Involving Men to Increase Family Planning: Case of Rural Bihar, India

Authors:
Rema Nanda, Amit Shah, Elkan Daniel

Presented by: Navendu Shekhar
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The Reproductive Health Context in Bihar

- Among women age 20-49 yrs, median age at first marriage is 15 yrs.
- More than two-thirds of women age 20-24 years married before 18.
- Median age of women at first birth: 18.8 years.
- Median interval between births is 30 months.
- Current use of modern contraceptive by couples:
  - ‘0’ parity 1.4%
  - ‘1’ parity 6.0%
- Total fertility rate: 4 (highest in country)
  - Increased from NFHS 2 to NFHS 3.
- Bihar has the third highest proportion of young people (aged 10-24) in India.

Source: NFHS III
PRACHAR Project
(PROMOTING CHANGE IN REPRODUCTIVE BEHAVIOR)

GOAL:
Improve health and well being of women, their children and families by reducing early fertility and by practicing healthy timing and spacing of pregnancy (HTSP).

OBJECTIVES:
• Delay age of marriage
• Delay first child till woman is 21
• Space the second child by 36 months

PHASE I: 2001 – 2005
PHASE II: 2005 – 2009
PHASE III: 2009 – 2012
Targeting Men in PRACHAR

• Overall contraceptive use among young couples is low.
  ▪ Among young couples aged 15-19, condoms are the number one method used
• Men principal decision makers for most family decisions
• PRACHAR therefore employed Male Change Agents that talked to men
Study

Background: The Phase II baseline survey (“Wave 3”), conducted in 2006 in selected intervention areas from Phase I, was used for this analysis.

Nature of Intervention: Phase I communication interventions included: home visits, trainings for young couples, group meetings conducted by male communicators, and infotainment sessions.

Objective: To examine the relationship between exposure of men to PRACHAR communication activities and contraceptive use.

Methodology
- Survey sample included 3,532 married women and men who had no children or one child, with only one partner (wife or husband) sampled from the same couple.
- Cross sectional survey
Data Analysis

• Bivariate analysis
• Logistic regression controlling for parity, women’s education and standard of living
  – The dependent variable for this analysis was current contraceptive use. Our hypothesized key predictor for contraceptive use was exposure to communication interventions.
  – Each respondent was asked in the survey if s/he or her/his spouse participated in PRACHAR Phase I training, group meetings and infotainment parties, and/or received information or counseling at home from a PRACHAR community worker.
  – Couples were grouped into four categories in terms of exposure to PRACHAR Phase I interventions.
  – Assess the effect of different exposures on contraceptive use.
Results

Current use of modern contraceptive methods among women and men, parity 0 and 1, by exposure to PRACHAR communications interventions (Wave 3, N = 3532).
Results

Multivariate logistic regression, adjusting for parity, education and standard of living.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exposure</th>
<th>Odds ratio</th>
<th>Significance level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neither partner exposed</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only wife exposed</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>p&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only husband exposed</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>p&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both partners exposed</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>p&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compared to couples where neither had been exposed, the odds of currently using a contraceptive method were highest when both partners were exposed.
Program Implications

• The findings of this study suggest that joint exposure of young married couples to reproductive health (RH) information is associated with the highest odds of using contraception.

• Exposure of men alone to interventions is more effective than exposure of women only, which may reflect men’s greater decision-making power regarding contraception.

• Health programs, elsewhere in India, may wish to adopt similar activities to reach young men, to promote contraceptive use for delayed childbearing and spacing of pregnancies.
THANK YOU

For more information, please visit www.pathfinder.org