

# Effect of Female Education on Family Size, Contraceptive Awareness and its Practice

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## ABSTRACT

**Objectives:** To determine the association of female education with family size, contraceptive methods awareness and its practice

**Study Design:** Descriptive / Cross-sectional study.

**Place and Duration of Study:** This study was carried out at Gyane and Obs Department, Fauji Foundation Hospital from 1st Oct, 2011 to 31 Oct, 2011.

**Patients and Methods:** One forty nine married females having children were included in the study. Subjects were patients from Out Patient Department Of Gynaecology and employees of Fauji Foundation Hospital. Data was collected through a questionnaire by convenience sampling.

**Results:** A total of 149 females were selected by convenience sampling. Thirty five (23%) females were uneducated and 114 (77%) were educated from 5<sup>th</sup> grade to FCPS. Average age at marriage was found to be 22 years. Most of females were house wives 80 (53%) while rest 69 (46%) were working, cashing their capabilities in field of teaching, nursing, medicine and working as Aya. One hundred and two (89%) of educated females were having small families i.e 4 or less children while 11 of uneducated were small family size the difference is statistically significant (p value<.01).

Ninety six (83%) educated females were aware of contraceptive methods as compared to 23 (65%) of uneducated females and the result was statistically significant (pvalue<.05). Regarding use of contraception no statistically significant difference was noted between two groups as 19 (54%) of uneducated were using contraceptive methods compared to 75(65%) of educated females. Condoms were the most commonly used method 26 (17%), followed by IUCD 17 (11%) natural method (8%) and bilateral tubal ligation (8%) while rest of females were using combination of contraceptive methods.

**Conclusion:** Education of females has association with family size and awareness of contraception while use of contraceptive methods has no association with education and some other motivational factors play role in the use of contraceptive methods.

**Key Words:** Contraception, female education, fertility

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## INTRODUCTION

High fertility, low contraceptive prevalence resulting in high population growth is main problem of developing countries compounded by low status of females.

There is rapid and dramatic rise in world population. It has increased from six billion in 1999 to estimated 6,928,198,253 in mid year 2011.<sup>1</sup>

This expanding population of world is time bomb to existing ecology of human beings. Pakistan is sixth most populous country with population of over 187 million in 2011<sup>3,4</sup>. Pakistan urban population has increased over sevenfold while total population increased by fourfold during 1950-2011. The population growth rate now stands at 1.6%.<sup>5</sup>

The economic development and the life of citizens are believed to be improved by reduction in population

growth. Throughout the world, more education is associated with smaller family size. In less developed countries uneducated women have twice the number of children as women who are educated upto ten or more years of school.<sup>4</sup>

Educated women want smaller families marry later, experience sexual intercourse at later age and are more likely to use contraception than uneducated women. Educated women are different from uneducated women in different ways like they are wealthier, living in urban areas and have better access to contraceptive services. The influence of non school factors like socioeconomic status, ethnicity, parental education, individual goals, later age at marriage and marriage to an educated husband on child bearing decisions varies from one setting to another. Women education has a greater impact on fertility than husband education.<sup>6</sup>

Use of contraception is directly related to factors like education, later age at marriage, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, individual goals and parental education. These factors increase contraceptive use by raising

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aspiration for higher standard of living, better understanding of reproductive process and providing opportunities for personal advancement. They also improve access to modern and effective means of contraceptive services as well as freeing women from traditionalism.

Keeping in view the depressing effect of female education on fertility it is hypothesized that fertility level of a state will vary inversely with the level of female education of the state.<sup>7</sup>

This study specifically focused on the effect of literacy on family size and to assess the knowledge and use of different contraceptive methods in our set-up. Study was conducted in Fauji Foundation Hospital. Results of the study are helpful in better understanding of the effect of literacy on family size in our set-up.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This descriptive / cross-sectional study was carried out at Gyane and Obs Department, Fauji Foundation Hospital from 1st Oct, 2011 to 31 Oct, 2011.

One forty nine married females having children were included in the study. Subjects were patients from outpatient department of gynaecology and employees of Fauji Foundation Hospital. Data was collected through a questionnaire by convenience sampling. Eligibility criterion was married females having children. Data collection was through convenience sampling. Detail information was recorded in pre-designed proforma.

**Inclusion Criteria:** All married female having children.

**Data Analysis:** Computer programme Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 10 was used for data processing and analysis of the results. Test of significance (chi-square test) was applied to analyse the statistical significance of results.

## RESULTS

A total of 149 females were selected by convenience sampling. Thirty five (23%) females were un-educated and 114 (77%) were educated from 5<sup>th</sup> grade to FCPS. Average age at marriage was found to be 22 years. Most of females were working 78 (52%), while rest 71 (47%) were housewife. Working females were cashing their capabilities in field of teaching, nursing, medicine and working as Aya. Sixty two (41%) females were living in joint family system and 87 (49%) had independent houses. Majority of females 128 (85%) were in favor of small family size while rest (15%) were in favor of large family size. Only 13 of educated women had large family i.e. 5 or more, 42 had 3 to 4 children and 60 had 2 or less children. This difference is significant statistically with a p value<.01. While in uneducated females, only 3 women had 2 or fewer children, 8 women had 3 to 4 children and rest had 5 or more children. Regarding knowledge of family planning practices 96 (83%) of educated women and 22

(65%) of uneducated were aware of family planning practices (p-value <0.05). Considering use of contraception seventy five (65%) of educated females and 55% of uneducated were using different methods of contraception. This difference was not statistically significant between educated and uneducated females (p-value >.05)

Condoms were the most commonly used method 26 (17%) followed by IUCD 17 (11%) natural method (8%) and bilateral tubal ligation (8%) while rest of females were using combination of contraceptive methods.

## DISCUSSION

Women education is the single most influential investment that can be made in developing world according to World bank. Our study results showed that female education has a role in limiting family size. In our study 149 females had filled the questionnaire. Out of these 77% were educated and 23% were uneducated. Only 13 of educated women had large family i.e. 5 or more, 42 had 3 to 4 children and 60 had 2 or less children. While in uneducated females, only 3 women had 2 or fewer children 8 women had 3 to 4 children and rest had 5 or more children. This difference is strongly significant (p<.01)). This finding is confirmed by many national and international studies. A study carried out in Quetta by Zaheer khan showed similar effect.<sup>6</sup> Study by Ali and Zahir also showed the inverse relation between female education and family size.<sup>8</sup> Study by Hyatte DE showed similar result.<sup>9</sup>

A study conducted by Jain and Nag showed that female education largely effect fertility through proximate determinants. Age at marriage of educated females was higher than their illiterate counterparts and the use of family planning methods is also greater among educated women.<sup>10</sup>

A study by Akmam , showed a significant and inverse relationship between education and fertility. The study also found success of family planning policies in reducing the fertility rate in that country.<sup>11</sup>

Tuman, Ayoub and Roth-Johnson study confirms the results of previous studies in the region which indicate inverse relation between female education and fertility rate.<sup>12</sup>

Regarding knowledge of family planning practices 96 (83%) of educated women and 22 (65%) of uneducated were aware of family planning practices, the finding is statistically significant .Considering use of contraception seventy five (65%) of educated females and 55% of uneducated were using different methods of contraception. This difference was not statistically significant between educated and uneducated females. It showed that awareness does not always lead to the use of contraception and a lot of educational and motivational activities and improvement in family planning services are needed to promote the use of

contraception and to decrease fertility rate. Religious beliefs regarding contraceptive use and social pressure from in-laws may also be an explanation for this finding. This finding is also revealed by a study carried out in India by Neelum Saluju.<sup>13</sup> The study showed that the knowledge about any method of contraception was 97.2%, but only 59.2% of the couples were practicing family planning methods. In contrast another study carried out in Lahore by Robina Sarmad and Shamim Akhter showed that education has positive impact on contraceptive use.<sup>14</sup> Another study in India by Agarwala SN showed similar result. Our study confirm the finding of previous studies regarding inverse relation of female education and family size and positive effect on contraceptive knowledge. Further research is needed to inquire on reasons for not using contraceptive methods despite of knowledge.

## CONCLUSION

Education of females has association with family size and awareness of contraception while use of contraceptive methods has no association with education and some other motivational religious and social factors may play role and these factors need to be researched.

**Conflict of Interest:** The study has no conflict of interest to declare by any author.

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