

Abstract

An Analysis of the Impact of Infertility on Fertility Change in Jamaica:

1960-2002

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Research into the factors constraining fertility levels have tended to focus on modernization, industrialization, and urbanization with their accompanying improvement in population health status, morbidity and mortality, along with improved child survival and contraceptive use. However, little attention has been given to the prevalence of primary and secondary infertility on fertility levels and change over time. This is of significance in the Jamaican context where sterility has historically been an important factor dampening birth rates. This dissertation examines the levels, trends and correlates of infertility over the last 40 years to quantify its contribution relative to other factors such as contraceptive prevalence, deemed responsible for fertility decline.

The prevalence of primary infertility is estimated to be 40 percent in 1989 and in 2002, among sexually active women of childbearing age, though there was an increase in the interim. In the case of secondary infertility, about 60 per cent of women experienced this condition over the four survey years. The level of childlessness recorded in the 2001 census was 30.5 per cent, and this is similar to the level recorded in RHS of 2002, which was 29.6 per cent.

The extent of fecundity impairment among women of childbearing age was 31 per cent in 2002. Impairment is found particularly among women over age 30,

mothers, women in stable unions, and women with the lowest levels of education. These women have difficulty conceiving, have experienced foetal loss, or have waited at least 2 years without conceiving.

Use of the Bongaarts framework revealed that in 1989, 15 per cent of the reduction of total fecundity to observed fertility was attributed to primary sterility. By 2002, the contribution had declined to 7 per cent. Contraception continues to play a major role in reducing fertility from the maximum possible, while sterility plays a lesser role.

Keywords: infertility; fertility; sterility, childlessness; infecundity; Jamaica;

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