Factors Affecting Kenyan Adolescents' Childbearing Desires

Kenya has been among the African countries mentioned frequently as experiencing rapid demographic transition (Cohen, 1998; Garenne & Joseph, 2002). A sharp decline on the fertility rate had been observed from the late 70's to mid 90's. A surprising slight increase in the fertility rate in the last 2003 Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS) was observed, with a number of suggested factors as contributing to the stalled falling rate (Westoff & Cross, 2006). One of these factors that was of interest to our study was the stall in contraceptive use among younger women with low levels of education.

With 45% of the Kenyan population being under 15 years of age and high adult mortality rate due HIV/AIDS in some parts of the country, it is important to explore the fertility expectations for older adolescents and emerging adults in order to plan for their emerging needs (Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) et al., 2004; Kenya Ministry of Health (MOH) & National AIDS/STD Control Programme (NASCOP), 2003). With a larger proportion of the Kenyan population still young, this study seeks to investigate factors that potentially influence the desire to have more children.

Method

This study examined adolescent and emerging adults between the ages of 15 and 24 found in the 2003 KDHS data. The total number of records for this subset was 3547. We investigated factors that may influence wanting a child or an additional one among the 82.2% of the adolescent and emerging adults who had indicated that they wanted to do so. We also wanted know if there was any difference between all those that wanted to have a child and those that were married. Among the married adolescents, 28.5% wanted to have a child. We also compared

the desire for children among the total population and those who reported that they had had sex (50% of the sample).

We expected factors influencing the decisions for wanting more children to be different for married adolescents compared to "all" adolescents. Factors we looked at were: Age of the respondent, number of children, if any children have died, if the highest education level was secondary school or higher, age at first sex, wantedness of the last child, ever had a terminated pregnancy, gender and age of the head of the household, urban or rural residency, experience any violence or abuse, if husband approves contraceptives or more children, and if they were HIV positive (Cohen, 1998; Dudgeon & Inhorn, 2004; Erulkar et al., 2004; Garenne & Joseph, 2002; Gyimah & Fernando, 2002; Mancini & Huebner, 2004; Shell-Duncan & Wimmer, 1999; Singh et al., 2000; Voeten et al., 2004; Westoff & Cross, 2006).

Results

Respondents that were 20 to 24 years old were positively associated with wanting another child compared to those 15 to 19 years of age. This variable was only significant for respondents that were married or already had sex. We found that HIV status was not significantly associated with wanting another child in any of the analyses. Contraceptive use was highly significant for all models but only positively associated with wanting another child for married respondents. Secondary education was only significant for married respondents who did not want another child. Urban residents wanted to have another child only if they were married or already had sex. Having a child that had died was positively associated with wanting another. Wealthier married women wanted fewer children compared to other women in the sample. Women that were head of the household wanted fewer children and were significant for all the analysis.

Conclusion

More work needs to be made on this emerging population since it will influence Kenya for a long time. HIV/AIDS had been suggested as a factor in the decision want another child but for this population the association was not significant.

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Table 2: Logistic Regression Results Comparing All Kenya Adolescent That Want another Child with Those That Are Married or Ever Had Sex and Want Another Child. (N=3530)

Model	*1*		*2*		*3*	
Dependent	*All that Want to have Another Child*		*Want to have Another Child & Married*		*Want to have Another Child & Ever had Sex*	
Parameter	*B*	*Odds Ratio*	*B*	*Odds Ratio*	*B*	*Odds Ratio*
Respondent 20 year and Over	0.1762	0.838	0.4766**	0.621	1.0270***	0.358
Have at least one child	-1.2592***	3.523	0.5300**	0.589	-0.1571	1.170
Have at least 2 children	-0.9974***	2.711	-0.5411**	1.718	-1.7477***	5.741
Any Child that have Died	0.8160***	0.442	0.8133***	0.443	1.1041***	0.332
Highest Education level is Secondary or Higher	0.1468	0.863	-0.3788**	1.461	0.1478	0.863
Wanted the last child	0.7008***	0.496	1.2921***	0.275	0.9548***	0.385
Ever had a terminated pregnancy	0.2125	0.809	0.8549**	0.425	0.3119	0.732
Age 1st sex less 15 yrs	0.7177***	0.488	1.0554***	0.348	3.7328***	0.024
Age 1st sex more then 15 - less 19 yrs	0.8061***	0.447	1.2235***	0.294	3.5966***	0.027
Type of place of residence	0.1810	0.834	-0.3525*	1.423	-0.2596*	1.296
Any Violence or Abuse	-0.0743	1.077	0.0487	0.952	-0.1712	1.187
Adolescent headed household dummy	0.4772**	0.621	1.2899***	0.275	0.6434***	0.526
Husbands approves FP	-0.3021*	1.353	1.6457***	0.193	0.0411	0.960
Husbands Wants Fewer Children then partner	0.5326*	0.587	1.0827***	0.339	0.6199*	0.538
Husbands Wants more Children then partner	0.0401	0.961	1.2651***	0.282	0.1346	0.874
Wealth index	0.1085**	0.897	-0.2457***	1.279	-0.0722	1.075
Children not at Home	-0.2500	1.284	-0.4861*	1.626	-0.3856	1.470
Ever Used any FP Method	-0.9245***	2.521	0.6535***	0.520	-0.4169**	1.517
Female Head of the Household	-0.3867**	1.472	-1.3108***	3.709	-0.3393**	1.404
Intercept	1.1852**		-1.5545***		-1.6700***	
Model statistic						
χ^2	13.309		140.597***		136.829***	
-2 log likelihood	3004.291		2402.264		2800.300	
R^2	0.123		0.582		0.595	

$p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$