

**AN INVESTIGATION OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC BARRIERS TO FAMILY
PLANNING PRACTICES AMONG RURAL WOMEN IN MURANG'A COUNTY,
KENYA**

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ABSTRACT

Global adoption of family planning represents one of the most dramatic changes of the current millennium. At the regional level, United Nations Fund for Population Activities 2008 contends that family planning is among a handful of feasible, cost-effective interventions that can make an immediate impact on maternal mortality in low resource settings. At the national level family planning programs in Kenya are an essential part of services to reduce maternal and child mortality rates, because they enable women to postpone, space or limit pregnancy. Yet, to reverse stagnation in the use of family planning methods in the study locale, contraceptive services need to be made more accessible. The study investigated the socio-economic barriers to family planning (FP) practices in Murang'a County. It was guided by the Normative Reference Group Theory which postulates that participant's behavior and attitude depend on the established norms. The study was based on four fold objectives, namely: (i) To find out the extent to which educational level of the rural women contribute to the size of the family; ii) To examine the extent to which the marital status of the woman contributes to family size, iii) To assess the extent to which accessibility and perception on FP devices influence the family planning practices, and iv) To determine the extent to which women perceived the socio-economic variables as barriers to family planning practices. The study employed a descriptive cross-sectional survey design. Stratified sampling was used to draw participants according to strata based on constituencies. A combination of purposive and stratified sampling techniques were used to select 110 women from Kiharu Constituency, 55 women from Kangema Constituency and 50 from Mathioya Constituency, yielding a total sample size of 215. Structured questionnaires, interview schedules and focus group discussion guidelines were the research instruments used to collect data. The questionnaires were pre-tested to determine their validity and reliability. The quantitative data was analyzed with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer programme version 20.0 and was reported in mean, mode, median frequencies and percentages. The findings were reported according to the study objectives. The study found no correlation between the level of formal education and use of family planning ($\chi^2 = 42.098$, $df = 3$, $p = .067$) at $\alpha = .05$ level of statistical significance. The findings led to the recommendation that family planning interventions should target both the formally educated and the non-educated.