Determinants of Excess Fertility among Women of Reproductive Age in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Fertility has declined throughout the world over the years and this decline is evident in all socioeconomic and demographic levels. Despite this decline, fertility levels in SSA are still high compared to other regions. In Kenya total fertility rate declined from 8.1 children in 1979 to 4.6 children in 2008/9. On the other hand desired family size declined from 4.4 children in 1989 to 3.8 children in 2008/9. The difference in this two fertility measures has resulted in excess fertility; an indication that women in Kenya are having more children than desired. For successful management of the population in Kenya, fertility decline is key. Understanding the determinants of excess fertility will therefore inform programmatic and policy efforts towards fertility reduction.

This study used 2008/9 data to analyse the determinants of excess fertility among women of reproductive age in Kenya. The sample constituted 3,216 women of reproductive age. Of these, 35 percent had less than expected fertility, 34 percent had achieved their desired fertility while 31 percent had excess fertility. The multivariate results showed that women who were using modern contraceptive, who had not experienced child mortality and those with secondary or higher educational achievement had less likely to have excess fertility compared to women who were not using contraceptive, who had experienced child mortality or who had no education, respectively. Therefore, increasing women’s education level, increasing modern contraceptive use and reducing child mortality can go a long way in reducing excess fertility in Kenya and hence contribute to the goal of fertility reduction.