

Knowledge, Perception and Preference for Contraceptives among Women in Christianity Religion

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the knowledge, perception and preference of family planning methods among women of the Christian faith with a particular focus on women from 3 different congregations within the Christian faith. A cross-sectional Descriptive survey was deployed as a design. A structured questionnaire was the instrument used and a total of 315 respondents were all women and attended: The Redeemed Christian Church of God, Palace of Grace Parish, Iju, Lagos, The City of the Lord Church, Beautiful Gate Solution, Giwa, Oke Aro, Ogun State, and The Celestial Church of Christ, Oluwatosin Parish, Iju, Lagos, Nigeria filled and returned their questionnaires. Data collected was analyzed with the aid of descriptive statistics of frequency, tables and percentages. Findings from the study revealed that the majority of the women ((86.0%) have substantial knowledge about contraceptives and their perception was affirmative. Also, the study was able to establish that the commonly used method was hormonal contraception implants (63.3%). A major determinant of the choice of contraceptives was the health benefits and couples' convenience. This study highly recommends the sustenance of the intensity of campaign, advocacy and awareness creation on the usefulness and health benefits of appropriate usage of family planning methods. It is also recommended that the involvement of men in the reproductive health of every woman, especially in family planning will further enhance women's involvement and improve their attitudes positively.

Keywords: *Contraceptive Practice, Christianity Religion, Literature Review, Nigeria, Religious Beliefs, Research.*

Introduction

Family planning is about the use of modern contraception as well as other methods of birth control as a way of regulating the number, spacing and also the timing of children's births. It helps parents, especially mothers, in planning their lives without being subjected to sexual commands.

Maternal health issues have remained a major concern throughout the world. Pregnancy and childbirth are seen as the major causes of both morbidity and mortality among women of childbearing age [1].

The third sustainable Development Goal [2] set up by WHO in 2020 emphasizes the

reduction of the global maternal mortality ratio to below 70 per 10,000 and also ensures universal access to reproductive health care services, which also include access to family planning education and information. It also calls for reproductive health to be integrated into National strategies and programs by 2030.

Advancements in medicine and disease control have led to a significant increase in population growth in developing countries unlike the developed ones, where certain deliberate policies aimed at having smaller families through the use of birth control measures have helped in the decline [3].

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Worldwide, only 63% of women who were either married or in union were using contraceptives as of 2017. One out of 10 women married or in union have unmet needs for contraceptive use [4].

The use of contraceptives has increased in some parts of the world, most especially in Latin America and Asia, but Sub-Saharan Africa still records low compliance. Use of modern contraceptives globally has increased slightly from 54% in 1990 to about 57.4% in 2015, [5]. In 2022, the contraceptive prevalence of any method was estimated at 65% and of modern methods at 58.7% for either married or women in union [6].

The highest growth in the prevalence of use of contraceptives in 2015 was found in Asia (61%) and in Latin America, (69%), [4]. Global contraceptive prevalence of any method was estimated at 65% and the modern, 59% in 2023 [6].

Asia rose slightly from 60.9% to 61.8%. The Caribbean and Latin Americans have been stable at about 66.67%, [5]. While the United Kingdom, Finland, Switzerland and Canada recorded contraceptive prevalence rates of over 70%, Latin America and Asia were 59% and 54% respectively [6].

In Africa, it increased from 23.6% to 28.5%, [5]. By 2023, less than 20% [7].

In Africa, one in every 5 women has an unmet need for family planning contraceptives, [4]. By 2022, it was estimated that about 245 million of both married women and women in union have an unmet need for contraceptives in sub-Saharan Africa [7].

In Sub-Saharan Africa, close to 70% of women in post-partum stages who are engaged in unprotected sex within 2 years of childbirth risk being pregnant [8].

An annual, unintended pregnancies of about 14 million are recorded in Sub-Saharan Africa, [8].

Most of the countries in Africa with low rates of contraceptive use seem to have high fertility rates and of course high mortality rates of

infants, children and women due to pregnancies [9].

A study on the perception and use of family planning among married men and women in Mfantseman Municipality, the central region of Ghana at Anomabu community revealed that despite about 5 decades of family planning launch, the prevalence and usage rate is still low. A major contributing factor is the perception of both married men and women [10].

In a similar study on the knowledge, use, attitude and perception of contraceptives among female University students in Uganda, it was established that both knowledge of contraceptive methods and perceived acceptability are high [11].

Assessing the relationship between the use of contraceptives and socio-cultural factors among married women in rural Eastern Ethiopia, it was found that there is a low utilization due to socio-cultural factors [12].

A similar study on knowledge, attitude and practices of family planning among married men and women in rural areas of Pakistan revealed that most of the respondents are ignorant of contraceptive methods, hence usage is low. Linked to the low usage are negative perceptions, religious concerns, perceived side effects, disapproval from in-laws and very little or no access to quality service [13].

Nigeria has been reported as one of the countries where very little progress has been recorded in contraceptive usage despite so many years of family planning programs. The fertility rate in Nigeria has remained high over the years and was at 5.7 children per woman as of 2013, [14], compared to 4.0 in Ghana and 4.6 in Kenya. By 2020, it reduced to 5.144 births per woman, 2023, 5.076 births per woman and currently in 2024, 5.009 births per woman [6].

In Nigeria, the Contraceptives prevalence rate (CPR) was as low as 17% among married women between the ages of 15-49; 12% of these women use the modern method while

about 5% depend on the traditional method [14].

Women, in some parts of Nigeria, still consider men as having the final decision in issues of family planning and also in the number of children that the family should have. The belief is held that women must not make family planning decisions on their own but must rather consult with the male partners regardless of the attitude the male partners portray [15].

By 2023, the modern contraceptive prevalence rate among women in Nigeria was 18%.

The poorer and less educated the women are, the higher the percentage [16].

Knowledge, perception and use of contraceptives are known to differ among most countries globally, especially developing countries, Nigeria inclusive. Despite several efforts to make family planning products available, less than 10% of women in marriage use contraceptives in Nigeria [17].

However, considerable variations are seen across the geographical areas and different social strata.

The prevalence rate of the use of contraceptives is lower in northern Nigeria when compared to the south. Usage rate is also lower among rural women when compared with those in the urban areas, lower among the poor than the rich [15].

As a way of investigating determining factors that influence the use of modern contraceptives in Nigeria, it was found that the choice by individuals and the community contributed largely to women's choice [18].

Evaluating the awareness and use of modern contraceptives among university students in Calabar, Nigeria, it was also discovered that both the knowledge and methods are very low [19].

The need to assess the level of knowledge and attitude regarding family planning and the use of contraceptives among married women

has become paramount considering the surge in population increase.

Adequate and right use of Contraceptives, especially post-partum contraceptives will no doubt reduce unplanned pregnancies and improve both maternal and child health outcomes [20].

Short birth intervals of below 15 months are most times linked to induced abortions, miscarriages, preterm births, stillbirths and other unfavorable outcomes [21].

Contraceptive use can save about 2.7 million infant deaths and the loss of about 60 million healthy lives globally on an annual basis [22].

Contraceptives can also help prevent a minimum of 25% of all maternal deaths if unintended pregnancies and unsafe abortions are prevented, in addition to protection against infections transmitted sexually [23].

Regardless of the benefits associated with the use of Contraceptives, it's only been embraced well by the developed and the developing countries [5].

This study aims at evaluating the perception, knowledge and use of modern contraceptives among women in the Christian faith in different denominations as a way of understanding their perception of fruitfulness and procreation.

Materials and Methods

Study Design

A cross-sectional descriptive survey design was used.

The Research Area and Setting

The study setting was among married women in the women groups within the Christian faith in three different congregations/denominations, both in Lagos and Ogun States, Nigeria.

Study Population

The study population were all married women who attended the women's forum program in the three congregations and consented to voluntary participation in the

survey. The congregations were: The Redeemed Christian Church of God, Palace of Grace Parish in mainland Lagos, The Celestial Church of Christ, Oluwatosin Parish, in the same location and The City of the Lord Church, Beautiful Gate Solution at Giwa Ogun state, Nigeria These women filled and returned their questionnaires.

Data Collection Instrument

A set of structured questionnaires was developed to obtain the relevant information on participants’ knowledge, perception and preferred choice of contraceptives. The questionnaire comprises two sections.

Section 1 of the questionnaire handles the socio-demographic information of the respondents while section 2 comprises 20 carefully selected questions on perception, knowledge and their preferred method of modern contraceptives.

In scoring the respondents on perception, a Likert scale was deployed. Short and close ended questions were used to determine knowledge and the preference of the respondents.

Data Collection Method

The women group leadership were approached and given a brief of the intention of the study and the protection of the opinion of each participant was agreed upon. Questionnaires were administered to willing respondents on their meeting days following informed consent and later retrieved for analysis.

Data Analysis Method

The obtained data were inputted into the statistical package for social sciences software V.20, and analyzed with descriptive statistics, and frequency distribution of tables with their percentages.

Results and Discussion

215 duly filled in questionnaires were retrieved in all. Find below the data presented in tables and in percentages.

Table 1 shows the distribution of the respondents in their socio-demographic status.

Table 1. The Distribution of the Respondents in their Socio-Demographic Status n=215

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age in years		
20-30	4	1.9%
31-40	88	40.9%
41-50	112	52.1%
51-60	11	5.1%
Marital status		
Non married	12	5.6%
Married	203	94.4%
Level of Education		
Primary	3	1.4%
Secondary	95	44.2%
Tertiary	117	54.4
Occupation		
House wife	11	5.1%
Business women	85	39.5%

Civil servant	116	53.9%
Others	3	1.4%
Religion		
Christianity	215	100%
Others	0	0%
Parity		
Nulliparous	5	2.3%
Multipara	151	70.2%
Grand multipara	59	27.4%

112 respondents are between the ages of 41-50 which is the highest and represents 52.1%, the lowest was in the 20-30 age groups which was 1.9%. In between are the 31-40 age group with 88 respondents representing 40.9% and 51-60 representing 5.1% with 11 respondents.

203 of the respondents were married, representing 94.45% while 12 were not, which was just 5.6%. The respondents' level of education showed that only 3, about 1.4% had just primary education, 95 respondents attended secondary schools which represented 44.2% and 117 respondents had tertiary education with the highest percentage of 54.4%.

The majority of the respondents were civil servants, with 116 representing 53.9%. Next to

them were 85 businesswomen with 39.5%. 11 respondents were housewives with 5.1%, 35% chose others, possibly learning new trades. 100% of the respondents were Christians. Examining the parity, the highest percentage was 70.2% for 151 respondents that were multipara, 59 respondents were Grand multipara representing 27.4% while 5 respondents were Nulliparous representing 2.3%.

Table 2 reflects that the majority of the respondents (86.0%) have substantial knowledge of contraceptives while about 4, (1.7%) have poor knowledge.

Table 2. The Level of Knowledge of the Respondents on Contraceptive: n=215

Level	Number	Percentage
Good	185	86.0%
Average	26	12.1%
Poor	4	1.7%

Table 3. The Distribution of the Respondents Showing their Perception of Contraceptive Use: n=215

Statement	SA (3)	A (2)	NA (1)
Using contraceptives have great advantages	113	95	7
Using contraceptives is good for a Christian woman	67	125	23
Contraceptives usage is good culturally	43	127	45
Contraceptive usage has some advantages for mothers	71	139	5

Contraceptive usage has some advantages for the family	68	136	11
Contraceptive usage has some advantages for the nation	110	80	25
Contraceptive usage is a borrowed culture from the Western world	43	172	0

Key: SA- Strongly agreed 3; A-Agreed 2; Not agreed 1.

Table 3 shows that the majority of the respondents considered contraceptives as something good religiously, socially and culturally. Though a certain proportion thinks that the plan of God for creation should not be tampered with, they are in the minority. A large percentage of the respondents also opined that the usage of contraceptives is a borrowed culture but has been accepted.

The responses of the respondents revealed an acceptance of the use of contraceptives among

women of these congregations within the Christian faith.

Table 4 shows that the majority of the respondents, 136, which represents 63.3% preferred implants as their choice. Next to implants is the intrauterine device which 22.8% of the respondents, 49 preferred. 29 respondents chose injectable, representing 13.5% and the last was oral with just one respondent which was 0.5%.

Table 4. The Preferred Options of the Contraceptives by the Respondents: n=215.

Contraceptives type	Number	Percentage
Oral	1	0.5%
Implants	136	63.3%
Injectable	29	13.5%
Intrauterine	49	22.8%

Table 5. Reasons for the Choice of Contraceptives: n=215

Reasons	Number	Percentage
Health benefits	123	57.2%
Family decision	4	1.9%
Husband preference	7	3.3%
Personal decision	14	6.5%
Joint decision by both husband and wife	58	26.9%
Duration of the method	9	4.2%

From Table 5 above, 57.2% of the respondents, 123 chose health benefits as their reason for choice of contraceptives. Next to that was a joint decision between husband and wife representing 26.9% of 58 respondents.

14 respondents chose personal decision as their reason representing 6.5%, 9 respondents went for duration of the method, which was 4.2%, 7 respondents went for husband preference, 3.3% and 4 respondents chose family decision as their reason for their choice of contraceptives, that was 1.9% and the lowest.

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

With the available results from this study, the knowledge of respondents about the use of modern contraceptives can be affirmed. This agrees with the previous studies of Ifeyinwa, [24] and Benedicta, [25], who discovered a relatively high knowledge of the usage of contraceptive methods among women in Nigeria. In contrast to this was the findings of Bekile, [26] while working on Knowledge and Attitudes towards Family Planning among Women of Reproductive Age in emerging Region of Ethiopia. Less than half of the participants, about 43.4%, had good knowledge of Family planning.

From the results of this finding, it could also be said that the women of these three congregations of the Christian faith are not averse to the use of contraceptives in spite of Gods commandment on procreation.

Findings from this study also show that the three most adopted methods in family planning among these married women are implants, intrauterine and injectable, with implants having the highest percentage. This is in contrast with the findings of Al-Musa [27] who discovered that the most commonly used contraceptives among Saudi Primary healthcare attendees were oral contraceptive pills. In like manner, Benedicta [25] while assessing the knowledge and utilization of family planning services among Women in the rural areas of

Ibeju Lekki, Lagos found condoms to be the most commonly used.

The majority of the respondents also perceived contraceptive use to be good (86%) and to have health benefits for the family and by extension, society.

Results from this study show that the main important factors in the choice of usage of contraceptives are the health benefits and a joint decision by the couple. This agrees with the findings of Blackstone & Iwelunmor, [28] who discovered the male partner has an influencing factor in the choice of contraceptive methods.

Conclusively, I recommend the sustenance of the campaign and enlightenment on the importance and health benefits of the use of modern contraceptives to sustain the knowledge and usage and to also increase the percentage of women with adequate knowledge. Additionally, it is advised that adequate counseling be made accessible at the primary health care centers level to further educate and remove misconceptions around the use of modern contraceptives. This can be done via health talk on the various options available.

I also recommend a continuous access of women to any contraceptives of their choice as a way of sustaining usage.

Limitation of the Study

There are diverse congregations of Christian faith in Nigeria, this is estimated to be over 200. This study could only approach a few. The others like the Presbyterians can differ a bit on their theological views, although this is likely to be a minority.

Conflicts of Interest

This study was done with the highest standards of integrity and professionalism, and I have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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