

Male Involvement in Family Planning Decision Making in Ile-Ife, Nigeria

Abstract

Background: This study assessed men's knowledge, attitude and practice of modern contraceptive methods, determined the level of spousal communication about family planning decision making, and examined the attitudes of family planning providers towards male participation in reproductive health services. The aim was to determine the extent of male involvement in family planning and reproductive goal decision making among couples in Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

Methods: Both quantitative and qualitative methodologies were used. The quantitative survey employed a cross-sectional descriptive design using a structured household questionnaire to collect information from 402 male study participants and 50% of their spouses. A multistage sampling procedure was employed, where 10% of the 400 enumeration areas (EAs) were selected by simple random sampling. For the selected EAs, all the constituent households (second stage sampling unit) were listed and one eligible respondent (third stage sampling unit) was interviewed from every Kth household. The qualitative design consisted of twelve focus group discussions and four in-depth interviews with identified groups and individuals. Data were analysed using appropriate descriptive and inferential statistical techniques.

Results: A majority (72%) of the male respondents were aged between 30 and 49 years, while half of the female respondents were between 30 and 39 years old. Virtually all (99.8%) male respondents were aware of the existence of at least one modern family planning method. Eighty nine percent of men approved of the use of family planning while only about 11% disapproved of it. The most common reason given for family planning approval was birth spacing, while that for disapproval was religious dictates (44% and 38% respectively). Eighty percent of men had ever used contraception while 56% of them were current users. Spousal communication about family planning and other family reproductive goals was quite poor, as consistently less than a quarter of either male respondents or their spouses individually initiated discussions on common reproductive health issues such as when to achieve a pregnancy, when to avoid a pregnancy and use of contraceptives. Furthermore, about a third of couples never discussed family planning in the year preceding the survey, while just about half of men and two-fifths of their spouses discussed family planning only one or two times during the same time period. While most of the female focus group discussion participants had attended family planning clinics, most male participants had not. All family planning providers interviewed corroborated men's low patronage of family planning services, but were favorably disposed to men attending their services. The providers were of the opinion that cultural beliefs, societal perception that family planning was a women's affair and religious misconceptions were the main reasons for men's poor patronage.

Conclusion: The study concluded that male involvement in family planning decision making in Ile-Ife was poor and their patronage of family planning services was low. There is an urgent need to increase male involvement in family planning decision making if family planning uptake in the country will improve.