

Profile of the Traditional Family Planning Method User

The female traditional family planning method user appears to be generally submissive to her husband, who conversely seems to be the controlling type.

"If my husband wants [to have sex] I cannot do anything. Sometimes he doesn't discharge inside because I'll be pregnant."

— MARRIED FEMALE, WITHDRAWAL USER

Decisions in their household are usually made unilaterally by the husband, including how many children to have and when to have them.

The husband is generally not in favor of his wife using the more modern methods of contraception for fear he would lose control over their sex life — which he feels withdrawal allows him to have. Instead, he asks his wife to mark the days in the calendar when it is safe and unsafe for them to have sex. Things go awry, however, when he gets drunk and insists on having his way in the marital bed, regardless of what the calendar says. This scenario seems to be played out quite often, and the result is usually another unplanned baby in the family.

"We had another child because I was drunk. I was not able to withdraw because I wanted full satisfaction. She got mad but I said I was drunk."

— MARRIED MALE, WITHDRAWAL USER

Despite the constant threat of accidental pregnancies, traditional method users are quite convinced that these methods work "if properly executed". Withdrawal users, for instance, attribute the method's high failure rate to the husband's slow reflexes than to the method's inherent weakness itself.

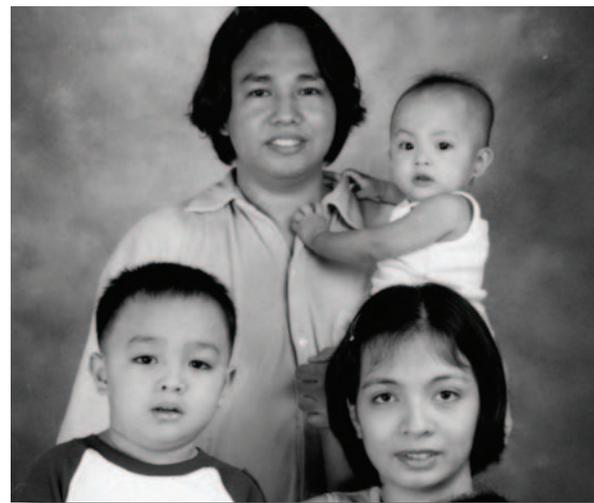
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This paper is based on findings in "Project Dynasty," a qualitative research study carried out in January-February 2003 by AC Nielsen for The Social Acceptance Project-Family Planning (TSAP-FP). TSAP-FP is being implemented in the Philippines by the Academy for Educational Development (AED) with funding support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The study was conducted among 230 respondents composed of male and female, 15-34 years old, single and married, belonging to Class DE and Broad C, and residing in Metro Manila, Cebu and industrial areas in Cavite, Batangas and Laguna. Most of the respondents were working, while the youngest respondents (15-18 years old) were usually still studying. Married respondents had one to six children.

Combining focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, the study aimed to accomplish the following objectives:

- Identify knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about family planning and related issues, including sex, pregnancy, and children
- Determine constraints and barriers to acceptance and use of family planning methods in terms of myths, misconceptions, taboos, fears, and cultural norms
- Understand perceptions of modern vs. traditional methods
- Understand perceptions of modern vs. traditional method users
- Identify channels of information/ influence that impact on the family planning decisions of the target segments





Still, barring accidental pregnancies, they believe the traditional method is best for them, possessing most of the qualities they look for in a family planning method, namely: safe, has no side effects, and affordable. They also want a method that will not affect their mood or their love life.

Their problem, it seems, with the more modern methods of contraception is their perceived side effects. This stems partly from their lack of information about the methods. Relatives and friends are their primary source of family planning information. Some, however, speak from experience, having used the methods themselves. Those who had tried the pill, for instance, said they stopped taking it because it made them fat and gave them headaches. Former injectable users said their menstruation became irregular and they became irritable.

“The other methods have side effects. For instance, I can't take the pill because I have a heart condition.”

— MARRIED FEMALE, WITHDRAWAL USER

Relatives and friends and the health service providers whom they consulted when they made their decision to first try out the modern methods no longer played a part in their decision to shift to the more traditional methods. The husband usually initiated the shift to withdrawal, while the woman decided the shift to rhythm method.

Most single males and females that are sexually active use withdrawal as their entry-level method of family planning mainly because it affords them the secrecy that they require. However, they shift to more effective methods as sexual relations increase between them and their partners.

Despite negative perceptions about traditional method users, subscribers to these methods have a positive view of themselves. Users of the calendar method see themselves as “sexy”, “simple”, “ready to handle responsibilities”, “comfortable” and “healthy”. Withdrawal users see themselves as “religious”, with “no worries and problems”. However, they also described themselves as “belonging to the lower income class”. ■

This publication is brought to you by The Social Acceptance Project-Family Planning (TSAP-FP). This project aims to promote greater social acceptance of family planning as part of one's lifestyle.

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