

GENDER RELATIONSHIP AND UNMET NEED FOR FAMILY PLANNING AMONG MARRIED WOMEN IN CAMEROON

by

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ABSTRACT

In the Cameroonian society, where the decision's power on the family is especially the man's duty, socio-cultural factors such as gender relationship are problems encountered during the promotion of family planning. This paper aims to examine the influence of gender relationship on the unmet need for family planning. Our study hypothesis is that decision-making process, spousal discussion and husband's opinion concerning family planning influence the risk for a woman to have an unmet need for family planning services. We used data from the DHS-MICS 2011, a national survey with 9805 married women aged between 15-49 years. Multivariate logistic regression was used to highlight the effect of the gender relationship on the unmet need for family planning. The relationship remained significant even when taking into account the influence of other factors such as woman's education and his occupation. Consequently, male involvement in family planning program should be encouraged in Cameroon.

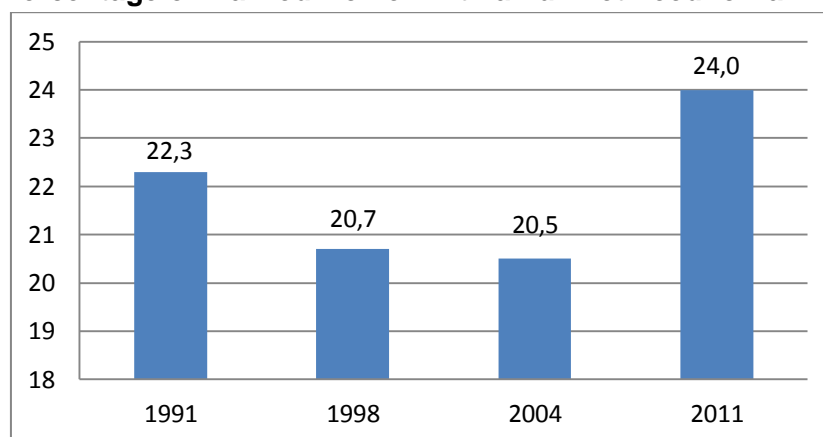
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INTRODUCTION

According to the Cameroon Demographic and Health Survey 2011, the total fertility rate has not significantly changed since 2004 (5.1 children per woman in 2004 and 5.2 in 2011). Indeed, about 24% of women in union want to prevent unintended pregnancies, to delay or stop having more children but are not using any method of contraception. In developing countries, an estimated 222 million women would like to delay or stop childbearing but are not using any method of contraception. However, the advantages of family planning services are well known and remain actuality. Family planning averts maternal and child morbidity and mortality, if couples space their pregnancies at least two years apart¹. It also protects women from repeated unintended pregnancy and repeat abortion. Thus, promoting family planning services represents a big challenge for many countries in the developing world.

Despite the Cameroonian government efforts through the Ministry of Public Health and the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Family, the percentage of married women who have an unmet need for family planning services has not changed significantly since 1991. The graph below shows the evolution of the unmet need for family planning among married women during the last twenty years.

Graph 1: Percentage of married women with an unmet need for family planning



Source: NSI Report 1991, 1998, 2004, 2011

Many approaches^{2,3} have been developed in order to understand reasons for non-adoption of contraception notably political, individual, socio-cultural and economic approach. Indeed, lack of political engagement, difficulty of the access to the family planning services and contraceptives methods, lack of knowledge about the contraception, socio-cultural weights, poverty etc. are the factors which are regularly highlight in the explanation of the unmet need for family planning among women in union. However, Recent studied revealed that among the approaches which can explain the unmet need for family planning services, the gender approach are not well develop in an African context.

¹ Report of a Technical Consultation on Birth Spacing, Geneva, Switzerland, 13-15 June 2005. Geneva, World Health Organization, 2007.

² NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL (1993), *"Factors affecting contraceptive use in Sub-Saharan Africa"*, Washington DC, National Academy Press, 252 p.

³ BONGAARTS, J. et BRUCE, J. (1995), *"The causes of unmet need for contraception or the social content of service "*, in *studies in Family Planning*, vol. 26, n°2, pp 57-75

Thus, the purpose of this communication is to highlight the effect of the gender relationship on the unmet need for family planning among Cameroonian women in union in order to contribute to improve the male involvement in family planning program.

Specifically we aim to:

- Examine the influence of gender relationship on unmet need for family planning;
- Identify another socio-demographic factors of unmet need for family planning

Our study hypothesis is that decision-making process, spousal discussion and husband's opinion concerning family planning influence the risk for a woman to have an unmet need for family planning services.

The interest of this study is based on the fact that we do not use only woman's characteristics to verify our hypothesis. We take also into account husband's characteristics to test the relationship between gender and unmet need for family planning among women in union in Cameroon.

DATA AND METHODS

Data

We used data from the Demographic and Health Survey Cameroon 2011, where 9805 women are in union. This survey was conducted by the National Statistics Institute (NSI) of Cameroon. Only women or girls in union aged between 15 and 49 years are concerning by this study. We considered all women who are in informal or formal union as married women because both of them have the same risk concerning family planning services.

Methods

We used Stata/SE 11 to analyze the data. To explore the background characteristics of the respondents some univariate techniques such as frequency distribution has used. Besides this, some bivariate techniques such as chi square statistic examined association between independent and dependent variables. Variables which were found significant in bivariate analysis have been used for establishing the cause and effect relationship in the multivariate model.

In the explanatory analysis, multivariate logistic regression was used to highlight the effect of gender relationship on unmet need for family planning services in Cameroon. We were interested in two regression's models. Firstly, binary logistic regression was applied to determine only gender relationship effects on unmet need for family planning services among Cameroonian's women in union without including other variables (model 1). And secondly, we included other socio-demographic and economic factors which were found significant in bivariate analysis (model 2).

Independent variables

In order to verify study hypothesis, three independent variables concerning gender relationship are introduced in the multivariate models: decision-making process, spousal discussion and husband's opinion concerning family planning.

Other socio-demographic and economic variables

Age gap between spouses, woman's education, husband's education, woman's media exposure, woman's knowledge of contraceptive, woman's number of living children, woman's number of desired children, residence's area.

Dependant variable

Unmet need for family planning:

This variable gives an account of gap between the woman's desire to prevent unintended pregnancies, to delay or stop having more children and the real woman's use of a contraceptive. If that gap exists, we will consider that that woman has an unmet need for family planning services otherwise she does not have it.

EXPECTED FINDINGS

At the end of this study, we are expecting to confirm our main hypothesis. Indeed we are hoping that in Cameroon, gender relationship has a direct and/or an indirect effect on unmet need for family planning among married women. That is what the first results shown in the exploratory analysis. Then, absence of women during decision-making process, no discussion family planning in the couple and wrong husband's opinion concerning family planning increase the risk for a woman to have an unmet need for family planning services.

So, if this result is confirmed, family planning program should emphasis on gender relationship through male involvement in communication with their spouse.

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