why should a couple practice FP? | 262 | 81.9 |
| <u>B. FP Methods:</u> | | |
| Which of the following is a male-oriented method? | 283 | 88.4 |
| Which of the following is a female-oriented method? | 300 | 93.8 |
| Which of the following methods require surgery? | 304 | 95.0 |
| <u>C. Side-Effects:</u> | | |
| Which of the following is the side-effect of condom? | 19 | 5.9 |
| Which of the following is the side-effect of pills? | 277 | 86.6 |
| Which of the following is the side-effect of vasectomy? | 15 | 4.7 |
| <u>D. Effectivity:</u> | | |
| Which of the following male-oriented method is permanent and most effective? | 267 | 83.4 |
| Which of the following male-oriented method is least effective? | 112 | 35.0 |
| Which of the following is the most effective and permanent female method? | 245 | 76.6 |
| <u>E. Level of Knowledge about FP</u> | | |
| High | 164 | 51.3 |
| Average | 149 | 45.6 |
| Low | 10 | 3.1 |

Men's Attitudes towards Family Planning

The men's attitude toward FP was generally favorable. All of them agreed that men should take responsibilities at home. Most of them also favored FP practice (94%), and agreed that couples should jointly decide on FP (98.8%). The majority expressed willingness to practice FP if their wives could not (92.8%). Nearly all of them acknowledged that an additional child means more expense (97.2%) to the family and that having many children hinders its economic development (93.8%). A

substantial proportion of the men, however, thought that being childless puts their virility in question (59.4%) and 77.9% believed that vasectomy decreases man's sexual satisfaction (Table 3).

Consistent with the findings in Africa (Mbizvo and Amanchak 1991). The men in general had favorable attitudes towards FP. Almost half of them (47.5%) obtained attitude scores from 9 to 10 which has a categorical equivalent of "Very Favorable" and almost the same percentage (46.5%) obtained scores from 7 to 8 which is equivalent to "Favorable."

Table 3. Distribution of Respondents According to their Attitudes Towards Knowledge About FP

| Questions About Attitudes Toward FP | f | % |
|--|-----|-------|
| 1. Should men help in the responsibilities at home? | 320 | 100.0 |
| 2. Do you believe that men should actively participate in FP? | 303 | 94.7 |
| 3. Do you believe that the couple should jointly decide about FP? | 316 | 98.8 |
| 4. If your wife is unable to practice FP, are you willing to do it? | 297 | 92.8 |
| 5. Does an additional child mean an additional expense? | 311 | 97.2 |
| 6. Do you think having a lot of children will hinder the improvement of the economic status of the family? | 300 | 93.8 |
| 7. Do you believe that men who do not have many children is not very fertile? | 190 | 59.4 |
| 8. Do you believe that male-oriented methods are necessary although it is the woman who gets pregnant? | 288 | 90.0 |
| 9. Do you believe that vasectomy does not decrease man's sexual satisfaction? | 71 | 22.2 |
| 10. Do you believe that the use of condom is good? | 275 | 85.9 |
| <u>Overall Attitude Rating</u> | | |
| Very favorable (9-10) | 152 | 47.5 |
| Favorable (7-8) | 149 | 46.5 |
| Unfavorable (5-6) | 14 | 4.4 |
| Very Unfavorable (3-4) | 5 | 1.6 |

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FP Practices

Despite the men's good knowledge about and favorable attitude towards FP, their FP practice was still far from desirable. The majority of the men reported that they and their wives (59.4 %) were not practicing FP. Only 40.6% were currently using a method to delay pregnancy or limit the number of children. This is lower than the 1997 national (48.1%) and regional (58.1%) figures (David, 1998). It was noted

that many of the non-FP users were previous users (18.8%) and were therefore, drop-outs.

The data further show that among the FP users, there were more users of modern FP methods than those using traditional FP methods. The pill was the most commonly used among the modern methods. The male FP methods were unpopular and the condom was more favored by men than vasectomy. The same were found by David in an earlier study (1998).

Table 4. Distribution of Respondents According to FP Practice

| FP Practice | Number | % |
|------------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Current FP user | 130 | 40.6 |
| Non-users: | 190 | 59.4 |
| Previous users | 60 | 18.8 |
| Never users | 130 | 40.6 |
| TOTAL | 320 | 100.0 |
| Male FP Methods | N=130 | % |
| <u>Modern Methods</u> | 92 | 71.8 |
| Condom | 21 | 16.2 |
| Vasectomy | 3 | 2.3 |
| DMPA (Injectable) | 9 | 6.9 |
| BTL (Tubal Ligation) | 26 | 20.0 |
| * Pills | 31 | 23.8 |
| IUD | 2 | 1.5 |
| LAM | 11 | 8.5 |
| Traditional Methods | 38 | 29.2 |
| Withdrawal | 12 | 9.2 |
| Periodic Abstinence/Rhythm | 26 | 20.0 |

Variations in FP Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice According to Selected Characteristics of the Men and those of their Wives.

Among the personal characteristics of the men which were found to be associated with FP knowledge were residence (Eta=.18), their educational attainment (eta=.19), and that of their wives' (eta=0.14), their wives' work status (eta = 12). All eta values were significant as 5 % level. This means that men's knowledge about FP significantly varied according to residence, the men's and their wives' and educational attainment and wives' work status. Men from urban areas, those who were college educated, with college-educated wives and those with working wives tended to be more knowledgeable

about FP than those who were from rural areas, those with no college education, those whose wives were not college-educated and those with non-working wives, respectively.

A significant correlation was found between FP practice and educational attainment of the husbands (eta=.17) and that of their wives (eta=.16). This means that college educated men and those with college educated wives were more likely to practice FP than those who were less educated and those with less educated wives.

The results support Alip's (1994) conclusion that knowledge about FP is dependent on occupation and educational attainment. The study also confirmed the absence of a significant link between age and FP knowledge.

Table 5. Results of Relational Analysis Between Selected Characteristics of Husbands and Wives and Husband's Knowledge, Attitudes and FP Practice

| Selected Characteristics | Knowledge about FP (Eta Values) | Attitudes Towards FP (Eta Values) | FP Practice (Eta Values) |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <u>Husbands'</u> | | | |
| Age | 0.01 | 0.03 | 0.12* |
| Residence | 0.18* | 0.06 | 0.05 |
| Educational Attainment | 0.19* | 0.07 | 0.17* |
| Work Status | 0.07 | 0.01 | 0.03 |
| <u>Wives'</u> | | | |
| Educational attainment | 0.14* | 0.07 | 0.16* |
| Work Status | 0.12* | 0.05 | 0.03 |

*Significant at 5 percent level

Relationship Between Men's FP Practice and their Knowledge about FP and their Attitudes Towards It

The data further show that men's knowledge about FP was found to be significantly related to their attitudes toward FP ($r=0.30$). Although low, the positive correlation between the two variables is significant at 5% level. However, knowledge about FP and attitudes towards it, did not yield a significant effect on FP practice. Men's knowledge about FP was

not significantly related to FP practice. When attitudes toward FP was controlled, the relationship between knowledge about FP and FP practice was strengthened ($r=.14$). Table 6 shows the data.

The findings indicate that the more knowledgeable the men were about FP, the better their attitudes toward it. High knowledge about FP and favorable attitudes toward FP, however, do not guarantee FP practice. Favorable attitude toward FP, however, strengthens the relationship between knowledge about FP and FP practice.

Table 6. Correlation Matrix for Men's Knowledge About FP, Attitudes Towards FP and FP Practice

| Characteristics | Knowledge about FP | Attitudes Towards FP | FP Practice |
|-----------------|--------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| Knowledge | 0.00 | 0.30* | 0.08 |
| Attitudes | 0.30* | 0.00 | 0.12 |
| Practice | 0.08 | 0.12 | 0.00 |

Partial Correlation Between Knowledge about FP and FP Practice Controlling for Attitudes Toward FP Practice: = 0.14*

*Significant at 5 percent level.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the study support the hypothesis that men's knowledge about FP enhances their chance of practicing family planning. The significant relationship between men's knowledge about FP and their residence, educational attainment and that of their wives' and their own work status confirms that the men's environment, experiences and learnings significantly influences their knowledge acquisition. In this study, they significantly contribute to the men's acquisition of knowledge about FP.

Men's attitude towards family planning, however, was not significantly influenced by any of the independent variables: age, residence, educational status and work status of the men.

Considering the study's findings and conclusions, it is recommended that DOH and non-government organizations strengthens their information, education and communication programs and their IEC materials must include and emphasize FP male methods. Various methods of information dissemination such as, the use of comics, drama, informal education and posters in the dialect must be explored. FP programs, like FP counseling should involve not only women but also men. Pills and condoms being the most popular contraceptive methods should always be available at the health center.

Men can be involved as teachers/informants or as male FP motivators to male target FP users, in order to overcome gender barriers. More studies involving men must be conducted.

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