

Original Research Article

**Perception and Attitude Towards Involvement of Males in Family Planning Practices in
Nigeria**

ABSTRACT

Aim: The study is designed to assess the perception and attitude towards the involvement of males in family planning practices in Nigeria.

Methodology: This study design was a descriptive cross-sectional design, whose population were males (15-55 years), and selected via the convenience sampling technique. The research instrument was a semi-structured questionnaire on male involvement in family planning and was subjected to face and content validity (Cronbach Alpha = 0.673). The study data (responses) were analysed using simple frequency, percentages, and means, with the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) V 21.

Results: Most of the men (n=267; 96.4%) have good knowledge of family planning, and there is a medium level of men's involvement (n=141; 50.9%) towards family planning practices. Furthermore, regarding their behaviours towards family planning methods involvement, 208(75.1%) men disagreed that family planning is meant for only females and that contraceptives are not working for males, while all the men (n=277; 100 %) disagreed that family planning is meant for the literate only. More so, half of the men (n=147; 53.1%) rejected that family planning delay pregnancy, while 208 (75.1%) men accepted that it prevents pregnancies. These results proved that the men do not believe only the literate utilize family planning methods.

Conclusion: Most males are knowledgeable about family planning and many adopted condoms as their methods of family planning, which implies that men could be effectively involved in family planning with proper and effective education.

Keywords: Males; Family Planning Practices; Perception; Attitude; Nigeria

1. INTRODUCTION

Family planning is defined as the planning of when to have children and the use of birth control and other techniques to implement such plans and has been in existence since 1936 [1]. The provision of family planning methods is to reduce maternal mortality and those with health risks [2]. In Nigeria, the components of family planning include counselling and the provision of contraceptives [3,4]. While counselling is a prerequisite for the initiation and continuation of family planning, contraceptives should be provided following an approved method-specific guideline by trained service providers [5,6].

Most developing countries in Africa, especially Nigeria is patriarchal, characterized by strong male dominance [6-8]. Consequently, the attitudes of males toward contraceptives or their willingness to use anyone of them is quite not encouraging to allow them to do so is very significant to population change [9]. Since the 1994 International Conferences on Population and Development (ICPD), interest in men's involvement in reproductive health has increased [10]. Evidence has shown that man's involvement can lead to contraceptive uptake through the pathway of increased spousal communication [11]. However, family planning programmers have traditionally focused on women as the primary beneficiaries and men have been considered as the silent partners of the services [12]. The concerns that led to the study about the men's knowledge and attitude are mostly the ideal of family size, gender of children, ideal

spacing between childbirth and contraceptive method use are of great influence in women's preferences and opinions [13].

However, fertility and family planning research and programs have ignored men's roles in the past, focusing on women's behaviour [13,14]. There is always a sense of partiality on the part of some men in the family when it comes to family planning as they always want a particular gender in the family and when they do not get that gender, they tend to continue trying to get that gender [14]. Therefore, he has a role in family planning as no man would prefer spending his income on sickness, hospitals even feeding children without proper education, and proper nutrition [15]. Hence, this study is designed to assess the perception and attitude towards the involvement of males in family planning practices amongst residents of Owo Local Government Area, Ondo State, Nigeria.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Study Location

The study was conducted in Owo, a city in Ondo State, Nigeria. Ondo State was created on 3 February 1976 from the former Western State. Ondo State has 18 Local Government Areas (LGAs) including Akoko, Akure, Okitipupa, Ondo and Owo. Owo is a city in Ondo State, with a total population of 258,230. The Owo palace is arguably the largest in Africa with 100 courtyards and was declared a national monument by the federal government of Nigeria.

2.2 Study Design and Population

This study design was a descriptive cross-sectional research design. The study's target population were male residents between 15 to 55 years in Owo LGA, Ondo State.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The convenience sampling technique (where study participants are enrolled based on their availability and accessibility) was used to select the respondents for the study. To obtain the sample size for the study, the Taro Yamane (1998) formula was applied as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(R)^2}; \text{ where } N = \text{Study population (156,722)}; R = 0.05 \text{ (margin of error)}; n = \text{sample size}$$

The computation for this is expressed as:

$$n = \frac{156,722}{1+156,722(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{156,722}{1+391.81}$$

$$n = \frac{156,722}{392.81}$$

$$n = 399$$

2.4 Instrument for Data Collection

The research instrument used for this study is a semi-structured questionnaire on male involvement in family planning. The questionnaire consists of 5 sections namely: A: Demographic data, B: Knowledge towards family planning methods, C: Perception/Attitude towards modern family planning methods, D: Practice/Involvement of males in family planning methods, E: Measure of factors influencing willingness of male to use modern family planning methods.

2.5 Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The face validity and content validity of the research instrument were carried out. The study supervisor went through the items of the questionnaire and made the necessary corrections. To test the reliability of the instrument, a pilot study was conducted in the Ilishan Remo community

of Ogun State, Nigeria. On collection, the internal consistency of the instrument was subjected to the Cronbach Alpha test (Cronbach Alpha score of 0.673).

2.6 Data Collection

The researcher obtained an official letter of introduction to aid easy administration of the questionnaire among the male resident in Owo Local Government of Ondo State. The researcher recruited and trained six (6) research assistants to assist in data collection. Questionnaires were numbered for easy retrieval and monitoring, and participants were informed not to write their names on them. For respondents that need further guidance on filling out the questionnaires, interviewing techniques were used. After completion, the questionnaires were retrieved for statistical analysis.

2.7 Statistical Analysis

Data obtained was analysed using the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 21 and were presented using tables and charts. The study responses were analysed using simple frequency, percentages, and means.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Socio-demography of Study Participants

The demographic characteristics of the study participants (n=277) are shown below.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of study participants

Characteristics	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Age	21-30	9	3.2
	31-40	135	48.7
	41-50	67	24.2
	51 and above	66	23.8
	Total	277	100.0
Marital status	Married	201	72.6
	Separated	12	4.3
	Divorced	8	2.9
	Single	56	20.2
	Total	277	100.0
Religion	Christian	196	70.8
	Muslim	81	29.2
	Total	277	100.0
Number of children	Nil	70	25.3
	1-5	207	74.7
	Total	277	100.0
Level of education	No formal education	15	5.4
	Primary	14	5.1
	Secondary education	88	31.8
	tertiary education	160	57.8
	Total	277	100.0
Family setting	Monogamy	261	94.2
	Polygamy	16	5.8
	Total	277	100.0
Occupation	Businessman	57	20.6
	Student	24	8.7
	Teaching	79	28.5
	Public servant	16	5.8
	Civil servant	70	25.3
	Trade	31	11.2
	Total	277	100.0

3.2 Knowledge Towards Family Planning Methods

The table below explains the study participants' knowledge of family planning methods.

Table 2: Study participants' knowledge towards family planning methods

Characteristics	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Have you ever heard about family planning?	Yes	267	96.4%
	No	10	3.6%
	Total	277	100.0
Do you know what family planning is?	Yes	258	93.1%
	No	19	6.9%
	Total	277	100.0
What is family planning?	Preventing people from giving birth	Nil	Nil
	Avoiding unwanted birth	Nil	Nil
	Having the number of children that one can take care of	277	100%
	Regulating intervals between pregnancies	Nil	Nil
	Increase the number of children	Nil	Nil
	Total	277	100.0
How did you learn about the family planning method?			
Television		67	24.2%
Radio		Nil	Nil
Newspapers		69	24.9%
Internet		Nil	Nil
Peer group		70	25.3%
Hospitals		Nil	Nil
Family members		Nil	Nil
None		71	25.6%
	Total	277	100.0
Which family planning methods do you know about?			
Rings		Nil	Nil
Condoms		210	75.8%
Pills		Nil	Nil
Intra-vaginal loops		67	24.2%
Safe period		Nil	Nil
Withdrawal		Nil	Nil
None		Nil	Nil
	Total	277	100.0
Do joint decisions on family planning improve gender relations?	Yes	255	92.1%
	No	22	7.9%
	Total	277	100.0
Does family planning delay pregnancy?	Yes	130	46.9%

	No	147	53.1%
	Total	277	100.0
Can family planning prevent pregnancies?	Yes	208	75.1%
	No	69	24.9%
	Total	277	100.0

3.3 Perceptions and Attitudes Towards Modern Family Planning Methods

The perceptions and attitudes of the study participants towards modern family planning methods are described in the table below.

Table 3: Study participants' perceptions and attitudes towards modern family planning methods

S/N	ITEMS	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Undecided (3)	Strongly Disagree (2)	Disagree (1)	Mean (5)	Average Score (5)
1	My religion does not support the family planning method	69(24.9%)	Nil	Nil	137(49.5%)	71(25.6%)	2.49	2.18
2	I support family planning to please my wife	Nil	136(49.1%)	Nil	Nil	141(50.9%)	2.47	2.18
3	Conceptive use is unacceptable to me	Nil	69(24.9%)	Nil	Nil	208(75.1%)	1.75	2.18
4	Vasectomy lessens a man's sexual drive	Nil	69(24.9%)	Nil	71(25.6%)	137(49.5%)	2.00	2.18
5	Only females should use contraceptives	Nil	Nil	69(24.9%)	138(49.8%)	70(25.3%)	2.00	2.18
6	Family planning diminishes self-esteem	Nil	69(24.9%)	Nil	71(25.6%)	137(49.5%)	2.00	2.18
7	Family planning is only for the literate	Nil	69(24.9%)	Nil	141(50.9%)	67(24.2%)	2.26	2.18
8	Family planning is against the culture	69(24.9%)	Nil	Nil	138(49.8%)	70(25.3%)	2.49	2.18

3.4 Study Participants' Utilization of Family Planning

The utilization of family planning by study participants is shown in the table below.

Table 4: Study participants' utilization of family planning

Have you ever used any family planning methods?	Frequency	Percent
Yes	136	49.1%
No	141	50.9%
Total	277	100.0
Are you currently using any family planning methods?	Frequency	Percent
Yes	119	43%
No	158	57%
Total	277	100.0
Which family planning method do you use?	Frequency	Percent
Rings	30	10.8%
Condoms	59	21.3%
Pills	11	4.0%
Intra-vaginal loops	13	4.7%
Safe period	10	3.6%
Withdrawal	51	18.4%
None	103	37.2%
Total	277	100.0
Why did you decide to use the family planning method?	Frequency	Percent
To space children	Nil	Nil
To stop having children	67	24.2%
Cannot afford to look after many children	139	50.2%
Not applicable	71	25.6%
Total	277	100.0

3.4 Measure of Factors Influencing Men's Willingness to Use Modern Family Planning

Methods

The factors responsible for influencing the willingness of men to utilize modern family planning methods are shown in the table below.

Table 5: Factors influencing men's willingness to utilize modern family planning methods.

S/N	ITEMS	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Undecided (3)	Strongly Disagree (2)	Disagree (1)	Mean (5)	Average Score (5)
SOCIAL FACTORS								
1.	Family planning is meant for only females	Nil	69(24.9%)	Nil	71(25.6%)	137(49.5%)	2.00	2.68
2.	Contraceptives are not working for males	69(24.9%)	Nil	Nil	71(25.6%)	137(49.5%)	2.25	2.68
3.	Family planning encourages bad sexual habits in male	Nil	69(24.9%)	Nil	71(25.6%)	137(49.5%)	2.00	2.68
4.	Family planning methods increase sexual pleasure	69(24.9%)	70(25.3%)	67(24.2%)	71(25.6%)	Nil	4.22	2.68
5.	Family planning is meant for the literate only	Nil	Nil	Nil	210(75.8%)	67(24.2%)	1.76	2.68
6.	Men should decide on the method of family planning	Nil	Nil	Nil	71(25.6%)	206(74.4%)	1.26	2.68
7.	The use of contraceptives prevents sexually transmitted diseases among couples	Nil	69(24.9%)	Nil	137(49.5%)	71(25.6%)	2.24	2.68
8.	Family planning is meant for couples with the required number of children	67(24.2%)	69(24.9%)	70(25.3%)	71(25.6%)	Nil	3.48	2.68
9.	The male has no reason to be involved in the family he does not reproduce	Nil	136(49.1%)	Nil	141(50.9%)	Nil	2.98	2.68
CULTURAL FACTORS								
10.	Family planning is not accepted in some cultures	67(24.2%)	210(75.8%)	Nil	Nil	Nil	4.24	2.68
11.	The family planning method is an abuse of individual personality	Nil	140(50.5%)	Nil	70(25.3%)	67(24.2%)	2.77	2.68
12.	The male is the head of the family so he should not be involved in family planning	69(24.9%)	Nil	Nil	141(50.9%)	67(24.2%)	2.51	2.68
13.	Family planning is a sign of sexual irresponsibility in men	Nil	69(24.9%)	Nil	141(50.9%)	67(24.2%)	2.26	2.68
14.	family planning is helpful to address unwanted pregnancy	70(25.3%)	71(25.6%)	69(24.9%)	67(24.2%)	Nil	3.52	2.68

4. DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to assess the perception and attitude towards the involvement of males in family planning practices amongst residents in a Nigerian community. Findings from the study showed that regarding the knowledge of family planning, many of the men (n=267; 96.4%) accepted that they have heard about it. On the other hand, 277 (100%) men defined family planning as having the number of children that one can take care of, which implied that they consented that it is all about making children with the ability to care for them. More so, the study showed that half of the men (n=147; 53.1%) rejected that family planning does delay pregnancy while 208 (75.1%) men accepted that it prevents pregnancies. This finding was similar to that obtained from recent study by Oluwasegun et al., [16], who reported a high level of awareness and knowledge of family planning in males. Similarly, a high level of men's knowledge about contraceptives was reported in a study in Uganda [17]. In contrast to this finding, an earlier study reported a low level of awareness of family planning among men in Northwest Ethiopia [18].

When evaluating the level of the respondents' involvement towards family planning practices, the results from this present study showed that most of the respondents (n=141; 50.9%) rejected that they have not used any family planning method before, while 158(57%) men said they are not currently using any family planning method. Furthermore, regarding the behaviours of males towards family planning method involvement, our findings revealed that 208(75.1%) men disagreed that (i) family planning is meant for only females, (ii) contraceptives are not working for males, (iv) family planning encourages bad sexual habits in males, while all the men disagreed that family planning is meant for the literate only. These results proved that the men do not believe only the literate utilize family planning methods. However, these results differ from

the findings in earlier studies which revealed a low level of men's involvement in family planning practices in Ogun State, South-west Nigeria [16], Uganda [17], and Northwest Ethiopia [18].

Conversely, all the respondents 277(100%) disagreed that men should decide on the method of family planning, which implies that the adoption of family planning methods should be decided upon by both men and women. More so, our findings showed that most men 208(75.1%) disagreed that the use of contraceptives prevents sexually transmitted diseases among couples. This study also revealed that all the men (n=277; 100%) agreed that family planning is not accepted in some cultures. Most of them (n=208; 75.1%) also disagreed that the male is the head of the family so he should not be involved in family planning, while 141(50.9%) men agreed that family planning is helpful to address unwanted pregnancy. These findings agree with the reports of previous studies conducted in Nigeria [19], and Ghana [20], which state that men should also actively participate and be involved in family planning practices alongside their wives.

Regarding the attitudes of the study participants towards family planning practices, our findings revealed that more than half of them (n=208; 75.1%) disagreed that their religion does not support the family planning method, while 141(50.9%) respondents disagreed that they support family planning to please their wife. Low attitudes of men towards family planning practices have been linked to several factors as identified in previous studies [14, 17, 18]. They include potential negative effects or interference with sexual activity, a lack of effective male contraceptive options, and worries that it would encourage adulterous sex relationships, among other things [14, 17, 18]. Nevertheless, men and women should share responsibility for choosing to utilize contraception. Therefore, effective planning and execution of family efforts involving

men should address obstacles to men's supporting involvement in reproductive health, including addressing men's misperceptions of contraceptive services.

5. CONCLUSION

From the study findings, most of the study participants are knowledgeable about the meaning and concept of family planning, and most of them adopted condoms as their method of family planning. This implies that men could be involved in family planning with proper and effective education about the concept via proper and adequate dissemination of information about it. Though education plays an important role in creating awareness and influencing the participation of men in the process of family planning in Nigerian society, media awareness, campaigns and training should be made handy and available to the public. More so, the government should provide facilities and proper family planning methods to the communities to enhance better participation of men.

Consent and Ethical Approval

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Public Health and Ethical Review Board of Babcock University, Ilishan Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria. Voluntary informed consent was obtained from each participant, and they were assured of confidentiality.

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