

## Modern Contraceptives versus Traditional Contraceptives and Abortion: An Ethnography of Fertily Control Practices in Burkina Faso

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**Abstract :** This paper examines how traditional contraceptives and abortion practices challenges the use of modern contraceptives in Burkina Faso. It demonstrates how fears and 'superstitions' interact with knowledge about modern contraceptives methods to determine use in a context where other way of controlling fertility (traditional contraceptives, abortion) are available to women in the public, private and traditional health sectors. Furthermore, these issues come at the time when Burkina Faso is among countries with a high fertility rate which (6.0 in 2010) and a very low used of contraceptives as only 16% of married women of childbearing age were using a contraceptive method in 2010. The country also has a young population since 33 % of the population is between 10-24 years old and this number is expected to increase by 2050, generating fears that a growing population of youth will put excessive pressure on available resources, including access to education, health services, and employment. Despite over two decades of dedicated policy attention, 24% of women of reproductive age (15-49) was estimated to have an unmet need for contraception in 2010. This paper draws on ethnographic fieldwork conducted since march 2016 (The research is still in progress) in Burkina Faso. Data were collected from 25 women (users and non-users of modern contraceptives and /or traditional contraceptives, post abortion care patients), 4 street drugs vendors and 3 traditional healers through formal and informal interviews, as well as direct observation. The findings show that a variety of contraceptives methods and abortion drugs or methods, both traditional and modern circulate and are available to women. Traditional contraceptives called African contraceptives by some of our participants refer to several birth control method including plants decoction, magical ring, waist necklace, a ritual done with a mixture of lay coming from termite mound and menses. Abortion is a practice that is done in secret through the use of abortion drugs or through intra uterine manoeuvres. Modern contraceptives include Oral contraceptive, implants, injectable. Stereotypes about modern contraceptives, having regular menstrual cycles and adopt of natural birth control methods, bad experience with modern contraceptives methods, the side effect of modern contraceptives, irregularity of sexual activities and the availability of emergency contraceptives are among factors that limit their use among women. In addition, a negative perception is built around modern contraceptives seen as the drug of 'white people'. In general, the information on these drugs circulates in women's social network (first line of information on contraceptive). Some women prefer using what they call African contraceptives or inducing an abortion over modern contraceptives because of their side effect. Furthermore, the findings show that women practices and attitudes in controlling birth varies throughout different phases of their lives. Beyond global discourses and technical solution, the issue of Family planning is all about social practices.

**Keywords :** abortion, Burkina Faso, contraception, culture, women

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