

High Unmet Need and Factors Associated with Utilization of Contraceptive Methods among Women from the Digo Community of Kwale, Kenya

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Abstract : Background: Utilization of contraceptive methods has been associated with improved maternal and child health (MCH) outcomes. Unfortunately, there has been sub-optimal uptake of contraceptive services in the developing world despite significant resources being dedicated accordingly. It is imperative to granulate factors that could influence uptake and utilization of contraception. Methodology: Between March and December 2015, we conducted a mixed-methods cross-sectional study among women of reproductive age (18-45 years) from a pre-dominantly rural coastal Kenyan community. Qualitative approaches involved focus group discussions as well as a series of key-informant interviews. We also administered a sexual and reproductive health survey questionnaire at the household level. Results: We interviewed 745 women from 15 villages in Kwale County. The median (interquartile range, IQR) age was 29 (23-37) while 76% reported being currently in a marital union. Eighty-seven percent and 85% of respondents reported ever attending school and ever giving birth, respectively. Respondents who had ever attended school were more than twice as likely to be using contraceptive methods [Odds Ratio, OR = 2.1, 95% confidence interval, CI: 1.4-3.4, P = 0.001] while those who had ever given birth were five times as likely to be using these methods [OR = 5.0, 95% CI: 1.7-15.0, P = 0.004]. The odds were similarly high among women who reported attending antenatal care (ANC) [OR = 4.0, 95% CI: 1.1-14.8, P = 0.04] as well as those who expressly stated that they did not want any more children or wanted to wait longer before getting another child [OR = 6.7, 95% CI: 3.3-13.8, P<0.0001]. Interviewees reported deferring to the 'wisdom' of an older maternal figure in the decision-making process. Conclusions: Uptake and utilization of contraceptive methods among Digo women from Kwale, Kenya is positively associated with demand-side factors including educational attainment, previous birth experience, ANC attendance and a negative future fertility desire. Interventions to improve contraceptive services should focus on engaging dominant maternal figures in the community.

Keywords : unmet need, utilization of contraceptive methods, women, Digo community

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