

Original Article

# Preferences and Practices of Postpartum Women about Contraception ; A Study in A Tertiary Care Hospital of Rawalpindi

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## Abstract

**Objective:** To find out the knowledge, attitudes and practices of postpartum women regarding contraception and the reason for their preference.

**Methodology:** It was a cross-sectional prospective observational study, conducted in Gynaecology unit II of Holy Family Hospital. over a period of six months i.e from 1st Jan 2016 till 30th June 2016. A total of 500 women were interviewed who were in their first week after delivery. The interview was conducted by the registrar who recorded their socio-demographic profile including age, parity, knowledge about contraception, source of information, attitude and practices of contraception along with the factors responsible for its use.

**Results:** A total of 500 postpartum women were questioned. Although majority of the women had some knowledge about contraception but only 33.6% had correct knowledge regarding the fertility period, 22% had wrong concepts whereas 22% had no idea about it. Even though a larger proportion of patients belonged to the low socio-economic group about 73.6% of the women desired contraception, whereas 26% did not accept it. The main cause of rejecting it was the desire to have more children as seen in 69% of those refusing contraception, followed by husband's reluctance for it in 36%. The most preferred method of contraception was identified as the natural method used by 28% followed by iucd 23.3% condom 15.38%, ocp 14.3% , injectable 9.5%. A least common option was of BTL which was used by 6.1% of the women desiring family planning.

**Conclusion:** Thus it can be concluded that there is still a wide gap between the knowledge desire and practices of postpartum women regarding contraception. Studies on a larger scale are required to gain further knowledge to tackle this extremely vital issue

Cite this article as: Abid R, Iqbal K, Malik SN, Farkhanda T, Begum A, Jamil M Preferences and Practices of Postpartum Women about Contraception ; A Study in A Tertiary Care Hospital of Rawalpindi. J Soc Obstet Gynaecol Pak. 2019; Vol 9(4):235-238.

## Introduction

Pakistan ranks 5<sup>th</sup> most populous country of the world and has one of the highest maternal mortality rate i.e. 178/100,000 live-births.<sup>1</sup> Pakistan's current birth rate of about 28.2/1000 people has made the population cross the figure of 211 million.<sup>2,3</sup> It has also got a very high fertility rate of 3.5 children/woman even amongst the developing countries.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, the contraceptive prevalence rate is only 42%.<sup>5</sup> According to

the Pakistan Demographic and Health survey Report 2019 there is a huge difference between the knowledge (97-98%) and the use of contraceptives (28%).<sup>6</sup> Postpartum period is the prime time for addressing the vital need for unmet family planning services. The main objective was to identify the current knowledge attitude and practices of postpartum women regarding contraception.

Authorship Contribution: <sup>1-3,6</sup> Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work, acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work Final approval of the version to be published, <sup>5</sup>drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content

**Funding Source:** none

Received: Sept 11, 2019

**Conflict of Interest:** none

Accepted: Jan 21, 2020

Postpartum contraception is defined as the family planning practices to prevent unplanned and closely spaced pregnancies in the first 12 months after childbirth.<sup>7</sup>

Even though a majority of the women desire contraception in the first year of childbirth, they are unable to practice contraception due to several reasons. Thus, repeated and closely spaced pregnancies result in not only maternal but also fetal complications. Maternal anemia being the commonest. Fetal growth restriction, low birth weight, oligohydramnios and later on stunted growth for the baby are on the top of the list for fetal adversities associated with repeated conceptions.<sup>8</sup>

Women should be an active decision maker in deciding the timing and number of children desired by the family. This right imposes upon her to know to make and execute her decisions. A lack of knowledge of the fertility period and effective use of contraceptive agents are some of the major hindrances in fulfilling the gap in family planning in our country. Moreover, the poor availability of contraceptive methods especially in far flung areas of the country lead to the ever increasing unplanned conceptions. A large number of contraceptives are not utilized because of actual or fear of side effects.<sup>9</sup>

The alarming statistics of Pakistan regarding population growth makes it inevitable to declare an emergency to fulfill the unmet need for family planning. For this, we have to know the current problems and tackle them accordingly.

## Methodology

This study was planned to identify contraceptive knowledge and practices amongst women delivering in a tertiary care teaching hospital. It was a cross-sectional prospective observational study. It was conducted in Gynaecology unit II of Holy Family Hospital. This questionnaire-based study was conducted over a period of six months i.e. from 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2016 till 30th June 2016. A total of 500 women were interviewed who were in their first week after delivery. The interview was conducted by the registrar who recorded their socio-demographic profile including age, parity, knowledge about contraception, source of information, attitude and practices of contraception along with the factors responsible for its use Data was entered and analysed on SPSS 16.

## Results

We questioned 500 postpartum women in their first week after childbirth. The maximum number of respondents were aged between 21 to 30 years i.e. 354 (70.8%), whereas 71 (14.2%) were less than 20 years, and 11.6% were more than 30 years. The subjects with a lower level of education was higher in our study i.e. 28.6% were uneducated and 30% had primary education whereas matriculate and higher were 20.6% and 20.2% each respectively. Although most of the patients had a lower level of education, 67% of the uneducated group wanted to practice contraception whereas 32% did not. In the primary, matric and higher education group 72.5%, 73.8%, and 83% wanted family planning respectively. Overall 73.6% desired contraception whereas 26.2% did not. Correct knowledge regarding fertility period was seen to increase with the level of education i.e. it was seen to be 36%, 19.6%, 25%, and 18% in the higher, matric, primary and uneducated group respectively. Media played an important role in educating women about family planning. 86.6% declared to have been exposed to contraception through media sources whereas 13.4% had other means of gaining knowledge. The most preferred method was the natural method practiced by 21.2% followed by IUCD in 17.6%, condom and ocp were used by 11.6% and 10.8% respectively. Injectables in 7.2% and norplant in 1.4%. 4.6% preferred bilateral tubal ligation. 1% were not clear about which method they wanted to practice.

<b>Table I: Socio-Demographic Features</b>		
<b>Parameter</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Age</b>		
16- 20 yrs	71	14.2%
21-30 yrs	354	70.8%
31-35 yrs	58	11.6%
35-40 yrs	17	3.4%
<b>Age at marriage</b>		
< 20 yrs	262	52.4%
21-25yrs	236	47.2%
>26 yrs	2	0.4%
<b>Socioeconomic status</b>		
Lower middle class	344	68.8%
Middle class	147	29.4%
Higher class	3	1.8%
<b>Religion</b>		
Islam	476	95.2%
Christianity	24	4.8%
<b>Educational status</b>		
Uneducated	143	28.6%
Primary	153	30.6%
Matric	103	20.6%

Higher	101	20.2%
<b>Parity</b>		
Primigravida	206	41.2%
P1- P4	255	51%
>P 5	39	7.8%

<b>Table II: Knowledge about contraception (n=500)</b>		
<b>Women knowledge of fertility period</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>percentage</b>
Right	168	33.5%
Wrong	110	22%
None	222	44.4%
<b>Women knowledge about contraception during breast feeding</b>		
Right	274	54.8%
Wrong	122	24.4%
None	104	20.8%
<b>Source of information media</b>		
Yes	433	86.6%
No	67	13.4%
<b>Motivated for contraception</b>		
Not know	48	9.6%
Yes	355	71%
No	97	19.4%

<b>Table III: Preferences and Practices (n=500)</b>		
<b>Intention to breastfeed</b>		
Yes	487	97.4%
No	13	2.6%
<b>Want to use contraception</b>		
Yes	368	73.8%
No	131	26.2%
<b>Method preferred</b>		
None	123	24.6%
Ocp	54	10.8%
Injectable	36	7.2%
IUCD	88	17.6%
Condom	58	11.6%
Natural method	106%	21.2%
Btl	23	4.6%
Norplant	7	1.4%
Not know	5	1%
<b>Reason for preference</b>		
Effective	160	56.5%
Reversible	34	12.01%
Fewer side effects	22	7.7%
Convenient	58	20.49%
Not know reason	11	3.8%

A total of 500 postpartum women were questioned. Although the majority of the women had some knowledge about contraception only 25% had correct knowledge regarding the fertility period. Even though a larger proportion of patients belonged to the low socio-economic group about 73.6% wanted family planning. However, 26% did not desire contraception. The major reason for not wanting contraception was the desire to have more children as seen in 69% of that declining contraception, followed by the husband's reluctance for

contraception in 36%. The most preferred method of contraception was found to be a natural method used by 28.1% followed by IUCD 23.3%, condom 15.38%, OCP 14.3%, injectable 9.5% and norplant 1.8%. The option of BTL was used by 6.1% of the women wanting contraception.

## Discussion

Postpartum is the period from delivery of the placenta until 6 weeks after delivery. Many contraceptive methods can be initiated immediately after delivery. Ovulation, as seen in literature, can start as soon as 27 days postpartum in non-lactating women. Although the mean time is approximately 70-75 days. In lactating women it is seen to occur on the average in 6 months.<sup>10</sup>

The practice of contraception can be usually seen in a higher as we move from lower to higher class whether education or socio-economic wise as seen in the study but our study showed the desire for contraception in a very high number even in the uneducated class. The knowledge of the fertility period, however, is not only lacking in the uneducated class but also in those with higher education and is supported by a study conducted by Saleem S and Bobak M in which women's decision autonomy is shown as not associated with education<sup>8</sup>. There are other factors responsible for it.<sup>8,11</sup>

In Pakistan, the age of marriage is usually in the early twenties or even earlier. Thus, the long period of reproductive capacity supports increased fertility rates. One of the major reasons for not wanting contraception are quoted as prohibited in religion. This is also seen in a study conducted by Mahmood N.<sup>12</sup>

Husband will is another for failure to use contraception even if the wife is convinced for it. Thus, addressing this issue will help greatly in increasing contraceptive practices.<sup>13</sup>

Amongst the variety of contraceptive agents still the most prevalent choice of family planning method to be used is the withdrawal method in our study. It is used because it is cheap, effective, readily available and has no side effects. However, failure with this method is high thus leading to ever increasing population. The other most commonly used contraceptive agents are condoms and oral contraceptive pills. These, however, need compliance. IUCD is the next frequently used agent. This, however, is associated with the fear of its complications like perforation, infection and heavy menstrual bleeding.<sup>14</sup> This is however in contrary to the

developed countries where modern contraceptives take the lead.<sup>15</sup>

## Conclusion

Thus, it can be concluded that there is still a wide gap between the knowledge desire and practices of postpartum women regarding contraception. Studies on a larger scale are required to gain further knowledge to tackle this extremely vital issue. This was contrary to the study in which LHW were the key motivation and knowledge providers to the women.<sup>16</sup>

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