



Turkish men's roles, opinions, manners and behaviors in their use of contraceptive methods

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Abstract

This research was carried out with the aim of determining the males' participation in the family planning services, and their opinions, attitudes and a behavior regarding the male contraceptive methods. This study is descriptive one and it has been carried out in the Sakarya, Turkey. A questionnaire is conducted on 237 volunteer men who visited the Sakarya Maternity and Children Clinic which was selected in accordance with the randomly sampling method among the hospitals. According to the findings about responsibility for contraception, 37 % of men declared that both partners should be preserved together; Most of the men (77.6) are not willing to use the men hormonal methods. There is a significant relationship between the use of men hormonal contraceptives and level of education ($p=0.016, p<0.005$). When we look at whether the partners used a method for contraception, we see that 73.4 % were protected by any method, and that 69.5 % employed effective and modern methods, while 30.5 % used traditional methods with limited effectiveness. The percentage of the partners who are not protected is 26.6 %. New male contraceptive methods, particularly if reversible, may alter men's willingness to accept or share responsibility for control of fertility.

Keywords: Contraception; contraceptive behaviors; contraceptive methods; male's opinions; male's role, Turkish

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Türk erkeklerinin kontraseptif yöntem kullanımındaki rolleri, düşünceleri tutum ve davranışları

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Özet

Araştırmamız erkeklerin aile planlaması hizmetlerine katılımlarını ve erkek kontraseptif yöntemlerine ilişkin düşüncelerini, tutum ve davranışlarını belirlemek amacıyla yapılmıştır. Tanımlayıcı tipte olan araştırmanın örneklemini Sakarya Kadın Doğum Ve Çocuk Hastanesine başvuran 237 gönüllü evli erkekler oluşturmaktadır. Bulgulara göre eşlerin her ikisinin de birlikte korunmaları gerektiğine inanan erkeklerin oranı % 37 dir. Erkeklerin çoğu (77,6) erkeklere yönelik hormonal yöntem kullanmaya gönüllü değillerdir. Erkeklere yönelik hormonal kontraseptif yöntem kullanımına gönüllülük ile eğitim düzeyi arasında anlamlı ilişki bulunmuştur ($p=0.016, p<0.005$). Partnerlerin kontrasepsiyon maksadıyla herhangi bir yöntem kullanıp kullanılmadıklarına bakıldığında %73,4'ünün herhangi bir yöntemle korundukları bunun %51,1'inin etkin ve modern yöntemler, %22,3'ünün klasik yöntemler olduğu saptanmıştır. Herhangi bir yöntemle korunmama oranı ise % 26,6'dır. Doğurganlığın kontrolünde erkeklerinde sorumluluk sahibi olmaları için yeni erkek kontraseptif yöntemler alternatif olabilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kontrasepsiyon; kontraseptif davranışlar; kontraseptif yöntemler; erkeklerinin görüşleri; erkeklerin rolü; Türk

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Introduction

In spite of the almost all of the family planning services have been planned towards women in Turkey and World, many men in Turkey are motivated to use contraceptive methods and to share responsibility for family planning with their wives. About half the couples practicing family planning use male-dependent methods. Global efforts to target women for family planning (FP) acceptance have ignored the important fact that in developing countries men are usually the primary family decision-makers (Ringheim 1993, Özvarış et al.1998, Kadın 2000, Anderson 2000, De Paola et al. 2002, Akin & Özyaydin 2005; Bianchi et al.2006).

The fact that the world population has greatly increased and the vital resources have begun to decrease makes it compulsory that the male, along with the female, should actively take role in the control of the fertility .Today; there are four contraceptive methods that are oriented to the male. Among these methods, withdrawal and periodic abstinence methods, although having some returns, have only limited effectiveness. And unfortunately, vasectomy is not an alternative for the males who wants to have children later in their life, either (Ringheim 1993, De Paola et al. 2002, Vogelsong 2003).

In spite of the limitations of the male contraceptive methods, due to the obvious presence of the males willing to bear the responsibility of the arrangement of the fertility, the hormonal approach attempts regarding the control of their fertility capability has shown themselves through epidemiological, biomedical and technological researches (Ringheim 1993, Meriggiola et al. 1996, Becker & Robinson 1998, Anderson 2000, Taşkın 2000, De Paola et al.2002, Weston et al., 2002). It was also stated in the United Nations Population Conference in 1994 and in the Beijing Declaration in 2000 that the family planning services should include not only the women, but all the active couples (Clift 1997, Kadın 2000, Raju & Leonard 2000).

Although there are a number of studies regarding the family planning in Turkey, the studies researching the roles, attitudes and behaviors of Turkish males in the arrangement of fertility are insufficient.

The aim of this study was to determine the males' participation in the family planning services, and their opinions, attitudes and behaviors regarding the male contraceptive methods

Methods

This study is descriptive one and it has been carried out in the Sakarya Maternity and Children Care Hospital (SMCCH)

Participants

The sample group is made up of 250 eighteen or above-eighteen years old, literate, married, volunteer males who or whose wives had been using any contraceptive method for at least one year those who applied to SMCCH due to any health problems of their wives or children, which was selected in accordance with the randomly sampling method among the hospitals within the provincial borders of Sakarya province, and to the hospitals of the Health Ministry. The study has been carried out in the Sakarya Maternity and Children Clinic which was selected in accordance with the randomly sampling method among the hospitals. Since the research questionnaires were filled by the males, the males having their own health problems other than the mentioned criteria and thus unable to answer the questionnaires were not included in the study

Since four of the participants withdrew from the study later on and nine participants answered the questionnaire incorrectly or incompletely, 13 questionnaires weren't included into the evaluation and the analysis was carried out using totally 237 questionnaires.

Data Collection

As the instrument of data collecting, a questionnaire form which had been prepared by the researchers in the light of current literature and had been given its latest shape after it had been reorganized following a pre-practice study on 25 volunteer males was used.

The questionnaire forms were distributed to the participants(who were to fill them themselves, and the researchers were present and ready in the involved policlinics and services in order to answer the probable questions of the participants regarding how to fill the questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of a pre-appendix including the aim of the study and the participation approval and a question form. The questionnaire included 19 questions, nine of which were inquiring the demographical characteristics of the participants and their wives and ten of which were about the participants' attitudes and behaviors regarding the contraceptive method use and the situation of their wives regarding children, pregnancy and contraception.

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Sakarya Human Research Ethics Committee. Permission to distribute the questionnaires was gained from Clinic Chief Executive Officers, and from hospital ethics committees when required. The questionnaire contained a short introductory paragraph outlining the purpose of the survey, name of the research centre undertaking the research and a statement that responses were anonymous. Contact details of the researchers were given at the end of the questionnaires for respondents to gain further details about the research.

Data analysis

The data was evaluated in computer, using SPSS 16.0 statistic packed program. The frequency was used in the determination of the demographical characteristics, the situation of the partners regarding the contraceptive method use and the distribution of the methods used. And qui-square method was employed in the determination of the relation between the protection applied by the partners and the unwanted pregnancies, the relation between the educational levels of the participants and their willingness in using hormonal pills (the hormonal pills for the use of males) and also the relation between the educational levels and who was expected to use the contraceptive methods and the reasons for using these methods.

Study limitations

The researches faced some difficulties in the features of the sample group of the study. The total population of the men or partners used any contraceptive methods was not known. Thus a power analysis was not run nor was a sample of the total population analyzed. Statistical interpretation of the result is difficult due to the small sample. Therefore, the result of the study may be generalized to only this group.

Results

The findings obtained as a result of our study were studied under the following two headings: 1- The demographical characteristics of the participants (males) and their wives. 2- The contraception situations of the participants and their opinions, attitudes and behaviors regarding contraception.

1-The demographical characteristics of the participants (males) and their wives

Table1. Demographic characteristics of participants and their partners (N=237)

Age	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
20- 25	47	19.9
26- 31	83	35.0
32- 37	69	29.1
38 and over	38	16.0
Education		
Literate and elementary level	149	62.9
High school and university	88	37.1
profession		
employee	43	18.1
worker	41	17.3
self-employed person	153	64.6
Family structure		
Large family	79	33.3
Nuclear family	158	66.7
Children number and state		
1-3	161	67.9
4 and over	46	19.4
Childless	30	12.7
Partners' wife's professions levels		
Literate and elementary level	190	80.1
High school an university	47	19.9
Partners' wife's professions		
employee	18	7.6
worker	8	3.4
House-wife	211	89.0

35 % of the males participating the study were in the 26-31 age groups, 62.9 % were literate-elementary educated, and 64.6 % were self-employed.

Of the partners of the males participating in the study, 80.1 % were determined to be literate-elementary educated and 89.0 % to be housewives. 66.7 % of the participants had nucleus-families, 67.9 % having 1-3 children and 19.4 % having 4 or more-than-four children.

As an answer to the question whether there was an unwanted pregnancy despite they had used a contraceptive method, the percentages of the “yes”, “no”, and “don’t know” answers were 23.0 %, 74.7 % and 2.3 % respectively.

2-The situations of the partners regarding contraception and the opinions, attitudes and behaviors of the males towards contraception

Table 2. Partners’ situations of using method and the distribution of the method they used (N=237)

The state of using method	Yes		No	
	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
	174	73.4	63	26.6
The kind of the used method	Modern and effective		Traditional and limitedly effective	
	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
	121	69.5	53	30.5
Used method distribution	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>		
Vasectomy	1	0.6		
tubal ligation	8	4.6		
Condom	43	24.7		
IUD*	36	20.6		
Hormonal contraceptive	33	19.0		
Diaphragm	1	0.6		
Coitus interruptus	48	27.6		
Vaginal lavage	3	1.7		
The others(the lactational amenorrhea,periodic abstinence)	1	0.6		
TOTAL	174**		100.0	

* IUD (Intrauterine devices)

**The total of only used any methods

Notes: Modern and effective methods are the vasectomy, tubal ligation, IUD and hormonal contraceptives, condom, diaphragm. Traditional and limitedly effective methods include Coitus interruptus, vaginal lavage, The others (the lactation amenorrhea, periodic abstinence method)

When we look at whether the partners used a method for contraception, we see that 73.4 % were protected by any method, and that 69.5 % employed effective and modern methods, while 30.5 % used traditional methods with limited effectiveness. The percentage of the partners who are not protected is 26.6 % (Table 2).

When we look at the distribution of the methods used, it was seen that 27.6 % were protected by withdrawal, 24.7 % by condom, 20.6 % by IUD, 19.0 % by hormonal contraceptives, 4.6 % by tubal ligation and 0.6 % by vasectomy .When we look at

whether the males using a specific contraceptive method were satisfied with the method, it was determined that 69.0 % stated they were satisfied with the method, and 31.0 % said that they were not satisfied but used the method out of necessity.

No statistical significant was determined between the satisfaction from the method and which method was used, however it was found out that 52 % of the males stating that they were satisfied with the method they used were protected by the contraceptives oriented to males.

The distribution of the relation between the unwanted pregnancy story and the satisfaction from the method is given in Table 3.

When Table 3 was examined, it was determined that of the people giving the “No” answer to the section about the “unwanted pregnancy story” 57.5 % were satisfied with the method they used, and that of the people giving “Yes” answer to this section 13.2 % were not satisfied with the method they used. Thus, the relation between the satisfaction from the method used and the unwanted pregnancy was found to be statistically significant $X^2=16.98$, $df=2$, $p<0.05$).

Table3. The distribution of the relation between the unwanted pregnancy story and the contentment of the method.

The unwanted pregnancy despite the preservation story the	Contentment with the method				Total	
	Contented n	%	Discontented n	%	n	%
Yes	17	9.8	23	13.2	40	23.0
No		57.5	30	17.2	130	74.7
	100					
I do not know	3	1.7	1	0.6	4	2.3
TOTAL	120	69.0	54	31.0	174	100.0

In Table 4 there is the distribution of the opinions of the participants regarding which one of the partners should use the contraceptive method.

When Table 4 is examined, it can be seen that the total percentage of the participants having the opinion that “the contraceptive method should be used by the woman” is 25.3 %, 13.9 of which giving the reason of “being the head of the family”, 5.5 % giving the reason of “being the reliable person”, and 11.0 % saying “this is the usual way”, the percentage of the participant saying “It doesn’t make any difference. The one

more suitable should use the contraceptive method” is 17.3 % and the percentage of the ones saying “they both should be protected, because this makes a double-effect” is 37.1%.

When the relation between the opinion regarding who should bear the responsibility of using the method and the structure of the family, it was seen that 11.8 % of the participants having a nucleus family and 15.5 % of the participants having an extended family gave the answer “It doesn’t make any difference. The partner who is more suitable can use the method.” On the other hand, no statistically significant relation was determined between the family structure and the opinions regarding the responsibilities of the partners in protection.

When the relation between level education and the opinions of the participants on by whom and why the protective methods should be used was examined, it was seen that the relation was statistically significant (Chi Square = 16.467, $p = 0.011$, $p < 0.05$). The opinion that the male should play an active role in family planning services due to the fact that the male is the head of the family and that the methods oriented to the male are more reliable was found to be 8.8 % among the high school and university graduates group and to be 10.6 % among the literate-elementary educated group. “Doesn’t make difference” answer was found to be 9.9 % among the high school and university graduates group and to be 7.4 % among the literate-elementary educated group.

Again, the ratio of people who say “both should preserve themselves together “ is 11.4% in high school and university educated group and 25.7% in the literate – elementary education group

To the question “which, do you think, is the most reliable and effective method in the fertility control?”, 5.9 % of the participant gave the answer “abortion”, 70.0 % “modern methods (pills, condom, IUD, surgical sterilization)”, 8.4 % “traditional methods (vaginal lavage, Coitus interruptus etc.)”, and 15.6 % “don’t know”.

The relation between the education levels of the participants and whether they want to use the male-oriented hormonal pills is given in Table 5.

Table 4. The distribution of men's opinions concerning the questions of who should use the contraceptive methods and why they should be used

The one who should use		Reasons of Usage	n	%
Men				
n	%	Because he is the head of the family	33	13.9
48	20.2	Because he is reliable in his decisions and manners	13	5.5
		Because he should contribute to the family planning	2	0.8
Women		Reasons of Usage	n	%
n	%	Because it is more easy and suitable for her	34	14.3
60	25.3	Because she is used to it, she does not know the reason	26	11.0
No difference		Reasons of Usage	n	%
n	%	It makes no difference, the suitable partner of the pair should use.	41	17.3
41	17.3			
Both		Reasons of Usage	n	%
n	%	Both use the method at the same time, and it has double effect	88	37.1
88	37.1			

When the consent and willingness of the participant regarding the male-oriented hormonal pills was examined, it was seen that 22.4 % of the participants gave the answer "yes", 77.6 % said "no", and 38.0 % among the participants giving the answer "no" were undecided, unable to offer a justification for their preference (table5).

Table 5. Men's attitudes to use male-oriented hormonal pills according to their level of education.

Answers relating to men's attitudes	Education Level					
	Literate-Elementary		High school and above		TOTAL	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes, he does not know the reasons	18	7.6	5	2.1	23	9.7
Yes, pill is more appropriate for men	6	2.5	6	2.5	12	5.0
Yes, men should be the responsible one	8	3.4	10	4.2	18	7.6
Total of yes answers	32	13.5	21	8.9	53	22.4
No, the method without well- known side effects	34	14.3	30	12.7	64	7.6
No, it is against traditional roles, religion and beliefs	25	10.6	5	2.1	30	27.0
No, he cannot express the reasons	58	24.5	32	13.5	90	12.7
Total of no answers	117	49.3	67	28.3	184	77.6
					237	100.0

$$X^2=13.884, df=5, p=0.016, p<0.05$$

Note: The percentages are the percentages of total population (N=237)

When the distribution of the participants opinions that whether they want to use pills or not according to their educational levels were examined, it was seen that the answers of the literate-elementary educated group were distributed in decreasing rate as “no, but I can't express the reason” with a percentage of 24.5 %, “no, pills cause a lot of side-effects on males and it's not a well-proven method” with 14.3 %, and “no, it's contrary to my traditions, religion and beliefs” with 10.6 %. Of all the participants giving the answer “no”, 49.3 % were in the literate-elementary educated group, and the percentage of the participants giving the answer “no” was determined to be 28.3 % for the high school – university graduates group.

A statistically significant relation was determined between the educational levels of the participants and the use of male hormonal pills ($p = 0.016$, $p < 0.05$) (Table 5).

Discussion

The contraception situations of the partners and the opinions, attitudes and behaviors of the males regarding contraception

When the contraception situations of the participants were examined, it was seen that 69.5 % were being protected by means of effective and modern methods, while 30.5 % were being protected by means of traditional methods. The percentage for the participants who were not being protected by any method was found to be 26.6 %

In a study carried out by Güldal and his friends (Güldal et al.2001) in İzmir, it was found out that the rate for protection by means of effective methods was 43.0 %, the rate for protection through ineffective methods was 17.7 %, and the rate of the people not using any method was 5.1 %. On the other hand, in another study carried out by Biri and her friends (Biri et al.2002) in Ankara, the rate for protection by means of effective methods was found to be 52.4 %. Findings came out to be higher compared to the ones obtained in the studies carried out by Güldal et al (2001) and by Biri et al (2002).

When the distribution rates of the methods employed were examined, the most common method was found to be withdrawing method (27.6 %) which was followed, in decreasing order, by condom (24.7 %), IUD, hormonal contraceptives, tube- ligation and vasectomy When the findings were evaluated, it was found out that the rate of protection by efficient methods were low for the males. And the rate of protection by vasectomy was the lowest among the males.

According to the results of the study, the rate of protection by condom, which is one of the modern and highly-efficient methods, was higher than that in the study carried out by Biri and her friends. (Biri et al.2002) (17 %) and our results were different in this respect.

Condom is a modern method which has a very high effectiveness when used properly (Güldal et al.2001, Biri et al.2002,). According to findings obtained from our study, condom was preferred less than the total preference of IUD and hormonal contraceptives. These results suggest that males do not assume enough responsibility in modern contraception. At least 30 % of total contraceptive usage in the world today and in the U.S.A., ¼ - ¾ of all contraception practices are applied by means of male-oriented modern methods (Wu 1996,De Paola et al. 2002,).In a research carried out by Lete and her friends (Lete et al.2001), the rate of protection by condom was found out to be 36.2 %, while in another research carried out by Wang (Wang 2002)) in China the rate was determined as 9.6 %.According to the results of the study, when the subject that whether the males using any contraceptive method are satisfied with the method was examined, it was found out that 31.0 % gave the answer “I’m not satisfied, but just using the method out of necessity”. On the other hand, in the research carried out by Güldal and his friends (Güldal et al.2001) in İzmir, the rate of males’ being satisfied with the method they were using was found out to be 36.7 %, showing similarity to our results.

Although no statistical significant was found between the satisfaction from the method and the method used, it was found out that of the males satisfied with the method, 52 % were being protected by means of male-oriented contraceptives. In a study carried out by Zambrana and friends in Bolivia it is seen that users of modern methods say they are more satisfied than couples who do not use contraception. (<http://www.fhi.org/en/RH/Pubs/wsp/fctshts/Bolivia2.htm>)

When The study was examined it was determined that of the people giving the “No” answer to the section about the “unwanted pregnancy story” 57.5 % were satisfied with the method they used it was seen that there was a statistically significant relation between the unwanted pregnancy story and satisfaction from the method (Chi Square = 16.98, df = 2, p<0.05).Based on these findings, it can be said that the satisfaction from the method can prevent unwanted pregnancy. Thus, it can be concluded that dissatisfaction from the method used can pave the way for unwanted pregnancies.

When the study was examined, it was determined that the rate of the participants saying that the responsibility had to belong only to the female (25.3 %) is higher than the ones saying that the responsibility should belong to the male (20.2 %). However, if the table is considered as a whole and the participants giving the answer “there is no difference. Whoever suitable can bear the responsibility” are considered, the existence of the males willing for the arrangement of the fertility can be deemed as a positive result and situation.

On the other hand, in the research carried out by Güldal and his friends (Güldal et al. 2001) in İzmir, 22.8 % of the males said “it’s the woman who should be protected”, while 17.7 % said “it’s the male who should be protected”, and 58.2 % said “there is no difference”. The rate of the participants saying “both partners should be protected simultaneously” is the highest among all the answers (37.1 %). This result suggests that the males seem determined in the fertility control.

The relation between level of education and participants’ ideas on the necessity about who should use preservative method and why they should be used is examined; the result is significant statistically ($\chi^2=16.467$, $p=0.011$, $p<0.05$). Because of “the head of family” and “the reliability of men’s usage”, the idea that men take active role in family planning is higher than high school and university educated group, which is in the literate-elementary education. The answer “there is no difference” is high at the high school and university educated group according to literate-elementary education.

Again, the ratio of people who say “both should preserve themselves together, because it makes double effect” is very low in high school and university educated group. It is more higher the literate –elementary education group (in order 11.4%, 25.7%). It is seen that the literate –elementary education group has incorrect knowledge about who should use preservative method and why they should be used. Because, with an effective method, it is enough for one of the partners to be preserved (Ringheim 1993). Hence, the level of education is important in men’s using method for regulating fertility. In that case, the personnel working at village clinics, family planning clinics should take into consideration the appropriateness of the method, the level of education and the cultural structure of the society (Bayık 1998, Martin et al. 2000, Taşkın 2000).

When study findings are evaluated as a whole, men’s reasons and opinions through the contraceptive methods are similar to society’s perception of men and the role, which is given

for them. And also, it is similar to traditional and conservative manners. When the males participating in the research asked the question “which method, do you think, is the most reliable and effective in the control of the fertility?” it was determined that 70.0 % gave the answer “the modern methods (in order to: IUD, pills, condom, surgical sterilization)”.

Although modern methods are known by the most of the participants, the level of preservation is low (table II) (The difference between having the knowledge and using the method) might result from the fact that the methods had not been adopted sufficiently and the education had not been effective enough in changing the behavior.

In the same way, though vasectomy was cited among the efficient and reliable methods, only 0.6 % of the participants preferred vasectomy. When the findings from the study were examined, it was seen that miscarriage and abortion was considered as a method and this is not surprising since the abortion is employed both in the world and in our country, though at different rates. 15 % of the women in Turkey terminate their unwanted pregnancies by miscarriage or abortion (Bayık 1998, TSNA 1998, Güldal et al. 2001 Koçoğlu 2002).

In the study Martin and her friends (Martin et al. 2000) carried out in different cities, condom took the first place as the least health-risky method with the easiest usage, and the hormonal contraceptives took the second place. Draca and Jakouljevic (said that) quote IFPF which considers IUD to be the most reliable method of contraception nowadays (Draca & Jakouljevic 2005). In many relevant works in the literature, condom is cited as a method having less risk and side-effects in terms of health (Robert et al. 1990, <http://www.fhi.org/en/RH/Pubs/wsp/fctshts/Bolivia2.htm>).

The relation between the educational level of the males and whether they want to use male-oriented hormonal pills is given in table 5. When the acceptance and willingness regarding the male-oriented hormonal pills use was examined in general, it was seen that 77.6 % of the participants gave the answer “no” and 38.0 % of the participants giving the answer “no” were undecided, unable to give any justification. When the distribution of the participants' situations regarding whether they want to use pills according to their educational levels, it was determined that most of the participants giving the answer “no” were in the literate-elementary educated group (49.3 %).

A statistically significant relation was determined between the educational levels of the participants and the male hormonal pills use ($p = 0.016$, $p < 0.05$).

In a research carried out by Weston et al. (Weston et al.2002) in Australia, it was found out that 19.5 % of the males gave the answer “certainly yes” for the use of the male-oriented contraceptive pills, while 12.7 % said “certainly no”, and 28 % saying “I’m undecided”. A majority of the participants giving the answer “yes” (43.0 %) stated to be university graduates. Our findings were similar in terms of the fact that the number of undecided participants were more than the that of the ones giving the answer “yes”, but different in terms of the rate of “no” answers. In some researches (Ringheim 1996, Brooks 1998, Martin et al. 2000, Weston et al. 2002,Heinemann et al.2005), it was found out that the willingness rate for the hormonal pills use were between 50 % - 80 %, but most of the males were willing to use the methods such as “pills for male use” that are still in the stage of hypothesis.

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