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Religious affiliation and contraceptive use in Kenya.

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Abstract

Background

Religion is widely known to affect the acceptance of modern contraception among people, thus affecting their reproductive behavioural outcomes in sub-Saharan Africa. The significance of religion on the use of contraceptives has been currently neglected in SSA. Fertility transitions have been widely attributed to the increased use of contraceptives among women worldwide. Given that religion plays an important role in post-colonial Kenya, this study examined the differentials in contraceptive use by religious affiliation as well as the demographic and socio-economic factors that affect the use of contraceptives in Kenya.

Methodology

The study obtained data from the Kenyan Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS, 2008-2009) that uses a national cross sectional study design. The study population was women of reproductive ages (15-49 years) who were sexually active and the sample size was 4, 207. This study made use of descriptive statistics, chi-square tests and logistic regression.

Results

Religious affiliation is a significant predictor of contraceptive use in Kenya. Muslims were 51% less likely to use modern methods of contraceptives compared to Christians. There was no significant difference in the use of contraceptives among Roman Catholics and Protestants. Demographic and socio-economic factors - specifically age, education, number of living children, fertility intention, wealth and marital status - were significantly associated with the use of modern methods of contraceptives.

Conclusion

Religious affiliation affects the use of contraceptives and plays a vital role in the reproductive behaviours of women in Kenya. The low levels of contraceptive use among Muslims are accounted for by their low socio-economic characteristics in addition to Islam's pro-natal doctrine. The lack of contraceptive use differentials among Roman Catholics and Protestants is as a result of their similar socio-economic characteristics, regardless of Roman Catholics pro-natal doctrine. Thus, a frontier for further study is to examine how religious involvement affects contraceptive use in addition to religious affiliation**.**