

Predictors of Fertility Preferences Among Adolescents in Zambia: Evidence from Zambia 2007 – 2014 DHS.

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Abstract

Study was done to examine the predictors of preferred family size among adolescents in Zambia. Adolescent childbearing is more common in developing countries, where nearly 10 percent of adolescent girls give birth each year, compared to less than 2 percent in developed countries (PRB 2013). Early childbearing poses serious consequences to the health and development of young girls (UNPD 2010). This study used secondary data from the 1996, 2001, 2007 and 2013-14 DHS to understand adolescent future reproductive behaviour. Findings indicate that adolescents who received family messages had on average preferred a family size of two children less than those who did not receive family planning messages. Adolescents who live in urban areas were 6 times more likely to receive family messages hence their preference for lower family size. The findings suggest need to strengthen programmes for information education communication to target adolescents especially those in rural areas.

Key Words: Predictors; Fertility preference; Young women; Zambia

1. Introduction

Munshi and Myaux (2006) note that, in spite of the decline of fertility throughout the world over the years, there still exists wide variations and slow pace of decline in fertility levels over the globe. The causes of these variations and slow pace of decline in fertility levels, however, are issues to be debated. The high desired family size that prevails in most of Sub Saharan Africa, Zambia included, hinders fertility decline as desire for large families' leads to high fertility. As much as National and global initiatives have been put in place to alleviate rapid population growth and its adversities total fertility rate (TFR) in Zambia still remains high at 5.3, while Contraceptive Prevalence rate (CPR) for all methods is limited at 35.1 per cent (ZDHS, 2013).

By 2014 desired family size was 4.8 and the actual was 5.3 (ZDHS, 2013). Ideal family size increases steadily with age, from 3.8 among women age 15-19 to 6.3 among those aged 45-49. Fertility preferences among female youths aged 15-24 in Zambia stands around 3.8 among those aged 15-19 and 4.1 among those aged 20-24. In relation to fertility desires it has been noted that for various reasons the desired family size cannot exactly be accomplished and actual fertility level exceeds the desired level especially in developing countries. Leading to questions such as; what are the factors associated with fertility preference in Zambia? Can fertility preferences be influenced and if so how? Not much is known about the factors associated with fertility preference. This study seeks to find out these factors that determine fertility preference among women aged 15-19 in Zambia. Answers to these questions should provide a better understanding of associated social, cultural, economic, political, and other factors that influence fertility dynamics in Zambia.

2. Study Objective

The main objective of the study is to investigate the predictors of fertility preferences among adolescents in Zambia using evidence from Demographic and Health Surveys.

3. Methods and Materials

This study used the Zambia Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) data, collected in 2007, and 2013/2014. The DHS surveys included nationally representative samples of (17,146 women in 2007, and 16,411 in 2013-14). The sample covered all women aged 15-49 years. The analysis in this study focused on female adolescents aged 15-19 (n=3,686).

The DHS studies used a multistage sampling design that first selected a random sample of enumeration areas and then selected a random sample of households systematically from a household listing of all households in the enumeration area. All eligible women in the sampled households were approached and asked to participate in the interview. Information on women's birth history was capture with the view of measuring life time and current fertility. Women were also asked questions about fertility preferences and family planning.

The analysis focuses on trend analysis on fertility preferences and desire for children from 2007 to 2014. Trend analysis of total fertility rates and proportions of children ever born were performed on weighted datasets. Bivariate analyses and Multivariate analysis using logistic regression model were also performed to assess the influence of contraception use on fertility preferences in urban and rural Zambia. All analyses were adjusted for the multi-stage sampling design and were weighted. All analyses were performed using Stata version 14.0.

4. Results

4.1 Background characteristics

The study included 3,686 female adolescents aged 15 to 19. Sixty percent of these had attained secondary level of education while 30% had primary level of education. Fifteen percent reported being married and 30% were coming from poor households.

4.2 Bivariate Analysis

Table 1 shows results of the association between adolescents' fertility intentions selected independent variables. Overall, results show that a considerable proportion (89.5%) of the adolescents would prefer wanting more children. Less than 5% reported not wanting to have additional children and about 8% said they were not decided. Adolescents from rich background were more likely to prefer wanting more children than from middle and poor backgrounds respectively.

Table 1: Percent distribution of Fertility intentions by background characteristics of female adolescents, ZDHS 2013-14

Covariate/Factor	Fertility Intentions			P-value
	Want more children	Don't want	Undecided	
Education Level				
No education	92.7	1.5	5.9	
Primary	88.0	3.4	8.4	0.202
Secondary	90.0	2.9	6.6	
Higher/Tertiary	92.1	0.0	7.0	
Wealth quintile				
Poor	87.3	4.6	7.8	0.003**
Middle	87.6	4.2	8.2	
Rich	91.0	2.7	6.3	
Marital Status				
Never Married	89.2	2.6	8.2	0.000**
Currently Married	91.9	6.2	1.8	
Formerly Married	78.0	6.2	12.3	
Place of Residence				
Urban	88.0	4.1	7.9	0.007**
Rural	90.9	2.5	6.6	
Employment status				
Employed	93.8	2.6	3.6	0.001***
Not employed	85.7	4.8	10.3	
Total	89.5	3.3	7.2	

Significance Level Codes: "****", "***" and "*" denote the *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$ significance levels respectively.

4.2 Multivariate Binary logistic regression analysis

Results obtained from multivariate binary logistic analysis on fertility preference and selected covariates. Results show that adolescents who received family planning messages through radio or health family awareness programmes were more likely to prefer fewer children. Adolescents from rural areas were four times more likely to prefer more children in the future. Adolescents with secondary education were more likely to want fewer children compared to those with primary education. Generally, study results show that adolescents who have access to reproductive health information have lower odds of wanting more children.

Conclusion

This study assessed the fertility preferences of adolescent in Zambia. Although most family planning programmes seem to focus on women 20 years and over, information on fertility preferences of adolescents is useful to estimate future fertility of a country. Designing of future family programmes should be informed by such information. This study has demonstrated that the fertility intentions of adolescents should not be disregarded and ignored. Based on the findings of this study, the major predictors of fertility preferences among adolescents include; education level, marital status, parity and type of contraceptive method used, access to family planning message and residence.

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