

**Theme: Fertility Transitions**

**Sub theme:** 1.3. Fertility desires: measurement, determinants and consequences

## **COMMUNICATION ABOUT FAMILY PLANNING ON DESIRED FERTILITY, THE CASE OF RWANDA**

**By**

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### **Extended Abstract**

Spousal communication is considered an important factor for effective family planning programmes and desired fertility. Despite that recognition, spousal communication remains a challenge to many couples in developing countries. This observation is attributed to a variety of factors ranging from cultural to economic in nature. The present paper used the 2000 Rwanda Demographic and Health Survey (RDHS) to assess spousal communication, about family planning on desired fertility. Analysis of various demographic and social factors was done on married couples of 15 to 49 years. Results indicated that communication about family planning is a significant covariate of the desire to have no more children. While these results suggest that there is a need to encourage spousal communication, the challenge is significant primarily because discussing sexual and reproductive health issues remains a taboo in most African societies.

### ***Dependent Variable***

The dependent variable, a measure of desired fertility, was taken directly from a survey question asking fecund women and their husbands whether the respondent would like to have a child (or another child) or would prefer not to have any more children. The variable has six categories of responses, namely, wants more within two years, wants more after two years, and wants unsure timing, undecided, wants no more, declared infecund. Because our concern was the demand for additional children, we measured the dependent variable as dichotomous, assigning a value of zero for respondents who do not want any more children and a value of one for all other responses. The respondents who replied “undecided” were included among “all others”, under the assumption that they did not have a clear wish to stop childbearing and could also not be counted as effectively wanting more children. Communication was interpreted in the communication about family planning variable, by including whether or not the couple had discussed the number of children they would like to have. If either family planning or desired family size had been discussed, the communication variable took the value of one.

### ***Independent Variables***

In order to assess the socio-economic and demographic factors; current age, type of residence and formal education of wives and husbands in relation to the desire for additional children were analysed. A number of control variables were used also in the regression; current age, husband's

and wives' formal education, type of residence, employment, attitudes toward family planning and discussing family planning. Two separate logistic regression models of the effect of selected predictor variables for wives and husbands are presented. The first model includes the control variables only, age, type of residence, employment and formal education. The second model includes variables that serve as proxies for attitudes toward the family planning programme, namely approval of family planning and discussion with their spouses about family planning.

## **Results**

Spousal communication, attitudes towards family planning and desired fertility were strongly correlated in this study. Spousal communication is therefore clearly associated with discussions on desired fertility. The results suggest the vital role played by spousal communication on desired fertility. Spousal communication leads to advantages of child spacing and birth limitation which translates into realizing desired fertility. The study found that the fertility desire of wives and husbands are shaped by the partners' desire.