

Abstract

Gender Decision-Making in Family Planning : Achievement and Future Direction

Chai Podhisita

Previous studies reveal a significant role of the couple communication in family planning. Contraceptive use is positively related to level of couple communication. Yet, husband-wife communication with regard to family planning is not common among substantial proportions of the couples. Joint fertility decision of husband and wife is rare in developing countries. Much more so is equal influence of husband wife in fertility decision. Where spousal communication exists, decision is made largely by the husband who is invariably dominant. Wife's influence prevails only under certain conditions associated with high level of women's status, greater availability of contraceptive methods and low fertility. Absence of spousal communication is explained in terms of misconception of the couple about the number of children one will have, sensitiveness of the issues, and cultural ideology and norms regarding sex role. The lesson learned from studies reviewed here is that spousal communication needs to be enhanced, contraceptive methods made available and accessible, and women's status improved if the goal is to reduce fertility in the developing world.