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**FERTILITY RATE AND CHILD HEALTH IN GHANA**

**Abstract**

An important factor that affects population health is the fertility rate. The fertility rate in Ghana is high despite the fall over the years. According to the 2008 Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) report,the total fertility rate has declined dramatically over the past 20 years, from 6.4 children per woman in 1988 to 4.4 children per woman in 1998 and stabilized until 2003 when it declined further to 4.0 in 2008. However, the 2014 DHS reports the rate of fertility to be at 4.2 births per woman showing an increase from that of 2008. This rate is high and above the replacement rate of 2.0 children per woman which raises concerns on the living standards of people, the school participation rate, and the participation of women in the labor force. Of particular interest is the impact of fertility on the health of the child. Fertility is believed can affect the health of the child through malnutrition and school attendance. All these have implication on the future health outcomes of the child. It is therefore important to understand the underlying factors that influence fertility and the effect of fertility on child health to inform appropriate policies to curb the population growth rate in Ghana. This study thus examines the factors that influence fertility rate in Ghana, and the effect of fertility on the health of the child using the child’s nutritional status. The study employed the negative binomial, the Ordinary Least squares and the ordered logistic regression models in the analysis using data from the 2014 Ghana Demographic and Health Survey. The preliminary findings indicate that fertility rate in Ghana is highly associated with wealth, education, decision making in the household and some interesting regional and religious variations. Also, the study finds that the nutritional status of the child is highly associated with wealth, health insurance possession, and the gender of the child. The study finds no significant effect of fertility rate on the health of the child for the sample used. Based on the findings, recommendations are made on how to achieve a reduction in the fertility rate to ensure a stable population growth rate in the country and improved child health.