

## Factors Influencing the Choice of Family Planning Among Couples in South West Nigeria

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**Abstract.** The study investigated factors influencing the choice of family planning among couples in south west Nigeria. Six hundred (600) couples were selected from five (5) south western states in Nigeria through a multistage sampling technique. Questionnaire was used to collect information from the subjects. Five research questions were raised and five hypotheses were formulated, chi-square statistics was employed for the purpose of data analysis at 0.05 alpha level of significant. The findings revealed that socio-economic status, religious factors and cultural norms do not influence couples' choice, whereas, educational background of the couples, and involvement of partners toward the choice of family planning significantly influence the choice of family planning among couple. On the basis of findings, it was recommended among others that, every couple should be well informed about the importance of family planning's choice so as to improve their reproductive health and economic standard of living, to reduce maternal mortality, morbidity and reduce unwanted pregnancy.

**Keywords:** Family planning, Couples, Socio-economic

### 1. Introduction

Child bearing and contraceptive use are among the most important reproductive health decision

that many have to make (Gertner 2009). Family decision and choices are most likely to meet based on accurate, relevant information, and are medically appropriate that is, when they are informed choices (AUSC International 1998).

### 2. Concepts of Family Planning

Family Planning is the planning of when to have and the use of birth techniques to implement such plans. Other techniques commonly used include sexuality education, prevention and management of sexually transmitted diseases, pre-conception counseling, management and infertility management (Olaitan, 2009).

However, Family Planning is usually used as a synonym for the use of birth control. It is most adopted by couple who wish to limit the number of children want to have and control the timing of pregnancy, also known as spacing of children (Olaitan, 2009). Family planning may encompass sterilization as well as pregnancy termination. It also includes raising a child methods of which require significant amount of resources viz time, social, financial and environmental. Family planning measures are designed to regulate the number and spacing of children within a family, largely to curb population growth and ensure each family has access to limited resources. The first attempt to offer family planning services began with private groups and often aroused strong

opposition. Activists such as (Margaret Sanger in the U.S., Marie Stopes in England and Dhanvanthis Rama Rou in India) eventually succeeded in establishing clinics for family planning and health care. Today many countries have established national policies and encourage the use of public family services (The United Nations and World Health Organisation offer technical assistance, 2006).

The concept of informed choice in family planning can be applied to a wide range of sexual and reproductive health decisions. It focuses on whether to seek, to avoid pregnancy, whether to space and time one's childbearing, whether to use contraception, what family methods to be used, and whether or when to continue or switch methods. The term family planning choice could also refer to a family decision making (Diaz et al., 1999).

The principles of informed choice focuses on the individual, however it also influences range of outside factors such as. social, economic and cultural norms, gender roles, social networks, religious and local beliefs, (Bosveld, 1998). To a large extent, these community norms determine individual childbearing preferences and sexual and reproductive behaviour. It is usually thought that community and culture affect a person's attitudes towards family planning, desire for sex of children, preferences about family size, family pressures to have children and whether family planning accords with customs and religious beliefs (Dixon – Mueller, 1999, Greenwell, 1999; and Vickers, 1994).

Community norms also reflect how much autonomy individuals have in making family planning decisions. The larger the differences in reproductive intentions within a community, the more likely that community norms support individual choices (Bosveld, 1998 and Dixon – Mueller, 1999).

Household and community influences can be so powerful that they can obscure the line between individual desires and community norms. For instance, in some culture, many women reject contraception because bearing and raising children is the path to respect and dignity in the

society (International Planned Parenthood Federation, 1996, Cherkaovi, 2000 and Berneth, 2001). In either country most women use contraception because having small families is the norm (Mkangi 2001 and Lutz 2003). People are often unaware that such norms influence their choices. In other cases, they are particularly aware. For examples, young people often decide not to seek family planning because they do not want their parents or other adults to know that they are sexually active. Many fear ridicule, disapproval and hostile attitude from service providers and others (Jehebho, 2004).

A person's social environment usually has more influence on family planning decisions that influence the attributes of specific contraceptives. In Kenya, for examples, when new clients were asked to give a single reason for their choice of a specific family planning method, most cited the attitudes of their spouse or their peers, or their religious value (Kim, et al., 1998). In many countries, family planning programmes are part of the national economic and social development efforts. Efforts to foster equity in decision making and raise awareness about reproductive right of the family, community and society also promote informed choice of family planning (Joconson 2000). As a woman gain more autonomy, they are better able to claim their rights as individuals including the right to act and protect their own reproductive health (Heise et al, 1999).

People chose contraceptive methods that are commonly used in their community because they know that, it is socially acceptable to do so, and they tend to know more about these methods (Rogers and Kincaid, 2004, Valente et al 2000). Many women use the same family planning methods that others in their social network use, (Godley, 2001). A 1998 study in urban Nigeria found that the more widely used method was the one that was popular in other cities and villages (Entusile et al.,1999). Entire community may be encouraged to one type of contraceptive based on the choices of early contraceptive users, rather than individual needs (Potter 1999).

### 3. Factors Influencing the Choice of Family Planning

A myriad of different factors affect a person's personal decisions about what types of family planning method to be used:

**(i) Effectiveness:**

People who are not in a financial or emotional situation to have children might opt for the most effective type of family planning in order to avoid pregnancy. A couple or woman with a casual approach towards parenthood, such as not actively pursuing it but not unwilling to take it on, might choose a less certain form of contraception, such as natural family planning.

**(ii) Religion:**

Some religions such as Catholicism, have restrictions on contraception based on the belief that, it is God's will to bring children into the world, according to Dixon-Muller (1999), Religious believers or observers might choose to avoid certain methods of family planning, such as birth control pill, in an effort to live their lives according to the teachings of their religion.

**(iii) Cost:**

Some forms of contraception, such as minor surgery like vasectomy, carry a fairly significant amount of one's time and cost so other options, such as condom or the calendar cycle methods which are less expensive and hence couples engage in it.

**(iv) Health Risk:**

For people with multiple sexual partners the choice to use family planning devices helps them to keep healthy. For example, using condoms can reduce the chance of contracting sexually transmitted diseases.

**(v) Permanence:**

Some contraception choices, such as vasectomy, are usually permanent. So couples who don't want to have children at present but would like to have one in the future might want to choose a less – permanent option such as condoms or birth control pills.

**(vi) Partner Involvement:**

One has to consider the preferences of his or her partner when choosing a birth control option. For example, some men don't like to have sex using a condom in that case birth control pills might be a better choice for preventing an

unwanted pregnancy, according to the National Institute of Health (Olaitan 2009).

#### 3.1 Socio-Economic Factors

There are some contraceptive methods of family planning that are expensive, and some couples cannot afford to use or purchase them due to their financial situations in the society.

For instance, people in rural areas cannot afford to use the expensive contraceptive methods of family planning such as vasectomy, Intra-uterine devices (IUD which are small, flexible, plastic frame inserted in the vagina of women), female sterilization method.

#### 3.2 Cultural Norms Factors

This is the most important factor influencing the choice of family planning among couples. These include:

- (i) Community norms
- (ii) Religious belief
- (iii) Gender role

##### a. Community Norms

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. 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 norm influences 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 adult 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 use of family planning.

**b. Religious Factors**

Family planning choice depends on the religion of the couple. It may be Islam or Christianity that calls for raising and bearing of more children in the society. Some religions, such as Catholicism, have restriction on contraception based on the belief that it is “God’s will to bring children” into world.

**c. Gender role**

Some couple want to have a male child, however the child born to them may be female in which the family is not happy. Therefore the couple may wish to have another child in order to have a male child.

**4. Research Questions**

- (i) Does the socio-economic status of the couples influence the choice of family planning pertaining to the cost of the choice of family planning method?
- (ii) Do the religious factors influence the choice of family planning among couples?
- (iii) Do the cultural norms of the society influence the choice of family planning among7 couple?
- (iv) Does the educational status of the couple influence the choice of family planning?
- (iv) Does the involvement of the partners (i.e. couple) influence the choice of family planning methods?

**5. Research Hypotheses**

- (i) The economic status has no significant influence on the choice of family planning among couples.
- (ii) The religion of the couple has no effect on the choice of family planning method.
- (iii) The cultural norms of the society have no significant influence on the choice of family planning among couples.

- (iv) The educational status of the couple has no significant influence on the choice of family planning method.
- (v) The involvement of the partners has no significant influence on the choice of family planning method among couples.

**6. Research Methodology**

The study employed descriptive survey and the population for this study comprised of couples across south west Nigeria. Questionnaire on factors influencing the choice of family planning among couples in south west Nigeria which include socio-economic status, religious factors, cultural norms, educational status and the involvement of partners was developed by the researcher. The questionnaire was validated and tested for reliability using a test retest method, reliability coefficient “r” level of 0.89 was obtained, which indicated that the instrument was reliable. For the purpose of data collection, researcher with the help of ten trained research assistants distributed the questionnaire to the respondents. The copies of the questionnaire were collected and score on the data obtained from the respondents. The data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics of frequency count, simple percentages and chi-square ( $X^2$ ).

**7. Results and Discussion of Findings**

The result of the data analysis is presented in a way as to highlight the background variables of the respondents, test of hypotheses and discussion of findings.

**Table 1: Bio-data of Respondents in Percentages**

Sex	No of Respondents	Percentages (%)
Male	240	40
Female	360	60
Total	600	100
State	No of Respondents	Percentages (%)
Lagos	115	30
Oyo	100	20
Osun	90	17.5
Ogun	105	21
Ondo	100	11.5
Ekiti	90	0.99
Total	600	100

Religion	No of Respondents	Percentages (%)
Christianity	288	48
Islam	252	42
Traditional	60	10
Total	600	100
Age Range	No of Respondents	Percentages (%)
≤ 30yrs	80	40
31 – 39yrs	70	35
≥ 40yrs	50	25
Total	200	100

Table 1 reveals the distribution of Gender Respondents. 40% of the respondents are male, while 60% are female respondents. This indicate that majority of the respondents are female. The distribution of States of respondents shows that. 30% of the respondents are from Lagos, 20% of the respondents are from Oyo, 17.5% are

from Osun, 21% are from Ogun, X% from Ondo and 11.5% are from Ekiti.

In the distribution of Religion respondents, 48% of the respondents are Christianity, 42% of the respondents are Islam and 10% of the respondents are Traditional. This indicates that the majority of the respondents are Christianity. In the distribution of Respondent Age Range, 40% of the respondents are Age 30 years old and below, 35% of the respondents are 31 years – 39 years old and 25% of the respondents are 40 years old and above. This shows that the majority of the respondents are age 30 years and below.

### 8. Testing of Hypotheses

There are five (5) research hypotheses in this study.

**Table 2: X<sup>2</sup> result of the respondents on factors influencing family planning’s choice N=600**

Variables	X <sup>2</sup> Cal.Value	Df	Critical Value	Decision
<i>Ho.1:</i> Socio-economic status on the choice of family planning among couples	6.32	9	16.92	Accepted
<i>Ho.2:</i> Religious factors influence the choice of family planning	8.53	9	16.92	Accepted
<i>Ho.3:</i> Cultural norms of the couples	8.53	9	16.92	Accepted
<i>Ho.4:</i> Educational Status of the couples influence family planning	21.26	9	16.92	Rejected
<i>Ho.5:</i> Involvement of partners on the choice of family planning	23.26	9	16.92	Rejected

**p≤0.05**

Table 2 indicates that the calculated value of 6.32 is less than the critical value of 16.92, therefore the hypothesis which states that there would be no significant influence on socio-economic status of couples in the choice of family planning in south west Nigeria, so therefore, it is accepted.

It is seen that the calculated value is 8.53 while the critical value is 16.92. The calculated value is less than the critical value at 0.05 alpha level of significant. Since the calculated is less than the critical value, the hypothesis which states that there would be no significant influence toward religious factors of the couples on the choice of family planning in south west Nigeria is therefore accepted. In this case, religious of the couples discussed fully on the choice of family planning.

From the result obtained therefore, the hypothesis stating that there is no significant influence the cultural norms of the couples toward the choice of family planning in south west Nigeria is accepted. So therefore, cultural norms of the couples do not neglect the choice of family planning.

From the above table, this reveals the calculated value of 21.26 while the critical value is 16.92. Since the calculated value is greater than the critical value, so therefore the hypothesis should be rejected. In this case, there is a significant influence on the level of educational status of the couples toward the choice of family planning in south west Nigeria. The study also reveals that there is a change or differences between educated couples and non-educated couples toward the choice of family planning.

The above table reveals that the calculated value ( $X^2$ ) is 23.26 while the critical value is 16.92 at 0.05 alpha level of significant. Since the calculated value is greater than the critical value. So therefore, the hypothesis is hereby rejected. In this case, there is a significant influence on the involvement of partners toward the choice of family planning in south west Nigeria. In this study it was also reveals that the agreement and involvement of partners is very important or crucial when choosing the method of family planning among couples. Also family planning method should not be only one side of the couples, it involve both couples when deciding decision on family planning method.

The study was conducted to investigate the socio-economic factors and norms influencing the choice of family planning among couples in south west Nigeria. The result of the hypothesis one which states that there is no significant influence on socio-economic status of the couples toward the choice of family planning in south west Nigeria is accepted. In agreement to this, the cost of family planning choice is very cheap to the need of the couples in terms of affordability, availability and accessibility. The common choice of family planning is located in our various societies such as use of condoms for both male and female, calendar based method in terms of sexual intercourse, etc. It is also reveals in my findings that both upper class level and lower class level, rural and urban area has equal chance to the accessibility, affordability and availability of family planning choice stated by the researcher.

The result of the hypothesis two which states that there is no significant influence on the religious factors of the couples in the choice of family planning in south west Nigeria is accepted. Rasheed (2010) said that the Qur'an actually states the limitation of children, which is having not more than four children with a stated age of marriage. Also states that father should take proper care of the children in terms of responsibility. Bible also confirms the statements that family planning is very crucial in couples's life so as to adjust favourably to economic demand of life (Schonfield, 2008).

The result of hypothesis three which shows that there is not significant influence on the cultural norms of the couples toward the choice of family planning in south west Nigeria is accepted. Habiger (2007) reveals that cultural norms of the couples should not neglect the choice of family planning. It was also indicates that family planning method should be encourage among couples.

The result of the hypotheses five which reveals that there is no significant influence on the educational status of the couples toward the choice of family planning in south west Nigeria is rejected. This is supported by Olaitan (2009) who opined that level of educational status of the couples determines their attitudes toward the choice of family planning. For instance, ignorance and illiterate will not know the benefit of family planning method, even though if the family planning service provider comes to visit the person on the importance of family planning method, he/she will be confused and will not listened to the service providers, especially those couples in the Northern part of Nigeria. Most of them said that family planning service providers want them to be barren for life which they tend to withdraw from the services.

Finally, the result of the hypothesis five showed that there is no significant influence on the involvement of partners toward the choice of family planning among couples in south west Nigeria was rejected. i.e. there existed a significant influence on the involvement of partners toward the choice of family planning among couples in south west Nigeria. It is supported by Potter (1999) that shows that the agreement and involvement of partners is very crucial when determining the choice of family planning among couples. Also, both couples should make right decisions on family planning's choice.

## 1. Conclusion

(i) Couples of south west Nigeria are not significantly influence on the socio-economic status toward the choice of family planning.

- (ii) Religious of the couples in south west Nigeria are not significantly influence on the choice of family planning.
- (iii) Cultural norms of the couples in south west Nigeria are not significantly influence on the choice of family planning.
- (iv) Couples educational status in south west Nigeria are not significantly influence on the choice of family planning.
- (v) There are significant influences in the involvement of partners on the choice of family planning in south west Nigeria.

## 10. Recommendations

Having studied the factors influencing the choice of family planning among couples in south west Nigeria, the following recommendations were made

- i. Every couple should be encouraged to visit the family planning service providers so as to enlighten the couples on various family planning choices that will meet up their economic status.
- ii. Society and community should be given a couple of advice to their neighbourhood on the importance of family planning.
- iii. Religion leaders should encourage their followers on the needs for family planning choice as related to their holy book.
- iv. Community leaders should discourage the habit of not having family planning choice in their cultural norms.
- v. Federal Government should build Reproductive Health Centre where family planning education for the couples on the choice of family planning for both educated couples and non-educated couples.
- vi. Family planning service providers should educate the couples on the effectiveness of family planning choice.
- vii. Every couples should be discourages about their thought in the health risk of family planning choice.
- viii. Couples with one baby and new couples should be discourages on the use of the permanent surgical method (vasectomy) of family planning.
- ix. Every couple should agree and involve when deciding the family planning choice.

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