

Standard Days Method for Family Planning in Mali

DJAPOU Chimene Diane

National Institute of Statistics; Cameroon

PO Box 134 Yaounde

Yaounde, Cameroon

E-mail: chimenedjapou@yahoo.fr

1- Introduction

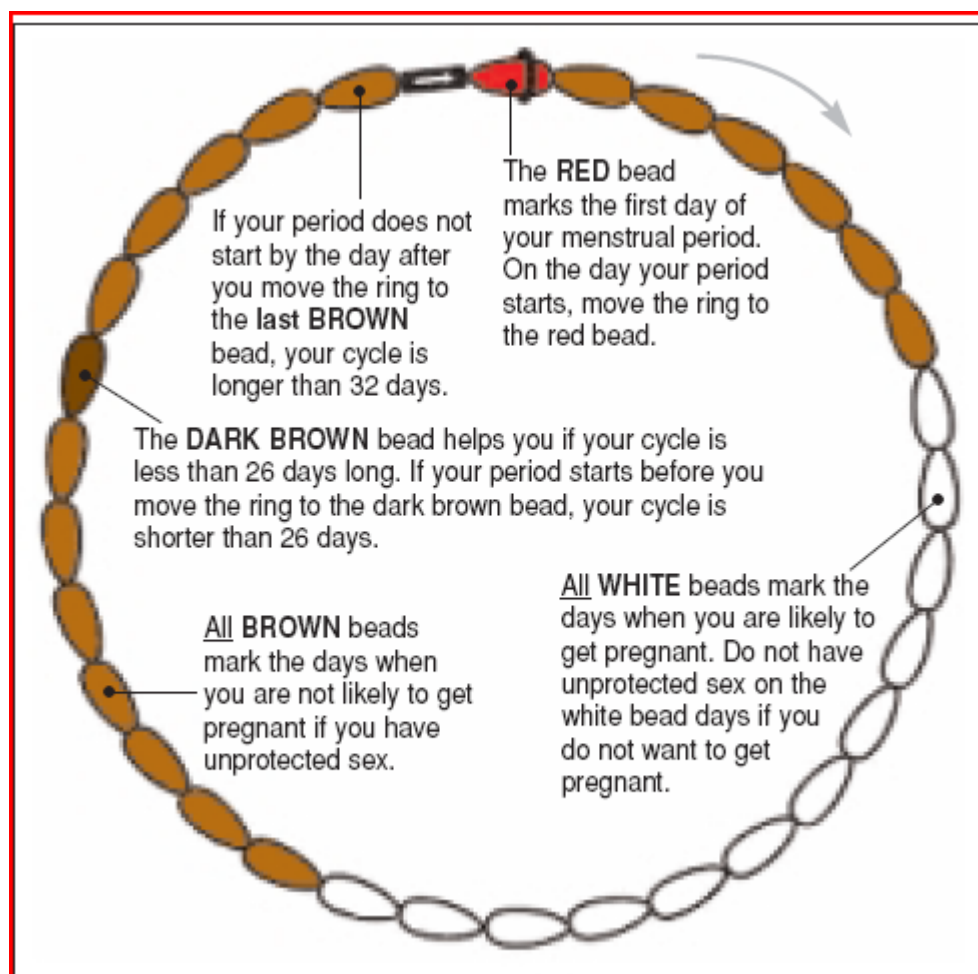
For several decades, there has been a governmental will in developing countries to limit the increase of the population. The appeal to the family planning was often one of the means used to reach this objective. Mali, as most of the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, is not outside this necessity. Indeed, according to the National Institute of Statistics (1992), the rate of natural increase in Mali is about 3 %. The synthetic indication of fertility estimated at 6.7 children per woman is among one of the highest in Africa. Improve the health of the mother and the child is one of eight specific objectives of the Statement of the millennium, which the Member states of the UNO undertook to realize from 1990 till 2015. The effects of the family planning on the maternal and infantile health are registered and well informed there. Nevertheless, needs not yet satisfied by family planning remain high. They are estimated at 31 % in Mali by the last one demographic survey in Mali (2006).

In 1991, Mali adopted an explicit policy of population. The implementation of this policy allowed the Ministry of Health of Mali to define and set up in 1994 the National Program of Family Planning. The purpose of this program was to return the compatible between population growth and the economic growth. Within the framework of its implementation, the PNPf of Mali is piloted by the Division of the Health of the Reproduction (DSR) and supported by the USAID. In spite of all these initiatives of the government and the efforts were granted by the partners on the development, the data stemming from recent studies show that contraceptive prevalence is always weak. Indeed, the prevalence rate contraceptive estimated at 1, 3 % in 1987 is crossed in 4.5 % in 1996, 8.1 % in 2001 and in 8.2 % in 2006 (demographic survey in Mali 1987, 2001 and 2006). The high level of needs unsatisfied by family planning can be explain by several sociocultural factors among which we count the reduced number of available methods for the prospect, and the side effects. Indeed, according to a study on the effects of the national campaign in favour of the family planning of 2006 and the obstacles to the planning in Mali; it emerges that only the pill and the injectable are the most the accessible. The choice of the method of family planning seems to be limited to these two methods in rural areas. To a certain extent, it is made appeal to condoms. Besides, the same study reveals that several women, old enough, to procreate mention several side effects connected to the use of these contraceptive methods: It is about abdominal pains consecutive taking of contraceptive pills, the disturbances of the menstrual cycle, the skin allergies, and visual problems. So many women gave up the Family Planning because of the side effects which followed the practice of the contraception and certain women indeed want to use a method, but they are afraid of

its effects. An alternative solution could thus be the adoption of the natural methods which are simple and effective, following the example of Standard Days Method. We wonder if a bigger use of the natural methods of Family Planning by couples would not be a solution for those who complain about side effects of the modern methods of Family Planning; and a means to decrease also this need not yet satisfied in Mali. Our present study is interested in a natural method of family planning called Standard Days Method (SDM). The general objective is to estimate the level of knowledge of couples about that method and to find the ways and means which could allow that method to be more used. In other words, what is the current level of knowledge for couples about the Standard Days Method in Mali? What are the means to be spread so that the Standard Days Method will be more used? There are some questions which we shall try to answer throughout our study.

2. Review on the Standard Days Method

The Standard Days Method is a new natural method for the Family Planning based on the knowledge of the fertility. It was developed through scientific analyses of the fertile period of the menstrual cycle of the woman. It worked out in the Institute for Reproductive Health (IRH) of Georgetown University (Washington, D.C.) it showed itself effective of more than 95 % for the women having a cycle from 26 to 32 days. To use the SDM, the couple bases itself on the menstrual cycle of the woman and avoids sexual intercourse during the fertile days of the 8th to the 19th if they want to avoid a pregnancy. Most of the users of Standard Days Method refer to a beaded chain which has a form of thread in pearls, called "cyclebead"; it helps them to control their cycle and to identify the days during which to be pregnant is very likely. Every pearl of that cyclebead represents a day of the cycle of women. The first day of her menstrual period, she places the ring black on the red pearl, she moves then by a moving ring after ring every day. When the ring is on one of some brown pearl, a pregnancy is very improbable. When it is on one of some white pearl, there is a strong probability that she falls pregnant and she has to avoid any unprotected sexual intercourse. The pearl also helps her to control the length of its cycle. If her period begins before she moves the ring on the dark brown pearl, her cycle is of less than twenty six (26) days. If on the other hand she moves the ring on the last pearl and does not begin her period in the daytime which follows, her cycle is of more than thirty two (32) days. If one of these cases appears often during the year, it will be good for the couple to change the contraceptive method.

Figure1 : CycleBeard

Source: IPPF Bulletin Medical

By the aim of determining the potential of satisfaction with the SDM, a study was made in a region of Istanbul in Turkey. A total of 657 couples selected by a systematic poll received the method. After a few months of use, the results revealed that, approximately 47 % of the couples were satisfied by the method and intended to continue to use it. Besides, the request for the Standard Days Method was 80.3% among the couples which used another method with low efficiency or have not method of family planning. The results of this test suggested that adding SDM among the lot of contraceptive methods could make the Turkish women benefit.

Introduced in Mali for some years, the Standard Days Method, in itself, was not yet being an object of a particular study in that country. Our present study thus adorned to be one of the first ones on the SDM in Mali. It will be question for us to estimate the level of knowledge of the couples and to find the means which could allow a better use of that method.

3. Methodology and Results

To reach the objectives that we settled, we are going to use the following methods; a descriptive analysis, a cluster analysis. The descriptive analysis will help us to consider the influence of the socio demographic characteristics of the couples on the knowledge of the SDM. The variables of our study were all qualitative or being able to be grouped together in classes, the analysis in multiple components is the best indicated method of analysis of the data which will be completed by a classification. The cloud of variables allows us to determine the sociodemographic or cultural variables which could influence the use of the SDM. In 2009, About 624 couples (so, 1024 peoples) selected by systematic sampling in three (3) regions of Mali (Koulikoro, Segou and Bamako) were admitted to the study.

The results obtained from this data analysis will allow us to propose means which can facilitate a bigger use of the SDM in Mali.

Let's note first of all that apart, the Standard Days Method, other method was presented to couples to know if there are already understand about those methods and if there are already used those methods. Those methods are: Female sterilization, male sterilization, IUD, Pill, Injectable, condom, diaphragm, Foam or jelly...

Results shows that about 79% of women and 71% of men knew the Standard Days Method, but, just about 1% of couples used it.

Some questions are been ask to couples to know their perception about the method, result is in the following table:

Table1: Perception about the method

	WOMEN			MEN		
	YES	NO	Don't know	YES	NO	Don't know
<i>The SDM is hard to understand</i>	52.2	24.8	22	21.2	65.7	13.1
<i>The SDM is difficult to use</i>	57.9	24	18.1	20.5	61.9	17.6
<i>The SDM is an effective method in preventing pregnancy when used correctly</i>	71.2	7.9	21	65.9	4.7	29.3
<i>The SDM is hard to obtain</i>	28.2	34.7	37.1	11.1	9.5	49.4
<i>Use of SDM is against religious beliefs</i>	25.8	46.6	27.6	10.2	78.1	11.7
<i>The SDM does not have side effects</i>	52.2	25	22.8	45.6	29.1	25.3
<i>The SDM does not cause health problems</i>	25.6	25.6	22.2	41.3	31.8	26.9
<i>The SDM interferes with sexual relationships</i>	28.5	43	28.5	15.6	54.3	30.1

On average, we can observe those results: 40 % of the women and 47 % of the men assert that the SDM has no negative effect on the health. 40 % of the women and 64 % of the men assert that the method is easy to understand and to use. However, we notice that about 50 % of the men and women who know the SDM do not know if it accessible.

According to The result of cluster analysis in Multiple Components method, we remark the originality of a group of individuals *who are the couples which have not perception of the SDM* (does who answer “don’t know “for questions concerning perception). Seen under this sight, we can say that one of the reasons of the no use of the SDM is certainly the lack of real knowledge of the method. However, we continue with the classification before confirming this last point. The purpose of classification is to have a global analysis of the resemblances.

By observing the result of classification, we realize that an interesting partition is the one of three (3) classes. *The first class represents 20 % of the information, the second class 38 % and the third class 42 %*. The interpretation of the MOD / CLASS and the CLASS / MOD can help us to characterize better those classes. However, we can explain only the modalities which have a test value upper to two in value absolute.

$CLASS / MOD = \text{number of individuals possessing the modality in the class} / \text{total number of individuals possessing the modality}$. $MOD / CLASS = \text{number of individuals possessing the modality in the class} / \text{staff of the class}$.

The first class is characterized by the couples who have a favorable opinion on the SDM, the couples who find that the method is easy to understand, and has no side effects. This class is also characterized by women who have already used the method of the calendar as method of Family Planning (59 %). More than half of the women of this class have a secondary level and more, more than half (87 %)of women of this class knows well her menstrual cycle, because they know when it is more likely for the pregnant woman of hang.

The second class is characterized by the couples who think that the SDM is difficult to understand, to use. Almost all the women of this class (94 %) have never used the method of the calendar. Besides, 62 % of the men of this class think that the decision to use the family planning at home returns mainly to the man.

The third class is the one where couples do not give their position about SDM; they have no perception of the method. They do not know if the SDM is easy to understand, difficult to use or having side effects ... It is necessary to note that the proportion of the individuals who have this opinion is more rise than the individuals of two other classes. This class is also characterized by couples (on average 50 %) who rarely watch television. No more half of the couples of this class has ever used pills or method of the calendar. Besides, 61 % of the women of this class have no school level.

Towards the classification we had just made, a strong proportion of the individuals which does not know if the SDM is easy to understand, to use or not, in brief which has no perception of the SDM is in a precise class, the third class. This class contains 42 % of the individuals concerned by the study. From these results and those who were found after analysis in multiple components, we can thus say that the first reason which can justify a very low used of the SDM in these regions of Mali is the *lack of real knowledge of the Method*. Indeed, most of the men and women who assert knowing the SDM has only a superficial knowledge of this method. They heard certainly just about the method without paying it big attention. The second reason can be a *lack of more interest of*

family planning method in general. Those reasons lead us to say that, the means which can be applied to encourage the most use of SDM are to:

- Facilitate a good knowledge of the SDM to the couples
- Find ways so that the couples have an interest more pushed into the family planning methods especially for the natural methods.

4. Remarks and Conclusion

Our study was about Standard Days Method for Family Planning in Mali. The results show that 71 % of the men and 79 % of the women know the SDM. To identify the means which can facilitate a bigger use of the SDM, we found necessary to identify firstly the reasons which could explain the current no use of the SDM (used unless 1 %). For that purpose, we used analysis in multiple components method completed by a classification which allowed us to put the individuals in groups or classes of resemblance. The interpretation of these various classes showed that two main reasons could justify the no use of the SDM: the lack of a real knowledge of the SDM and the lack of a big interest of the couples for the Family Planning (FP) in generally and natural methods in particular. These results allowed us to identify some tracks which can make the method be more used. There are: a good knowledge of the SDM and a big interest for the FP methods in general and the natural methods of FP.

The recommendations that we can formulate to the Malian government and especially in the Institute of Reproductive Health (IRH) who makes promote this method of family Planning are the follow ones: Make a good awareness program, nearness of the couples to present them better the method. It seems to us that it's too necessary to encourage the services of FP and the associations of women or men to show the advantage of the FP for the limitation and the spacing of the births; and especially the advantage of the natural methods which appear to be an answer for women who complain about side effects of the other modern methods like pills and injections. We also want to note that because the SDM, not requiring from our point of view, a high school level to know how to use it; it could be more adapted to the Malian population. Indeed, several women in Mali haven't any school level. The data of this study which cover only three (3) regions of Mali show that 59 % of the women have no school level. We think that it could be easy even for a woman who did not go to the school to follow the cyclebeards and to know that at the level of the white pearls she has to avoid unprotected sexual intercourse.

Furthermore, in rural areas in Mali, the varieties of methods of family planning are limited, and sometimes there is the need of qualified doctors to offer certain methods as the injections. However this staff is sometimes rare in rural areas; the SDM can thus be accessible in this environment because it does not require medical examinations.

Figure or Table Title

Figure1: CycleBeard

Table1: Perception about the Standard Days Method