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CONSISTENCY OF COUPLE DECLARATION ABOUT USING FAMILY PLANNING METHODS IN TURKEY

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Summary. The aim of this study was to determine the consistency of spouses' declarations about contraceptive use and child desire in Turkey. Husbands eligible for the study were currently married to eligible women, i.e. those who generally lived in the same household or who stayed in the household the night before the interview. Husband questionnaires were completed by 1971 men. It was found that 88·9% of the couples had not talked about family planning with each other in the last two months. The percentage of answers on current contraceptive use for all methods that were consistent for husbands and wives was 70·2%. The consistency among partners who stated they would like to have children in the future was found to be 94·8%, and that among partners who were planning to use a contraceptive method was found to be 88·3%.

Introduction

Couples control their fertility primarily by using male and female contraceptive methods. However, men and women do not take equal responsibility for contraception (Helzner, 1996). In 1994, the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) reached a broad consensus that men should take an equal responsibility for family planning and reproductive health with women (United Nations, 1994). The role of men in the family, their relationship with their partners, gender patterns of society, men-oriented educational programmes and counselling activities on family planning, and HIV/sexually transmitted infections all influence men's knowledge of and behaviour regarding family planning. Contraceptive use by women is affected by similar factors.

However, most surveys only present women-based data about contraceptive use. Documenting men's perspective directly regarding their views on demographic and health events in their lives will help better understand the factors affecting utilization of reproductive health services (Ringheim, 1996).

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Differences in fertility trends, information about use of family planning methods and indicators of child health have been provided by nationwide surveys carried out at regular 5-year intervals since 1963 in Turkey. According to the last survey in 1998, 39·7% of currently married women aged 15–49 were using a modern contraceptive method (23·0% IUD, 6·7% pill, 6·6% condom, and 2·3% female sterilization) and 28·0% of them were using coitus interruptus. Approximately half of the couples were using male-dependent contraceptive methods (Ozvaris *et al*., 1998). According to the survey findings, men are involved in family planning programmes in Turkey and activities have been carried out to increase men's contraceptive use all over the country.

The aim of this study was to define the consistency of spouses' declarations about contraceptive use, their desire to have children and the intentions of using family planning methods among non-users using the 1998 Turkish Demographic and Health Survey.

Methods

The Turkish Demographic and Health Survey, which was designed to provide information on fertility levels and trends, family planning etc., was carried out in 1998 by Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies (HUIPS, 1999). In the survey, couples were asked separately about family planning and fertility issues. Four questionnaires were used: the household questionnaire, and individual questionnaires for ever-married women, women who had never married and for husbands. The individual questionnaire for husbands consisted of six major sections: background characteristics, fertility, contraception, marital history, fertility preferences, and knowledge about sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS. For the fieldwork, teams were organized and each team member was trained over a 3-week period. Approximately 120 interviewers carried out the data collection process.

In this study, data were collected from married women and their husbands for a nationally representative sample, selected by a weighted, multistage, stratified cluster sampling approach. Stratification was done for five regions chosen for the Turkish 1993 DHS for comparability of findings. Further sub-stratification into fourteen strata was established based on geographical proximity and infant mortality rate for the year 1990. Sampling from each stratum was done for rural and urban settings, proportional to size.

Interviews were carried out in 8059 households, with 8576 women. All women aged between 15 and 49 who generally lived in that house or who had stayed in the household the night before the interview, were included in the study. For the male questionnaire, a sub-sample half the size of the study with females was determined: the number of households for which husbands were interviewed was 4983. Husbands eligible for the study were currently married to eligible women living in that particular household or who had stayed in the house the night before the interview. Among those households contacted, 3043 husbands were defined as eligible for interview. Husbands' questionnaires were successfully completed by 1971 husbands (64·8%). Failure to complete husband questionnaires was mainly due to an inability to find the husband at home at repeated visits. Distributions of age, level of education and place

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Table 1. Distribution of currently married husbands and women by age group and educational attainment, Turkey 1998

Background characteristics	Husbands (N=1971)		Women (N=1906)	
	n	%*	n	%*
Age				
15–19	3	0·2	78	4·4
20–29	419	22·9	622	34·1
30–39	728	36·3	717	36·4
40–49	589	29·2	489	25·1
50+	232	12·9	—	—
Education				
Never attended school	135	6·6	393	18·2
Primary incomplete	76	3·7	115	6·1
Primary complete/secondary incomplete	1250	63·6	1130	60·8
Secondary complete	272	13·1	187	10·1
High +	238	12·9	81	4·9

*Weighted percentage.

of residence were compared for husbands for whom questionnaires were completed or missing. No statistical significance was detected between the groups.

Given that all husbands could be reached, data from males and females were merged and husbands for whom the questionnaires were completed were matched to their those of their wives. Consistency of the matching was checked for a few variables, including husband's/wife's age, educational attainment, size of the household, number of children and house condition.

Data groups were analysed by using SPSS 11·5. All analyses were corrected for sampling strategy, using sampling weights. Sampling weights were calculated for each study participant as inverses of the product of: (i) sampling fraction, (ii) eligibility of the household reached, (ii) response rate of the household questionnaire and (iv) completion rate of the questionnaires for females or husbands, as appropriate. Weighted and unweighted analyses were compared to check for the robustness of sample weights. The results are presented with unweighted numbers and weighted percentages in the tables.

Results

The distributions of age and education of the study participants are presented in Table 1. The majority of the husbands were in the age group 20–49 years (88·4%). The average age of husbands was $37{\cdot}6 \pm 9{\cdot}4$ (median age: 37), while their minimum age was 18 (n=1) and maximum age 85 (n=1).

While the percentage of uneducated husbands was 6·6%, it was 18·2% among their wives. In addition, 63·6% of husbands and 60·8% of women graduated from primary school. Only 12·9% of husbands and 4·9% of women had high school education.

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Table 2. Distribution of husbands by region and residence and 2000 population census, Turkey

	Husbands included in survey (N=1971)		2000 population census, Turkey (N=67,803,927)
	n	%*	%
Region			
West	546	38·9	40·8
South	400	14·4	14·2
Central	413	24·4	23·1
North	299	7·6	7·9
East	313	14·9	14·1
Residence			
Urban	1312	68·3	64·9
Rural	659	31·7	35·1

Table 2 shows the year 2000 Turkish population census distribution by region. It shows that 38·9% of husbands were living in the western region of Turkey, 14·6% in eastern Anatolia, 24·4% in central Anatolia, 7·6% in northern Anatolia and 14·4% in southern Anatolia. The distribution of the population by region was found to be consistent with the distribution of men included in the study by region (State Institute of Statistics, 2001).

Husbands were asked whether they talked with someone else about protection against unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections (Table 3). All men asserted that they had talked with someone else about this issue at least once. When they were asked with whom they talked about family planning in the last 2 months before the survey, 24·8% stated that they talked with their friends. Among men who declared that they talked with their friends, effective contraceptive method use was 46·3%. The percentage of men who stated that they talked with their wives was 4·3%, and in this group 50·6% were found to be using an effective contraceptive method. The percentage of men who said that they talked with their neighbours was 3·8%, and among these effective method use was found to be 47·3%.

The responses of men and their wives with respect to whether men discuss contraception with their wives or not, current contraceptive method use, the desire to have children in the future, and whether men who have unmet needs recently were using a contraceptive method or not, were compared and the consistency between them was assessed. In Table 4, husbands and wives included in the study are compared in terms of their statements about whether they discussed contraceptive methods or not. Of the husbands, 4·3% stated that they talked with their wives, whereas 7·5% of the women were found to discuss contraception with their husbands. The consistency of spouses' statements is 89·6%. Table 5 examines the consistency of spouses' declared family planning method use. Of women's husbands who asserted that they were non-users, 77·4% responded in the same manner as their wives. Among

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Table 3. Distribution of husbands by the statement 'With whom talked about contraception during the last two months?'

With whom talked about contraception during the last two months?	Husbands		Percentage using modern contraceptive methods†
	n	%*	
Friends	511	24·8	46·3
Wife	90	4·3	50·6
Neighbour	69	3·8	47·3
Mother	19	1·1	20
Father	18	1·0	27·8
Brother	26	1·3	52
Sister	14	0·8	56·3

*Weighted percentages; the denominator is 1969.
†The denominator is the number in the row.

Table 4. The coherence of husbands and their wives on talking about contraception

Husband's statement	Wives' statement		Total
	I did talk about contraception	I did not talk about contraception	
I did talk about FP	0·7†	3·6†	4·3†
I did not talk about FP	6·8†	88·9†	95·7†
Total (*n*)	7·5†	92·5†	1900*

*71 couples did not give any answer.
†Percentage of total.

husbands who declared that their wives were non-users, 11·1% were protecting against pregnancy by withdrawal and 3·5% with condoms. The consistency between spouses' statements was found to be 77·8% for oral contraceptives, 85·3% for IUD and 74·8% for condom use. The highest consistency rate between spouses was detected for the IUD: 85·3% of women whose husbands stated that their wives were using the IUD, also declared that they were using the IUD. Of the current withdrawal users, 48·2% of statements were found to be consistent with that of their spouses. However, 28·3% of this group stated they were not using any contraceptive method and 12·6% of them mentioned that they were using condoms. Of women whose husbands stated that they were using condoms, 74·8% also mentioned that they were using condoms for protection against pregnancy. Two-hundred and nineteen men stated that they were using condoms and 5·6% of their wives stated they were using pills, whereas 12·6% of them asserted their husbands were using withdrawal.

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Table 5. Consistency of male declarations about using contraceptive methods by female declarations

	Female declaration							Total	
Male declaration	No use	Pill	IUD	Condom	Tubal ligation	Withdrawal	Other	%	*n*
No use	77·4	4·4	4·8	6·5	18·7	28·3	17·6	38·6	717
Pill	2·8	77·8	2·1	1·9	—	5·3	2·0	6·7	122
IUD	2·0	2·2	85·3	4·5	2·7	3·1	5·9	19·2	353
Condom	3·5	5·6	1·9	74·8	—	12·6	2·0	11·4	219
Tubal ligation	0·9	—	3·2	—	78·7	—	2·0	4·1	89
Withdrawal	11·1	7·8	2·1	8·4	—	48·2	23·5	18·8	352
Other	2·2	2·2	0·5	3·9	—	2·4	47·1	3·2	52
Total consistency								70·2	
Total *n*	651	89	359	163	84	509	49		1904
%	33·7	4·8	19·8	8·2	4·0	26·9	2·7	100·0	

*Weighted percentage.

Table 6. The coherence between spouses on whether children are desired

	Wives		
Husbands	Desired *n* (%)*	Not desired *n* (%)*	Total *n* (%)*
Desired	481 (26·3)	66 (3·6)	547 (29·9)
Not desired	29 (1·6)	1253 (68·5)	1282 (70·1)
Total	510 (27·9)*	1319 (72·1)*	1829†

*Percentage by total.
†Excluded infertile couples.

Eighty-four women stated that they had undergone tubal ligation and 78·7% of those women's husbands knew this situation accurately. However, 18·7% of men whose wives had been sterilized stated that their wives were not currently using any method. The number of men who declared that their wives had been sterilized was 89, and all of those stated they were not using male family planning methods.

The opinion of husbands and their spouses about having children in the future was sought (Table 6): 70·1% of men and 72·1% of their spouses stated that they desired no children in the future. The consistency rate between spouses about having children hereinafter was found as 94·8%. Seven hundred and twenty-six of the husbands were found to be still using a contraceptive method. Among those who did not want children in the future, 522 were not using any contraceptive method (Table 7). These husbands and their spouses were asked whether or not they would use any

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Table 7. The coherence between spouses on the intention of using contraception among non-users

	Wives		
Husbands	Intend *n* (%)*	Not intend *n* (%)*	Total *n* (%)*
Intend	244 (46·7)	49 (9·4)	293 (56·1)
Not intend	12 (2·3)	217 (41·6)	229 (43·9)
Total	256 (49·0)*	266 (51·0)*	522†

*Percentage by total.
†Current users and couples who desired children are excluded.

contraceptive method in the near future: 56·1% of men and 49·0% of their spouses declared that they did not intend to do so. The consistency between husbands and wives who were not using any method for protection against pregnancy was found to be 88·3%.

Discussion

According to the 2000 population census in Turkey, 64·9% of the total population live in urban areas and 35·1% live in rural areas (State Institute of Statistics, 2001). In this study, 68·3% of the interviewed couples lived in urban areas and 31·7% in rural areas, a similar distribution to the population census results.

The number of eligible husbands and response rate were found to be 2087 and 62·9%, respectively, in urban areas. In rural areas, 956 eligible husbands were found, but the response rate was 68·9%. Distribution of age, level of education and place of residence were compared for husbands for whom questionnaires were completed or not completed. No statistical significance was detected between the groups. When the sample was compared with the population of the country, it was found to be similar with respect to regional distribution. It can therefore be assumed that the husbands who participated in the survey reflect those of the country as a whole.

According to this study's results, 24·8% of men talk with their friends to acquire knowledge about family planning issues. It has been show that men prefer to get information mostly by chatting with friends (Ringheim, 1999). In developing countries, men have been found to talk about contraception with their friends (Loaiza, 1998). Cultural structures may influence behaviour regarding obtaining information about sexual life. It is known that men are uncomfortable about talking with people of the opposite sex about sexual issues due to cultural inhibition/pressure in developing countries, even among the well-educated (Kim *et al.*, 2000).

Those men who talked with their wives about family planning issues constituted 4·3% of all husbands. The percentage consistency with which couples declared that they have a dialogue with their partners about family planning issues was found to be 0·7%. The percentage of consistency among couples that did not talk about

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contraception was found to be 88·9% (Table 4). However, the highest percentage of modern contraceptive method use was found among the husbands who talked with their wives about contraception issues (50·6%). Thus, it seems that communication between spouses is a crucial, positive influence on the use of modern contraceptive methods. Women's educational level and their status both have a positive impact on the dialogue between spouses. In this study, only 15% of women had secondary school education or higher (De Silva, 1994). Necessary prerequisites for the expansion of contraception use among spouses are an increase in the educational level of women and improvement in the status of women.

The consistency of statements of husbands and wives in terms of using withdrawal as a contraceptive method was found to be low. Withdrawal is used alongside other contraceptive methods, and women defined withdrawal as an intermediary, transitional method (Finger, 2002). Spouses who are withdrawal users are likely to use another contraceptive method besides withdrawal. In such cases, it is possible that while one of the spouses mentions the withdrawal method, the other may mention the other method. A lack of necessary information about all contraceptive methods, or being unable to comprehend the questions asked in the survey, may also have had an impact on the couples' statement coherence.

While 219 husbands responded that they used condoms for contraception, only 163 wives stated that they did so. Three-quarters of women said that their husbands used condoms. However, men reported more use of condoms than women did. Research has suggested that this inconsistency in spouses' answers about condom use is due to extramarital affairs (Ezeh, 1993). It is presumed that men protect themselves from STIs as well as pregnancy in their extramarital relations (Gardner, 1999). Six per cent of condoms are used in extramarital, non-marital and commercial sex relationships. The condom is a coitus-dependent method and interferes with sexual functioning. Although many men are willing to use condoms during commercial sex, men in monogamous unions are not expected to use condoms with their primary partners (Knodel, 1996; Kim, 2000).

Eighty-four women reported that they had undergone tubal ligation. Of these, 18·7% of their husbands reported that they did not use any family planning method and 2·7% of their husbands declared that their wives used an IUD. In conclusion, 21·4% of husbands did not report that their wives used female sterilization as a contraceptive method. Husbands were asked on the questionnaire form which method they were currently using. Husband may not consider that his wife is sterilized with tubal ligation and may state that they do not use any contraceptive method. It is noteworthy to mention here that after determining vasectomy and tubal ligation history, questioning about temporary method use would improve the quality of gathered data. Another reason could be that wives might be sterilized without their husband's knowledge and acceptance because her husband may be against it. The law on family planning in Turkey necessitates husband's consent before sterilization. For that reason, whether their husbands consented or not should be asked of women who have tubal ligation. In this way, for those cases in which the husband did not provide consent, their answers may not be taken into consideration.

Table 6 demonstrates that men are more willing to have children in the future when compared with women. The consistency between spouses' statements about the

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desire to have children in the future is found to be 94·8%. Although the fertility behaviours of women in developed regions are found to be independent of those of their husbands, those of women living in less developed regions are dependent on them. It has been shown that, in communities where the traditional masculine gender roles are dominant and where men show behaviour patterns defined by stereotypic traditional norms, husbands appear to have more authority within the family and fertility rates among women tend to be higher (Glasgow. 1993). The reason for this high consistency rate between spouses with regard to the desire to have children may be due to the fact that they may not reach their ideal number of children.

The conformity of spouses' statements about their intentions for future contraceptive method use was also examined among spouses who do not desire children and who were not using any contraceptive method at the time of the interview (Table 7). Of these, 56·1% of men and 51·0% of women declared that they were planning to use a family planning method and the interconsistency rate was found to be 88·3% between spouses. It is noticed that, of all spouses, 41·6% agree on not using any contraceptive method. This group, which do not desire to become pregnant but also do not protect themselves from pregnancy, should be investigated by socially structured research other than examining their contraceptive method knowledge and ideal number of children.

It is recommended that awareness-raising education and counselling programmes should target men as well as women for the effective promotion of family planning issues. This approach builds a positive environment between men and women which encourages the discussion of contraception. Increasing communication between spouses about family planning could also be a factor in increasing the use of modern contraceptive methods. This study has shown that the dialogue between women and men in a family is currently inadequate in Turkey. Further surveys should be carried out in order to define which factors affect dialogue between wives and husbands on reproductive health issues.

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