



Attitudes of Couples towards Family Planning Methods in Orhionmwon Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria

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Abstract. Family planning plays a vital role in promoting maternal and child health, regulating population growth and enhancing the socio-economic stability of families. Despite the availability of various contraceptive methods, the attitudes of couples towards family planning remain influenced by multiple socio-cultural, religious and educational factors. The Objective of this study was to determine the attitudes of couples towards the use of family planning methods. A descriptive survey design was adopted, and data were collected using the structured questionnaire administered to a sample of married men and women. The findings suggest that efforts to improve family planning uptake must be context-sensitive, addressing not only individual knowledge gaps but also cultural norms, religious beliefs and socio-economic barriers that shape reproductive decisions. This study recommends that the Federal and State government should build reproductive health centers where family planning education would be given to couples on the choice of family planning for both educated and non-educated couples.

Keywords: Family planning, Couple's attitudes, Contraceptive methods, Reproductive health, Population control.

1. Introduction

According to Adinma (2021). Family planning implies the ability of individuals and couples to anticipate and attain their desired number of children by spacing and timing their births. It is achieved through the use of contraceptive methods and the treatment of involuntary infertility. The availability of family planning does more than enable women and men to limit family size (Filstie, 2019). It safeguards individual health and rights, and improves the quality of life of couples and their children. The most

important proximate determinant of fertility is the use of family planning (Rajaretnam, 2009). Where contraceptive use is widespread, fertility is low. Many potential informational barriers exist to contraceptive use.

Population growth has been a problematic issue all over the world. Family planning is a crucial component of public health and population control, enabling individuals and couples to anticipate and attain their desired number of children and the spacing and timing of their births (Kleinman, 2021). (Omorogiuwa, 2020), explained that a family's environment has a major influence on its members' behavior, well-being, and social, emotional, cognitive, and psychological development. The health condition of a family affects not only its personal life alone but also its general state and wellness.

Globally, family planning is recognized as a fundamental human right and a key strategy for reducing maternal and infant mortality, promoting gender equality, and improving the overall well-being of families. According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA, 2022), approximately 1.1 billion women of reproductive age (15–49 years) worldwide have a need for family planning. Consequently, many developed countries have approved and resorted to birth control or family planning. Family planning according to United Nations Population Funds Activities (UNPFA, 2013) is a recognized basic human right and enables individuals and couples to determine the number and spacing of their children. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2013) stated that family planning allows individuals and couples to anticipate and attain their desired number of children and the spacing and timing of their births. This is achieved through the use of contraceptive methods. The availability of family

planning does more than enable women and men to limit family size (Omorogiuwa, 2017; Herdiana, 2018). It safeguards individual health and rights, and improves the quality of life of couples and their children.

A woman's ability to space and limit her pregnancies has a direct impact on her health and well-being as well as on the outcome of each pregnancy (Onwuzurike, 2021). In effect, family planning is the regulation and control of the rate of child birth by individuals, both married and unmarried.

In African contexts, the attitudes of couples toward family planning methods are shaped by a complex interplay of cultural, religious, educational, economic, and gender-related factors (Suleiman, 2020). While awareness of family planning has increased significantly across the continent, attitudes towards its use often remain negative or ambivalent, particularly in rural and conservative communities. Many couples still associate contraception with moral decline, infertility, or cultural taboos (Kleinman, 2021). Misconceptions, fear of side effects, lack of male involvement, and opposition from religious or traditional leaders further discourage the use of modern contraceptive methods. In Nigeria, family planning is recognized as a strategy to reduce maternal and infant mortality, improve economic stability, and empower women. Despite national efforts to promote the use of modern contraceptives, uptake remains relatively low in many rural and semi-urban areas, including parts of Edo State (Golden, 2019).

1.1 Statement of the Research Problem

Despite of efforts to curb population growth through family planning, attitude of couples towards family planning still poses a problem in Orhionmwon LGA, Edo State. In spite of all the efforts at birth control in Nigeria, there still exist a gap between desire for fertility regulation and practice. Studies have shown that birth rate and population growth in Orhionmwon Local Government area is still high (Federal Republic of Nigeria Official Gazette, 2009). Records from public health centres established across Edo State shows a poor turnout of women or couples in the patronage of family planning services provided by the government through these health centres (Area Council Health Centre, Family Planning Record, 2009-2011). Furthermore, most maternal deaths have been associated with unwanted pregnancies resulting from unsafe abortions, high rate of infant and childhood mortality, miscarriages or fetal wastages are problems associated with short birth interval (Suleiman, 2020).

The researcher believes that low level awareness leading to poor attitude towards family planning might have contributed to low patronage of family planning services. More so, the focus of most discussion on family planning appears to mainly be on how family planning affects the women with little or no reference to their male partners. This may have underestimated the role of men as the custodian, family heads and major decision makers in the family and society in general. In many cases, men are either poorly informed or excluded from family planning programs, despite their influential role in household decisions (Omorogiuwa, 2017; Herdiana, 2018). This often leads to women bearing the sole burden of contraception and sometimes secretly using family planning, which may cause tension or violence in relationships.

Men decide when, where and how family planning programmes should be conducted, so it becomes important to focus on couples in such researches rather than women for an effective awareness and change in attitude of couples towards the practice of family planning. These are the challenges that have motivated the researcher to go into this study, to find out the attitude of couples towards family planning in Orhionmwon Local Government Area, Edo State.

1.2 Research Questions

This paper seeks to investigate the attitudes of couples towards family planning methods. The study was guided by the following research questions:

- What are the attitudes of couples towards different family planning methods in Orhionmwon Local Government Area, Edo State?
- What factors influence couples' attitudes toward family planning methods?
- What are the major barriers couples face in adopting family planning methods?

2. Review of Literature

Family planning is the voluntary planning and action taken by individuals to prevent, delay or achieve a pregnancy (Adiele, 2020). Previous studies (Hall, Fares, Luinstra & Adiele, 2020; Omorogiuwa, 2020) reveals that family planning is the voluntary planning and action taken by individuals to prevent, delay or achieve a pregnancy. Family planning services include counseling and education, preconception care, screening and laboratory tests, and family planning methods. Family planning methods include abstinence,

natural family planning and all approved methods of contraception including hormonal contraception and contraceptive supplies such as condoms, diaphragms and intrauterine devices. Family planning is the decision-making process by couples, together or individually, on the number of children that they would like to have in their lifetime, and the age interval between children (Ajuzie, 2020).

People have consciously or unconsciously engaged in family planning throughout history. Abstinence, either lifelong or temporary, and prohibitions, forbidden, intercourse during certain times of the year or during certain festivals effectively curtail the fertility rate (the number of life births for each woman during her life time) (Barns, 2020). Separation of husbands and wives for long period of time by war or business trips also curtails the fertility rate.

In the modern era, the perception of religious people Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhist, etc has changed with time (Herland, 2021). According to (Herland 2021) religious faithful of one religion or the other sees family planning and the in-take of birth contraceptives as crime against God who desired that humans should increase the world through birth. For example, the Catholic Church frowns at family planning in whatever method. The Catholic doctrine preaches against it, enjoin members to desist from it and sees it as an act perpetrated against the creation of human beings (Amos, 2015). But this researcher wants to add that not all Catholics imbibe the culture of non-contraceptive as measure to stop child birth as preached by the Catholic Church. Due to education and sophistication, couples see the use of contraceptive as a means of curtailing the rate of births in the family despite their religiosity.

2.1 Attitude of Couples towards different family planning

In Nigeria, men are recognized as the head of the family and they take most of the family decisions, As a result, attitudes regarding contraception, the desired number of children and the actual use of contraceptives are influenced greatly by the husbands (Adamson, 2019). This suggests that, the decision whether to use a method either by the wife or by the husband himself is often taken by the male partner. The overall involvement and responsibility by men is poor, as indicated by contraceptive use statistics (Alani, 2022). On the whole, studies have shown that men's negative attitudes are often major reasons why their wives fail to practice family planning, even when the latter are motivated to do so. Fertility particularly in developing countries would have been lower if women were in a position to decide when to become

pregnant and how many children they want to have because it is them that undergo all the sicknesses associated with pregnancy and delivery and may lose their lives as a result of pregnancy and childbirth. Though male fertility regulating methods are available, female methods, both spacing as well as sterilization are more widely accepted and practiced. (Chinomso, 2019).

2.2 Factors Influencing Couples Attitude toward Family Planning Method

2.2.1 Socioeconomic factors

Gender indicates the characteristics, positions and roles of man and woman in all social relationships. But in most studies on family planning, women are usually on the front line of factors that affect socioeconomic outcomes (Parvin, 2020). For ages, a commitment to supporting gender equality in economic outcomes has underlined women's empowerment. However, despite important advances toward equality, differences in the socioeconomic outcomes of men and women still persist. If the population is increasing by forcing natural resources and economic opportunity, the necessity of implementing effective and adequate family planning in the society is emerging (Onyeonu, 2021). With industrialization, families have better economic opportunities and social security. Thus, aggravating living conditions and taking more roles in women's work life reduces the desire to have many children.

2.2.2 Cultural norms and attitude of couples toward family planning

This is the most important factor influencing the choice of family planning among couples. This includes: community norms, religious belief and gender role. Community norms also prescribe how much autonomy an individual has in making family planning decisions. The larger the differences in reproductive intentions within a community, the more likely the community norms support individual choices. Household and community influence can be so powerful that they can obscure the line between individual desires and community norms (Hoque, 2015). For instance, in some culture, many women reject contraception because bearing and raising children is the path to respect and dignity in the society. People are often unaware that such community norms influence their choices. In other cases, they are particularly aware. For example, young people often decide not to seek for family planning because they do not want their parents or other adults to know that they are sexually active. Some couples in the community

feel that bearing children is the major aim of their marriage, as tradition, customs and beliefs. In some northern part of Nigeria, especially the Islamic religion, they believe that bearing more children will indicate how wealthy they are, in which they tend to withdraw themselves from the use of family planning.

2.3 Major barriers couples face in adopting family planning methods

Religious beliefs and practices have been found to be important in shaping the attitudes of Nigerian couples towards contraception as couples are often under an obligation to act under the belief systems of the religion they are affiliated to. A 2005 study on the influence of religion on adolescent sexual attitude and behaviour among 1,870 Nigerian university students revealed a strong influence of religion on attitudes towards reproductive health issues.

Couples who were committed to their religion tended to have more negative attitudes towards issues of reproductive health such as contraception than those who were only affiliated to the faith (Barns, 2020) Reports also indicated a lower usage of contraception among Muslims compared to Christians, because of the practice of early marriage and the belief that it is beyond the capacity of humans to decide on the number of children one should have (Brindis & Katsuranis, 2018). A Muslim cleric, stated in an interview with Vanguard (a Nigerian newspaper) in July 2012 that religiously, the practice of contraception among both married and unmarried couples is at variance with God’s injunction which teaches that all sexual relations should be open to procreation and there should be no limit to or restrictions on childbearing (Vanguard, 2012).

2.4 Theoretical Framework

This study adopted the Family Systems Theory as the theoretical framework.

Occupation	Number of Participants	Percentage (%)
Farmers	120	30%
Traders	100	25%
Business Men & Women	80	20%
Teachers	60	15%
Others (e.g., civil servants, artisans)	40	10%
Total	400	100%

The sample size will be obtained using the simplified formula for proportions or sample size by Taro Yamane (1973). The questionnaire has two parts, with a total of thirty-five (35) questions. The first part is for the student respondent which contains two Sections A and B, Section A contains the student Bio-data; such as the Age, Sex, Class etc while section B contains the research questions. The second Part of the research questionnaire is the teacher respondents which is also further divided into Two Sections A and B, Section “A” contain the teachers Bio-data; such as the Age, Qualification, Sex etc. which Section “B” contain the research questions items that investigated The Attitudes of

Family Systems Theory, developed by Murray Bowen in 1950 views the family as an emotional unit and a complex social system in which members interact and influence one another’s behaviors, decisions, and well-being. In the context of family planning, this theory provides a valuable framework for understanding how reproductive decisions are shaped not just by individual choices, but by the dynamic interactions within the family system. According to Family Systems Theory, the beliefs, roles, communication patterns, and emotional ties within a family all play critical roles in shaping such choices. For instance, cultural expectations, intergenerational values, and the level of cohesion or conflict among family members can significantly influence how couples or individuals approach family planning. Murray Bowen (1988), a pioneer in family therapy, formulated Family Systems Theory, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of family members and the patterns that develop within family units. He proposed eight interlocking concepts (also called tenets or principles) to explain how families function and influence individual behavior.

3. Research Methodology

This study will adopt a descriptive survey research design to investigate the attitudes of couples towards family planning methods in Orhionmwon Local Government Area, Edo State. The descriptive survey method is appropriate for this research because it enables the collection of data from a sample population in order to describe and interpret existing conditions, beliefs, and behaviors related to family planning without manipulating the study environment.

The sample size for the study will be made up of 400 participants across different occupational groups in the local government area. Using the simple random sampling technique, 120 farmers will be selected, 100 traders will be selected, 80 business men & women, 60 teachers and 40 civil servant/artisans. This is shown below:

Couples towards Family Planning Methods in Orhionmwon Local Government Area, Edo State. The researcher will make use of four liker’s scale: Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA), Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD).

4. Results

Research Question 1: What are the attitudes of couples towards different family planning methods in Orhionmwon Local Government Area, Edo State

S/N	Statement	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Family planning is beneficial for spacing children.	3.24	0.84	Agreed
2	I believe family planning helps improve family welfare	3.30	0.71	Agreed
3	Using contraceptives is against my cultural/religious beliefs.	2.95	0.92	Agreed
4	Societal expectations and norms surrounding family size, gender roles, and reproductive behaviors can shape attitudes towards family planning.	2.80	1.05	Agreed
5	Family planning is the responsibility of both partners.	3.55	0.70	Agreed
	Cluster	3.19	1.24	

Mean value of 2.5

Research Question Two: What factors influence couples' attitudes toward family planning methods

Item No.	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Remark
6	My cultural beliefs influence my decision about using family planning	3.42	0.88	Agreed
7	My religion supports the use of contraceptives	3.55	0.79	Agreed
8	The cost of raising children and the financial implications of family planning decisions can influence a couple's choices.	3.38	0.91	Agreed
9	Socioeconomic status can be a factor in family size preferences and access to family planning services.	3.61	0.74	Agreed
10	Family planning services are easily accessible in my area	3.47	0.86	Agreed
	Cluster	3.71	1.13	

Mean value of 2.5

Research Question Three: How do cultural, religious, and socio-economic factors impact couples’ decisions on family planning.

Item	Statement	Mean (M)	Std. Dev (SD)	Remark
11	Cultural traditions in my community support the use of family planning	3.42	0.65	Agreed
12	My religious beliefs play a major role in family planning choices	2.88	0.82	Agreed
13	Our religious values align with our current family planning methods	3.25	0.71	Agreed
14	Our income level influences how many children we plan to have	3.57	0.60	Agreed
15	The cost of raising children is a key factor in our family planning decisions	3.63	0.58	Agreed
	Cluster	3.68	1.14	

Mean value of 2.5

Research Question Four: What are the major barriers couples face in adopting family planning methods

Item No.	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Interpretation
16	I am concerned about the side effects of contraceptive methods.	3.82	0.94	Agreed
17	My partner is worried about the health impacts of family planning.	3.91	0.88	Agreed
18	Fear of infertility makes us hesitant to use contraceptives.	3.95	0.90	Agreed
19	I have heard false information about family planning that affects my decision.	4.02	0.85	Agreed
20	I believe that contraceptives can cause long-term health problems.	3.87	0.92	Agreed
	Cluster	3.61	1.21	

Mean value of 2.5

Research Question Five: How can social workers improve couples' knowledge and attitudes towards family planning

Item No.	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Interpretation
21	Social workers have helped me understand the different types of family planning methods	3.79	0.92	Agreed
22	Social workers provided information that clarified misconceptions I had about family planning.	3.80	0.82	Agreed
23	Social workers helped me feel supported and respected in my family planning choices.	3.91	0.89	Agreed
24	I am more likely to discuss family planning with my partner after meeting with a social worker.	4.03	0.81	Agreed
25	The social worker created a comfortable space for discussing sensitive family planning topics.	3.81	0.87	Agreed
	Cluster	3.49	1.20	

Mean value of 2.5

5. Discussion of Findings

Findings from the study revealed that Family planning remains one of the most crucial components of reproductive health, offering couples the opportunity to make informed decisions about the number and spacing of their children. The present study sought to investigate couples' attitudes towards different family planning methods, with a particular focus on how knowledge, cultural norms, accessibility, and socio-demographic factors influence their perceptions and choices (Wave, 2020). The findings revealed that while a significant proportion of couples expressed generally positive attitudes towards family planning, variations emerged across the types of methods considered namely, modern methods (such as hormonal contraceptives, intrauterine devices, and implants) and traditional or natural methods (such as withdrawal and calendar-based approaches).

In this study, many couples acknowledged the benefits of family planning in preventing unintended pregnancies, improving maternal and child health, and enhancing household economic stability. These findings are consistent with earlier research by Cleland et al. (2019), who found that improved awareness of reproductive health services is often associated with greater acceptance of family planning methods.

One of the notable findings was that couples tended to demonstrate higher levels of acceptance for short-term modern contraceptive methods such as oral pills and injectables compared to long-term methods like implants, intrauterine devices (IUDs), and sterilization. This preference could be attributed to the perception that short-term methods offer greater flexibility and control, with fewer fears of long-lasting side effects.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study on the Attitudes of Couples towards Family Planning Methods reveals that the perception and acceptance of family planning among couples are shaped by a combination of socio-cultural, educational, and economic factors. The findings indicate that while there is a general awareness of the importance of family planning in promoting maternal and child health, reducing population growth, and improving family welfare, misconceptions and cultural beliefs still pose significant barriers to its full adoption. Couples who possess adequate knowledge and receive guidance from health and social workers tend to exhibit more positive attitudes toward modern family planning methods compared to those influenced by myths, religious restrictions, or misinformation.

The research highlights that family planning is not merely a health intervention but a crucial component of sustainable development. Positive attitudes toward its use often stem from an understanding of its benefits, such as spacing births for better maternal recovery, improving household economic stability, and enhancing the quality of life for children.

Having studied the factors regarding the knowledge, attitude and practice of family planning among couples in Orhionmwon Local Government Areas of Edo State, the following recommendations were made:

Community-based family planning services need to be expanded and strengthened in the rural areas so as to disseminate information, education, and counseling on family planning and provide services to the needy, especially to the unreached and underserved populations. Service providers have to be encouraged and provided with the necessary training and motivation to effectively promote family planning services in health facilities on a regular basis.

In a traditional society like Nigeria where men are dominant in decision making, encouraging spousal and involving men in family planning decision-making is important in bridging the gap between met and unmet need.

While factual information about contraceptive use should be reinforced and sustained in campaigns about the benefits of family planning, myths and misinformation should be clarified and countered by appropriate factual information. Every couple should be discouraged about the thought of health risk of family planning choice through relevant awareness sessions.

Federal and State Government should build Reproductive Health Centres, where family planning education would be given to couples on the choice of family planning for both educated and non-educated couples. Federal and State Government should also make funds available for the tension of the programme.

Religious leaders should encourage their followers on the needs for family planning choice as related to their holy book while community leaders should discourage the habit of not having family planning choice in their cultural norms.

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