

DETERMINANTS OF THE CHOICE OF FAMILY PLANNING METHODS AMONG MARRIED WOMEN IN KATSINA-ALA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF BENUE STATE

By

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Abstract

This study investigated 'Determinates of the choice of family planning methods among women in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State'. Two research questions were raised and two hypotheses formulated for the study. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The area of study was Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State. The research adopted a descriptive survey research design. Multistage sampling was used to draw a sample of 200 respondents. A structured questionnaire designed by the researchers titled 'Determinants Choice of Family Planning Method Questionnaire, DCFPM-Q' was used for data collection. Mean scores and Chi-square were used to answer the research questions and test the research hypotheses respectively. The study found out that illiteracy and cultural norms significantly influenced choice of family planning methods among married women in Katsina-Ala local government area of Benue state. The study recommended that government agencies and guidance counselors should embark on aggressive campaign to create awareness in the public concerning the choice of family planning methods among married women in Katsina-Ala local government area of Benue state to curb the menace of population explosion.

Keywords: Determinants, Choice, Family, Family Planning Methods, Married Women.

Background to the Study

The single most important problem that Nigeria is facing now is the uncontrolled growth of population. In August, 2006, Nigeria became the 1st country in Africa to have its population reach more than a hundred million with a growth rate of 21.34% in the last decade, meaning nearly 20 million persons were added to the national population (Mwiragu, 2018). This has an undoubted handicap in the socio-economic progress of the country. Realizing these consequences, Nigeria has been implementing official family planning programs to curb population growth. But in spite of the availability of a wide range of contraceptives and mass-media campaigns and ICC programmes, population control remained a distant dream to achieve (Islam, Padmadas and Smith, 2019). This was possibly because over the years, emphasis was laid on the adoption of drastic measures, thereby neglecting the factors affecting its acceptance at grass-root levels. However, the acceptance of family-planning is influenced by many socio-cultural and demographic factors at levels of individual, family and society.

Among these different factors affecting choice of family planning methods among women, attitudes are considered to exert most profound effect on family planning acceptance and fertility. It is usually maintained that education not only provides opportunities for personal advancement and awareness of social mobility but it also provides a new outlook, freedom from tradition, the willingness to analyze institutions, values and patterns of behavior and the growth of rationalism. In other words, attitudes are the most dynamic and influential tool for inducing proactive participation among couples towards the methods and measures of family planning (Sheldon, 2022). Family planning is a way of thinking and living that is adopted voluntarily, upon the basis of knowledge, attitudes and responsible decisions by individuals and couples, in order to promote the health and welfare of the family group and thus contribute effectively to the social development of a country (Udoh, 2022). Literature provides considerable baseline data on the benefits of family planning on women's health. Ude (2021) notes that, the practice of family planning helps in reducing the rates of unintended pregnancies, of maternal and child mortality and of induced abortions.

Female education has been seen as a key determinant of contraceptive. Better-educated women are argued to be more willing to engage in innovative behavior than are less educated women and in many Third World context, the use of contraception remains innovative (Oyedokun, 2023). Better educated women are also argued to have more knowledge of contraceptive methods or of how to acquire them than are less educated women because of their literacy, greater familiarity with modern institutions and greater likelihood of rejecting a fatalistic attitude towards life. Koc (2017) finds a positive association between the educational level of both spouses and the use of contraceptive methods in Turkey. It is often seen from studies that higher the education of the woman (or partner) better chances of spacing and contraception. Osonwa, Osuchukwu, Nelson and Offiong (2018) note that it is mainly due to the fact that the awareness is developing from a younger age and is practiced due to better understanding of various issues related to lack of child spacing like maternal and child health issues, socio economic factors etc. In the views of Betrand (2018), education influences women's reproduction by increasing knowledge of fertility, increasing socio-economic status and changing attitudes about fertility control. Education also affects the distribution of authority within households, whereby women increase their authority with their partners over child bearing and choice of contraception.

Socioeconomic factors can complicate the chances of preventing maternal death or poor pregnancy outcomes. The effect of wealth on family planning is immense. A study by Oyedokun (2023) on family planning policies showed that with the policies (to provide family planning for the poor) actually benefitted the rich rather than the poor and the people in the lower quintiles increased the use of traditional methods and decreased modern methods use. Studies show that a lower socio economic status triggers the sterilization of women rather than reversible methods due to the incentive attached to it and also pressure from health workers. A study shows the influence of socio cultural beliefs, customs and factors on the woman's knowledge and practice of breast feeding, which is a known method of spacing (Agyei, 2019).

Again, socio-economic status influences the choice of modern family planning methods. . Ude (2021) notes that 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, Mahadeen, Khalil, Hamdan-Mansour, Sato and Imoto (2022) found out that 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) and female sterilization method. Some forms of contraception, such as minor surgery carry a fairly significant amount of one's time and is very cost as compared to other options, such as condom or the calendar cycle methods which are less expensive; hence, couples engage in them. This depends on the socio-economic status of the couple.

Cultural norms factors affect the choice of family planning methods among women. According to Etukudo (2015), 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. According to Orji, Adegbenro, Akinniranye, Ogunbayo and Oyebadejo (2023), 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 norms influence their choices. In other cases, they are particularly aware. For example, Kennedy, Todd, Stibich, Shaffer and Sinei (2022) report that 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 (Hameed, Azmat, Ali, Sheikh, Abbas, Temmerman & Avan, 2019).

Kabir, Iliaysu, Abubakar and Mage (2018), reports that, cultural norms is the most important factor influencing the choice of family planning among couples. This includes: community norms, religious belief and gender role. 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. According to Etukudo (2015), 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 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 (Dahal, Padmadas and Hinde, 2018). It's against this background that the researcher wishes to undertake this research.

Statement of the Problem

The cost of living in Nigeria is increasing day-by-day today while the standard of living is comparatively lowering. This is owing to a globally depressed economy, uncontrollable positive increase of joblessness or unemployment, insatiable demand for improved social services and educational opportunities. To further exacerbate this anomaly, population explosion has become a serious and global concern. This is more so when the population growth rate is greater than the growth rate of economy. Even though nature has provided some methods of natural checks and balances through war, famine, earthquake, diseases, epidemics, fatal accidents, unprecedented insurgency, terrorism, extrajudicial killings and so on. Nevertheless, issues that influence population explosion. Specifically attention should be given to spacing of pregnancies, limiting and tailoring the family size that is equated with available resources.

In spite of all these crises against human population explosion, there is still an exponential increase in the number of persons over and above available economic and social amenities. Nigeria is the most populous country in African with an estimated population close to 200 million people. This development has created serious demographic and health complication in the Nigerian family and society at large. Changes in the socio-economic status of women have also called for the need to either space or limit the number of children to bear. Seminars, lectures and series of talks have been, held on the issue of family planning both within and outside the country. Despite the effort to curb population explosion, the influence of illiteracy and customs on family planning is presumably still very high in the Nigerian society. Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State is not alienated from the scenario depicted above. It has persistently experienced surges in population without a corresponding surge in the availability of natural resources to cater for the survival needs of the teeming population. Something definitely seems to be wrong in the society with regards to the choice of family planning methods resulting to an ever-surging population. The researchers presume that women are not favourably disposed toward methods of family planning as a result of many factors influencing their choice of family planning methods. Summarily, the statement of the problem is made thus: What are the determinants of the choice of family planning methods among married women in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State?

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised for the study:

- i. How does level of literacy determine the choice of family planning methods among married women in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State?

- ii. In what ways do cultural norms determine the choice of family planning methods among married women in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated for the study.

- i. The level of literacy does not significantly determine the choice of family planning methods among married women in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State.
- ii. Cultural norms do not significantly determine the choice of family planning methods among married women in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State.

Research Methodology: This section treated the research methodology under the following subheadings: Research design, area of the study, population, sample and sampling technique, instrumentation, validation of the instrument, method of data collection as well as method of data analysis.

Research Design: The design adopted for this study is survey design. This is a design that deals with data collection for the purpose of describing, interpreting, evaluating and analyzing the existing conditions of variables and prevailing situations through the formulation and testing of relevant hypotheses for drawing inferences (Shields, 2018). This design is most appropriate for this study because it seeks to establish the influence of the independent variable (factors affecting) on the dependent variable (choice of family planning method among women) through the analysis of research questions and hypotheses.

Area of the Study: Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State was formerly part of Katsina-Ala Division of Benue State. It was created as a local government area in 1976 with Katsina-Ala as its administrative headquarters. It has an estimated area of about 183.4 square kilometers and a projected population of about 291, 679 based on the 2022 national census figures. It is located between latitude 6°N and 8° and longitude 7°E and 9°N. It is bounded in the west by Buruku local government area, in the south by Cross Rivers State, in the South West by Cameroon Republic. Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State shares a common boundary with Taraba state in the east and in the north with Ukum Local Government Area of Benue State. It is composed of a guinea savannah that favours agricultural activities.

Population of the Study: The target population of this study was all the married women in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State. The total number of women of married women at the time of this study was estimated at one hundred and eight thousand, six hundred and twenty-seven (National Population Office, Katsina-Ala, 2023).

Sample and Sampling technique: The sample of this study was made up of 200 married women in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State. 20 married women were sampled from each of the ten health posts giving rise to 200 women. The sample was obtained through multistage sampling technique. In the first stage, the researchers used proportionately stratified random sampling to divide the local government area based on the existing four sectional lineages of Ikyurav Tiev, Shitile, Tongov and Township. In the second stage, the researchers adopted simple random sampling to sample fifty (50) respondents from

each of the four major sectional clans in the area of study. In the last stage, the researcher adopted cluster sampling by sampling women that attended the primary health care centres.

Instrument for data collection: A structured questionnaire developed by the researcher titled 'Determinants choice of family planning method among married women Questionnaire, DCFPMWQ) was be used for data collection. The questionnaire consists of three (3) clusters named Section I to II. Each cluster has four items. Section I contains items concerned with the influence of level of literacy on the choice of family planning methods among women; Section II elicits information on the influence of the socio-economic status on the choice of family planning methods among women and Section III contains items concerned with determining the influence of cultural norms on the choice of family planning methods among women.

Validation of instrument: In order to elicit relevant information from the respondents the constructed questionnaire was presented two lecturers from the Department of Public Health Administration and one expert in Measurement and Evaluation of Imo State University, Owerri, Katsina-Ala Study Centre, to ascertain the relevancy of the instrument used. This was done in order to eliminate ambiguous statements from the questionnaire while those that were not relevant were eliminated based on experts' advice. The experts made necessary correction after which the researchers effected the corrections.

Data collection: The instruments will be administered on the respondents by the researcher with the assistance of three trained research assistants. The research assistants were holders of Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) because their educational background with made it easier for them to understand the purpose on the study and explain the instruments better to the respondents where need be. A total of 200 copies of the instruments will be give to the respondents with enough time to attend to them.

Data analysis: A four point modified rating scale was used to establish the disparity in the respondents' opinions. Thus, Strongly Agree (SA) =4; Agree (A) =3; Disagree (D) =2; Strongly Disagree (SD) =1 were used by respondents to respond to each item in each cluster. The descriptive statistics of Mean Score and Standard Deviation were used to answer the research questions. A cut-off point of 2.50 was used for decision making. Chi Square statistics was used to test the hypotheses 0.05 level of significance.

Data presentation: Data was presented based on the postulated research questions and formulated research hypotheses.

Research question 1: How does level of literacy determines the choice of family planning methods among married women in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State?

The table 1 below provides information that was used in answering the above research question.

Table 1: Mean Scores and Standard Deviation of the respondents' perception of Illiteracy as a determinant of the choice of family planning methods among married women in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State.

S/N	ITEM DESCRIPTION	N	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	σ	Decision
1	Illiterate women practice less of the modern family planning methods.	200	92	101	23	30	3.41	0.55	Agree
2	Illiterate women are afraid of practicing modern family planning methods.	200	79	12	28	10	3.4	0.2	Agree
				9			7	1	
3	Literate women display the right attitudes towards modern family planning methods.	200	98	82	7	19	3.1	0.8	Agree
							5	2	
4	Illiterate women practice less of the modern family planning methods.	200	111	3	9	13	1.8	1.0	Agree
						4	2	6	

Source: Researchers (2024)

As shown on table 1 above, respondents agreed with all items as all have a mean score above 2.50. The implication of the responses is that respondents were of the view that illiteracy determines the choice of family planning methods among married women in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State.

Research hypothesis 1: The level of literacy does not significantly determine the choice of family planning methods among married women in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State.

Analysis of generated data relating to the above hypothesis is presented on Table 2.

Table 2: Chi-Square Analysis on Illiteracy as a determinant of the choice of family planning methods among married women

Opinions	Observed N	Expected N	Level of Sig.	df	χ^2 -cal	P-value	Decision
SD	12	50	.05	3	282.05	.001	Ho rejected
D	8	50					
A	126	50					
SA	100	50					

(*P-value=0.001; P=0.001<0.05; Ho rejected*). **Source: Researchers (2024)**

Table 2 shows Chi-square (χ^2) value of 282.05 at 3df, $P<0.05$ and H_0 rejected. This result reveals that the null hypothesis which states that the level of literacy does not significantly determine the choice of family planning methods among married women in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State was rejected. From the result above, the implication is that illiteracy is a determinant of the choice of family planning methods among married women.

Research question 2: In what ways do cultural norms determine the choice of family planning methods among married women in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State?

The table 3 provides information that was used to answer the above research question.

Table 3: Mean Scores and Standard Deviation of Respondents' Perception on Cultural Norms as a determinant of the choice of family planning methods among married women in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State.

S /N 0	ITEM DESCRIPTION	N	SA	A	D	S D	$\bar{x}$	σ	Decision
5	Some cultural values forbid the discussion of modern family planning methods among women.	200	128	7	5	2	3.06	0.33	Agree
6	In some cultures, the man has the last say about family planning.	200	157	4	1	22	3.15	3.61	Agree
7	The use of family planning methods in some cultures is a taboo.	200	124	14	1	21	3.24	0.37	Agree
8	Some cultural values forbids the discussion of modern family planning methods among women.	200	206	132	9	8	3.35	3.22	Agree

Source: Researchers (2024)

As shown on the table 3, respondents agreed with all the items in the cluster. The implication of the responses is that respondents agreed that cultural norms determine the choice of family planning methods among married women in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State.

Research hypothesis 2: Cultural norms do not significantly determine the choice of family planning methods among married women in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State.

Table 4: Chi-Square Analysis on the Influence of cultural norms on the choice of family planning methods among married women in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State

Opinions	Observed N	Expected N	Level of Sig.	df	χ^2 -cal	P-value	Decision
SD	1	50	.05	3	22.05	.001	Ho rejected
D	8	50					
A	56	50					
SA	100	50					

P-value=0.001; P=0.001<0.05; Ho rejected). **Source: Researcher (2024)**

Table 4 shows Chi-square (χ^2) value of 22.05 at 3df, $P<0.05$ and H_0 rejected. This result reveals that the null hypothesis which states that Cultural norms do not significantly determine the choice of family planning methods among married women in Katsina-Ala Local Government

Area of Benue State was rejected. From the result above, the implication is that cultural norms determine the choice of family planning methods among married women in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State.

Discussion of Findings

The first finding of this study revealed that illiteracy is a contributory factor towards choice of family planning methods among married women in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State. The level of literacy is a significant determinant of the culture of a given community which invariably determines the reproductive behavior of a person including family planning, family size, desire for a male child etc. It is not the person rather the culture that determines how much autonomy one individual has in making family planning decisions. This result agrees with Koc (2017) who finds a positive association between the educational level of both spouses and the use of contraceptive methods in Turkey. It is often seen from studies that higher the education of the woman (or partner) better chances of spacing and contraception. It is mainly due to the fact that the awareness developed from a younger age and is practiced due to better understanding of various issues related to lack of child spacing like maternal and child health issues, socio economic factors etc. The result also is in line with the views of Betrand (2018), that, education influences women's reproduction by increasing knowledge of fertility, increasing socio-economic status and changing attitudes about fertility control. Education also affects the distribution of authority within households, whereby women increase their authority with their partners over child bearing and choice of contraception.

The second finding of this study revealed that cultural norms are significant determinants of the choice of family planning methods among married women in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State. This result is in line with Undelikwo, Osonwa, Ushie and Osonwa (2018) who found out that cultural norm are the most important factor determining 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 impact of cultural norms on the reproductive intentions within a community, the more likely the community norms supports individual choices. The result also rhymed with Fionaand (2018) who found out that culture of a given community determines the reproductive behavior of a person including family planning, family size, desire for a male child etc. It is not the person rather the culture that determines how much autonomy one individual has in making family planning decisions.

Conclusion

This study has revealed that the level of literacy as well as cultural norms significantly determine the choice of family planning among married women in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State. This calls for concerted efforts to mitigate the impact of these determinants on the choice of family planning methods among married women so as to curtail the menace of population explosion bedeviling our society today.

Recommendations/ Implications for Guidance Counselors

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are brought forward:

- i. The government and guidance counselors and educational policy planners should include family planning and sex education programmes in the curriculum (of both formal and adult education programmes) to create awareness on the dangers of unplanned families.
- ii. Government, community and religious leaders should sensitize their members on the need for effective utilization of family planning methods among women.

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