Gender and Choice of Contraceptives Methods; A Feminist Economics Theoretical Framework

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Abstract

Many studies that have attempted to study choices of contraceptives have been analytical and descriptive in design without a coherent and well grounded economic and gender theoretical foundation. Scholars who have attempted to study choice in sexuality have feminized the framework of the analysis (Ingela Lindh, Leg barnmorska, 2011; National Collaborating Center for Disease Control, Feb 2010; Emel Kurtoglu, Haldun Arpaci (2011). This paper attempts to shape future investigations in theory of choice of contraceptives by providing a framework of analysis (Femi-econ dilemma), hence improving future research results and policy outcomes. It borrows from empirical researches, feminist and economics theories and approaches. It is shown that individuals actor are rational and that choice of contraceptives is driven by the utility individual derive from the method used, the ability to pay for the contraceptives, age, space, parity, availability of substitutes, wealth status/class of the players, social stigma associated with use of contraceptives, availability and access to information about the type of contraceptives, efficacy and past experience about the use of the contraceptive method, level of promiscuity of the duo, level of education, motive of the respective duo and the personal negotiation skills and mutual trust between them.
Key words: Gender and sexuality, choice of contraceptives, economic theory and choice of contraceptives and femi-econ dilemma.

INTRODUCTION

In the developing countries, population related issues including poverty reduction, unsustainable resource use and environmental degradation rank high in development agenda. The underlying issues behind rapid growth in population in these countries are the continued effect of lower infant mortality and levels and patterns of fertility. Fertility rates have been falling although, lowering the rates of population growth remains a challenge (Shagufa in Romy Borooah, 1994). Feminist scholars have point to the gender constrict a driver to woman’s identity and behavior making it exceedingly difficult for a woman to identify and develop their own sexual desires and needs hence control over use of contraceptives (Moser, 1993).

Jaggar in Milletti in Tong, (1995) observes that under the feminist liberal political thought, human nature locates our uniqueness as human persons in our capacity for rationality. The value of individual autonomy and the self fulfillment are stressed. Society should allow individuals to exercise their autonomy and to fulfill themselves. The “right”, must be given priority over the “good”. The ideology of individual rights is justified because it is these rights that constitute a framework within which one makes choices provided that this does not deprive others. The provision that the right takes priority over the good complicates the construction of the just society. The fact that resources are limited and that each individual, even when restrained by altruism, has an interest in securing as many available resources as possible, then it will be a challenge to create political, economic, and social institutions that maximize the individual freedom without jeopardizing the community’s welfare.
It is argued that, State intervention in the private sphere (family or domestic society) should be limited and outside bedrooms, bathrooms, kitchens, recreation rooms, and nurseries. Space where one can among family and friends, shed their public personae and become their “local” selves are encouraged. There are differences in opinion when it comes to state intervention in a public sphere (civil or political) namely, classical or liberarrrians and the welfare or agalitarian liberals.

Liberal feminism believes that given the correct legal and political institutions, heterosexuality relations will be voluntary, egalitarian and just. For classical liberals, the ideal state protects civil liberties including, property rights, voting rights, freedom of speech, freedom of religion and freedom of association. Welfare, liberals on the other hand advocate for economic justice such as legal services, school loans, food stamps, low cost housing, medical care, social security and aid to families with dependent children rather than civil liberties from the State so that the market does not perpetuate or otherwise solidify huge inequalities.

The Marxists feminist believe that “class” ultimately explains women’s status and function(s). It is argued that under capitalism, bourgeois women will not experience the same kind of oppression as proletarian women. Marxists invite every woman whether proletarian or bourgeois to understand women’s oppression not so much as the result of the emotional actions of individuals but as the product of the political, social and economic structures associated with capitalism. It is argued that given the right economic institutions, heterosexual relations will not be exploitative have alleviating of oppressive.

The liberalist feminist believe that women will always remain subordinate to men unless sexuality is reconceived and reconstructed. Central to the feminist liberalism ideology is that markets fail to provide optimal or right outcomes. They encourage the concept of self
determination, creation of an enabling environment for self determination and ability to make informed choices, the ability of individuals to reason and act rationally, the power of institutions to regulate the markets and environment to shape individual behavior. Government intervention is necessary in some spheres of life to make markets work by providing an enabling environment to empower individual players.

It is observed that both the liberal and Marxist feminists advance the same arguments but put differently, that under certain conditions women are able to make right choices. Both agree that the State should be a regulator and enforcer of law and justice and the creation of an enabling environment where it is necessary for social justice. Both the liberalists and Marxists argue for the existence of functions and just institutions and the need for level ground for all players.

Radical feminists argue that aggression and the “need” to dominate form a routine part of what is accepted as (normal) male sexuality. Male violence against women is normalized and legitimatized in sexual practices through the assumption that when it comes to sex, men are by nature aggressive and dominant, whereas women are by nature passive and submissive. The basic motivating force of history is men striving for domination and power over women, with the physical subjugation of women by men as the basic form of oppression. Patriarchy is emphasized in re-enforcing women’s subjugation (Milletti in Tong, 1995). Moser, (1993); Milletti in Tong, (1995) argue that sex is political and primarily, because the male – female relationship is the paradigm for all power relationships, “social caste” supersedes all forms of egalitarian, radical, political or economic systems and unless birth right is a finally forgone, all systems of oppression will continue to function simply by virtue of their logical and emotional mandate in a primary human situation. Patriarchy ideology exaggerates biological differences
between men and women, making certain that men always have dominant or masculine roles and that woman always have the subordinate or feminist ones. Through conditioning, men usually secure the apparent consent of the very women they oppress, through institutions such as academy, the State, the church, and family, each of which justifies and internalize a sense of inferiority to men. Moser adds that this is maintained through male control over such areas of power as politics, industry religion, resources and military both within and outside the state. Should a woman resist the patriarchal ideology and should she manifest her mistrust by casting off her femininity – submissiveness, men will use coercion to accomplish what conditioning has failed to achieve.

Women circumvent coercion by acting feminine or else they are subjected to cruelties, intimidations and barbarities. An androgynous culture is proposed in which male and female differences are minimized, alternatively to replace male culture with female culture and /or transforming the institution of heterosexuality such that neither men nor women plan a dominant role, rejecting heterosexuality in favour of celibacy, autoeroticism or lesbianism.

However, radical feminists have been criticized for their claims about the goodness of women’s nature and the evilness of ‘man’ nature. For paying attention to women’s body falling to recognize that in contemporary societies, sex differentiation is minimal in many social groups in which women are tall, broad shouldered, and narrow hipped as men and therefore sexual dimorphism is exaggerated; accordingly the smaller shape of women in societies has been attributed to women’s history. Because of their inferior social status, women have had a poorer diet nutritionally than men. Women are smaller than men not so much of because nature has made them so, but because of historical product of the interplay between environment and biology, between culture and nature. Thus, it is not the case that women biology will yield the
same set of imperatives across space and time. Biology is only one of the constituents of women’s identity and not in and of itself a prescription for the gender and sexuality Jaggar in Milletti in Tong, (1995).

Jaggar is critical of the radical feminist position that locates psychological qualities such as nurturance and aggression in female and male biology respectively. According to her, there is no reason to believe that by nature all men are one way and all women another, or even that most men are one way and most women another. The historical interplay of biology and environment makes this man the way he is and this woman the way she is. She is unequivocally rejected universal assertion about men and women. She observes that not all men are victimizers, and not all women are victims. She observed the fact that radical feminists themselves are able to escape their false consciousness, even under the system of patriarchy, it is evidence of this. If patriarchy were, indeed, all pervasive and totalizing, radical feminism could never have obtained the space it needed to develop. As Michele Z. Rasaldo in Tong 91995) puts emphasis.

“that on the contrary, women typically have power and influence in politics, and economic life. …for in every case, in which we see women confused, by powerful men or by the responsibilities of child care and the home, one can cite others which display female capacities to fight back, to subordinate the needs of infant children (in their homes or their backs) to their desires for travel, labour, politics, love or trade……. Male dominance ……does not in here in any isolated and measurable set of facts. Rather it seems to be an aspect of the organization of collective life, a pattern of expectation and beliefs which gives rise to imbalance in ways people intercept, evaluate and respond to particular form of male and female action”.

The creation of “wom-spaces” – places such as women’s cooperatives, clinics, clubs, and shelters that emphasize decision by consensus, the tapping of spiritual resources and the giving the mutual aid, can help fragment the hegemony of male dominated culture because in them each woman is encouraged to use her power as she sees fit although this may not necessarily be the best means to women’s liberation.
Contrary to the critics of radical feminists, choice of contraceptives is a man’s prerogative until structures have been put in place to dismantle patriarchy by creation of women spaces, women culture to dismantle the male hegemony over come women and male psychology.

George Homans in John Scott, (2000) pioneered the rational choice theory as a basic framework of exchange theory, grounded in assumptions drawn from behaviorist psychology. Accordingly, all individual actions are fundamentally 'rational' in character and that people calculate the likely costs and benefits of any action before decisions are made. Known as rational choice theory, its application to social interaction takes the form of exchange theory. Basic to all forms of rational choice theory is the assumption that complex social phenomena can be explained in terms of the elementary individual actions of which they are composed. This standpoint, called methodological individualism, holds that 'The elementary unit of social life is the individual human action. To explain social institutions and social change is to show how they arise as the result of the action and interaction of individuals’ (Elster 1989: 13). Rational choice theorists argued that the general economic principles of how production, distribution and consumption of goods and services is organized through the market mechanism can be used to understand interactions in which such resources as time, information, approval, and prestige are involved. It is assumed that individuals are motivated by wants or goals that express their 'preferences'. They act within specific, given constraints and on the basis of the information that they have about the conditions under which they are acting. At its simplest, the relationship between preferences and constraints can be seen in the purely technical terms of the relationship of a means to an end. As it is not possible for individuals to achieve all of the various things that they want, they must also make choices in relation to both their goals and the means for attaining these goals. Individuals must anticipate the outcomes of alternative courses of action and
calculate that which will be best for them. Rational individuals choose the alternative that is likely to give them the greatest satisfaction (Heath 1976: 3; Carling 1992: 27; Coleman 1973). The methodological individualism of rational choice theorists leads them to start out from the actions of individuals and to see all other social phenomena as reducible to these individual actions.

Like the feminist liberals, human nature is driven by rationality and are selfish by nature, individual actions are driven by cost – benefit analyses given certain conditions with a view to maximize individual satisfaction.

Economists share much of the assumption of rational choice theory although economists emphasize human action as involving rational and non-rational elements under certain conditions especially when it comes to making joint decisions. Keat ((2003) in game theory shows how individuals /firms make independent decisions in which they are aware that their actions affect others. The basic application of this is that firms/individuals optimize their economic situation based on marginal revenue (MR) equals marginal cost (MC) model. The assumption is that individuals have sufficient information to determine the marginal cost and marginal revenue. Although useful in perfectly competition, monopoly, monopolistically competitive markets, it helps us understand mutually independent behavior. There are variants of games, each characterized by a unique set of assumptions concerning such conditions as the number of players, the stakes involved, whether there must be a winner or a loser and whether the decisions taken are simultaneous or sequential. But regardless of the conditions, the essential idea in game theory is to apply the logic of mathematics to arrive at a joint solution - equilibrium.

Martin J. Osborne (2002) presents the strategic game model of interacting decision-makers. Each player has a set of possible actions. This model captures interaction between the
players by allowing each player to be affected by the actions of all players, not only his/her own action. A strategic game with ordinal preferences consists of a set of players, for each player, a set of actions, and for each player, preferences over the set of action profiles. Each player has preferences about the action profile and the list of all the players’ actions. Under certain conditions, the Nash solution is characterized by cooperative gain sharing in order to maximize the product of the two individual gains. This is an action profile for which every player’s action is a best response to the other players’ actions. Stated differently, the action profile \( a_i^* \) is Nash equilibrium of a strategic game with ordinal preferences if and only if every player’s action is a best response to the other players’.

\[ a_i^* \ \text{is in } B_i(a_{-i}^*) \ \text{for every player } i \] …………………………………………………1

If each player \( i \) has a single best response to each list \( a_{-i} \) of the other players’ actions, we can write the conditions in (1) as equations. In this case, for each player \( i \) and each list \( a_{-i} \) of the other players’ actions, denote the single member of:

\[ B_i( a_{-i} ) \ \text{by } b_i( a_{-i} ) \ \text{(that is } B_i( a_{-i} ) = \{ b_i( a_{-i} ) \} ). \]

Then equation (1) is equivalent to

\[ a_i^* = b_i(a_{-i}^*) \ \text{for every player } i \] ………………………………………………………2

for a collection of \( n \) equations in the \( n \) unknowns \( a_i^* \), where \( n \) is the number of players in the game. For example, in a game with two players, say 1 and 2, these equations are;

\[ a_1^* = b_1(a_2^* ) \]

\[ a_2^* = b_2(a_1^* ) \]

That is, in a two-player game in which each player has a single best response to every action of the other player, \( (a_1^* , a_2^* ) \) is a Nash equilibrium if and only if player 1’s action \( a_1^* \) is his/her best response to player 2’s action \( a_2^* \), and player 2’s action \( a_2^* \) is his/her best response to player 1’s action \( a_1^* \). There are many variants of these strategic games including; the Prisoner's
Dilemma, Bach or Stravinsky, Matching Pennies, the Stag Hunt. (Martin J. Osborne (1995; 2002).

Norbert Neuwirth Astrid Haider (2004) provides an analysis of household decision making as a cooperative games based on the seminal papers of Manser and Brown (1980) and McElroy and Horney (1981). A cooperative approach according to the well known Nash solution is used for further analysis. For simplicity no altruism is taken into this model. Generally altruism causes serious feedback loops within game theoretical models. Total income pooling is assumed and there are neither household public goods nor time allocations considered. The model assumes two entirely selfish agents simply called (a) and (b), endowed with continuous and globally concave utility functions and constrained by a quasi-convex set of private goods, like Martin J. Osborne (2002), Nash solution is characterized by cooperative gain sharing in order to maximize the product of the two individual gains.

\[
\max_{x^a, x^b} \left[ (U^a(x^a) - D^a) \times (U^b(x^b) - D^b) \right]
\]

Subject to

\[
(x^a + x^b)P = Y
\]

\[
(U^a, U^b) \in P
\]

\[
U^i \geq D^i
\]

Where

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ui</th>
<th>Agent i’s payoff (=utility level) when partners agree on a feasible set</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>xi</td>
<td>vector of i’s (private) goods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y</td>
<td>total income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Di</td>
<td>Agent i’s payoff (=utility level) when partners do not agree ( \square ) defection point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>payoff space (feasible sets of utility pairs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \lambda P )</td>
<td>price vector</td>
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The Nash product of utility levels is located within the feasible set below or on the Pareto line – equilibrium.

Accordingly, individual (a) and (b) choice is driven by ones utility function under certain conditions among which are information levels and availability, negotiation skills of an
individual, level of altruism, choices available, reaction function of the ether player, . One chooses a method of contraceptives depending on how much satisfaction one derives other things remaining constant. A joint utility function will suffice in which everyone maximizes utility from their respective choices given other players’ choices- equilibrium.

Scholars including Ingela Lindh, Leg barnmorska (2011), Emel Kurtoglu, Haldun Arpaci (2011) Sarah M. Wablembo1 and Henry V. Doctor, (2013) among others have investigated the choice of contraceptives and established that choice of contraceptives of depends on age, parity, influence by their husbands, counseling from a physicians, affect of neighbors, loss of confidence from previous methods and getting pregnant, wealth status, education level, and place of residence were equally important. socio-economic circumstances- individuals born at different time periods have differential exposure to socioeconomic circumstances that may influence women’s attitudes and behavior towards critical life issues such as contraceptive use among others,

Following Milletti in Tong, (1995), Norbert Neuwirth Astrid Haider (2004), Martin J. Osborne (2002), Keat ((2003), John Scott, (2000), Moser, (1993); Ingela Lindh, Leg barnmorska (2011), Emel Kurtoglu, Haldun Arpaci ( 2011) Sarah M. Wablembo1 and Henry V. Doctor, (2013) arguments, a feminists economics theoretical approach hence forth (femi-econ dilemma) is informed by the liberal, Marxist, Radical feminism theories and ideologies and economic theory and presented as follows; The underlying assumption is that individuals are rational and are able to make decisions subject to certain conditions, depending on the opportunities and benefits associated with their chooses. Keat ((2003) in his rationality choice theory asserts that conditions of perfect competition can suffice in determining social choices in pursuit of individuals argue to maximize their satisfaction-utility even arriving at joint utility functions.
Assuming two entirely selfish agents 2, simply called m(ale) and f(emale), endowed with continuous and globally concave utility functions and constrained by a quasi-convex set of private goods, a theoretical framework of analysis of Choice of contraceptive methods, can best be understood by considering a game involving two players, a male and female who for simplest have two available alternative actions, which we call \( CC \) and \( CN \) for cooperation and non cooperation respectively. If the players choose not to cooperate - different actions, they each get a payoff (level of satisfaction) of \((0)\). If they both choose to cooperate - same actions they each get a payoff of \((2)\), and if they both choose non cooperation \( CN \), they each get payoff of \((1)\). This “coordination” game may be represented as follows, where player \( f \) chooses a row, player \( m \) chooses a column, and the resulting payoffs are listed in parentheses, with the first component corresponding to player \( f \)’s payoff: The action profile \((CN, CN)\) is an equilibrium, since a unilateral deviation to \( f \) by any one player would result in a lower payoff for the deviating player. Similarly, the action profile \((CC,CC)\) is also an equilibrium of course with greater satisfaction for both players as shown in the figure below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>( f )</th>
<th>( m )</th>
<th>( CC )</th>
<th>( CN )</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( CC )</td>
<td>((2,2))</td>
<td>((0,0))</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( CN )</td>
<td>((0,0))</td>
<td>((1,1))</td>
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The \textit{femi-econ dilemma} assumes that players have complete information about the preferences, correct beliefs about the methods of contraception, they are strategic and able to negotiate for the joint equilibrium in this case the one that maximizes each others’ utilities, they act rationally and that each player believes that there is some possibility, perhaps very small, that his or her partner will cooperate in all periods provided that no defection will be observed. And if the players meet several times and the \( n \) is sufficiently large, it can be shown that mutual
defection in all stages is inconsistent with equilibrium behavior, and that, in a well-defined sense, the players will cooperate in most periods.

In light of the above, choice of contraceptives is driven by the utility individual derive from the method used, the ability to pay for the contraceptives, age, space, parity, availability of substitutes, wealth status/class of the players, social stigma associated with use of contraceptives, availability and access to information about the type of contraceptives, efficacy and past experience about the use of the contraceptive method, level of promiscuity of the duo, level of education, motive of the respective duo and the personal negotiation skills and mutual trust between them.
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