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Research Paper

The Demographic, Socio-Economic and Cultural Factors Influencing Non-Marital Fertility in Makueni District, Kenya

Jackson M. Musau^{1*}, Leonard M. Kisovi¹ and Warkach K. Tonui¹

¹Kenyatta University, Kenya

*E-Mail: jacksonmmusau@yahoo.com

Abstract

Fertility has been and is a major determinant of population growth in Kenya. The country has witnessed increasing levels of non-marital fertility. The rates are high for the unmarried women. Hence study was designed to investigate the factors influencing non-marital fertility in Makueni District of Kenya. A rural-peri-urban appraisal survey design was adopted targeting women aged between 15 to 49 years who had non-marital births. A total of 120 women from the study areas were sampled. The primary data on the demographic, socio-economic and cultural factors that influenced non-marital fertility in the district were collected. Various factors like age, family background, education, occupation etc. were focussed during carrying out this study. The findings of this study are important for the policy makers and administrators namely; the ministry of planning, ministry of health and the individuals with non-marital births. From the study findings it was recommended that the government will have to come forward to stop this abuse in society.

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

1. Introduction

Marriage and childbearing patterns in sub-Saharan Africa are in a state of transformation (Ocholla-Ayayo et al, 1993 and Gage, 1998). According to the Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS) (2003), Kenya has been described as a “marrying” society and almost everyone had done so by the age of 40-44 years. In most communities in Kenya, sexual intercourse outside marriage was socially stigmatized and marriage marked the start of a socially accepted active sexual life. The KDHS (1998 and 2003) reported that, 50% of young adults begin childbearing in Kenya before the age of 20 and by age 17 and 18 years; the proportions are 20% and 30% respectively.

Fertility has been and is still a major determinant of population growth in Kenya. The noted rapid increase in fertility was attributed to low age marriages and high value accorded to children (Dow & Linda, 1983). According to KDHS (2003), the previous documented decline in fertility

appears to have stalled. The Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of 4.9 children born/woman for three years period preceding survey (mid 2000-mid 2003) was almost identical to the rate of 5.0 children born/women derived from the 1999 population and housing census. However, according to KDHS (2008-2009) the TFR has now decreased to 4.6 births per woman. The results revealed that the TFR in the rural areas was still significantly higher (5.2 children born/women) than the rate in urban areas (2.9 children born/women), although there was a slight drop as reported by KDHS, 2003 results of 5.4 children born/women in the rural and 3.3 children born/women 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). Analysis of Age Specific Fertility Rates (ASFR) indicates that, single woman exhibited a broad -peaked fertility pattern during

the 1978-89 and 1989-99 decades. Reported average parities for woman aged 40-44 indicate that fertility for single women increased marginally from 3.4 children born/women in 1979 to 4.0 children born/women in 1989 before falling to 3.1 children born/women in 1999. The rise in reported average parities consistently affected the age group 15-19 years during the 1979, 1989 and 1999 census. Also, age groups 20-29 showed a consistent fall from 1979 to 1999. The other age groups showed an inconsistent trend (CBS, 2003).

Non-marital births are of two types; that is, 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).

Non-Marital fertility in Kenya was first reported in 1999 census that it was on increase. The rate was higher for the unmarried women in their early twenties than it was for teenagers despite the fact that, teenagers accounted for about half of all the first births to the unmarried women. The KDHS (2003) data also confirmed that non-marital pregnancies were common in Kenya despite the increased awareness and use of contraceptives to control unwanted pregnancies.

This study provides basic data on the demographic, socio-economic and cultural factors influencing reproductive and sexual behaviour of the unmarried mothers in Makueni District. The percentage of births to women aged 15-19 years in the district is 8.6% with a mean age at first birth of 21.1 years.

The study sought to achieve the following objectives:

- To establish the demographic factors influencing non-marital fertility in Makueni District
- To determine the socio-economic factors influencing non-marital fertility in the rural and peri-urban regions of Makueni District
- To investigate the cultural factors influencing non-marital fertility in the study area

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 2009. The total number of males and females were 372,639 and 398,906 respectively (CBS, 2003). The total fertility rate was 5.8 children born/women with a crude birth rate of 44.7 children born/women/1000 and mean age at first birth was 21.1 years in 1999 (CBS, 2000). 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 varies across the district and among women and men and is 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 (MFP, 2002).

3. Research Design and Data Analysis

3.1. Research Design

The research design was a rural-peri-urban appraisal survey. Selection of respondents was done through two complementary sampling approaches. This included i.e. purposive sampling through networking and snowball sampling which was used to identify participants of interest from people who knew the information of rich cases for the study. At the end of each interview, the researcher asked the respondent 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 geographical segment (Table 1).

Table 1. Number of Individual Interviews by Population Segment

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

3.2. Data Analysis

The data collected were edited, coded and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and the results were presented using Frequency tables, Percentages and histograms. The primary data were subjected to significant test using Chi-square test (χ^2). Chi-square test

(χ^2) is a statistical tool used to evaluate if the observed frequencies differ significantly from those which would be expected under theoretical assumptions. In this study Chi-square test (χ^2) was used to test if or not a significance difference existed between the demographic, socio-economic, cultural factors and non-marital fertility in Makueni District. The level of significance was fixed at 0.05 ($P = 0.05$).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Demographic Factors Influencing Non-Marital Fertility

The results revealed that there is a significant relationship ($\chi^2=43.13$, $df=14$, $\rho =0.000$) between age of respondent and the total number of children in Makueni District. Results in Table 2 indicate that majority (85%) of those in the age group 15-24 had between 1-2 children. In the age group 25-34, 85% had between 1-3 children while in the age group 35 years and above, 90% had between 2-5 children. This indicates that prior childbearing by unmarried mothers increases the risk of subsequent non-marital childbearing and that a substantial proportion of non-marital births in the district increase with increasing ages.

Table 2. Association of Age of Respondents and Non-Marital Fertility

Age of Respondents (Years)	Total Number of Children								Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
15-24	21	13	5	1	-	-	-	-	40
25-34	12	12	10	5	1	-	-	-	40
35 and above	2	9	9	10	3	5	1	1	40
Total	35	34	24	16	4	5	1	1	120

Seventy five percent (75%) of the sampled respondents had their sex debut between ages 10-19, with a greater percentage i.e. 38.4% living in peri-urban and 36.6% in the rural areas. The median age at sex debut as per the results is 17 years. This is in agreement with the KDHS (1998) report. The results found that age at first sexual intercourse is significantly ($\chi^2=38.20$, $df=21$, $p=0.012$) associated with the number of non-marital births in the district. This is because the decreases in age at which young women initiate sexual activity expose them to the risk of conceiving a child outside marriage.

The data on age at first child indicate that 60% of the mothers with non-marital births had begun their childbearing as teenagers i.e. between 10-19 years. About 33.3% began in their early twenties and only 6.7% began

at the age of 25 years and above (Table 3). It was also found that age at first child was statistically significant ($\chi^2=66.48$, $df=32$, $p=0.000$), with age of respondent. Age at first birth was lower for those in the age group 15-24 years (13 years) followed by 14 years for those in the age group 25-34 and 15 years for those with 35 years and over.

Table 3. Respondent's Age at First Child

Age Group at First Child (Years)	Region					
	Rural		Peri-Urban		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
10-14	1	0.8	4	3.3	5	4.2
15-19	32	26.7	35	29.2	67	55.8
20-24	22	18.3	18	15	40	33.3
> = 25	5	4.2	3	2.5	8	6.7
Total	60	50.0	60	50.0	120	100.0

4.2. Socio-Economic Factors Influencing Non-Marital Fertility

Parental behaviour and attitudes influence the behaviour and attitudes of their children (Thornton et al, 1992). To explore such influence, the respondents were asked to state their parents' level of education and occupation (Table 4).

Results from Table 4 reveal that overall most of the respondents' parents had low level of education. The results further reveal that parents' education delays the age at first child's birth and also reduces the risk of non-marital childbearing. Respondents whose parents had no education or had primary education initiated childbearing at age 13-15 and had many children in total. Among this group, 72.5% and 86.7% had their fathers and mothers with no education or with primary education respectively. Those who had parents with secondary education delayed the birth of their first child up to 17 years and 19 years for those with college education. The study also found that having a father and mother with secondary or college education reduces greatly the risk of non-marital births. All respondents whose fathers had secondary to college education had between 1-2 children. Similarly, those who had mothers with secondary education (92.4%) had between 1-2 children and those whose mothers had college education (100%) had one child. This implies that there is a relationship between parents' education level and non-marital births to their daughters. However, the association is statistically insignificant.

Low parental income and income instability during childhood significantly increases the risk of a pre-marital birth (Wu, 1996). Results in Table 4 indicate that

generally, most of the respondents' parents had low income and the few who were salaried were employed by individuals or in private companies and thus, due to their low education levels, their job security was not guaranteed. The results reveal that children whose parents have lower educational and income levels are more likely to engage in early sexual activity and non-marital births. This is because as stated by Whitbeck et al (1992), financial hardships tend to disrupt parenting practices.

the peri-urban. More than 16% had secondary education while 5% had attained college education. About 60% of those with college education lived in peri-urban areas. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics (2003), the school dropout rate for girls in Makueni District is 41% in primary and 12.72% in secondary schools. This indicates that lack of educational advancement could be a contributing factor to non-marital fertility in the district.

Table 4. Respondent's Parents Level of Education and Economic Occupation

Parents' Education Level		Region					
		Rural		Peri-urban		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Father	None	14	11.7	19	15.8	33	27.5
	Primary	26	21.7	28	23.2	54	45
	Secondary	8	6.7	7	5.8	15	12.5
	College	4	3.3	1	0.8	5	4.2
	Don't know	8	6.6	5	4.2	13	10.8
Total		60	50.0	60	50.0	120	100.0
Mother	None	25	20.8	23	19.2	48	40
	Primary	29	24.2	27	22.5	56	46.7
	Secondary	4	3.3	9	7.5	13	10.8
	College	1	0.8	0	0	1	0.8
	Don't know	1	0.8	1	0.8	2	1.7
Total		60	50.0	60	50.0	120	100.0
Parents' Occupation							
Father	Salaried	6	5.0	3	2.5	9	7.5
	Self-employed	10	8.3	10	8.3	20	16.5
	Farmer	4	3.3	6	5.0	10	8.3
	Unemployed	10	8.3	13	10.8	23	19.2
	Deceased	23	19.2	24	20	47	39.2
	Don't know	7	5.8	4	3.3	11	9.2
Total		60	50.0	60	50.0	120	100.0
Mother	Salaried	2	1.7	2	1.7	4	3.3
	Self-employed	11	9.2	9	7.5	20	16.7
	Farmer	3	2.5	4	3.3	7	5.8
	Housewife	36	30	31	25.8	67	55.8
	Deceased	8	6.7	14	11.7	22	18.3
Total		60	50.0	60	50.0	120	100.0

This study found out that majority (75.8%) of the respondents had up to primary education with a higher percentage (40%) in rural areas compared with 35.8% in

The results revealed that about 60% of the respondents were single parents with 32.5% of the group living in the rural areas and 27.5% in the peri-urban. 23.3% of these

women had already been married, then divorced and 6.7% were widowed by the time they had their non-marital births. The results revealed some association between marital status and non-marital fertility because most of the respondents were exposed to the risk of pregnancy by virtue of their marital status.

Majority of the child’s likely fathers were salaried (35.8 %), self-employed (27.5%) or farmers (4.2%). Child’s likely father’s occupation was found to be significantly ($\chi^2=51.92$, $df=35$, $p=0.033$) contributing to the rate of non-marital births in the district. Most women confessed that they were relating with married men who were either in

Table 5. Respondent Religion and Frequency of Attending Church Services

Respondents		Region					
		Rural		Peri-Urban		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Respondent’s Religion	Protestants	39	32.5	28	23.3	67	55.8
	Muslims	0	0	6	5	6	5
	Catholics	21	17.5	26	21.7	47	39.2
	Total	60	50.0	60	50.0	120	100.0
Frequency of Attending Services	More than once a week	1	0.8	5	4.2	6	5
	Once a week	28	23.3	22	18.3	50	41.7
	Monthly	2	1.7	1	0.8	3	2.5
	Occasionally	25	20.8	25	20.8	50	41.7
	Never	4	3.3	7	5.8	11	9.2
	Total	60	50.0	60	50.0	120	100.0

In terms of occupation, the results indicate that the self-employed group engaged in small business such as hair dressing, selling of green vegetables, tailoring, operating a boutique or a kiosk. From the FGD’s (Focus Group Discussions) it was reported that, in the peri-urban areas, a number of women operate small business during the day and at night they went hunting for men to subsidize their daily income.

This research found that respondents’ occupation was significantly ($\chi^2=60.648$, $df=21$, $p=0.000$) contributing to the increase in the rate of non-marital births in the district.

KDHS (2003) reported that 50% of the population in Makueni lives below the poverty line and that, women headed households were the most affected. This study examined the level of income for the respondents and found that 15.8% of the respondents were dependants with majority (94.7%) living in the rural areas. Income levels were much higher in peri-urban (34.2%) compared to the rural (11.7%). In the district, 31.7% earn between Kshs. (Kenya Shillings) 2501-5000, however, there were a significant number of respondents (14.2%) who earned above Kshs. 5000. Respondents’ monthly income was found to be significantly associated with their economic occupation, with majority (54.1%) earning below ksh.2500 per month (Figure 1).

salaried jobs or operating their businesses. From the FGD’s it was found that most of these men exploited the women sexually in exchange of financial gains or material support. The results further imply that a higher percentage of respondents’ fathers were deceased or had low income and thus, they had to support their mothers, majority of whom were housewives to raise the extended family.

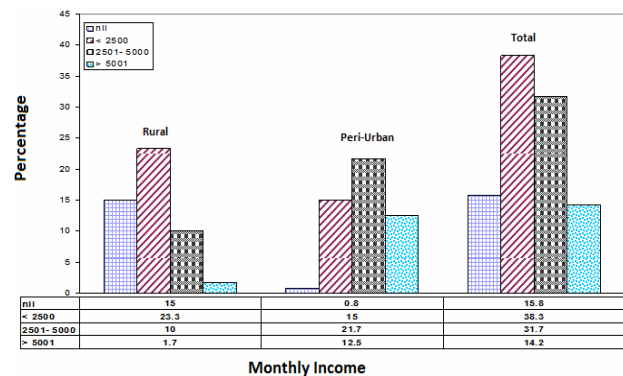


Figure 1. Respondents Monthly Income

The results from Table 5 imply that Protestants seem to be more accepting of pre-marital sex and non-marital childbearing than Catholics and Muslims and that personal values and attitudes by religious participation are

substantial among the women with non-marital births in the district.

Results in Figure 2 on the reproduction knowledge level of the respondents before 18 years indicate that majority (91.7%) of the respondents had been taught in school about the menstrual cycle, 88.3% had knowledge on how pregnancy occurs while 77.5% had information about birth control methods. 93.3% and 92.5% were informed on female and male reproductive systems respectively. A greater percentage (61.7%) had attended a lesson outside school about sex and childbearing. Health centres were the key source of this information especially when the women went for antenatal clinic during their first pregnancy. 18.3% got it from church seminars and 8.3 percent from NGOs campaigning against HIV/AIDS.

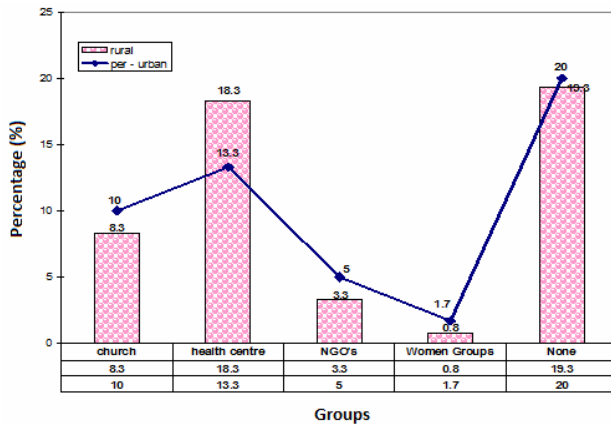


Figure 2. Providers of Course or Lecture on Sex or Childbearing Outside School (Field Data, 2009)

Though majority seems to be informed about sex and reproduction, the FGD's in both peri-urban and rural areas reported that, the content of the lessons were shallow and based on factual information about sexuality and reproduction which was aimed at preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections but not to control non-marital births perse.

The media is becoming a prime source of information regarding sexuality, as well as a source of influence regarding values and behaviour of young adults. About 95.8% of the respondents said they listened to all types of music while 3.3% listened to gospel music and 0.8% listened to secular music (Table 6). The results revealed that the frequency of listening to music is significantly ($\chi^2=132.002$, $df=14$, $p=0.000$) associated with non- marital births. Reports from the FGD's indicate that with the current competition in the music world, many songs and music video shows have high sexual content which if frequently exposed to especially young women, they are likely to influence their sexual behaviour leading to increased cases of non-marital births. Watching of

television was however, found insignificant in influencing non-marital fertility in the district because majority (53.3%) rarely watch television. It is only 16.7% who watch television daily and majority (85%) stay in the peri-urban areas.

Table 6. Frequency of Listening to Music

Type of Music	Rural	Peri-Urban	Total
Gospel	2	2	4
Secular	1	0	1
All Types	57	58	115

95.8% all types of music; 3.3% gospel music and 0.8% secular music

Generally, male friends were reported to be the leading (58.3%) in both physical and sexual abuse (Table 7). This was found common in the peri-urban (32.5%) areas. This group was followed by business customers (12.5%), parents (11.7%) and the spouse (2.5%). From the FGD's, it was found that this abuse was inform of unwanted touch, sexual insult or forced intercourse. Majority reported that unwanted sexual touch was the most common, followed by sexual insults. However, some women felt that it may not be sexual abuse as such because; normally women have to be somehow propelled to accept sexual advances. Physical abuse was common in the rural areas affecting 75% compared to 25% in the peri-urban. Those who experienced both physical and sexual abuse or were abused physically had few children which may imply a negative attitude towards men. Though majority (50.8%) of the respondents were not forced into sex at sexual debut, the age difference with their partners may have been a factor undermining decision to have sex especially when the women were young. Lamb (1986) suggests that young mothers with older partners are likely to come from poorer households. The level of poverty and inadequacy of resources might have driven the young women to be involved in pre-marital sex and thus non-marital fertility given that they come from poor background.

The results indicate that most of the respondents' first sexual intercourse experiences were with older boyfriends (73.3%) while 12.5% were with just a friend, 9.2% and 3.7 % were with either a boyfriend younger or rape case, respectively. This suggests that sexual intercourse is coerced to some extent because with greater age differences between the partners, power relations tend to be more unequal and this may mean lack of empowerment for the women to put into practice their own desires. In this research, there was a significant ($\chi^2 = 97.949$, $df = 64$, $p = 0.004$) association between relationship with partner at sex debut and age at first child. The trend towards earlier age at sexual initiation and coerced sexual intercourse means that the period

during which the average young woman is at risk of conceiving a pre-marital birth has been extended.

regardless of plans to marry and especially when they are mature because not all will get married. 16.7% felt that

Table 7. Forced into Sex at Sex Debut/ Physical or Sexual Abuse

Physical/ Sexual Abuse		Region					
		Rural		Peri-Urban		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Have You Ever Been Molested	Physically	6	5	2	1.7	8	6.7
	Sexually	31	25.8	39	32.5	70	58.3
	Both	6	5	7	5.8	13	10.8
	None	17	14.2	12	10	29	24.2
	Total	60	50.0	60	50.0	120	100.0
Forced at Sex Debut	Yes	10	8.3	9	7.5	19	15.8
	Sort of	21	17.5	19	15.8	40	33.4
	No	29	24.2	32	26.7	61	50.8
	Total	60	50.0	60	50.0	120	100.0

4.3. Cultural Factors Influencing Non-Marital Fertility

In Sub-Saharan Africa, childbearing is sanctioned and valued within the adequate ritual framework (marriage) (Mbithi, 1974). Pregnancy constitutes a prerequisite to marriage, but it was strongly condemned when it occurred outside wedlock (Bledsoe & Cohen, 1993). The African culture has some set values or norms, defining what are expected of a woman in the society. Table 8 shows women attitude on suitable age at sex debut for the young girls.

after 18 years when the girls are through with secondary education and are mature to decide on their own is a suitable time for sex debut. Others (14.2%) felt that they should start when they have plans to get married because of the surety of marriage life. Thus, there is a significant ($\chi^2 = 45.031$, $df = 28$, $p = 0.022$) relationship between the community attitude on age at sex debut and non-marital fertility rates in the district.

There have been increasing changes on women attitude towards marriage in the district. 56.7% of the sampled

Table 8. Perception of Women with Non-Marital Births on Girls' Age at Sex Debut

Age For The First Sexual Intercourse	Region					
	Rural		Peri-Urban		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
After Marriage	24	20	20	16.7	44	36.7
Before Marriage	13	10.8	4	3.3	17	14.2
In Love Regardless of Plans to Marry	15	12.5	23	19.2	38	31.7
In Dates a Man but is not in Love	0	0	1	0.8	1	0.8
After Secondary School	8	6.7	12	10	20	16.7
Total	60	50.0	60	50.0	120	100.0

The results indicate that there is an increased acceptance of pre-marital sex in the district because it is only 36.7% of the respondent who felt that young women should initiate sex only after they are married. 31.7% felt that due to changes in social norms, peer pressure, media and internet influence, girls should initiate sex when they are in love

women felt that marriage is necessary with availability of a suitable spouse; however 43.3% of the women felt that marriage is 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 you are 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.

The results on intention to marry show that 68.3% of the respondents had planned to marry their children's likely fathers before the pregnancy occurred, although this never happened. Majority of them felt that, most men like exploiting women sexually and once they conceive they deny their responsibility and abandon them. These results are in agreement with Akerlof et al (1996) who argued that an important cause of rising rates of non-marital childbearing is a decline in the willingness of men to marry women who became pregnant with their children as an unintended result of non-marital sexual activity.

Our research findings reveal that most pregnancy cases (67.5%) were said to be accidental or unintended, with 35% of such cases reported in rural areas and 32.5% in the peri-urban. It was only 32.5% who had planned for their pregnancy and majority of them were those who perceived themselves to be in more committed relationships or who were married by the time of the pregnancy as reported by the FGD's.

The findings also reveal that 62.5% of the interviewed 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. Among this group are those who were relating with just a friend or with boyfriends of the same age. 7.5% were married by the time of conception and 3.3% conceived after they were raped.

Among unmarried people who are sexually active, non-marital births can be prevented by effective and consistent use of contraceptive methods. In this study, it was found that 80% of the sampled proportions were contraceptive users, primarily relying on Injectibles (32.5%), condoms (24.2%), pills (13.3%), Norplant (6.7%), Tubal ligation (2.5%) and the coil (0.8%). The results reveal that Injectibles and condoms were the commonly used contraceptives. The use of Norplant was higher in peri-urban (75%) than in the rural areas (25%). This suggests high sexuality in the peri-urban areas. Pills were used more in the rural areas (62.5%) than in the peri-urban (37.5%). The data indicates that only a few (20%) were not using contraceptives. This group contributes disproportionately to incidences of unintended pregnancy in the district.

The respondents were asked how frequently they used the stated contraceptives. Our research findings reveal that 20% in the peri-urban compared to 19.2% in the rural areas

used the methods oftenly, 16.7% used at times, 11.7% rarely use a method of contraception. This implies that an estimated 60% of the respondent do not use contraceptives consistently or correctly or never use. This could be reflecting the sporadic and unpredictable nature of unmarried sex and greater difficult unmarried women have in planning to use protection. This behaviour in a way has contributed to increase in non-marital births in the district.

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 and most of these 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 indicates that 78.3% of the sampled respondents felt that contraceptive use has contributed to high level of non-marital births in Makueni District. Majority felt that access to family planning services is constrained by the cost of contraceptives, under estimation of likelihood of pregnancy, low level of education, lack of knowledge on how to use some of the contraceptives especially the pills and the fear of the side effects. However, some reported that some men 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 has greatly contributed to the increase of non-marital births in the district as reported by the FGD's.

5. Conclusion

The increase in the rate of non-marital childbearing and female headed families in Makueni District as depicted in this study reflects changes in the sexual and marital behaviour of women of childbearing age in Kenya. The results reveal that non-marital childbearing arises from broad demographic, socio-economic and cultural trends which if not slowed or reversed to some extent by policy intervention may be extremely difficult to counteract in the future. The programmes and policies to reduce non-marital fertility must reflect the causes or factors associated with it and especially to the mothers who do not desire to have children. The policies and programs should aim at delaying age at sex debut, enhance women to acquire a career before having a child or children, increase the consistent and competent use of effective contraceptives once sexually active and in the event of a pregnancy to enable the women who intent to have a child to be ready emotionally and economically.

Prevention efforts should begin with the adolescents before they become sexually active and provide them with the desired skills to abstain from early sexual activity. Unmarried mothers, on the other hand, should be taught

how to prevent a second unwanted pregnancy and the divorced/separated or widowed women should be informed on consistent and proper use of contraceptives to avoid a non-marital birth, if not wanted. For effective prevention, there is also a need for the government to identify the implication of cultural and geographical differences for policy design and implementation.

So far, the Kenya government has initiated a way to prevent the increase of fertility through family planning programmes. Though initiative has been taken to reduce adolescent pregnancy and childbearing through the teaching of life skills in schools, however, except for the family planning services, little attention has been paid to prevention efforts for women over the age 20 years despite the fact that they account for 70% of non-marital births in Kenya. Thus there is a need of combined policy or programmes to ameliorate the negative consequences associated with childbearing out side marriage and especially to the mothers who do not desire to have children; because the behaviour of these group (15-49 years) is the most difficult to change.

From these findings, it is recommended that the government should increase entrepreneurial education and labour market opportunities for the disadvantaged unmarried mothers, promote responsive child bearing behaviour, participation of child biological father to their children needs, provide comprehensive sexual and reproductive information and increase public awareness on the consequences of non-marital pregnancies.

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