

Abstract

Use of any method of family planning (FP) by women is often influenced by their husbands. In many countries men have been excluded from participating in FP programmes as FP is viewed as a woman's affair. Consequences of unmet need of improper use of FP may affect the whole family. Therefore a setting need to be built up to minimize the gap between the knowledge and the attitudes with the practice of the FP of the couple through improving the knowledge and the attitudes of the male rather than involving only the female partner. This study was aimed at finding the gap of knowledge and attitudes with the practices of family planning of the couple in order to reduce the unmet need of FP, which is a timely need of the country.

The study was aimed at determining the knowledge, attitudes, practice and the prevalence of FP and the associated factors among married male Navy Personnel in Sri Lankan Naval Base "Dakshina", Galle.

This study was an occupational based descriptive cross sectional study carried out in Southern Naval Base "Dakshina", Galle, among 424 married male Navy Personnel. Study participants were selected using simple random sampling method.

Study instrument was a self administered questionnaire, with closed ended questions. The knowledge was assessed using a composite score comprising 50 knowledge related questions. Similarly attitudes were measured based on 13 questions based on positive and negative attitudes using the Likert Scale. Ever use and current use of FP were also assessed as important variables. The associations were analyzed using Chi-Square test, considering $p < 0.05$ as the significant value.

The overall knowledge on FP was satisfactory among 53% ($n=224$) of study subjects. Among the different methods, the highest percentage of men (85%) reported good knowledge on condoms, oral pills (57%) being at the second place. A satisfactory knowledge on injectables and the IUCDs were reported in 38% and 39% of subjects respectively. Eighty two percent ($n=348$) of the study subjects had either good or average knowledge on traditional methods of FP while on emergency contraception it was 57%. Overall favorable attitudes towards FP was observed among 61% of the respondents.

The study found that nearly 73% (95% CI=0.68-0.77) of couples had ever used a regular FP method while the balance 27% had never used a FP method. The most common ever used method was condoms (34%, $n=14$) which was followed by oral pills (32%) and injectables (17%). Before marriage the commonest FP method used was condoms (6%, $n=19$) followed by oral pills whereas from the marriage to

the first pregnancy, the most common method was the pill(20%). After the third pregnancy it was the LRT(4%) which showed the highest prevalence.

Among the total study population, 59% were currently using any FP method while 52% were modern method users. Most commonly used method was condoms(16%,n=69) while the second commonest was oral pills(12%,n=50). Emergency contraceptives were ever used by 10%.

This study attempted to identify selected factors related to knowledge, attitudes and practice of FP among the study participants. It revealed that 53%(n=224) of respondents showed an overall knowledge score of average and above on FP methods. The overall favourable attitudes were observed among 61%(n=165) of the respondents towards FP.

There was strong significant association between the knowledge of the study subjects and the ever use of FP among them ($\chi^2=21.101,df=2,p=0.000$). The attitude scores of the study subjects and the ever use of FP among them had a more stronger association than the knowledge and ever use ($\chi^2=16.714,df=2,p=0.000$). There was a noticeably significant association between the knowledge of family planning methods and the current use of FP where better knowledge was associated with increased prevalence($\chi^2=19.168,df=4,p=.001$). The same association was shown for every method of contraception except for LRT, traditional methods and emergency contraception.

Number of children and the ever use of family planning has a strong negative statistically significant link ($\chi^2=19.168,df=4,p=0.001$). However, there was no substantial association between age categories, academic qualifications or ranks of the study subjects with the satisfactory knowledge and attitudes on FP methods.

The findings of the study recommends that there is enough room for improvement of FP practices for this occupational category through regular updating of their knowledge and making attitudinal changes. This could be easily achieved by well-organized programmes conducted at work places.