

Variability in Contraception Choices and Abortion Rates among Female Garment Factory Workers in Urban and Rural Cambodia

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Abstract : Background: Modern contraceptives are effective in preventing unwanted pregnancies and therefore the potential to reduce abortion rates. There is a need for information about how rates of contraceptive use and abortion vary across Cambodia and the relationship between the prevalence of modern contraception use and abortion rates. This study compares the use of contraception and abortion among female garment factory workers in rural and urban areas of Cambodia. Method: Cross-sectional surveys were conducted with 1701 women working in eleven garment factories in rural and urban areas of Cambodia. Sexual and reproductive health data were collected using Audio-Assisted Survey Interviews and analysed using STATA 14 software. Findings: Over 70% of the respondents were less than 30 years of age across both rural and urban settings and over 50% have only primary education, thus the study population was largely young women with limited education. A significantly higher proportion of the rural women earned over \$200 in the previous month compared with their urban counterparts. The majority of the urban women (51.5%) were married, while single women (46.9%) made up the largest group working in the rural factories. A significantly larger proportion of women in the rural areas (83.9%) were sexually active compared to the urban women (50.9%). More women from the rural areas (41.4%) had been pregnant at some time compared with the urban population (37.7%). The use of any contraceptive method among sexually active women was significantly higher in the rural areas (80.1%) compared to the urban areas (65.7%) with p-value=0.000. However, among those women who used contraception, the prevalence of modern contraception use was slightly higher in the urban population (68.8% urban, 63.4% rural, p-value=0.1). For women who had a history of pregnancy the abortion prevalence was higher among rural women (43.8%) compared to their urban counterparts (37.7%). Regression analysis showed that after adjustment for the demographic variables (age, relationship status, income, education) only age and relationship status had a significant influence on the use of modern contraception. Single females who were sexually active and older women, who had potentially completed their families, were more likely to choose modern contraception. Conclusion: Although overall the use of contraception was higher among rural women, the use of modern contraception was higher among urban women. This finding may partly explain the higher rates of abortion among women in the rural areas as traditional contraception methods have higher failure rates and are more likely to result in an unplanned pregnancy. Despite the regional variation, the high rates of abortion across the country suggest there is a need for improve education on family planning among female garment factory workers in Cambodia.

Keywords : abortion, Cambodia, contraception, garment factory

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