ABSTRACT

Fertility behaviour issues are a concern of many governments and organizations in several countries. Documentation of children ever born is important in understanding fertility behaviour of a region. Fertility bevahiour is usually influenced by various factors so it's necessary to determine their level of influence. Modern contraceptives are currently available for fertility regulation so when fertility is high, it's necessary to find out the threshold at which various factors influence the decision to regulate fertility. Fertility level of Maseno Division is high as illustrated by a total fertility rate of 5.2, higher than those of the sub-county, national and global ones of 4.5, 3.9 and 2.5, respectively. Its population growth rate of 3.9% is higher the national and global ones of 2.6% and 1.2%, respectively. Its contraceptive prevalence rate of 26.1% is lower than the national of 58%. High fertility is causing undesirable effects in Maseno Division yet there isn't documented study on factors influencing it. The purpose of this study was to examine socio-economic factors influencing fertility behaviour in Maseno Division of Kisumu West Sub-County, Kenya. The objectives of this study were to: determine the mean number of children ever born to married women; determine the level at which education level, age at marriage, sex preference, religion, income level, family pressures and family land size influence mean number of children ever born to married women; and assess the threshold at which education level, age at marriage, sex preference, religion and income level influence the decision to regulate fertility by use of modern contraceptives. Cross-sectional survey research design was used. A sample size of 384 married women was obtained from a study population of 40,306 women. The study area was stratified according to locations then married women, key informants and members of Focus Group Discussions were selected using purposive sampling technique. Primary data was collected using questionnaires, Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions while secondary data was collected from published sources. Quantitative data was analyzed by using descriptive and inferential statistics such as frequency distribution, percentages, mean and correlation analysis.. Qualitative data was analyzed by organizing them into themes and patterns then evaluating their usefulness to answer research questions. Results showed that the mean number of children ever born to married women at age cohort 44-45 years is 7 children. Results also revealed that socio-economic factors influence mean number of children ever born at various levels: education level, age at marriage, family income, size of family land, sex preference, religious affiliation and family pressures. Results further indicated that education level, income level, age at marriage and sex preference had thresholds at which they influence the decision to regulate fertility by use of modern contraceptives. The study concluded that a small proportion of the division is in the early third phase of transition according to Demand-Supply Theory of Easterlin. The study recommends enactment of laws that limit the size of a family and a two pronged approach to empower married women economically and to increase their level of motivation towards fertility control and hence adopt modern contraceptives.