

Spousal Communication and decision making on family planning : Findings from a study of a Peri-Urban Community of Ipetumodu, Southwest Nigeria

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Significance /background:

Spousal communication and family planning use are closely linked, but the pathways of influence, especially within the context of family health and wealth are unclear in peri-urban Nigeria. The abysmal low rate of contraceptive use in Nigeria of about 10 per cent for modern method is a clarion call for development of communication interventions which can be implemented to encourage couples to talk about the number of children to have, birthspacing and contraceptive use. Thus, since relatively little is known about joint reproductive decision-making in peri-urban Nigeria, studies on the process and its outcomes are important for programmatic reasons

Main research question /hypothesis :

While many researchers have shown that contraceptive use tends to increase where there is spousal communication it remains to be conclusively shown, whether couples' joint decision-making is more strongly associated with family planning use than is decision-making by either spouse alone. Of particular interest are the dynamics of the decision-making process and whether and how spousal communication affects this dynamic. This study therefore seeks to examine the inter-relationship between spousal communication and level of family planning use. It would also determine who makes the decision on family planning and the influence of the decider on family planning use.

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. A total of 800 couples were sampled in this baseline. After data cleaning, only 784

couples have complete data. The data have been analysed at both univariate and bivariate levels. 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 spousal communication, decision making. The covariates include age, education and the desire for more children.

Results/ Key findings:

Out of 784 women studied, 259 (33%) of the women are currently using a form of contraception. Out of these 259 women, 229 women stated that their husbands are aware of their method of family planning. About 397 (51%) women discussed family planning with their husbands. Of these 397, 228 (57%) are currently using a method. ($P < 0.0001$). When subjected to logistic regression, the odds of using family planning are 17 times higher among those who discuss family planning with their husbands as compared to those who do not. Also the odds of using contraception are 3.5 times higher among those desired lesser family size (equal to or less than 4) compared to those who desired 7 or more children. Furthermore women who have secondary or more level of education have a higher odds of using family planning (secondary is 3.5 times higher and tertiary 3.6 times higher) than those of lesser educational level. Men's level of education appeared not to be significant. Our findings also showed that the decision to use contraceptive is majorly a joint decision between husband and wife in over 90% of cases and joint decision significantly associated with family planning use compared to when either of them took the decision ($P < 0.001$).

Knowledge contribution

Spousal communication is closely linked with family planning use. The decision to use family planning method is predominantly a couple decision. Messages directed at couple would be a better intervention strategy to improve the level of contraceptive use in Nigeria.

Conclusion :

Spousal communication should be aggressively pursued as it correlates with family planning use. Since the decision to use family planning is jointly made interventional efforts should be targeted to the couple not just the women