

ABSTRACT

Planning the family is a human right. All individuals have the right to equal access and to choose a scientific process in the selection of family planning method. Family planning methods are broadly categorized into two main groups as modern and traditional methods. In general, the family planning methods which are categorized as traditional have a markedly high failure rate compared to the methods categorized as modern. Sri Lanka has a well established family planning service which is provided mainly through field level public health service network and is governed centrally by the Family Health Bureau of Ministry of Health. In spite of efforts to promote modern family planning by family planning services, a considerable percentage of Sri Lankans are using traditional family planning methods. The factors influencing the choice between modern and traditional methods have not been extensively studied. Thus, this study aimed to fulfill this gap in the evidence by comparing personal and service related factors associated with contraceptive use among women currently using traditional and modern family planning methods.

This was a community based comparative cross sectional descriptive study conducted in estate and rural areas of Haliela Medical Officer of Health area in Badulla district. The study utilized cluster sampling technique in selecting the estimated sample of 217 traditional family planning users and 217 modern family planning users. Pre tested interviewer administered structured questionnaire was used to collect data and statistical analysis was performed by using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 12.0.

The study recorded an overall response rate of 98.2%. The commonest contraception method among the modern method users was intrauterine contraceptive device (37.7%) which was followed by female sterilization (22.6%). None (0%) reported that their husbands have undergone surgical sterilization. Coitus interruption (49.1%) was the commonest traditional family planning method among traditional method users. Commonest reasons for not choosing a modern family planning method among traditional users who knew about modern contraceptive methods was husband's dislike to use modern

family planning methods (38.8%) which was followed by having heard of side effects from others (34.6%).

Age over 35 years ($p < 0.001$), Muslim nationality ($p < 0.05$), Islam religion ($p < 0.05$), ability to read and write in Tamil language ($p < 0.01$) and living in an extended family ($p < 0.01$) were statistical significant socio-demographic factors that were associated with the choice of traditional family planning method.

The reproductive health related factors associated with the use of traditional family planning methods were not having children at the time of survey ($p < 0.05$), expecting only one child in the future ($p < 0.001$) and age of youngest child being more than 6 years ($p < 0.05$).

Many service related gaps were found to be significantly associated with traditional family planning use. Not having received detailed information regarding modern family planning methods ($p = 0.011$), not receiving any home visits by public health midwives ($p < 0.001$), having more than 1 km distance from residence to family planning clinic ($p = 0.002$), not having utilized family planning clinic services ($p < 0.001$), negative opinion on public health midwife's services ($p < 0.001$) and negative opinion regarding field clinic services ($p < 0.001$) were these service related factors.

Low overall knowledge on modern family planning methods was also significantly associated with the choice of traditional family planning methods ($p = 0.015$).

The study identified a range of personal and service related factors that were associated with the choice of less effective traditional family planning methods. The women to be targeted in interventions to promote modern family planning methods were highlighted as recommendations. Improvements to family planning field services were also recommended to promote choice of modern family planning methods.

Key words: Contraceptive use, Traditional use, Modern use