Latino men and vasectomy: An exploration in El Paso, Texas
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Abstract

Latino population in the United States has a lower prevalence of vasectomy than the non-Hispanic white population. A body of research has considered that cultural perceptions about masculinity might explain why Latinos are less likely to undergo vasectomy. Latino population has experienced limited access to health care which might explain the lower prevalence of vasectomy among Latino population in the United States. We conducted logistic regression to analyze the relationship between the perception about the decision of men to undergo vasectomy and the frustrated demand for female sterilization. We also observed how other women’s experience might influence attitudes toward partners’ willingness to obtain a vasectomy. Finally, in order to have an insight into attitudes toward vasectomy among Latino men, we analyzed the information from the two focus groups conducted in El Paso, Texas. We find evidence that although some Latino men are willing to undergo vasectomy, they face economic and labor situation that prevent them to obtain the procedure.

Problem

The prevalence of vasectomy is lower in the Latino population as compared with the non-Hispanic white population in the United States. A body of research has considered that cultural perceptions might explain why Latinos are less likely to undergo vasectomy. Another factor that may explain this disparity could be the limited access to health care experienced by the Latino population in the US.

Situation

Although vasectomy is less invasive, cheaper, and carries fewer risks of complication than female sterilization, vasectomy prevalence is considerably lower than female sterilization (Jayaraman and Mann 2012; Shih, Turok, and Parker 2011; Eisenberg, Henderson, Amory, Smith, and Walsh 2009; Barone, Johnson, Luick, Teutonico, and Magnani 2004).

In the United States, Hispanic and African American women have the highest prevalence of sterilization while white men have considerably higher rates of vasectomy utilization than Hispanics and African American men (Shih 2012; Borrero, Schwarz, Reeves, Bost, Creinin, and Ibrahim 2009; Eisenberg et al 2009; Bumpass, Thomson, and Godecker 2000). In fact, some researchers have found that among the Hispanic male population, vasectomy is not widely accepted (Shih 2012; Borrero et al 2009; Sable, Campbell, Schwarz, Brandt, and Dannerbeck...
However, Sable and colleagues also find that Latino men’s knowledge about contraceptive methods is limited (2006).

There is substantial evidence that social networks facilitate people’s behavioral changes. Knowing someone who had a vasectomy might change someone’s prejudices about vasectomy. (Rindfuss, Bumpass, Choe, and Tsuya 2004; Kohler 1996). Moreover, knowing someone who underwent vasectomy might provide information regarding the method itself as well as places and requirements to obtain this procedure.

**Data**

For the present study we use data from the Border Contraception Access Study (BCAS). The BCAS is a longitudinal study conducted in El Paso, Texas, from December 2006 to December 2008. This study collected information from pill users who obtained their pills in family planning clinics in El Paso or over the counter from pharmacies in Mexico. In the fourth wave questionnaire the respondents were asked about their partner’s willingness to obtain a vasectomy and if the partner had ever asked to obtain one.

The BCAS conducted an additional follow-up interview for women who declared in the nine-month interview that they wanted to undergo sterilization, had two or more children, and met the Medicaid age requirement (at least 21 years old). The aim of the sterilization study was to know women’s reasons for wanting a permanent method as well as the barriers that may have prevented them from obtaining their desired method. Women were asked whether or not they knew other women whose partners had had a vasectomy, what kind of relationship they have with these women, when and where these women’s partners obtained the vasectomy, and how satisfied the other women and their partners were with this method.

Additionally, two focus groups with partners of some of the women interviewed in the sterilization study were conducted in El Paso. The participants ranged in age from 28 to 48 years with an average age of 37 and they had 2 or more children. The information from these focus groups provides an insight into attitudes toward vasectomy among Latino men in El Paso.

**Methods**

We will use logistic regression to analyze the covariates associated with asking to obtain a vasectomy or being willing to obtain one and to analyze how social networks relate to our outcome variable.
Preliminary results

There are 70 women whose partners had asked to obtain a vasectomy and 34 percent of them asked for the procedure before or during the last pregnancy of their partners.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner ever ask to get a vasectomy</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before respondent's last birth</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During respondent's last pregnancy</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After respondent's last birth</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of those women whose partners had not asked to obtain a vasectomy, 163 thought that their partners were willing to have a vasectomy. Wanting sterilization increased the odds that women declared that their partners were willing to obtain a vasectomy.

|                           | O.R. | Std. Err. | Z    | P>|z| | [95% Conf. Interval] |
|---------------------------|------|-----------|------|------|----------------------|
| Woman wants sterilization | 2.485| 0.379     | 5.96 | 0.00 | 1.842 3.352          |
| Constant                  | 0.199| 0.020     | -15.9| 0.00 | 0.163 0.242          |

Log likelihood = -535.12491 Number of observations = 1048
LR chi2(1) = 35.26 Prob > chi2 = 0.0000
Pseudo R2 = 0.0319

The relationship between women who knew someone whose partner had a vasectomy was usually friendship or a relative apart from sister or mother. Almost half of the other women’s male partners obtained the procedure in Mexico. Ninety percent of these couples were very satisfied with the procedure and only 1 percent were very unsatisfied.

Although some Latino men oppose vasectomy because they think it might affect their masculinity or their sexual preferences, we find that some men wanted to undergo vasectomy but did not have the resources to obtain one. For example, in the focus groups, men mentioned not having the chance to take days away from work for recovery and the fear of losing their jobs as barriers to obtaining vasectomy.

“Sometimes…, well in my case, I would like to get the surgery but I do not get it because a friend of mine told me that you have to spend one or two weeks without doing heavy work
and my work is really heavy and I cannot spend one or two weeks without working (FG-1R743).”

“I would say that if you do that, then at work I should be given a chance to miss two weeks without losing my job (FG-1R771).”

However, the focus groups revealed that some Latino men are willing to undergo vasectomy, especially when their partners cannot obtain sterilization or they are having health problems.

“Sometimes, we also have to think about the woman, like when his wife has been sick in her last pregnancies and we have to consider that if she gets pregnant again she might not make it. If you have the solution, you can do it (FG-1R489).”

The men participating in our focus group expressed that they would like to obtain more information about places and requirements for obtaining vasectomy. They said that all the men they knew who underwent vasectomy obtained the procedure in Mexico.

The prevalence of vasectomy among Latinos is considerably lower than among white men in the United States. However, there is evidence that access to services and economic constraints have played a role alongside negative cultural perceptions about vasectomy in reducing the prevalence of vasectomy in this population. Participants in our focus groups claimed that they would like to know more about places and requirements to obtain a vasectomy but no information was available for them. Disadvantageous conditions at work tended to prevent some men from seriously considering obtaining a vasectomy since they could not take time away from work without losing their jobs.
References


