

FERTILITY DECISION MAKING BY WOMEN IN SHANTIES IN COLOMBO DISTRICT

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Abstract: *The main objective of the study was to examine the roles of women in making decisions regarding starting, spacing and stopping behaviours of fertility. Both quantitative and qualitative data were used and quantitative data was collected from 125 married females who are in reproductive ages (15-49 years) in selected shanties at Mahawatta Grama Niladhari division, Colombo district. Purposive sampling technique was applied to select respondents who visited mobile clinics in the study area and an interviewer administered questionnaire was used to collect data. Qualitative data was collected through in-depth interviews from 7 females who completed their fertility. Data was analyzed using univariate and bivariate analyses. Women played a limited role in making decisions relating to fertility behaviour and other activities. Most of the decisions related to fertility behaviour and other decisions such as having first child, more than one child, more children in the future, place of delivery, education of children and earnings are taken by the husbands and these decision capability is mostly related to the husbands' higher educational level and employment status. However, women possess high decision making power in child spacing, use of contraceptives and health of children. Hence, most of decisions are taken by husbands alone, inter spousal communication seems poor. Qualitative data also highlighted the men's perception, that women are poor in making decisions. Based on these findings, the study made some suggestions to enhance the decision making power of women in fertility behaviour.*

Keywords: Fertility decision making, domestic violence, male participation, ethnicity

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