

Background

Low level use of family planning is a major factor associated with high fertility pattern and population growth rate in Nigeria, which has a population of about 160 million and is set to double its population in 22 years (Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS), 2008). The level of unmet need for family planning (20%) exceeds the level of contraceptive use (9.7%) in spite of high contraceptive knowledge (NDHS, 2008; Mandara M., 2012). The United Nations estimates that by 2050 the demand for family planning will grow by 40% (Feyisetan BJ & Bankole, 2002). There is a continued need to understand factors associated with unmet need among Nigerian women (Mandara M., 2012).

Much has been said about the importance of access to family planning services and husband-wife communication in relation to contraceptive practice; however, the interplay between these factors and the attitude to family planning needs to be critically explored.

This study set out to examine the role of approval of family planning by women of reproductive age who are in union on unmet needs for family planning, as well as its interactions with access to family planning services and husband-wife communication.

Main Research Hypothesis -

Women in union who approve of family planning will have reduced unmet needs for family planning whether they discuss family planning with their spouse or not, irrespective of the level of access to family planning.

Methodology

Data Source and Study Population

Data were from the Nigeria-Ife 2010 baseline round of the Gates Partner Family Health and Wealth Study (FHWS). The FHWS is a multi-country longitudinal study which follows up a cohort of at least 500 peri-urban families in nine different sites in Africa and Asia (China, Ghana, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Malawi, Nigeria-Ibadan, Nigeria-Ife, and Uganda).

The FHWS Nigeria-Ife cohort consists of 784 couples, residing in Ipetumodu, South-West of Nigeria. Analysis was based only on those women who either approved or disapproved of family planning i.e. 718 (91.5%) of the women.

Analysis Approach

There are three outcomes of interest: having unmet needs for spacing, unmet needs for limiting, and the overall unmet need for both spacing and limiting. The main explanatory variables of interests were approval of family planning, access to FP services and husband-wife's discussion of FP. The data were explored using descriptive analysis, and bivariate analysis used to assess

relationships between relevant variables. Binary logistic regression was carried out for each of the three outcomes on the selected independent variables. The best model fits, using Akaike's Information Criteria (AIC), were obtained in deciding variables to be omitted due to multicollinearity. Wald test was carried out for joint significance of categorical variables, and predicted probabilities of the outcomes were also estimated.

Results

Among the 784 women, 425 (54.2%) approved of contraceptives or any other means of delaying or avoiding pregnancy, 293 (37.4%) disapproved, and 66 (8.4%) were indifferent. About half of the women (412, 52.6%) do not have need for family planning, 143(18.2%) have unmet need for limiting, 83 (10.6%) for spacing, and 146 (18.6%) have met needs for family planning.

The odds of having unmet need for limiting was reduced by 40% by approving of FP compared to those who disapproved.(AOR: 0.60, p-value: 0.035) The average predicted probability for having unmet need for limiting was 0.16 if all the women in the study approved of family planning, compared to 0.21 if they all disapproved. The predicted marginal probability for having unmet need for limiting was reduced to 0.10 if the women both discussed with their spouses and also approved of FP, and even further reduced to 0.04 if they also had good access to family planning services in addition.

Conclusion:

Approval of family planning among women is critical to meeting their needs for limiting. The need for limiting is even better met if women, in addition, also discussed family planning with their spouses and have good access to family planning services.

Knowledge Contribution

This paper puts forward approval of family planning as a strong predictor for achieving or meeting the need for limiting fertility among South-West Nigerian women. Furthermore, the comparative relevance of approval with access or husband-wife communication is clearly expounded.

Our results indicate that programs must aim to improve women's approval of family planning, interaction between couples and good family planning services access if the level of unmet need is to be reduced among women of reproductive age.