

Gender and Maternal Health: A Study of Family Planning and the Use of Contraceptive Among Rural Women in Iwaro-Oka Akoko, Ondo State

Oyewole .O. Olusanya^{1*} (PhD) Kingsley .C. Imo² (PhD)

1. Department of Sociology, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba Akoko, Nigeria

Abstract

The issue of family planning all over the world has attracted attention due to importance in decision making about infant mortality, maternal morbidity and mortality, population growth and development issues. Women are disadvantaged as they have little or nothing to say regarding when to have a child, and how many to have in the process. This is particularly so among rural dwellers in Nigeria and Sub-Saharan Africa due to household gender dynamics. The study adopted a descriptive research survey and 150 rural women were randomly selected from Iwaro-Oka settlement. Data was collected using a self-constructed questionnaire. Data was analysed using frequencies, simple percentage and chi-square analysis. The result shows that majority 94(80.3%) of the respondents within the community have the knowledge of family planning, and they have practiced one or more family planning methods. Also, few 23(19.3%) of the respondents who do not practice family planning believe in the benefit of the method. Test of the hypotheses revealed that there was significant relationship between the educational back ground of the respondents and their attitude towards family planning and contraceptive use. In addition, there was a significant relationship between husband's involvement in decision making in wife's family planning life and attitude towards family planning and contraceptive use. Based on the findings, the study recommends that family planning programme should be intensified to improve people's knowledge of contraception and reduce their fear of modern methods. Moreover, all stakeholders should plan interventions that will further make family planning health services husband-targeted by involving men and ensuring confidentiality, privacy and respect. In addition, such intervention should provide information necessary for informed men consent especially in traditional settings, in order to curtail infant mortality, maternal morbidity and mortality.

Keywords: Family Planning, Contraceptive, Attitude, and Rural Women.

1. Introduction

Family planning and modern contraceptives are important health measures contributing to the health of women, adolescents, children and men (WHO 2018). In rural areas, the common view held by people is that family planning is associated with the use of contraceptives to limit family size and that it also contributes to the reduction in maternal mortality and morbidity rate by enabling women to protect themselves from unwanted pregnancies and the aftermath of frequent and poorly spaced birth, unwanted birth and unsafe abortion (Federal Ministry of Health, 2010). Family planning is also the voluntary planning and action taken by individuals to prevent, delay or achieve a pregnancy. (National Centre for Health statistics, 2013).

Nonetheless, Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, with more than 140 million people (Population Reference Bureau, 2006); it also has a high annual rate of population growth (3.5%) and a total fertility rate of 6.0% life births per women. (Federal Office of Statistics, Health and Demographic Survey, 2006). In response to this and other serious demographic and health issues, the Nigerian government put into place a national population policy in 1989 that called for a reduction in the birth rate through voluntary fertility regulation methods compatible with the nation's economic and social goals. Ever since, there have been controversies on whether these policies of family planning is really understood and practiced by Nigerians

Contraceptive use is a sensitive subject in Nigeria (Onokerhoraye, 1997). Today, it is being increasingly discussed as necessary or a necessary factor in population control and development. Policy makers and political leaders have accepted contraceptive usage as an important health measure contributing to the health of mothers and children as well as improving the status of women (National Centre for Health statistics, 2013). Unfortunately, efforts geared towards improving the level of contraceptives usage have not been positive as Nigeria continues to experience persistence high fertility leading to its increasing population.

Choices about family planning are among the most important health decisions that many people make. Family planning decisions are most likely to meet a person's needs when based on accurate, relevant and medically appropriate information. This is when they could be described as informed choices. The concept of informed choices in family planning focuses on whether to seek to avoid pregnancy, whether to space the time of child bearing, whether to use contraception, what family planning methods to use and whether to continue or switch methods (Mischell, 2007). The principle of informed choice focuses on the individual. Yet most people's attitude towards family planning also reflects a range of outside influences. Social and cultural norms, gender

roles, social networks, religion and local beliefs influence people's choices (W H O 2002). Studies have shown that in many instances, decisions around family size and fertility, in the Nigerian context, fall outside of a woman's domain (Kahansim, Hadejia and Sambo, 2013, safe mother, 1998). Interventions aimed to improve women's empowerment, particularly with reference to their own health, have been shown to increase women's uptake of contraception rather in the urban Nigerian context (Corroon, Speizer, Fotso, Akiode, Saad, Calhoun, et al 2014)

In Nigeria, most research works on family planning have been based exclusively on family planning methods; limited studies have examined the attitude of rural dwellers towards family planning in a patriarchy social milieu. It is against this background that this study becomes relevant in filling such gap in our knowledge on the issues of gender and maternal health, examining family planning and the use of contraceptive among rural women in Iwaro-Oka Akoko, Ondo State. The study hypothesized that the involvement of husbands in their wives family planning life has significant influence on wives attitude towards family planning and contraceptive use.

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Examine the opinion of rural women about family planning and contraceptive usage.
2. Examine the opinion of husbands and how it influences their wives attitude towards contraceptive usage.

2. Methodology

The descriptive research design of the survey type was adopted for the study. A total of 117 of married women in the community from aged between 15 and 25 years randomly selected based on willingness and availability were used for the study. Data were collected using a self-developed questionnaire. Section A of the instrument elicited information on demographic data of the respondents, section B was designed to gather information on types of family planning, section C gather information on attitude and perception towards family planning, section D was designed to gather information on the implication of unplanned pregnancy, section E: consisted of questions designed to gather information on the influence of husband opinion on contraceptive usage and section F elicited information on the possible ways of family planning enlightenment. The instrument was self-administered and retrieved from the respondents immediately. Data were analysed using chi-square, frequency count and simple percentages.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Descriptive Analysis

Table 1: Respondents Socio-Demographic Information (N=117)

Age	Frequency	Percentage
15-25	10	8.5
26-35	66	56.4
36-45	38	32.5
46 and above	3	2.6
Total	117	100
Marital Status		
Married	108	92.3
Widow	3	2.6
Separated	3	2.6
Divorced	3	2.6
Total	117	100
Educational Attainment		
No formal education	8	6.8
Primary	8	6.8
Secondary	28	24
Tertiary	73	62.4
Total	117	100
Occupation		
Civil Servant	64	54.7
Business	29	24.8
Farming	15	12.8
Artisans	8	6.8
Petty Traders	1	0.9
Total	117	100

Ethnic Group		
Yoruba	89	76.1
Ibo	18	15.4
Hausa	7	6.8
Others(Tiv, Uhorobo & Nupe)	3	2.6
Total	117	100
Religion	F	%
Christianity	92	78.6
Muslim	20	17.1
Traditional	5	4.3
Total	117	100

The age distribution of the respondents as presented in table 1 shows that some 10(8.5%) were 15-25 years old, the majority 66(56.4%) were within 26-35 years, while 35-46 years old were 38(32.5%). Lastly, a few 3(2.6%) were 46 years and above. The results shows that a good number of respondents (about two third) were between the ages of 26-35 years.

In respect to marital status about 108(92.3%) of respondents were married, other 3(2.6%) were separated; 3(2.6%) were widow; 3(2.6%) were divorced. This implies that majority of the respondents are married women who are sexually active and really need to know of family planning.

The table further shows that some 8(6.8%) of the respondents were had no formal education, 8(6.8%) had only primary school education; 28(24.0%) had secondary school education, while the remaining 73(62.4%) were had tertiary education.

The major occupation in this community was civil servant, as a larger percentage 64(54.7%) of the respondents were civil servants, many 29(24.8%) were business women, some 15(12.8%) were into farmers; while 8(6.8%) were artisan, the remaining 1(0.9%) was a petty traders.

Most of the respondents were Yorubas 89(76.1%) since the community researched on is a Yoruba town. But there were still people who migrated from other part of the country to the community, 18(15.4%) were Ibo. while 7(6.0%) were Hausa's, the remaining 3(2.6%) represents a small divers ethnic group which include, Tiv, Nupe and Urhobo.

The community is majorly a Christian community, 92(78.6%) of the respondents were Christian, 20(17.1%) were Muslims, while 5(4.3%) practiced traditional religion.

3.1.1 Opinion of Rural Women about Family Planning and Contraceptive Usage.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by their Opinion about Family Planning and Contraceptive Usage (N=117)

Family planning is good and necessary to improve standard of living	F	%
Yes	103	88.0
No	14	12.0
Total	117	100

Table 2 shows that 103(88.0%) of the respondents opined that family planning is good as well as necessary with affirmations that it help improves standard of living, while 14(12.0%) of the respondents felt otherwise. The attitude of rural women towards family planning and contraceptive use in Iwaro-Oka Akoko community is quite positive because majority of the respondents have the knowledge and have practiced one form of family planning method or the other. Some however, do not practice family planning at all. In addition, the majority believes in the benefit of family planning and contraceptives usage such as reduced risk of unintended pregnancies and reduced maternal as well as infant mortality. The finding of the study reverberates the work of Huezo and Carignam, (1997) that the benefit of family planning are numerous as it has helped women around the world to avoid the risk of unintended pregnancy, maternal morbidity and mortality.

3.1.2 Opinion of Husbands and how it Influences their Wives Attitude towards Contraceptive Usage.

Table 3: distribution of respondents by their husband's involvement in their family planning life (N=117)

Husband involvement in family planning life	F	%
Yes	96	82.1
No	21	17.9
Total	117	100

Table 3 shows the response of the respondents on the involvement of their husbands in their family planning life. 98(82.1%) of the respondents noted that their husband are involved in their family planning life while 21(17.9%) noted otherwise. The findings indicates that majority of the respondents do carry their husbands along in the process of decision making about family planning; which in turn could make their husband respond positively towards the use of any contraceptives methods. Spousal communication in family planning is a central

to increasing men's participation in reducing maternal morbidity and mortality; thereby increasing safe motherhood. This is because communication between partners about child bearing and family planning is closely linked to successful contraceptive use.

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by whether they feel embarrassed talking to their Husband about their Usage of Contraceptive (N=117)

Feel embarrassed	F	%
Yes	19	16.2
No	98	83.8
Total	117	100

Table 4 indicate that 19(16.2%) of the respondents noted that they feel embarrassed talking to their husband about family planning. While majority of the respondents 98(83.8%) indicated that they do not feel embarrassed talking to their husbands as it makes contraceptive usage and family planning in general effective.

3.2 Test of Hypothesis

H_0 : The involvement of husbands in family planning life does not have significant relationship with their wives attitude towards family planning and contraceptive use.

H_1 : The involvements of husbands in family planning life have significant relationship with their wives attitude towards family planning and contraceptive use.

Chi-square test for the significant relationship between the involvements of husbands in family planning life and attitude of wives towards family planning and contraceptive use.

Response	O	E	O-E	(O-E) ²	(O-E) ² /E
Yes	96	50	46	2116	42.32
No	21	50	29	814	16.28
Total	117				56.8

Where O = Frequency Observed
 E = Frequency Expected

Degree of freedom (D.F.) = N-1 N=2

Therefore, 2-1 = 1

Level of significance = 0.05

1 at 0.05 level of significance = 3.84

Calculated value (χ^2) 56.8

Table value (χ^2) 3.84

Decision rule: When chi-square (χ^2) calculated is greater than χ^2 table, alternative hypothesis (H_1) would be accepted, but when table value is greater than χ^2 calculated, null hypothesis (H_0) is accepted.

Therefore, alternative hypothesis states that the involvements of husbands in family planning life have a significant relationship with their wives attitude towards family planning and contraceptive use was accepted. The study thus concludes that there is link between husband involvement in family planning life and attitude towards family planning and contraceptive use.

4. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study examined gender and maternal health in respect of family planning and the use of contraceptive among rural women in Iwara-Oka Akoko, Ondo State. It was found that the attitude of the rural women in this community was fair because majority of the respondents have the knowledge and have practiced one form of family planning method or the other. Some however, do not practice family planning at all. In addition, a few who do not practice family planning believes in the benefit of family planning; that it helps people live a good life, reduce the risk of unintended pregnancies, reduce maternal as well as infant mortality and families with fewer children have a brighter future ahead. This was supported by the work of Hatcher, Ward, Blackburn and Geller, (1997) that the benefit of family planning are numerous as it has helped women around the world to avoid the risk of unintended pregnancy.

This study shed light on possible factors that do influence people's attitude towards family planning as indicated in the tested hypothesis; the findings revealed that there is link between husband involvement in family planning life and attitude towards family planning and contraceptive use. This corroborates the findings of Adewuyi and Ogunjuyigbe (2003), who found that inter-spousal communication is a key factor in the adoption and sustainable use of family planning in Nigeria because it allows couples discuss and exchange information that may appear unclear. This is particularly relevant in Nigeria where men often dominate decision.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study focused on gender and maternal health: a study of family planning and the use of contraceptive among

rural women in Iworo-Oka Akoko, Ondo State. The study revealed that the most married women in the community have positive opinion about the practice of family planning and contraceptive usage and indicated that husbands are fully involved in their family planning life. The study do not only reveal that husbands involvements make contraceptive usage and family planning effective for their wives but also influence wives attitude towards contraceptives use and family planning in general. Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that:

- Interventions should seek to re-orientate husbands who are the major stakeholders in the maternal health of their wives to be receptive and friendly in the giving due and timely support to the family's practice of contraceptives use and family planning in general particularly in rural and educational disadvantage settings. This becomes overwhelmingly important in the face of persistent Violence Against Women (VAM) particularly within the family
- Sociologist and other professionals should understand the implication of the findings of this study to be able to execute proper intervention programmes, especially for husbands to become more open and receptive in discussing contraceptives-related matters with their wives particularly in our society where patriarchy is pervasive.
- All stakeholders, particularly the government could make health services men-friendly by involving husbands (especially during childbirth) and ensuring provision of information necessary for informed consent especially in traditional social milieu like ours

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