

Title of the paper: CONTRACEPTIVE CHOICE, UNINTENDED PREGNANCY AND INDUCED ABORTION: CASE STUDY OF EDUCATED URBAN DWELLERS OF HOWRAH, WEST BENGAL

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Introduction:

Number of research shows that there is a rise in contraceptive use or in effectiveness of use must lead to a decline in induced abortion and vice versa. The use of traditional methods of contraceptives may not be much more desirable for some couples. Because the length of women's menstrual cycle can vary and because refraining from sexual intercourse places some couples under strain, periodic abstinence is not always effective or easy to practice. Yet this method and withdrawal are still popular in many countries.

The demographic transition in the west was achieved largely through the use of coitus interrupts and abortion (Wrigley, 1969). It is one of the most widely used temporary methods worldwide. But abortion cannot limit pregnancies to any where. Abortion is women's only option to close the gap between the number of their pregnancies and the number of children they consent to bear.

Abortion is an issue that evokes, on all sides, very strong feelings and judgments and very heated recriminations. On the other hand, the most radical formulation of the pro-abortion or "pro-choice" side views opposition to abortion as opposition to the freedom of women, as haters of women and as part of a historical effort to "subjugate" women as nothing more than baby-making machines or failing that, to see that they die in botched abortions as part of indeed, something comparable to the genocide of the Jews. Hence, world wide the magnitude of abortion represents an important aspect of women's reproductive health and rights.

However, the purpose of the study is to understand the choice of contraceptive, relation between choice of contraceptive and unintended pregnancy and how it is leading induced abortion.

Methodology:

The data used for the study had collected for the study, "*An exploration of the use of traditional method of family planning in West Bengal: A micro study in Howrah*". The women were selected on the basis that they were currently married, aged between 18-39

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years and who were ever user of traditional methods of contraceptive. Regarding the qualitative aspects of the data, case study method had applied with 10 husbands. Husbands were selected on the basis of their type of occupation, educational level and the method they were using at the time of the survey.

This paper is a quantitative study involving bivariate analysis to establish the choice of contraceptive, pattern of use of the method and the relation between contraceptive use and induced abortion.

Result

Choice of contraceptive:

It had found that apart from higher level of education, wives were completely depends on husband's desire regarding contraceptive use. According to them husbands is more knowledgeable person than the wife, so the husbands decisions must be taken into granted.

On the other hand, during the interview we had come to know that there has lack of knowledge and misconception about modern methods. Men told, they cannot tolerate the side effects of modern methods when using the pill, injectable or IUD. They hear unfounded or exaggerated rumours about such side effects and are deterred from even trying these methods. They had come to know from the physicians the benefits of traditional methods and negative impacts of modern contraceptives. The physicians only prescribed them traditional methods of contraceptives to use. Hence, they feel traditional methods are reliable and convenient to use and that is why they were using traditional methods of contraceptives. Few think that because they do not have regular sexual activity, they do not need use a contraceptive method. On the other hand, social networking to women and men were very high in the community. Men use to talk about contraceptives with their friends and women also talk with their sister-in-laws vis-à-vis with friends and they had also told them to use the method. Before using the method husband had informed about the method to their wife but the final decision which method he would use that had decided by husband only.

Pattern of use of contraceptive:

It is observed that at the time of survey among the 100 ever user of traditional contraceptive method 29 percents were currently non users of family planning methods. There were 58 percent women who were using only traditional methods, six percents were the users of combination of traditional and modern methods, and only modern methods users were only seven percent.

If we look in to the different methods in the categories of traditional and modern methods then the pattern of method use comes into front. It is observed that 16.9 percent, 28.6 percent and 28.6 percent women respectively were using rhythm, withdrawal, and combination of rhythm and withdrawal methods. Besides these some couples like to use the combination of rhythm and condom, withdrawal and pill, abstinence and withdrawal.

The data on the contraceptive use was collected for each inter-pregnancy interval (close and open interval), i.e. from the last pregnancy till survey. It had observed some times the couple tries to shift from one method to the other method. It is interesting that in each and every interval the proportion of traditional method users are the highest. If we look into the method wise users then we see same feature as we find in the case of current users. Here also in each and every interval the proportion of users of rhythm, withdrawal and the combination of rhythm and withdrawal methods users are the highest. It is also observed that those couples who were using these traditional methods, most of them were using with other methods. Most of the couple are using only rhythm method but the couples who are using withdrawal method, are using it with combination of other

methods, either traditional or modern. Usually couple use rhythm method, and during unsafe days practice either withdrawal or condom. When we had asked women why they are using the method in combination with other methods? They had replied some time we scare about the method. But we cannot say to our husbands about these. So we are using the method according to our husband's desire as well as using the method we feel more reliable with out taking consent of our husbands.

It has been observed among the 53 withdrawal users 43 were using it every time of their sex in 1st interval. In 2nd interval 77 percent among 39 users of withdrawal users had practiced it in every sexual activity. But it had also observed (table 4.5) that they were using the methods in combination with other methods. In first interval 62 percent were using combination with other methods; in second interval 55 percent were using the method in combination with other method. Among 30 users of rhythm method 25 couples (83 percent) were using it in combination with other methods, in second interval among 37 users 26 couple (70 percent) were using it in combination with other methods.

Prevalence of Unplanned Pregnancy:

In the study population, many women consider abortion as a method of contraception. This is supported by the fact that in our study. When we asked whether they faced any problem by use of these methods they replied that “no, we had not faced any problem by these methods”. But after that when we asked, “Why did you stop the method that you were using?” they gave so many reasons for stopping the methods and one or major cause was becoming pregnant. After that when we had asked “what do you do when you feel that the method had failed?” They answered “what to do? We go to doctor for abortion.”

The prevalence of unintended pregnancy in this population is very high. The unintended pregnancy rate² and ration³ in this population are 235 per 1000 women and 570 per 1000 women accordingly and the average rate of unintended pregnancy is 1.38. If we add up all the pregnancy intervals of these 100 women then we have 243 episodes of pregnancies. In 85 percent of episodes these women used family planning methods, among these 90 percent were used for traditional methods. It had also observed that in all there were 57 episodes of method failure and out of them 37 episodes (65 percent) were due to only use of traditional methods. It has also observed that among the 37 episodes 13 episodes (35 percent) were ended in induced abortion for the couple who were using only traditional methods. If we will see it interval wise, then we will see, in first interval 68 percent women, in second interval 67 percent women, in third interval 88 percent women experienced unintended pregnancy while they were using any of these methods. These 57 episodes of method failure were not from 57 different women. There were some women who faced methods failure more than once. So if we calculate for women then we can see that these are 42 women who faced at least one method failure in their lifetime.

Termination of unwanted pregnancy:

The higher level of natural method use among the women of our study indicates that this may indeed be a critical factor in abortion behaviour. The abortion ratio⁴ is 220 and the abortion rate⁵ is 200 in the study population. If we see the out come of all the pregnancies there were 79 percent live birth, 14 percent induced abortion and 8 percent miscarriage. It is also observable that in the first interval there were 27 episodes that faced methods failure and in 22 episodes women faced method failure. There were 13

² Unintended pregnancy Rate= Total no of unintended pregnancy/ Total number of pregnancy*1000

³ Unintended pregnancy Ratio= Total no of unintended pregnancy/ Total women studied*1000

⁴ Abortion Ratio= Total no of abortion/ total women studied*1000

⁵ Abortion Rate= Total no of abortion/total no of pregnancy*1000

induced abortions among the women who were using only traditional methods. On the other hand, there were four women who had faced unintended pregnancy at the time of using combination of traditional 50 percent of them had went for induced abortion and modern methods and 16 women who had faced method failure at the time of using modern methods among them only four had went for induced abortion. There were total 22 episodes of pregnancy that had ended with induced abortion. In first interval among 27 episodes of unintended pregnancy only two had ended as induced abortion. While in second interval among 22 episodes of unwanted pregnancies 14 were ended with induces abortion. There has a norm in the community that the first pregnancy must not be aborted, if any one will abort then in future she will be fail to conceive in future. It had found that the women who were using traditional methods they were go through with induced abortion more than the other method users. On the other hand, it had also observed some repeated induced abortion and continuation of the traditional methods of contraceptive.

Table 1 pattern of use of contraceptive

Pattern	Percentage
No. of women	100
Current non users	29
Current users	71
Current users by type of methods	
Only traditional methods	81.7
Combination of traditional and modern methods	8.5
Only modern methods	9.8
Total	100
Total users by method	
1. Abstinence	2.9
2. Rhythm	16.9
3. Withdrawal	28.6
5. Abstinence + Withdrawal	4.3
6. Rhythm + Withdrawal	28.6
7. Abstinence + Rhythm + Withdrawal	1.4
8. Rhythm + Condom	4.3
10. Withdrawal + Pill	1.4
11. Rhythm + Withdrawal + Condom	2.9
12. Pill	4.3
13. IUD	2.9
14. Permanent	1.4
Total users	100

Table 2. Distribution of number of women faced failure of methods by types of methods

Methods	Women faced failure	Went for induced abortion
Only traditional methods	37	13
Combination of traditional and modern methods	4	2
Only modern methods	16	4
Total	57	19

Table 3. distribution of women by pregnancy episodes and extent of method failure and resulting abortions in inter-pregnancy interval

INTERVALS	WOMEN	TOTAL USERS	TRADITIONAL METHOD USERS		FACED FAILURE		INDUCED ABORTION	
\$1	100	79 (79.0)	71 (89.9)		27 (38.0)	2 (7.4)		
\$2	91	79 (86.8)	74 (93.7)		22 (29.8)	14 (63.6)		
\$3	39	38 (97.4)	34 (89.5)		6 (17.6)	3 (50.0)		
\$4	9	8 (88.9)	5 (62.5)		2 (40.0)	0		
\$5	4	3 (75.0)	3 (100.0)		0	0		
Total	243	207 (85.2)	187 (90.3)		57 (29.4)	19 (34.5)		