

KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDE OF RURAL COLLEGE STUDENTS REGARDING CONTRACEPTION

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ABSTRACT: INTRODUCTION: The contraceptive knowledge of today's teenagers decides the future of contraceptive practices of tomorrow's eligible couples. High abortion rate of 46%² of live births is associated with lack of contraceptive awareness. **MATERIALS AND METHOD:** The study was conducted among 426 students belonging to 3 rural colleges in Bangalore, South India. **RESULTS:** Majority 83.1% of the students were aware of legal age at marriage for girls however 79.6% of the preferred 18-21 years. 78.4% of them preferred two child norm. However, the knowledge regarding contraceptive practices was poor. The awareness regarding condoms was 70.9%, 30.8% for OCPs, 8.9% for IUCD. 16.2% for Emergency contraception and 32.6% for surgical method. 82.6% of them felt that there must be spacing between two children and only 8.6% were aware of IUCD for the same. More than 50% of the students felt that family planning improves health, solves social problems and improves quality of life. **CONCLUSION:** The study clearly shows that though there is a positive attitude regarding family planning, there is lack of awareness regarding various contraceptive methods.

KEY WORDS: Contraception, Knowledge, attitude, Students.

INTRODUCTION: India was the first country to introduce the National Family Welfare programme in 1952¹. Despite this, contraceptive and sex education remains a taboo. Besides this, the programme has targeted the so called 'eligible couple' to control population. This leaves the newly married couple at risk of pregnancy due to lack of contraceptive knowledge. This has also led to a rise in the abortion rate to as high as 46% of live births².

Thus contraceptive knowledge among newlyweds is a must. However, the attitudes are developed much earlier, as early as during teenage. So the future population trend will hinge on the fertility decisions of today's teenagers and also their ability and freedom to act on those decisions. Because of the young age structure of India's population, the reproductive attitude and behavior of teenagers are likely to have an impact on overall reproductive health, demographic and socio-economic outcome. Since they are potential parents and responsible future citizens, it warrants an investigation into their knowledge and attitude regarding contraception.

MATERIALS AND METHODS: The study was carried out in three Pre-University colleges in rural Bangalore, the field practice area of SIMS & RC. 462 students of first and second year preuniversity were included in the study.

Inclusion criteria: all the students present on the day of the study willing to participate in the study.

Exclusion Criteria: Students not willing to participate.

The students were informed about the study and consent was taken assuring their anonymity. They were given a pretested semi-structured questionnaire to be filled. The data

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obtained was analyzed using SPSS version 16 statistical package. Results presented as proportions and chi-square.

RESULTS: A total of 462 students, 232 boys (54.5%) and 194 girls (45.5%) were studied. Only 50% of the students knew the correct legal age for marriage for boys and 83.1% of them knew the legal age for girls. This knowledge was significantly higher among girls as compared to boys. Majority of the boys (78.9%) and girls (80.4%) regarded 18-21 years as desirable age for girls. However 5.4% of the students felt that the desirable age for marriage for girls should be less than 18 years. Majority of the girls (79.4%) and 37% of the boys indicated 20-25 years as the desirable age for boys.

A significant number of girls (98.8%) preferred two child norms as compared to only 61.2% of the boys.

76% of the boys and 65% of the girls were aware of condoms as birth control method. However there was poor awareness regarding other methods of contraception like OCPs where 40.7% of the girls and only 22.4% of the boys were aware and the difference was significant. Only 2.5% of the boys and 16.4% of the girls were aware of IUDs.

When students were asked regarding their attitude regarding the spacing, majority of them opted for delay in first child birth (77.2%) and spacing between two children (82.6%). However their knowledge regarding the methods of contraception for the same was poor. Only 40.7% of them were aware of using condom for delaying first pregnancy, 32.5% were aware of use of OCPs for the same. Only 9.65% of the students said that they can use IUD as spacing method and even 3.1% of them mentioned surgery as option for spacing. 20.3% of the boys and only 11.2% of the girls were aware of emergency contraception and 23.7% of boys and 43.3% of girls were aware of surgery.

There was a good amount of knowledge regarding uses of contraception and family planning. 62.5% of them mentioned that it improves health of the people, 51% of the said it solves social problems, 32% of them said it prevents unwanted pregnancies and 54% of them felt it improves quality of life.

DISCUSSION: In a study done on high school students in Ludhiana 54% of the boys and 70% of the girls knew the correct legal age of marriage for boys similar to our study where it was 36.6 and 66% respectively. The knowledge regarding legal age of marriage for girls was 61.8% among boys and 81.3% among girls which was higher in our study 76.1% and 91% respectively. 80.1% of boys and 72.7% of girls felt the desirable age of marriage of girls must be 18-21 years, and in our study it was 78.9% and 80.4% respectively³.

In a study done on college students in Sikkim, the awareness about condom was 85% and that of OCP was 40% as compared to 70.9% and 30.8% respectively in our study which is much lower. In the same study awareness regarding Surgery and IUCD was 12% each as compared to 32.6% and 8.9% in our study⁴. There was very poor knowledge regarding emergency contraception in our study being 16.2% which was only 7.3% among female college students at Chandigarh⁵ and 20% as per NFHS III⁶ data.

CONCLUSION: It is evident from the study that there is lack of awareness regarding availability of various contraceptive methods among PU college students. However it is encouraging that they have a positive attitude towards contraception and are aware of the ill effects of uncontrolled population growth. This gap in knowledge must be filled with appropriate health education programmes

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incorporated into the curriculum in colleges. This will considerably reduce the abortion rate due to unwanted pregnancies and bring about only wanted pregnancies which is the essence of family planning.

Age at marriage	Boys n= 232 (%)	Girls n= 194 (%)	Total n =426 (%)	p value
Legal age at marriage				
For boys – 21 years	85(36.6)	128(66.0)	213(50)	0.000
For girls – 18 years	178(76.7)	176(91.0)	354(83.1)	<0.05
Desirable age for marriage for boys:				
< 20 years	15(6.4)	08(4.1)	23 (5.4)	>0.05
20-25 years	86(37.0)	154(79.4)	240 (56.3)	0.000
>25 years	131(56.6)	32(16.5)	163 (38.3)	<0.05
Desirable age for marriage for girls:				
< 18 years	11(4.7)	12(6.2)	23 (5.4)	>0.05
18-21 years	183(78.9)	156(80.4)	339 (79.6)	>0.05
21-25 years	32(13.8)	18(9.3)	50 (11.7)	>0.05
>25 years	06(2.6)	8(4.1)	14 (3.3)	>0.05
Desirable Number of children				
One	88 (37.9)	1(0.6)	89 (20.9)	0.000
Two	142(61.2)	192(98.8)	334 (78.4)	<0.05
Three or more	2 (0.9)	1 (0.6)	3 (0.7)	>0.05

Table I: Student's Knowledge and attitude regarding age at marriage and family size

	Boys n= 232 (%)	Girls n= 194 (%)	Total n =426 (%)	p value
Contraceptive method awareness				
Condom	176 (76)	126 (65.0)	302 (70.9)	>0.05
Oral Contraceptive Pills	52 (22.4)	79 (40.7)	131 ((30.8)	<0.05
IUCD	6 (2.5)	32 (16.4)	38 ((8.9)	<0.05
Emergency contraception	47 (20.3)	22 (11.2)	69 (16.2)	>0.05
Surgery	55(23.7)	84(43.3)	139(32.6)	>0.05
Attitude regarding contraception				
Delay in first child birth	190(81.9)	139(71.6)	329(77.2)	>0.05
Spacing between 2 children	196(84.5)	156(80.4)	352(82.6)	>0.05
Knowledge regarding methods for delay in first pregnancy:				
Condom	119(51.3)	54(27.8)	173(40.7)	<0.05
OCP	69(29.7)	69(35.6)	138(32.5)	>0.05
Knowledge regarding methods for Spacing between 2 children:				

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Condom	62(26.7)	37(19.1)	99(23.2)	<0.05
OCP	22(9.5)	31(16)	53(12.4)	<0.05
IUCD	13(5.6)	24(12.4)	37(8.6)	<0.05
Surgery	3(1.3)	10(5.1)	13(3.1)	<0.05
Knowledge regarding advantages of Family planning:				
Improves health	142(61.2)	124(63.9)	266(62.5)	>0.05
Solves social problems	130(56)	87(44.8)	217(51)	>0.05
Prevents unwanted pregnancies	63(27.2)	73(37.6)	136(32)	>0.05
Improves quality of life	136(58.6)	94(48.4)	230(54)	>0.05

Table II: Student's awareness regarding contraceptive methods and attitude regarding family size

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