



Teacher's attitude may be an impediment to adolescent reproductive & sexual health- A study on awareness and practice of contraception among school teachers of Raipur city

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Abstract:

Recently unsafe sexual practices and adolescent pregnancy has been gaining more focus. Emphasis has been laid upon introduction of sex education in secondary schools to ensure healthy reproductive life. Therefore, the present cross-sectional study was undertaken to assess the understanding of meaning and methods of contraception, the status of unmet need for contraception & the reasons for unmet need of contraception in Raipur city, Chhattisgarh among 204 teachers from 6 schools with pre-designed, pretested semi-structured questionnaire. The current study not only identifies the unmet need among school teachers, but also identifies serious lacunae and prejudices in terms of knowledge and attitude regarding contraception. An urgent need is thus identified for education and training of teachers through seminars and workshops, to equip them properly not only in addressing their unmet needs for contraception but also for the task of providing sex education adequately in schools.

Key words: Adolescent Reproductive & Sexual Health, Contraception awareness, India, School teachers, Unmet need

Introduction

Though India was the first country to introduce family planning programme in national health programme, population explosion still remains a major problem [1]. At the current rates, India is expected to take over China as the most populous country by 2028 [2]. Important population control strategies planned include identifying and addressing unmet needs of contraception. Currently very limited data are available in India which assesses the unmet needs of contraception among teachers.

During schooling, school teachers have a huge influence on adolescent minds. The beliefs and concepts of school teachers play an important role on how they modify their pupils. Recently unsafe sexual practices and adolescent pregnancy has been gaining more focus. Emphasis has been laid upon introduction of sex education in secondary schools to ensure healthy reproductive life. Therefore, the present study is undertaken to assess the status of knowledge, awareness and practice of school teachers about contraception.

Objectives

1. To assess the understanding of meaning and methods of contraception among school teachers.
2. To assess the status of unmet need for contraception among married school teachers.
3. To know the reasons for unmet need of contraception.

Materials and Methods

A cross sectional, observational study was carried out in Raipur city, Chhattisgarh from November 2011-January 2012 among school teachers. The study was carried out through Department of Community Medicine of Pt. JNM Medical College, Raipur with required permission and consent from College Authorities. Convenient sampling was done for selecting sample size. A list of all the schools present in Raipur city was obtained from DEO {District Education Officer} which were nearby to the Institute. Ethical approval was taken from Institutional Ethical Committee board. From 24 schools, a sample is selected by simple

random sampling by lottery method. Total six schools came out for survey conduction. All the teachers present in these schools on the day of survey were included. 204 teachers from 6 schools were finally enlisted for study. A predesigned, pretested semi structured questionnaire was used. Days before every survey, permission from respective principles were taken and all the arrangements (sitting and sound system) were checked. Before distributing questionnaire all the teachers were told about purpose of the study with introduction of surveyors. The teachers were asked to fill up the questionnaire. Questionnaire included questions about their particulars, knowledge related questions (regarding contraceptive methods) and contraceptive practice question for married couples. Questionnaire included both open ended and closed ended questions. Proforma was in Hindi as well as in English and abbreviations were explained to them beforehand.

Results

Socio-demographic characteristics

Majority of respondents (85.8%) were female and in the age group of 20 – 30 years. Also majority of respondents (81.6%) were Hindu. Respondents were predominantly married (74.5%) Among 152 married subjects, 5 subjects were living single i.e. either divorced or a widow. Therefore these 5 subjects were not eligible for practice of family planning measures. Majority of subject lives in nuclear family (68.13%) followed by joint family (31.86%). Out of 204 subjects, 128 (62.7%) had children, with 35.9% teachers having borne the last child in the last 5 year. 29.7% the respondents had borne the last child in the last 5-10 year. 18.8% of the teachers had their last child more than 15 years back.

Contraception knowledge and awareness

172 respondents (84.3%) were aware of the meaning of contraception while 13 (6.3%) had refused to answer the question. The awareness was more among males (72.4%) as compared to females (54.3%). Most of the respondents (84.3%) believed contraception was to be used by married couples, while lesser number believed that contraception is also a must for live in relationships (35.3%) or for unmarried couples (27.9%).

The main reason cited for contraception use was for spacing of children (57.1%), followed by limiting the family size (52.2%), delaying first pregnancy (29.1%). Very few (2.4%) cited protection against sexually transmitted disease, as other objectives. None cited regularising menstrual cycle as objectives. 75.9% of the

male respondents were aware of the various methods of contraception. Unfortunately only 53.9% of the female respondents were aware of the various types of contraceptives that can be used. The knowledge about emergency contraception was even poorer with 34.5% males and only 18.9% females answering correctly. Emergency contraceptive - pill was the most preferred mode for emergency contraception (26.1%).

Males were more aware of advantages of use of various modes of contraception, and condoms were the most preferred mode (55.7%). Among females, OCPs were the most (21.7%) preferred because of perceived advantages like maximum effectiveness and use in spacing children. Males preferred condoms as they were easily available and easy to use. Interestingly even 20.7% females responded that condoms were a safe and convenient mode of contraception. Only 31% of the males and 27.5% of the females were aware of one or more side effects of the various contraceptive methods. Common side effects correctly enumerated were weight gain, vomiting for OCPs and excessive bleeding and back pain for IUDs. Majority of the subjects got to hear about these methods of contraception from their doctors (69.6%) and media (57.4%).

Practice of contraception:

Out of the 204 respondents, 134 (65.7%) were eligible for practice of contraception (married and less than 50 years). Of these only 74 (36.3%) were using contraceptive measures. Of the 60 not using contraceptive measures, 26 were either planning for pregnancy, currently pregnant or recently delivered.

Thus the number of respondents in the current population in need for contraception and not using it is 36 (26.9%). This comprises the unmet need of contraception in the current study population.

Majority (61.1%) of the non-users cited fear of side effects as the reason for not using contraceptives. 16.6% were not using contraception because of opposition from family members while 22.2% did not specify any reasons.

Discussion

In the current study, 84.3 % were aware of the meaning of contraception while another 6.3% refused to provide any answer. Only 74 (36.3%) subjects were using contraceptives of some form. In a study to assess the attitude, knowledge and practice of contraception and medical abortion in women attending the family planning clinic in Bangalore, India, only 42.5% were

found to be aware of some form of contraception [3]. In another study from Kancheepuram among married women attending an urban health centre, 52.4% of women were aware about contraceptive practices, of which only 32.2% of subjects were using contraceptive methods [4]. In Aligarh, only 45.9% of women use modern family planning whereas in the other cities, the percentage using modern methods is between 54% and 61% [5]. As per NFHS 3 data, knowledge of contraception is nearly universal: in India with 98 percent of women and 99 percent of men age 15-49 years knowing one or more methods of contraception.

The contraceptive usage rate for currently married women in India is 56 percent. Lower percentage of awareness reflected in the current study may be indicative of the hesitation on part of the respondents as regards to issues of reproductive health and contraception, while the higher usage rate may be reflective of the better educational status of the population. As per NFHS 3 data, contraceptive use among currently married women varies markedly by educational status. Only 52% women with no education use contraception, as compared with 62 percent of women with 12 or more years of education.

Interestingly, in the present study most of the respondents (84.3%) believed contraception was meant for use by married people exclusively. But, in India, there is increasing evidence sexual activity among adolescents. A study in four public and two government schools of South Delhi conducted in 1992 showed that 63.3% of boys and 37.4% of girls were of the opinion that students of their age had sex; 17% boys and 9% girls agreed to take the risk of AIDS rather than miss the chance of having sex with an attractive stranger [6]. In another study in schools in rural Delhi, 23.4% boys and 15.1% girls admitted to having had sex, while 5.7% boys and 9.6% girls did not deny it [7]. Hence the onus is often on the school and ultimately the teachers to educate children about safe sexual practices. Thus awareness must be raised among teachers regarding the importance of contraception in all sexual relationships including those among adolescent or unmarried couples.

In the current study, among females OCPs were the most preferred mode of contraceptive, while males condoms. These findings are similar to a study in Europe [8] where OCP was the most common contraceptive used in Germany (54.3%), France (50.5%) and Sweden (34.6%). While in studies done in Andhra Pradesh and Eastern Delhi, tubectomy and condom (33.9%) were the most preferred methods of contraception respectively [9, 10] As per NFHS 3 data, female sterilization, with a prevalence of 37 percent, accounts for 66 percent of all contraceptive use in India.

In our study 36 subjects (26.9%) had unmet need for contraception. In a study carried out in both rural and urban area of Gwalior district the unmet need of family planning was found to be 21.70% [11]. The unmet need for family planning was 25.4% in a study carried out in a resettlement colony in eastern Delhi [10]. In our study, majority (61.1%) of the non-users cited fear of side effects as the reason for not using contraceptives. 16.6% were not using contraception because of opposition from family members while 22.2% did not specify any reasons. In a study from India [4], 51.6% was the unmet need. The main factors associated with high unmet need identified were lack of knowledge about contraception (70.5%), followed by fear of side effects (21.3%) and familial pressures (13.9%).

The unmet need for family planning should be targeted in population control measures. Reviews on unmet need for family planning in developing countries indicate that substantial gain in contraceptive usage can be achieved in the absence of changes in the demand in number of children by meeting the existing unmet need [12].

Conclusion

In our study male teachers were more aware about contraception than females and also about different methods of contraception. Most of the respondents believe contraception were for married couples while one third also believes contraception is also must for unmarried and live-in relationship couples. Spacing and delaying pregnancy were main reasons cited for contraception. Knowledge about emergency contraception was very poor and restricted to only emergency pill only. Among male condom and among females OCPs were preferred. Nearly less than one third of study subjects were about side effects and heard it from doctors or media. Barriers for unmet need were found to be side effects of contraception or opposition from spouse or family members. Nearly one-fifth were unable to provide any reason for non-use.

Recommendations

The current world population today stands at over 7 billion around 17% of this population resides in India alone. India was the first country in the world to introduce family planning programme in 1952. But India has missed the set goal of achieving net reproductive rate of 1 by 2000 by a mile. Thus the current interventions should be targeted at urgently identifying and addressing the unmet needs of family planning to make contraception more widely available, accessible, and

unmet need among school teachers, but also identifies serious lacunae and prejudices in terms of knowledge and attitude regarding contraception. Adolescent sex and exposure to the risk of pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases has attracted considerable attention in recent times. Hence introduction of sex education in secondary schools through adequately informed and sensitive teachers has been considered the need of the hour. An urgent need is thus identified for education and training of teachers through seminars and workshops, to equip them properly not only in addressing their unmet needs for contraception but also for the task of providing sex education adequately in schools.

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