

## BIRTH CONTROL: CHRISTIAN ETHICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Rwanda continues to face rapid growing population though its government did not cease to call upon all Christian churches to be involved in educating citizens on the advantages of smaller families as we look forward the 2020 vision. The intent of this study was to find out the perceptions of Rwanda Christians on birth control in ethical perspective. The cor-relational and descriptive research designs were chosen for this study. A questionnaire was designed in way it can meet three dimensions of birth control (general acceptance, natural methods and artificial methods) and distributed to 62 respondents selected randomly among Christian community of AUCA. The findings showed that birth control is viewed as ethical by Christians (mean=3.48), but among the natural methods of birth control none of them has a significant relationship with birth control, while among the artificial methods, the Barrier method (including male condoms and female condoms) and pills method have a weak but significant relationship with birth control. However, given that respondents see any method that brings an end to the embryo's life as unethical and that accept pills method as ethical means that they do not have enough information concerning the functionality of the pills because among them there are those which make an end to the life of the embryo. From the above findings we recommend that further explanation relating to the functionality of each and every method of birth control be given to the Christians to allow them to exercise their ethical choice.

**Keywords:** Birth control, natural methods, artificial methods, barrier methods

### Introduction

The government of Rwanda is trying all means of birth control to tackle the issue of population growth to achieve its ambitious Vision 2020. To slow population growth rate, the Government of Rwanda wants all Christian churches to be involved in educating citizens especially their church members on the advantages of smaller families, sensitizing them to the application of Birth control methods (The Lancet, 2010).

This struggle is carried out in the context where some Christians believe that God is sovereign not just in salvation, but also in providing a couple with children whereby according to some of them, children are a blessing (Bishop, 2010). Since, several forms of birth control directly violate some commands of the Bible, specifically the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill", and that Christians believe that human life is sacred and that all humans are called to promote life since they are created in the image of God. In addition to this, Provan (1989), commenting on Genesis 1:27-28, said that birth control obviously involves disobedience to God's command of having many children, for it attempts to prevent being fruitful and multiplying. Therefore, accord-

ing to him, birth control is wrong, because it involves disobedience to the Word of God. In the light of that, according to the author, birth control clearly represents disobedience to God's command of filling the earth.

Such world view stands on the belief that Christian ethics is not determined by conventional rather, it is shaped by the account one renders of God and God's revelations to the world (Bangert, 1994). Therefore, the proponents of no-birth control regard it as a denial of God's sovereignty, a rebellion against God's legitimate authority over reproduction. The fact that the Bible presents God as the one who opens and closes a woman's womb prohibits couples from taking the matter of the timing and number of children into their own hands.

On the other side, they are other Christians who, at a certain degree, consider birth control as ethical. According to Hollinger (2013) contraception can be employed for the glory of God, as long as the methods employed do not destroy life or harm the mother, child or the relationship; but to the evangelical mind, this is a rather strange and fabricated distinction (Mohler, 2013)

Therefore, this research intends to find out the perceptions of Rwanda Christians on Birth control in Christian ethical perspective. This will answer the fol-



Following questions: What do Rwandan Christians have to say about birth control in the Biblical context? Does it help to determine any contraceptive methods that are ethically acceptable?

**Methodology**

The research was carried out among the Christian community of Adventist University of Central Africa. The intent of this study was to find out the perceptions of Rwanda Christians on birth control in ethical perspective. The quantitative correlational and descriptive research designs were chosen for this study.

The four-point scale (from disagree to agree) questionnaire, which was chosen as research instrument, was designed in way it can meet three dimensions of birth control such as general views on birth control (5 questions), natural methods (3 questions) and artificial methods (4 Questions) . The coding for all questions was same, (1) for “Disagree”, (2) for “Tend to disagree”, (3) “Tend to agree” and (4) for “Agree”. The questionnaire was distributed to 62 respondents selected randomly among Christian community of AUCA.

Mean, standard deviation and Pearson correlation coefficient were used for statistical analysis of data. The mean from 1 to 2.5 was evaluated as “reject-

ed” and the mean from 2.6 to 4 was evaluated as “accepted” while for the standard deviation less than 0.5 was interpreted as “homogeneity” and the standard deviation equals to 0.5 and above was interpreted as “heterogeneity”. The correlation coefficient having the absolute value greater than 0.5 was interpreted as positive/ negative strong correlation while the correlation coefficient having the absolute value less than 0.5 was interpreted as positive/negative weak correlation and that one equals to 0.5 was interpreted as positive /negative moderate correlation.

**Results and Discussion**

With regards to the respondents’ profile, the gender and level of educational aspects were taken into account. These demographic variables were chosen assuming that Christian female and Christian male may not necessary have the same understanding relating to both birth control and methods of birth control as far as the ethical issues are concerned. This was to balance respondents’ views. Educational background was also considered to be influencing respondents’ mindset.

Table 1  
*Gender and Level of Education of Respondents*

		Count	%
Gender	Male	32	51.6%
	Female	30	48.4%
	Below D6	7	11.3%
Level of Education	Below Bachelor's Degree	45	72.6%
	Bachelor Degree and Above	10	16.1%

Among the respondents, 32 were male while 30 were female which means that the sample is almost equally distributed regarding the gender. This allows assuming that the views of respondents were balanced

as long as gender is concerned. Concerning the level of education the majority of respondents (88.7%) have sufficient education background which gives the assurance on the quality of their answers.

Table 2

*General Views of Respondents Regarding Birth Control*

Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation
Birth control is allowed for Christian	3.48	1.00
Giving birth to many children is God's commend	2.06	1.24
Giving birth to many children is God's blessing	2.69	1.24
Replenishing the Earth means to give birth to many children	1.77	1.15
Replenishing the Earth means to give birth to children that you will be able to provide their needs	3.26	1.09
Pull out (coitus) birth control methods is allowed for Christian	2.68	1.29
Birth control by abstinence method is allowed for Christians	2.85	1.21
Sex abstinence birth control method is not allowed for Christians for it can break family relationship	2.31	1.14
Barrier method are allowed for a Christian for birth control ( including male condoms and Female condoms)	2.97	1.17
Birth control pills are allowed for a Christian	2.65	1.20
Birth control by Sterilization for one of the spouses is allowed for Christians	2.18	1.25
Any method that brings an end to the embryo's life is not prohibited for a Christian provided that is oriented to birth control	1.61	1.05

The respondents in general understand giving birth to many children as god's blessing (M= 2.69) but not as God's commend (M=2.06). Replenishing the earth is not understood as giving birth to many children (M=1.77) rather as giving birth to the children one will be able to provide their needs (M=3.26). Therefore, the respondents accept that birth control is allowed for Christians (the mean is 3.48) but still not completely determined in relation with the methods to be used.

Relating to the natural methods of birth control, the respondents see them as accepted to be used by a Christian who wishes to control birth. These are pull out methods (M=2.68) and abstinence (M=2.85). The allegation that abstinence may break family relationship was rejected (M=2.31).

Concerning the artificial methods of birth

control, respondents reject any method that brings an end to the embryo's life (M=1.61). The sterilization of any of the spouses is also understood as prohibited (M=2.18). The artificial methods of birth control such as Barrier methods (M=2.97) and Birth control pills (M=2.65) are understood as accepted to be used by Christians wishing to control birth.

From aforementioned, some thing is to be noticed. The respondents' views are not some direction-oriented given that for all the items the standard deviation varies between 1.00 and 1.29 which are greater than 0.5.

**Null Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant relationship between general view of birth control and views on natural methods of birth control.



Table 3

*Relationship between General View of Birth Control and Views on Natural Methods of Birth*

		Pull out (coitus) birth control methods is allowed for Christian	Birth control by abstinence method is allowed for Christians	Sex abstinence birth control method is not allowed for Christians for it can break family relationship
Birth control is allowed for Christian	Pearson Correlation	.148	.247	-.103
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.252	.053	.425
	N	62	62	62

From the table above, it is notable that among the discussed natural methods of birth control, none of them has a significant relationship with the Christian's general view of birth control. The message from such situation is that natural methods of birth control may not be considered a valuable decision for a Christian and will not be affected by his/her general view of birth control.

**Null Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant relationship between general view of birth control and views on artificial methods of birth control

Table 4

*Relationship between General View of Birth Control and Views on Artificial Methods of Birth*

		Barrier method are allowed for a Christian for birth control	Birth control pills are allowed for a Christian	Birth control by Sterilization for one of the spouses is allowed for Christians	Any method that brings an end to the embryo's life is not prohibited for a Christian provided that is oriented to birth control
Birth control is allowed for Christian	Pearson Correlation	.250*	.280*	.166	-.193
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.050	.027	.198	.132
	N	62	62	62	62

From the table above, it is indicated that if a Christian believes that birth control is allowed, then he/she tends to believe that barrier method (including male condoms and female condoms) and pills method are artificial methods that are also allowed. The relationship is weak.

**Conclusion**

This study was aiming on collecting the views of Christian believers regarding Birth control in Ethical perspective. In order to be able to collect them, a sample of 62 students were selected and

questioned on that issue. The questionnaire included 3 categories of questions: General view on birth control, the natural method of birth control and the artificial methods of Birth control. The intent was to understand if birth control is accepted by Christians as ethical, the next task was to know the methods that are accepted as ethical by Christians.

The findings showed that birth control is accepted as ethical by Christians (mean=3.48). Concerning the information related to the methods which are acceptable as ethical, among the natural methods of birth control: Birth control by abstinence (M=2.85) and pull out methods were accepted as ethical but none of them has a significant relationship with birth control. While among the artificial methods, the Barrier method (including male condoms and female condoms) and pills method are the artificial methods which determine the birth control according to the respondents. They see them as ethically acceptable.

However, given that respondents see any method that brings an end to the embryo's life as unethical and that accept pills method as ethical means that they do not have enough information concerning the functionality of the pills because among them there those which make an end to the life of the embryo. From the above findings we recommend to the spiritual leaders to give to the Christians further explanation relating to the functionality of each and every method of birth control to allow them to exercise their ethical choice.

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