

ATTITUDE OF MARRIED PEOPLE TOWARDS FAMILY PLANNING PRACTICES IN ENUGU STATE

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Abstract

Family planning is the act where individuals who are legally married resolve to bear the number of children they could, through spacing, abstinence and among others. This study was carried out to investigate the attitude of married people towards family planning practices in Enugu west Senatorial zone in Enugu State guided the study. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of this study comprised 4,260 married people. Stratified random and purposive sampling techniques were used to select 426 married people. An instrument developed by the researcher titled "Attitude of Married People towards Family Planning Practice" (AMPTFPP) was used for data collection. The instrument was subjected to face and content validation. The reliability was established using Cronbach Alpha. The result gave coefficient value of 0.73 for family planning practices. The researchers administered the instrument with the help of five research assistants. The research assistants were

trained on how to distribute and collect the instrument. The completed copies of the questionnaire were collected on the spot. The data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions. The findings of the study showed that married people have negative attitude towards family planning practices in Enugu State. Some recommendations were made among which was that government should organize free seminar/workshops in all Senatorial zones in Enugu State on the importance of family planning and the methods to limit the number of children they would have during their marriage.

Keywords: Attitude, Married People, Family Planning, Family Planning Practices, Enugu State

Introduction

Family planning is the act where individuals who are legally married resolve to bear the number of children they can cater for through spacing, abstinence and among others. Family planning helps in combating population and consequently poverty in Nigeria as well as other developing countries in Africa. Therefore, its roles cannot be overemphasized. Though many families find it very difficult to understand and comprehend its importance, family planning allows married people to anticipate and attain their desired number of children in addition to the spacing and timing of their births. It is achieved through the use of contraceptive, Udoka (2010). Family planning offers a positive view of reproductive life and enables people to make informed choice about their reproduction and well-being.

Park, (2007) asserted that family planning is a way of maintaining reasonable interval in childbearing practice. That is, letting a woman rest after giving the first birth before another birth. It also embraces a way of preventing unwanted pregnancy, and a means of sexual gratification. Ibezim (2005) defined family planning as an organized effort to assist people to have the number of children they want and to space them as they choose. Family planning helps individuals and married people to choose if and when they would have children or to choose the number of children that they would have. The choices depend on social, cultural and psychological influences; and lately for the first time in history, married people have had reliable methods to enable them to make that choice freely and relatively easily.

According to Ugwuanyi (2007) Family planning practices are defined as educational comprehensive medical or social activities which enable individuals including minors, to determine freely the number and spacing of their children and to select the means by which this may be achieved. There are specific methods used in family planning by most married people in Nigeria. In the words of Chikwelu and Arinze (2009), the natural method of family planning has six types namely: Ovulation method (Billings), safe period method, temperature method, withdrawal method, abstinence and exclusive breast feeding method. The artificial method of birth control includes the: hormonal methods, occlusive methods, spermicidal methods, surgical methods and intrauterine devices. Some of these artificial methods of family planning have advantages and side effects. Orakwue and Orakwue (2012) defined family planning practices as an organized effort to assist people to have the number of children they want and to space them as they choose. In addition, family planning practices may involve

consideration of the number of children a woman wishes to have, including the choice to have no children, as well as age at which she wishes to have them. These matters are influenced by external factors such as marital situation, career considerations, financial position, and disabilities that may affect their ability to have children and raise them. If sexually active, family planning practices may involve the use of contraception and other techniques to control the timing of reproduction. Operationally, the researcher saw family planning as the practice of controlling the number of children in a family and the intervals between their births. Family planning is a way of maintaining reasonable interval in childbearing practice. That is letting a woman rest after giving birth, the first birth before another birth. Family planning also embraces a way of preventing unwanted pregnancy, and a means of sexual gratification.

Gordon (2002) stated that benefits of family planning include saving women's live, avoiding unsafe abortion, limiting risks of pregnancy and child birth, saving children's lives, limiting childbearing to the healthiest ages, having fewer births, offering women choice, delaying motherhood enables women to obtain schooling, family with fewer children are more likely to educate their daughters as well as their sons, helping people avoid STDs, encouraging healthier sexual behaviour and slowing population growth. It enables mother to regain her health after delivery, gives enough time and opportunity to love and provide attention to her husband and children (Jones, 2009). Amaefuna (2004), viewed that the importance of family planning also include economic benefits, health benefits, educating benefits and social benefits. The benefits of family planning could not be over emphasized because they go a long way in helping individuals, parents, children, communities and government in the area of health, education of children, socio-economic and political development of the society. For these reasons, governments, non-governmental organizations and individuals have found it necessary to introduce family planning programmes at Federal, State, Local and Community Levels. Nwaora (2015) stated that family planning was introduced to this country at a time when such need was of paramount importance. It was to bring both psychological and economic relief to families. Interestingly, government and other non-governmental agencies had put in much effort to bring the knowledge about family planning to the people through advertisement on Television, Radio and other media. For instance, in 1987, the Enugu State Commissioner for Health stated that there should be increased public enlightenment campaign to educate parents on the need to use of public health facilities particularly those concerning birth control. This connoted request for family planning as prevention of unwanted pregnancy through provision of contraceptives as outlets that would be accessible to families. On this note, if family planning education is adopted, the problem of population explosion would be minimized. This should not be seen as divorcing sexual act from procreation. However, people's attitude are to a large extent influenced by social and cultural conditions of the environment as well as their views on the importance of children and their own needs as status aspiration.

Chikwelu and Arinze (2009) opined that attitude towards family planning had attracted much attention in recent times. This is due to increase in unwanted or unplanned pregnancies, induced or criminal abortion and maternal mortality. However, Dereck (2001) opined that attitude is a moderately intense emotion that prepares or predisposes individuals to respond consistently in a favourable manner, when confronted with a particular object. Eagly and Barbara (2006) stated that attitude is concerned with one's

feeling towards an object, person or thing. Onokorleye (2004) asserted that an attitude refers to mind-set to action, an internal readiness to behave or act. Dada (2002) defined attitude as a way of feeling, thinking or behaving. Aitken (2000) argued that there is no standard definition of attitude, but in general terms, he perceived the term to imply a learned predisposition or tendency on the part of the individual to respond positively or negatively to some objects or situation. According to Mann (2002), attitude implied a relatively enduring organization to internalized belief that describes, evaluates and advances actions with respect to an object or situation with each belief having cognitive, affective and behavioural components. He further stated that each one of these beliefs is a predisposition that suitably activates results in some preferential response towards the attitude-object or situation or toward the maintenance or preservation of the attitude itself.

Ojo (2013), asserted that marriage is a legal union between two persons that confers certain privileges and entails certain obligations of each person to the other. There is similar union of more than two people in polygamous marriage. According to Okolo, (2006), marriage is a union between persons that is recognized by custom or religious tradition, the state or relationship of two adults who are married. Anyanwu (2015) opined that some factors could influence attitude of married people towards family planning practices. These include level of Education, gender among others. In addition, babies born at frequent intervals are not fully developed especially with babies with low birth weight, disability rate increases, care becomes difficult and infant mortality increases in the mother's womb. Moreover, when there is increase in birthrate there is bound to be explosion in population, and this tend to affect the growth and development of the economy, thus, leads to depletion of natural resources, degradation of environment, conflicts and war, rise in unemployment, high cost of living, pandemics and epidemics, malnutrition, starvation and famine, water shortage, lower life expectancy, extinction, increased intensive farming and faster climate change (Gotmark 2018; Javaid 2020).

In lieu of the above, there is substantial evidence both in literature and observations to buttress the deteriorating situation of the economy as regards high population growth in the country. This scenario may be as a result of lack of adequate family planning by married people. The above listed consequences of high population in the society made the researchers to be worried, hence, it is problematic to the entire society at large.

Worried by the challenges as a result of the consequences posed by high rate of population in Enugu state, the question then arise: what is the attitude of married people towards family planning practices in Enugu west senatorial zone?

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the attitude of married people towards family planning practices in Enugu west Senatorial zone in Enugu State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the attitude of married people towards family planning practices in Enugu west Senatorial zone;
2. Find out the attitude of male and female married people towards family planning practices in Enugu west Senatorial zone;

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- 1) What is the attitude of married people towards family planning practices in Enugu west senatorial zone?
- 2) What is the attitude of male and female married people towards family planning practices in Enugu west senatorial zone?

Method

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design and was conducted in Enugu state, Nigeria. The population for the study consisted of 4,260 married people in Enugu west senatorial zone in Enugu state. The sample for the study consisted of 426 married people selected from the population of the study: stratified random and purposive sampling techniques were used to draw the sample. The researchers developed a self structured instrument called "Attitude of married people towards family planning practices" (AMPTFFP) with a four point rating scale. The instrument has 20 items and was face validated by three experts, two from guidance and counselling and one from measurement and evaluation, all in the department of educational foundations, faculty of education, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam campus. The internal consistency of AMPTFFP was ascertained using Cronbach Alpha reliability estimate. A population of 20 married people from Anambra central senatorial zone was used during the pilot study. The data collected from the pilot study was analyzed using the Cronbach Alpha reliability estimate and the reliability coefficient stood at .73. to collect data for the study, the researchers employed the assistance of five research assistants whom they trained in one day consultative meeting. 426 copies of AMPTFF were able to retrieved 402 copies signifying 94.4% return of dully filled copies of the administered instrument. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research question. The decision rule for the interpretation of the respondent responses is that for any item 2.50 is regarded as agree, while any item whose mean score is less than 2.50 is regarded as disagree.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The analyzed data were presented in Table 1 and 2 in accordance with the research question that guided the study.

Research Question One:

What is the attitude of married people towards family planning practices in Enugu west senatorial zone?

Table 1: Mean Score of married people towards Family Planning Practices

Source of variation	N	\bar{x}	SD	Remarks
Attitude of People Family planning practices	402	2.35	.28	Negative Attitude

As indicated by the mean score of 2.35 in Table 1, married people have a negative attitude towards family planning practices in Enugu west senatorial zone

Research Question Two:

What is the attitude of male and female married people towards family planning practices in Enugu west senatorial zone?

Table 2: Mean Score of Male and Female Married People towards Family Planning Practices

Source of variation	Male (N=191)			Female (N=211)		
Attitude	\bar{x}	SD	Remark	\bar{x}	SD	Remark
Family planning practices	2.29	.31	Negative	2.41	.23	Negative

Results in table 2 reveal the mean score of 2.29 and 2.41 for male and female married people respectively. The mean scores indicate that male and female married people have a negative attitude towards family planning practices in Enugu west senatorial zone.

Summary of the Findings

The findings of the study are summarized as follows:

1. Married people have a negative attitude towards family planning practices in Enugu west senatorial zone.
2. Male and female married people have a negative attitude towards family planning practices in Enugu west senatorial zone.

Discussion of the Findings

The discussion was done in accordance with the research questions that guided the study. The findings of the study as shown in table 1 revealed that married people have a negative attitude towards family planning practices in Enugu west senatorial zone. The result is in line with the findings of some earlier researchers who found that married people have negative attitude towards family planning practices (Omeje 2002, Deda, 2002). The finding of this study is not surprising because of low exposure of married people in Enugu west senatorial zone. However, the findings contradict the study by Alina (2016) and Orakwue and Orekwu (2012) who revealed the married people have positive attitude towards family planning practices.

The result of the study presented in Table 2 showed that male and female married people have negative attitude towards family planning practices. The finding of this study is not surprising because women's education greatly influence their choice of family planning. Furthermore education of women is of great importance to their awareness of the trends of family planning Arinze (2011). The findings of this study disagree with the study of Talor (2003) and Otim (2015) who found that male and female married people have positive attitude towards family planning practices.

Conclusion

From the results obtained in the investigation of attitude of married people towards family planning practices; the following conclusion was made; in the view of the findings, Married people in Enugu West Senatorial zone have negative attitude towards family planning practices.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made.

1. Government should organize free seminar/ workshops in all Enugu Senatorial Zones in Enugu State on the importance of family planning and the need for married people to adopt family planning methods to limit the number of children they would have during their marriage. This will enable them develop positive attitude towards family planning practices.
2. Sex education should be made a compulsory subject in all schools in order to teach children the importance of family planning in the society.
3. The community approach should be used in integrating family planning education in various communities. The aim is not only to motivate the people but also to generate social support for family planning. To do this effectively in rural environments there is need to know something about the community such as its structure, its channels of communication, its attitude to government agencies as well as its attitudes to health and family planning.
4. Family planning education could form part of health education. This could be given to pregnant mothers attending the antenatal clinics. All health officers should actively participate in family planning education in their communities.
5. Direct family planning services clinics and multipurpose community centers should be opened by the government in rural and semi-urban areas. These should also be methods of reaching married at their door steps.

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