

Fertility Behaviour and Women's Empowerment in Oyo State

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Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between women's empowerment and fertility behaviour in Ibadan Metropolis. Data for this paper was collected using systematic random sampling technique; the respondents were women aged 15-49 years. The data included descriptive information on the characteristics of husbands and wives. Ordinal and Logistic regression were used as statistical tools. The paper found that women's empowerment affects their fertility. Fifty-one per cent of the respondents are not using any family planning method, while majority of them have formal education of at least primary school education. It was also found that the discussion of the number of children to have significantly affects women's fertility. From the findings, encouraging both sexes to have more education will be important and necessary to increase the chances of women's empowerment. Furthermore, encouraging women to make use of family planning methods will be important and necessary to reduce women's fertility.

Keywords: Fertility, Empowerment, Family Planning, Reproductive rights, Autonomy

1. Introduction

Fertility remains the most inexplicable among the varieties of demographic variables despite the sustained attention and major efforts that has been directed at it (Graft, 1979). There is no doubt that immense efforts have gone into the analysis of both historical and contemporary data of fertility patterns and changes. Due to the fact that the importance of fertility cannot be over-emphasized, it has received much attention. This importance stems from the fact that it is a major expansionary force in population changes, and a major counteracting force to population attrition. Secondly, the forces causing fertility in a population are more complex than those causing mortality (Bogue, 1971).

The changing course of birth rates, marital and non-marital, ethnic, age and socio-economic groupings has been well charted for most nations in the world. The rise and fall of many correlates and associations of fertility rates have been well documented too. Nevertheless, one's understanding of the effect of women's empowerment on fertility behaviour is not yet clear especially in the developing nations. There has been confusion as regards what women's empowerment is all about and how it affects fertility behaviour, explanation has not been achieved to the satisfaction of many.

Since the mid-1980s, the term empowerment has become popular in the field of development, especially in reference to women. In grassroots programmes and policy debates alike, empowerment has virtually replaced terms such as welfare, community participation, and poverty alleviation to describe the goal of development and intervention (Batliwala, 1994). In spite of the prevalence of the term however, many people are confused as to what the empowerment of women implies in social, economic and political terms.

Nonetheless, many large-scale programmes are being launched with the explicit objective of "empowering" the poor and "empowering" women. Empowerment is held to be a panacea for social ills, high population growth rates, environmental degradation, and the low status of women among others. It is a matter of basic human rights (Mostafa *et al.*, 2008). It was during the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) that the issue of women empowerment was endorsed as a necessary condition for population stabilization. It is now a key part in the Millennium Development Goals³ (MDGs). The MDG 3 specifically refers to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment. MDG 3 is dependent on the achievement of the other goals; inversely, all the MDGs can also only be achieved when there is an active and sustained effort to promote gender equality in working toward them (Caird, 2004). A quick look at the targets and indicators for this goal show empowerment in economic and education terms, which are key to women being able to exercise their reproductive rights. Nevertheless, the United Nations Millennium Project Task Force on Gender Equality has been reviewing MDG Targets and Indicators for Goal 3, recommending further strategies and additional indicators for meeting the goal (Grown *et al.*, 2003). The attention given here to women's empowerment is based on the premise that it is an enabling condition for reproductive rights.

From the 1990s analysts have shifted their focus somewhat away from statistical correlations between women's status and fertility. Instead, they have begun to examine the interconnections among the exercise of human

³ The Millennium declaration is a statement of values, principles and objectives for the international agenda for the 21st century, it is time-bound with measurable goals and targets for combating poverty, hunger, discrimination against women among others

rights (Such as right to work, to acquire an education, and to enjoy freedom of movement), women's perception of their own well-being and self-efficacy, and a broad range of reproductive decisions (Anand, 1994). Such studies have assessed the role of women's autonomy in decision-making, and have considered the resources needed to alter or circumvent restrictions on this autonomy at many cultural and institutional levels. Research, policy debate, and action programmes are beginning to recognise the centrality of gender-based power relationships in influencing the decision making process by which reproduction is determined (Mahmud and Johnson, 1994).

Central to this paper therefore, is to understand and explain the effect(s) of women's empowerment on fertility behaviour of women resident in Ibadan. This study will therefore look into the extent of women empowerment, and whether it has negative or positive effect on the fertility behaviour of the women, or whether it has no effect. The special emphasis is on how empowerment has affected the number of children women desires to have. The following hypotheses were tested: that.

- i. Fertility is not likely to be affected by women's empowerment
- ii. Fertility of women with husbands of high social status is likely to be lower than that of women with husbands of low social status.

This study is important in as much as it may be used to predict future population as it relates to women empowerment. There is the need to give enhanced recognition to the place of women, since to train the women is to train the homes and to train the homes is to train the nation. The study is also necessary because it is central to women and women are central to issues of population growth but ironically they are side-lined in the policy development process in general terms. Women empowerment and fertility behaviour studies are very relevant to the problems of over-population and modernisation and to the relationship between resources and members.

2. Literature Review/Theoretical Framework

2.1 Literature Review

The literature on women's status and fertility has evolved since the 1970s from a narrow focus on specific indicators, such as women's education, to a broader concern with women's autonomy and decision-making power. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, the negative correlation between women's education and fertility (Kishor and Gupta, 2009) was substantiated by considerable empirical evidence, and captured the attention of policy makers. Researchers then attempted to understand the links between fertility and women's access to gainful employment, but found no simple correlation (Mahmud and Johnson, 1994). By the mid-1980s, researchers and advocates recognised, as well, that status is related in complex ways to demographic behaviour. Some of these complexities are examined in the literature of 1990s, which shifts the focus somewhat away from statistical correlations between women's status and fertility. Instead, analysts have begun to examine the interconnections among the exercise of human rights (such as the right to work, to acquire an education, and to enjoy freedom of movement), women's perception of their own well-being and self-efficacy and a broad range of reproductive decisions. Such studies have assessed the role of women's autonomy in decision-making and have considered the resources needed to alter or circumvent restrictions on this autonomy at many cultural and institutional levels. Research, policy debate and action programmes are beginning to recognise the centrality of gender-based power relationship in influencing the decision making process by which reproduction is determined (Mahmud and Johnson 1994).

Central to this study is the role of women in achieving success with the population policies. Sen *et al.*, (1994) identified that one useful means by which population policies, that are not only ethnically sound but reinforce human development, could only translate into program strategies is by empowering women. The existing attitudes, cultural and religious beliefs about sex, reproduction and women's right to protect themselves constitute obstacles to women empowerment and indeed limits her control and power of decision-making with regard to the determination of fertility behaviour. Germain and Ordway (1989) asserted that for women to control their reproduction, they must also be able to achieve social status and dignity, to manage their own health, sexuality and to exercise their basic rights in society and in partnerships with men. In the words of Makinwa-Adebusoye (2001) fertility must be within calculus of conscious choice and reduced fertility must be seen to be "advantageous" as well as the knowledge and availability of effective techniques of fertility reduction, for a country to experience fertility decline.

It is in the light of the above that Sen *et al.*, (1994) asserted that promotion of women's empowerment in concept, language, and practice can help bridge the distance between women's rights language increasingly used in policy statements, and the actual implementation of population policies, which continues to emphasize contraceptive services. Women's empowerment requires changes in male power and dominance thus; an empowerment approach would increase policy and program attention to male responsibility for their own fertility, disease transmission and childcare. According to Sen *et al.*, (1994), exercising reproductive control means making decisions, not only about contraception, but also about other sexual and reproductive health needs, and about

sexuality itself.

Walters (1991) traced the source of the concept of women's empowerment to the interaction between feminism and the concept of "popular education" developed in Latin America in the 1970s, it is a challenge to basic power relations and demand for redistributing power between genders. According to Batliwala (1994) empowerment is held to be a panacea for social ills including high population growth rates, environmental degradation, and the low status of women among others.

In order for women to be empowered, there is the need for women's autonomy. Dyson and Moore (1983) define equality of autonomy between men and women as "equal decision-making ability with regard to personal affairs". Stafiliros-Rothschild (1982) asserted that the gap between status and autonomy is evident in the fact that, although women may rise to higher status levels either as producers, reproducers of labour, as mother-in-law, or in other social roles, their subordination to men is not necessarily reduced.

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Mahmud and Johnson (1994) also asserted that the pathways of influence from women's increased autonomy to their fertility and childcare behaviour, may both be direct and indirect. Empowering experiences that change women's perceptions of self-worth and well-being affects women's dependence on men and their ability to make decisions. These impacts flow back into the hierarchical social structure through women's existing relationships with men and "powerful" women. They went on to say that they also exert influence indirectly to reduce gender inequalities in prestige, control over resources, and decision-making power. Such changes in turn affect fertility behaviour by enhancing women's ability to take their own needs for health and well-being into account. It is worthy of mention that if women are to implement their reproductive preferences, then it is essential that their empowerment occurs not only within their personal spheres but also in the broader spheres of the community and the state. As Dixon-Mueller (1993) has pointed out, the promotion of policies that encourage contraceptive use and smaller families are futile if not accompanied by the eradication of legal, social and economic constraints on women. According to Malhotra, *et al.*, (2002), the promotion of women's empowerment as a development goal is based on a dual argument: that social justice is an important aspect of human welfare and is basically worth pursuing, and that women's empowerment is a means to other ends. The conclusion by Malhotra *et al.*, (2002) from their review of the conceptualisation of empowerment was that empowerment is most often regarded as women's ability to make decisions and affect outcomes of importance to themselves and their families. This is the line that this paper will follow in examining the effect(s) of women's empowerment on fertility behaviour.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study was based on the framework of sociological theory of power. In other words, the theoretical perspective of power was employed in analysing women's empowerment and fertility behaviour. According to Karl Marx, power is the ability of some people to exert their will over other people, derived from the economic base of society (Cuff *et al.*, 1992). Thus, in capitalist society, the owners of the means of production (whom Marx called bourgeoisies) clearly had industrial power, they could determine what to produce, whom to employ and where to employ them. Marx further states that their income could shape a distinctive life style for themselves and their families. In the case of women and their reproductive behaviour, their gaining access to the productive sector will affect their reproductive behaviours.

From the above, it can be deduced that the source of power in society lies in the economic substructure. Thus if women could gain access to the economic substructure of the society, they will invariably gain power. To Karl Marx therefore, it is those who own the means of production in the society that also own power (Haralambos and Heald, 2004). Weber differed from Marx, in that he did not agree, that power is solely derived from economic relations, i.e. the relationship to private property or the means of production. For him, there were three dimensions to any analysis of power: class, status and party (Cuff *et al.*, 1992).

By class, Weber is referring to the economic order of society where 'market relationships' were of the utmost importance. By 'Status', he is talking about the way the organization of society produces different amount of prestige or social honour for different groups of individual. To him, social honour is not achieved simply by the ownership of property or of skill or attributes. Rather it derives from a style of life practised by a group in a society.

A problem common to all perspectives on the nature and distribution of power in society involves the measurement of power. Robert A Dahl argues that the measurement of power requires a careful examination of actual decisions. By this method, it is possible to determine why individuals and groups realise their objectives

and therefore to specify who has power (Haralambos and Heald, 2004).

Labinjoh (1994) supported the above view when analysing Dahl's contributions to the analysis of power. To him, Dahl believes that in order to locate power in societies, one should search for evidence of specific decision makers on particular issues. Therefore, if women can make decisions on issues that affect their own bodies and especially their fertility behaviour, they could be said to have wielded power at least on that particular issue.

3 Methodology

All women in Ibadan constitute the universe of the study. Two local government areas were purposively sampled. Systematic random sampling technique was employed in selecting 502 women from the two local government areas. The study was directed at women of childbearing age i.e. 15-49 years, who are ever married. Two hundred and fifty one cases (251) were selected in each of the two local government areas.

The systematic random sampling technique was used in order to give all the elements in the population a fair chance of being selected. These two local government areas were roughly zoned into five sections each to ensure that no section of the local government area is excluded from the survey. Care was taken to draw the elements from the five zones of each local government area. *Akinyele* Local Government Area was zoned into *Moniya, Idiose, Sasa, Ojoo* and *Orogun* while Ibadan North was zoned to *Agbowo, Sango, Bodija*, 'Water' and University of Ibadan.

In selecting the respondents, a census of the houses in these zones was taking. This became necessary because the listing of the number of housing units in these areas was not available. After the whole exercise, it was discovered that the sample interval is fifteen (15). Therefore, every fifteenth house was included in the sample, at least one respondent was selected in each household where there are more than one qualified respondents in a household the first identified qualified respondent was interviewed. All the questionnaires collected were edited, to ensure legibility, consistency and uniformity. They were then prepared for the coding process.

4. Findings

Table 1 shows that those in the age group 25-29, constituting 20.7 percent of the total sample size, were more represented in the study than other age groups. The age group 25-29 which has the highest percentage is a conventional age at marriage in the study area. In the same table, it could be observed that Christians were more represented with 58.4 percent. The least represented of the religious group was traditional religion. The reason for this could be as a result of "modernization" and the spread of the two major religious groups - Christianity and Islam.

Those who are married (currently living with their husbands) constitute the largest percentage of the respondents (86.1 percent), while the divorced were least represented in the study with 1.0 percent, which may be an indication of marital stability in the study area. The data also invariably show that women in the study area tend to endure marital problems the more, even if they are not empowered, there is the likelihood that they will continue to stay with their husbands. However, 7.4 percent of the total respondents were separated. Some of the reasons given by the respondents include violence at home (by the husbands), not being given the chance to visit their relatives, marital infidelity (as a result of labour mobility on the part of the husband), etc. The greater majority of the respondents (82.5 percent) had formal education, at least primary school education. Majority of the respondents (60.4 percent) are non-civil servants, they are mainly traders and many of them are self-employed. About 41 percent of the respondents contracted traditional form of marriage.

Virtually the entire respondents (91.2 per cent) supported the idea of empowering women. The implication is that if many of the women that supported the issue of empowering women are not presently empowered, there is the likelihood of them becoming empowered in the nearest future. Some of the reasons given by those not interested in the issue of empowering women include the notion that women are naturally wicked or devilish. They went on to say that if they are empowered they will misuse or abuse their power and they will become more devilish. About 88 per cent of the respondents reported taking part in decision-making on all things that affect their families. This indicates that the majority of the women in the study area are empowered. About 48.5 percent of the respondents have at least four children as at the time of the survey.

It could be observed that more than half (51.0 percent) of the total respondents are not using family planning. One implication of this is that there is the likelihood of high fertility in the future among the non-users of family planning if the trend continues. Some 35.4 percent of those who are using family planning method do not allow their husband to know that they are using.

Some of the reasons given is that men always want to give birth to as many children as possible without caring about the health of their wives and whether there is enough to cater for the children or not. Also, they said that their husband will start to think that they will be flirting around and as such they will no more be trusted by their husbands. Some even said they could be sent packing.

Table 1: Socio-economic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	15-19	11	2.2
	20-24	57	11.4
	25-29	104	20.7
	30-34	84	16.7
	35-39	75	14.9
	40-44	84	16.7
	45+	87	17.3
Religion	Christianity	293	58.4
	Islam	198	39.4
	Traditional	2	0.4
	Others	9	1.8
Marital Status	Married	432	86.1
	Separated	37	7.4
	Divorced	5	1.0
	Widowed	25	5.0
	No Response	3	0.6
Education	No formal education	88	17.5
	Primary	122	24.3
	Secondary	144	28.7
	Tertiary	126	25.1
	Others	22	4.4
Occupation	Non-civil servants	303	60.4
	Civil servants	129	25.7
	Not working	70	13.9
Marriage Type	Traditional	202	40.2
	Church	101	20.1
	Islam	130	25.9
	Court	56	11.2
	Others	13	2.6
Employment Status	Employer	17	3.4
	Employee	85	16.9
	Self-employed	322	64.1
	Apprentice	5	1.0
	Unpaid family worker	1	0.2
	Unemployed	71	14.2
Empowerment	Interested	458	91.2
	Not interested	37	7.4
	No response	7	1.4
Decision Making	Participates	440	87.6
	Does not participate	59	11.8
	No response	3	0.6
Number of children ever born	0	26	5.2
	1	73	14.5
	2	89	17.7
	3	71	14.1
	4	106	21.1
	5	43	8.6
	6	51	10.2
	7	26	5.2
	8	15	3.0
	9	2	0.4
Use of family planning method	Yes	240	47.8
Husband has knowledge of use of family planning	Yes	164	31.5

Source: Field Survey

Table 2: Husband's Background Information

Characteristics	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Education	No formal education	12	2.4
	Primary	78	15.5
	Secondary	213	42.4
	Tertiary	199	39.7
Occupation	No occupation	44	8.8
	Non-civil servants	138	27.5
	Civil servants	320	63.7
Employment Status	Employer	30	6.0
	Employee	223	44.4
	Self employed	203	40.4
	Apprentice	3	0.6
	Unpaid family worker	1	0.2
	Unemployed	42	8.4

Source: Field Survey

From table 2, it could be observed that 97.6 percent of the respondent's husbands have formal education of at least primary school education. Majority of the respondents' husbands (63.7 percent) are civil servants. As regards the employment status of their husbands, 44.4 percent are employed and this was closely followed by self-employed with 40.4 percent.

4.1 Relationship between Fertility and Women's Empowerment

The basic assumption underlying the specification of the Ordinal regression model used in this paper is that fertility (measured by CEB) depends on women's empowerment (measured by women's decision-making power, her level of education and age)

That is $CEB = f_n(DMP1, DMP2, DMP3, DMP4, Education, Age)$

where:

- CEB = Children ever born (dependent variable)
- DMP1 = Discussion of number of children with husband
- DMP2 = Decision of number of months a woman should wait before having another child
- DMP3 = Decision of number of children women should have
- DMP4 = Decision on other things in the family.

Ordinal Regression allows you to model the dependence of a polytomous ordinal response on a set of predictors.

Table 3: Ordinal Regression Model of Fertility by Women's Empowerment

Variables	Categories	Coefficient
Threshold/Dependent Variable	CEB=0	1.343 [*]
	CEB=1	3.138 ^{**}
	CEB=2	4.451 ^{**}
	CEB=3	5.399 ^{**}
	CEB=4	6.825 ^{**}
	CEB=5	7.512 ^{**}
	CEB=6	8.681 ^{**}
	CEB=7	9.793 ^{**}
	CEB=8	12.082 ^{**}
Independent Variables		
Discussion of number of children	Discussed with husband	-0.399 [*]
	Not discussed with husband	r
Decision of the number of months	Own decision	-0.062
	Husband's decision	r
Decision of the number of children	Own decision	-0.289
	Husband's decision	r
Decision of other things	Participates	-0.275
	Does not participate	r
Education		-0.275 ^{**}
Age		0.185 ^{**}
Constant		1852.271
Model Chi-Square		313.984 ^{**}
N		502

Source: Field Survey

* Significant at 0.05

** Significant at 0.01

r=reference category

The null hypothesis tested by the model chi-square statistics is that the coefficients for the terms in the current model except the constant, is zero. From Table 3, the result shows that the model fits perfectly. The model chi-square is also significant at 0.01 significance level, thus implying that the coefficient of the variables in the model are different from zero. Thus the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted - that the variables have coefficients that differ from zero. This means that women's empowerment, age and education affects fertility. This result agrees with the assertion of Mahmud and Johnson (1994) that women's empowerment affects fertility behaviour.

The result is an indication of the fact that not minding the number of children a woman has the variables included in this model has significant effect on her fertility. It is not surprising that the level of significance changes when a woman does not have any child and when she begins to have children.

From the table, it can be seen from the sign of the coefficients that apart from the age of the woman which leads to an increase in the number of children ever born, all other variables would lead to a reduction in the fertility of women, also the fertility of women is significantly affected by the fact that a woman discusses the number of children to have with her husband. The implication is that those who discussed the number of children they would like to have with their husbands are likely to have a smaller number of children than those who have never discussed such with their husbands. The results also show that the number of children a woman would have reduces when such women are able to decide on the number of months they should wait before having another child, decide the number of children they should have, who take decision on other things in the family, and have higher level of education.

4.2 Relationship between Fertility and Husband's Social Status

The basic assumption underlying the specification of this logistic regression model is that women's fertility is dependent on husband's social status.

$$\text{That is CEB} = f(\text{HED, HOC, HES})$$

Where

- CEB = Children ever born (dependent variable)
- HED = Husband's level of education
- HOC = Husband's level of occupation
- HES = Husband's employment status

Table 4: Logit Model of Fertility by Husband's Social Status

Variables	Categories	Coefficient	Exp(β)
Education	Educated	0.3736	1.4529
	No formal education	r	-
Occupation	Civil servants	-0.2190	1.2448
	Non-Civil servants	r	-
Employment status	Employed	1.1135**	3.0450
	Unemployed	r	-
Constant			-2.2898*
-2 Log likelihood			621.233*
Model Chi-Square			10.177**
N			502
Overall Classification			67.73%

Source: Field Survey

* Significant at 0.00 level ** Significant at 0.05 level r = Reference category

Table 4 shows that the model fits perfectly, the model chi-square is significant at 0.02. Thus implying that the coefficients of the variables in the model are different from zero. Thus we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. This means that husband's social status affect women's fertility.

It can be seen from Table 4 that women with educated husbands are one and a half times as likely to have lower fertility relative to women with uneducated husbands. Also, women whose husbands are civil servants are one and a quarter times more likely to have lower fertility than those women with non-civil servant husbands. Women whose husbands are employed are three-times more likely to have lower fertility than women whose husbands are unemployed. From the coefficient of the model, it could be observed that husband's employment status exerted the greatest influence on fertility. The implication of this is that if husband's social status improves, women's fertility will decrease.

5. Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Summary

Attempts have been made in this paper to ascertain the level or extent of women's empowerment in Ibadan Metropolis. Attempts have also been made to discover the effects(s) of women's empowerment on fertility behaviour of the women in the study area.

In this paper, decision-making power of women on various issues, their age and level of education was used to measure empowerment. Results from the study revealed that majority of the women in the study area are interested in being empowered and many do participate in some decision making in the home. Also, the majority of the women have formal education, though, the educational level of many are low (primary school). The results show that the more empowered a woman is the higher the chances that her CEB (fertility) will reduce. The results also revealed that husband's social status affects fertility i.e. the higher the social status of a husband, the lower the fertility of his wife/woman.

Furthermore, a little more than half of the total respondents are not using any family planning method and the implication of this would be high fertility. Some of the reasons given by those who are not using any family planning method are lack of knowledge, husband's disapproval and religious reason.

There are some women who are not interested in the issue of empowering women, they do not want women to be empowered due to what some of them called "wicked nature of women folk". It should also be noted that women's employment status and their occupation influences empowerment and subsequently their fertility.

5.2 Conclusion

As highlighted above, the majority of the women in the study area are empowered. The cultural and religious practices and non-use of family planning methods of the people in the study area could be responsible for the level of fertility. It may also be that fertility is yet to be within the calculus of conscious choice of the respondents. It should be noted that improved social status of the husbands was found to likely reduce fertility.

5.3 Recommendations

As a result of the findings of this study, it becomes vital that there is the need for policy makers and educators to do more in the enlightenment of women on what women's empowerment is all about. It is imperative to intensify efforts on getting women enlightened on the availability and the need to use family planning methods. It was discovered that about 51 per cent of the total respondents do not use any family planning method. In line with the above, more men need to be enlightened on the reasons why they should allow their wives to use family planning methods (the findings of this research shows that some women are using family planning methods without the knowledge of their husbands).

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