

**Research Paper**

Non-Marital Fertility and its Implication to the Child and the Mother in Makueni District, Kenya

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Abstract

A study of levels of non-marital fertility and its implication to the mothers and their children was conducted in Makueni District which is arid and semi-arid district of Kenya; prone to droughts and feminine that occurs periodically each year. More than 75% of the population live below poverty line ; majority (>51%) of whom are women who are severely affected due to marginalization in terms of access to ownership of assets and other sources of income thus prone to non-marital sex, pregnancies and childbearing . A rural-peri-urban appraisal survey was adopted targeting women aged between 15-49 years who had non-marital fertility. Data on non-marital fertility characteristics were obtained from a random sample of 120 unmarried women using questionnaires and Focus Group Discussion (FGD's).

Through FGDs majority (75%) of the women admitted that poverty made them look for financial assistance from men as rewards for sexual relationship that resulted in unwanted pregnancies. Consequently levels and implication of non-marital fertility is important in creating awareness to the community of the consequences and policy making process aimed at reduction of non-marital pregnancies especially to mothers who are not able to provide their children with basic needs for their well being.

Keywords: *Non- Marital Fertility, Multiple Fertility, Total Fertility Rate, Makueni, Kenya*

1. Introduction

Marriage and childbearing pattern in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) are in a state of transformation (Ocholla et al, 1993 and Gage, 1998) and are related to socio-economic and cultural factors of individuals and communities in the region. In most communities in Kenya and many other countries of SSA, sexual intercourse outside marriage was socially stigmatized and marriage marked the start of a socially accepted active sexual life (KDHS, 2003).

In Kenya according to Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS, 2003) almost all adults are married by the age 40-44. The KDHS 1989-2003 reported that, 50% of young adults begin childbearing in Kenya at ages 17 and 18 years in the proportions of 20% and 30% respectively. Despite a relative high level of contraceptive use, the same report indicated that unplanned pregnancies are common

and approximately 20% of the births are unwanted while 25% are mistimed. The rapid increased fertility is attributed to low age at marriage and high value accorded to children (Dow & Linda, 1983). This shows that the previous documented decline in fertility appeared to have stalled. Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of 4.9 children per woman for 3 years period preceding survey (mid 2000- mid 2003) was almost identical to the rate of 5.0 derived from the 1999 national population and housing census The study results revealed that the TFR in the rural areas was still significantly higher (5.2) than the rate in urban areas (2.9); although there was a slight drop as reported by KDHS (2003) results of 5.4 in the rural and 3.3 in the peri-urban areas.

Kenya has witnessed increasing levels of non-marital fertility despite the onset of decline in fertility in the general

population (NCPD, 2000).

Age Specific Fertility Rates (ASFR) indicated that single women exhibited a broad-peaked fertility pattern during the 1978-89 and 1989 -1999 National Population Censuses, while age group 20-29 showed a consistent fall from 1979 to 1999 while the other age groups showed inconsistent trend (CBS, 2003).

Non-marital births are of two types: births among young women who have never been married and births among those who were divorced or widowed at the time of birth. The proportion of females aged 12 years and above who were divorced and separated increased marginally from 2.2 % in 1989 to 2.7% in 1999 and those aged 30-59 years were consistently higher than in the past census. However, the TFR for the divorced and separated women were the lowest, with the exception of age group 15-19, which showed an increase in ASFR. The proportion was higher in urban areas with 3.4 % compared to rural areas with 2.5%. The proportion of widowed women in rural areas was 6.6% compared to 2.9% in urban areas (CBS, 2003).

The increase in non-marital childbearing has negatively affected the government population policies on family planning programmes aimed at improving child wellbeing and poverty reduction. Based on the above background this study was carried out in Makueni District to investigate increasing number of non-marital births and its implications to the child and the unmarried mother and thus to suggest strategies to reduce or control the incidences of unwanted (untimed) non-marital childbearing in the district. The specific objectives of the study were:

- To examine the magnitude of non-marital fertility across rural and peri-urban regions of Makueni District
- To investigate the implications of non-marital fertility to mothers and their children

2. Study Area

Makueni District is situated in Southern Kenya and covers an area of 7965.8 km². It had a population of 771,545 in 1999 census and 884,527 in the last census (2009). The total number of males and females were 372,639 and 398,906 respectively (CBS, 2003). The total fertility rate was 5.8 per woman with a crude birth rate of 44.7 per 1000 and mean age at first birth was 21.1 years in 1999 (CBS, 2001). The district is situated in low potential arid and semi-arid area and is prone to droughts and famine that occur periodically each year. About three quarters of people in the district are poor and live below poverty line majority of whom are women and children (KDHS, 2003). The incidence of poverty and its intensity vary across the

district and among women and men and are more severe among women- a factor attributed to inequality and limited access by women to ownership of assets, income generating activities opportunities, essential economic services and decision making (Ministry of Finance and Planning, 2002).

3. Research Design

The research design was a rural-peri-urban appraisal survey. Selection of respondents was done through two complementary sampling approaches. This included; purposive sampling through networking and snowball sampling techniques. They were used to select women residents identified as unmarried and with non-married children. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used and later each respondent was asked another case with non-marital birth and then the case was contacted for further inquiry. A maximum of 20 respondents were interviewed among the three age cohorts in each peri-urban and rural sites as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Number of Individual Interviews by Population Segment

Age (in Years)	Peri-urban	Rural	Total
15-24	20	20	40
25-34	20	20	40
35 & above	20	20	40
Total	60	60	120

4. Data Collection and Analysis

The collected data were edited; coded and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and the results were presented using frequency tables, percentages, and histograms. Correlation analysis was used to determine the association between non-marital births and age at sex debut, age at first child and number of child likely father. A Chi-square test was used as a test of significance.

5. Results and Discussion

The data revealed that among the women interviewed, 60 % were single with a relatively higher percentage (32.5%) in the rural areas compared to 27.5 % in the peri-urban. About 23.3 % were divorced with (15%) in the peri-urban and 8.3 % in the rural areas. 10 % cohabiting and only 6.7 % were widowed (Figure 1).

Further analysis revealed that, there was a significant ($\chi^2=52.650$, $df=21$, $p=0.000$) relationship between the state of respondent in marriage and non-marital fertility. The results also reveal that the non-marital cases for the single and cohabiting women were higher in the rural areas. Similarly, they were higher for the divorced women

in peri-urban areas. This suggests that non-marital births can be first births or higher order births and that they can occur to the divorced or widowed women as well.

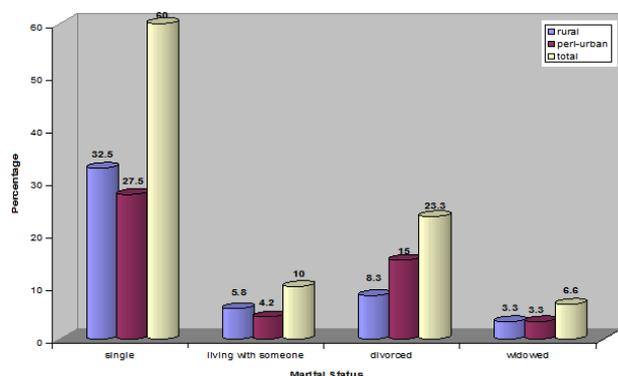


Figure 1. Marital Status of the Respondent

Considering the number of children per respondent, the results revealed that 29% had one child, 28%, 20% and 13% had between two, three and four children respectively. Only a few had five (3.3%), six (4.2%), seven (0.8%) and eight (0.8%) children. This indicates that across the sampled women with non-marital births, majority had one, two or three children (Table 2). It was also found that more women (57% and 58%) in the rural areas had between one and three children respectively, whereas in the urban areas, majority (58.8%) had two children.

Table 2. Number of Non-Marital Children per Mother

Total No. of Children	Absolute and Percentage distribution Across Areas of Residence					
	Rural		Peri-urban		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	20	16.7	15	12.5	35	29.2
2	14	11.7	20	16.7	34	28.3
3	14	11.7	10	8.3	24	20
4	7	5.8	9	7.5	16	13.3
5	1	0.8	3	2.5	4	3.3
6	2	1.7	3	2.5	5	4.2
7	1	0.8	0	0.0	1	0.8
8	1	0.8	0	0.0	1	0.8
Total	60	50.0	60	50.0	120	100.0

Source: Field data

The results further revealed that, 35% of the respondents had one partner as the likely father to their children. Among these groups, 62.9% were in the rural areas compared to 57% in the peri-urban areas. The largest representation

(45%) was of respondents having two partners as likely father to their children were 23.3% in rural and 21.7% in peri-urban areas. However small proportion of respondents had three (13.4%), four (5%), six (0.8%) and seven (0.8%) partners as likely fathers to their children (Table 3).

A cross-tabulation between total number of children, age of respondent and number of likely fathers indicated that in the age group 15-24, 60% of respondents had one partner as likely father to their children. 73% in the age group 25-34 had between 1-4 partners and 77.5% in the age group 35 and above had between 1-6 partners as likely fathers to their children. This indicated that the number of likely fathers to their children increased with age. Further analysis of the results indicated that there was a significant ($\chi^2=290.305$, $df=35$, $p=0.000$) relationship between the number of likely fathers and the total number of children per respondent and most single mothers had children with multiple partners. This implies that among the women with non-marital first birth in the district, 45% subsequently had a birth with another partner and 20% with three or more children had multiple partners (Table 3). Through the FGD's majority admitted that poverty made them to look for money and assistance from men and with improper use of contraceptives they found themselves pregnant. Most of the women revealed that the cost of the contraceptives was high and at times they lacked money to buy them. It was reported that majority of the likely fathers preferred unprotected sex and thus they could not resist because of the expected returns in terms of money and other material items such as food and clothing among others.

Table 3. Number of Children Likely Fathers

Number of Likely Fathers	Area of Residence					
	Rural		Peri-Urban		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	22	18.3	20	16.7	42	35.0
2	28	23.3	26	21.7	54	45.0
3	7	5.8	9	7.5	16	13.4
4	1	0.8	5	4.2	6	5.0
6	1	0.8	0	0	1	0.8
7	1	0.8	0	0	1	0.8
Total	60	50.0	60	50.0	120	100

Source: Field data

Most pregnancies by unmarried mothers were reported to be accidental or unintended. The results indicated that 67.5% of pregnancy cases were unplanned; 35% of such cases were reported in the rural areas compared to 32.5% in the peri-urban regions, only 32.5% had planned for their pregnancies. It was also revealed that 62.5% of the women

conceived during normal socialization with their boyfriends while 26.7% reported that boredom made them to look for company and in the process they conceived and among this group are those who were relating with just a friend or boyfriends of the same age and 3.3% conceived after they were raped. Through the FGD's it was reported that majority of those women who had planned for their pregnancies had perceived themselves to be in more committed relationships or were married by the time of the pregnancy. A number of those who had unplanned pregnancies confessed that they became pregnant unexpectedly while learning how to use natural method of birth control. Others felt that some of the private doctors gave them expired contraceptives.

However, from the FGD's results in both peri-urban and rural areas, it was revealed that illiteracy, lack of awareness and discontinued use of contraceptives contributed greatly to the increased cases of non-marital pregnancies in the district.

The issues regarding occurrence of first pregnancy was sought and ages of respondents established. Figure 2 shows that a higher percentage (59.1%) of the sampled women had their first child between the ages 18-22 with a relatively higher proportion of this group (31.7%) living in rural areas compared to 27.4% in peri-urban. 30.9% conceived their first child between ages 13-17 with majority (18.4%) of this group living in the peri-urban and 12.5% living in the rural areas and only 10% gave birth to their first child at age of 23 years and above. These results concur with the KDHS (1998) report that 50 percent of young women begin childbearing in Kenya by age 19 and that a higher percentage was in the rural areas.

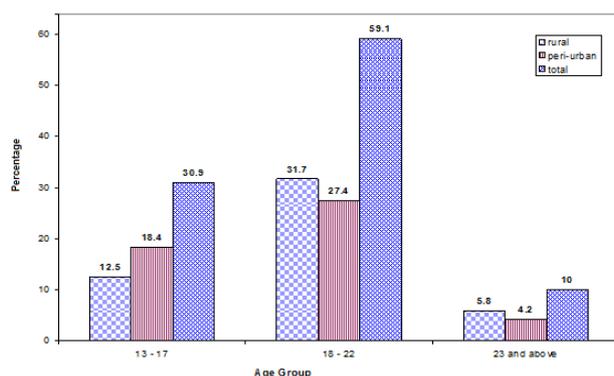


Figure 2. Age at First Child Birth

Results in Table 4 shows that age at first child birth was significantly associated with the respondent's level of education at sex debut. About 73.4% of the women interviewed had their sexual debut while they were at primary school level. Among this group, 2.3% gave birth to their first childbirth at the age 13. About 11.1% of those with sec-

ondary school education (22.5%) got their first child at age 16 and 20% of those with college education at age 18, while 22.5% of those with secondary school education gave birth at the age of 16 years and 20% of those with post secondary education gave birth to the first children at the age 18 years. The results further revealed that 37% of those with secondary school education delayed their first childbirth, giving birth between ages of between 18-20 years an overall. 40% with college education delayed up to 21 years, while 100% of those with university education delayed the first child birth up to 25 years.

Table 4. Factors Influencing Age at Birth of First Child

Variable	Chi-Square Value (χ^2)	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-Sided)
1. Highest education level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None • Primary • Secondary • College • University 	152.37	64	0.000
2. Age of respondent <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15-24 • 25-34 • 35 and above 	66.48	32	0.000
3. Age at sex debut <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10-14 • 15-19 • 20-24 • 25 and above 	153.637	48	0.000
4. Age of partner at sex debut <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14-18 • 19-23 • 24-28 • 29 and above 	446.285	336	0.000
5. Relationship with partner at sex debut <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boyfriend of your age • Boy friend older • Relative • Rape/forced • Just a friend 	97.949	48	0.000
6. Education level at sex debut <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary • Secondary • College • None 	116.587	48	0.000
7. Contraceptive use <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes 	30.247	16	0.017

Source: Field data

Age at sex debut was also associated with age at first child. In this study, the median age at first intercourse was 17 years. About 95.8% of the sampled women initiated sexual activity before their early twenties. Among this group, 64.4 % were in the age bracket 15-19.

The association between use of contraceptive and age at first birth was quite significant ($\chi^2=27.8$, $df=16$, $p=0.033$) in the rural areas. This indicated high cases of unprotected sex in the district which led to unplanned pregnancies. These results concurred with the KDHS (1998) report that 30% of sexually active unmarried young women aged 15-19 years reported using a method of contraception. The report further revealed high fertility rates among these young women group partly due to high sexuality.

The reported high contraceptive use (80%) among the unmarried mothers in Makueni District implies high frequency of sexual activity. A high percentage of these mothers (90.8%) had between 1-4 children (Table 2) and most of the pregnancies were unintended. These results imply that despite the high contraceptive use, a higher percentage of unmarried mothers in the district still become pregnant. Further analysis indicated that 78.3% of the sampled respondents felt that contraceptive use had contributed to high levels of non-marital births in Makueni District. Majority felt that access to family planning services was constrained by the cost of contraceptives, under estimation of likelihood of pregnancy, low education level; lack of knowledge of contraceptives use especially the pills and the fear of the side effects.

Some respondents that some men, however, refuse to use condoms especially after two or more sexual encounters with the same partner. Others tore off the condom or gave more money for unprotected sex. Such kind of behaviour had greatly contributed to the increase of non-marital births in the district as reported by the FGD's.

The likely fathers of children born to the unmarried mothers in Makueni District are generally older. This is revealed by the significant relationship between age at birth of first child and respondent's relationship with partner at sex debut. The results revealed that 73.3% of the partners were older boyfriends. Such cases were higher in the peri-urban areas (37.5%). The age of partner was also found to be significant regarding men in the age group 19-23 fathering more children (36.7%) with the young unmarried women, followed by those in the age group 24-28 (31.7%). 64.2 % of the women were in the most productive age group of 15-19 years.

Table 5 shows the correlation results between total number of children and age at sex debut, age at first child and number of likely fathers.

The above results revealed that there was a positive correlation (0.565) between age at sexual debut and the age at first child. This suggested that women who engaged in pre-marital sex while young gave birth to their first child while young. Age at sex debut was negatively correlated (-0.215) with the number of fathers. This implied that if sex debut was delayed, the number of likely fathers to their children reduced significantly. There was a negative correlation (-0.83) between age at sex debut and the total number of children per respondent, meaning that an increased age at sex debut leads to a reduction in the total number of non-marital births. Age at first child's birth is negatively correlated (-0.193) with the number of likely fathers. This shows that if age at first child is delayed, the number of likely fathers reduces significantly.

Women who delay to get their first child are more likely to have few children with age. This is derived from the correlation of (-0.124) between age at first child and the total number of children per mother. The total number of children per respondent is highly positively correlated (0.784) to the number of fathers. This implies that women who have many non-marital births are likely to have conceived them with multiple partners.

Results in Table 6 indicated that most women (62.5%) with non-marital births in the district were stigmatized. This was reported in 35% of cases in the rural and 27.5% in the peri-urban areas. About 8.3% said such women were believed to be unfortunate and 29.2% were respected. However, FGD's in the peri-urban region reported that the level of respect depends on the family background and the women occupation or economic status. The proportion 29.2% though small, showed a likely change in the society on its perception on women with non-marital births, because in the past, it was totally unaccepted as reported by FGD's in the peri-urban areas.

Regarding attitude towards marriage, 56.7% of the sampled women felt that marriage is necessary with availability of a suitable spouse; 43.3% of the women, however, felt that marriage was not an essential part of life for them. During the FGD's those respondents who said that marriage was necessary said: "It is important if you want to start a family, or get financial and moral support and again if you wish to be respected by the community". Those who felt that marriage was unnecessary for women had a feeling that if one was financially stable, it was unnecessary to marry because of the fear of pressure in marriage, belief in male untrustworthiness, their inability to care for children responsibly and their erratic employment and earnings.

5.1. Implication of Non-Marital Fertility

This study focused on the causes of non-marital childbearing.

ng and their implication to the mothers and their children. Marital status was a significant factor pertaining to the birth of the child. The study also factored in whether the pregnancy was intended or unintended, the age of the mother at first child birth, number of non-marital births and whether the mothers were able to financially support their children needs. The knowledge of the implication of non-marital fertility is important in creating awareness to the community of the consequences and in policy making regarding reduction of non-marital pregnancies especially to the mothers who are highly unlikely to be able to provide their children with basic needs for their wellbeing.

rs and sisters. In this study, 70.5% of the women reported that they were stigmatized by the society. However, the trend seems to be changing since 29.2% reported that the educated and working women with non-marital births were respected. In this case, therefore, economic factors are seen as largely responsible for the rejection of traditional customs.

5.2.2. Mothers Education

Mothers with non-marital births are less likely to complete secondary school or college education. This is true especi-

Table 5. Correlation between Total Number of Children and Other Variables

Pearson Correlation/Variables	Age at Sex Debut	Age at First Child	Total Number of Children	Number of Likely Fathers
Age at sex debut	1.000	0.565**	-0.083	-0.215*
Age at first child	0.565**	1.000	-0.124	-0.193*
Total number of children	-0.083	-0.124	1.000	0.784**
Number of likely fathers	-0.215*	-0.193*	0.784**	1.000

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

One of the major implications is the altered future life trajectories of the women and children who experience it. From the FGD's it was noted that, the consequences faced by these women may vary from one family to another depending on their family background, education level and economic status.

ally when they give birth at young ages. Their dreams are thus shattered because they lack the qualifications and skills needed for one to get a well paying job. This study revealed that it was only 5% who had college education. The majority (75.8%) had primary education.

Table 6. Community Attitude on Women with Non-Marital Births

Description		Region					
		Rural		Peri-Urban		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Attitude of community on mothers with non-marital births	Respected	13	10.8	22	18.3	35	29.2
	Stigmatized	42	35	33	27.5	75	62.5
	Unfortunate	5	4.2	5	4.2	10	8.3
	Total	60	50	60	50	120	100

Source: Field Data

5.2. Implication to the Mothers

5.2.1. Social Stigma

Non-marital childbearing often sets the woman on an unfortunate life course. These mothers often face stigma. The society condemns them and disregards the divorced women blaming them for the break-up. They are shunned not only by the society but even by their own relatives, brothe-

5.2.3. Economic Problem

Unmarried mothers are likely to experience poverty. Poverty in this case is associated with low levels of education given that most of them have primary education. Without good education, they are likely to face difficulties in finding and keeping a job. Also due to the economic changes, the economic consequences of early childbearing often are more extreme and long lasting. In this study, majority (67.5%) of fathers did not assist mothers to raise the children and again in Kenya there is no effective legal framework for enforcing the likely father's child support. In extreme cases, many unmarried mothers are forced to sell sex to support themselves and their infant as it was reported through the FGD's in the peri-urban areas. Most of the mothers of young children stay at home.

Majority of the women in the FGD's reported that maintaining a job while coping alone with children is problematic, particularly since children have unpredictable needs and many employment situations do not allow the flexibility required balancing work and family needs. In view of the economic position of mothers, employing paid caretaker (maid) to look after their children was not possible. In this

study, all the respondents did not employ maids to take care of their children, instead their mothers or relatives assisted in child/children care.

5.2.4. Little Time Spent with Children

Single mothers have to work outside leaving children alone at home. Again they have more responsibilities and are thus faced with the problem of balancing work, domestic duties and economic struggles, leaving less time to spend with their children. 70% of women in this study reported that they had no time for leisure because they devoted all their time looking for money. There is thus lack of proper supervision to their children and this can greatly contribute to development of risk behaviours like pre-marital sex and likely to lead to non-marital pregnancies and births.

5.2.5. Stress

Most single parents may feel stigmatized or even subject to public criticism. They may face hostility and thus develop a feeling of being rejected. Also, the responsibility overload, difficulties in finding a job and child care may lead them to significant loss of self-esteem. Others face the stress of divorce and relationship breakdown. During the FGDs one of the respondent said:

“The biggest thing that stresses women after a split is the lack of money, comfort and confidence to make one not forgetting loneliness, social isolation and a place to settle and raise the children”.

5.3. Implication to the Children

Family plays a major role in shaping children's behaviour, educational and career decision. According to Thornton et al (1992), family background, socio-economic status, family composition, parenting style and geographical location have a strong influence on a child physical, mental abilities and personality styles. Where single mothers cannot make ends meet, there are significant effects on all aspects of a child well being. Household poverty can lead to material deprivation, financial constraints, poor environment for growth, poor education attainment, lower income in later life and a high probability of children engaging in risky behaviours like pre-marital sex.

5.3.1. Social Stigma

Children of unmarried mothers are likely to face social stigma. They may be made to feel demoralized when called bastards or teased by their peers. This can have a negative effect on a child self-esteem which can in turn lead to behaviour problems and unwillingness to go to school.

5.3.2. Children Education

Because of income insecurity and limited resources, single mothers are likely to have lower educational expectations for their children. Their children are more likely to drop out of school because their mothers are not in a position to cater for the necessary schooling expenses and at times they expect their children to become substitute providers for family and hence start working to supplement the meager family income.

5.3.3. Children Discipline

Children of unmarried mothers are likely to receive inconsistent and lower levels of parental supervision and involvement. Moreover, it may become hard for the mother to discipline a child without backup support from the child's father. Again, due to poverty, the girls are likely to engage in sex with older and working men. Studies by Ocholla et al (1993), found that, in Kenya, there is a growing expectation for gifts or money among sexually active young women. The report revealed that 54% of girls believe that sex is for money and gifts.

5.3.4. Problem with Personality Development

Father's absence can have harmful effect on children. Lacking a father figure may have impact on children development, socially and emotionally. Thornton et al (1991) pointed that while boys look up father as a role model, a girl's future relationship with the opposite sex is largely shaped by her interaction with her father and the image she has of him. Moreover, husbands and wives generally balance each other's personalities and thus provide a secure environment for children. Generally, children of unmarried mothers are likely to have trouble in establishing appropriate sex roles; gender identity, lack fatherly care and positive influence which help them stay on track.

5.3.5. Socio-Environmental Influence

Single motherhood may affect the family formation behaviour of future generation. Children who grow up in communities with high prevalence of single mother families find single motherhood more acceptable and are more likely to become single parent themselves. In this study, some of the respondents and especially those aged between 15 to 24 years, confessed that they decided on having a child because most of their friends and women of their age in their home areas had a child outside marriage and thus they felt the old one out without a child.

5.3.6. Family Stability

Unstable living arrangements may be more common for children born to single mothers such as going from a single parent family to a step family or to living with relatives especially when their mothers are divorced, widowed or

cohabiting. Wu (1996) found that girls who experience frequent changes in family structure are at increased risk of having pre-marital sex during adolescent.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study found that most of the unmarried mothers are from poor families; an indication that poor family background contribute to the likelihood of non-marital births; thus the government should focus on increasing education and labour market opportunities for these group of people.

The respondents had knowledge on reproductive health and sexuality before the age of 18 years, although they had unintended pregnancies thus the need for sex education to promote responsive childbearing behaviour for the young and adults.

The results further reveal that majority of the women were contraceptive users although they did not use them correctly or consistently. This calls the need for the government to produce a variety of reproductive information.

This study has found that most of the unmarried mothers are from poor families. This suggests that poor family background contribute a lot to likelihood of non-marital births. Thus there is need for the government to target young children and especially girls from highly disadvantaged families and ensure that they get good education. It should also provide life option programmes which focus on increasing education and labour market opportunities for the young unmarried mothers; to enhance their employment prospects and reduce poverty among the group. The programmes should emphasize on skill building and entrepreneurial activities to improve wage rates for the low income group.

The results indicate that most of the respondents had knowledge on reproductive health and sexuality before the age of 18 years. However, all had unintended pregnancies suggesting that either the education was not offered early enough before they had the non-marital birth or the content was shallow. Therefore there is a need for sex education designed to promote responsible childbearing behaviour for the young and adult women. The government should support the teaching of comprehensive sex education throughout the school years and even in non-school settings. The education should be offered early enough to influence the youth most at risk of pregnancy who may initiate sexual activity early.

From the above results, these studies revealed that majority of the women were contraceptive users although most of them did not use them correctly or consistently. This was attributed to the cost and misinformation about use and side effects of the contraceptives. The government, throu-

gh the family planning departments should therefore provide a variety of reproductive information and sexual education programmes to enlighten the women on proper use of the contraceptives. Moreover, to achieve its family planning goals, there is need for construction of adequate public hospitals in the rural areas for easy access and also the cost of the contraceptives should be user friendly.

The results further revealed that, many of the fathers of babies born to especially young mothers are older men. Most of them fail to assume the responsibility of rearing the children. Thus there is need of programmes and activities that promote the financial, personal responsibility and participation of the child's biological father to their children needs.

The analysis also suggests that there is an increased acceptance of premarital sex due to changes in social norms and exposure to the media/internet. This calls for the need by the government to encourage and support community wide approaches focusing on mobilizing community members to prevent non-marital problems. This should be done through private agencies and community based institutions like schools, religious institutions, community health clinics and youth organizations. The education campaign should focus on increasing public awareness on the consequences of non-marital pregnancies, promoting abstinence and pregnancy prevention.

In conclusion, there is no one cause or one single strategy certain to reduce the incidence of non-marital childbearing or to address the negative consequences associated with non-marital births. Therefore, since government policy is a limited instrument to effect all changes in sexual and marital behaviour, deeply rooted as they are, there is a need for every individual to have knowledge and understanding in his or her capacity to take the needed action and the ability to weigh the cost and benefits of any action that may lead to or prevent non-marital births, especially to the mother who do not desire to have children by the time of the pregnancy.

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