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ATTITUDE OF MUSLIM MEN TOWARDS FAMILY PLANNING IN BORNO STATE

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of this study was to determine those socio-economic variables that have the most impact on attitude towards family planning among married Muslim men in Borno state, Northeast Nigeria. This is because the attitude of husbands is key to the practice of family planning due to their decision making roles in the family set up. Studies have revealed that attitude of males towards family planning in Sub-Saharan Africa is not encouraging. Therefore determining the variables that affect attitude of males towards family planning is important in improving family planning programme success.

Methodology: Both qualitative and quantitative techniques were used to collect information for this study. The qualitative technique involved the use of Focus group Discussions. A total of 12 sessions of FGDs were conducted in three purposively selected Local Government areas. For the interview schedule, eight local government areas were randomly selected based on geographic location and cross sectional survey was used to collect the quantitative data. Four villages in each local government area were randomly selected plus the state capital. A total of 475 married Muslim men were interviewed using the systematic random sampling method

Findings: The result of the study showed that the attitude of married Muslim men towards family planning is mainly negative because of the belief that Islam is against family planning. However, people with western education, younger husbands and the Babur/Bura ethnic group have more favourable attitude than other groups. Factors found to be most responsible for negative attitude are religion (96%), rural residency (93%) and low literacy level (92%). However, the most outstanding factor among all sub-groups is socioeconomic insecurity.

Unique contribution to theory, practice and policy: Better economic conditions and more education are shown to ameliorate attitude towards FP in spite of religious beliefs as seen in this study. Improving on these two factors and providing health education that is culture and religion specific targeted at males will help in making the males to be more receptive. Messages should include the consequences of closely spaced pregnancy on the mother and child

Keywords: *Family planning, Northeast Nigeria, attitude of Muslim men.*

INTRODUCTION

Family planning (FP) is one of the factors that reduce high maternal mortality attributed to high birth rates among others. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2012) there is a high risk of maternal mortality in Sub-Saharan Africa because of high birth rates which could be reduced by practicing family planning. It was estimated that 56% of all maternal deaths occurred in Africa in 2010 because millions of women in developing countries do not plan their families (WHO, 2012) mainly due to: deficiency in knowledge, husband's disapproval, fear of side effects, in-affordability or inaccessibility of family planning services, religious prohibition, deficiency and incompetence of family planning workers and limited supply (Bruce, 1990; Iyer, 2002). According to Stephenson and Hennink (2004) community level barriers such as social and cultural characteristics and lack of infrastructure in providing health care services could be added to the individual level barriers.

In the early 1970s African leaders were not ready to accept Family Planning for various reasons. Some of these reasons were the belief by African governments that there is vast land in Africa that needs to be peopled. Another reason among others is mistrust of the motives behind the propaganda on population control by the West. African governments thought that it was a ploy by Western nations to decrease the population of the black race (Sai, 1989). It was later in the late 70s and early 80s that governments of African countries got to accept family planning and population control measures as necessary for development policies. In 1988 a national population policy was approved by the Federal government of Nigeria. One of the goals of the national population policy was: "...to achieve lower population growth rates through reduction of birth rates by voluntary fertility regulation methods that are compatible with the attainment of economic and social goals of the nation" (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1988, pp. 12).

Men have strong influence on family decisions which includes family planning that makes their attitude towards it to be very important. That was why this research sought to determine their attitude towards family planning in the study area. The specific objectives were to determine the influence of various socio-economic variables on attitude of males towards family planning. The variables are education, age, ethnicity, area of residence, and practice of polygamy. Men's approval of FP against these variables will reveal which ones have more influence. The attitude is important because it has influence on practice (NPC Nigeria and ICF Macro, 2013). This study was carried out before the onset of insurgency in the state.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the 80s Total Fertility Rate (TFR) for Nigeria was 6.34 and the marital fertility rate of 7.48. More than two decades later, in 1996 the TFR for Nigeria barely changed to 6 children per woman and 5.6 in 2013 (Population Reference Bureau, 1996; NPC Nigeria and ICF Macro, 2013). In 1996 the level of family planning in Nigeria among married women was six percent for all types of family planning methods and 4% for modern types according to the Population Reference Bureau, 1996. By 2013, practice of family planning in Nigeria had increased to 15% but it stood at three percent in the Northeast (NPC Nigeria & ICF Macro, 2013).

This research was conducted in Borno State, in the Northeastern part of Nigeria, mostly inhabited by Muslims. Borno State has a long history of Islamic belief and culture and the predominant ethnic group is Kanuri. Ordinarily, the average Muslim citizen in Borno believes

that family planning is a ploy by Western nations to reduce the Muslim population in the world. This belief is not restricted to the rural people alone. Urban residents as well as, highly educated and well placed Muslims also believe it to be so (Aliyu, 1992; Sada, 1993; Ahmed & Demba, 1994; Baig, 1994; Liagin, 1996; Cook & Maine, 1991).

There is a linkage between a family's socioeconomic characteristics, attitudes and practice of family planning (FP). It is common knowledge that among patriarchal societies, main decisions including those concerning the family are taken by men. For instance, a woman cannot decide to practice family planning even if she is motivated to do so, unless she obtains her husband's consent. The final decision rests with the husband in most cases as reported in many studies on family planning in developing countries (Orubuloye & Caldwell, 1994; Roudi and Ashford, 1996.)

Therefore men's attitude towards family planning and their willingness to adopt greatly affects practice. Studies carried out in Northern Nigeria and Ethiopia suggest that there is high knowledge of family planning but negative attitude toward practice of family which has led to low contraceptive use (Duze & Mohammed, 2006; Tilahun et al, 2013). This indicates that attitude of males to family planning is important to practice. That is the reason success rate of family planning programmes is limited because they mainly focus on women who are not the decision makers (Tilahun et al, 2013).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this study the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 2012) is applied to explain what determines fertility intentions. This will help clarify the socio-psychological processes involved in forming the intention to have a child or not which could affect attitude towards FP. According to the theory, intention is governed by three kinds of considerations. The first consideration is behavioral beliefs which are a person's beliefs and values which make him/her want to do something or not based on perceived positive or negative consequences of the thing in question which in this case is FP. The second consideration is the attitude of a person's immediate social environment constituted by a person's partner, friends and family. This is called normative beliefs or subjective norms which produce the perceived social pressure on the person to comply with those individuals. The third consideration is known as perceived control which is the resources or obstacles that can facilitate or hinder the action that needs to be taken.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour applied in this research suggests that the attitude of a man towards FP will be influenced by the man's beliefs and values, as well as the social pressure from his immediate family and community and the resources and obstacles at his disposal to go through with the intention to practice or not practice FP. A man's belief system which govern his behavior towards his family, gender relations and life values; and his willingness to comply with the norms around him determine how he acts and reacts to situations and issues of importance. Similarly resources or obstacles can go a long way to facilitate or hinder intentions. Therefore the TPB is applied to show that a man's attitude towards family planning is a result of these three factors.

METHODOLOGY

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and cross sectional survey by the administration of individual interview schedules were used to collect the necessary data for this study. A total of

12 sessions of FGDs were conducted in three purposively selected Local Government areas (LGAs) which include Maiduguri metropolis, the state capital, one from southern Borno and another from northern Borno. This selection was done to give a representation to all three Senatorial districts, as well as to urban, semi-urban and rural settings. The focus groups consist of six groups of eight to ten persons each of younger (<30 yrs) and older (>30 yrs) married Muslim men.

The FGDs were conducted under conducive atmosphere in the various selected study areas. Each session lasted for about 45 minutes and was recorded for transcription. Both moderator and note taker were male to allow free atmosphere for discussion. The issues for the FGDs were knowledge of family planning, attitude towards family planning, and the practice of family planning. However, this paper focuses only on the attitudinal aspect of family planning.

For the interview schedule, eight local government areas were randomly selected based on geographic location (Gubio, Magumeri, Gwoza, Damboa, Ngala, Dikwa, Maiduguri and Konduga). Local government administrative staff and University students were trained to administer the instrument, which was adapted with some modifications from the National Demographic Health Survey 2008 questionnaire for the collection of quantitative data.

Four villages in each local government area were randomly selected. In addition to that, the local government headquarters and the state capital, which represented the semi-urban and urban areas respectively, were also included. A total of 475 married Muslim men were interviewed using the systematic random sampling method. The data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

RESULTS

Focus Group Discussions

Generally, the attitude of the males is negative toward family planning. Most of them insist that the family planning programme is a conspiracy between the government and the white man. As one participant in Maiduguri puts it, *“it was the white man who felt that people here are becoming too many and they want to reduce them. We were told that family planning is the white man’s conspiracy, so we don’t accept it”*. A summary of their attitudes is as follows:

1. Educated and enlightened women discuss family planning with their husbands, but illiterate and ignorant women are shy to do so.
2. Family planning can be openly discussed among males, but most are against it.
3. The number of children to have is Allah’s business and to specify a certain number amounts to interfering in Allah’s affairs.
4. A male child is preferred because he will always be by his father’s side and he can carry on the family name and look after the family when the father dies.
5. The female child is not liked because she deserts her parents after marriage, it is costly to get them married, and can bring shame on her parents should she get pregnant before marriage.
6. Practice of family planning is associated with the urban elite, schoolgirls and prostitutes.
7. Men can use condom as protection against infection when sleeping with a prostitute, but not with their wives.

Quantitative Data

The attitude of Muslim men towards family planning was examined using five variables that could affect attitude: these include level of education, age, ethnic group, residential area and number of wives.

Attitude to Family Planning and Education

Table 1 shows the relationship between respondent's educational level and attitude towards FP. The result indicates that the number of males who generally disapprove of FP decreased as the level of Western education increased.

Table 1: Attitude towards FP among Men of Different Educational Levels

Variables indicating attitude	Educational Levels				
	No formal education N = 104	Quranic Education N = 147	Primary Education N = 35	Secondary Education N = 50	Tertiary Education N = 94
	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)
Disapprove of FP	89 (85.6)	128 (87.1)	30 (85.7)	39 (78.0)	65 (69.1)
Do not intend to practice FP in future	96 (92.3)	126 (85.7)	29 (82.9)	39 (78.0)	66 (70.2)
Those who have never discussed FP with wife(s)	99 (95.2)	133 (90.5)	32 (91.4)	45 (90.0)	71 (75.5)
Major Reasons for not practicing FP:					
• Want more children					
• Against religious beliefs	70 (67.3) 16 (15.4)	41 (27.9) 73 (49.7)	14 (40.0) 14 (40.0)	14 (28.0) 22 (44.0)	22 (23.4) 50 (53.2)
Major Reasons for wanting to have more children.					
• Need to provide care in old age	43 (41.3)	54 (36.7)	16 (45.7)	21 (40.0)	30 (31.9)
• Religion prohibits child limitation	32 (30.8)	50 (34.0)	10 (28.6)	16 (32.0)	43 (45.7)
Never tried to practice FP	96 (92.3)	138 (96.5)	33 (94.3)	43 (86.0)	76(80.9)
It is left to God to give male or Female children	92 (88.5)	124 (93.9)	29 (82.9)	40 (80.0)	78(83.0)
Those who do not approve of their wife(s) working outside the house	79 (76.0)	121 (82.3)	24 (68.6)	30 (60.0)	55(58.5)

Those with Quranic education recorded the highest level of disapproval of FP (87.1%). The percentage of respondents who do not intend to plan their families in future decreased steadily from those with no education to those with tertiary education. The proportion of those who never

discussed FP with their wives was highest among people with no formal education (95.2%) and decreased steadily with increase in level of education.

Reasons for not practicing FP are varied. They include disapproval by wife, lack of knowledge, desire to have more children, opposed to family planning, against religious beliefs, costs too much, infrequent sex, health reasons, methods are not effective, difficult to use and hard to get. But out of all these, the most frequently given reasons are that, they want more children or it is against religious beliefs. The highest percentage of people who want more children was observed among those without formal education (67.3%). Those with tertiary education (53.2%) gave religion as the most common reason for not practicing FP. The proportion of people that never tried to plan their families was highest among people with only Quranic education followed by those who have primary education and decreased as level of education increased.

Respondents were further probed to give reasons for wanting to have more children. The various answers include not having enough children, to carry on the family name, need to help with house work, need to provide care during old age; religion prohibits child limitation, etc. The most popular reason was the need to provide care in old age. Approval of work by wife outside the house is included to give an indication of a man's attitude towards his wife. Disapproval decreased steadily from those without to those with Western formal education. The highest level of disapproval was observed among males with only Quranic education (82.3%). To find out whether preference for sons was also a driving factor in the desire for large families, most of the respondents replied that they are indifferent as, it is God's will to give them whichever sex. The highest response comes from those with Quranic education (93.9%) followed by those with no education at all (88.5%) and decreased with increase in education.

Attitude towards Family Planning and Age

The men were classified into two groups. Men aged 30 years and below (young husbands) and those above 30 years (older husbands). The level of disapproval of FP is high among both groups as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Attitude towards FP among Men of Different Age Groups

Variables showing attitude	Age Groups of Men			
	30 and below N = 80		Age above 30 N = 388	
	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)
Disapprove of FP	65	(81.3)	316	(81.4)
No intention to practice FP in future	60	(75.0)	335	(86.3)
Those who have never discussed FP with wife(s)	73	(91.3)	341	(87.9)
Major reasons for not practicing FP:				
• Wants more children	29	(36.3)	153	(39.4)
• Against religious beliefs	41	(51.3)	145	(37.4)
Major Reasons for wanting to have more children.				
• Need to provide care in old age	41	(26.3)	157	(40.5)
• Religion prohibits child limitation	40	(50.0)	122	(31.4)
Never tried to practice FP	76	(95.0)	345	(88.9)

It is left to God to give male or Female children	63	(78.8)	327	(84.3)
Those who do not approve of their wife(s) working outside the house	46	(57.5)	265	(68.3)

So also was lack of intention to plan their families in future. This attitude was however, higher among older men (86.3%) (Table2). Their reasons for not planning their family are mainly desire for more children, which is higher among older men (39.4%) and against religious beliefs which is higher among younger men (51.3%). Major reasons for wanting to have more children are; need to provide care in old age which is higher among older men (40.5%) and religion which is higher among younger men (9.0%). Fewer younger men disapprove of their wife working outside the home (57.5%) than the older men (68.3%).

Ethnic Group and Male Attitude towards Family Planning

Table 3 shows that the major ethnic groups in the state are Kanuri, Shuwa, Hausa and Babur/Bura, even though the predominant ethnic group was Kanuri (71% of respondents). In order to explore the influence of ethnicity on attitude towards FP, the respondents were categorized according to ethnic groups. General disapproval of FP is highest among the Kanuri (86.1%) followed by the Shuwa (84.6%). Those who have no intention to practice family planning are consistently highest among the Kanuri (89.9%) and lowest among Babur/Bura (54.5%). Also those who never tried to plan their family are lowest among the Babur/Bura people (66.7%).

Table 3: Attitude of Various Ethnic Groups Towards

Attitudinal variables of Different Ethnic Group	Different Ethnic Groups			
	Kanuri	Shuwa	Hausa	Babur/Bura
	N = 338 Freq. (%)	N = 13 Freq. (%)	N = 36 Freq. (%)	N = 66 Freq. (%)
Disapprove of FP	291 (86.1)	11 (84.6)	28 (77.8)	37 (56.1)
Do not intend to practice FP in future	304 (89.9)	10 (76.9)	31 (86.1)	36 (54.5)
Have never discussed FP with wife(s)	319 (94.4)	10 (76.9)	29 (80.6)	43 (65.2)
Major Reasons for not practicing FP:				
• Want more children	157 (46.4)	4 (30.8)	6(16.7)	15 (22.7)
• Against religious beliefs	124 (36.7)	7 (53.8)	24 (66.7)	11 (16.7)
Major Reasons for wanting to have more children.				
• Need to provide care in old age	126 (37.3)	8 (61.5)	7 (19.4)	20 (30.3)
• Religion prohibits child limitation	118 (34.9)	3 (23.8)	20 (55.6)	14 (21.2)
Never tried to practice FP:	319 (94.4)	11 (84.6)	33 (91.7)	44 (66.7)
It is left to God to give male or Female				

children	291 (86.1)	12 (92.3)	29 (80.6)	46 (69.7)
Disapprove of wife work outside the house.	261 (77.2)	10 (76.9)	30 (83.3)	48 (72.7)

The majority of males who have never discussed family planning with wives are the Kanuri (94.4%) and the least are Babur/Bura (65.2%). Their major reasons for not practicing FP are mainly because they want more children or because of religious beliefs. On why they wanted more children the major reasons were, need to provide care during old age and religion. Except among the Hausa, the need for care during old age overrides the religious belief as a reason.

Disapproval of work outside the house is lowest among the Babur/ Bura. The most favourable attitude towards FP appears to be among this group.

Attitude towards Family Planning by Residence

In the sample population, there are three categories of residential areas: villages, local government area headquarters which are semi-urban and the state capital, which is urban. Table 4 shows that the level of disapproval of FP is highest among rural men (83.5%), lack of intention to practice family planning in the future was highest among semi urban men (94.3%). The least is recorded for urban residents. Those who never tried to plan their families are highest in the rural areas and lowest in the urban areas. Non communication with wife regarding family planning is also highest amongst rural men.

Table 4: Attitude towards FP and Residence

Attitudinal variables	Residence of Respondents					
	Rural		Semi-Urban		Urban	
	N = 254		N = 141		N = 46	
	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)
Disapprove of FP	212	(83.5)	110	(78.0)	37	(80.4)
No intention to practice FP in the future	222	(87.4)	133	(94.3)	38	(82.6)
Those who have never discussed FP with wife(s)	235	(74)	120	(85.1)	38	(82.6)
Major reasons for not practicing FP:						
• Wants more children:	122		46	(32.6)	6	(15.0)
• Against religious beliefs	(48.0)85		62	(43.4)	25	(62.5)
	(33.5)					
Major reasons for wanting to have more children:						
• Need to provide care in old age:	133	(52.4)	47	(33.4)	6	(13.0)
• Religion prohibits child limitation.	79	(31.0)	54	(38.3)	18	(39.1)
Never tried to practice FP	237	(93.3)	122	(86.5)	39	(84.8)

It is left to God to give male or female children	210 (82.7)	124 (87.9)	34 (73.9)
Those who do not approve of their wife(s) working outside the house	178 (70.1)	85 (60.3)	28 (60.9)

Major reasons for not practicing family planning are: desire for more children (48%) and religion (33.5%) among rural men. For the semi-urban and urban areas, religious beliefs take precedence over need for more children.

Reasons for wanting more children are: need to provide care during old age which decreases with urbanization while religion as a reason increases with urbanization. All the variables indicate that urbanization has a positive effect on men's attitude towards FP.

Attitude of Men towards Family Planning and Number of Wives

About 48% of the respondents have one wife at the time of interview, while the rest have more than one wife each. Those with the highest level of disapproval of FP are men with 3 wives. Lack of intention to plan the family in the future is highest among men with two wives (Table 5). None of the variables revealed any relationship between, number of wives and attitude to FP except in the case of disapproval of work by wives that steadily increased as the number of wives increased. In view of this, no conclusive statement could be made regarding the effect of number of wives a man has and his attitude towards family planning.

Table 5: Attitude of Men to FP in Relation to their Number of Wives

Variables Depicting Attitude	Number of Wives			
	1	2	3	4
	N =227 Freq. (%)	N = 180 Freq. (%)	N = 40 Freq. (%)	N = 28 Freq. (%)
Disapprove of FP	188 (82.8)	141 (78.3)	34 (85.0)	22 (78.6)
Do not intend to practice FP in future	183 (82.8)	155 (86.1)	36 (50.0)	23 (82.1)
Those who have never discussed FP with wife(s)	198 (87.2)	162 (90.0)	35 (87.5)	24 (85.7)
Major reasons for not practicing FP:				
• Want more children	92 (40.5)	68 (37.7)	16 (40.0)	7 (25.0)
• Against religious beliefs	85 (37.4)	73 (40.5)	16 (40.0)	15 (53.6)
Major Reasons for wanting to have more children.				
• Need to provide care in old age	81 (35.7)	74 (41.1)	12 (30.0)	14 (50.0)
• Religion prohibits child limitation	85 (37.4)	52 (28.9)	19 (47.5)	7 (25.0)
Never tried to practice FP	198 (87.2)	167 (92.8)	37 (92.5)	24 (85.7)

It is left to God to give male or Female children	179 (78.9)	156 (86.7)	34 (85.0)	26 (92.9)
Those who do not approve of their wife(s) working outside the house.	147 (64.8)	119 (66.1)	29 (72.5)	21 (75.0)

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that there is a general negative attitude towards FP. However, a breakdown shows that the attitude of Muslim men towards family planning as reported in other studies such as Roudi and Ashford (1996) is mainly negative. But on the whole, men with Quranic education are the most conservative as would be expected because of the belief that Islam is against family planning. People with western education are more favourably disposed than others as found in other studies (Underwood, 2000). The higher the level of education, the less negative the attitude. Younger men (<30 years) also have less negative attitude than older men (>30 years). This may indicate that, the new generation of Muslim men is becoming more receptive to the issue of family planning.

The attitude of males by their ethnic group shows that the Kanuri and Fulani have the most negative attitude while the Babur/Burhave the most positive attitude. The Babur/Bura who come from the southern part of the state have had longer contact with Western education and have higher Western literacy levels as observed by Akpede, Omotara and Gazali (1995). This could be responsible for their receptive attitude towards family planning. Urbanization has also been found to have a neutralizing effect on negative attitude because the level of disapproval decreases with urbanization. The difference between the rural and urban men is that, rural men want more children to provide security in old age, while urban dwellers want more children because religion prohibits child limitation. Economic reasons take precedence in the rural areas while religious influence is more important in urban areas presumably because of higher religious awareness. No relationship could be established between number of wives and attitudes towards family planning. Perhaps this aspect needs a more rigorous investigation.

Overall, socio-economic insecurity is the driving factor of high fertility rates, rather than religion as can be seen from differing fertility levels in the various Muslim countries. In some of these countries they have high levels of Family Planning acceptance. For instance Putra and Singh (2015) noted that there is a difference of opinion in relation to acceptability of family planning or otherwise in Islam. They stated that according to the Faculty of Medicine of the King Abdulaziz University of Saudi Arabia family planning is acceptable within wedlock if there is a threat to the health or life of the expectant mother. Likewise, in a study carried out in Jordan where the majority of the people are Muslims, 82% of male and 98% of female religious leaders believe that family planning is in keeping with Islamic tenets as reported by Putra and Singh (2015). And in a study conducted in Sudan, 59.5% of Muslim men believe that Islam approves of family planning as reported by Khalifa (1988).

In conclusion, better economic conditions and more education are shown to ameliorate attitude towards FP as seen in this study and in other countries around the world. Improving on these two factors and providing health education that is culture and religion specific targeted at males will help in this regard. The messages should include the consequences of closely spaced pregnancy on the mother and child, especially on already existing children.

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