

## KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND PRACTICE ABOUT FAMILY PLANNING IN LOW INCOME EMPLOYEES OF CMH LAHORE MEDICAL COLLEGE, LAHORE – PAKISTAN

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### ABSTRACT

*Objective: To determine the knowledge, attitude and practice regarding family planning methods among low – income employees of Combined Military Hospital (CMH) Lahore Medical College, Lahore, Pakistan.*

*Design: Cross – sectional observational study.*

*Place and Duration of Study: CMH Lahore Medical College, Lahore from April 2013 to June 2014.*

*Subjects and Methods: A total of 175 low-income, married, in reproductive age group (15-49 years) employees were selected by convenient sampling. Data was collected by pre-designed, pre-tested questionnaire. Face to face interview was conducted to collect the data. Data was entered and analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16.0.*

*Results: About 75% were having knowledge about family planning methods and 38.6 percent were practicing any one of the family planning methods. This showed wide gap between knowledge and practice. Condom (barrier) was most used method (19.3%) followed by safe period (7.4%). Source of knowledge mainly was media (29.5%). Maximum number of employees (79%) were having positive attitude about family planning methods.*

*Conclusion: Majority of people have knowledge and positive attitude about family planning methods but low contraceptive prevalence of 38.6% shows a wide gap between knowledge and practice. There is a dire need of increasing contraceptive prevalence rate in country at least up to 60%. This can be done by increasing easy accessibility to contraceptive methods and tools, through public-private partnership and using mass media for public awareness and motivation.*

*Key Words: Family planning, knowledge, attitude, practice, low-income employees, CMH Lahore.*

### INTRODUCTION

Population size, its composition and growth rate are key in shaping the social and economic development of a country. Pakistan has a fairly high growth rate in the developing world. With a projected population of 188 million, it ranks sixth amongst the most populous countries in the world. Population growth rate in Pakistan is 1.95 percent which exceeds the average growth rate of South Asian countries. The key factor responsible for this is high fertility rate.<sup>1</sup> With this continuing trend, Pakistan's population will double in the next 35 – 36 years.

Although Family Planning Programme of Pakistan is one of the oldest in Asia desired results could not be achieved mostly secondary to low literacy rate, particularly among women in rural areas, cultural and religious beliefs, fear of side effects and scarcity of skills in advocating family planning. Strong political backing in

the 1990s led to increased contraceptive use, rising from 12 percent in the early 1990s to around 28 percent in the late 2000. However, the period 2000 - 11 did not continue the upward trend, rather the contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR) stagnated. This may be due to lack of proper policies, planning, a governance mechanism and limited coordination among stakeholders.<sup>2</sup>

Knowledge, Attitude and Practice gap regarding contraception is very evident.<sup>3,4</sup> The reason for abandoning family planning methods are lack of knowledge and education, religious beliefs and fear of adverse effects.

Knowledge and practice of family planning are related to higher education level, labor force participation and to fertility.<sup>4</sup> Most studies revealed education is the most influencing factor. It could have direct influence on fertility, since it affects the attitude and be-

havior patterns of the individuals. Several Knowledge, Attitude and Practice Surveys have been carried out involving different population groups.<sup>5-8</sup>

Currently, one in three married women in Pakistan are using at least a single contraceptive method, which is a five percent rise from 2006 – 07. The majority of contraceptive users prefer a modern method (26% of currently married women) and 9 percent use traditional methods.<sup>9</sup> However, a quarter of women in the reproductive age group (15 – 49 years) in Pakistan have unmet needs for family planning.<sup>10</sup>

Family planning has large impact on women health. Contraceptive use contributes in reducing maternal mortality and improves maternal health by preventing unwanted and high risk pregnancies and avoiding unsafe abortions. Some contraceptive also improve women health by protecting against certain cancers and health problems.<sup>11</sup>

Family planning involves two domains; first, to have only the desired number of children and second, when to have those children.<sup>12</sup>

Reduction in the population growth in the previous decades from 3% to 2.1% has not reduced the number of unwanted pregnancies.<sup>13</sup> The knowledge and attitude of people towards family planning methods are crucial determinants in practicing of family planning methods by them.<sup>14</sup>

The basic objective of this study was to determine knowledge, attitude and practice about family planning methods of low income employees of CMH Lahore Medical College, and to highlight any gap between knowledge and practice.

**SUBJECTS AND METHODS**

A cross – sectional survey was carried out at CMH Lahore Medical College from April 2014 to June 2014. A convenient sample of 176 married people of reproductive age group (15 – 49 years) was selected from the low income employees of CMH Lahore Medical College. Low – income were defined as employees having income less than Rs.20,000 per month. A questionnaire was designed according to Knowledge, Attitude and Practice methodology. Questions were close ended and precoded. The survey was carried out by face to face interview by medical students of this college. Ethical considerations and confidentiality was ensured. Specific issues explored were knowledge about family planning methods, sources of information, number of people currently practicing contraceptives, specific methods preference, attitude towards family planning and opinion about ideal family size. Data was entered and analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16.0. Descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies and percentages were determined and data was presented in the form of tables and graphs. Chi-square test of significance was used to see significance of difference between know-

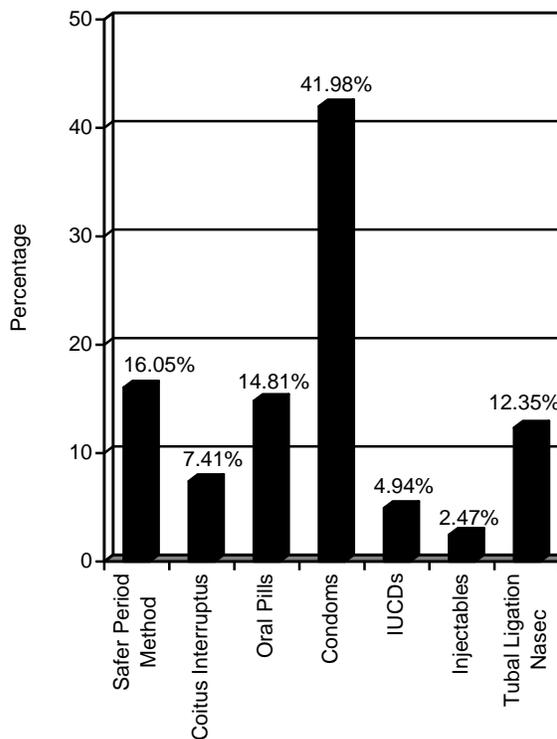
ledge and practice. P value <0.05 was considered statistically significant.

**RESULTS**

A total of 176 respondents were studied. Out of these, 143 (81.2%) were males and 33 (18.8%) were females. As far as level of education is concerned, the results showed that 33 (18.8%) were illiterate, 44 (25%) were primary, 31 (17.6%) Matric, 35 (19.9%) Intermediate, 23 (13.1%) graduate and 10 (5.7%) were post-graduate. Majority of them (21%) were having 3 children. About 75% were aware of family planning practices. Source of information in majority (29.5%) was media.

Contraceptive prevalence was 38.6 percent. There is wide gap between knowledge and practice of family planning which was statistically highly significant (p = 0.001). Condoms were predominant method of use (19.3%), followed by safe period (7.4%) (Fig. 1). Maximum number of employees (79%) were in favour of using family planning methods. Out of remaining 21%, who were not in favour of family planning methods, majority of them (16.5%) narrated that religion does not allow (table 1).

According to 77 (43.8%) respondents, the ideal family size is three children (table 2). As far relationship of contraceptive practice with education is concerned, educated employees were more likely to practice family planning methods as compared to illiterate.



**Fig. 1:** Use of Various Contraceptive Methods if yes, which of the following methods?

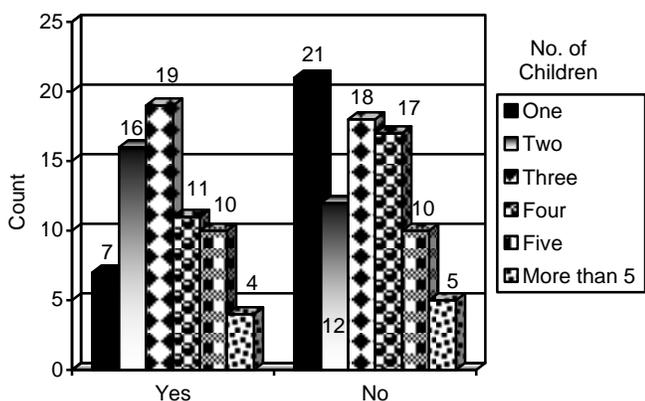
**Table 1:** Reasons stated for not practicing family planning.

Reason Given	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Religion does not allow	29	16.6
Parents do not allow	2	1.1
No money to purchase contraceptives	2	1.1
Shyness in purchasing contraceptives	3	1.7
Total	36	20.5

Similarly, when relationship of contraceptive practice with number of children were studied, it was found that employees with three or more children were more likely to use contraceptive methods as compared to those who have two or less children (Fig. 2).

**Table 2:** Ideal family size.

Ideal No. of Children	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1 child	1	0.6
2 children	50	28.4
3 children	77	43.8
4 children	38	21.6
More than 4 children	10	5.7
Total	176	100.0



**Fig. 2:** Relationship between no. of children and practice of family planning.

**DISCUSSION**

Uncontrolled and exponential rise in population is one of the biggest hurdles in the socioeconomic growth and progress of a nation. Improving use of modern contra-

ceptive is a challenge in our country.<sup>15</sup> The wide adoption of family planning in a society is a vital component of modern development and essential for incorporating women into social and economic life. According to Alex Ezeh and colleagues, “Pakistan failure to promote family planning in the 1970s and 1980,” has already had, and will lead to, great repercussions: a population that is anticipated to be “41% larger than Bangladesh’s” by 2050.

At the moment, Pakistan’s population is estimated to be above 180 million, increasing at a rate of 1.95% per annum. It is projected to rise to 342 million by 2050, largely to be determined by the prevalence of family planning and consequent fertility decline.<sup>16</sup>

The use of family planning has increased in Pakistan over the last fifty years. However, the state of this increase has been slow, around 0.5% per year over the last fifty years.<sup>17</sup>

According to results of our study, about 75% people have knowledge about family planning practices, of which only 38.6% people are currently practicing family planning. There is wide gap between knowledge and practice of family planning methods. Contraceptive knowledge of our study participants is comparable to the other areas of country.<sup>18,19</sup> However, this gap is less as compared to findings of Pakistan Reproductive Health and Family Planning Survey which highlighted wide gap between knowledge (97%) and use of contraceptives (28%) among currently married women.<sup>18</sup>

Contraceptive prevalence of 38.6% in our study is comparable to our national level of 35%.<sup>3</sup>In our study, major source of knowledge about family planning methods was media. This is consistent with the findings of study carried out by Aziz A. et al,<sup>14</sup> where also major source of knowledge about family planning methods was mass media.

In our study, condoms were predominant method of use (19.3%). This is consistent with the findings of Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2012 – 13.<sup>3</sup> Twenty – one percent of our respondents were not in favour of family planning methods and majority (16.5%) of them narrated that religion does not allow. This finding is similar to study carried out in Bangladesh<sup>20</sup> where it was showed that the CPR was alarmingly low in a community where more than two thirds of religious leaders discouraged family planning.

Our study results showed positive correlation between education and contraceptive use. As the education level rises, people are generally better aware and more likely to use family planning methods. This finding is in consistent with the study carried out by Chaudhry MA and Irshad S<sup>21</sup>that also found positive correlation between education and contraceptive use.

In our study, it was found that employees with three or more children were more likely to use contraceptive methods as compared to two or less children. This finding is in consistent with Pakistan Demogra-

phic and Health Survey 2013 – 14<sup>9</sup> which also found that women do not begin to use contraception until they have at least one child.

As far as attitude towards family planning is concerned, 79% of respondents have positive attitude and approve contraception, only 21% disapprove it. This shows majority of people are in favour of contraception, which is almost same and comparable to a study in Tezu village India.<sup>22</sup> However, our study results are in contrast to earlier study carried out by Sajid et al,<sup>23</sup> which found that 54% of the women had positive attitude and approve contraception, 32% disapprove it. This shows that positive attitude towards contraception is increasing in our country.

It is **concluded** that majority of people have knowledge and positive attitude about family planning methods but contraceptive prevalence of 38.6% is very low when compared to other South Asian countries in the region. There was wide gap between contraceptive knowledge and practice. Family Planning Program may need to shift their focus from family limitation to birth spacing with special focus to satisfying unmet needs for contraception, easy accessibility to contraceptive methods and tools, improving counseling techniques and involvement of men. Mass media and public-private partnership can also play a part in increasing accessibility and male participation rate in family planning and overcome the knowledge / practice gap, besides long – term measures such as enhancement of women literacy.

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