

## Factors Influencing the Attitude of Couples Toward Family Planning Practice in Benue South Senatorial District of Benue State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

*The study focuses on the factors influencing the attitude of couples towards family planning practices in Benue South Senatorial District. This study adopted a descriptive survey design. From the population of 3,000 registered marriages, a multi-stage sampling technique was employed to draw the sample. A sample of 250 respondents were used for the study. Instrument used for data collection was structured questionnaire made up of two sections. Section 'A' seek respondent's gender, age, religion, occupation, income derived and educational qualification, while section 'B' was made up of twenty-five items measuring the degree of attitudes / acceptance of couples towards family planning practices. Respondents were asked to tick the degree of acceptance of the items and scored on likert point scale. Descriptive statistics of percentage and mean frequency were used to analyze the demographic data, while non-parametric statistics of chi-square was used to analyze the data for testing the hypotheses 0.05 alpha level. The findings indicated that chi-square calculated on education, religion affiliation, traditional beliefs, finance and occupation were greater than the table value of 21.026 hence null hypotheses on each variable stated were rejected. That means that all the variables; education ( $x^2 = 869.247$ ,  $df = 12$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), religion affiliation ( $x^2 = 532.432$ ,  $df = 12$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), traditional beliefs ( $x^2 = 616.437$ ,  $df = 12$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), finance ( $x^2 = 416.096$ ,  $df = 12$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) and occupation ( $x^2 = 558.623$ ,  $df = 12$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) have significance on the attitude of the couples towards family planning practices in Zone 'C' senatorial district of Benue State. It was therefore recommended among other things that adult and non-formal education be established to educate couples at health care center of the Zone through workshops and seminars on the importance of family planning programme to change their attitude.*

**Keywords:** attitude, couples, family, planning, practice.

### Introduction

Couples in the Zone have different attitude towards family planning practices. The people who are predominantly Christian see family planning practice as an abortion that will attract God's judgment and punishment hence no one should decide God's measure of gifts to be given to a family. Therefore, couples in Benue South Senatorial District take pride in having many children since it is a source of wealth when the parents get old and a title Inanjwo is given to a woman who has many children and Onana is given to a male in the community. According to the Chamber dictionary (10<sup>th</sup> edition) "attitude is a posture or position expressing some thought or feelings by an individual concerning a situation. Family planning is having only the

number of children couples can adequately support and cater for in terms of good feeding, clothing, shelter, and education. It is a process of spacing conception, pregnancies and child birth at interval mutually determined by both husband and wife. Couples in Benue South Senatorial District of Benue State need awareness on the danger of having too many children in the family without spacing them. It is believed that Benue South said “a woman who is able to deliver ten children successfully is given a title of Oriakwu”. According to Chief Nweke Nwangbu, this is the basis for the rejection of family planning practices. Realities and risks of giving birth to children indiscriminately, decisions about sex, and contraceptive behaviour are crucial than those one make on the society. Therefore, child-spacing is to allow the woman to recover from nutritional depletion she suffered during pregnancy, delivery and lactation (Okeke, 1996).

Agocha, Obo and Ode (1987) in their investigation of Benue South community attitude towards child-bearing and family planning practices discovered that women from the area take pride in having many children and maintained that children are special gift from God and nobody has right to refuse them when they come to being. They stick to the biblical injunction of Gen. 1:28 which states “be fruitful, multiply to fill the earth and subdue it”. The people believe that since God gives children, He (God) should provide for their living. This gives rise to some parents (couples) having children as many as possible, to them, God will provide for their up keep, hence family planning practices were not taken seriously.

Studies conducted by Okeke (1990), Ezegwu (1991), Ifediora (1993), and Omeje (1998) showed that couples in developing countries such as Nigeria seem not to accept family planning practice probably due to some interrelated and interwoven factors like education, religious affiliation, traditional beliefs, financial constraints and occupational nature. The study designed to educate the Benue South Senatorial District of Benue State intending couples, general public and individual to think about beliefs, attitude and practices towards sexual behaviour (attitudes towards family planning practices) relating to the mother and child’s health, and unwanted pregnancies.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In attempt to control population explosion with its attending consequences in Nigeria, Federal Ministry of Health directed State Ministry of Health to open Primary Health Care Centers with family planning clinics to help the couples in controlling their fertility and birth rates. Attitudes of the married couples in Benue South and intending ones towards family planning practices in the area of study has been a major concern to the researcher, government and general public because of the population explosion with the time-frame between one census and another has leads to increase number of unemployed youths; failure of the five years development plan to achieve its objectives due to population explosion; sexual promiscuity leading to STDS; youths restiveness and after social vices; and school dropouts, roaming the streets leading to social vices.

Non-adherence of couples to family planning practices in Benue South Senatorial District of Benue State might be as a result of educational level, religious affiliations, occupational status / location, cultural beliefs and financial strength to back the procurement of material for use. All the above problems enumerated prompted the researcher to delve into this study to determine the level of education, the influence of religious affiliation, occupation of couples, traditional beliefs and financial status to attitudes of couples towards family planning practices in Benue South Senatorial District.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of the study was to investigate factors influencing couples towards family planning practices in Benue South Senatorial District of Benue State.

The study is designed to:

1. Determine the influence of level of education to attitudes of couples towards family planning practices in Benue South Senatorial District.
2. Determine the influence of religious affiliation to attitudes of couples towards family planning practices in Benue South Senatorial District.
3. Determine influence of occupation of couples to attitudes of couples towards family planning practices in Benue South Senatorial District.
4. Determine influence of traditional beliefs to attitudes of couples towards family planning practices in Benue South Senatorial District.
5. Determine financial status to attitudes of couples towards family planning practices in Benue South Senatorial District.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were asked to enable the researcher gather information for data analyses:

1. How does the level of education of the couples influence on their attitudes towards family planning practices?
2. How does the level of education of the couples influence their attitudes towards family planning practices?
3. How does traditional beliefs of the couples influence their attitude towards family planning practices?
4. How does financial status of the couples influence their attitudes towards family planning practices?
5. How does occupation of the couples influence their attitudes towards family planning practices?

## Research Hypotheses

In carrying out the research, the following hypotheses were formulated to enable the researcher gather data for analyses.

1. Level of Education of the couples does not significantly influence the attitude of couples towards family planning practices in Benue South Senatorial District.
2. Religion affiliation of the couples does not significantly influence the attitude of couples towards family planning practices in Benue South Senatorial District.
3. Occupational of the couples does not significantly influence couples' attitude towards family planning practices in Benue South Senatorial District.
4. Traditional beliefs of the couples does not significantly influence the attitude of couples towards family planning practices in Benue South Senatorial District.
5. Financial status of the couples does not significantly influence the attitude of couples towards family planning practices in Benue South Senatorial District.

## Significance of the Study

The study has both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, the study has anchored on self-regulatory of illness behaviour by Leventhal and Lau (1980). The theory focuses specifically on approach to problem solving and suggest that illness and symptom are dealt with by individual in the same way as other problems. This theory can be applied to family planning practices as individual may be confronted with the problem of indiscriminate child bearing he / she may act in order to reduce unwanted pregnancy (s) with regard to the practical significance, the findings of the study may be of great help to health educators, institutions of learning and other advocates of family planning programme to design better strategies for creating awareness on family planning practices. It will help religious leaders on how best to educate their followers on family planning practices. This study may stimulate the married couples and intending couples, on how to design a better occupational strategy for the number of children they intend to have. It may also help the traditionalists to adjust their beliefs to conform to the modern society on family planning practices. It may be an eye opener to the general public to design financial strategy on expenditure that will accommodate family life education or family planning practices and children they can cater for effectively and efficiently.

## Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey design. This method is chosen because it is concerned with the present condition and tries to determine the status of the phenomena under study. It was used because, it permits the description of the situation in their natural settings. Mauldine and Parker (1995) used it to investigate the direct judgmental measures of family planning. Therefore, the design is appropriate for use in the present study. The targeted population of this study were resident couples in rural areas of Benue South Senatorial District

(Benue South) both literate and non-literate. A sample for the study consisted of two hundred and fifty couples from six Local Government areas of the District: Ado 40, Agatu 50, Apa 40, Ohimini 40, Oju 40 and Ogbadibo 40. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed to draw the sample.

**Stage I.** Involved using balloting without replacement to select six (6) local government areas out of nine (9) areas, Ado, Agatu, Apa, Obi, Ohimini, Oju, Ogbadibo and Otukpo that make up Benue South Senatorial districts.

**Stage II:** Involved using ballot again without replacement to select four (4) Council Wards from each Local Government Area.

**Stage III:** Involved using a systematic random sampling technique to select respondents from each council ward, selection was based on the Primary Health Care in each Local Government both urban and rural couples.

Questionnaire were the main instrument used for the data collection. A self-designed questionnaire was constructed in two sections. Section (A) personal data (B) testing of variables or hypotheses. The response to the questionnaire is on a four-point likert scale that ranges from strongly agreed (SA) agree (A) disagree (DA) and strongly disagree (SD). The options represent numerical values 4, 3, 2, 1 respectively. The respondents were asked to tick either strongly agree (SA) agree (A) Disagree (DA) and strongly disagree (SD) which represents the degree of individual acceptance or rejection. The questionnaire designed by the researcher was validated by four experts two from Department of Human Kinetic and Health Education, Benue State University and two from Department of Human Kinetic and Health Education, University of Nigeria Nsukka. The items were grouped into even and odd numbers. Subsequently, the reliability of the instrument was computed, and reliability coefficients of 0.61 was obtained indicating a high reliability. Nworgu (1991) said if the correlation coefficient is up to 0.55 above it is reliable enough to be used in any research. A four-point Likert scale as adopted for the questionnaire, which allows the following scoring system: Strongly agreed = 4, Agreed = 3, Disagreed = 2, and Strongly Disagreed = 1.

Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research question. While, chi-square was used to test the level of significance of the hypotheses. The decision rule was that null hypothesis were rejected when the probability value (p-value) was less than the alpha level, but when the p- value is greater than the alpha value, the null hypothesis was not rejected. The results show that 130 respondents representing 52% of the sample were male couples while, 120 representing 48% were female couples. On Age distribution, 130 respondents representing 52% were between the ages of 18 – 30. 120 representing 48% of the total sample were aged 31 – 45. Religious affiliation of the couples, African traditions, sixty (60) respondents representing 24% of the sample were African traditionalist, Christian religion had 70 respondents representing 28% of the sample, Islamic religion respondents seventy (70) representing 28% of the total sample, while other religions had 50 respondents representing

20% of the sample. On educational level of the couples, seventy (70) respondents representing 28% of the sample had no formal education, seventy (70) respondents representing 28% of the sample had primary education, and sixty (60) respondents representing 24% of the sample had secondary education, while fifty (50) respondents representing 20% of the sample had their tertiary education.

On the occupation of the couples, eighty (80) respondents representing 32% of the sample were self-employed, fifty (50) respondents, representing 20% were government employed, and forty (40) respondents representing 16% were business / contract oriented while eighty (80) respondents representing 32% of the total sample were unemployed. On the annual income level of the couples, eighty (80) respondents representing 32% of the sample got N10, 000 as their annual income, eighty (80) respondents representing 32% got N15, 000 as annual income, fifty (50) respondents representing 20% had N20, 000 as their annual income while forty (40) respondents representing 16% of the sample had N25, 000 as their annual income.

**Table 1:** Mean Analysis of Variables

S/N	Variables	Cluster Mean	Decision
1.	Educational influence on family planning practices	3.64	Significant
2.	Religious influence on family planning practices	3.22	Significant
3.	Traditional influence on family planning practices	2.91	Significant
4.	Financial influence on family planning practices	3.15	Significant
5.	Occupational influence on family planning practices	3.21	Significant

Table 1 showed that a mean score on educational level of the couple is 3.64 which is greater than 2.50 established for decision. This showed that educational of the couples in Benue South Senatorial District of Benue State has influence on their attitude towards family planning practices. A mean score on religion affiliation 3.22 is greater than 2.50 established for decision. This showed that religion affiliation of the couples in Benue South Senatorial District of Benue State has influence on this attitude towards family planning practices. On traditional beliefs, a mean score of 2.91 is still greater than 2.50 established for decision. This shoed that traditional beliefs of the couples in Benue South Senatorial District of Benue State has influence on this attitude towards family planning practices.

A mean score on financial status is 3.15 which is greater than 2.50 established for decision. This showed that financial status of the couples in Benue South Senatorial District of Benue State has influence on this attitude towards family planning practices. On the occupation of the couples a mean score of 3.21 is greater than 2.50 established for decision. This showed that occupation of the couples in Benue South Senatorial District of Benue State has influence on this attitude towards family planning practices.

**Null Hypothesis 1:** Level of education of the couples does not influence their attitudes towards family planning practices?

**Table 2:** Chi-square summary of Level of Education on the Couples

Response	Fo	Fe	$X^2_{cal}$	$X^2_{tab}$	df	@	Remark.
SA	882	312.5					
A	307	312.5	869.247	21.026	12	0.05	Significant
D	34	312.5					
SD	27	312.5					
<b>Cluster</b>	<b>1250</b>	<b>1250.0</b>					
<b>Total</b>							

$$x^2 = 869.247, df = 12, p < 0.05$$

Table 2 showed that the calculated  $X^2$  value of 869.247 was greater than the  $x^2$  table value of 21.026 with 12 df at 0.05 level of significance. Thus the null hypothesis which stated that educational level of the couples will not significantly influence the couple's attitude towards family planning in Benue South Senatorial District of Benue State is rejected. This means that educational level of couples affects their attitude towards family planning practices.

**Null Hypothesis 2:** Religious affiliation of the couples does not influence their attitude towards family planning practices?

**Table 3:** Chi-square summary of Religious Affiliation of the Couples

Response	Fo	Fe	$X^2_{cal}$	$X^2_{tab}$	df	@	Remark.
SA	585	312.5					
A	445	312.5	532.432	21.026	12	0.05	Significant
D	128	312.5					
SD	92	312.5					
<b>Cluster</b>	<b>1250</b>	<b>1250.0</b>					
<b>Total</b>							

$$x^2 = 532.432, df = 12, p < 0.05.$$

Table 3 showed that calculated  $X^2$  value of 532.432 was greater than 21.026 with 12 df at 0.05 level of significance. This showed that the null hypothesis which stated that religious affiliation of the couples will not significantly influence the couple's attitude in Benue South Senatorial District of Benue State is rejected. This means that the religious beliefs of the couples will affect their attitude towards family planning practices significantly.

**Null Hypothesis 3:** Traditional beliefs of the couples does not influence their attitudes towards family planning practices?

**Table 4:** Chi-square summary of Traditional Beliefs of the Couples

Response	Fo	Fe	$X^2_{cal}$	$X^2_{tab}$	df	@	Remark.
SA	435	312.5					
A	416	312.5	616.437	21.026	12	0.05	Significant
D	248	312.5					
SD	151	312.5					
<b>Cluster Total</b>	<b>1250</b>	<b>1250.0</b>					

$$x^2 = 616.437, df = 12, p < 0.05$$

Table 4 showed that calculated  $X^2_{cal}$  value 616.437 was greater than 21.026 with 12 df at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that the null hypothesis which stated that traditional beliefs of couples will not significantly influence the couples in Benue South towards family planning practices was rejected. This means that traditional beliefs of the couples has affected their attitudes towards family planning practices significantly.

**Null Hypothesis 4:** Financial status of the couples have any influence on their attitudes towards family planning practices?

**Table 5:** Chi-square summary of Financial Status of the Couples

Response	Fo	Fe	$X^2_{cal}$	$X^2_{tab}$	df	@	Remark.
SA	597	312.5					
A	418	312.5	416.096	21.026	12	0.05	Significant
D	134	312.5					
SD	101	312.5					
<b>Cluster Total</b>	<b>1250</b>	<b>1250.0</b>					



$x^2 = 416.096$ ,  $df = 12$ ,  $p < 0.05$ .

Table 5 showed that calculated  $X^2_{cal}$  value of 416.096 was greater than 21.026 with 12 df at 0.05 level of significance. This again, implies the null hypothesis which stated that financial status will not significantly affects the attitudes of the couples in Benue South towards family planning practices was rejected. This means that the financial status of the couples will affect their attitude towards family planning practices significantly because of the lost of the contraceptives.

**Null Hypothesis 5:** Occupation of the couples does not influence their attitude towards family planning practices?

**Table 6:** Chi-square summary of Occupation of the Couples

Response	Fo	Fe	$X^2_{cal}$	$X^2_{tab}$	df	@	Remark.
SA	548	312.5					
A	456	312.5	558.623	21.026	12	0.05	Significant
D	135	312.5					
SD	111	312.5					
<b>Cluster</b>	<b>1250</b>	<b>1250.0</b>					
<b>Total</b>							

$x^2 = 558.623$ ,  $df = 12$ ,  $p < 0.05$

Table 6 showed that calculated  $X^2_{cal}$  value of 558.623 was greater than 21.026 with 12 df at 0.05 level of significance. This means the null hypothesis which stated that occupational level of the couples will not significantly affects the attitude of the couples in Benue South towards family planning practices was rejected. This means that the occupation of the couples will affect their attitude towards family planning practices because of the distance between and movement of the couples from home and working places.

### Discussion of Findings

The discussion has been done in line with the research questions and hypotheses tested. From the findings on education, the calculated chi-square of 869.247 was greater than the table value 21.026 set at 0.05 alpha level with degree of freedom of 12 was obtained. The hypothesis which said that Education has no significant influence on the attitude of the couples towards family planning practices was rejected, therefore, accept the alternative hypothesis. This then

means that couples educational background correlates positively with their attitudes towards family planning practices in Benue South Senatorial District.

In support of the findings, Afunuge (1995), said that family planning in Nigeria is more practiced by elites, while the illiterate farmers in the village who actually needed the family planning practice. This is why he suggested proper awareness to be laid on, educating illiterate villagers through seminars. Said, that churches could be used to propagate the importance of family planning practices to the villagers. That is why many couples stay away from attending family planning programme lectures of their inability to ask some questions that border them.

From the findings on religious affiliation, the calculated chi-square of 531.432 was greater than the table value of 21.026 set at 0.05 alpha level with degree of freedom of 12 obtained. The hypothesis which said that religious affiliation has no significant influence on the attitude of the couples towards family planning practices was rejected therefore accepted the alternative hypothesis. This then means that couples religious affiliation significantly influenced their attitudes towards family planning practice in Benue South Senatorial District. This was in line with Fasina (1991) who said that family planning programme is a major contributory factor to the perpetuation of immoral acts by Nigerian youths and couples.

This is in lined with Bouqaart (1975), Lam (1981), and Hills (1998) that the religious group based their argument on the biblical injunction to man that, man and woman should have children so that their descendant might live over the earth and bring it under control. This is why Okogie (2002) agreed that he will encourage catholic faithful to disobey birth control laws and obey the law of God, even at gun point. All these problems exist possibly because couple believe that children are gifts from God and should not be stopped by any programme.

From the findings on traditional beliefs, the calculated chi-square of 616.437 was greater than the table value of 21.026 set at 0.05 alpha level with degree of freedom of 12 was obtained. The hypothesis which said that traditional beliefs has no significant influence on the attitude of the couples towards family planning practices was rejected and accept the alternative hypothesis. This revealed that traditional beliefs has significant influence on the attitude of couples towards family planning practices. This was in line with Ude (1998), Agocha, *et al* (2004) that family planning practices and contraceptives are taboo in their areas. Women in their areas take pride in giving as many as fifteen children. Okeke (1996) stated that people

misunderstood family planning to mean abortion and means of discouraging couples from producing children, because of this misinformation, people developed non-challant attitude towards family planning practices.

From the findings on the occupation of the couples, the calculated chi-square of 558.623 is greater than the table value 21.026 set at 0.05 alpha level with degree of freedom of 12 was obtained. The hypothesis which said that occupation has no significant influence on the attitude of the couples towards family planning practices is rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. This means that the occupation of the couples has significant influence on the attitude of the couples towards family planning practices in Benue South Senatorial District.

This again means that couple's occupation has significant influence on their attitude towards family planning practices in Benue South Senatorial District. This was in agreement with Ifelumi (1999) who said that studies carried by Columbia association for population studies through personal interviews with a sample of 6,692 women aged 15 – 19 living in Bogata. Data collected on the attitude towards family planning programmes and their negligence of their children, said it was the nature of their work which often take them away from home. He further said that parents should be educated on the need to stay with their children to give them sex education to save the country from death resulting from attempt to abort unwanted pregnancies.

From the findings on the financial status of the couples, the calculated chi-square 416.096 is greater than the table value of 21.026 set at 0.05 alpha level with degree of freedom of 12 obtained. The hypothesis which said that financial status has no significant influence on the attitude of couples towards family planning practices was rejected. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis was accepted. This then means that the financial status of their attitudes towards family planning practices in Benue South Senatorial District.

Earlier studies like Agawara (1992) said that in most developing countries where life insurance is novelty, most people think it is a good investment to have children and train them up so that, at old age they can be support for their parents. Whelpton (1990) study on attitude towards contraception in USA found out that high income couples prefer contraception after a second birth.

## Conclusion

The attitude of couples towards family planning practices in Benue South Senatorial District of Benue State is influenced by factors such as education, religion, traditional beliefs, occupation, finances and democratic elections were found significant influence on couple's attitudes towards family planning practices. Women and men all over Benue South Senatorial Districts of Benue State need to be given awareness on the danger of having too many children in the family, the realities and risks so that responsible decision about sex could be made. Our Lawmakers should enact laws prohibiting population explosion in the society.

## Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, the following recommendation are made:

- i. Religious leaders of the couples should be enlightened on the family planning practices, though workshop and seminars by Ministry of Health.
- ii. Women education should be encouraged to foster economic growth, promote smaller families to increase modern contraceptive use which will improve child health.
- iii. Cultural restrictions on women should be lifted to enable them use health services to improve their reproductive health care.
- iv. Custodian of traditions should bridge their gap between modernity.
- v. Employment opportunity should be given to the couples to relevant their status and earn income to improve their health.
- vi. Civil Services Commission should devise a mean of posting staff so that couples are not cut off completely from the family planning clinics services.

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