

The Low Acceptability and Use of Condoms within Marriage: Evidence from Nakuru District, Kenya

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Abstract:

In the last two decades, there has been an increase in the prevalence of contraceptive use in Kenya. While use of modern contraceptives has been successful in preventing unwanted pregnancy, it has not been so successful in preventing HIV/AIDS. The twin risk of unwanted pregnancy and HIV/AIDS infection is a central concern of reproductive health programmes. Condoms are considered an effective barrier method because they can be used for the dual purpose of protecting against pregnancy and disease transmission. But will married couples and those in stable sexual relations accept and use them? This paper attempts to answer this question using data from Nakuru district, Kenya. From both quantitative and qualitative results, this study concludes that, not only, is the use of condoms to prevent STIs including HIV low within married and stable sexual relations, but, also, future prospects of condom use in such relations is rather bleak. Apart from using a condom for preventing a pregnancy in sexual relations, the only other reason for using it is because one does not trust the sexual partner. Majority of married couples will therefore not ask their partners to use a condom because they dread straining or breaking their relationship. This fear is amplified by the religious view of condom use being a sin. The study calls for appropriate interventions which should aim at providing married couples and those in stable sexual relations (including men) with targeted counseling services to strengthen mutual trust, a feeling they all cherish. Such services will not only facilitate the prevention of HIV/AIDS but will also minimize intra-couple tensions by enhancing mutual trust.