

Enhancing the Capabilities of Church-based Family Planning Counsellors with the Billings Ovulation Method

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ABSTRACT

A strategy to enhance the welfare of families is family planning. Couples are given the freedom to decide what is best for their family when it comes to the number of children and the spacing between births. An autonomous, simple, affordable, and Catholic-compliant method of contraception is natural family planning with the Billings ovulation method. For the purpose to complete this community service project, representatives from Catholic churches are trained about the Billings ovulation method. Participants in this activity acquire information and guidance on how to observe cervical mucus. In order to address any circumstances that may arise during observations, participants are also instructed. It is intended that after completing this course, the participants will be qualified to become counsellors in their own settings.

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INTRODUCTION

Families and governments throughout the world are now generally aware that efforts to nurture and develop children must go hand in hand with population expansion. This knowledge motivates society and the government to create family planning initiatives ^[1]. Contraception alone is not the only factor in family planning or planned parenting. There is a connection between family planning and the responsibility of raising a family. This refers to the optimal ways to arrange family life. This is the definition of responsible parenting. The Catholic Church, in general, supports pro-creation and the formation of strong families. The purpose of marriage is to serve as a vehicle for God's intervention in the creation of new humans, as well as to validate the love shared by husband and wife. For this reason, the commandment to procreate must be followed in line with God's plan. Family planning is a deliberate effort to control the number of children born and/or the intervals between births, which will ultimately have a wider impact on managing the population of a nation. Actually, the main goal is to make sure that a family is formed in a way that is in line with God's purpose ^[2]. The Catholic Church classifies the many types of contraceptives that are currently available according to their method of work. Natural birth control is the advised method. Next, condoms, diaphragms, jelly cream, birth control tissue, pills, injections, and implants are among the techniques that should be in consideration. IUDs and sterilization are the techniques which still be a matter of polemic The morning after pill and abortion are strictly prohibited methods. And the least ineffective method that were not recommended are interrupted coitus and abortive traditional medicine ^{[3][4]}.

The natural birth control method is based on determining the fertile and infertile periods and is an approach to controlling birth spacing without the use of instruments, medications, or surgery ^[5]. Given that natural birth control is more in line with God's design through the menstrual cycle. Therefore, the abstinence period truly works as an aphrodisiac to enhance the quality of sex. Because every sexual relationship must be open to producing children, this technique of family planning is dignified and responsible (offspring). People are encouraged to practice self-denial in order to show their lover how much they care. In addition, it is a sign of fidelity to the marital vows, which call for compassion and respect for each partner's situation ^[3].

Women who use the natural birth control method known as the Billings Ovulation Method are trained to identify the indicators of fertility. This is accomplished by looking at the cervical mucus's condition. The Billings Ovulation Method of contraception is simple, affordable, maintains the recreational value of sexual intercourse, and is compliant with religious teachings. Since its introduction in 1996, this approach has been 97% successful in preventing and obtaining pregnancy across all age groups and menstrual cycle patterns ^[6]. Many couples prefer to employ artificial family planning because Catholics are uninformed about family planning. In order to encourage more people to use the Billings Ovulation Method—a safe, effective family planning method that complies with Catholic teachings—and to increase public awareness of family planning, this community service project is deemed crucial.

METHOD

This community service project is being carried out in association with the Jakarta Archdiocese's Health Commission. Representatives from each Catholic church in the regions of Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi participated in this activity. The solution proposed by STIK Sint Carolus is to provide knowledge and skill to Billings Ovulation Method. It is intended that after taking part in this activity, participants will inevitably be able to counsel natural family planning in their particular communities.

This community service activity is carried out in several stages starting from planning, starting with preparation of a proposal, agreement on implementation time, preparation of materials and activity schedule. We made a group of people that will join us to present topics and demonstration to the audience. The facilitators are coming from academics of STIK Sint Carolus's lecturers and medical representative and practitioner from Jakarta Archdiocese's Health Commission. On this stage of preparation, we identified documents, materials, evaluation templates and other things needed for this project.

The learning methods that will be used are face-to-face lectures and practice observing the fertile period by observing cervical mucus. Participants will be divided into several groups and given case examples to discuss with the facilitator in the group. Fifty people are the intended participants in this exercise.

RESULTS

On Sunday, May 28, 2023, KBA Counselors participated in Ovulation Bilings Method Skills Training Activities. This activity, which worked with the Health Commission of the Archdiocese of Jakarta (KAJ), was held in the Auditorium of St. Carolus. Activities for participant re-registration begin at 8:00 a.m. There were 42 participants in all that day.

Table 1. Participant's Characteristics

Participant's Characteristic	n	%
Gender		
Female	42	100
Male	0	0
Age		
20-30	0	0
31-40	9	22
41-50	27	63
51-60	6	15
Professional Background		
Medical Doctor	13	30
Nurse	11	27
Midwife	4	9
Other	14	34

Sixty-three percent of the participants, who were all female, ranged in age from 37 to 54 years. The participants have a range of professional backgrounds. Sixty-six percent have experience working as nurses, doctors, or midwives. This is advantageous since participants will be able to better understand the information and assist other participants who are not in the health field. Every participant is married and has kids. This

implies that the prospective facilitators have prior experience with pregnancy planning, getting pregnant, giving birth, and parenthood.

The host leads an opening prayer prior to the activity starting, and participants are then requested to spend ten minutes completing a written pre-test questionnaire. There are ten questions on this questionnaire that are linked to the content that will be given. The language used to ask questions is simple enough for laypeople to understand. After that, the activity continued with remarks from representatives from the Health Commission of the Archdiocese of Jakarta. He emphasized how crucial it is for Catholic couples to participate in this activity in order to encourage them to utilize natural birth control, which is safer for their health.



Figure 1. First Session of The Community Service

The team responsible for community service conducted the lecture. Types of Contraceptive Methods is the first topic. The instructor in this session explained the various forms of contraception that are now on the market, from basic, natural methods to mechanical methods that require operation. At this point, the Catholic Church's position on each of these techniques is also discussed. The facilitator also emphasizes the value of assigning each family member a specific function so that no one is forced to take on a heavier workload than the others.



Figure 2. Q&A Session

The second subject is understanding how artificial contraception affects reproductive health. The health effects of each method of contraception were explained. The facilitator also suggested that tolerance and communication between couple are really the most important factors in family planning success.

In the last session, the concepts of long cycles and delayed ovulation cycles were covered, along with counseling techniques for natural birth control acceptors. The presentation provides guidance on how to counsel clients. What methods can be used in therapy sessions to encourage clients to share their problems. In

the meanwhile, information about long cycles is provided, including the causes, the observation procedure, and decision-making guidelines for women with long cycles. An environment of trust where clients and health providers feel comfortable discussing emotional, sexual, or gender-related difficulties relating to technique of choice is typically fostered by respect for privacy. Since encouraging clients to clarify instructions or ask questions is linked to better results, providers should encourage clients to do just that ^[7].



Figure 3. Group Discussion Led by Facilitators

Group discussions were placed as the training exercise went on. Three groups of participants were formed to talk about how to observe cervical mucus and note it in a log book. A group facilitator accompanies participants as they perform cervical mucus monitoring activities by presenting case studies. In order for participants to practice effective counseling approaches, role plays were also required. After taking turns acting as counselor and client, the facilitator provides comments to the participants. Inquiries regarding potential challenges throughout the counseling process and desired methods of practice for each site are welcome from participants. A study showed that women who experienced in Billings Ovulation method has challenges to identifying sensations at the vulva and the required periods of abstinence ^[8]. It means, this learning method will be very useful when the counsellor face their clients.

Table 2. Participant's Score of Pre Test, Post Test and Practical Test

Type of the test	Score		
	Min	Max	Average
Pre Test	20	60	40
Post Test	60	100	80

The host selects two participants to receive door prizes during the closing session based on who asked the best questions. Every task may be finished on time. Following the Q&A session, personnel gave out post-test questionnaires and assisted participants in filling them out if needed. The counseling participants' knowledge and skills had increased by 42%, according to the post-test results. Thus, it can be said that this training exercise was effective in enhancing participants' knowledge of the Billings Ovulation Method and in boosting their knowledge and skills in general. Those who complete this training can assist in educating premarital couples in their various church environments in addition to offering counseling. As a result, more people will be open to learning about natural family planning, particularly the billings ovulation method ^[9].

CONCLUSION

The community service project goes on smoothly in partnership with the Jakarta Archdiocese's Health Commission. Of the 42 individuals who attended the program, health workers made up the majority. Interactive educational materials are offered, covering topics such as family planning strategies, the effects of artificial contraception, counseling approaches, understanding the ovulation cycle, and group support from facilitators. The participant evaluations showed that following the training, there was an improvement in knowledge and abilities, indicating that the community service activities went extremely well.

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