

Factors Influencing Male Interest in Family Planning in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines factors that influence male interest and participation in family planning in Kenya. Quantitative data were assembled from a sample of 221 married men from Siaya and Machakos districts of Kenya. Additional qualitative data were collected through focus group discussions and key informant interviews. Male knowledge and interest in family planning was found to be higher among the young and educated. However, some socio-cultural and method-related obstacles inhibited inter-spousal communication. The study identifies increased male services, and community-based male peer-educator approaches, as ways of ensuring sustained male interest and participation in family planning in rural Kenya. (*Afr J Reprod Health* 1998;2(2):122–141)

RÉSUMÉ

Facteurs influençant l'intérêt des hommes pour la planification familiale au Kenya. Cette étude examine les facteurs qui influencent l'intérêt des hommes à participer à des programmes de planification familiale au Kenya. Des données quantitatives étaient collectées à partir d'un échantillon de 211 hommes mariés des districts de Siaya et de Machakos au Kenya. Des données qualitatives étaient également collectées à partir de discussions avec des groupes cibles et interviews avec des informateurs clés. On a ainsi découvert que parmi tous les hommes de l'échantillon, les jeunes et les lettrés étaient ceux qui avaient le niveau de connaissance et l'intérêt par rapport à la planification familiale les plus élevés. Cependant, certains obstacles liés au contexte socio-culturel et aux méthodes utilisées ont entravé la communication entre époux. Cette étude a identifié les deux méthodes suivantes comme moyens de garantir l'intérêt soutenu et la participation des hommes dans la planification familiale au Kenya: l'augmentation des services pour hommes d'une part, et la mise à contribution d'éducateurs communautaires d'autre part. (*Rev Afr Santé Reprod* 1998;2(2):122–141)

KEY WORDS: *Male contraception, family planning, gender, Kenya*

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Conclusions and Recommendations

Contrary to popular beliefs that African men are disinterested in family planning, the findings of this study show that men in Kenya are interested in family planning. There is scope for increased male participation in family planning as shown by the declared intentions to use a family planning method in future. However, social factors such as husband/wife educational and age differences, dominant gender ideologies, lack of suitable fora for initiating discussions, as well as absence of appropriate local terms inhibited broaching and opening discussions on family planning between couples. This study identifies five ways of enhancing male interest in family planning.

First, this can be done through the adoption of an information, education and communication (IEC) approach which promotes family planning through peer-group information sharing, rather than the current approach which focuses on information-giving and the supply of family planning methods.

Second, to counter local gender ideologies, there is need to initiate programmes that target men to influence women as these are likely to be more successful.

Thirdly, there is need for increased provision of male services in accessible and convenient locations. This would ease tensions currently experienced by men in female-dominated clinics.

Fourthly, use of social networks can prove to be effective in communicating family planning messages, particularly in the rural areas, where the presence of the mass media is limited. Social networks tend to be found by local people as providing more accurate, credible and acceptable information.

Finally, there is need to explore the use of communal meetings in broaching discussions on family planning among couples. These meetings would provide the 'breaking point' particularly in the African cultures where matters touching on sexuality are hardly verbalized.

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