The Influence of the Mother-in-Law on Young Couples' Family Planning Decisions

Ms. Leanne Wolff
Dr. Naveed Ahmed
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Introduction

- **4 Year USAID-Funded MCH Program**
- **Lead:** Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs
- **Consortium Partners:**
  - Center for Communication Programs Pakistan
  - Mercy Corps
  - Rural Support Programs Network
- **MCH Program Partners: 5 (+) Components**
  - Service Delivery: Jhpiego and Marie Stopes
  - Health Communication: Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs
  - Health Systems Strengthening: JSI
  - Commodities: Chemonics (was JSI)
  - Advocacy: Palladium
We envision an environment...

where individuals, families and communities advocate for their own health, practice positive health behaviors (including timely use of MNCH/FP services) and engage with a responsive, coordinated and committed health care system.
Where we Worked

10 Districts in Sindh

- Larkana
- Sukkur
- Ghotki
- Shikarpur
- Naushahro Feroze
- Mirpurkhas
- Matiari
- Sanghar
- Umerkot
- Jacobabad

We are HERE!
Pakistan: A Complex Environment

- 6th most populous country in the world.
- Third highest burden of maternal, fetal, and child mortality.
- Slow progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5.
- Many MCH indicators remain the same.
- Additional burden of political fragility, complex security issues, and natural disasters.
- Strict broadcast restrictions created an added layer.
Pakistan: A Complex Environment

- Among women ages 25-49, 35% were married by age 18, and 54% were married by age 20.
- The median age of marriage among rural women age 25-49 living in Sindh is 17.9.
- Women are also bound by social pressure for fertility.
- Family planning can only be talked about in terms of birth spacing, and not limiting or prevention.
Bright Star Movement

The Bright Star Movement aimed to:

Bring a message of hope & heightened motivation igniting a cultural movement that inspired individuals to define their aspirations & take steps towards better maternal & child health outcomes in Pakistan.
Who is a Bright Star?

An individual or group who is “Working Together for Brighter Future”

(a mother or father, households, health providers, managers, policy makers, parliamentarians, media professionals, faith based leaders, community support groups, etc.)
If she says, yes...

“Mother-in-laws want both of them (the husband and wife) to listen to her only. Especially the daughter-in-law… they should do whatever she wants.”

(Male FGD, Umerkot).
Theory of Ideation

Ideational factors:

- Couple Communication
- Self-Advocacy
- Social Support
- (In-Depth) Knowledge
The Bright Star Campaign

Objectives

• Increase knowledge and access to family planning services
• Enhance the CPR rate
• Reduce unmet need for family planning
• Increased understanding of her role in the family and to making sure the family remains healthy and safe.
• Improved support for their son and daughter-in-law to make independent decisions.
• Increased support of her son and daughter-in-law to seek FP services.
What we Had Going for Us

Facilitators

• The mother-in-law is a respected family member.
• The role and influence of the mother-in-law has the potential to be beneficial if we are able to shift the definition of support.
Key Promise:
Supporting your son (and his wife) to space their children will help to ensure that your grandchildren (and family) have a healthy and Bright Future.

Call to Action:
Support your son’s (and daughter-in-law’s) to plan their family and wait at least 3 years before having another child.
Decision Making to Tell a Story

Building a System of Support

- Role of Husband’s Mother
- Confidence Building
- Com. between Husband & Mother
- Husband’s ability to advocate

Couple Communication
Joint Decision-Making

In-Depth Knowledge

- Method Choice
- Benefits/ Side Effects
- Client Advocacy

Role of Husband’s Mother
Confidence Building
Com. between Husband & Mother
Husband’s ability to advocate

Couple Communication
Joint Decision-Making

Method Choice
Benefits/ Side Effects
Client Advocacy
Engaging the Mother in Law

- **Mass Media**: TV and Radio
- **Mid-Level Media**: Mohalla & Flotilla Meetings, District Mela Events
- **Community**: HH Visits, CSG, VHCs
- **Services**: Provided through PWD Camps, PWD Centers & partners
Results

Mass Media:
Estimated that more than 4 million individuals were reached through TV and 5 million through radio.

Mid-Level Media:
• A total of 14,889 women & men participated in the Mohalla/Flotilla mtgs.
• Mela Events reached approximately 50,000 plus men and women.
Results

Community:
132,611 referrals were made by CHWs through the various events and household visits.

Services:
Almost 99,000 receiving some form of FP service from a partnering project.
Exposure to FP Messages (W)

- Approval of Birth Spacing
- Approval of Limiting
- Use of Modern Contraception
- Intent to Delay Next Birth by 3 Years
- Spousal Discussion of FP

Unexposed vs. Exposed
Exposure to FP Messages

- Men to Initiate Discussion of FP
- Women who Discussed FP with MIL

Categories:
- Unexposed
- Exposed
Lessons Learned

• Using EE as a centerpiece paved the way for household discussions on complex and taboo topics, including FP, in rural Pakistan.

• Understanding the decision-making process, especially in a joint family, can enable program teams to design an intervention focused on key household decision-makers.

• There is so much more to explore and understand…
Thank You!

Leanne Wolff
leanne.wolff@jhu.edu
Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs
111 Market Place, Suite 310
Baltimore, MD 21202
+1.410.659.6300

ccp.jhu.edu
Johns Hopkins CCP
JohnsHopkinsCCP
@JohnsHopkinsCCP