



Religious Affiliation and Uniform Men Involvement in Family Planning in Edo State, Nigeria

ELIZABETH B. TIMBIRI, MARGARET ONOBUMEH
University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria

Abstract. Male involvement in Family Planning (FP) is crucial to the reduction of maternal infant and neonatal mortality. This study examined religious affiliation and uniform men involvement in FP in Edo State. A descriptive survey research design was used and the population of this study was 3,443. Multistage sampling technique was used to select 494 respondents as sample for this study. The instrument used for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire with two sections. The questionnaire was validated by three experts in the Department of Health, Safety and Environmental Education. Cronbach Statistical tool was used to analyze the data collected. It yielded an alpha value of 0.78. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics of frequency count percentage and regression. From the findings, it was revealed that majority of the respondents had high involvement in FP, and religious affiliation did not significantly influence uniform men involvement in FP. In line with the findings of the study, it was therefore recommended that seminars and workshops should be targeted at uniform men to further improve their involvement in FP.

Keywords: Male Involvement, Family Planning, Uniform Men, Maternal Mortality

1. Background to the Study

Family planning (FP) can help to regulate population increase while also minimizing the number of undesired pregnancies. There are direct and indirect benefits of family planning and they include the reduction in the spread of HIV to newborns, reduction of maternal morbidity and mortality, reduction in neonatal, infant and child mortality, reduction in the recourse to unsafe abortion and improvement in education and employment opportunities for women who are able to delay initiation of childbearing

(Cleland, Conde-Agudelo, Peterson, Ross & Tsui, 2017). Family planning will improve the health status of both the mother and child because it enables the mother to adequately cater to the needs of the child and wean the child properly before becoming pregnant again. Family Planning will also allow the mother to recover properly from the last delivery.

There are different categories of men amongst which are male teachers, doctors, traders, artisans and truck drivers. Uniform men fall in the category of men who work in any of the security apparatus in the State. Uniform men are men from diverse ethnic, religious and social groups. Uniform men in Edo State are men from the six geo-political zones of the country who fall within the reproductive age group. This is the age in which men are mature, sexually active and have the means to procure sex or marry wives. Uniform men are of the age where society and culture permits them to marry and have children. They are seen as mature and responsible to take on the responsibilities of life. From the researcher's personal observation, uniform men tend to have large family size which could be as a result of the close space they live in the barracks. This close spaced arrangement may lead to frequent intercourse by the couple and ultimately more children. In addition, some of the lower cadre staff in the uniform outfits in Edo State are poorly paid and have low levels of education and these could prevent them from utilizing FP.

Male involvement in family planning (FP) means more than an increase in the number of men who use condoms and have vasectomies; male involvement also includes the number of men who encourage and support their partners and peers to use FP and who influence the policy environment to be more conducive to developing male-related programmes. Male involvement should be understood in a much

broader sense than male contraception, and should include all activities aimed at men as a discrete group which have the objective of increasing the acceptability and utilization of family-planning practice of either sex (Manortey & Missah, 2020). Male participation in contraceptive use improves women's uptake and continuity of family planning approaches by increasing spousal coordination and decreasing opposition (Bayray, 2012). Male non-involvement in family planning may lead to a high incidence of contraceptive discontinuation among women, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria inclusive where men are key decision-makers in the home and family planning inclusive. Though women bear children and most modern contraceptives are female-oriented, childbearing has a significant impact on men as well. This impact may be felt financially if men are responsible for their children's welfare in any way possible, including the health and well-being of their wives. A man's social status is sometimes affected when he attains fatherhood as a result of the plethora of financial demands the child brings.

The low engagement of males in family planning is attributed to various factors, encompassing their perceptions of family planning, socioeconomic and demographic profiles, prevailing national policies, mass media campaigns, inter personal communication from health workers, advice from family members, spousal communication, and the health systems in place (Arundhati, 2011). According to Ijadunola et al. (2010), there is an urgent need to increase male involvement in family planning in Nigeria. Research by Manortey and Missah (2020) disclosed poor attendance of men at family planning clinics, with the majority (54.61%) attending only once. This aligns with findings in Afar, Ethiopia, where husbands' involvement in family planning stood at approximately 42.2% (Chekole et al., 2019).

Christian ideas on contraception come from interpretations of Church teachings rather than scripture. Although little is explicitly mentioned regarding the use of contraception, the Bible mentions that children are a gift from God and that God's first words to Adam and Eve were, "Be fruitful, multiply and fill the Earth" (Genesis 1:28) (McKeown, 2014). Prior to the 20th Century, all Churches disapproved of contraceptive use, since limitation of children was against the main purpose of marriage (to procreate) (Goodson, 1997). In recent times, Protestant Churches have become more liberal in their teachings of family planning. The Catholic Church (i.e. the Vatican and Pope) do not allow the use of artificial methods of contraceptive as these methods are believed to encourage adultery and promiscuity. Only "natural contraception" is permissible, i.e. breastfeeding,

withdrawal (coitus interruptus) and calendar (rhythm) methods (Ignaciuk, 2020). Despite the ban on artificial contraceptive methods, some Catholic Churches silently tolerate the practice (Kok, 2020).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

In the early days of FP and even till the present day, family planning programmes have been targeted at women, in order to free women from excessive child-bearing, and to reduce maternal, infant and neonatal mortality through the use of modern contraceptive methods. This focus on the women-folk has strengthened the belief that family planning is largely a woman's prerogative, with the man playing a very minimal role. It is important to involve men and obtain their support and commitment to family planning, given their elevated position in the Nigerian society. Men are the force behind most of the decisions that affect family life. Men are the architects behind most decisions in politics. Key positions of influence and leadership from the family unit to the national level are held by men.

Uniform men are a category of men who perhaps have been associated with large family size. This could be because of the nature of their job where they get transferred regularly to other locations. When this transfer is made these uniform men may not be inclined to go with their families making it easy for them to perhaps have concubines outside their homes. In a situation where the uniform man gets transferred 7 times in his career that means he may have many more children than the one he has with his wife if he is not using any means of protection. Being the key decision-makers in almost all spheres of life, including the utilization of FP (Ndinda et al., 2017); there is a considerable need to include men more frequently in FP services. Most partners who use contraception rely on methods requiring active male participation (Handelsman, 2019); therefore, the involvement of men in FP can have significant benefits to the FP methods acceptance, continuation of utilization, client satisfaction and efficacy. The government and non-governmental organizations like the Society for Family Health have continued to sensitize the populace on the importance of FP and the benefits to both the couple and the child. Despite the abundance of information on print, social and electronic media on the need for family planning, male involvement in FP is still perceived to be low. Could this perceived low involvement be as a result of their religious belief and affiliation? This question prompted the researcher to carry out this study on religious affiliation and uniform men involvement in family planning in Edo State.

1.2 Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- What is the level of uniform men involvement in FP in Edo State?
- Does religious affiliation influence uniform men involvement in FP in Edo State?

1.3 Hypothesis

The following hypothesis was formulated and tested at .05 level of significance:

- Religious affiliation will not significantly influence uniform men involvement in FP in Edo State.

2. Methodology

This study employed the descriptive survey design. Descriptive survey was used to describe characteristics of a population being studied. The population of this study comprised all uniform men in Edo State (Army, Police, Civil Defense, Road Safety and Immigration, Drug Law Enforcement Agency, Correctional Service, etc) with the total population of three thousand, four hundred and forty-three (3,443).

3. Results

Research Question One: What is the level of uniform men involvement in FP in Edo State?

Table 3: Frequency distribution and percentage of level of uniform men involvement in FP in Edo State (n=379)

Knowledge	Frequency	Percentage
High	242	63.9
Low	137	36.1
Total	379	100

High knowledge- score of 8 to 16; low knowledge- score of 0 to 7

Table 3 shows the percentage on the level of uniform men involvement in FP. The table reveals that 63.9% have high level of involvement in family planning and 36.1% have low level of involvement in family planning. Hence majority of the respondents have high level of involvement in family planning.

Hypothesis

Hypothesis One: Religious affiliation will not significantly influence uniform men involvement in FP in Edo State

Table 5: Regression Analysis of Religious affiliation on Uniform Men Involvement in FP (n=379)

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	47.823	3	15.941	2.209	.087 ^b
	Residual	2705.560	375	7.215		
	Total	2753.383	378			

a. Dependent Variable: Involvement

b. Predictors: (Constant), Muslim, Catholic, Pentecostal

The researchers adopted the multistage sampling technique to select. Firstly, Simple random sampling by balloting with replacement was used to select five (5) uniform outfits out of the eleven uniform outfits. Purposively, 30% of respondents was selected from each of the uniform outfits using the list of staff members. The sample size for the study was therefore four hundred and ninety-four (494) uniform men. A researcher developed questionnaire was used data collection. The instrument was divided into two sections (Section A, sociodemographic characteristics, Section B, male involvement in FP) with 16 items. In order to check the content and face validity of the instrument, the researcher presented the instrument to three experts in the Department of Health, Safety and Environmental Education, after which their suggestions, corrections and contributions were effected in the final draft of the instrument. In order to establish the internal consistency of the items, the instrument was administered once to twenty (20) uniform men who were not part of the study and thereafter Cronbach Statistical tool was used to analyze the data collected. It yielded an alpha value of 0.78 which warranted the use of the instrument. The instrument was administered by the researcher and the research assistants, and data was collected at the spot to ensure high rate of return. The data collected was analyzed using frequency counts, percentages and regression.

Table 5 shows the Regression Analysis of Religious affiliation on Uniform Men Involvement in Family Planning. From the table $F= 2.209$, $P\text{-Value} = .087$. Testing at alpha level of .05 the $F\text{-Value}$ is not significant ($.087 > .05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis that says “Religious affiliation will not significantly influence uniform men involvement in FP in Edo State” is retained. This implies that, religious affiliation of the uniform men do not determine their involvement in family planning.

4. Discussion of Findings

Regarding the extent of uniform men involvement in family planning, the majority of respondents displayed high levels of involvement. This finding aligns with a study in India where 71.0% of respondents exhibited high involvement in family planning (Rekha et al., 2015). However, it contrasts with studies in by Wondim et al. (2020), Chekole et al. (2019) and Butto & Mburu (2015), where husbands' involvement was approximately 42.2%, 40.0%, and 12%, respectively. Notably, in those studies, 99.0% of males relied solely on condoms for contraception, indicating poor utilization of other male contraceptive methods. Abubakar et al. (2021) suggested that high male involvement in family planning is associated with factors such as respondents' and their wives' occupation and educational level, age, social class, and the use of family planning methods. The proportion of respondents highly involved in family planning was significantly higher among those in the upper social classes (91.9%) compared to the middle (60.0%) and lower social classes (26.5%), as well as those who had ever used a family planning method (85.7%) compared to those who had never used one (13.6%). Urban residence and education were identified by Obilor & Osita-Njoku (2021) as factors that increase contraceptive use due to improved accessibility, awareness, and economic pursuits. In this study, the high level of involvement among uniform men may be attributed to the majority having at least secondary education, enabling them to make informed choices regarding contraceptive use. The reason majority of uniform men have high involvement in FP could be because many of them have had some form of schooling as this may be associated with involvement in FP.

On the influence of religion on uniform men involvement in FP, findings indicated that religion did not significantly influence uniform men involvement in FP. The implication is that, religious affiliation of the uniform men does not determine their involvement in family planning. This study is in consonance with Ndakara et al., (2021) who in their study, revealed that

there is no significant relationship between religious belief and attitude of married teachers towards family planning. On the contrary, findings from studies carried out by Igbudu et al (2011), Bojana et al. (2016), reported that significant relationships exist between religious belief and family planning. This study revealed that Catholics were the least involved in family planning. The reason religious affiliation did not significantly influence uniform men involvement in FP could be because even though some religious groups do not accept family planning, the adherents decide on their own what works best for them and may actually use FP.

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the majority of uniform men reported high levels of involvement in FP. Also, religion did not significantly influence uniform men involvement in FP.

6. Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

- Seminars and workshops should be targeted at uniform men to further improve their involvement in FP.
- Effort should be made by stakeholders to target men from different religions to make them more involved in FP.

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