

Short report

FAMILY PLANNING IN ISPARTA, TURKEY

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Summary. Family planning practices were reported by 491 married women, aged 15–49, who applied to the Family Planning Centre in Isparta, Turkey. Eighty-four percent of the women used contraception, the IUD being used most frequently. Almost half of the women married before age 18 years.

In Turkey, family planning was included as part of preventive health services almost 30 years ago. Since then, important improvements have occurred in family planning service and education programmes. Until 1965, Turkey followed a pronatalist population policy. After 1965, concern over rapid population growth predominated. In 1983, voluntary abortion and surgical sterilisation were legalised, IUDs could be inserted by midwives, and early abortion, or menstrual regulation, by medical practitioners was allowed. Today 84% of women say they do not want any more children, or wish to postpone the next pregnancy (Dervisoglu, 1994). Family planning services are mainly delivered by the health units, the Mother and Child Health Care and Family Planning Centres belonging to the Health Ministry. Government hospitals provide surgical sterilisation and uterine evacuation. In addition, other government institutions such as the Social Security provide family planning. Family planning services are free in government institutions, but a charge is made for voluntary surgical sterilisation and safe abortion. Oral contraceptives, condoms and spermicides are also sold by chemists (Dervisoglu & Ergor, 1994). As a policy, clients are encouraged to use contraceptives with low failure rates.

Isparta is a medium sized city with a population of 110,000. It is situated in the southern Mediterranean region of Turkey. There is only one Mother and Child Health Care and Family Planning Centre in Isparta. A study was completed between May and November 1994 in which 491 married women aged 15–49 filled in a questionnaire reporting their family planning practices. All the women were Muslim.

In this study, eighty-four percent of women used a method of contraception. The most widely used method was the IUD (55.6%). Three hundred and ninety women (79.4%) were 20–34 years old. One in ten was illiterate, over two-thirds had primary education, 10% had completed high school and 4% university education. Over 90% were housewives and 6%, blue collar workers. Nearly all were parous, but 31% had only one child and only 8% had no children. The age of marriage and the stage of

Table 1. Relationship between education level and age of marriage

Age of marriage (years)	Uneducated		Primary school		Secondary school		High school		University		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
≤15	7	31.8	15	68.2		0.0		0.0		0.0	22	100
16–18	34	16.6	147	71.7	11	5.4	9	4.3	4	2.0	205	100
19–21	10	2.0	125	67.6	19	10.3	31	16.7		0.0	185	100
22–25		0.0	43	60.6	4	6.0	11	15.5	13	18.3	71	100
25+		0.0	5	62.5		0.0		0.0	3	37.5	8	100
Total	51	10.4	335	68.2	34	7	51	10.4	20	4	491	100

Table 2. Contraceptive methods used

Contraceptive method	<i>n</i>	%
Withdrawal	74	15
Breast-feeding	7	1.4
Condom	51	10.4
IUD	273	55.6
Oral	8	1.6
No method	78	15.9

family building when contraceptive use was initiated were strongly associated with education (Tables 1 and 2).

Contraceptive use in Isparta (63%) is higher than in the rest of Turkey (Dervisoglu & Ergor, 1994). The contraceptive methods used for the shortest period of time were the condom and withdrawal (20%). The high rate of contraceptive use in Isparta is believed to be the result of easy access to clinics such as the Isparta Mother and Child Health Care and Family Planning Centre. Although education levels are low and marriage early, contraceptive use is close to the rate found in developed countries.

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