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### **Awareness of Contraceptive Methods among Saudi women in Ha'il region**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The use of birth control methods have been known as an essential factor in lowering fertility in several developing countries. A characteristic feature of the Saudi Arabian population is their aspiration for big families and relatively have higher birth and fertility rate compared to developed countries. This study aimed to analyze the awareness of various contraceptive methods, source of information, attitude and actual practices towards contraception among Saudi women in Hail city. A cross sectional study was started by distribution of the self-administered questionnaire. The data was collected and analyzed using Excel program. Most of the respondents (68.16%) showed acceptance of the use of contraceptives while (31.83%) not accepted to use it. Our study showed that the participant's use of contraceptive methods did not differ significantly according to their age (P-value=0.298). However significantly more use of contraceptives was reported by the participants with higher education (P-value=0.026), and being least among participants with low education. Moreover, the study showed that the majority of the respondents (59%) accepted oral contraceptive pills followed by the male condom (17%). The other methods used intrauterine contraceptive devices (IUD), breastfeeding, patch were less used. The study has shown that the most commonly used contraceptive methods in Hail is the pill contraceptives. The study concluded that there is a good number of women using contraception but their knowledge about it is insufficient. The attitude of females towards contraception was affected by their educational level so a good counseling practice is the main way to improve contraceptive use.

**KEY WORDS:** Awareness, Contraceptive, Methods, Women, Ha'il

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The use of birth control methods is as old as humanity <sup>1</sup>. Birth control or "contraception" is defined as the methods or tools that are used to inhibit pregnancy. Planning, provision and utilization of contraception is called family planning. Birth control methods have been in use since ancient times, however, successful and safe methods just commenced to be available in the 20th century <sup>2</sup>.

Islam is against abortion and sterilization except on medical reasons. However, the use of contraceptive methods is permitted, especially for child spacing to keep the health and general well-being of both mother and child rather than to limit the family size <sup>3</sup>.

A characteristic feature of the Saudi Arabian population is their aspiration for big families <sup>3</sup>. They used to have relatively higher birth and fertility rate compared to those of developed countries, however now data has shown an obvious decrease in both rates <sup>4</sup>. Total fertility rate (TFR) shows decrease from 7 (1985) to 4.53 (1999) within less than 15 years in Saudi Arabia <sup>5</sup>.

The use of birth control methods has been known as an essential factor in lowering fertility in several developing countries <sup>6-8</sup>. During the last half of the twentieth century, developed countries have experienced both some population growth and exceptional declines in fertility rates. Couples now have lower than two children on average in most European countries and they tend to delay these births until a later age <sup>9</sup>.

Review of literature suggests that child spacing are beneficial, as high fertility rate has been associated with drawbacks in developing countries <sup>10</sup>. Birth spacing has been determined by the World Health Organization as one of the six important health interventions to realize safe motherhood <sup>11</sup>.

Studies demonstrate that the total fertility rate of a community is inversely correlated to the diffusion rate of contraceptive use <sup>12</sup>. The total quick change in the socio-demographic pattern of the Saudi Arabian society, particularly the changes related with women's education and work, will be an essential factor in changing fertility beliefs and comportment with more slants to birth spacing and, therefore, the use of the contraceptives <sup>13</sup>.

### **Objectives:**

This study aimed to analyze the awareness of various contraceptive methods, source of information, attitude and actual practices towards contraception among Saudi women in Hail city.

## **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

A cross sectional study was commenced by distribution of the self-administered questionnaire that contained 13 questions and designed with free text, bipolar questions and multiple choices .

The questionnaire was distributed in a period between 3 to 23 April 2016, and among 267 married female in Ha'il city in King Saudi Arabia.

Finally, the data was collected and analyzed using Excel program.

## **RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS**

In the socio-demographic characteristics, the questionnaire results were obtained from approximately 267 women. The average age of women was (34 ) years, while the age range was 17 to 55 years. All of the respondents (100 %) had received education, (75.28%) had university and above university while (24.71%) had under university as shown in table no. 1.

**Table No. 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents**

<b>Age</b>	<b>No.(=267)</b>	<b>%</b>
17-25	31	11.61%
25-35	125	46.81%
36-45	100	37.45%
46-55	11	4.11%
<b>Educational level</b>	<b>No.(=267)</b>	<b>%</b>
<High school	15	5.61%
High school	51	19.10%
University	168	62.92%
Above university	33	12.35%

**Table No. 2: Respondents attitudes toward the use of contraceptives**

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>No.(=267)</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Attitude</b>		
<b>Acceptance to use contraceptive</b>		
Yes	182	68.16%
No	85	31.83%

According attitudes towards the use of contraceptives most of the respondents showed acceptance of the use of contraceptives while some not acceptance of use it as shown in table no.2.

Our study showed that the participant's use of contraceptive methods did not differ significantly according to their age (P-value=0.298). However significantly more use of contraceptives was reported by the participants with higher education (P-value=0.026), and being least among participants with low education.

The result from our study obtained towards attitudes towards the use of contraceptives, were in agreement with a study of <sup>14</sup> reported the same findings in his study done in Al-Qassim, Saudi Arabia which stated that attitude of participants toward contraception was not significantly decided by age of participants (P =0.46). However, their attitude was significantly decided by their educational level (P =0.04).

Through education, women have obtained the cognitive and communication skills that shape their actions, family style and communication with the new world. These showed in a study association between the use of services and education <sup>15</sup>.

In contraceptives acceptance and refusal the reasons for the acceptance of contraception use is 79% of the acceptance, for the use of contraceptives, are reasoned for child spacing to take care of the children and to teach them well. Health reasons have been reported by 17% of the cases and (3%) reported other causes like financial. On the other hand, women who were not

accepted contraception use was explained by many reasons: Believing that contraception cause health problems (73%), the fear of infertility (13%), the desire for a large numbers of children (10%), and others (4%). This study showed that the main reason for acceptance of contraception is for child spacing.

In contraceptives acceptance and refusal this study showed that the main reason for acceptance of contraception is for child spacing. Same results was reported by <sup>16</sup> in a study conducted in Al-Madinah, Saudi Arabia, that the majority of participants (91.9%) conveyed positive attitude toward child spacing.

Regard the type of birth control used the majority of the respondents accepted oral contraceptive pills followed by the male condom, intrauterine contraceptive devices , others, breastfeeding and patch respectively as shown in figure no.1.

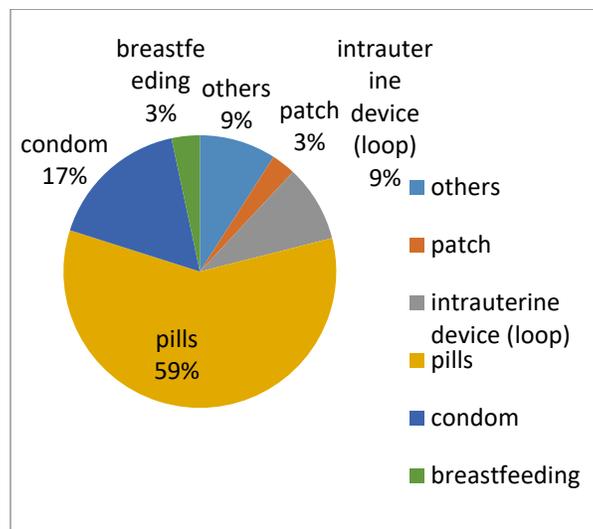


Figure No.1 : Type of birth control used

This study showed that the contraceptive pill and male condom are the main methods of contraception used across Hail city. This findings runs in the same track with the study conducted by <sup>17</sup>in Al-Qassim, Saudi Arabia, which reported that the most frequently used current methods were oral contraceptives (49.1%), followed by the male condom (17.1%).

Physicians were the most common source of knowledge about birth control methods among the women, followed by family and relatives, Internet, friends, pharmacist and others respectively as shown in figure no. 2.

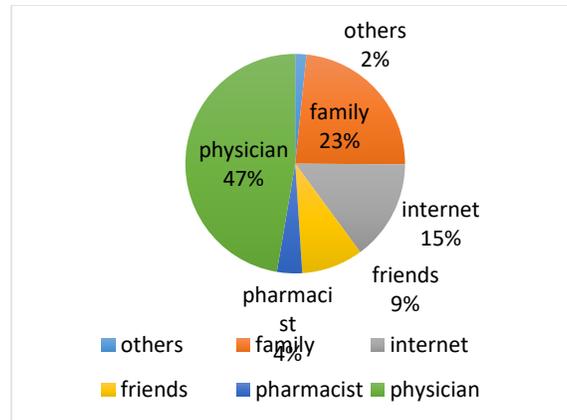


Figure No.2: Source of information about contraceptive methods

Sources of knowledge regarding contraception seemed to differ in different studies. In Qassim, Saudi Arabia, <sup>14</sup> reported that family members were the most common source of knowledge about contraceptive methods (32.9%), followed by television (TV) and press media ( 26.3 % and 21.5 % respectively ), Health workers were reported by 17.3 % of the participants, while the internet was the least source of information, reported by 2.0 %.

In Istanbul Turkey (2003), 84% were aware about IUCD and in Pakistan 68% had knowledge of oral pills and 38% had of IUCD <sup>21</sup>.

Moreover, the recent United Nation's report (2007) about contraceptive use worldwide which showed widely utilization of condom among the Saudi population and to be the second most basic utilized method after pills, which corresponds to the direction of developed countries<sup>18</sup>.

Although contraception options have increased in recent years, women's awareness of newer methods such as (vaginal ring, patches and hormonal injection), slightly due to the truth that not all new methods are easily available in all countries or regions and because they are not typically suggested by health care professionals. In the present study, the comparatively low use of natural contraceptive methods compared with other (artificial) contraceptive methods may reflect converting opinions and attitudes from traditional to newer methods of contraception <sup>19</sup>.

This is also in agreement of <sup>20</sup> who found that the most common source of information on contraception was TV and radio (70%) and neighbor/relative (35%) and (29%) through health workers In another study conducted in Pakistan (Khwaja,Tayab 2003), most common source of information was TV, radio and family/relatives <sup>21</sup>.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study has shown that the most commonly used contraceptive methods in Hail is the pill contraceptives. The women's acceptance of the IUD and patch was low. The study concluded that there is a good number of women using contraception but their knowledge about it is insufficient. The attitude of females towards contraception was affected by their educational level so a good counseling practice into adolescent family planning behavior is very important, especially among those with young pregnancies. Education appeared to be an important factor in raising awareness and use among women. Therefore, health education may be started at the school level. Awareness regarding contraception for male and female is demanded.

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