

Introduction

With only 15% of women using a method of contraception and 10% using a modern method, contraceptive use in Nigeria is generally low; fertility on the other hand, remains high with a stagnant Total Fertility Rate of 5.7 in 2003 and 2008. The role of men in family planning is very important in the Nigerian context as the society remains patriarchal, not just in lineage, but virtually every sphere of decision-making. It is understandable that research is increasingly focusing on men's role in reproductive health matters, especially, family planning. However, a lot of studies tend to examine men's roles based on inferences made from women's responses; these include the husband's opposition/support for family planning, desire for children, sex preference, etc.

Main Hypothesis

While many researches have shown that contraceptive use tends to increase where there is spousal communication and concordance on reproductive intentions, many other studies, using couple data, have equally shown that most spouses do not accurately report the views/intentions of their partners. This study therefore seeks to examine the concordance of couples on their reproductive choices and intentions and examine its relationship with each couple's use of contraception.

Methodology

This study is based on the baseline data from a longitudinal couple study in a peri-urban community, Ipetumodu, in Osun State, Nigeria collected between April and May, 2010. This study is part of a multi-country Family Health and Wealth Study (FHWS) in seven peri-urban communities in five sub-Saharan African countries of Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Nigeria and Uganda. The study is coordinated by the Bill and Melinda Gates Institute for Population and Reproductive Health, Johns Hopkins University, USA. Ipetumodu is located northwest of Ile-Ife and is the headquarters of Ife North Local Government Area of Osun State, Nigeria. This community has a total population of 20,472 and 4,950 households, several intermediate public institutions as well as a privately owned higher educational institution. Ipetumodu has five government owned health facilities: 3 primary health centres, one model national primary health centre and a general hospital. A total of 787 couples were sampled in this baseline and the cohort will be followed up for 2-3 years using an identical survey instrument and methodology in all the study sites. After data cleaning, only 784 couples have complete data and this paper is based on this number. The data have been analysed at both univariate

and bivariate levels, but further analysis at multivariate level is ongoing and will be incorporated in the final paper. The outcome variable is use of contraception as reported by the women; the study adopts the women's reported use of contraception as the standard as it is possible for the woman to use some methods without the knowledge of the spouse, but rarely possible vice versa. The independent variables are concordance on desire for more children, how many additional children they will like to have, actual discussion of the number of children to have with spouse, age at which a woman should stop childbearing, ideal birth interval, spouse's desired number of children and the notion that having many children provides financial security to parents. The covariates include age, education, number of living children and household wealth status.

Key Findings

Although a third of the women (33%) reported the use of contraception while only about a quarter (28%) of the men reported the use of contraception but only 14% of couples concurred that they use contraception.

On the desire for more children, about equal proportions of husbands and wives respectively indicated that they still desire to have more children (64% each), suggesting a high fertility desire among the couples. About 31% each of wives and husbands also indicated not wanting any more children. However, there is a noticeable level of discordance when the response of each wife is matched with her husband's. Only about a fifth of couples (22%) were in concordance that they want no more children but the proportion that wants more children (concordance) is to 53%. Also, only 30% of couples concurred on the number of additional children they will like to have. These include 26% of couples whose responses concurred on the intention to have 1-3 more children and about 2% who want 4-6 additional children and 2% who want 7 or more children¹. On the number of children that they consider as ideal for a family, the findings show that the women have a stronger preference for a large family size relative to the men; both however indicated strong desire for large family size.

The couples were asked if they think that their spouses want the same number of children, if they want more or less than them. Two-thirds (67%) of the men reported that their spouses want the same number, 8% reported that their spouses want more, while 4% reported that

¹The category 7+ includes those whose responses are "as many as God gives"

their wives want fewer children; 21% do not know their wives preferences. Fewer proportions of the women reported that their husbands want the same number relative to the men (57%), 7% reported that their husbands wants more children than them while 4% reported that their husbands want fewer children. A third of the women (32%) do not know their husbands' preferences. Matching the responses of each couple, the findings show that 60% of the couple responses in the families surveyed incorrectly stated their partner's desired number of children. Only 38% of couple responses concurred that they want the same number of children as their spouses, while only 2% of couples' responses concurred that their spouses want fewer or more children. Examining the linkage between couples' desire for more children and women's contraceptive use, the bivariate results suggests that the proportion of women using contraception is highest when the couple (husband and wife) both desire to have no more children (44%), when the woman desires no more children (even if the husband do) 44%, and when there is indecision by the couple on whether to have more children (34%). The findings further suggest that women's use of contraception is least when both spouses (couple) desire more children (27%) and when the woman desires more children (even when the husband wants no more) 28%.

The study also examined women's use of contraception by whether a couple agree on the number of children to have, the findings indicate women's contraceptive use is highest when there is agreement between the couple (37%) compared to when the couple cannot agree on the number of children to have (30%). Similarly, when there is concordance in couple responses on the ideal number of children a family should have, the proportion of women using contraception is higher (36%) compared to when there is discordance in responses on the same issue (31%). A comparison of individual spouse's responses on ideal birth interval and women's use of contraception shows that the husband's view of ideal birth interval has no clear pattern of influence on the wife's use of contraception. However, a woman's view of what the ideal birth interval should be appears to be related to her use of contraception, as their ideal birth interval increases from less than two years, to exactly two years, and to more than two years, the proportion of contraceptive users increase from 26% to 29% and 36% respectively. Other variables where concordance in couple responses appear to positively influence women's contraceptive use include discussion of the number of children with spouse, a spouse's knowledge of her/his partners desired number of children and opposition to the notion that having many children provides financial security to parents.

Knowledge Contribution

The study indicates that even though both spouses have strong desire for a large family size, however, women were found to have a stronger preference for a large family size relative to the men. Also, the study shows that the proportion of women using contraception is highest when the couple (husband and wife) both desire to have no more children, when the woman desires no more children (even if the husband do) and when there is indecision by the couple on whether to have more children.