

## RESEARCH PAPER

# Factors influencing the use of contraceptive methods among women of reproductive age group in Basrah

Sara M. Fouad<sup>1</sup>, Rasha A. Abdul Qader<sup>2</sup>

1. MBChB, Department of Community and family medicine, College of Medicine, University of Basrah, Basrah, Iraq
2. MBChB, FIBMS, Department of Community and family medicine, College of Medicine, University of Basrah, Basrah, Iraq

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### Abstract

**Background:** Family planning has obvious health benefits by preventing unintended pregnancies, which results in a subsequent decrease in maternal morbidity and mortality, allowing the spacing of pregnancies, delaying pregnancies in young girls who are at an increased risk of health problems from early childbearing, and preventing pregnancies among older women who also face increased risks. Despite these benefits, there are reports of low usage among reproductive-age women in most developing countries.

**Aim:** This study aimed to identify the factors that influence the choice and use of contraceptive methods among women of reproductive age in Basrah City, Iraq.

**Methods:** This is a cross-sectional study involving 400 married women of the reproductive age group (15-49) years, who attended five primary healthcare centres in Basrah city during the period of seven months, from 1<sup>st</sup> May 2022 to 1<sup>st</sup> November 2022.

**Results and conclusions:** in the results, 84.0% of participating women currently use contraceptive methods. The modern methods were used by 71.7% of women, and the most utilized methods were oral pills followed by injectables. while the natural methods were used by 28.3% and withdrawal was the preferred one among them. Also, the factors that influence the utilization include women's age, education of both women and their husbands, parity, the desire for more children and the source of women's information.

**Recommendations:** More effective ways are needed to educate women about modern contraceptive methods, effective health education should be included in the primary health center programs to maintain this level of use and we need more studies in other parts of Iraq to identify the factors that influence the use of contraceptive methods, and more studies are needed to address the reasons affecting the non-utilization of family planning methods.

**Key words:** Family planning, contraceptive methods, factors influencing, Basrah

**Corresponding Author:** Sara Mohannad Fouad, Department of Community and family medicine, College of Medicine, University of Basrah, Basrah, Iraq

✉ E-mail: [saramohannad91@gmail.com](mailto:saramohannad91@gmail.com)

### Introduction

Family planning and contraceptive methods play a vital role in national and human development. Birth control has been used since ancient times, but effective and safe birth

control methods only became available in the 20th century. <sup>1</sup> The latest projections by the United Nations suggest that the global population could grow to around 8.5 billion in 2030, 9.7 billion in 2050, and 10.4 billion in 2100. <sup>2</sup> In Iraq, the development is complex; according to United Nations Population Division data, Iraq's population has increased four-fold over the last 50 years, doubling over the previous 25 years (from 10 million in 1970 to 20 million in 1995, to some 40 million in 2020), 23% are adolescents (10-19 years old),

and women of reproductive age (15-49 years) account for 24.4% of the total population.<sup>3</sup> Birth control helps regulate population growth and reduce the total fertility rate, which brings about socio-economic benefits such as decreased poverty levels, enhanced education opportunities, and reduced gender inequality and impacts on the economy, environment, and national and regional development efforts.<sup>4</sup> One in three women of reproductive age not using contraception despite their desire to delay or limit childbirth.<sup>5</sup> In 2019, more than half of the 1.6 billion women of reproductive age living in low and middle-income countries want to avoid pregnancy.<sup>6</sup> Among these 923 million women who do not wish to become pregnant, three-quarters use modern contraceptives, and one-quarter do not.<sup>7</sup> Several factors contribute to the use of contraceptive methods in developing countries; access to family planning methods services, individual factors, community-level and socioeconomic factors remain prominent determinants of contraceptive methods use in these countries.<sup>8</sup>

### **The study objectives:**

1. Identify the factors that influence the choice and use of contraceptive methods.
2. Examine the patterns and determinants of contraceptive methods used among married women and assess the knowledge of women about the types and side effects of contraceptive methods.

### **Materials and methods**

This study is a cross-sectional study involving 400 married women of the reproductive age group (15-49) years, who attended five primary healthcare centres in Basrah city during the period of seven months, from 1st May 2022 to 1st November 2022. Unmarried, divorced, widow; and pregnant women were excluded

from the sampling process. Verbal agreement to contribute to the study was acquired for each participant. The selected women were directly interviewed by the researcher. A directly administered questionnaire specially designed for the study purpose was used which included the following parts:

**Part 1:** Socio-demographical characteristics of the participating women and their husbands included: age, education, occupation, and economic status.

**Part 2:** Age of marriage of the women, duration of the marriage, and the obstetric history which included: parity, pregnancy wastage, mode of delivery of the last baby, and whether the women desire more children.

**Part 3:** Current usage of contraceptive methods, the type, duration, whether the women were satisfied with this method, causes of the selection of this method, the causes of dissatisfaction and the causes for non-use of contraceptives.

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. was used for data presentation, the qualitative data were presented as frequency and percentage, while the presentation of quantitative data was presented as Mean  $\pm$  Standard deviation. The chi-Squared  $X^2$  test was used to determine the association between different variables, a P-value  $< 0.05$  was considered statistically significant (Fisher's exact test was used when the expected value was less than 5).

### **Results**

The mean age of the participating women was equal to  $32.8 \pm 9.2$  years. The majority (65%) of women were between the age of (20-39) years, and 7.2 % of them were in the age groups of less than 20 years. Regarding education status, 32.8% of women had a primary level of

education, followed by university and postgraduate (24.8%). This study showed that the percentage of husbands who had university and postgraduate levels of education and those who had a primary level of education were nearly equal (30.8%) and (30.2%), respectively. The majority of women in this study were housewives (77.5%), and regarding the occupation of their husbands, 54.0% were self-employed. Regarding economic status, 44.5% of the participating women were poor, and only 85 (21.3%) women had good economic status. (Table-1).

**Table 1.** The socio-demographic characteristics of the studied population.

Variables		No.	%
Women's age (years)	Mean ± Sd	32.8 ± 9.2	
	<20	29	7.2
	20-	124	31.0
	30-	136	34.0
Women's education	40 and above	111	27.8
	Illiterate and just read and write	52	13.0
	Primary	131	32.8
	Intermediate	56	14.0
Husbands' education	Secondary	62	15.4
	University and postgraduate	99	24.8
	Illiterate and just read and write	22	5.6
	Primary	121	30.2
Women's occupation	Intermediate	52	13.0
	Secondary	82	20.4
	University and postgraduate	123	30.8
	Housewife	310	77.5
Husbands' occupation	Employed	88	22.0
	Student	2	0.5
	Governmental Employees	184	46.0
Economic status	Self-employed	216	54.0
	Poor	178	44.5
	Medium	137	34.2
Total	Good	85	21.3
		400	100.0

The women's age of marriage was mainly between (15-19) years (37.3%) and the mean age of marriage was equal to 20.53 ± 4.38 years. The duration of marriage of 22.5% of the participants ranged between (10-14) years. The

highest percentage of the women in this study (68.0%) had (1-4) children and 302 (75.5%) of the women had no history of pregnancy wastage. Regarding the mode of delivery of the last child, 76.5% of women had a normal vaginal delivery and 23.5% had a caesarean section. More than 50 % of the women were desired to become pregnant in the future. (Table-2).

**Table 2.** The age of marriage of the women, duration of the marriage and the past obstetric history

Variables		No.	%
Age of marriage (women)	Mean ± SD	20.53± 4.38	
	<15	25	6.2
	15-	149	37.3
	20-	145	36.2
	25-	70	17.5
	30 and above	11	2.8
Marriage duration (years)	Mean ± SD	12.2± 8.2	
	<5	87	21.8
	5-	81	20.3
	10-	90	22.5
	15-	58	14.5
	20-	43	10.8
Parity	25 and above	42	10.3
	0	9	2.2
	1-4	272	68.0
	5 and more	119	29.8
Pregnancy wastage	None	302	75.5
	1-2	91	22.8
	3 and more	7	1.7
Mode of delivery of the last baby	Caesarean section	94	23.5
	Normal vaginal delivery	306	76.5
The desire for more children	Yes	203	50.7
	No	197	49.3
Total		400	100.0

Eighty-four percent of participating women were current users of contraceptive methods. (49.1%) of women used oral pills followed by withdrawal, which was used by 21.4%. The lowest percentage was for tubal ligation and implants (2.9%). Seventy-five percent of women were satisfied with the contraceptive

method they were using. The participants were asked about the causes of the selection of the current method, 30.7% of them mentioned that the reason was related to that method was safe with few side effects. (Table-3).

**Table 3.** Characteristics of the current utilization of contraceptive methods

Variables		No.	%
Current use of contraceptives	Yes	336	84.0
	No	64	16.0
The method used currently. (n = 336)	Oral Pills	165	49.1
	Injectable	20	5.9
	IUDs	16	4.8
	Implant	10	3.0
	Male condom	13	3.9
	Withdrawal	72	21.4
	More than one method	7	2.1
	Tubal ligation	10	3.0
	Lactational amenorrhea	23	6.8
	Satisfaction (n = 336)	Yes	252
No		84	25.0
Cause of selection of this method (n=336)	Safe with few side effects	103	30.7
	Available method at PHC	67	19.9
	Low cost of the method	31	9.2
	Simplicity to use	23	6.8
	Used previously	50	14.9
	Infrequent sex	21	6.3
	Medical reasons	20	5.9
	Personal preference	5	1.5
	No specific reason	16	4.8

The non-usage of contraceptive methods among 64 (15.7%) participating women. The commonest cause was that want to become pregnant (42.2%). While the cause in 14.1% of them was due to fear of side effects and 9.4% of them mentioned non-usage due to medical reasons. (Table-4).

**Table 4.** The causes of non-usage of contraceptive methods.

Variables		No.	%
Causes of non-use	Want children	27	42.2
	Fear of side effects	9	14.1
	Medical reasons	6	9.4
	Husband objection	15	23.4
	Infrequent sex	7	10.9
	<b>Total</b>	64	100

Women's age was significantly associated with contraceptive methods used since the p-value = 0.001. As women age increases their usage increases and then decreased in the age group of 40 years and above. Women's and husbands' education both showed a significant association with contraceptive methods used since the p-value was equal to 0.006 and 0.008 for them respectively. The usage was higher among women with secondary education levels and also among women whose husbands had secondary education levels. Regarding occupation status, it showed no significant association with contraceptive methods usage since the p-value > 0.05. Similarly, the economic status of the family had no significant association with contraceptive usage. (Table-5).

**Table 5.** The association between the utilization of contraceptive methods and socio-demographic characteristics of the studied population.

Variables		User	Nonuser	Total	p-value
		No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)	
Age of marriage (women)	<15	19(76.0)	6(24.0)	25(100.0)	0.594
	15-	122(81.9)	27(18.1)	149(100.0)	
	20-	126(86.9)	19(13.1)	145(100.0)	
	25-	60(85.9)	10(14.3)	70(100.0)	
	30 and above	9(81.8)	2(18.2)	11(100.0)	
Marriage duration (years)	<5	67(77.0)	20(23.0)	87(100.0)	0.164
	5-	69(85.2)	12(14.8)	81(100.0)	
	10-	82(91.1)	8(8.9)	90(100.0)	
	15-	49(84.5)	9(15.5)	58(100.0)	
	20-	37(86.0)	6(14.0)	43(100.0)	
Parity	0	0(0.0)	9(100.0)	9(100.0)	0.001
	1-4	226(83.1)	46(16.9)	272(100.0)	
	5 and more	110(92.4)	9(7.6)	119(100.0)	
Pregnancy wastage	None	254(84.1)	48(15.9)	302(100.0)	0.715
	1-2	77(84.6)	14(15.4)	91(100.0)	
	3 and more	5(71.4)	2(28.6)	7(100.0)	
Mode of delivery of the last baby	Caesarean section	77(81.9)	17(18.1)	94(100.0)	0.528
	Normal vaginal delivery	259(84.6)	47(15.4)	306(100.0)	
The desire for more children	Yes	161(79.3)	42(20.7)	203(100.0)	0.009
	No	175(88.8)	22(11.2)	197(100.0)	
Total		336	64	400(100.0)	

The age of marriage of women and duration of marriage had no significant association with contraceptive methods usage (p-value > 0.05). Parity had a significant association with contraceptive methods used since the p-value = 0.001. As the women's parity increase the utilization increase. Pregnancy wastage and the mode of the last baby delivery showed no significant association with contraceptive methods usage (p-value > 0.05). The women's desire for more children was significantly associated with contraceptive usage (p-value = 0.009). Women who don't wish for more children tend to use contraceptive methods than those who want to become pregnant in future. (Table-6).

**Table 6.** The association between the utilization of contraceptive methods and the age of marriage of women, duration of the marriage and the past obstetric history

Variables		User	Non-user	Total	P-value
		No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)	
Women's Age (years)	<20	15 (52.7)	14(48.3)	29(100.0)	0.001
	20-	107(86.3)	17(13.7)	124(100.0)	
	30-	124(91.2)	12(8.8)	136(100.0)	
	40 and above	90 (81.1)	21(18.9)	111(100.0)	
Women's Education	Illiterate and just read and write	38(73.1)	14(26.9)	52(100.0)	0.006
	Primary	104(79.4)	27(20.6)	131(100.0)	
	Intermediate	51(91.1)	5(8.9)	56(100.0)	
	Secondary	59(95.2)	3(4.8)	62(100.0)	
	University and postgraduate	84(84.8)	15(15.2)	99(100.0)	
Husbands' education	Illiterate and just read and write	16(72.7)	6(27.3)	22(100.0)	0.008
	Primary	103(85.1)	18(14.9)	121(100.0)	
	Intermediate	36(69.2)	16(30.8)	52(100.0)	
	Secondary	74(90.2)	8(9.8)	82(100.0)	

There was a significant association noticed between the women's source of information and contraceptive methods usage (p-value=0.003). The utilization of contraceptive methods was mostly influenced by family planning services. (Table-7).

**Table 7.** The association between the utilization of contraception methods and the women's source of information about the methods.

Variable		User	Nonuser	Total	p-value
		No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)	
Source of information	Doctor	126(85.7)	21(14.3)	147(100.0)	0.003
	Family planning services	64(95.5)	3(4.5)	67(100.0)	
	Family and friends	87(75.0)	29(25.0)	116(100.0)	
	Media and internet	41(80.4)	10(19.6)	51(100.0)	
	Women experience	18(94.7)	1(5.3)	19(100.0)	
Total		336	64	400(100.0)	

## Discussion

The current utilization of contraceptive methods was (84.0%) of the participating women used contraceptive methods, which is considered a high rate compared with the previous rate of a study done in Basrah in 2011 which was 53.7%, and also higher than the rate of use in Baghdad City (49.6%) and Mosul city (67.3%).<sup>9-11</sup> This rate of utilization is considered good compared to that reported in Saudi Arabia (88%), Nepal (79.3%), and Turkey (77.7%).<sup>12-14</sup> In the present study, most of the women were using modern methods and the most common methods were oral pills, followed by injectables. Withdrawal was the highest type of the natural method currently used by 21.4% of the participating women. In Al-Amara city, Iraq, 54.8% of women used modern methods and 45.2% used natural methods.<sup>15</sup> While in Ajman, United Arab Emirates, 66.4% of the current users, used modern methods and 33.6% used traditional methods.<sup>16</sup> In India, 72% of Indian women using modern contraception in the form of sterilization (70%) and pills (12%).<sup>17</sup> Our study revealed the current method satisfaction was 75% which was higher than that reported in Delaware and Maryland (61%) and consistent with Congo (83.3%) and Nigeria (84%).<sup>18-20</sup> The percentage of non-users in the study was only 16.0% of the participants, most of women wanted to become pregnant and followed by the fear of contraceptive methods' side effects. In a study to assess the reasons for the non-use of any method in low- and middle-income countries, health concerns were the top reason followed by infrequent sex.<sup>21</sup> In Ethiopia 15% of women not using any contraceptive method due to their husband's objections.<sup>22</sup> Women's age in the present study was significantly associated with the usage of contraceptive methods similar results were seen in many other studies.<sup>16,23,24</sup> The use of contraceptive methods

increases with women's age, this might be due to the reason that, when age increases mothers' awareness, attitude and practice towards family planning may increase. In addition, as age increases women would like to space and time their childbirth, as a result, they would be interested to utilize family planning in one or another way. Adolescent women less than 20 years in the present study got a long fertile life to spend, and at the same time, they want to complete their families. This could explain the lower rate of using contraceptives in this age group. While women above 40 had a lower rate of using contraceptives, which could be explained by that they had a low perceived risk of pregnancy. Other studies have shown no association with age. Women's educational level may help them to understand easily the messages of the importance of birth control and family planning. In the present study, the utilization was more among women with a secondary level of education. A similar result was found in many other studies.<sup>14,16,24,25</sup> Women who have educated husbands in the current study were more utilization of contraceptive methods, the possible explanation might be; education can improve awareness, induce sharing of decision-making power and can improve the attitudes towards contraceptive methods utilization. The current study revealed no significant association between both partners' occupations and the economic status with the use of contraceptive methods, in line with a study done in Nepal, Indonesia and Bangladesh.<sup>13,26,27</sup> That is because family planning services in Iraq provide free access to contraceptive methods to all women could be beneficial and remove the financial burden and may explain the increasing rates of the use of contraception methods. Other studies in Turkey and Meghalaya show that those two factors had a strong influence on contraceptive methods utilization.<sup>14,28</sup> In terms

of the association between women's age of marriage and duration of marriage with the usage of contraceptive methods, there was no significant association in the present study. In line with a study conducted in Ghana.<sup>29</sup> Our study revealed that as the women's parity increased the usage of contraceptive methods increased also. Studies done in Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates support this result.<sup>14,18,16</sup> Several studies had shown the opposite results.<sup>13,30,31</sup> Pregnancy wastage in the present study did not influence the use of contraceptive methods. Similar to a study in Saudi Arabia which revealed no significant association between pregnancy wastage and the usage of contraceptive methods.<sup>32</sup> The desire for more children didn't influence the use of contraception. A similar result was seen in a study done in Nigeria.<sup>33</sup> Women who depend on family planning services as a source of their information showed more utilization of contraceptive methods, especially the modern types. This is not surprising considering that these facilities tend to provide services free of charge thus removing one of the key barriers to accessing FP services. However, our findings also show that private health facilities are a good source of FP information. A study carried out in Al-Ramadi City, Iraq revealed that there was a significant association between the utilization of contraceptive methods and women's source of information, health personnel had more influence on women's use of contraceptive methods in the rural area.<sup>34</sup>

### Conclusions & Recommendations

A high percentage of women in Basrah were contraceptive users, and the majority of them prefer the modern method of contraception. The most important Factors that influence the utilization include women's age, the education of both women and their husbands, the number of children, the desire for more children and the

source of women's information. More effective ways are needed to educate women about modern contraceptive methods. There is a need for health personnel to be more effective sources of information and increase women's awareness of the various benefits of contraceptive methods. Effective health education should be included in the primary health center programs to maintain this level of use. The administration of the family planning services should ensure a continuous supply of contraceptives to avoid inconveniencing the clients. We need more studies in other parts of Iraq to identify the factors that influence the use of contraceptive methods, and more studies are needed to address the reasons affecting the non-utilization of family planning methods.

### Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest in this study.

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### *العوامل المؤثرة في استخدام وسائل منع الحمل لدى النساء في سن الإنجاب في البصرة*

**الخلفية:** هذا البحث هو دراسة مقطعية شملت خمسة مراكز الرعاية الصحية الأولية في مركز مدينة البصرة التابعة الى القطاع الأول والثاني والثالث.

**هدف الدراسة:** الهدف هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على العوامل التي تؤثر على اختيار واستخدام وسائل منع الحمل بين النساء في سن الإنجاب في مدينة البصرة.

أجريت هذه الدراسة على عينة ملائمة من ٤٠٠ امرأة في سن الإنجاب حضرن خمسة مراكز رعاية صحية أولية من ١ مايو ٢٠٢٢ إلى ١ نوفمبر ٢٠٢٢

**النتائج:** أظهرت نتيجة الدراسة أن متوسط عمر المرأة كان ٣٢,٨ سنة، معظم النساء تتراوح أعمارهن بين ٢٠ إلى أقل من ٤٠ سنة، ٣٢,٨٪ كان لديهن مستوى تعليمي ابتدائي، معظمهن كن ربات بيوت. وكان متوسط سن الزواج للنساء المشاركات ٢٠,٥٣ سنة. معظم النساء كان لديهن ١ إلى ٤ أطفال، وكانت النسبة الأعلى ليس لديهم تاريخ من الهدر في الحمل، ٧٦,٥٪ من النساء كان لديهن ولادة مهبلية طبيعية لطفل الاخير وأكثر من نصف النساء المشاركات يرغبن في الحمل في المستقبل. أوضحت هذه الدراسة أن معرفة النساء بأنواع وسائل منع الحمل كان النسبة الاعلى للحبوب الفموية، يليه الواقي الذكري، وأقل طريقة معروفة كانت طريقة الحيض الآمن.

**الاستنتاج:** مصدر معلومات المرأة عن موانع الحمل كان النسبة الأعلى من الأطباء في العيادات الخاصة، يليه العائلة والأصدقاء. أوضحت الدراسة ان الاستخدام السابق لوسائل منع الحمل ٧٧,٥٪، بينما (٨٤,٠٪) من المشاركات كانت من المستخدمين الحاليين لوسائل منع الحمل، و (٢٨,٣٪) من النساء يستخدمن الوسائل الطبيعية، و (٧١,٧٪) من النساء يستخدمن الوسائل الحديثة. كشفت الدراسة ان العوامل التي تؤثر على استخدام وسائل منع الحمل هي سن المرأة، والوضع التعليمي لكل من المرأة وزوجها، وعدد الاطفال، والرغبة في المزيد من الأطفال، ومصدر معلومات المرأة عن وسائل منع الحمل. لم يؤثر أي من العوامل المشمولة في الدراسة على تفضيل الأساليب الحديثة أو الطبيعية باستثناء مصدر معلومات المرأة عن وسائل منع الحمل.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** تنظيم الأسرة، وسائل منع الحمل، العوامل المؤثرة، البصرة.