

The PAA annual meeting

Call for Papers

**Theme: Gender relations and family planning among couples in Cameroon:
the case of the discussion on family planning among couples**

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Abstract: Discussions have been conducted in the context of the use of family planning among married women but they were not followed (or very little) through practical applications within couples. The results of the EDS in 2011 in Cameroon revealed that nearly 53% of married women have no discussion of family planning with their spouses. Yet this practice would be more effective if this discussion was most often and would have the direct impact of fertility control. The objective of this paper is to fill this gap by studying the influence of gender relations on the discussion of couples on family planning for better policy guidance on family planning

Keywords: couples, family planning

Introduction

With a contraceptive prevalence of 23% among married women, Cameroon is still lagging behind in terms of contraceptive use among married women. This is not surprising since the results of the latest Demographic and Health Survey showed that 53% of married women never discuss family planning with their spouses. Yet this practice would be more effective if this discussion was most often and would have the direct impact of fertility control. Given this, it is important to know the explanatory of such low exchange factors on family planning in couples to identify those on which we must act to curb this low level of discussion. The present study aims to contribute to improved knowledge of the factors explaining the non-response of couples to family planning. Given that the couple operates inequalities between spouses and that most decisions are made by man, it would be wise to analyze the influence of gender relations on the discussion of family planning the couple. It is therefore important to go beyond assigning the use of family planning only to women and to include the man through gender relations. This communication seeks more specifically to: examine the influence of gender relations on the discussion of family planning; Highlight the mechanisms of action; Identify among the explanatory variables, those that strongly influence the discussion of planning among couples. This communication focuses on three points, namely: a literature review, the methodology and the main results. It concludes by discussing the results and implications thereof for policymakers family planning policy in Cameroon.

I. Literature Review

• *Feminist Approaches*

From the 1970s, research has highlighted the links between fertility and social status of women. It draws attention to gender relations and rejects the idea of an equal distribution of productive activities, and reproductive materials purchased within families. According to this theory, the decline in fertility results from a transformation in gender relations that is to say a change in the sexual division of labor in both productive activities that reproductive

• *Gender Approach*

The gender approach is to reconstruct the women's studies by providing a more comprehensive and symbolic inking. The gender approach and fertility can take into account the relationship between spouses, decision-making, access to economic resources, the degree of empowerment of women

• *Institutional Approach*

This approach is mainly focused on government policies, laws and providing health care and health services. Under this approach, the main reasons for the underutilization of health services would be linked to insufficient supply of health services both quantitative and qualitative point of view; to geographical accessibility (distance services) and different costs of care. Loco (1992) shows that the husband's permission is required to access to contraception in the South. It shows that there is a common gap between rhetoric and legislation. In addition, the legalization of access to contraception or a government statement of support does not necessarily mean that the population of a country has access to contraception.

- ***The socio-cultural approach***

The socio-cultural approach emphasizes the individual relationships and systems of thought (ideology, values, patterns) and ways to act (behavior) in the society. There is a relationship between the reproductive behavior of the individual and instruction. Thus, couples can through their educational information and discussion about the benefits of birth control and discuss the use of modern contraceptive methods (Bulatao, 1983). If the instruction positively influences the use of family planning, it is the same for discussion in the couple.

Explanatory factors for the analysis of gender relations

- ***The difference in ages between spouses***

According Hertrich (2001), the difference of ages between spouses is probably an important factor in gender relations in the couple. The reduction of the age difference between spouses would lead to a change in gender relations that will generate more equal relationships between couples.

- ***The instruction of the couple***

Sala-Diakanda and Kassegné (2001) reported that the couple, the man wants a higher number of his wife when they are uneducated, especially when the woman is better educated children. Tchitou and Vignikin (2008) went further by saying that improving education is a couple of factors that weaken the adverse cultural prejudice, reshaping the dialogue between spouses about the reproductive life and forced to adapt to view innovation.

- ***Participation of women in decision-making within the couple***

Andro (2001) dwells on the process of decision making regarding reproduction. He mentioned that to define decision making reproductive should take into account the draft fertility of each individual (desire for additional children, the number of children desired) and the terms of pooling of these projects reach a common realization.

II. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Assumptions

The general assumption underlying this study is as follows: The discussion on family planning within marriage is influenced by gender relations which are determined in turn by the sociocultural context and individual characteristics. This hypothesis comes from the following specific assumptions:

H1: The level of education of the couple provides some equality in gender relations, facilitates communication between spouses, adoption of new behaviors and provides a degree of autonomy to the woman. Thus, we hypothesize that when both spouses have a level of secondary education and the discussion on planning is effective

H2: Women do not participate in decisions about their health, visits and cleaning are likely not to have discussion on FP with their spouses than those who participate.

H3: Couples who have a small age gap are more likely to discuss family planning than those where the age difference is important.

3.2. Data source

This article uses data from the Demographic and Health Survey conducted in Cameroon in 2011 Analyses focused on a representative sample 9123 women in unions in Cameroon.

3.3. Methods of Analysis

The analytical methods used in the study are those of the descriptive and explanatory analysis. In a first step, it uses the descriptive analysis bi varied to study levels of discussion about family planning, but also to evaluate using the chi-square statistic the links between some family characteristics and the number. Then the explanatory analysis will be done through a binary logistic regression with the aim of identifying determinants that penny behind this discussion within the Cameroonian households. Interpretation of the results will focus on the risks faced by couples to desire discuss family planning. The significance level used is 5%.

III. RESULTS

The results of the different analyzes have shown that gender relations within the couple have a direct and indirect influence on the discussion of family planning. The most important factors are the level of education of the couple, the economic power of the couple, the age gap between spouses, the decision concerning the health of the woman to a family member. Following the results, the study proposes a number of recommendations including: strengthening actions to improve women's education and economic power; refocusing programs of reproductive health of men and women; reducing inequalities in gender relations in the society especially in the couple through awareness and advocacy.