



ISSN: 0975-833X

RESEARCH ARTICLE

AWARENESS OF WOMEN STUDENTS ABOUT ROLE OF CONTRACEPTIVES IN PREVENTION OF STI

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 15th October, 2013
Received in revised form
26th November, 2013
Accepted 19th December, 2013
Published online 26th January, 2014

Key words:

Young people, Contraceptives,
STI, Awareness.

ABSTRACT

Young people's poor access to reproductive and sexual health services and information, increasing trend in violence and sexual abuse pose a tremendous challenge for addressing their healthy development. There are tremendous changes in young people's behaviour when compared to old generations. STIs are a major public health concern and have long term implications for individual's health. STIs are most frequent in young people aged 15-19 years old. One in 20 young women is believed to contact a curable STI each year, excluding HIV or other viral STIs — including hepatitis B, genital herpes and genital warts, which are not curable. Therefore the young people's awareness towards role of contraceptive in preventing STI is significant area to be studied hence the present study is conducted.

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INTRODUCTION

Young people's poor access to reproductive and sexual health services and information, increasing trend in violence and sexual abuse pose a tremendous challenge for addressing their development and health especially reproductive and sexual health. The Cairo Conference, 1994 placed great emphasis on these concerns, and the needs of young people and the reproductive aspects of young people gained attention which was ignored till then. Contraception is a family planning method introduced to reduce growth of population in developing country like India. A method specific contraceptive target was followed throughout the country till April 1996, and in October 1997, a Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) approach was introduced within the programme, following the Cairo Conference on Population and Development in 1994. A substantial unmet need for contraception persists, in spite of easy access, widespread availability and the low cost of family planning services¹. The contraceptive method particularly condoms plays a vital role in preventing STI. Hence awareness of contraceptives among students is studied.

Objective

- To find out the level of awareness of contraceptives among women students

Sampling Design

The women students studying in various colleges affiliated to Bharathiar University constitute the universe for the study.

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There are eighty Arts and Science colleges affiliated to Bharathiar University, out of which twenty are women's colleges. The women's colleges were selected purposively for the study. As the population is too large to be studied, final year degree students were selected for the study. There are about 7,110 final students studying in nineteen women's colleges. From each college fifty five students were selected based on random sampling method, generating random numbers from the website. (randominterger.com). A total of 1045 sample students were selected for the study. Care has been taken to include all the courses in the selected nineteen women's colleges.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study is descriptive in nature and based on survey method. The study involves both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected by administering interview schedule prepared by the researcher herself. Secondary data were collected from journals, magazines, books, newspapers, reports of Central and State Governments, various publications of international bodies and Government records and websites. Interview schedule designed by the researcher was used for collection of primary data.

Level of Awareness about Contraceptives

The level of awareness about contraceptives among women students is measured by applying Likert type five point scale. The respondents were asked to express their opinion in seven statements in interview schedule. The respondents scoring pattern in five point scale for each variable is as follows.

Table 1 Likert type five point scale

Definitely true	Probably true	Don't know	Probably false	Definitely false
5	4	3	2	1

The maximum score for each respondent in each statement is 5 and the minimum score is one. Thus the Contraception Awareness Scale has maximum score of 35 and a minimum of 7. So the score in the present study ranges between 7 to 35.

To find out the level of awareness, the scores assigned by 994 respondents for each statement and the total score for seven statements were calculated. In addition the mean and standard deviation for the total score were computed for the analysis.

Table 2. Level of Awareness about Contraceptives among the Respondents

S.No	Score level	Level of Awareness	No of Respondents	Percentage
1	< 25.28	Low	266	27.00
2	29.54 - 25.28	Medium	447	45.00
3	>29.54	High	281	28.00
		Total	994	100

Table 3. Awareness about Contraceptives

S.No	Components	Score Obtained	Total Score	Percentage
1	Condoms prevent pregnancy and STIs	4101	4970	82.5
2	Vasectomy is birth control operation done to male	3865	4970	77.8
3	Tubectomy is birth control operation done to female	3841	4970	77.3
4	Copper T or loop is a female contraceptive method	4053	4970	81.5
5	Pills like Mala D is used as contraception in female	3823	4970	76.9
6	Having contact in safe period prevent STI transmission	3913	4970	78.7
7	Emergency contraceptives are taken within 72 hours of contact	3646	4970	73.3
	Total	27,242	34,981	

It is inferred that the number of sample respondents in the medium awareness group is higher 447(45%) than the high and low medium category. It is to be noted that 55% of the women students taken for the study shows medium and high level of awareness in the sample and reveals that the awareness of the students is significant. The wide variation in the average scores of the three groups supports the view that the three categories of women students are distinct classes. The mean score for the 994 sample respondents is 27.41 with a standard deviation of 4.26. It confirms that a wide variation exists in the levels of awareness among women students.

Awareness about Contraceptives

The scores allotted by each respondent to the statements given in the Interview Schedule were computed and the total score of all respondents were calculated and presented in table. The scores for the seven variables are shown in the Table. It is evident from table that the respondents have scored above 70% which shows the awareness for various components of contraception. However the two variables 'Condoms prevent pregnancy and STIs' and 'Copper T or loop is a female contraceptive method' have the score of above 80% which shows the influence of media such as news paper and TV.

The important finding of the study is the score for the variable 'Having contact in safe period prevents STI transmission' is 3913(78.7%) which shows the wrong perception of safe period contact which actually is not the protection against STI and pregnancy. This highlights the need to inculcate the awareness among women students which is essential for prevention of STI.

Limitation of the Study

The present research is carried out in four districts namely Coimbatore, Erode, Tirupur and Ooty. The study is confined to the final year students, as they are in the immediate need of the awareness about reproductive health and majority of them are stepping into marital life. The study did not cover the views of men students, women students of co-education colleges of Arts and Science, engineering, medicines, education and law colleges.

Conclusion

An analysis of the level of awareness of respondents about contraceptives shows that 45% of respondents have medium

level awareness and 27% of respondents have low level of awareness. The respondents have high level of awareness in all the nine components taken for the study. Future studies can concentrate on contraceptive practices among young students.

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