

The Roman Catholic Church (RCC) has for a long time taught against the use of Artificial Family Planning (AFP) methods condemning them as immoral and sinful. This study sought to establish whether the teaching or policy of the RCC on family planning (FP) has any influence on the fertility behaviour of the Catholic adherents of Kangundo Division, Machakos District.

The study is guided by the functional theory of religion as discussed by Carrier, O'dea and O'dea (1983) and Ring (1998). According to the theory, religion has a strong social and personal influence and control over the believers. In this regard, religion, not only determines people's identity, but also guides their social and other forms of behaviour. According to the functional theory, therefore, peoples' behaviour is largely influenced by their religious environment. This environment includes the teachings, beliefs, practices and the authority of a given religious institution, all these being regarded as sacred and authoritative by the adherents.

The religious environment will, most likely, determine which innovations are to be adopted or rejected. Thus, an innovation or a new behaviour is likely to be rejected by the people if it is disapproved by an established religious group or institution that has powerful influence on them. This explains why the Catholic adherents are likely to reject the practice of AFP, which is disapproved by their church.

The study had recourse to primary and secondary sources of data. The primary data were collected mainly by interview method, using the questionnaire instrument, while the secondary data were gathered through extensive library research, using content analysis method. The data were synthesized, arranged and analyzed according to themes.

The study found that the awareness of FP methods in Kangundo is high but the acceptance, and, consequently, the use of modern family planning methods is low. Natural Family Planning (NFP) methods were found to be more popular than AFP methods. The latter were being used more by Protestants than by Catholics. The Protestants were found to be more liberal with regard to discussions on FP methods as compared to the Catholics, who regarded such discussions as immoral. Most of the Catholic associated AFP methods with immoral sexual behaviour, particularly premarital and extramarital sex. The behaviour was blamed for teenage pregnancies, illegal abortions, single parenthood and children born out of wedlock, not to mention about the spread of HIV/AIDS. It was observed that many Christians engaged in immoral sexual activities, which aggravated the spread of HIV/AIDS in Kangundo.

As a way of reducing premarital pregnancies, single parenthood, abortion and the spread of HIV/AIDS in Kangundo, more Protestants than Catholics recommended the introduction of sex education in the current system of education. In addition to this, more Catholics than Protestants recommended sexual morality and faithfulness in marriage, which is the view promoted by the RCC.

In conclusion, the researcher notes that more Catholic concurred with the teaching of their church in rejecting the use of AFP as immoral. Consequently, most of them used the NFP methods which their church promotes and ignored the AFP methods, although the latter are said to be more effective. Therefore, the study concludes that the fertility behaviour of the Catholic adherents in Kangundo is largely influenced by the policy of the church on FP. This conclusion

agrees with the functional theory of religion according to which peoples' behaviour is largely influenced by their religious environmentperformance, particularly at grass root levels where the genres serve as useful sources of information.

Finally, suggestions were made for possible areas for further investigations. These included: comparative study on the level of mass media preferences among the rural population in Kenya, with regards to the print, electronics, music and other types of indigenous media; a study to determine the communicative capacity of various types of indigenous media including music, drama, poetry and stories in order to ascertain the most favourable local media for rural communities in Africa; study on compatibility of various indigenous media contents in relation to the prevailing social-cultural situations; assessment of the audience impact of the indigenous media such as music with regards to their capacity to enhance change in attitude and behaviour; and a study to determine relationship between preference of a specific type of indigenous media among a particular African community and the communicative efficacy of the genres