Tanzanian Journal of Population Studies and Development, Vol. 20, Nos. 1&2, 2013: 91-109

The Influence of Family Size on Family Wellbeing In Mbozi District, Tanzania

Margreth Nakalani[*] *& Cosmas H. Sokoni*[**]

Abstract

This paper investigates factors influencing large family size and family realization of its benefits in Nanyala ward, Mbozi district, Tanzania. It is based on a household survey that involved 280 heads of households aged 50 years and above. Large family size is predominant in Nanyala ward. Factors influencing large family sizes include use of force by men, desire for security at old age, men's desire to increase clan, high child mortality and parents' believe that every child has his/her own luck. The paper reveals parents' reflections on the benefits and disadvantages of large family size. 63.2% of the respondents claim that life is so difficult that a large family size is no longer beneficial. These parents indicated that if they were young, they would choose to have no child or not more than three children. On the other hand, parents revealed advantages of large family size as a source of farm labour, respect, bride wealth and health services. The study recommends various positive measures to be taken – such as reinforcement of population policies on marriage laws, education for women and improvement on health services, falsifying traditions and culture related to large family size – to prevent having large family sizes.

1. Background

The size of a family is an important demographic variable. A nuclear family consists of a husband and wife, and their children (Treas, 1981; Moses & Adewale; 2002). It is a social group characterized by common residence, economic cooperation, and reproduction. Persons in a family are united by ties of marriage, blood, or adoption constituting a single household; interacting and communicating with each other in their respective social role of husband and wife, mother and father, brother and sister, as well as maintaining a common culture.

In the context of this paper, 'family size' is confined to the members of the nucleus family composed of father, mother and their own children by birth. It excludes other relatives that may be living with them. The size of a family has an influence on the wellbeing not only of the family, itself but also of the country as a whole. Family size is never neutral in its impact. It generates benefits and costs that affect the wellbeing of family members. Wellbeing has

[*] Demographic Training Unit, University of Dar es Salaam
[**] Department of Geography, University of Dar es Salaam

been defined as the quality of life of an individual or other social unit (Keyes, Shmotkin & Ryff, 2002). Family wellbeing covers both physical and psychological wellbeing, as well as the quality of relationships between parents, and the quality of parent-child relationships (Leonard & Roberts, 1999). The wellbeing of children could be defined as having a positive dimension called 'life satisfaction' (comprised of satisfaction with self, family, friends, home, and school), and a negative dimension called 'psychological disturbance' (comprised of anxiety, depression, anger, disruptive behavior, and physical symptoms) (ibid.).

Most of the developing countries are characterized by high birth rates and falling death rates that are directly linked to large family size. Tanzania is one among developing countries with high fertility rate. Its total fertility rate for 2010 was 5.4 (URT, 2010). Pressat (1989) defines fertility as the child-bearing performance of individuals, couples, groups or populations. The term is used to cover all aspects of reproduction and measures of fertility. It normally refers only to live births.

The total fertility rate differs widely within Tanzania. The total fertility rate in Mainland Tanzania is 5.4; and 5.1 births per woman for Zanzibar. In Mainland Tanzania the TFR ranges from 3.9 in the eastern zone, to 7.1 in the western zone (URT, 2011). Despite the fact that large family sizes have been elucidated to bring about more hardships in family's wellbeing, still Mbeya and other west regions of Tanzania have large family sizes.

2. Perspectives on the Determinants of Family Size

Family size is an outcome of a family's desire for children. Various theories explain the justification for a family size. The economic theory of fertility (Becker, 1960; Willis, 1973) asserts that parents desire children for the benefits of child services they generate. Additional child services can be obtained extensively by having additional children, or intensively by devoting additional resources to the upbringing of existing children; and thereby raising the level of quality per child. The cost of a unit of child services is determined by the quantity and price of each input (parental time, various goods and services). A family's ability to produce a child and other services is also constrained by available time and wealth.

Caldwell's theory of intergenerational wealth flows hypothesizes that children are net economic assets to parents (Caldwell, 1976). The theory proposes a direct link between family structure and fertility. Fertility decisions in all societies are economically rational responses to familial wealth flows. Whereas in 'traditional' societies of developing countries, net wealth flows are primarily upward from younger to older generations, in developed nations downward wealth flows (where parents are expected to provide for children's economic wellbeing) dominates. In societies with net upward wealth flows, the

economically rational decision is to have as many surviving children as possible because each additional child adds positively to a parent's wealth, security in old age, and social and political wellbeing. In societies with net downward wealth flows, the economically rational decision is to have no children, or the minimum number allowed by a psychological disposition that derives pleasure from children and parenting. The worldwide transition from high to low fertility is the result of a change in family structures from upward to downward wealth flows.

This change in family structure is due to the spread of new values that place a premium on individual satisfaction and achievement (Caldwell, 1980). The transition from `traditional' to 'modern' family structure occurs when a critical mass of individuals adopt new values, and respond with low fertility. Caldwell's theory recognizes technological impacts on wealth flows, such as the changing economic value of education. The theory seems to face challenges in modern days due to the fact that there is change in wealth flow from upward to downward, hence there is more cost to bring up a child. Thus, having many children is more challenging and seems to be a burden to a household.

Leibenstein's economic theory of fertility decline states that the motivation to achieve upward social mobility is the most powerful economic motivation for the individual. It is reinforced by the fear of the realistic consequences of downward social mobility. Many aspire upwards, but few aspire to a fall in status. Families have a strong desire to avoid a fall in status (Leibenstein, 1975). Parents are considered to rationally calculate costs and benefits at every birth. Children are seen as commitment goods such that expenditure on children reflects a commitment undertaken by parents, and not the temporary feeling toward the child at any moment.

Becker's quantity-quality model (QQ) shows that households decide the level of resources allocated per child quality (Becker, 1960; Becker & Lewis, 1973; Becker & Tomes, 1976). The quantity-quality distinction allows a separation of the decision between the number of children and the expenditures, or 'quality', per offspring. A household behaves as an individual decision-maker and maximizes a utility function containing the quantity of children, the expenditure on each child (child-quality), and a single composite consumption good. That is, the cost of an additional child depends on the chosen quality, and the cost of an additional unity of child-quality depends on the chosen level of quantity.

With reference to the theories discussed above, the issue of family size in Tanzania is determined by biological, behavioral, economic, cultural, social and environmental factors. These factors cause variations in family size, others opting to have large and others small family size. Most of the economic theories on family size fail to capture cultural factors that may be strong in traditional societies. As argued by Van Den Walle and Foster (1990), fertility

decrease could be impossible given the constellation of cultural forms and norms that provide support for high fertility. Furthermore, high fertility is rooted in the socio-cultural value of male child preference, low social and educational status of women that prevents them from taking decision on their fertility, and use of family planning services. Cultural factors such as kin support and traditional values, as well as norms perpetuating high fertility, have also their own independent and intrinsic effect on fertility in developing countries like Tanzania. In traditional societies fertility remains to be high as values are attached to male heir; and child rearing is not only the responsibility of biological parents but shared by close relatives and neighbours (Turke, 1989; Low, Clarke & Lockridge, 1992). Among these societies, fertility may not decline in response to economic hardship since the costs are shared; and individual mothers would not feel the pain of resource constraints.

3. Influence of Family Size on Family Wellbeing

Various studies have shown higher morbidity among mothers and children in large-sized families. Early marriage, followed by too early pregnancy, too many children, and too frequent births affect the health of the mother, as well as that of the children (Alderman, Chaudhry & Garcia, 1988).

The health and education of children influence the productivity of the next generation. In the new family economics it is hypothesized that parents choose the family size they want, at the same time they decide the quality of children they wish to have. Thus, they decide the amount they wish to invest in child health and education. The new family economics predicts negative correlations between family size and investment in a child's education (King, 1986).

Downey (1995) examines the relationship between family size and education, and finds that children living in smaller families indeed have more educational resources. As family size increases, the availability of resources per child declines. Powell and Steelman (1995) investigated the occurrence and amount of parental financial support. They consistently found a negative relationship between the number of children and the presence and amount of parental support. Larger family size is associated with fewer parental supports. According to Powell and Steelman, families with many people will have hardships in access to various basic needs such as education and others (ibid.).

Hammer (1985) found that, for developed countries, children may have little impact on the amount of savings done by a household, but may affect the timing of the savings. The timing of savings can affect the aggregate effects of population growth, but the size and direction of this effect is not clear. A family must determine not only how many children it has, but also the amount spent on them (Becker, 1960).

The influence of large family on socio-economic status can be explained by using the 'family economic stress model'. This model posits that a family's economic hardships influences children and adolescents' wellbeing and development outcomes indirectly through a series of mediating family processes, including perceived economic pressure, emotional distress, marital relations, and parenting practices (Conger & Donnellan, 2007). Large family sizes impose economic burden to the entire family because the family has to rearrange the available resources to accommodate the whole family, which in many cases have led to deterioration of the wellbeing of the family.

Larger number of children results in a decline in the labour force participation of parents, particularly mothers, as well as in a decline of their earnings. This means that mothers are forced to withdraw from the labour force as they have additional children. The impact on paid employment is also bigger than for all types of work, (Dacanay & Rodolfo, 2005). Thus, as a result, there will be reduction of income due to failure to participate in labour force which will be the source of problems in affording basic needs.

The methodologies used in various literatures focus on determinations of influence of family size on family wellbeing. Aspects of parents' self-evaluation and assessment on expectations of family sizes are not examined. Recently, researchers have shown interest in assessing prior expectations of couples who have completed their reproductive period, and on the influence of family size on the wellbeing of their families. One of such studies is that by Kalesanwo and Adenuga (2009), which assesses adults' opinion on the ideal family size and family wellbeing.

4. Objectives and Significance of the Study

Basing on parents' self-assessment, this study evaluates the influence of family size on family wellbeing in Mbozi district, one of the high fertility areas of Mbeya region, Tanzania. It examines the extent to which parents have realized the expected benefits of large family size. Specifically, the study examines family size distribution, and identifies factors influencing family size.

The study contributes to knowledge, especially on the aspect of the influence of family size on family wellbeing. Furthermore, it reveals the reflections of parents on their prior expectations of costs and benefits of their family sizes as it has implications on the wellbeing of family members. Assumed negative effects of large family sizes have directed population policies to encourage reduction of family size. For viable and sustainable policy interventions, it is necessary to have a deeper understanding of the broad and complex interrelationship between family size outcomes and the economic and socio-cultural factors encountered by families.

5. Study Area and Methodology

The survey was conducted between November and December 2011 in four villages of Nanyala ward in Mbozi District located along the highway from

Mbeya to Tunduma. The district of Mbozi has the highest population growth rate about 3.1% per year. The majority of the people in the district prefer large family size.

To start with, we obtained a list of all households from each of the four sample villages. A total of 1121 heads of households aged 50 years and above was drawn from the list as follows: Lusungo (180); Songwe (345); Nanyala (304), and Senjele (292). Then a sample of 25% of the heads of households was drawn randomly from each village, giving a total of 280 respondents who completed a household questionnaire. More data were collected using observation, interviews with key informants, and through focused group discussions. The major criterion for the selection of respondents was their completion of reproductive age, marked by the age of 50 years and above, in order to review their prior cost of large family size.

6. Research Findings

6.1. Respondents' Characteristics

The majority of the respondents were males (55.4%), with some variations between villages. Senjele village had a greater proportion of female respondents (53.4%) because the village had more widows who were aged above 50 years. The majority of the respondents (98.6%) were peasants. The respondents belonged to fifteen religious sects/denominations, including traditional religion, Roman Catholic, Moravian, Anglican, Ridmud, Apostolic Church, Pentecost, TAG/AG, Brotherhood, Last church, Lutheran, Jehovah's Witnesses, Evangelical Church, Adventist and Baptist. The most dominant denomination was traditional religion, followed by Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church. The category of traditional religion refers to the non-formal groups following religious beliefs and practices based on their local traditions. Such groups have retained their traditional beliefs and practices in the context of the widespread of Christianity.

Figure 1 shows the main religious groupings of the respondents. The multiplicity of religious sects in Mbozi district has been influenced by a mixture of many tribes in the region. While 31.8% of the respondents belonged to the group of traditional religion, the rest belonged to various groups of Christian religion. The group 'others' includes Christian denominations of Baptist, Brotherhood, Jehovah's Witness, Adventist, Evangelical, Anglican and Ridmud. Dominance of traditional religion has encouraged persistence of traditional culture, norms and values related to marriage and family size.

More than half of the respondents, i.e., 65.4%, had not gone to school, while 33.6% had attended primary school, 0.7% had attended secondary education and only 0.4% respondents had reached tertiary education level. There are variations between villages in terms of education. Senjele had the greatest proportion (80.8%) of respondents who had not gone to school, followed by Lusungo (71.1%) and lastly by Songwe (51.2%).

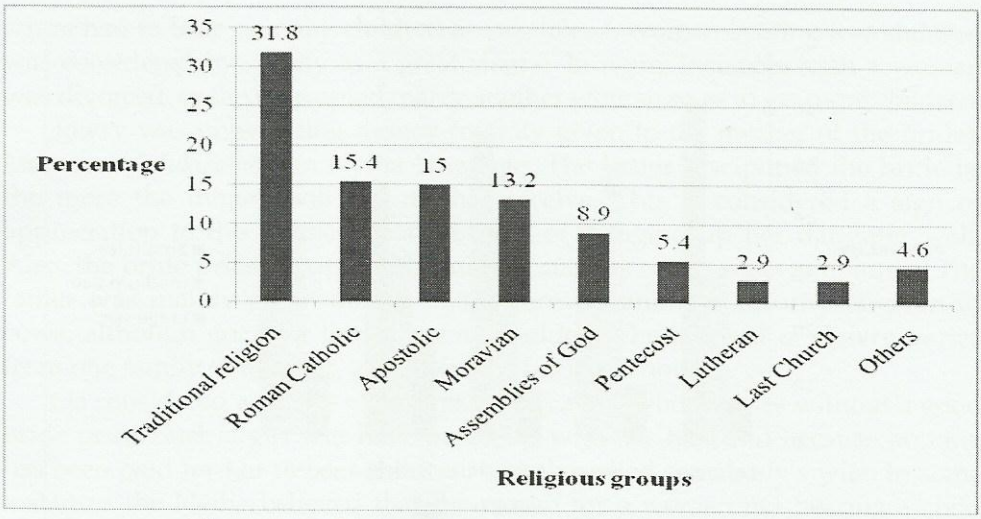


Figure 1: *Religious Groupings of the Respondents*

Furthermore, respondents belong to eleven tribes. The dominant tribe was the Nyiha who formed almost half of the people in the study area. Other tribes were Nyakyusa, Ndali, Nyamwanga, Safwa, Malila, Walambya, Ngoni, Gogo and Kinga. Different ethnic groups have different perceptions on issues pertaining to family size. Some tribes encourage large family size like the Nyiha, but others did not considered large family size as important.

6.2 Family Size Distribution

Arthur (2005) categorizes family size into three groups: (i) a large family (one with more than six children); (ii) a small family size (with up to three children); and a medium family size (with four to six children). For this study, a large family size is one with more than six siblings; a medium family size is that which has four to six siblings; and a small family size has three or less siblings.

Almost half (49.3%) of the respondents had large family size, 39% had medium family size, and 11.8% had small family size. Lusungo village had the largest proportion (61.4%) of households with large families, followed by Nanyala (55.6%). Senjele was leading in having small family size (19.2%); and 40% of households in Songwe village had medium family size (Fig. 2).

6.3 Factors Influencing Large Family size

The majority (93.5%) of the families did not plan the number of children they had as there were no prior agreements among couples on the number of children they should have. Respondents argued that children were given by God, and thus it would be sinful to plan how to bear them. The few who planned the number of children had various reasons in favour of large or small family size. Fig. 3 shows the factors influencing family size in Nanyala ward.

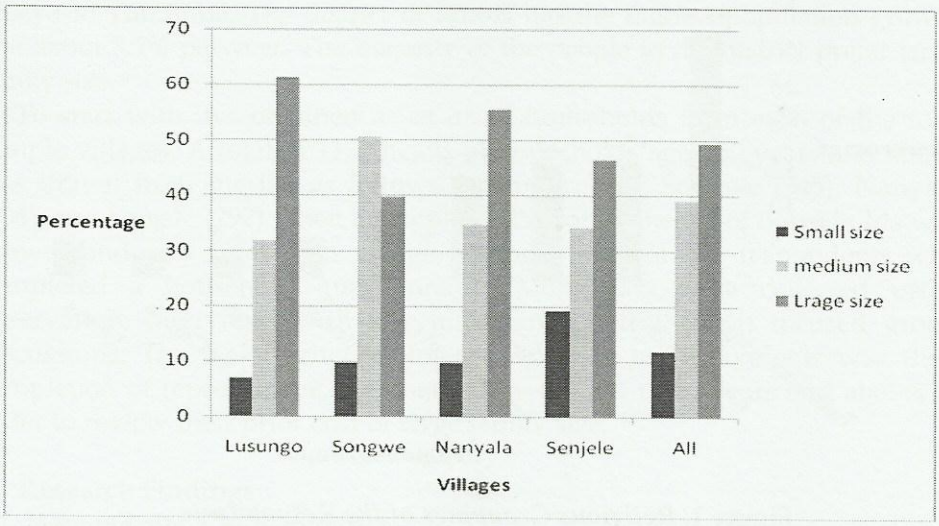


Figure 2: *Family Size Distribution in the Study Area*

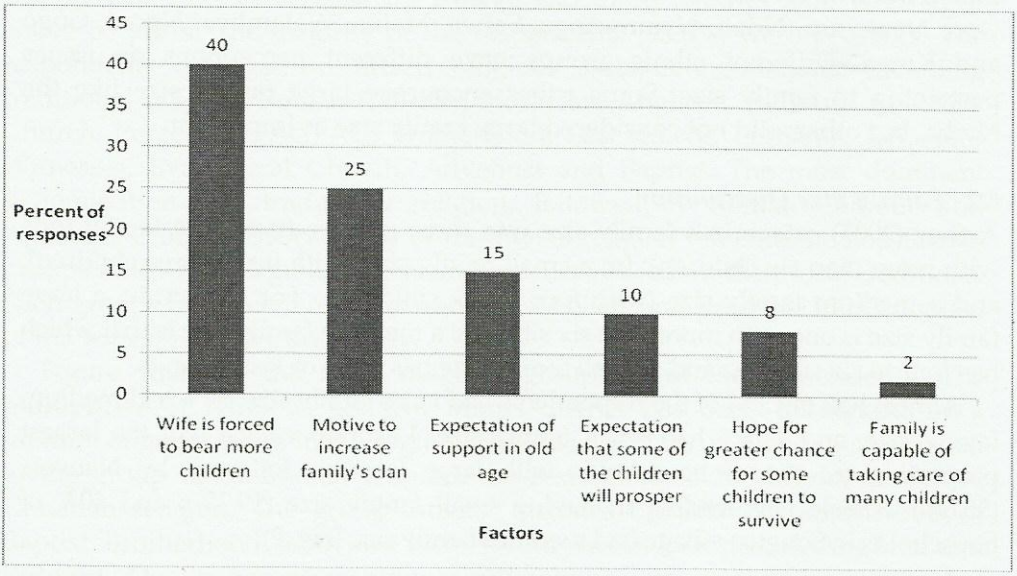


Figure 3: *Factors influencing family size in Mbozi district*

(a) Use of Force

Use of force is a major factor that influences large family size. Women are forced by men to bear more children. It was reported that once a woman delays conception she was beaten by her husband. Men claimed that as their cows—which were given as bride wealth—reproduce and increase in numbers, their

wives had to bear as many children as possible. A woman bearing few children was considered by society as a great shame. In many instances such a woman was divorced, or the man opted marry another woman so as to get more children.

Dowry was given using money (mainly given to the mother of the bride), known as *'ulukwamba'* in Nyiha language. The better disciplined the bride is, the more the money will her mother receive. This is considered a sign of appreciation to the mother's contribution of bringing up her daughter well. Also, the bride price is paid using animals such as cows, goats and lambs. The father was mainly given dowry in the form of animals. Priority is given to cows, although goats or lambs are also added. The amount of dowry varies from one family to another, and from one bride to another.

It is considered a shame to parents and to a girl who marries without a good bride price. Such a girl will have problems with her husband because nothing has been paid for her to bear children, or to be called somebody's wife. In some instances the Nyiha believed that the reason for a woman not bearing a child was because her husband had not paid anything her. Most of such marriages did not last long as the couples ended divorcing each other.

The importance of bride price is declining with the increase of in-migration of other tribes—such as Ndali and Malila who are not very strict on dowry—into the study area, although among the Nyiha it is still valued; and they blame other tribes for marrying their daughters without paying dowry. Where a woman marries with a high bride price and unfortunately does not bear a child, she is divorced and all the bride price has to be returned, except the *ulukwamba.* But if the woman bears some children, not all bride price is returned once she is divorced. The woman is allowed to retain part of the bride price.

(b) Men's desire to increase their clans

Men's desire to increase their clans is an important factor for large family sizes in Mbozi. The Nyiha claim that having few children is a sign of poverty, and puts the clan in the danger of diminishing. This factor accounted for large family size for about 25% of the respondents. Husbands aspire to increase their clans by having many children. This phenomenon is supported by Chibalonza (1989) who states that children belong to the husband in patriarchal societies. The extension of his clan is thus a motive towards large family size for the man. The husband pays dowry to the bride's family as a compensation for the loss of her services and expenses of upbringing. In return she is expected to contribute to the husband's family in terms of labour and bearing children. For this reason, a woman cannot cease child bearing voluntarily because it will seem to be a failure of the wife to fulfill her obligations.

(c) Security at Old Age

The desire for security at old age is another factor for large family size. This factor accounts for large family size for 15% of 48 respondents who planned

their family size. This factor is supported by the old age security hypothesis which states that the expectation of relying on children in one's old age promotes the desire for large families. Help from children in old age is frequently stressed as an important benefit children provide to parents in most developing countries (Arnold & Fawcett, 1975; Bulatao, 1979; Kagiticibasi, 1982; De Vos, 1984). However, during focused group discussion it was argued that nowadays there is a decrease of support from children at old age. The traditional obligations towards parents and the duty to provide them with the love and care that they deserve are now difficult to fulfil.

(d) Every Child has his/her own Luck

There are people who are in favour of having large family size by thinking that among these many children there could be a chance to get good/prosperous ones. In this sense having a small family size is seen as a risk in that parents will miss some gifts from their children. To such people, it is better to be more certain by bearing many children as every child will be different from the other, and each will have his/her own luck. The questionnaire results show that 10% of 48 respondents were influenced by this factor.

(e) Child Mortality

Death of children motivates large family size. People bear many children because they are not sure if the children born will survive. As such they decide to bear many so that some would survive in case of deaths. This factor influences family size for 8% of the respondents. This is supported by the child survival hypothesis which states that experience with or fear of child mortality may lead parents to have additional births either to replace those who have actually died, or as an insurance against expected deaths (United Nations, 1987, 1988). The incidence of child mortality exercises a positive influence on large family size desires, and a negative influence on the use of family planning methods. Large family size is a fundamental adjustment to high mortality, and high fertility is necessary for a group's survival when mortality is high. When infant and child mortality rates are high, large number of children in those circumstances becomes necessary given that the chances of survival of children to adulthood are slender.

7. Influence of large family size on family wellbeing

7.1. Parents' realization of benefits of large family size

Large family size is more prominent in Nanyala ward. It accounts 49.3% of the households studied in the area. The study findings show advantages and disadvantages of having a large family size in Nanyala ward. The advantage of large family size is another motive towards maintaining a large family size. Fig. 4 shows the benefits of large family size. The total frequency of responding various benefits of large family size was 445 as the question allowed multiple responses. The frequencies have varied according to the respondents priorities.

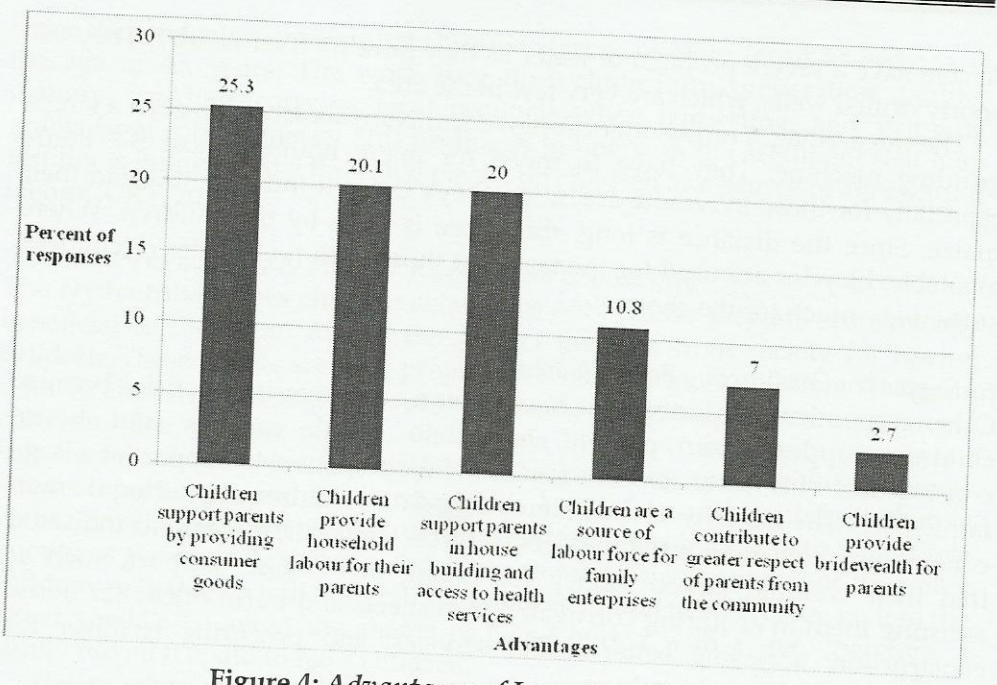


Figure 4: *Advantages of Large Family Size.*

(a) Children Support through Provision of Consumer Goods

Many respondents reported that having many children is advantageous because children support their parents by buying clothes, sugar, soap and giving money. This reason accounts 25.3% of the responses to the question. Parents are pleased to be given such items by their children; hence they find that if they have many children they will get many of such consumer items.

(b) Children as a Source of Household Labour

Parents benefits from large family size in terms of household chores when their children are still young. One of the respondents explained that even in her old age she desired to bear other children, even to reach 20, so that they can help her in fetching water, grinding flour, fetching firewood, cooking and other household chores. Fig. 4 show about 20.1% of the respondents gave this reason as the factor that influences large family size. This factor is supported by the finding that one of factors behind high fertility in Tanzania is the value of children as a source of domestic labour (URT, 2006).

However, parents in the study area felt that they lack support of their children in household chores. The people of Nanyala ward use firewood as the main source of energy. They have to spend many hours looking for firewood. The villages of Nanyala, Songwe and Lusungo have rivers and piped water, although sometime the piped water does not reach the area, and therefore people have trek for almost an hour to fetch water. For example, people at

Senjele have a severe problem of water as they have no river nearby. They use poorly drilled wells, which are very few in the area.

The three villages of Lusungo, Songwe and Nanyala have not even a single grinding machine. They have to travel for many hours, almost 5-7 hours especially for those in remote areas, to Mbeya Cement Industry to grind their maize. Since the distance is long, this chore is done by the children. Where available, bicycles are used for the task, but those with no bicycles or children suffer very much for the chore.

(c) Support in Constructing Better Houses

Other respondents reported that having many children is beneficial because children support their parents' access to health services and house construction. This factor accounts for 20% of the responses in support of a large family size. The majority of the parents stated that children supported them in constructing houses by providing labour force. However, the parents indicated that their children lacked money for giving them more support, such as assisting them in acquiring corrugated iron sheets and burnt bricks for house construction; accessing better health services; and procuring fertilizer for improving agricultural production.

House-building is a crucial aspect in the study area because every person builds his/her house. Individuals do not hire people to construct their houses. If one cannot build his/her house, s/he will remain in an old house with no door, windows and with faults everywhere. The only support for building a house comes from a couple's children. Many houses in Nanyala ward are not durable. Most of them are roofed using grass, and the walls are of earth bricks or of mud. Houses need to be repaired almost every year because once the grass decays the roof leaks.

People in the area have the perception that a good house is the one made of burnt bricks, corrugated iron sheets and a wooden door. Due to this, parents seek more support from their children in construction of their houses. Parents are satisfied of their children's support if they help them repair or build houses even if they miss other needs such as clothes, food or health services.

(d) Children as a Source of Labour Force

Parents see provision of labour force by their children as one of the advantages of a large family size. This factor accounts for 10.8% of all the responses. Since the majority of the people in the study area (about 99%) are farmers, access to labour force from own children is advantageous. As these people do not have the ability to mechanise agricultural production, they rely more on available human labour force. Thus having many children is considered to be of help to parents. Children's labour force can be used in economic activities such as working in farms and limestone production, and in house construction. Children are expected to start working in farms when they are still young.

Some respondents reported that children start to work in farms as early as at the age of six years. The work they do include farm preparation, putting manure, weeding, carrying farm products when harvesting, and stripping grains from cobs of maize. This finding is in line with the argument that high fertility is influenced by the value placed on children as a source of agricultural labour (URT, 2006).

(e) Children as a Source of Parents' Respect from Community

The Nyiha tribe values children sometimes not because they are economically beneficial to them, but due to the respect they get from society for having children. These people are very proud to have ten or more children. A woman with 13 children was asked about the benefits she gets from having so many children. The woman replied, *"mb'akuleta umushinzi kumb'antu ukwaga pu kujenda ushindime mb'akuti apapile;"* meaning: having many children brings one's respect from people. Furthermore, key informants explained that in earlier days, a parent who died with no children was buried with a fruit tree known as *zumbi*, and another tree known as *ipangala* as a symbol of their only children so that s/he will not grab the children of others when they go into the 'other world'. To avoid the shame of being buried with a tree, therefore, a family did all it could to have children.

The problem of not having a child and its implication during the burial ceremony is the same for women and men. They are all buried with *zumbi* and *ipangala*. As such, sometimes a woman may ask her young sister to marry her husband so that she can bear a child for him; and if the husband is the one that cannot not bear children, a woman can be allowed to have a child from another man. If the woman had a child outside the marriage, the child would be smuggled in the family and considered to belong to the woman's husband. This is done so as to avoid the shame of not having a child.

(f) Children as a Source of Bride Wealth

A small proportion (2.7%) of the respondents considered more bride wealth as one of the advantages of having a large family size. Parents who have female children expect to get many cows as bride wealth. A family expected to be rich from having many baby girls. However, bride wealth is the least advantage as shown in Fig. 4. Parents informed that nowadays girls are not adhering to traditional norms and practices of marriage. Parents no longer receive bride wealth as their daughters marry without adhering to their parents' claim for bride price.

7.2 Limitations of large family sizes to households' well being

Many respondents explained the disadvantages of large family size. It was observed that many children were useless because much effort was used to care for them, and yet they eventually did not help their parents. These disadvantages are summarized in Fig. 5.

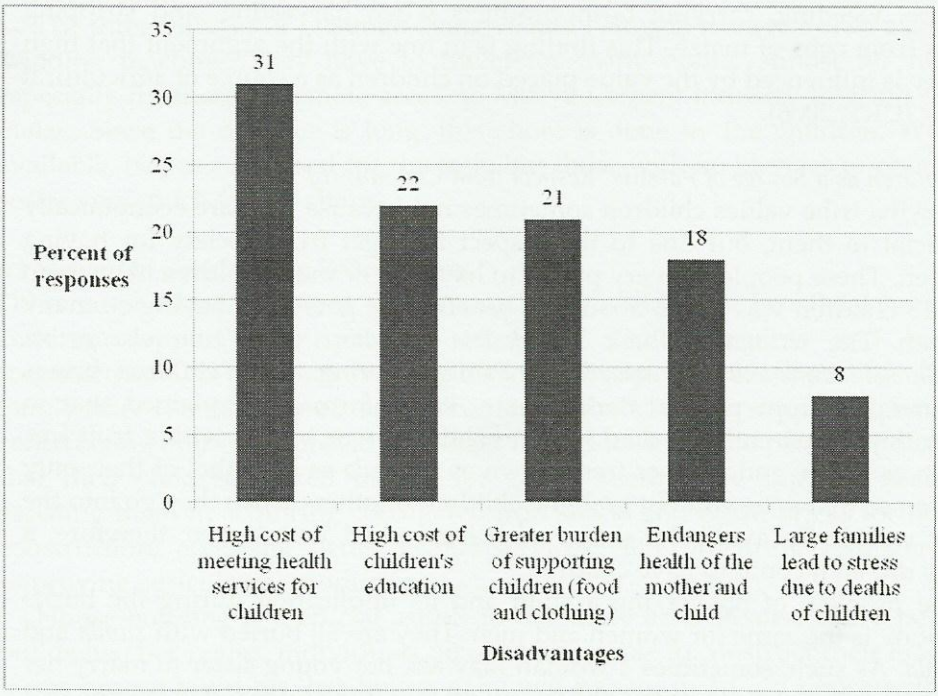


Figure 5: ***Disadvantages of large family size***

(a) Costly Health Services Needs

Fig. 5 reveals that high cost of health services was seen one of the great disadvantages of large family size, accounting for 31% of the responses to this question. The people assess this issue across time. They argue that there were no many diseases in the past, and that is why many children then grew without being sent to hospital. However, they argue, the situation is now different as there are so many diseases. Hence, having many children is a torture nowadays because of health expenses.

(b) Costly Education Needs

The cost of access to education service is another factor which troubles households with large family size. This was reported by a quarter (26%) of the respondents. In the past many people did not attend school, but with the change of time, and under the influence of the government, people are forced to send their children to school. Sending many children to school is expensive as many things—such as tuition fee, school uniform, stationery, pocket money, etc.—require financial resources. In this respect parents feel that it is costly to have many children. It was reported by key informants that enforcement of

local rules towards parents contribution to the development of community schools encounters resistance from parents who consider it a burden to them.

(c) Burden of Supporting Many Children

Parents considered it a is a burden to feed and support needs of many children in a family. About a fifth (22%) of the respondents cited this problem. Parents explain that though they desire many children, feeding many mouths is actually a torture to them. Also, parents noted that some children bear children before marriage and bring them home for their parents to take care of them. Parents are, therefore, required to support their grandchildren. This is considered a disadvantage to parents.

(d) Endangering of the Health of the Mother and Child

Another disadvantage of large family size is that it endangers the health of the mother and child due to close spacing of children. When pregnancies and births are spaced too close, women do not have sufficient time to re-build nutritional stores in their bodies. There is an additional physiological stress involved as a short interval causes an overlap in gestation and lactation. This phenomenon is commonly called "maternal depletion syndrome". It can lead to low birth weight children, preterm birth, placental abruption, placenta previa, uterine rupture, stunting, maternal malnutrition and changes in breast milk content (Rutstein, 2002).

(e) Stress and Confusion of Parents

Death of own children is a cause of stress to many parents in the study area. It is a common scenario to have a family which had 12 children eventually has just one or no child remaining. One man reported that after the death of all of their children his wife had a stress till she died. She kept sitting facing the tombs of her children. There were many deaths in the study area caused by HIV/AIDS. Death of grown-up children left many parents without the expected support from own children. Parents have pain and stress due to many deaths of their children. Some parents could not resist from shading tears when responding to the question on the number of children they had. Having a large number of children, therefore, does not guarantee availability of support to parents at old age. Less care for many children, as is commonly experienced, and health risks may lead to their untimely death.

7. Conclusion

The paper has analyzed factors behind large family size in Mbozi district. Large family size is a dominant feature of households in the study area. The majority of households (49.3%) in the study area have a large family size. There were few small sized families (11.8%) with less than 3 children, and 39% were middle family-size families with 4 children to six children.

Family size in Mbozi district has been influenced by many factors. Factors for large family size include men forcing their wives to bear more children; parents' desire for security at old age, motive to increase clan, desire for social respect; family need for labour force, bride wealth; minimizing risk of losing children in case of high mortality rate; and parents' belief that every child has his/her own luck, with the hope that some prosperous individuals would be realized among the many children being born.

Information on parents' realization of benefits of large family size was gathered through structured interviews and focused group discussion. Parents stated advantages and disadvantages of large family size. Advantages of large family size to parents include social respect; greater bride wealth; security at old age; and support when in need of food, clothes and other basic needs. The disadvantages to parents included the burden of meeting high cost of health services, education needs, feeding of children, endangering the health of the mother and child, and stress and confusion of parents.

Moreover parents showed changes on the benefits of large family size over time. In the past a large family size was more beneficial, but due to current changes of socio-economic conditions a large family size is a burden to parents. Furthermore, respondents argued that in-migration of members of other tribes and increase of children access to school has reduced the strength and effect of Nyiha culture and traditions in the area.

8. Recommendations

The paper recommends that initiative to reduce large family size should consider specific local contexts. Although culture and traditions that influence large family size are likely to be reduced with socio-economic changes and increase in interaction with the external world, there is the need to sensitize local population of the unfounded justification for large family size.

The paper recommends the establishment of an appropriate information, education, and communication system, which among other things, will encourage the provision and the use of services related to family planning and responsible parenthood. These include motivating mothers to breastfeed their children for a period of not less than two years, and directing a significant part of family planning programs to cover men so that eventually couples are able to decide and plan the size of their family.

There is need to educate the local population, especially men, on the necessity to consider and give priority to the health of the mother and child rather than material and social benefits that arise from having many children. Having many children involves a family spreading its meagre resources thinly for the development of each of the children. Eventually, none of the children attains qualities necessary for achieving parents' expectations for support.

Furthermore, the law on marriage should be enforced. Women in the study area bear many children partly because the law is not enforced as many girls marry at very young age and eventually increase their chance of bearing many children. Improving access to education for the youth, especially girls, will help them to delay marriage, henceforth decreasing the reproductive age for women. There is the need to improve women's status in society by reviewing existing laws in areas where the rights of women and those of children are undermined. The reported use of force by men against their wives for promoting interests of husbands is socially not acceptable and should be stopped.

Since high mortality appears to have encouraged families to have many children, improvement of access to health facilities and services in rural areas is likely to reduce the urge to have many children as a way of spreading risks of child mortality in a long run. As Cleland (2001) argues, mortality decline is the necessary and sufficient condition for fertility decline. Angeles (2010) concludes that mortality changes have a large impact on fertility, and can account for a major part of observed fertility decline. Therefore, the better way to reduce family size is to provide good health services reducing child mortality.

Also, measures should be taken to falsify some traditions and cultural believes related to large family size should be taken into consideration. The traditions of bride wealth, lack of respect among women with no child or few children, divorcing of women who lack children and forcing women to bear more children in order to increase clan should be stopped. Couples should plan together on their ideal family size.

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