PRACTICE OF CONTRACEPTION IN PREMARITAL AND MARITAL SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP AMONG MYANMAR YOUTH MIGRANTS IN BANG BON DISTRICT, BANGKOK

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ABSTRACT: Migration becomes a global issue nowadays not only in economic but also in health aspects. Thailand is one of the major migrant receiving countries in South East Asia. More than 80% of migrant workers in Thailand are Myanmar and concentrated in the age group of 15-24 years. No matter where they settle, it is always true that the migrant youths suffer the health problems and inaccessibility more than the native youths. The objective of this study is to assess the sexual practice and contraceptive usage among Myanmar migrant youths in Bang Bon District in Bangkok. The study was cross-sectional descriptive study carried out by face to face interviewing to 413 migrant youths (15-24 years) between 15th February and 26th February 2010. The results revealed that 24.7% of migrant youths had premarital sexual relationship and 60.0% of both married and unmarried youths used contraception in their premarital relationship and family planning. However, their knowledge towards STIs and contraception was found to be poor. Overall findings indicated that though the migrant youths practice contraception widely, their level of knowledge was still low indicating their needs of health information. This study indicates that effective communication, information dissemination, sexual health counseling become crucial needs to the migrant youths who are vulnerable to sexual and reproductive health risks.

Keywords: contraception, premarital and marital sex, Myanmar migrant youths, Bang Bon District

INTRODUCTION: A positive trend of migration is obviously recognized nowadays due to several constraints in own lands. Worldwide, there are 175 million migrants in 2000, between 185 and 192 millions migrants in 2005 and will be 214 million migrants in 2010. Myanmar, previously known as Burma is one of the ASEAN countries and is a neighbor of China, Laos, Thailand, Bangladesh and India. The estimated total population in Myanmar is 58 million in year 2005, in which youth population accounts for 19.5%. Employment opportunities for out-of-school youth are very limited and an estimated 90% are unemployed. Hence, many youths flee to the big cities like Yangon (Rangoon), Mandalay and nearby neighboring countries for better living. Among the neighbors, Thailand is one of the major receiving countries for Myanmar migrants and nearly 80% of migrating workers in Thailand are from Myanmar. While majority of Myanmar migrants are concentrated in the areas along the border, minority of them come to the main city, Bangkok, hoping for better life making.

Out of 50 districts in Bangkok, Bang Bon District locating southwest of Bangkok is the one where most of the youth migrants congregate due to the presence of many industries. More than six thousand Myanmar workers are working in varieties of factories in Bang Bon and majority of them are single young aged group. Away from the communities of origin, youths have the

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chance to gain new experiences and form new relationships at a time when they are particularly vulnerable to such threats as premarital sexual relationship, unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections including HIV-AIDS and pregnancy related complications.\textsuperscript{7} The objective of this study is to assess the sexual practice and contraceptive usage among Myanmar migrant youths in Bang Bon District.

METHODS: The study was quantitative cross sectional descriptive study among Myanmar youth migrants (15-24 years) both married and unmarried from Bang Bon District. Convenient sampling was used due to the very mobile nature of the study population. Four hundred and thirteen youth migrants were face-to-face interviewed using structured questionnaires in Burmese language after requesting informed consent verbally. Data was analyzed by SPSS software.

RESULTS: In this study, more than 80% of the respondents were between 20 and 24 years. Gender distribution was nearly equivalent with 46.7% of male and 53.3% of female respondents. Nearly half (45.5%) of them were single (Table 1).

On regarding premarital sexual practice, 24.7% of them experienced it and the age at first sex ranged from 16 to 22 years with the median of 19 years (Table 2).

The respondents' knowledge upon modern contraceptive methods were asked and scored and it was found out that nearly half (47.9%) of them had poor level of contraceptive knowledge (Table 3).

Contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR) was measured by the percentage of the sexually active respondents using contraception currently either by themselves or their partners. Majority (60%) of the respondents were practicing contraception either in their premarital sexual relationship or in family planning of which unmarried accounted for 42.2% and married for 57.8%. The most commonly used methods were oral pills, male condoms and injection. On asking the reasons for discontinuing, afraid of side effects and want more child were the commonest answers among ever users whereas lack of knowledge was the one among never users (Table 4).

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|l|l|}
\hline
\textbf{Variables} & \textbf{N (M/F)} & \textbf{\% (M/F)} \\
\hline
\textbf{Premarital} & & \\
\hline
\textbf{sex} & 102 (72/30) & 24.7 (70.6/29.4) \\
Yes & 311 (121/190) & 75.3 (38.9/61.1) \\
No & & \\
\hline
\textbf{Age} & & \\
16 & 6 (6/0) & 5.9 (100.0/0) \\
17 & 9 (9/0) & 8.8 (100.0/0) \\
18 & 10 (7/3) & 9.8 (70.0/30.0) \\
19 & 35 (20/15) & 34.3 (57.1/42.9) \\
20 & 30 (24/6) & 29.4 (80.0/20.0) \\
21 & 6 (3/3) & 5.9 (50.0/50.0) \\
22 & 6 (3/3) & 5.9 (50.0/50.0) \\
\hline
Mean=19.14 SD=1.43 Median=19 & & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Premarital Sexual Relationship}
\end{table}

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|l|}
\hline
\textbf{Variables} & \textbf{N} \\
\hline
\textbf{Poor knowledge} & 198 \\
\textbf{Fair knowledge} & 161 \\
\textbf{Good knowledge} & 54 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Level of Contraceptive Knowledge}
\end{table}


### Table 4 Current Contraceptive Usage (n=225)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current use</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever use</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never use</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Currently used</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contraception</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral pills</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male condoms</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injection</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency pills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reasons for discontinue in ever users**
- Afraid of side effects: 37 (61.7%)
- Want more children: 15 (25.0%)
- Others (spouse away): 8 (13.3%)

**Reasons for never used**
- Lack of knowledge: 17 (54.8%)
- Afraid of side effects: 6 (19.4%)
- Service unavailable: 5 (16.1%)
- Want more children: 4 (9.7%)

DISCUSSION: Prevalence of premarital sexual practice among Myanmar migrant youths in Bang Bon District was 24.7% comprising of 37.3% of males and 13.6% of females. The results showed much lower premarital sex than a study done in Chiang Rai Thai vocational students (15-21 years) where 48% of male and 43% of female youths had premarital sexual experiences. The study design could be one of the reasons for different findings as this study was face-to-face interview whereas Chiang Rai’s study was computer-assisted self-interview. Different populations, different environments and different cultures could be other reasons for the different findings.

Contraceptive prevalence rate was 60%. It was lower the rates of Myanmar migrants in other areas but higher than that of own country which was only 37%. The most commonly used contraception were oral pill (42.4%), condoms (35.3%) and injection (20.1%). Regarding youth contraceptive usage, it was found out that injections and oral pills were the most commonly used methods among young people in Myanmar. Condom used was higher in this study compared to the others due to freely and/or widely availability of subsidized condoms from the existing health center. On the other hand, though oral pills and injections were popular among married couples, unmarried couples prefer condoms as it was widely and anonymously available via their peers and did not make them busy and obviously like the other methods, for example, oral pills are needed to take regularly, they need to go to health center for injection 3 monthly in which the health personnel recognized that they had sexual relationship with someone. In addition, it was encouraging practice as condom provides dual protection.

On tracing the history of contraception discontinuation and never using, it was found that due to the side effects (61.7%) and want more children (25.0%) were the main reasons among ever users. The major reason for contraceptive discontinuation throughout the world was due to the occurrence of side effects yet, lack of knowledge 54.8%, afraid of side effects 19.4% which was the consequences of the lack of knowledge and service unavailable 16.1% were the main reasons for never users. This indicates that unmarried youths need more information regarding sexual and reproductive health. Some respondents reported that they would like to receive more sexual health information and other kinds of contraception with cheaper price like condom free distribution.

REFERENCES: