Factors Influencing Contraceptive Use for Women

Introduction:

Many young college students are sexually active in the United States and use different methods of contraception. Some factors associated with contraceptive choice include sexual relationship characteristics and partner influence. Yet, a higher percentage of unintended pregnancy in the 20-somethings age group of female college students has become an important public health issue. Thus, it is important for researchers to examine how all of these factors influence contraceptive choice and use in order to help young women better manage their reproductive health.

Background on study:

Students of the Minnesota Young Women’s Collaborative (MYWC) conducted a research survey on the health behaviors of college women, specifically around reproductive health. Results of the survey were collected from 1,401 University of Minnesota, Twin Cities female respondents ages 18-25. The purpose of this study was to identify by whom and to what extent young women are influenced around the choice and use of contraceptives (e.g.: condom, pill, patch, ring, etc.). In addition, the top 3 preferred methods of contraception were compared among Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) ethnicities.

Survey question topics included:
- Extent of influence from a partner, family member, friend, or healthcare provider received on the choice of contraceptive(s)
- Role a dating/intimate partner played around contraceptive use
- Common methods of contraceptive use among AAPIs

Findings:

Influences on Choice of Contraceptives
- Participants identified that their partners had a lot of influence (34%) or somewhat influenced (22%) their choice of contraceptives
- Other family members (60%) and other (63%) were identified as the having no influence on contraceptive choice.

Effect of Relationship Status and Extent of Partner Influence on Contraceptive Choice
- When asked how much influence a partner had on participants’ choice of contraceptives, participants who were in a committed relationship identified that their partner had a lot of influence (33%) or somewhat influenced (26%) their choice.
- Conversely, participants who identified with not dating, not committed most reported that partners did not influence their choice of contraceptives (35%).
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Role of Partner around Contraceptive Use

Fig. 3: Role of Current or Most-Recent Dating/Intimate Partner in Decision-Making Around Contraceptive Use

- From a total of 835 responses to an open-ended question on the role of a partner around contraceptive use, most of the participants reported that a partner had no role to little role as the primary reason for using contraceptives.
- 39% expressed that their partner had no role to a little role, including that it was a personal choice or a third-party that influenced their contraceptive use.
- 18% had an equal role with support and discussion.
- 19% had a large, influential, and significant role.
- 9% reported no role but used contraceptive(s).
- 15% of responses were non-applicable (identified as lesbian/trans, no contraceptive use, not sexually active)

Preferred Method of Contraceptives among AAPIs

Fig. 4: Three Most Frequently Used Methods to Prevent Pregnancy by AAPIs

- In most AAPI ethnicities, male condoms were the most commonly used type of contraceptive.
- South Asian respondents reported the highest percentage of using condoms (73%) and Taiwanese the lowest (33%).
- When aggregating 165 AAPI respondents, on average 54% reported use of male condoms, 26% use the pill, and 20% have not used any method.
- Korean women reported more frequently choosing the pill (47%) over male condoms (42%) to prevent pregnancy.
- Japanese, Laotian, Pacific Islander, and Thai ethnicities did not respond: “I have not used any methods.”

Summary:

- Respondents who were “in a committed relationship” tended to report much higher levels of influence from their partners regarding contraception choice.
- Male condoms were the most common choice of contraceptive across all AAPI ethnicities (54%), except Korean respondents who on average chose the pill over male condoms.

References:


“My most recent partner has no effect in my decision making. I make the decisions for myself.”

“We talk about contraceptive choices together and have decided on a method that feels the most comfortable for us and our lifestyle.”

“He had a pretty significant role in it. I was on the fence about using birth control and he talked me into it.”