

The Family Planning Language of Ordinary Folk

Family planning workers use specific terms to describe or classify the different family planning methods. They describe these methods either as *modern* or *traditional*, *temporary* or *permanent*, and even *artificial* or *natural*.

Ordinary folk, it seems, have their own way, too, of describing these methods. By paying close attention to what these folk are saying, program workers can derive clues about the family planning choices that these folk make.

Method Groupings by Inherent Characteristics

In the language of ordinary folks, family planning methods are either "*pangmatagalan*" (continuously used or for long term use) or "*panandaliang aliw*" (intermittently used or for short-term use). Methods in each category are further described as follows:

- Easy to use vs. Not easy to use
- No side effect vs. With side effect
- Effective to use vs. Risky to use

(The method groupings are illustrated in the table next page.)

Methods described as "*pangmatagalan*" include the *IUD*, *injectables*, *vasectomy*, *ligation*, *abstinence*, *the pill*, and *the calendar*. Among these, only the pill and the calendar are perceived to be "easy to use"; the rest are regarded as "not easy to use".

The *panandalian* methods include the *diaphragm*, *spermicides*, *the condom*, and *withdrawal*. Among these, the condom and withdrawal are described as "easy to use". The diaphragm and spermicides — which few really know about and employ — are "not easy to use".

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:

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



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Methods	Easy To Use	Not Easy To Use	No Side Effects	With Side Effects	Effective To Use	Risky To Use
LONG-TERM USE (PANGMATAGALAN)						
IUD		✓		✓	✓	
Injectable		✓		✓	✓	
Vasectomy		✓		✓	✓	
Ligation		✓		✓	✓	
Abstinence		✓	✓		✓	
Pill	✓			✓	✓	
Calendar	✓		✓			✓
SHORT-TERM USE (PANANDALIAN)						
Condom	✓			✓		✓
Withdrawal	✓		✓			✓
Diaphragm		✓	✓			✓
Spermicides		✓		✓		✓



Among methods classified under “*pangmatagalan*,” only the calendar and abstinence are described to have “no side effect”. All the rest — the pill, IUD, vasectomy, ligation, and injectables — are perceived to produce side effects.

The “*panandalian*” methods thought to have “no side effect” are withdrawal and the diaphragm.

Respondents of Project Dynasty who use the pill, condoms, and injectables say that side effects occur only when the method is not suited to the user, or “*hiyang*” in the vernacular. Respondents who use the calendar and withdrawal, on the other hand, seem to generalize side effects across all modern methods simply because they lack the necessary information about them.

Except for the calendar method, all “*pangmatagalan*” methods are perceived to be effective to use. Like the calendar method, all “*panandalian*” methods are supposed to be risky to use — that is, their effectiveness is generally considered to be low. Users, however, continue to employ these methods because their fear of side effects is greater than their fear of the risks.

Method Groupings by Procedure Involved

Methods were also described by the procedure involved in using them, as follows:

- By surgical method — e.g., ligation and vasectomy
- Can be used anytime — e.g., condom, IUD and withdrawal
- Use is based on a fixed schedule — e.g., calendar method, rhythm, pill, injectable

Good News, Bad News

The above descriptions and method groupings indicate that family planning users are keenly aware of which methods are effective and which are not (i.e., “risky to use”). That's the good news.

The bad news is that most of the methods regarded as effective were also described as “not easy to use” and “with side effects”. ■

Ordinary folk, it seems, have their own way of describing these methods, too. By paying close attention to what these folk are saying, program workers can derive clues about the family planning choices that these folk make.



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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Sketches

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