

# Influence of Spousal Communication and Gender Attitudes on Contraceptive Use

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# Background

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- Despite the common belief that inequitable gender norms can function as barriers to contraceptive use by constraining spousal communication and family planning (FP) decision-making, there is little published evidence linking FP with gender attitudes

# Study Objectives

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- To examine relationships between:
  - gender attitudes,
  - spousal communication, and
  - contraceptive use
- To determine if there are differences in these relationships for husbands and wives

# Methods and Analysis

*Source of Data:* baseline household survey of 200 couples in Dodoma and Mwanza regions, Tanzania (from a larger OR study testing the effectiveness of radio programming addressing gender norms in support of a CBD program)

*Dependent variable:* current contraceptive use (as reported by women)

*Independent variables:* spousal communication on FP; GEM Scale

*Control variables:* age, education, number of living children, region

*Analyses:* multivariate logistic regression, using wives' and husbands' data in separate models

# Background Characteristics of Study Sample

Variable	Wives (n=200)	Husbands (n=200)
<b>Age</b>		
15-29 years	66.0%	31.5%
30-49 years	34.0%	68.5%
<b>Education</b>		
No education or some primary	26.5%	16.0%
Complete primary or higher	73.5%	84.0%
<b>Number of living children</b>		
None or one	29.0%	28.0%
Two	26.5%	24.5%
Three or more	44.5%	47.5%
<b>Region</b>		
Mwanza	50.0%	50.0%
Dodoma	50.0%	50.0%
<b>Religion</b>		
Christian	74.5%	69.5%
Muslim	25.0%	29.5%
Other	0.5%	1.0%

# Gender Equitable Men (GEM) Scale

## *Purpose:*

- To measure attitudes towards gender norms in intimate relationships

## *Scale Domains:*

- Violence
- Sexual Relationships
- Reproductive Health and Disease Prevention
- Domestic Chores and Daily Life

## *Scoring:*

- 3-point scale

There are times a woman deserves to be beaten

Men need sex more than women do

A real man produces a male child

A woman's role is taking care of her home and family

# Husbands and Wives have Similar Gender Attitudes

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- Husbands' mean GEM score = 9.4 of possible 24
- Wives' mean GEM score = 9.0 of possible 24
- t-test = not significant



# Percent Distribution: Selected Variables of Interest

Variable	Wives (n=200)	Husbands (n=200)
<b>Spousal communication on FP (past 3 months)</b>		
Never or once	41.5%	46.5%
More than once	58.5%	53.5%
<b>Current use of family planning</b>		
No	54.5%	--
Yes	45.5%	

# Spousal FP Communication, Gender Attitudes, and Contraceptive Use

Variable	Wives		Husbands	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Age	ns	ns	ns	ns
Education	ns	ns	ns	ns
No. of children				
0-1 (R)				
2	3.63**	3.96**	2.69*	2.69*
3 or more	4.50**	4.82**	2.88*	2.86*
Region				
Mwanza (R)				
Dodoma	6.91***	9.17***	4.16***	4.30***
Spousal communication on FP				
Never or once (R)				
More than once	3.69***	3.66***	ns	ns
GEM Scale (continuous)	--	1.11*	---	ns

ns = not significant; \*p< .05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

# Summary of Results

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- Husbands and wives had similar gender attitudes
- Spousal communication was a significant predictor of contraceptive use (reported by women) , after adjusting for control variables
- In a second model, the wife's gender attitudes score was a significant predictor of contraceptive use, and spousal communication remained significant
- In comparable models using husbands' data, neither spousal communication nor gender attitudes were significant in predicting contraceptive use

# Study Limitations

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- Small sample size (n=400)
- Respondents have high FP use
- Cannot establish causal relationships due to cross-sectional survey design

# Discussion

- The effect of women's gender attitudes was largely independent of couple communication, suggesting that gender attitudes may influence women's propensity to take initiative in FP
- While influencing men to be more gender egalitarian may be worthwhile for many reasons, it is women's gender attitudes that influence contraceptive use in this setting



# THANK YOU

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