

## **FAMILY PLANNING PRACTICE AND PARTICIPATION IN PAID WORK AMONG WOMEN OF REPRODUCTIVE AGE IN WESTERN VISAYAS**

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***Abstract:** A study of 1,100 married women of reproductive age in Western Visayas showed a positive influence of family planning on the work participation of women. The findings support the hypothesis that the women's opportunities to work tend to be enhanced by FP practice. Their being able to limit the number of their children or space their pregnancies have allowed them to have more time to work for a pay. The need for women to work and earn income becomes more evident when they already have children. As their number of children increases, their need to join the work force is also increased.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

One of the aspects of a woman's life which is expected to be affected by her reproductive behavior is her employment status. In many societies, female employment is becoming more a necessity than a choice because of changing views, and values and economic demand. Many married women who desire to work, however, cannot work because of the conflict of work and mothering responsibilities. It has been argued, however, that if a married woman can postpone or space childbearing through family planning, her chances of getting employed, and of being promoted, if she is already working, can be improved. Whether this holds true among married women of

reproductive age (MWRA) of Western Visayas is a question which this study attempts to answer.

Two specific concerns were addressed in the inquiry: 1) whether or not family planning practice is associated with the women's involvement in gainful work or employment status, and 2) the women's perception, as well as the perception of their husbands, and of family planning providers regarding the influence of family planning on the economic situation or activities of married women of reproductive age.

### **DATA SOURCE**

The data for this analysis were taken from the set of data of the Family Health International (FHI)

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Women's Studies Project, particularly the study conducted in Region VI, entitled "Economic and Psychosocial Influence of Family Planning on the Lives of Women in Western Visayas." This study involved personal interview with 1100 married women of reproductive age who were randomly selected from three sample provinces in Region VI. In addition, qualitative data were gathered through focus group discussions (FGDs) with health care providers, husbands of the women respondents and other selected female key informants who were not part of the survey sample.

## ***FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION***

### **Family Planning and Women's Employment**

The data show that practice of family planning tended to have a positive influence on women's labor participation. Table 1 shows that there were significantly more FP users than non-users who were gainfully working (45.1% and 367%, respectively) at the time of the survey. On the whole, most (58.9%) of the women were engaged in remunerative work. The favorable effect of family planning practice on the women's employment status consistently emerged even when certain factors were controlled.

When religion was controlled, the difference in work participation

between FP users and non-users, was statistically significant but only among the Roman Catholics. There were 9.5% more Roman Catholic FP users (45.2%) than their catholic counterparts (35.7%) who were gainfully working.

Controlling for age, the employment advantage of the FP users over the non-users was maintained in all age levels. This suggests that the age of the women is a mediating factor in the relationship between family planning practice and working status of the women. Age tends to suppress the extent of association between family planning and work status.

When educational attainment was considered, the proportion of working FP users remained consistently higher than the proportion of working non-users in all education levels, except among women with no formal education. The difference between proportions, however, was statistically significant only for those with at least high school education ( $Z=2.583$ ). The limited work opportunities for women with low educational attainment and the fact that the college-educated are likely to be employed may have concealed the influence of family planning practice on employment of women belonging to these two education categories.

The positive influence of family planning on the women's work participation of the MWRAs was

**Table 1.** Percentage Distribution of MWRAs According to Labor Force Participation and Family Planning Practice Controlling for Selected Variables.

Variables	Non-users (n =521)*	FP -Users (n=579)	Total (n=1100)	Z-test Values
<b><u>MWRAs who were currently working for pay</u></b>	36.7(191)	45.1(261)	41.1(452)	2.842**
<b><u>Employment Status According to:</u></b>				
<b><u>Age</u></b>				
Below 20	5.9(17)	16.7(6)	8.7(23)	0.664
21-30	23.5(179)	29.3(157)	26.2(336)	1.203
31-40	41.7(211)	49.1(281)	45.9(492)	1.638
41 and above	52.6(114)	56.3(135)	54.6(249)	0.584
<b><u>Religion</u></b>				
Roman Catholic	35.7(429)	45.2(465)	40.6(894)	2.907**
Non- Roman Catholic	41.3(92)	44.7(114)	43.2(206)	0.491
<b><u>Educational Attainment</u></b>				
No Formal Education	66.7(3)	33.3(3)	50.0(6)	0.868
Elementary	34.1(135)	39.4(109)	36.5(244)	0.854
High School and Vocational	21.8(220)	32.4(241)	27.3(461)	2.583**
College and Above	58.3(163)	61.5(226)	60.2(389)	0.635
<b><u>Barangay</u></b>				
Rural	32.7(208)	41.7(175)	36.8(383)	1.819
Urban	39.3(313)	46.5(404)	43.4(717)	1.940**
<b><u>Household Size</u></b>				
1-2	63.0(27)	66.7(3)	63.3(30)	0.129
3-4	38.0(179)	48.3(145)	42.6(324)	1.859
5-6	33.3(192)	42.4(236)	38.3(428)	1.944**
7 and above	34.1(123)	45.6(195)	41.2(318)	2.066**
<b><u>Number of Pregnancies</u></b>				
0	38.7(31)	100.0(1)	40.6(32)	7.007**
1-2	42.0(200)	48.1(154)	44.6(354)	1.145
3-4	28.8(170)	41.2(216)	35.8(386)	2.570**
5-6	37.1(70)	51.1(135)	46.3(205)	1.944**
7 and above	40.0(50)	38.4(73)	39.0(123)	0.178
<b><u>Number of Children Ever-born</u></b>				
0	44.4(36)	50.0(2)	44.7(38)	0.154
1-2	38.6(223)	48.0(171)	42.6(394)	1.872
3-4	29.9(157)	41.5(234)	36.8(391)	4.000**
5-6	39.1(64)	48.2(112)	44.9(176)	1.180
7 and above	41.5(41)	45.0(60)	43.6(101)	0.349

\* Figures enclosed in parenthesis are frequencies.

\*\* Statistically significant at 5 percent level.

sustained even when residence was controlled. There were more working FP users than working non-users in both rural and urban areas (9.0% and 7.2% difference, respectively) The difference, however, was significant only among the urban dwellers. This may be due to the fact that most of the women farm workers, (FP users or non-users), are likely to be engaged in paid work when work in the land the till done. Available work for women in the rural areas are mostly seasonal, intermittent, and low-paying, such as farming, vending, and service-related jobs, types of occupation which non-users can do just as well as the FP users

The data support the hypothesis that family planning is significantly associated with the MWRAs' participation in paid work. Although the practice of family planning may not directly result to a woman's participation in the labor force, it is clearly a facilitating factor. Low educational attainment can also reduce the positive influence of family planning on the women's work participation because this can decrease their ability to compete for the limited number of better-paying jobs.

#### **Participation in Gainful Work Between Pregnancies**

Table 2 shows that there were more FP users than non-users who were able to work between

pregnancies: 11.9% more FP users than non-users between their first and second pregnancies (46.0% vs. 34.1%); 5.8 % more FP users than non-users between their second and third pregnancies; and 12.5% more FP users than non-FP users between their third and fourth pregnancies.

The data also show that there were more FP users than non-users who were engaged in professional/technical (38.7% vs. 28.8%) On the other hand, there were more non-FP users than FP users, who were engaged service-related jobs (23.0% vs. 12.05%) during periods between pregnancies. This implies that the FP users had better opportunities than the non-FP users to engage in better-paying jobs outside the home. It seems that non-FP users tended to engage in seasonal or part-time jobs which allow them to work near their homes.

The data suggest that having small children limits a woman's opportunities to engage in paid work outside the home or far from her home. Since child care in Filipino homes is dominantly a woman's responsibility, she usually takes care of the children when they are young. A woman already working before child birth is sometimes forced to quit work after childbirth especially when she cannot find nor afford to hire a baby sitter. Mothers who cannot trust their babies, especially their first born, to a care giver, may quit work when the baby is still small.

**Table 2.** Distribution of MWRAs by Employment Status Between Pregnancies and FP Practice

<b>Employment Status Between pregnancies</b>	<b>Non-users (521)</b>	<b>FP -Users (579)</b>	<b>Total (1100)</b>	<b>Z-test Values</b>
<u>MWRAs who were employed/worked for pay</u>				
<u>Between first and second pregnancies</u>	34.1(651)	46.0(324)	38.1(975)	3.569**
<u>Type of Work</u>	(222)	(150)	(372)	
Professional/Technical	28.8	38.7	32.8	1.978**
Managerial/Administrative	1.4	2.7	1.9	0.844
Sales/Business (engaged in buying/selling)	23.9	28.0	25.5	0.882
Farming/Fishing	13.1	4.7	9.7	2.949**
Clerical work	3.6	5.3	4.3	0.767
Transport and communication	0.5	0.7	0.5	0.241
Craft/Production process	5.4	4.7	5.1	0.304
Service/Sport	23.0	12.0	18.5	2.839**
Others	0.5	3.3	1.6	1.826
<u>MWRAs who had worked/employed for pay</u>				
<u>between second and third pregnancies</u>	29.9(455)	35.7(252)	32.0(707)	1.566
<u>Type of Work</u>	(136)	(89)	(225)	
Professional/Technical	19.9	37.1	26.7	2.792**
Managerial/Administrative	0.7	2.2	1.3	0.877
Sales/Business (engaged in buying/selling)	24.3	25.8	24.9	0.253
Farming/Fishing	16.2	5.6	12.0	2.656**
Clerical work	3.7	4.5	4.0	0.293
Transport and communication	0.7	0.0	0.4	0.979
Craft/Production process	5.1	6.7	5.8	0.492
Service/Sport	28.7	13.5	22.7	2.864**
Others	0.7	4.5	2.2	1.644
<u>MWRAs who had worked/employed for</u>				
<u>pay between third and fourth pregnancies</u>	28.1(324)	40.6(175)	32.5(499)	2.794**
<u>Type of Work</u>	(91)	(71)	(162)	
Professional/Technical	22.5	31.4	26.4	1.265
Managerial/Administrative	0.0	2.9	1.3	1.456
Sales/Business (engaged in buying/selling)	23.6	34.3	28.3	1.490
Farming/Fishing	20.2	7.1	14.5	2.521**
Clerical work	2.2	4.3	3.1	0.735
Transport and communication	0.0	1.4	0.6	1.004
Craft/Production process	4.5	4.3	4.4	0.062
Service/Sport	25.8	14.3	20.8	1.858
Others	1.1	0.0	0.6	1.006

\* Figures enclosed in parenthesis ( ) are frequencies.

\*\* Statistically significant at 5 percent level.

**FP Practice and Work Participation, Controlling for Other Variables: Regression Analysis**

The effect of FP practice on work participation when other variables are held constant, was determined using regression analysis. Work participation was categorized simply as working or non-working. FP practice was measured in terms of duration of FP use. The reference variable for duration of use is, current users who have used FP continuously for 24 months or more.

The results of the regression analysis (Table 3) show a log odds value of 0.6743 for the non-FP users. Since it is less than 1.0, it can be interpreted that the non-users are less likely to work compared with the FP users. The negative regression coefficient of -.3940, means that there is a 39.4% less probability that the non-FP users can work, compared with the FP users. This confirms the favorable effect of FP practice on women's participation in paid work, even when other factors are held constant.

The data support the argument that when a woman can space or limit her pregnancies, she will have better opportunities to work for pay because she has more time for work when she is not saddled with reproductive responsibilities.

The analysis also showed that each of the variables controlled in the regression had significant influence on the women's work participation. The women's participation in paid work significantly increased with age, household size, educational attainment and socio-economic status. As women grow older and have more children, it is more likely that they will work for pay. It also confirms precision research findings that women with high school or college education, high socio-economic status have better chances of participating in the labor force than those with less education and lower status. (Bizgrove, 1995)

The female FGD participants acknowledged specific contributions of family planning practice on their economic opportunities. The women stressed that family planning has allowed them to spend more time at their work, be more efficient, advance in their work position, and earn better income.

Mothers with closely spaced child births will definitely need more time for child care and house work and therefore, will have less time for gainful work.

**Table 3.** Regression Analysis of Women’s Work Participation and Selected Variables.

Independent Variables	Regression Coefficient	Log Odds	Significance
<b><u>Age</u></b>	.0675	<b>1.069</b>	.0000**
<b><u>Residence</u></b>			
Rural	.0761	1.079	.6136
Urban*			
<b><u>Household Size</u></b>	-.1183	<b>.8884</b>	<b>.0157**</b>
<b><u>No. of children ever born</u></b>	.0288	1.029	<b>.5744</b>
<b><u>Religion</u></b>			
Non-Roman Catholic	.1391	1.149	.4318
Roman Catholic*			
<b><u>Education</u></b>			
Elementary	-.3850	.6804	<b>.0693</b>
High school	-.9046	.4047	<b>.0000**</b>
<b>College*</b>			
Postgraduate	2.0313	7.623	.0105**
Vocational	-.9883	.3722	.0002**
<b><u>Duration of FP use</u></b>			
Non-FP users	-.3940	.6743	.0203**
PU for 24 mos. & above, but not CU	-.4256	.6533	.1339
PU, for less than 24 mos. But not CU.	-.1094	.8963	.4573
PU stopped, then CU 24 mos. & above	.4266	1.532	.0087**
PU stopped, then CU, less than 24 mos.	-.4550	.6344	.0685
CU, continuous for 24 mos. & above **			
CU, continuous for less than 24 mos.	-.0497	.9515	.2759
Cannot recall	-.00004	1.000	.3776
<b><u>Socioeconomic status</u></b>	.1159	1.122	.0000**
Constant	-3.0342	<b>0.0481</b>	.0000

\* Reference category

\*\*Statistically significant at 5 percent level

CU - Current users

PU - Previous users

**Family Planning and Work Participation: Qualitative Examinations**

Results of the FGDs and in-depth interviews support the survey results. Both the male and female key informants tended to favor wives' working for pay. The men shared the women's view that women should work if they want to. They also agreed that women can help augment their family income and that having multiple and closely-spaced pregnancies can prevent mothers from working, even if they want to. Being the one mainly responsible for child care, a mother cannot easily leave the house when the children are still small, unless she has a full-time baby sitter. With the high cost of baby sitters, however, a mother would rather stay at home to attend to her mothering responsibilities.

The husbands concurred that when pregnancies are spaced or when the number of children is limited, it is easier for their wives to decide to work full-time outside the house; otherwise, they have to wait until their children are grown up. Both the men and the women perceived that working women with closely-spaced pregnancies often suffer from physical as well as emotional exhaustion from the multiple burden of housework, child care and formal employment.

The women acknowledged the economic and psychological advantages of working for pay. They underscored the fact that in difficult

situations, working women can contribute to the family coffer, and, economic partnership of the husband and the wife is "more of a necessity rather than a choice."

The women pointed out that among the psychological benefits they get from earning money is the enhancement of their self-esteem or self-worth. They said that when they have their own money, they "think highly of themselves" and "feel more secure and confident because they can buy what they want.

Some key informants also confided that having more children than the number they desire limits their economic opportunities. They recognized the fact that most mothers give priority to their children.

The husbands agreed that the wife's time is usually concentrated in child care and household chores and that the presence of small children at home increases their responsibilities and burden. Some of the men expressed that they prefer their wives to stay at home than for them to work outside the home when the children are still of pre-school age, even when household help is available.

The following cases illustrate how family planning has enhances the economic opportunities and improves the quality of life of woman.

**The Case of Salve**

*Salve (21 years old) married Alexis immediately after college graduation. Two months after, she got pregnant. Even if she wanted*



to work, she could not because two months after the birth of her first baby. Realizing, that she could never work unless she stopped having babies, she discussed with Alexis the possibility of family planning. They visited a doctor for advice and since they still wanted to have a third child, they were prescribed pills. Salve was still on pills during the survey and was already working as an accounting clerk in a private firm. With a steady income, she felt better that she could help meet the financial needs of her family. She was also pleased that she could buy things for herself without asking for Alexis' permission.

### **The Case of Mary**

Mary, a fish vendor, has seven children. When she married Andres, a fisherman, she was convinced that a wife's functions were to "bear children," "serve her husband," and "take care of the children and the house;" and the husband's role was to "provide for the family." After 13 years of marriage, however, she realized that Andres' income from fishing could adequately not support their family. Although Mary wanted to work, her closely spaced pregnancies prevented her from doing so. When her seventh child was born, the eldest was only about 13 years old. She had heard about family planning from

a BHW, but being a devout Roman Catholics, she and Andres hesitated to contracept, until they could no longer ignore their economic difficulties. They decided to go to the RHU where they obtained family planning advice. Mary was able to work and earn about Php 100 daily by vending fish.

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The results of the study confirm the positive influence of family planning on the work participation of women. The findings support the hypothesis that the women's opportunities to work tend to be enhanced by FP practice. Their being able to limit the number of their children or space their pregnancies have allowed them to have more time to work for a pay.

The need for women to work and earn income becomes more evident when they already have children. As their number of children increases, their need to join the work force is also increased.

This findings support the position of Hong and Seltzer (1994) that women's chances of getting employed are enhanced by family planning practice as evidenced by the favorable association between family planning practice and work participation of MWRAs.

Since many women are already working for a living, work environments must be improved to make it safe, especially for women who have special needs, like those who are pregnant, with small children, or those who are lactating. A day care or drop-in center near or at their workplace can help working mothers perform their work well, since they do not need to worry about their children during work hours. With less things to worry about they can be more punctual in their work and

they can be more productive. If their performance improves, so better-paying jobs will be opened to them, and promotions and other incentives usually enjoyed only by men will also be enjoyed by them.

Women must be given equal chance as men in the field of work. There should be laws requiring companies/institutions to show proof that they give women equal chance so men to be employed, to occupy decision-making positions, and to get promoted.

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