

## ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Unmet Fertility Expectations and the Perception of Fertility Problems in a Malawian Village

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## Abstract

This study analyses in-depth interviews with 15 women and 11 men living in a rural Malawian village to know how fertility problems are identified and interpreted in a context of high fertility demand. Results of the analysis show that although ideal family size may be falling, expectations to quickly achieve pregnancies remain high. Individual and social expectations about childbearing inform the perception of fertility problems if more than a few months pass without a noticeable pregnancy. Such problems are usually attributed to women, especially if the male partner has proven his fertility with another spouse/sexual partner. Community education on variation in the time to conception is needed, as is an understanding of how perceived infertility, regardless of actual waiting time to pregnancy, can lead to treatment seeking and risky sexual behaviour. (*Afr J Reprod Health* 2005; 9[2]: 14-25)

**Keywords:** *Infertility, expectations, interpretation, women*

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