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Assessment of the Intersection between Modern Family Planning Services and Social Realities of the Kurya People in Tanzania: A Case of Tarime District, Mara Region, Tanzania

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Abstract:

This study examined the intersection between the use of modern family planning services and the social realities of the kurya community in Tarime District, Tanzania. Data were collected using interviews, FGDs and observation methods because each method informed a certain aspect of social reality. This study employed qualitative research approach, case study research design and content analysis as a method of analyzing data. The data indicate that the utilization of modern family planning services in Tarime District in Tanzania was low as it encountered with the social realities which are anti-modern family planning services. The low utilization of modern family planning services was attributed to gender norms and values, fertility culture, traditional beliefs about infertility, polygamism and initiation ceremonies. Also, the data indicate that in some cases, the kurya people decided to combine modern family planning methods and traditional methods in order to minimize the perceived side effects brought about by modern family planning services. The study concludes by holding that the kurya social realities impact a lot on the acceptability and use of modern family planning services in Tanzania. The study has two basic recommendations; one is that the modern family planning methods which the kurya people are equipped with have to complement the traditional family planning methods. Secondly, more studies have to be conducted to understand how what happens when the social realities of a particular area encounter with the modern family planning services across social-cultural and economic milieu in Tanzania and elsewhere as this study was context-specific.

Keywords: family planning, modern family planning services, social-cultural context, social reality.

1. Introduction

Family planning has been an issue that has attracted a long-standing debate in the world. The debate has been on one hand motivated by the development and population discourses (global discourse), on the other hand by the actor oriented (local) discourse. Espousers of the global/modern discourse (Bongaarts & Sinding 2009, Beegle, 1995, Frost & Dadoo 2009, UNFPA 2011a) consider that overpopulation is a primary barrier to economic and social growth. Consequently, there are must be controlled fertility, diffusion of technologies and information that promote modern contraceptives from one part to another (*Ibid*).

Those scholars who subscribe to the latter discourse (local discourse) argue that the flowering exploitation of family planning services pivots on the engagement and acceptability of the local people/service users (Mann 2000, Richey 2008, Williams et al. 2000, Kelly & Boucar 2000, Sanchez et al.1997). Supply and availability alone are not sufficient measures for the realization of family planning use since the local people are endowed with consciousness, free will, and reflexivity and can think about what they are going to do, compare various alternatives on family planning and anticipate possible outcomes (Mann 2000, Richey 2008, Williams et al. 2000, Kelly & Boucar 2000). In providing the social realities and concerns of the local people have to be taken into consideration. The local people's perceptions are in turn influenced by personal, socio-economic, and cultural factors (Bertrand et al. 1995; Kols and Sherman 1998).

In Tanzania, family planning services began in 1959, when the Family Planning Association of Tanzania (UMATI) introduced services at urban clinics (Pile & Simbakalia 2006). The government's implementation of family planning as an official program was based on the need to control population growth for the purpose of achieving national social and economic development. The nationalist discourse was in line with the developmental discourse (from donors) which is of the view that overpopulation is a key problem and barrier to economic growth (Richey, 2008). The government continued to provide family planning services throughout the 1970s and 1980s. In 1989, the Government of Tanzania designed a national population policy and launched the National Family Planning Programme (NFPP) (Pile & Simbakalia 2006).

The National policy guideline and standard service and training in family planning which was also adopted in 1994 committed the government of Tanzania to provide comprehensive health services to all citizens equally and adapted to the Primary Health Care (PHC) approaches in which family planning and its components as a basic service fundamental to provision of health for all (Pile & Simbakalia 2006). The Government and NGOs and donors like Marie Stopes Tanzania and USAID joined together to implement the

national family planning program, with UMATI tasked to provide supervision and quality assurance in the public sector. In 2010 national CPR¹ among married women was at 34%, and the use of modern methods of contraception was at 27%. In the same year, Tanzania set a target to increase the national Contraceptive Prevalence Rate (CPR) to 60% in 2015 as part of its initiatives to enhance use of family planning services (TDHS, 2010).

Despite all these efforts/interventions not much has clearly been attained. The literature indicates that contraceptive use in Tanzania is still low (see also Pile & Simbakalia 2006, Mosha 2013, Greene 2000, Joseph 2010, Cates et al 2010, NBS 2010). For example, the report by NBS (2010) showed that national CPR² in Tanzania was at 27%. Further, the same survey by TDHS³ indicates that Mara region is the last (10%) in terms of CPR in Tanzania mainland (NBS, 2010). Tarime District as one of the Districts in Mara Region has the lowest contraceptive prevalence rate 0.2% (URT, 2013) at the same time the reproductive issues are generally under-researched (Lambert et al, 2011). This study seeks to ascertain how the modern family planning services intersect with the local realities of the Kurya community in Tarime District and what happens out of that interplay in terms of utilization of the modern services. The findings obtained from this study can be of use to different actors who deal with modern family planning issues in Tarime District and Tanzania at large.

2. Theoretical Framework

Social constructionism holds that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work (Berger and Luckmann, 1991; Creswell 2009). Individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences and often meanings directed towards certain things or objects. In this perspective (social constructionism), reality is considered as locally and specifically constructed. The main assumption is that the way Kurya people of Tarime District perceive modern family planning services might not be the same to other people and elsewhere. In that regard, reality is an intersection of the local environment and the prevailing values that people attach to get meanings. This theory seems to be suitable in terms of explaining how people construct reality and react on modern family planning services. To this end, I would like to add Appadurai's (1996) concept of "global flows" This is because, we need to understand how the global/modern discourse gets to be integrated or rejected by the local actors. The assumption is that when the so-called "global flows" reach the local people they never remain the same. People may react by either modifying them, accept some of them or reject some of them (Appadurai, 1996). In that regard, reality is an intersection of the local environment and the prevailing values that people attach to get meanings. When adding the concept of "global flows" to social constructionism, we find that the theory directs us to understand the interplay between the local knowledge and global/modern family planning services.

3. Methods and Materials

3.1. Research Approach

Research approach used in this study was qualitative. According to Creswell (2009) and Mason (2002), qualitative research has numerous advantages as incorporated in this study as follows. First, it enabled this study to examine how the social realities of the kurya people intersect with the modern family planning services relatively deeply. Second, the approach permitted data collection from a variety of users of family planning methods using mixed methods (interviews, FGDs and observation) of data collection and hence making the data more credible.

3.2. Research Design

Research design in this study was case study. Case studies are particularly useful when one is interested to have a deep understanding of an issue, individual, organization or phenomena (Yin, 2009). In this study, the Kurya community was my case study. The decision to carry out a case study is based on the need to have an in-depth discussion to understand *contextual conditions* that inform people's acceptability/unacceptability of family planning services. Secondly, case study focuses on *how* and *why* questions (Yin, 2009). In this study, I was interested to find out how and why and how people accept/do not accept in family planning services informed by their social-cultural context.

3.3. Data Collection Methods

In this study, four methods of data generation namely In-depth interview, Focus Group Discussions and observation methods were employed. This was done in order to have a multiple source of information and detailed accounts as each method of data generation had a specific contribution to certain aspect of social reality in the kurya community.

3.4. Sampling Procedures

In this study, purposive sampling technique was employed. Under purposive sampling the organizer of the inquiry purposively chooses the particular units of the universe to constitute a sample (Kothari, 2004). Through this technique, I was able to select informants purposely who are ready and exhibit of knowledge about the issue under study. But also, the village/'mtaa' leaders and health care workers were of help to me to familiarize myself with participants in their areas.

¹CPR- Contraceptive Prevalence Rate

³ TDHS- Tanzania Demographic and Health Survey

3.5. Study Area and Population

Selection of the proposed study area (Tarime District) is premised on the fact that contraceptive prevalence is low 0.2% (URT, 2013). It is a District with highest population growth compared to other Districts in Mara Region. For example, according to Housing and Population Census Report (2012), Tarime District has 339,693 followed by Bunda District which has 335,061, Rorya 262, 241, Musoma Urban District 134,327, Musoma Rural District 178,356 and Serengeti District 249,420. Further, Tarime is chosen because the reproductive issues are generally under-researched (Lambert et al, 2011).

4. Data Analysis

This study employed *content analysis* as a strategy for analyzing data. Hsieh & Shannon, (2005) define content analysis as a research technique that deal with the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the logical classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Content analysis was used to analyze both written information like reports and verbal information obtained from interviews, FGDs in order to get an interpretation of their meanings, develop themes and patterns that may be manifest or latent in a particular text.

4.1. Findings

The findings of this study indicate that the utilization of modern family planning services among the kurya community have been low. This is attributed to a number of issues namely, gender norms, roles and expectations, fertility culture, polygamism, traditional marriages and initiation ceremonies. Thus, the main themes that emerged from the findings of this study included the following; gender norms, roles and expectations, fertility culture, polygamism, traditional marriages and initiation ceremonies.

4.2. Gender norms, Roles and Expectations and Modern Family Planning

In the first place, the kurya people were asked about how they understand the modern family planning services. The findings depicted that the conceptions of family planning services for some of the informants were gender-based as some of them conceptualized family planning services as methods that assist women to control or space birth while others did not want to think beyond that understanding and thus appealed to the researcher to engage more women in issues of family planning services rather than men. For example, during the FGD with male informants at Buliba Village, they equated family planning services with women methods that aim at enabling them reducing the size of children while for some women they defined family planning services as methods that help them to plan for size of their families. One of the informants from the first group of male informants had the following sentiment;

Family planning services entails those methods that assist women to control child bearing (Male informant, 48 years, primary education, Buliba Village)

Other male informants were not in a position of explaining in detail what they know about family planning services. Rather, they asked the researcher to direct those questions to women. One of the informants said had this to say;

- Family planning services are methods that concern women and thus it is women who are the right persons for answering issues related to family planning services. I think Mr. Researcher you have to direct these questions to women (Male informant, 45 years, secondary education, Kemakorere Village).

In the kurya community like other African communities there are strong gender norms, roles and expectations that show how a man and a woman should actually relate to each other. In the kurya community, a man is viewed as strong, provider, resilient, fighter which represents the notion of masculinities while a woman is viewed as submissive, less resilient, emotional, care taker and dependent, which represents the notion of femininity. Socialization of man and woman begins from their families and continue in their communities through different social institutions like education, religion, culture, peer groups commonly known as *saigha*. As a matter of fact, some of the informants said they are taught how to behave in front of either men or female in their families. They saw how their parents interacted as part of their socialization and build that picture for their future life. The interaction in their families showed that mothers were paying respect to their fathers and would do what their fathers instruct them.

On gender roles, traditionally women are supposed to be doing domestic chores like fetching water, collecting firewood, cooking for their families, taking care of children and elderly parents, taking cattle to the pasture grounds, milking cattle, participate in farming activities etc. while men are supposed to lead decisions in home and outside their homes as community leaders, providing for their families, taking cattle to the market for selling, ensuring security to the family and community properties. From the stipulated gender roles in the Kurya community, mens' engagements in modern family planning services become marginal for the reason that the way they have been brought up in their families and communities does not expose them to family planning issues. The informants asserted that all decisions are made by men concerning different aspects of social life including family planning. Men would dictate how many children they want as they believe that marriage guarantee them sexual rights and entitlements over women due to socialization. CDF (2010) has also reported that despite carrying huge responsibilities, a married woman cannot make decisions on issues that concern her life and her children. She has a bond with her husband based mainly on dependence. This tends to lead to violence if the wife makes an autonomous decision against the husband's wishes.

Further, in the kurya community, men do not take part in either pre-natal or postnatal care except by providing material support to their wives and children. Men usually do not go the clinics because of gender roles that locate that it as part of women domestic activity. Though, not all men do allow their wives to go to the clinics for various services including family planning services for the belief that they are going to be spoiled by modern methods of family planning. A report by CDF (2010) posted that in the kurya community, taking care of the cattle is a women activity but men may sometimes decide to assist women "if the woman is sick, travelled, or has taken a child to the clinic". CDF (2010:10). Some of men who were interviewed as to why women seemed to have a

heavy workload which combine domestic chores, grazing cattle, child and elderly parents care, farming and income generating activities, they responded that it is because they had paid dowry for them and thus they should do all the work, assisted with their children.

Taking part in the perceived women activity in the kurya community among men implies that they are not circumcised, complete men and for this reason they are called dense or perceived to be subordinated by women. Such men face stigma and social isolation from their fellows and labeled with degrading terms such as *omulisya*. Traditionally, men have also been allowed to apply physical punishment to their women who portray elements of disloyalty like declining to have sex, failure to prepare food or other expressions of misbehavior to men. Wife beating is also perceived by some of the kurya people as an expression of love and concern to them. Though, to some extent this practice has changed because some of women no longer accept that. Despite the practice of wife battering being socially acceptable or legitimized in the kurya community, a number of informants (especially those exposed to education, converted to Christianity and Islam) condemned against that practice and calls for abandoning it because of perpetuating gender based violence in the kurya community.

Changes have also been seen in the economic realities as some women have started assuming mens' roles of providing to the family. Women are now assuming more roles as the breadwinners and house makers in the kurya community while men hang out with their fellows. This is attributed to the fact that some men have become alcoholic, lazy, drug addict to the extent that they are incapable of supplying basic needs to their families or children. A report by CDF (2010) also remarked that men in Tarime District have a drinking culture. The same culture prohibits women from drinking alcohol in the community although it is women who make traditional brew to be consumed by men including the elders when they assemble to relax, reduce stress or to be cheerful. The typologies of traditional brew include *gongo*, *kimpumu*, *mnazi*, *wanzuki* which is made up of ripe bananas, coconuts and fermented millets like cassava and maize. In most cases the money earned from selling cattle and farm products is often spent on alcohol consumption, marrying additional wives rather than their own families (CDF 2010). However, some men pointed out that despite being idle or unproductive, women should seek permission from them if they want to chip in their efforts in taking care of their families and insisting that their decision-making positions as heads of the families should not be jeopardized or compromised in whatever circumstances. Mens' instances were that all-important decisions including the use of modern family planning methods and number of children have to be left solely to men.

According to the key informant working at the Police Gender Desk in Tarime Urban, there is approximately five cases reported everyday resulting from wife battering, sexual harassment or assault due to various reasons including the decisions to use modern family planning services. According to the key informant, there are few reported cases compared to the actual situation. This is because most of the cases are handled either in their families or communities as a "family matter" by elders or traditional leaders. Others do not report because of fear of being divorced following their firm suggestions over the use of modern family planning services. However, other male informants (10 out of 35 who talked about gender roles and who portrayed reasonable degree of understanding in reproductive health issues) remarked that collective decisions are needed when it comes to issues that seem important in the families like the use of modern family services and the ideal size of the family.

4.3. Fertility Culture and Modern Family Planning

According to the findings, some of the kurya informants remarked that they are against modern family planning services because of the value of children. Children are important because of the nature of their economic activities which seems to be labor intensive, children are highly valued for the continuation of clan lineage, providing security etc. one of the female informants at Kemakorere Village had the following to say;

- It is a bit challenge to think about utilizing modern family planning services. Since people in our community want many children. Children are extremely important for different reasons including providing labor; ensure the development of clan lineage and security in the family and community at large.

In the kurya community, giving birth to many children is perceived as a blessing to the family and community. A previous research by Mhando (2014) also noted that despite the socio-economic changes happening in the kurya community, they have steadily continued with the principle of high fertility. Some of the informants pointed out that what they need to have as many children as possible and they do not bother about how to care them as it is God who knows that as they had already done their part. The kurya people expressed themselves that their activities are labor intensive. Activities like farming, livestock keeping, maintaining security to the family and the entire community needs to have enough labor power. Thus, limiting the number of children is not a priority of the kurya community based on that social reality. CDF (2010) & Finke (2006) report that farming is one of the Tarime's main economic activity. Most people grow food crops near their homes, which they use to feed their huge families. They cultivate cash crops like tobacco, coffee, millet, maize, beans, bananas, sweet potatoes, peas and cassava on farms further away. The cash enables them to buy items for their home or to educate their children. Most of the farming is done by children and women; men may sometimes assist with harvesting. They use hand hoes for cultivating food for consumption, and cow ploughs on their cash crop land. Women and children do farm work early in the morning, returning home around 10am to continue with household chores.

CDF (2010) & Finke (2006) further report that cattle keeping is a major source of wealth in the kurya community and is also labor intensive. The cattle are used for ploughing land and their sale can raise money for education or other uses in the families. Women take care of the cattle (milking them and grazing them all afternoon), but men own the animals and any wealth they generate after selling them even though they do not care them. Women who are unable to care for cattle maybe be "beaten and chased from their husband's home". Men only care for cattle "if the woman is sick, travelled, or has taken a child to the clinic" (CDF 2010:10). They

reportedly often spend any income earned from cattle on alcohol or marrying additional wives, rather than on their family's needs. Cattle form a key component of the bride price during marriage negotiations in the region (CDF 2010:10, Finke 2006).

The value of child children especially male children was central in the kurya community. This is because male children were considered as *Moran* in the kurya community whose primary function was to maintain security in the kurya land. This is attributed to the fact that for long time, the kurya people have been keeping livestock like cattle, sheep and goat and they were always invaded by the neighbor ethnic group known as *Maasai* from Arusha via Serengeti national park in cattle-raiding events. So, the male children were critically needed in order to constitute the kuryan army. This was also supported by the chairperson of the kurya tribal council. According to the chief tribal elder/the chairman of the Kurya tribal council in Tarime District *inchaama*, acceptability of modern family planning services is an issue simply because in the kurya tribe children occupy a central position due to the nature of activities in the area. The informant remarked that none of the kurya men tolerate to marry a woman who cannot bear him children. That is why there are traditional marriages like *nyumba ndobhu* and *nyumba mbhoke* that supplement the deficit of children in the community.

Mhando (2014) also argue that fertility culture in the kurya community has been a persistent feature for ages. Since most of the productive activities are done by women and are labor intensive, women have to bear as many children as possible so as to ensure labor security. For women who are unable to bear children, they resort to marry young girls in a marriage commonly known as *nyumba ndhobhu* in order to gain social and economic advantages. The newly married girl/girls would assist the kurya "infertile women" in different production activities and also bear children who also belong to those women who paid bride price. For the Christian women who do not like to marry *nyumba mbhoke*, they adopt children of single dead mothers called *ikineraka* by paying a bride wealth to the dead single mothers' parents and hold a small ceremony to mark that event of officially transferring the children (Mhando 2014).

Perceptions with regard to fertility are also informed by kurya people procedures of choosing the traditional elders commonly known as *wazee wa mila*. According to some of the informants, one of the criteria to be called or chosen as the elder or traditional leader is that one should have children and grandchildren. Finke (2006) reported that in the kurya community there is initiation ceremony to the elderhood commonly known as *isubo yu umukungu*. To achieve this rank, a man is needed to have reasonable number of children and grandchildren. Once initiated, he is responsible to become the ruler of the Kurya or his clan in general. Laws are made and enforced by such elders, sometimes with the aid of curses or witchcraft (Finke, 2006).

Another social reality related to fertility culture in the kurya community is that children ensure the continuation of the clan lineage. According to the informants, more than 13 kurya clans have managed to survive because of the presence of children who also continue to reproduce. Children inherit the ancestors' names *ichindoko* in order to continue merit the blessings of the ancestors and it is believed that the ancestors become happy and continue to offer abundant blessings when their names are pronounced in the community. They can offer protection against misfortune, sickness and all other social contingencies if they are named. If a first born in the family is a boy, his name can either be Marwa, Mwita and Chacha. If a first born is a girl she can either be called *Ghati*, *Robhi*, and *Bhoke*. That means that these six names are very common in the kurya community. These names and others have some meanings which reflect the ancestors' positions within the lineage of the family. Also, greeting model between the kurya people is influenced by the names of children (preferably the first born) that one have. Those without children miss the social respect when they are greeted. For example, *Sakoro Mwita*, *Sakoro*, *Ghati*, *Sakoro*, *Rhobi*.

The word *tata* is pronounced to show respect to the kurya elderly men but it has to be connected with the names of their first born. If the first born is Mwita then you will be greeted *tata sakoro mwita*. If your first born is *Ghati* then you will be greeted *tata sakoroGhati*. Men who do not have children especially those who at the reproductive age are greeted only *tata* which does not have much weight. Women also are greeted according to their first-born men as well. Naming of the child in the kurya community is followed by a ritual; the family is required to sacrifice. The practice is commonly known as *kumwensa* a goat or a cow according to the desire of the spirits so as to open the doors and windows for blessings. However, this practice has taken a different shape in some of the families because of being concerted to either Christianity or Islam or exposed to modern education.

Further, the parents' names change after bearing children. The prefix *Isa*-followed by a child's name and *Nya*-followed by a child's name, correspondingly, from there onwards after bearing children. For example, the parents of a firstborn let us say *Bhoke* would change and become *Isabhoke* for the male parent and *Nyabhoke* for the female parent. The same applies to grandparents, they are renamed after the birth of a firstborn child; the prefix *Isako*- is followed by the firstborn name when it is a male child while the prefix *Nyako*- is followed by the firstborn name if it is a male child.

4.4. Polygamism and Modern Family Planning

In the kurya community *etoto* or *chiharekha* is commonly referred to as polygamism. This is practiced when a man decides to marry several wives to constitute his family. The informants asserted that in this type of marriage there are no issues of family planning. The wives who call themselves sisters compete to bear many children in order to attract their husband. Giving birth to many children provides security to these women and their children especially the male children will have that opportunity to own a piece of land or any other properties owned by their husband. The women are trying to outshine themselves by bearing many children in order to meet this goal. This type of marriage is also undertaken by those men who have a lot of possessions/resources like land, livestock, and enterprises. During a FGD with the junior female informants at Nyarwana, one of the informants pointed that: -

- Etoto is a practice in which several women are married to one husband are always in competition to bear many children....so women of this nature they don't accept FP because they say When they use, them they will delay to conceive and hence the man will be attracted to those who give birth frequently.

Other informants believed that they are born again when they die because they have children. In other words, a person is considered to be alive even if he or she has already died through the children he/she has procreated. Additionally, according to some of the kurya

people, there is competition between the wives who are married to one husband to bear many children (at least one male child) in order to gain love from the husband and ensure security when it comes to inheritance of properties. Some of the informants also marked that men enter in polygamous marriage because of the infertility of their women and this is traditionally allowed. In the kurya community marriage has a function of procreation and thus marriage is not complete, has no sense if it is not procreative or if one partner is barren or not having a male child. This is not socially accepted. In an interview with a male informant at Nyamwigura, he had the following sentiment;

- Polygamous marriage has no choice if your wife is barren...My first wife did not get a male child. We had six female children. As a result, I received pressure from parents and relative that my family will disappear, but I neglected. As pressure grew high I decided to marry another woman for the purpose of getting male children, it now working well we have four male children and other two female children from the second wife. How can you talk about modern family planning in that situation?

So, several women who are married to a single husband bear as many children as possible and do not bother themselves to use modern family planning method services for planning their families. The reason advanced was that modern family planning services could cause infertility and thus preclude them from bearing children. Additionally, some of the kurya informants remarked that some of the parents are still choosing the life partners for their children when they are still young, perhaps at the age of 15 to 20. Their children especially male children are forced to marry women whom they do not want and according to the beliefs about children, those women usually give birth to many children so as to be assured of properties before their husbands start thinking about marrying other women (second wives) of their choices. Another thing which sounds singular is that sometimes kurya women suggest to their husbands to marry a second wife because of profound workload. As it has been pointed out earlier concerning the gender division of labor, women in the kurya community have much to do and they expect their children to assist them in various activities like grazing cattle, crops cultivation, income generating activities and other domestic chores which are incredibly labor exhaustive to women while men have little to do.

Some women who fail to get enough children to suffice the required labor force, they suggest to their husbands to marry other women so as to share the burden. However, according to the informants, this practice is declining as days go on because of diseases and inherent conflicts attributed to property inheritance. The value for many children is also declining because most of the children are now legally forced to go to school and the land size has decreased to accommodate many children, according to some of the informants. Makoka and Shomang (2003) argue that the primary purpose of polygamism in African marriage is attributed to the value of extended family, which is the spine of African communion relations and living through labor force.

Another propensity towards polygamism among the kurya community is that adult women are supposed to be in marriage, failure to be in marriage is considered as socially unacceptable that make the community look down at those women and use mortifying words like *wasimbe* as a way of expressing their negative perceptions towards single/unmarried women, who are also adult. According to the informants, some women resort to enter in polygamous marriage because of safe guarding their social status. Similar observation has also been made by Gaskiyane (2000) study who reported that in Mara region, it was deemed very improper for adults to be unmarried. Thus, every woman was supposed to have a husband and every man had to have a wife so as to be socially acceptable. Consequently, a woman decides to be one of the multiple wives rather than to remain without a husband and face risks of being labeled a "social outcast". It was therefore considered ethically imperative for every woman to have a husband in order to meet this criterion.

However, according to the informants this is also changing slowly because of education and interaction with other people in their area. Some of the female informants especially the young ones remarked that they do accept polygamous marriage. Rather, they migrate to other neighbor regions like Mwanza and Shinyanga to try their luck of being married in a monogamous marriage and establish themselves there. According to the informants, most of these who flee their communities are educated and would not live under the social-cultural pressure and be married with their fellow kurya men.

4.5. Traditional Marriages and Modern Family Planning

During the FGDs with senior female informants at Kemakorere village, they mentioned different marriage styles in the kurya community which are particularly meant for those who have failed to bear children for different reasons. In the kurya community, these types of traditional marriages include *nyumba ndobhu*, *nyumba bhoke*, *nyumba ntune*, *etoto*, *ekebete*. All of which are meant to legitimize the children born out of either the formal union or single parent who had some problems with child bearing. The informants remarked that it is difficult to talk about family planning/family planning methods since a woman is married for bearing children that will ensure the continuity of the family/clan name. One of the informants remarked;

- When you are married in *nyumba mbhoke* or other traditional types of marriage, there is no way you can talk about modern family planning methods since the purpose of marriage is to bear children... (Female informant, 27 years, Nyarero Village)

Similar observation was made by TAWJAS (2012) report which called this type marriage "ghost marriage" in which a woman pay dowry to the desired girls parents and take the girl to her home as a ghost in law. The report documented that in this marriage, the girl is forced to bear children from a man chosen by that woman who has paid dowry. The girl is not allowed to use modern condoms or any other modern family planning methods for the intention are to have many children from the ghost daughter in law.

The history of kurya traditional marriage goes long before the period of colonialism in Tanganyika simply because the colonial powers put some efforts to reject and subdue this practice which was unfamiliar to them (Chacha, 2004). The practice has been going through different realities. Chacha (2004) for example, report that the girls who were involved in these marriages, in the past were not ordinary girls. Rather, it was either those who got pregnancy before being circumcized (*amakunena*) or those who became pregnant

before formal marriage (*ubuisseke ubusigenche*). Notwithstanding, the practice has taken a different direction and meanings. Nowadays, the practice is more concerned with acquiring children and escaping from violence behavior of men.

In this type of marriages, a chosen man known as *umutwari* from the family members is given mandate of impregnating a woman on behalf of another woman (a marrying woman) who has not either succeeded to get children or has female children alone. According to the kurya informants, these types of marriage do not aid the use of modern family planning services since the intention is to have as many children as possible. For example, in *nyumba bhoke* a woman may marry another woman in order to get male children following the failure to get male children. There is a common say among the kurya community “*inyumba etana moona wi kirisia ne ntoberu*” meaning that a house without a son is considered extremely poor.

Mhando (2014) and Haworth (2016) *inter alia* pointed out that since the kurya patriarchal structural system and inheritance rights favors men and require women and their children to belong to lineages. In order to pass the property over to sons, women intentionally seek to acquire sons in order to access resources and property. The inheritance rights favor men because women are married and once they are married, they belong to the husbands’ family and not to their blood family longer. Additionally, there are some of the activities which have traditionally been done by men in the kurya community. Some of those activities involve provision of security against the rival tribes/clans and walking at a distance to sell cattle at the market place. Usually, it is men who are responsible to do that while women are performing domestic activities including child care. In *nyumba ndobhu/maweto* a woman may marry another fellow woman in order to get children following the failure to get any children. A common say “*taichaba wiibore*” meaning that you can get a child outside a normal marriage concerns those women who do not succeed in getting their own children through ordinary marriage. In this practice, an infertile woman pay dowry and engage the son of her husband, a son of a second wife/another wife, a son of his brother in law or any other relative as agreed to impregnate *mokamona* in order to get children for keeping her surname.

In *nyumba ntune*, a woman who is married to a mentally retarded/dysfunctional man is given another man to impregnate her. In all these types of marriage there is no room for modern family planning methods since the intention is to get the socially acceptable number of children. All these traditional marriages/practices inform the manner in which the kurya people understand, perceive and experience modern family planning services. A research conducted by Nyakeke (2016) estimated that, in Tarime and Serengeti Districts alone there are more than 10,049 most young girls who have been subjected to early traditional marriages. Most of the parents force their female children to be married in *nyumba mbhoke*, *ntobhu* and other traditional marriages in order to gain wealth from the paid bride price. It is estimated that there are more than 2,740 such marriages which take place every year in Tarime and Serengeti districts alone (Nyakeke, 2016).



Figure 1: A photo showing family members and friends of *nyumba ndobhu*. The husband known as Mugosi Isombe aged 50 years (seated left on the mat, in blue) and the wife Paulina Mukosa aged 20 years, who had given birth to four children (seated right on local carpet, in teal) eat lunch with family members and other friends. A photo by Charlie Shoemaker (2016) at Nyamwigura Village

4.6. Traditional Beliefs about Infertility and Modern Family Planning

The findings show that the kurya informants are afraid of infertility in their communities which impact on social marginalization on those who found to be infertile. As a result, since the community expect a child as soon as people completing their wedding ceremonies; the new couples do not think of accepting and utilizing modern family planning services. One of the informants had the following to say;

- Most women start thinking about using modern family planning methods after bearing a good number of children. In our community, it is normal to find a person having more than ten children while he/she is still young. Most of the children are obtained in the beginning of marriage. This is because in the beginning, the new couple is expected to bear children in order to test its fertility capacity and by doing that the community get to know that the new couple has no problem related to fertility. In case you do not get children in the first few months, people may start gossiping at you. Because of that some of the families may either go to consult traditional herbals or performing rituals in order to get away from that unpleasant situation (Female informant, 44 years, secondary education, Nyamwigura Village)

In the kurya community infertility is measured within one year after getting married. The new couples are expected to bear children immediately after the wedding ceremony. A woman who fails to conceive after one year, tries her level best to make sure that it happens. She tries to pay visit to the sacred places or spirituals where she can communicate with the ancestors so as to get rid of her problem. If she does not succeed, she is considered unproductive, outcast and thus unwanted.

Mhando (2014) pointed out the importance of children and the resultant position of being single women in the kurya community. In the kurya community infertility is not accepted. Children are highly valued and due to that people are afraid of using the modern family planning services because they believe that the modern family planning services cause infertility. Mhando (2014) and Polycarp (2008) are of the view that up to this moment, single women who are also infertile are considered incomplete, cursed and when they die, they are buried at isolated graveyards like strange people. The same procedures are applied when a girl dies without being circumcised. The girls are not buried in a home, she is thrown away like an animal CDF (2010). They are also denied that social right of being ancestors in their families and communities. Thus, due to this belief, there is persistent stigmatization of single mothers and single daughters who have been unable to get children. Those women who fail to get children are called *wasimbe* which means they are wandering about in the community without any value and as such they deserve no respect. Other kurya people believe that human reproduction is a natural process and thus it should not be interfered with modern family planning methods. These traditional beliefs are deeply rooted and have continuously gaining social acceptance among the kurya community members. There is also a traditional belief that children attract the blessings from the ancestors and thus any procedure that would preclude people from bearing children like the use of modern family planning methods is discouraged. Mhando (2014) reports that the negative perceptions towards infertile women in the kurya community, have also forced people who have been converted to Christianity or Islam and yet they are infertile to adopt children as a way of gaining social acceptance. One of the ways is to adopt a child left by a single dead parent in the neighbor in the community.

It is also believed that the ancestors wanted to create a strong kurya ethnic group identified with their own social identities from other neighbor tribes like the Luo and Maasai who were in endless conflict because of cattle-rustling events. Apart from the inter-tribal wars which have significantly decreased in the kurya community, there are intra-tribal wars. The intra-tribal wars have been accelerated by continuous clans' conflicts and fighting. The clans fighting was usually implicating *Ryanchoka, Nchari, Nyabasi, Kira Timbaru Iregi and Kabwa*. However, in the recent times, the clans fighting has mainly remained been between the *Ryanchoka* and *Nchari* for the same reasons (cattle raiding). In the views of the key informants, all the kurya ethnic clans support many children for various reasons including security which is assured by youths in their communities.

In order to get away from the problem of infertility, some of women pointed out that they have decided to mix modern and traditional methods of family planning in order to reduce the side-effects/ risks of using modern methods. During FGDs with a female informant at Sirari they remarked that although the modern family planning methods have side-effects they cannot stop from using them. Rather, they are applying traditional medicines in order to minimize the side-effects. One of the informants had the following to say;

- I know that the modern family planning methods have many side-effects like over bleeding during the menstrual cycle especially to people like me who use Depo-Provera. What I do is to drink some traditional medicines which regulate my menstrual period as if I had not taken any Depo-Provera before. I can say that the medicines are of help to me.

Concern of infertility was also expressed by women who had applied long-terms methods like IUD. The informants pointed out that the traditional medicines of family planning are of help to some women who fail to conceive. One female informant in an interview at Tarime urban had the following to say;

- I used long-term method that stopped pregnancy for over three years. But when I wanted to conceive later it was difficult to do that. My aunt gave me traditional medicines which I used like two months which worked well. I would say that women have to be clever. They should not give up from using these options. They can change or mix the methods as long as their desire of spacing their children is realized. Life is extremely difficult. We cannot live by depending on our husband alone that is why some of us are oppressed.

Other informants expressed that they since they have been told and experienced the side-effects of the modern family planning methods, they have resorted to take a break sometimes and mix with other traditional methods. One of the informants at Buliba Village had the following to say;

- We have been told that frequent use of modern family planning methods is dangerous. So, I use Depo-Provera for like three months and then I stop and switch to traditional methods like calendar method and the use of bush tomatoes commonly known as "nyanya pori"

This was also supported by one of the nurses in a government dispensary at Nyamwaga who said that her responsibility is to assist women with advice on proper modern methods of family planning telling them the excellent side and dreadful side of applying them. However, she is not using any modern family planning methods since she knows their health consequences. She pointed out that women should consider mixing the modern and traditional methods like taking a break so that they can minimize the effects of applying the modern methods.

Other female informants whose husbands approved the use of condoms reported that they sometimes use condoms in their danger dates and continue to use traditional methods as usual. Women who reported to mix condoms and traditional methods remarked that it was not easy to convince their husbands to do. Their husbands agreed but giving them conditions that condoms were to be used temporarily and will never entertain them in the long run. The informants added that the responsibility of purchasing the male condoms was theirs and not their husbands.

The current study found that the some of the kurya women have now really understood the socio-economic changes going on around them and are still negotiating with the modern family planning methods by applying the traditional medicines in order to curb the side-effects of modern family planning methods. From the findings, we see that the beneficiaries of modern family planning services have decided to adopt some of the modern methods and combine them with the traditional methods in order to minimize the perceived health risks. From the findings, we clearly see that informants' perceptions about risks associated with modern family planning services differ from that of experts.

The informants have scrutinized what they hear from the family planning experts and try to combine them with traditional methods. By doing this, the family planning beneficiaries try to socially construct the family planning services. This is reiterated by Appadurais (1996) concept of "global flows" In essence, this concept attempt to understand how the global discourse gets to be integrated or rejected by the local actors. The assumption is that when the so-called "global flows" reach the local people they never remain the same. People may react by either modifying them, accept some of them or reject some of them (Appadurai, 1996). Further, Berger and Luckmans' (1991) concept of subjective reality is used to denote that individuals have different ways of looking at things, they are conscious; they are capable of changing or modifying the situations. To put this concept in the perspective of these findings, one would say that the kurya community is conscious and capable individuals who can decide to mix modern and traditional methods depending on the way they construct their own reality.

Other scholars believe that it is difficult to completely change the traditional identities at the expense of globalization; rather what the local people do is to socially create their own reality that would not abandon the traditional attributes. "Local groups often reshape their local identities when they meet challenges related to globalization processes, but they do not abandon these identities to become entirely globally oriented" (Stromquist & Monkman, 2000:21). Arguing in the same line, Gyekye (1997) points out that the traditional norms cannot be undermined in the presence of modernity and thus people construct their own reality by this process and acknowledge the fact that many aspects of tradition are inherited, cherished and maintained even if people accept modernity.

4.7. Initiation Ceremonies and Early Marriages and Modern Family Planning

Different kurya informants revealed that the kurya initiation ceremonies which include genital cutting do not visibly support the utilization of modern family planning services. The informants contended that the teachings that provided during the initiations (genital cutting) help to prepare the initiates to be either good father or good mother. Girls are always taught how to love and respect men, parents and how to relate to the entire community, observing menses, how to space their children by using traditional methods of birth control. In most cases, no body talk or very little is mentioned about the utilization of modern family planning services. One of the senior female informants has the following sentiments;

- During the initiation ceremonies like female genital cutting, females are generally taught how to be good wives, good civilian, observing their menses, using traditional family planning methods, be clean because after the ceremonies females are allowed to be married. In most cases girls are taught how to handle family responsibilities, care and love their husbands and sometimes they are taught about traditional methods of family planning and not modern methods. Those who do not attend female genital cutting are disqualified in the community.

One of the nurse midwives at Nyangoto Village also linked female genital cutting and acceptability of modern family planning services. She claimed that;

- During initiation sessions, the initiates especially girls are prepared to accept whatever men say and get prepared to be good wives. An initiation ceremony in the kurya community is a bridge to marriage to most of the young girls. Since the female genital cutting is social-culturally motivated; those girls who escape from undergoing it are not valued when it comes to marriage times.

In the kurya community, there common initiation ceremonies constitute male and female circumcisions. These act as the rite of passage and are aimed at instilling the kurya norms and values to the young generation. The practice also aims at changing the social positions of the kurya people from childhood to adulthood. At this stage, the young generation is properly socialized through different aspects of social life of the kurya community. Different community facilitators instruct the initiates how to behave in their society. Girls are taught how to be obedient to their prospective husbands and boys are taught how to take care of their families. According to the kurya informants, during these ceremonies, the initiates are trained the importance of bearing children once they are married, which is believed to form the basis of their marriage. Girls are taught that their marriage will be more stable by bearing children. The trainings offered have a bearing to the acceptability of modern family planning services because the initiates are given the warning that they have to be careful with modern methods of family planning in the sense that they are believed to cause infertility. On top of that, girls who undergo this important even in their life are taught how to handle their husbands, including being submissive to whatever men say and how to make their husbands come down after being stressed.

Further, since the initiates are expected to be married after the initiation ceremonies and the fact that some of them are still very young, they cannot negotiate the use of modern family planning services with their husbands who are aged and who are supported by values that perpetuate gender inequalities. The initiates are taught that marriage has its norms and values. Once they are married they are not allowed to break the marriage and go back home to their parents. According to some of the informants a dowry paid for the

purpose of marriage is not returned in case there is marriage break-down and thus girls are expected to stay in their marriages even if they are abusive because they either are not accepted to go back home or otherwise they have to return the paid dowry which sometimes goes up to 40 cows. Further, young girls are forced or pressurized by their husbands and in-laws to get pregnancy once they are married and face divorce in case they fail to do that. The reasons attributed to early marriage practices among the kurya community include the fact that girls are considered as the source of wealth to the parents when they are married. The parents are expecting their female children to be married in order to get the bride price (cows) to support marriages for their male children.

The informants also added that in most cases the young girls are not exposed to sexual and reproductive health education before marriage rather than being taught by their parents to respect men and bear children. Upon finishing the initiation ceremonies, a traditional dance is held. The traditional dance commonly known as *litungu* is usually performed on special occasions, such as to celebrate a good harvest, weddings, FGM rituals (*saaro*) and passage to adulthood. Both boys and girls, of the same age (usually 13-18-year-olds), take part. They dance in two lines, with boys on one side and girls on the other. The girls dressing style and their participation in the dances symbolizes that they are ready to be married (CDF 2010, Waritay & Wilson 2012).

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate understanding the social realities of the kurya people are essential in realizing the utilization of modern family services. These social realities seem to draw back the utilization of modern family planning services among the kurya community in Tarime District. These realities constitute the fertility culture, traditional beliefs concerning infertility, gender norms, values and expectations, polygamism and initiation ceremonies. This study would also negate the assumption that supply, accessibility and availability of modern family planning services is not enough for realizing better utilization of the services. Rather, the social realities mean a lot for better utilization of the methods. As it has been reported above, most of the factors attributing to low utilization of modern family planning services are social-culturally based--which are also historically driven and context-specific. Socio-cultural norms and values particularly enable people to construct their own views regarding modern family planning services which inform their acceptance, rejection and modification of the services they have come across.

6. Recommendations

Understanding social realities of a given population cannot be overemphasized. This study has clearly shown how the social realities of the kurya people bump into the modern family planning interventions in Tarime District, which in turn inform the utilization of modern family planning services. However, this study cannot merit generalization since it has been conducted to a specific group of people who share more or less the same values within their own social-cultural context. Therefore, other studies have to be conducted in other areas. The study also recommends that the modern family planning methods which the kurya people are equipped with have to complement the traditional family planning methods which are socially acceptable for enhancing the utilization of the family planning methods.

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