



KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE OF FAMILY PLANNING METHODS AMONG WOMEN IN HIMACHAL PRADESH: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

In the present paper, an attempt has been made to examine the knowledge and awareness of various contraceptive methods among women in Himachal Pradesh. The main objective of this paper is to explore the knowledge, awareness and practice of different family planning methods among women in Kangra and Kullu district of Himachal Pradesh. This is a comparative study conducted in the two districts namely Kangra and Kullu of Himachal Pradesh. This paper is based on data collected through a structured Interview schedule regarding various contraceptive methods among women in Himachal Pradesh. A total number of 332 ever-married women in the reproductive age group of 15-49 years, 170 women from Thural Sub-Tehsil of Kangra and 162 from Kullu's Nirmand Tehsil were taken for the study. Simple percentage method was used for analysing the categorical data. The results of the study show that in district Kangra, a higher number of women have knowledge and awareness of various family planning methods as compared to Kullu district. The findings of the study also indicates that higher use of contraceptive method is associated with higher level of education and also have positive relationship with son preference.

Keywords: Family Planning, Contraceptive, Sterilized, Tubectomy, Son Preference.

Introduction

Family planning refers to a conscious effort by a couple to limit or space the number of children they have through the use of contraceptive methods (Survey H. Central Statistical Agency, 2016). Family planning is adopted voluntarily upon the

bases of knowledge, attitude, and responsible decisions by couples and individuals. Furthermore, it deals with reproductive health of the mother, having adequate birth spacing, avoiding undesired pregnancies and abortions, preventing sexually transmitted diseases, and improving

the quality of life of mother, fetus, and family as a whole (World Health Organization, 2007). Contraception in the simplest term is the prevention of pregnancy and contraceptive methods, by definition, are the preventive methods to help women avoid unwanted pregnancies (Wani *et al.*, 2019).

Today, the global population stands at 7.7 billion and is expected to reach 9 billion by the year 2045 (Van, 2013). Increasing population is a global problem today, India is having one-fifth of the world population and a growth rate of 16 million each year, is the second most populated country in the world (Park, 2002). The major impediment to our national development has been recognized as uncontrolled population growth, despite the fact that India was the first country in the world to adapt a national population control program in 1952 (Renjhen *et al.*, 2010). Therefore, at global as well as national level, it becomes imperative to ensure that all pregnancies are wanted or intended.

The use of contraceptives can prevent at least 25% of all maternal deaths by preventing unintended pregnancies and unsafe abortions and also protect against sexually transmitted infections such as - Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), Chlamydia, Syphilis, etc. (Weldegerima & Deneke, 2008). In the developing countries the main barriers that exist are lack of knowledge of contraceptive methods, source of supply, cost, or poor accessibility etc. (Jahan *et al.*, 2017).

To adopt an official family planning programme, India became the first country

of the world in 1952. India stands at 56.3 per cent with an unmet need of 12.8 per cent in the current use of overall family planning methods (Sehgal *et al.*, 2009). Women resorts to medical termination of pregnancy to end them and unintended pregnancies occur as a result of unmet need of family planning methods or contraceptives. The conditions that can lead to a pregnancy being unwanted include and hence terminations are due to - having enough children, unplanned pregnancy, pregnancy due to contraceptive failure, previous child too young, others unmarried, rape, medical illness, etc.

Studies have shown that due to low level of awareness of family planning methods or contraception, lack of availability of spacing methods, misinformation or lack of practice of the different contraceptive options, leads to abortion being used as an alternative to contraception. Studies have also found that there is an inverse relation with the level of contraceptive use and abortion incidence, and there is a positive correlation between unmet need for contraception and abortion levels (Marston & Cleland, 2003).

The current study by Rabbanie *et al.*, (2019) about the knowledge, attitude and practice of family planning services among healthcare workers in Kashmir – A cross-sectional study depicts that most of women in reproductive age group, know little or have incorrect information about family planning methods. Even when they know the name of some of the contraceptives, they do not know where to get them or how to use it. These women have negative attitude

about family planning, whereas some have heard false and misleading information. However, some of the researches have shown that highest awareness but low utilization of contraceptives making the situation a serious challenge.

Review of Existing Literature

Jha *et al.*, (2011) conducted a study on women from different socio-economic groups residing in Bombay, to assess their attitudes and practices with regard to family planning. The findings of the study suggests that sterilization is the best-known method of family planning, and the knowledge of contraception and the desire to limit family does not immediately lead to use of the contraceptives. The use of contraceptives for spacing is present mainly in the younger and better educated mothers, knowledge about the other methods is related to the educational level of the women.

In Andhra Pradesh, the most favoured option for family planning is female sterilization and about 62.9 per cent of women aged 15 to 49 years and currently married have undergone sterilization. The state has the youngest average age (22.4 years) at sterilization in the country with only 6-8 years of reproductive span but the preventive knowledge of regular use of condoms is very low in Andhra Pradesh at only 34.1 percent among women and 73.4 percent among men NFHS-3 (Human Development Report, 2007).

The study by George and Dahiya (1998), with regard to female foeticide in rural Haryana in thirty-six villages of Rohtak and Jaghar districts, the results of the

study indicated that the percentage of sterilized women increased as they had more surviving sons but reverse was not evident. The pregnancy rate was also higher for women who had no surviving sons compared to mothers who had several sons. It indicates that use of family planning methods and son preference is also having close positive relation.

The study by Devi *et al.*, (2007) Characteristics of Primigravida Women Seeking Abortion Services at a Referral Centre, Manipur, examined the reasons for seeking abortion services by the women. More than one-fifth (21.06 per cent) women undergoing abortion for first time, were ignorant, 66.05 per cent had poor knowledge about contraceptive methods. Only 11.09 per cent women had good knowledge of contraceptive. Socio-cultural and economic factors was the commonest reason for undergoing abortion among these women. The lack of contraceptive knowledge among these could be due to the lack of education regarding contraceptive methods among adolescents. Therefore, the study reveals that there is a need to strengthen adolescent health services.

John, *et al.*, in (2008) addresses the strategies and technologies of family planning and highlighted the complex and nuanced issue of intra-family dynamics and the politics of reproduction within the household. They argued that social change can take place only by a change in structural factors, like equal property rights and equality in other intergenerational transfers. The study further gives rich insights into the phenomenon of son-preference and its

normative outcome—daughter aversion—and asserts that ‘Planning the family now means planning for families with sons and preferably without daughters, and certainly not more than one daughter’. It indicates that new way of family planning is taking place by using new modern reproductive technologies followed by medical termination of pregnancy, leading towards families with sons and preferably without daughters.

In Rajasthan, National Family Health Survey 2005-06-III evinces the contraceptive prevalence rate for currently married women (15-49 years) are 47.0 per cent compared to 56.0 per cent in India. The contraceptive prevalence rate increased from 40.0 per cent (NFHS-2, 1998-99) to 47.0 per cent for (NFHS-3, 2005-06). Female sterilization is the most common method. According to NFHS-1(1992-93) and NFHS-2(1998-99) the male sterilization was 1.5 per cent and 2.5 per cent respectively, the NFHS-3 recorded male sterilization to be merely 0.8 per cent only. It reveals that in a patriarchal society like Rajasthan, the male contraception is resisted, especially vasectomy.

Knowledge of contraception is almost universal in Himachal Pradesh. However, some methods are less well known. According to NFHS-4, 2015-2016, only 21 percent of currently married women know about female condoms. Fifty-nine percent of currently married women know about emergency contraception and 65 percent know about injectables. A little less than one-third (32%) of currently married men know about female condoms. Fifty-one

percent of currently married men know about the Inter-Uterine Device (IUD or PPIUD) and 59 percent know about emergency contraception. The contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR) among currently married women age 15-49 decreased up to 57 percent in NFHS-4, from 73 percent in NFHS-3. According to NFHS-4, modern contraceptive method use is up to 52 per cent, has also declined from (71%) since NFHS-3. The share of female sterilization in contraceptive method use is decreased 61 percent in NFHS-4, from 67 percent in NFHS-3. Contraceptive use in NFHS-4 increases with age, from 12 percent for women age 15-19 to 65 per cent for women age 30-49. In Himachal Pradesh, contraceptive use does not vary much by urban-rural residence and caste/tribe. Contraceptive use varies considerably by schooling. Sixty-eight percent of women having no schooling use contraception, compared with 46 percent of women having 12 or more years of schooling.

Regarding the use of contraceptive method, women are more likely to use a contraceptive method if they already have a son in Himachal Pradesh. The reports of in NFHS-4,2015-16, shows that women with two children, 70 percent with at least one son use a method of family planning, compared with 43 percent with two daughters and no sons. It indicates that highest contraceptive use is associated with son preference in Himachal Pradesh. In Himachal Pradesh, the condom/Nirodh (13 per cent) is the most common modern spacing method used by currently married women. In general, the use of spacing methods among women is low.

The analysis about the utilization of the facility show that, a vast majority 97 percent of sterilized women had their sterilization operation in a public sector health facility, mainly in a government/municipal hospital or a camp, and 80 percent of IUD/PPIUD users had their IUD insertion in a public sector health facility, in NFHS-4. It indicates that public sector/ health facility, mainly government/municipal hospitals are playing a significant role in providing family methods in Himachal Pradesh.

According to NFHS-5 (2019-20) the contraceptive using rate among currently married women is (age 15-49) 74 per cent, increased from 57 per cent in NFHS-4. The use of modern family planning method is 63 per cent has also increased from 52 per cent in NFHS-4. Female sterilization level has recorded slight increase 38 per cent in NFHS-5as compared to 35 per cent in NFHS-4; the share of female sterilization in overall contraceptive use has fluctuated between 51 per cent to 68 per cent in all five NFHS surveys.

The contraceptive use does not vary very much, by urban-rural residence and caste/tribe in Himachal Pradesh. Contraceptive use varies considerably by schooling. The percentage of women is 68 per cent having no schooling, use contraception, compared with 46 percent of women having 12 or more years of schooling. The religious categorization reveals that Muslim women (37 per cent) are less likely to use contraception than Hindu women (57 per cent) or Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist women 62 per cent in NFHS-4,

2015-16. The contraceptives prevalence rate among different religious groups suggests that religious beliefs and practices also influence the use of contraceptives methods.

The prevalence of son preference is also deeply associated with contraceptive use, women in Himachal Pradesh are much more likely to use contraceptives if they already have a son in all five NFHS surveys. In this context, a large majority 84 per cent with one son use a method of family planning, compared with 64 per cent of women with two daughters and no son (NFHS-5, 2019-20). It indicates that son preference is also there and have positive relation with contraceptive use also.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of this paper is to explore the knowledge and awareness of different family planning methods /contraceptives among women, in a comparative study, conducted in the two districts namely Kangra and Kullu of Himachal Pradesh.

Data and Methodology

This paper is based on data collected through an Interview schedule from Himachal Pradesh's two districts namely Kangra and Kullu. A total number of 332 women in the reproductive age group of 15-49 years were taken. These comprises of 170 women from Thural Sub-Tehsil of Kangra and 162 from Kullu's Nirmand Tehsil. They are selected on random basis. The study includes all castes and social groups living in the selected villages of Thural sub-tehsil of Kangra and Nirmand Tehsil of Kullu district. Simple frequency and percentage

method was used for analysing the categorical data. In this paper an attempt has been made to explore the knowledge and attitude of different contraceptive methods /family planning methods among women in Kangra and Kullu district of Himachal Pradesh. In this study, primary data collected through Structured Interview Schedule, field work by taking household survey, all women respondents contacted at their place of residence. Secondary sources of data like-census reports, books, magazines, research articles and Internet sources are also extensively used for the study purpose.

Findings and Discussion

Use of Contraceptives better than Abortion

The data pertaining to respondents, who think that it is better to use contraceptives rather than to go for abortion, **Table 1** indicates that all the respondents in the study area agreed that it is better to use contraceptive methods than having abortion repeatedly.

Table 1: Use of Contraceptives better than Abortion

Response	Kangra		Kullu		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Yes	170	100	162	100	332	100
No	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	170	100	162	100	332	100

Knowledge of Contraceptive Methods

The data about knowledge of different contraceptive methods (**Table 2**) indicates that in total, majority (80.72 per cent) of the respondents know either one or another method of birth control. The remaining

small number 19.27 per cent of respondents informed that they do not know about any contraceptive method. In district Kangra only 08.23 per cent and in Kullu 30.86 per cent revealed that they do not know about contraceptive methods.

Table 2: Knowledge of Contraceptive Methods

Response	Kangra		Kullu		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Yes	156	91.76	112	69.13	268	80.72
No	14	08.23	50	30.86	64	19.27
Total	170	100.0	162	100.0	332	100.0

In district Kangra a maximum (91.76 per cent) number of women reported to have knowledge of contraceptive methods, while in Kullu (69.13 per cent) respondents have knowledge of one or another method of family planning. The results of the study indicate that in district Kangra, due to higher level of literacy i.e. 85.67 per cent (2011), a significantly higher number of women know about contraceptive methods whereas in Kullu due to low literacy rate i.e. 79.40 per cent (2011) women lags behind regarding knowledge and awareness about family methods from their counterparts in district Kangra.

Use of Contraceptive Methods

The contraceptive prevalence rate in Himachal Pradesh is the highest of any other state in India. The National Family Health Survey-3 (2005-06) shows that nearly three-fourth (73.0 per cent) of currently married women are using a contraceptive method. Female sterilization is 49.00 per cent and only 06.00 per cent men have undergone male sterilization, and condom is the second most commonly used spacing method. The -

Table 3: Use of Contraceptive Methods

Use of Contraceptive Method	Kangra		Kullu		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
N.A.	14	08.23	50	30.86	64	19.27
Oral Pills	25	14.70	11	06.08	36	10.84
Condoms	63	37.05	32	19.75	95	28.61
Copper-T	29	17.05	02	01.23	31	09.31
Tubectomy/ Vasectomy	34	20.00	52	32.01	86	25.90
Self-devices	05	02.94	15	09.25	20	06.02
Total	170	100.0	162	100.0	332	100.0

-percentage of women using a contraceptive method (94.00 per cent) is significantly higher with two sons but no daughters as compared with 48 .00 per cent of women with two daughters but no sons (NFHS; 2005-06: 9). It indicates prevalence of son preference in the state of Himachal Pradesh.

The data regarding the use of contraceptive methods **Table 3** reveals that in total, more than one-fourth (28.61 per cent) of the respondents were using condoms, followed by 25.90 per cent had undergone tubectomy or vasectomy and only little more than one-tenth (10.84 per cent) were using oral contraceptives or pills. The remaining good number of respondents were using Copper-T, and a few numbers among them were practicing withdrawal method or self-devices (09.31 per cent, 06.02 per cent) respectively. Nearly, one-fifth (19.27 per cent) of the respondents were not using any method of birth control. It is observed that they must be using self-devices or some of the women reported that their husband is having infrequent visits, because of their jobs they were living in some other places.

In district Kangra a higher number more than one-third (37.05 per cent) of women revealed that they were using condoms as compared to 19.75 per cent in Kullu. In both districts a small number (06.08 per cent in Kullu) of women were using oral contraceptives, the number of women is slightly higher (14.70 per cent) in district Kangra. In Kangra, only 02.94 per cent and in Kullu 09.25 per cent women reported about self-devices or withdrawal method. In Kullu significantly higher number (almost one third 32.01 per cent) of women have undergone tubectomy or (their husbands had vasectomy) than (20.0 per cent) in Kangra. In district Kangra a very less number of women 8.23 per cent were not using any contraceptive or they replied negatively about contraceptive use, whereas in Kullu, a significantly higher number 30.86 per cent of women were not using contraceptive methods. It indicates that in remote areas of the state due to lack of education women lags behind in awareness and use of family planning methods.

Table 4: Where did they get Contraceptives?

From where they get Contraceptive?	Kangra		Kullu		Total	
	Freq.	%age	Freq.	%age	Freq.	%age
N.A.	19	11.17	65	40.12	84	25.30
Govt. Hospital	52	30.58	30	18.05	82	24.69
PHC/CHC	15	08.82	29	17.90	44	13.25
Govt. Dispensary	35	20.58	18	11.11	53	15.96
Private Doctor/Private Hospital	12	07.05	-	-	12	03.61
Chemists	37	21.76	20	12.03	57	17.16
Total	170	100.0	162	100.0	332	100.0

The analysis of the study reveals that in remote areas like Kullu most of the women prefer to undergo (tubectomy) permanent family planning methods, whereas in Kangra due to better level of education and development women's partner were using temporary methods of birth control. It further indicates that in remote areas of the state education plays a significant role in selection of type of family planning method or contraceptives and family planning burden is also on women.

Where did they get Contraceptives?

The data on the question from where do you get contraceptives? (Table 4) depicts that in total, nearly one-fourth (24.69 per cent) of the respondents receive contraceptives from government hospitals, followed by 17.16 per cent from the chemist shops, and a good number of (15.96 per cent) of respondents got it from the nearby government dispensary in the village. The remaining small number 13.25 percent of respondents received contraceptives or family methods from Primary Health Centre or Community Health Centres.

In district Kangra, a higher number (30.58 per cent) of respondents get

contraceptives from Government hospital followed by 20.58 per cent from Govt. dispensary and 8.82 per cent women received contraceptives from the Primary Health Centres / Community Health Centres (PHC/CHC) (whereas number of women are less in Kullu i.e. 18.05 per cent who got it from Govt. hospital, 17.90 per cent took from Primary health/ Community health centres and 11.11 per cent got contraceptives from Govt. dispensary. In Kangra 21.76 per cent, and in Kullu 12.03 per cent got from chemist shops and in Kullu district a significantly higher number 40.12 per cent women replied negatively regarding the use of contraceptive or they may be using self - devices or may have undergone tubectomy.

In district Kullu the number of women are almost double, those who received contraceptives from primary health centre than in Kangra. The findings of the study regarding seeking of contraceptives in both districts reveals that a higher number of women were receiving contraceptives from Government hospitals PHC/CHC, Government Dispensaries but the number of women are quite higher in Knagra. It indicates that in the state of Himachal

Pradesh, Government health facilities are providing good family planning and health services to people. But differentiation can be seen in the context of rural and urban, educated and uneducated, more - developed and less developed regions of the state.

Conclusions and Recommendation

On the basis of the foregoing analysis, it can be inferred that orthodoxically, the prevalence of son preference is also deeply associated with contraceptive use, it is also found in the study area as well as in all five NFHS surveys that women in Himachal Pradesh are much more likely to use contraceptives if they already have a son. In this context, a large majority 84 per cent of women s with one son use a method of family planning, compared with 64 per cent of women with two daughters and no son as found in NFHS-5, 2019-20.

It is significant to mention here that majority of the respondents were aware about family planning methods in the selected villages. But certainly, the variation regarding the choice of selection of contraceptive method is influenced by the level of education, income, more development and accessibility. The Study further shows that in district Kangra, due to higher level of education, income, accessibility and awareness most of women were using modern contraceptive methods in comparison to their counterparts in district Kullu.

In various other studies as well as in all five NFHS surveys, female sterilization is found the most common method. According to NFHS-5, the most widely

known contraception is female sterilization, known by 95-97 per cent of currently married women, men and adults are less likely to know about temporary contraceptive methods. It reveals that in a patriarchal society like India, bearing the burden of family planning, is also lie on women, their mental, physical, and emotional health is not considered important and male contraception is resisted, especially vasectomy. So, as to increase the awareness and use of family planning practices in a comprehensive manner, health workers should teach the community about family planning methods / contraceptives practices and develop a favourable attitude so that family planning utilization will be enhanced.

Hence, it can be concluded that government should make more serious efforts to implement family planning programme in the rural and less developed areas and people with low level of education. Furthermore, awareness programmes as well as easy access to contraceptives among men and women about the family planning methods/ contraceptives should be strengthened more. Keeping in view, the reproductive health and rights of the women, there is an urgent need to make men and women aware about family planning methods or contraceptives in the rural and remote areas of the state of Himachal Pradesh.

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