

- 3.1 Emerging patterns and determinants of contraceptive use
3.3 Men's roles in Family Planning

Men in Malawi: Romantic relationships and Condom use in Lilongwe

Susan Godlonton, University of Michigan

Rebecca Thornton, University of Michigan*

Ryoko Sato, University of Michigan

Abstract:

This study examines romantic relationships and sexual behavior among 1700 uncircumcised males between the ages of 18 and 30 living in urban Malawi. Although on average, the men report being sexually active with an average of 1.9 partners in the past 12 months, a high percentage (23 percent) report no longer seeing the woman who they viewed as their most long-term sexual partner. There is also considerably high prevalence of suspected cheating of sexual permanent partners – almost 70 percent of the men in the sample suspected their partner of having had at least one other partner simultaneously. While increased partnership duration decreased the likelihood of condom use (potentially related to fertility intentions), condom use was not correlated to suspicions of partnership concurrency. Men's partnerships – both long-lasting, and short term – need to be better understood; finding new ways of promoting condom use among long-lasting partnerships is needed particularly in the context in which partners suspect that their partner has other concurrent sexual relationships.

*Corresponding author: Department of Economics, University of Michigan, 213 Lorch Hall, 611 Tappan St. Ann Arbor MI, 48109-1220, USA; rebeccal@umich.edu;

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Extended Abstract

Introduction

Family programs throughout the world often focus on women. This is mainly due to the fact that not only do women bear the physical burdens of pregnancy, but also that many contraceptives are available for women (ie. oral contraception, Norplant). However, increasingly there is a call for men to be more active in reproductive health decisions and in family planning programming. Especially in developing countries, men often have more bargaining power within a relationship and thus it is argued that it is important to consider men's involvement. In this paper, we focus on men's sexual behavior, romantic relationships and contraception use.

Data

This paper reports on sexual behavior, attitudes and preferences of 1700 men in urban Malawi. The data are from a larger project – Circumcision, Information and HIV Prevention Project (CIHP) – which sampled uncircumcised men in Malawi. The data was collected in the capital city of Malawi, Lilongwe in 2010. Men were sampled from a random set of 29 enumeration areas as defined by the Malawian National Statistics Office (NSO). Each enumeration area was subdivided into blocks. Blocks were demarcated using roads and rivers as natural dividing lines. There are a total of 114 blocks across the 29 enumeration areas and were the sampling unit for the purposes of this study. Two blocks per enumeration area were selected. A full census was conducted in each block selected into the study. At each household, all eligible men (eligibility was defined as any man aged 18 to 30 and a permanent resident in the household) were identified. In households in which more than one eligible man resided, one man was randomly selected to participate in the study. If the man was selected, he then was administered informed consent and went through a screener interview to determine his circumcision status. Only uncircumcised men continued with the interview. In all, there are 1,706 uncircumcised men in the survey data.

Methods and survey instrument

Men were asked demographic and socioeconomic status questions as well as question about their general sexual behavior. They were asked to identify their primary sexual partner (not specifying whether this woman was their wife or not). In particular, Men were asked the following: *“If you have had more than one sexual partner in the last year, please now think about the one with whom you share the most time with and who you think has the most chance for a lasting relationship. This could be a wife, girlfriend or any other sexual partner. Let's say her name is Hope. Now, I am going to ask you some general questions about Hope, but remember that I am not going to ask you for her real name nor her relation to you.”* Men were then asked several questions about this partnership. Lastly, men were asked specific questions about their behaviors related to contraceptive use as well as a novel question about their suspicions regarding this partners' other sexual partnerships. Respondents were asked the following: *“Many people in Malawi have multiple sexual relationships, even if they are in a committed*

relationship. Which of the following statements do you think best characterizes this partner during the time that she has been in a committed relationship with you: I know she has had another partner and I have proof, I think she has had multiple other partners but I have no proof, I think she has had multiple other partners and I have proof, I think she has had one other partner and I have heard rumors supporting this, No possibility she has had another partner, and I can confirm that, I don't think she has had another partner but I can't prove it, or I think she has had one other partner but I can't prove it.”

Results

The total sample of uncircumcised respondents is 1,706 men. Table 1 presents the summary statistics for all men in the sample. The sample is on average 27 years old and relatively well educated for Malawi with 11 years of completed schooling. The majority of the men are literate in Chichewa (97 percent), the national language in Malawi and in English (88 percent). Given that the sample is conditioned on circumcision status, the sample is not representative of all men in Malawi, nor in Lilongwe. The sample is however ethnically diverse - 33 percent are Chewas, 14 percent Lomwe, 24 percent Ngoni, and 13 percent Tumbuka. Notably, there are few Yao's in the sample as the vast majority gets circumcised at young ages as part of traditional initiation rites of passage. Similarly, the sample is predominantly Christians, as Muslims tend to be circumcised. About half the sample has electricity in their household and they have most of assets (on average 6 items out of 8). Almost 70 percent think their financial situation is the same as or better than others.

Table 1: Summary Statistics: Demographic

<u>Background:</u>	N	Mean	SD
Age	1667	26.696	5.832
Years of Education	1702	11.041	2.480
Literacy in Chichewa	1702	0.971	0.167
Literacy in English	1702	0.881	0.324
<u>Ethnicity</u>			
Chewa	1706	0.334	0.472
Lomwe	1706	0.140	0.347
Ngoni	1706	0.243	0.429
Tumbuka	1706	0.128	0.335
Yao	1706	0.038	0.191
Other	1706	0.115	0.319
<u>Religion</u>			
Christian	1706	0.976	0.153
Muslim	1706	0.009	0.096
Other	1706	0.015	0.120
<u>Household characteristics:</u>			
Electricity	1666	0.580	0.494
Number of Assets	1701	5.922	4.671
<u>Subjective Financial Situation</u>			
Much better than most	1701	0.055	0.229
Slightly better than most	1701	0.458	0.498
About the same as most	1701	0.153	0.361
Slightly worse than most	1701	0.286	0.452
Much worse than most	1701	0.033	0.178

Notes: Subjective Financial Situation: 0.Much worse than most, 1.Slightly worse than most, 2.About the same as most, 3.Slightly better than most, 4.Much better than most. Number of Assets: sum of the number of 8 items owned (sofa, TV, bicycle, car, computer, stereo, hotplate/stove and refrigerator)

In terms of general sexual behavior, the majority of the respondents report that they have had sex, and the average age at sexual debut is 18 years of age (Table 2, Panel A). Almost half have fathered children with an average of 2 children. The men report on average 1.6 sexual partners in the past 12 months and 4 times having sex in the past month.

Table 2: Summary Statistics: Partner and Sexual Behavior

Panel A: General sexual behavior (and fertility)			
	N	Mean	Std. Dev
Never had sex	1684	0.123	0.328
Age at sexual debut	1477	18.194	3.762
Fathered any children	1706	0.447	0.497
Number of children	1665	0.828	1.171
Number of children (conditional on having any)	717	1.922	1.041
Number of sex partners in the past 12 months	1681	1.649	3.632
Number of sex partners in the past month	1677	0.657	0.888
Number of sex encounters in the past month	1663	4.233	7.309

We next turn to the results pertaining to the self-identified respondent’s primary sexual partner (recall that this partner is not necessarily his wife) in Table 2, Panel B. On average, respondents met their partner approximately 5.8 years earlier. There is an average difference of 4.5 years of age between the respondent and his primary partner, although only approximately a half a year difference in schooling. The majority first met their partner at school (36 percent) or in their neighborhood (25 percent), with fewer meeting their partner at work (13 percent) through a friend (9 percent) or at a religious place of worship (6 percent). Some of the men see their partner every day (38 percent), presumably because this is his wife (or in the case of polygamists – one of his wives). Others however see their partner much less frequently ranging from several times a week to less than once a year. Surprisingly, many of these men report that they have “stopped meeting” with their partner (22.7 percent) and have not had sex with her in the past year. These men still report this woman as their primary partner who they believe they have the most chance of having a lasting relationship. Recall that the majority of men remain sexual active, despite the fact that they do not consider their current sexual partner(s) as their “primary” partner(s). This has important implications for understanding how men think about sexual partnerships. When asked what they believe about their partner in terms of sexual faithfulness, we find that 70 percent suspects multiple (or one other) partner(s). Most of these men (41.6 percent) report that they suspect this, but that they do not have any proof. A large fraction of the men that are suspicious believe that their primary partner has had multiple other partners (26.2 percent of all men; 43.1 percent of those men that do suspect cheating by their primary partner).

Men were asked about what forms of contraception they ever used with their primary partner. The majority reported condoms (64 percent), followed by injections (23.8 percent) and withdrawal method (17.5

percent). Only 11.6 percent of the sample reported that their partner had ever used an oral contraceptive. Almost 45 percent report that they used a condom the last time they had sex with their primary partner.

Table 2: Summary Statistics: Partner and Sexual Behavior

Panel B: Summary Statistics of self-identified primary sexual partner	N	Mean	Std. Dev
Years since met with current partner	1479	5.769	4.385
Difference in Age between Partner	1439	4.450	4.129
Years of Education between Partner	1478	0.501	2.438
<i>Place where first met partner:</i>			
School (Primary, Secondary, or College)	1478	0.360	0.480
Church/Mosque	1478	0.058	0.233
At Work	1478	0.131	0.337
Neighborhood	1478	0.246	0.431
Bar/Dance Place	1478	0.009	0.093
Met through mutual friend or family	1478	0.089	0.284
Other	1478	0.104	0.305
<i>How often see partner:</i>			
Every day	1483	0.380	0.485
Several Times a week	1483	0.096	0.294
Once a week	1483	0.069	0.254
Several times a month	1483	0.057	0.231
Once a month	1483	0.058	0.234
Several times a year	1483	0.078	0.268
Less than once a year	1483	0.033	0.179
Stopped meeting with her	1483	0.227	0.419
<i>When was the Last Time You Had Sex with Her:</i>			
Last week	1460	0.312	0.464
Last 2 weeks	1460	0.048	0.214
Last 3 month	1460	0.117	0.322
Last 6 months	1460	0.080	0.272
Last year	1460	0.177	0.382
More than 1 year ago	1460	0.258	0.438
<i>What You Think About Your Partner:</i>			
Suspects multiple additional partners	1482	0.131	0.337
Suspects one additional partner	1482	0.563	0.496
Suspects no other partners	1482	0.304	0.460
I know she has had another partner and I have proof	1482	0.093	0.291
I think she has had multiple other partners but I have no proof	1482	0.092	0.289
I think she has had multiple other partners and I have proof	1482	0.039	0.194
I think she has had one other partner and I have heard rumors supporting this	1482	0.054	0.226
No possibility she has had another partner, and I can confirm that	1482	0.074	0.261
I don't think she has had another partner but I can't prove it	1482	0.230	0.421
I think she has had one other partner but I can't prove it	1482	0.416	0.493
<i>Have You Ever Used this Contraceptive:</i>			
Pill	1476	0.116	0.320
Injections	1476	0.238	0.426
Norplant	1476	0.029	0.168
Male Sterilization	1476	0.003	0.052
Female Sterilization	1476	0.013	0.113
Withdrawal	1476	0.175	0.380
Condom	1476	0.641	0.480
IUD	1476	0.007	0.082
Other	1476	0.027	0.162
Used Condom the Last Time You Had Sex	1464	0.449	0.498

Notes: The sample is 1707 uncircumcised males who ever had sex (8.1%). Difference in years of education between partner: (Male's highest education level completed)-(Partner's highest education level completed). Difference in age between Partners=(Male's age)-(Female's age)

If we examine the determinants of condom use (at last sex), we find several interesting patterns (Table 3). In particular, we run OLS regressions on the dependent variable of ‘using a condom at last sex with primary partner’ among those who are sexually active with their self-identified primary partner. We can see that age and partner’s age are negatively correlated with condom use. Older couples tend to be using condoms less. This might be attributable to the fact that these are married couples, or couples that desire children. Results show that while one’s own education has no impact, partner’s education level is positively associated with condom use. Recall, from Table 2 Panel B, that the difference in years of completed schooling between partners is not large (about half a year) and as such these two variables are highly correlated.

Respondents that see their partner daily and those that are more frequently sexually active with their partners use condoms significantly less. Importantly, suspecting a partner of cheating has no impact on condom use. This is important for the prevention of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS. If a man does not alter his condom use based on his perceived levels of risk, then he is unlikely to be able to adjust condom use within a single relationship.

Table 3: Determinants of Condom Use

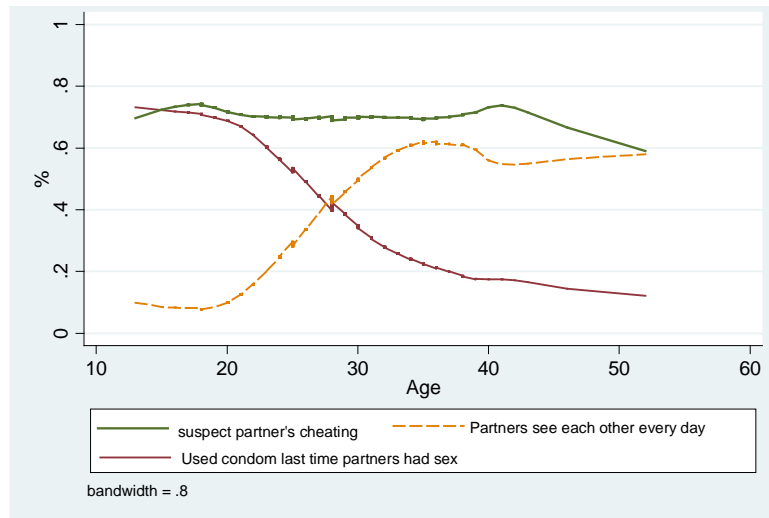
Used condom last time had sex with primary sex partner	(1)	(2)
Age	-0.008*** [0.002]	-0.008*** [0.002]
Education	0.01 [0.006]	0.01 [0.006]
Partner's age	-0.008** [0.003]	-0.008** [0.003]
Partner's education	0.016*** [0.006]	0.016*** [0.006]
Partners see each other every day	-0.291*** [0.031]	-0.291*** [0.031]
How many times partners had sex in the past months	-0.007*** [0.002]	-0.007*** [0.002]
Suspect Partner's cheating		-0.01 [0.026]
Constant	0.747*** [0.087]	0.751*** [0.089]
Observations	1360	1358
R-squared	0.200	0.200

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses. * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

In fact, figure 1 below presents how frequency of seeing a romantic partner, suspicion of cheating, and condom use correspond to age. This shows that the frequency of seeing a romantic partner increases with age –

likely due to higher rates of marriage with age. However, while level of suspicion of cheating is constant across the life course, rates of condom use decline. Addressing how men and women can negotiate condom use within relationships may be important, and focusing on older adults particularly those that suspect their partner has other sexual partners may be an important intervention. One difficulty in such an approach is that these men may also be desiring children.

Figure 1: Frequency of seeing a partner, suspicions and condom use by age



Conclusion

This paper reports sexual behavior, attitudes, and preferences for partnerships and contraception among men in Malawi. This is a first step towards understanding what helps to determine men’s relationships and behavior that affect their health and families. We hope to explore these relationships further – in particular the relationship between suspicions in relationships and condom use.