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Rethinking Family Planning in Nigeria: A Critical Examination of Men's Attitude toward Reproductive Health Decision Making in Ikeja, Lagos State

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Abstract

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Family planning is a critical public issue globally and more especially in developing countries like Nigeria where more emphasis is laid on women than men whose pivotal role as the head of families significantly affects household reproductive health decision making. This study critically examines men's attitude toward reproductive health decision making in the Ikeja area of Lagos State with a focus on their roles, perceptions and level of involvement in family planning practices. The purpose of the study is to uncover the cultural, economic and information barriers that determines the level of male involvement in family planning practices in Lagos State. It also investigates if there is a significant relationship between men's socio-demographic characteristics such as age, marital status, educational level, income and religious affiliation and their involvement in household family planning decisions. The study employed a quantitative research design using an online questionnaire survey to collect information from men in the Ikeja area of Lagos State. A total of 150 men, aged between 25 and 65 years were purposively selected. The questionnaires were distributed electronically via online platforms and the study records a 100% response rate.

The data gathered was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. While the socio-demographic level of the respondents was analyzed using frequencies and percentages; Chi-square set at 0.05 confidence level was used to test hypothesis of the study. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to examine the linear relationship between awareness, belief, source reliability and men's involvement in household FP decision making.

The findings indicated that there is a very strong correlation between the men's marital status and their willingness to participate in household family planning. The study also found that there is a strong correlation between men's awareness and source of FP information on their involvement in family planning. The study argues that sustainable family planning outcomes can only be achieved when men are actively involved as partners in their household reproductive health choices. This informs the need for increased awareness, education a supportive interventions to encourage male engagements in family planning practices.

Keywords: Family Planning, Male Involvement, Reproductive Health, Socio-Demographic Factors, Cultural Barriers, Awareness, Lagos State.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Reproductive health decision making is a factor of the beliefs, education level, government policies, economic status, access to information and most especially; partner involvement. These factors which are either contextual or influential in nature

are intended to shape the attitudes, perceptions and acceptance of the public concerning their reproductive health choices (Ojo, 2000). Majority of the young people in Nigeria are engaged in alarming proportions of sexually activity yet ill-prepared to protect themselves from the attendant risks involved in such illicit practice. This attitude potentially puts this significant

group of the population into devastating health risks of early and unintended pregnancy coupled with different forms of sexually transmitted diseases giving most of them emotional and psychological trauma which they are obliged to live with for the rest of their lives. Family planning services which place emphasis on birth control is an important aspect of ensuring the sustainable development goals 3 and 5 is achieved through reducing maternal/child mortality, providing universal access to family planning services, eradicating hunger and empowering women to make their own reproductive health decisions.

Family Planning which is a part of reproductive health education enables couple to space and limit pregnancies and helps the sexually active unmarried to prevent unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. Despite the recognition of the importance of addressing the low uptake of modern contraception in developing countries, its adoption has increased only slightly in recent decades (Alkema et al., 2013; Darroch et al., 2013). An estimated 222 million women have an unmet need for modern contraception in the developing world (Wang and Cao, 2019). This number may increase in the decades ahead if the pace of contraceptive uptake does not keep pace with population growth and the growing demand for smaller families and precisely timed births remain minimal(D'Souza et al. 2022). Estimates also indicate that if all women having unmet need of contraception used a modern contraceptive method, 54 million unintended pregnancies and 26 million abortions would be averted each year (Uthman et al., 2022).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the poor uptake of family planning options in households and among sexually active individuals hinder its role in ensuring the security of public health (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2022). This has negative implications on economic development, population growth, maternal and child health. In Nigeria for instance where issues of population, food, security, housing, maternal and child mortality are public health concerns; family planning becomes imperative for promoting quality of life and environmental sustainability (Adebowale and Palamuleni, 2023). Suffice to note is that since its formal introduction in global health programmes between the 1950's and 60's; family planning practices and decisions have continuously targeted women often sidelining men in reproductive health discourse. This has left negative implications on the state of maternal health, quality of life of families, human capital development and deepened gender disparities. Recent studies reveal that men's traditional role as primary financial providers in most Nigerian households often extends their power to controlling the reproductive health decision of their household (Ezebuiro et al., 2025; Amuzie et al., 2022, Daniel et al., 2024). The authors observed that this is believed to be partly as a result of misinformation about family planning practices and the fear of loss of control over their wives. However, an alignment of policies to ensure men's participation in family planning practices is suggested to improve the uptake of the services thereby promoting a decrease in both the morbidity and mortality rates of mothers and their children.

In the light of the above, this study critically examines men's

attitude toward household family planning decision making using a case study of Ikeja area of Lagos State. The study aims to uncover the socio-cultural, economic and information barriers that prevent men from participating in household family planning.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Setting, Sampling and Design

The research is targeted at the cross-sectional investigation of the factors that determine the poor attitude of men toward reproductive health decision making. This study was carried out in the Ikeja area of Lagos State, Nigeria. The inclusion criteria for this study was men between the ages of 25 - 65 years, currently residing within Ikeja. Participants younger or older than the age bracket were exempted from the study. Participants were recruited through social media platforms between the period of April 2025 to June 2025. The study's survey was developed via google form and uploaded to survey monkey as the principal platform for data collection.

2.2 Data Collection Instrument

The questionnaire was designed into four sections including (i) demographic characteristics of respondents, (ii) awareness of family planning practices (iii) household decision making on family planning practices, and (iv) men's attitude toward household family planning. The demographic section contained information on age, marital status, education level and religion. Section two examined general facts about how informed the men were concerning family planning practices with a few points utilizing the Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree). multiple choice questions were used to source information on issues on household reproductive health decision making. The questionnaire was pretested before it was finally sent out to the respondents.

2.3 Statistical analysis

All data was cleaned and analyzed using SPSS software 28. categorical variables were presented as frequencies and percentages while continuous variables were presented as means and standard deviations. The associations between the different variables were examined using the Chi-Square and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient analytical methods. All statistical tests were conducted at 95% confidence level and 5% error margin. A p-value of less than 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

3. Hypothesis Testing

i. Ho: there is no significant relationship between the respondent's age and their involvement

in family planning

Hi: there is significance relationship between the respondent's age and their involvement in family planning

ii. Ho: there is no significant relationship between the men's marital status and their involvement in family planning

Hi: there is significance relationship between the men's marital status and their involvement in family planning

iii. Ho: there is no significant relationship between the men's education level and their involvement in family planning

Hi: there is significance relationship between the men's education level and their involvement in family planning

iv. Ho: there is no significant relationship between the men's religion and their involvement in family planning

Hi: there is significance relationship between the men's religion and their involvement in family planning.

4. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

150 men participated in the survey and the greater proportion of them were aged between 35 - 44 years (40%), married (73.3%), have tertiary education (74.7%) and are Christians (62%).

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age group		
25 - 34	45	30
35 - 44	60	40
45 - 54	30	20
55 - 64	15	10
Marital status		
Single	5	3.3
Married	110	73.3
Divorced/Seperated	25	16.7
Widowed	10	6.7
Level of education		
Primary education	5	3.3
Secondary education	28	18.7
Tertiary education	112	74.7
No formal education	5	3.3
Religion		
Christianity	93	62
Islam	55	36.7
Traditionalists	2	1.3

4.2 Awareness of Family Planning Practices

Among the 150 respondents, condoms and abstinence were the most widely known family planning methods, each with 100% awareness. Natural methods followed closely at

84% while other methods such as oral pills, injectibles and implants amounted to 13.3%, 36% and 4.7% respectively. The least known methods were intrauterine devices (3.3%) and tubal litigation (0.7%).

Table 2: Awareness of Family Planning services among respondents

Variable	Frequency (n)	Total responses (%)	% out of 150
FP method awareness			
Condoms	150	29.2	100
Oral pills	20	3.9	13.3
Intrauterine device (IUD)	5	1.0	3.3
Injectibles	54	10.5	36.0
Natural method	126	24.6	84.0
Implant	7	1.4	4.7
Tubal litigation	1	0.2	0.7
Abstinence	150	29.2	100
FP Information source			
Health facility	35	15.8	23.3
Friends/Relatives	122	55.0	81.3
Media (radio, television, inter	net) 45	20.3	30.0
Religious/Community leaders	20	9.0	13.3

The the total response rate amounts to 148% indicating that most of the respondents sourced information on family planning from multiple channels. Results shows that friends and relatives were the most common source of family planning information with 122 responses making up 81.3%. This suggests that the informal social networks play a significant role in disseminating information on reproductive health. 23.3% received information from health facilities, indicating a poor access to professional information on family planning. The media on the other hand served as an information source for 30% of the respondents showing its modest reach when compared to the dominant influence of friends/families and based on its potential for family planning campaign awareness. The remaining 13.3% reported hearing about family planning from their religious and community leaders, highlighting the influence of social institutions in creating reproductive health knowledge awareness.

4.3 Household Decision Making on Family Planning Practices.

Several questions were asked in order to get some insights into the perspective of men regarding family planning decision making in their households. A majority 137 (91.3%) of the respondents agree that family panning is important to reproductive health. A small fraction of 13 (8.7%) disagree or remain neutral. This suggests a high level of the relevance of

family planning among the men in the study area. However, despite recognizing the importance of family planning to reproductive health decision making;men's involvement in household family planning was very low. While 25 (16.7%) of them report active involvement in family planning decisions in their household, 108 (72%) which is a significant majority are not involved at all and 11.3% are uncertain. This highlights a gap in the knowledge and practice of family planning among the men.

Based on how well they encourage their wives to practice family planning; only 20 (13.3%) of the men are supportive while the majority 88 (58.7%) are less concerned with the spouse involvement in family planning practices. However; 42 (28%) gave a conditional response as they have consideration for the type of family planning method they would like their wives to practice. This reflects a need for inclusive education on different family planning methods and the close support of men.

It is indicative that most of the decisions on family planning in households are made by men as 82 (54.7%) claimed they have the final say in their home. 21 (14%) of the men claimed that family planning issue in their ho usehold is not their business. While joint decision making on family planning issues occurs in 30% cases; very few women decide alone (1.3%). this underscores the patriarchal dominance of men over women.

Table 3: Reproductive health decision making in households

Variables	Frequency (n)	Precentage (%)
FP importance to reproductive health		
Strongly agree	122	81.3
Agree	15	10
Neutral	1	0.7
Disagree	12	8
Men involvement in FP		
Yes	25	16.7
No	108	72
Maybe	17	11.3
Encouragement of spouse on FP		
Yes	20	13.3
No	88	58.7
Depends on the method	42	28
Household decisions on FP		
Men alone	82	54.7
Couple	45	30
Woman	2	1.3
Not my business	21	14

4.4 Men's Attitude toward Household Family Planning

The data gathered from the respondents reveal significant barriers that discourage male involvement in family planning. The most frequently cited barrier is the fear of side

effects 100 (66.7%) suggesting a huge concern regarding the impact of contraceptive methods on health and well-being. Religious beliefs was the second most reported barrier 30 (20%) highlighting the influence of spiritual and cultural norms on male reproductive health decisions. Lack of knowledge 15 (10%) and lack of time 5 (3.3%) were less mentioned.

Table 4: Men's attitude toward household family planning

Variables	Frequency (n)	Precentage (%)
Barriers to male involvement in FP		
Religious belief	30	20
Fear of side effects	100	66.7
Lack of knowledge	15	10
Lack of time	5	3.3
FP encourage promiscuity		
Yes	120	80
No	30	20
Support for joint FP decision		
Yes	135	90
No	15	10
Visit to FP clinic		
Never	150	100
Willingness to attend FP seminars		
Yes	14	9.3
No	130	86.7
Maybe	6	4
Perception on male involvement in FP		

Very important	10	6.7
Not my responsibility	38	25.3
A woman's decision	102	68
Plans to be involved in FP in the future		
Yes	27	18
Not sure	6	4
Not at all	117	78

When asked if family planning encourages promiscuity, 120 (80%) said yes indicating a moral aspect of non-usage while 30 (20%) disagreed suggesting a need for sensitization on the value of practising family planning. Interestingly, despite the aforementioned barriers, majority of the respondents 135 (90%) support joint-decision making with their spouses while 15 (10%) opposed. This reflects an men's openness to inclusive adoption of reproductive health options in households.

None of the respondents reported ever visiting a family planning clinic showing their complete disengagement from the service level. While 14 (9.3%) expressed their willingness to attend family planning seminars, 130 (86.7%) declined and 6 (4%) were uncertain demonstrating men's low interest in seeking information on family planning practices.

Based on the perception on who should be responsible for decisions regarding family planning in households; a substantial number of the respondents 102 (68%) view family planning as a woman's decision. 38 (25.3%) of them claim issues of family planning is not their responsibility at all

suggesting that a woman should know how to take care of her self when it comes to issues of fertility.. only 10 (6.7%) of the men believe male involvement in household family planning is very crucial to the overall reproductive health of the family underscoring the deep gendered attitudes towards reproductive health issues.

On their future plans whether to or not to get involved in their household family planning matters, 117 (78%) of them stated that they had no intention of participating while only 27 (18%) have plans of getting involved. A marginal proportion of them which is 6 (4%) were undecided.

4.5 Factors Associated with Men's Involvement in Household Family Planning

The chi-square statistical test at a 0.05 level of significance was used to test if there is a significant relationship between men's socio-demographic status and their future involvement in family planning practices.

4.5.1 Age and Involvement in Family Planning

Table 5: Relationship between age and involvement in family planning

Age group	Yes	No	Row total	Expected	d frequency	
				О	Е	
24 - 34	10	35	45	8.1	36.9	
35 - 44	7	53	60	10.8	49.2	
45 - 54	5	25	30	5.4	24.6	
55 - 64	5	10	15	2.7	12.3	
Columns total	27	123	150			

$$X^{2} = \frac{\sum (0 - E)^{2}}{E}$$

$$= 0.437 + 0.098 + 1.339 + 0.296 + 0.03 + 0.006 + 1.967 + 0.43 = 4.602$$

$$df = (4 - 1)(2 - 1) = 3$$
Critical value at $\alpha = 0.05$, $X^{2}_{0.05}(3) = 7.815$

With the chi-square value for men's age (4.602) lower than the critical value (7.815), there is an indication that there is no significant relationship between age group and involvement of

men in family planning. Therefore, the null hypothesis (Ho) is accepted while the alternative hypothesis (Hi) is rejected.

4.5.2 Marital Status and Involvement in Family Planning

Table 6: Relationship between marital status and involvement in family planning

Marital status	Observed	d frequency	Expected	frequency	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
 Single	3	2	0.9	4.1	
Married	15	95	19.8	90.2	
Divorced/seperated	8	17	4.5	20.5	
Widowed	1	9	1.8	8.2	

$$X^2 = 5.016 + 1.076 + 1.162 + 0.254 + 0.356 + 0.398 + 0.356 + 0.079 = 8.897$$

The value for marital status (8.897) exceeds the critical value (7.815) showing that there is a significant relationship between marital status and future involvement in family planning. This implies that marital status influences the likelihood of men

participating in family planning practices and decisions. Therefore, the null hypothesis (Ho) is rejected while the alternative hypothesis (Hi) is accepted.

4.5.3 Education Level and Involvement in Family Planning

Table 7: Relationship between education level and involvement in family planning

Education level	Observed	l frequency	Expected	frequency	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Primary	1	4	0.9	4.1	
Secondary	5	23	5.04	22.96	
Tertiary	20	92	20.16	91.84	
No formal education	1	4	0.9	4.1	

$$X^2 = 0.011 + 0.0024 + 0.0003 + 0.00007 + 0.0013 + 0.00029 + 0.011 + 0.024 = 0.029$$

With the chi-square value of educational level (0.029) far below the critical value (7.815), this indicates that there is no significant relationship between men's educational level and their involvement in family planning. Therefore, the null hypothesis (Ho) is ac cepted while the alternative hypothesis (Hi) is rejected.

4.5.4 Religion and Involvement in Family Planning

Table 8: Relationship between religion and involvement in family planning

Religion	Observed frequency		Expected fre	quency	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Christianity	20	73	16.74	76.26	
Islam	6	49	9.9	45.1	
Traditionalists	1	1	0.36	1.64	

$$X^2 = 0.635 + 0.139 + 1.537 + 0.337 + 1.137 + 0.250 = 4.035$$

Also, the value for religion (4.035) is below the calculated critical level (7.815). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is accepted. This suggests that there is no significant relationship between religion and future

involvement in family planning. Therefore, the null hypothesis (Ho) is accepted while the alternative hypothesis (Hi) is rejected.

Table 9: Relationship between men's socio-economic characteristics and involvement in family planning

Socio-demgraphic variable	X ² Value	df	P-value ($\alpha = 0.05$)	Significant?
Age group	4.602	3	> 0.05	No
Marital status	8.897	3	< 0.05	Yes
Education level	0.029	3	> 0.05	No
Religion	4.035	2	> 0.05	No

The chi-square test of independence above revealed that marital status was the only variable that had a statistically significant relationship with men's involvement in family planning. This relationship is significant because the p-value generated for the variable is more than the level of significance used for the study (r = 7.815. therefore, the null hypothesis (Ho) is rejected while the alternative hypothesis (Hi) is accepted. In contrast, the variables; age, education and religion did not demonstrate statistically significant relationships with men's involvement in family planning.

The findings therefore highlights the critical role of marital status in shaping men's engagement in family planning practices. This is supported by the work of Wondim et al., (2020) and Fleming et al., (2020) which asserted that marital status plays a significant role in determining whether or not men will get involved in family planning practices. Men's involvement in family planning can be understood from the

angle of marriage which typically establishes a formal relationship within which issues of family planning becomes a shared concern directly affecting both partners. Hence, the structure of marriage fosters communication between partners which encourages men's participation. Married men are more likely to be involved in family planning because such decisions would determine their family life. Conversely, men who are single, divorced or widowed may have less opportunity to engage in family planning discussions perceived lack of marital responsibility and limited awareness.

4.6 Statistical Analysis of Men's Perception and Involvement in Household Family Planning.

The Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) was calculated to examine the linear relationship between awareness, belief, source reliability and men's involvement in household FP decision making.

Variables compared	r-value	Interpretation	
Awareness/Involvement	0.97	Strong positive correlation	
Belief/involvement	0.96	Strong positive correlation	
Information source/involvement	0.55	Strong positive correlation	

All three variables show strong positive correlations indicating that they are closely associated with greater male involvement in family planning. However, belief in the importance of family planning in households is most strongly associated with men's involvement. This suggests that improving men's attitude to family planning practices either through better education and access to efficient information sources could significantly enhance their participation in making FP decisions or supporting their partners to engage in family planning practices. Also, the reliability of the source from which information on

family planning is gotten shows a very strong correlation with their in volvement. This means that men who receive FP information from credible sources are more likely to be involved in household family planning decision making. Hence, the findings reveal that higher awareness rate of family planning practices is directly proportional to the desire of men's involvement in household family planning.

5. CONCLUSION

The study has shown that the involvement of men in

household family planning is vital to improving the reproductive health outcomes and quality of life of their families. Encouraging male participation does not only afford women the opportunity to engage in family planning practices but also strengthens family decision making in various aspects of life. Men's marital status appears to be the best predictor of their involvement in family planning.

In view of this, it is strongly recommended that men be better informed on family planning options that best suits their families and information on responsible fatherhood be inculcated in men so as to prompt the advocacy for reduction in maternal and child mortality. This could be done through joint-counselling sessions at health centers where both partners can learn about family planning options together. Also, government should ensure that health services be male-friendly and the media should be actively engaged in promoting male role models who are actively involved in family planning.

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