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EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE OF MALE FACTOR AS A DETERMINANT OF REPRODUCTIVE BEHAVIOUR IN CENTRAL SENATORIAL DISTRICT OF EDO STATE, NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the relationship between male factor and reproductive behaviour in Central Senatorial District of Edo State. The background to this study was derived from the need to find out more about why in spite of the existence of a population policy (population control) at ensuring a relatively population size in Nigeria, the population growth has continued to increased unabated. For this course, five (5) objectives and four (4) hypotheses were generated. A sample size of nine hundred (900) respondents (that is, married couples of childbearing age) was selected by multistage sampling method from the five Local Government Areas that constitute Central Senatorial district of Edo State. Data collection focused on social survey method, mainly on questionnaire. This was adopted to find out if there were relationships between: (i) educational attainment and reproductive behaviour (ii) religious belief system and attitude to family planning, (iii) husband's attitude to family planning and spouse's reproductive behaviour and (iv) sex of children and reproductive behaviour. For data analysis, socio-economic and demographic attributes of respondents were considered by percentage, while the formulated hypotheses were examined by Chi-Square (χ^2) statistical test. However, Cramer's v contingency co-efficient test was used to ascertain the strength of relationship. The findings revealed high literacy level. Up to 96.07% of the respondents had one form of education or the other. Despite the very high percentage of education acquired among the people, certain traditional values still persisted. The percentage of male children preference (34.22%) was far higher than the percentage of female children preference (4.97%), a reflection of the standing value order of keeping the family's name. The following findings were equally revealed: the existence of association between educational attainment and family size, the existence of relationship between religious belief system and attitude to family planning, as well as the existence of association between sex of children and reproductive behaviour. However, some recommendations were made to prevent the adverse or negative effects that could be derived from male factor in relation to reproductive behaviour and ensure a more sizeable population of 'carrying capacity' for sustainable development.

Keywords: Population Growth, Family Planning, Population Policy, Reproductive Behaviour, Family Size, Sex Preference.

INTRODUCTION

The ever population rapid growth in the past three decades (1970-1980, 1980-1990, 1990 – 2000) and the prospects of even more rapid growth, remain a concern to all nations of the world. An item that constantly features (directly or indirectly) on the agenda of International Population Conferences is the problem of rapid population growth and its implications for national development. This rapid population growth is found to be associated with rapid socio-economic changes more in developing countries (Nigeria inclusive) than the developed countries of the world. This ever-increasing nature of world population and the rapidity with which this is moving in developing countries cannot sometimes be properly imagined. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA, 1994) estimated the world annual rate of population increase since 1975 to be 1.7 per cent. The world population in 1960 was put at 3.0 billion and by 1993, it was put at 5.57 billion, an increase of 2.57 billion. That is 46.1 per cent increase. The data showed that there was an addition of about 72 million and 93 million to global population in 1975 and 1992 respectively.

Although it has been argued that there has been significant decline in fertility in Africa, yet the present demographic picture shows very little evidence of such decline. The demographic trends as shown in the human development report (2007/2008) clearly support this view. By 2005, the total population of developing and least

developed countries (including Nigeria) as shown in the report was 5.2 billion and 765.7 million respectively. For Arab States, East Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, South Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and Central Africa and Europe, the figures were 313.9 million, 1.9 billion, 556.6 million, 1.5 billion, 722.7 million and 405.2million respectively. By 2015 and 2018, the world population was estimated to be 7.2 billion and 7.6 billion respectively. Similarly, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2017), has estimated the world population by 2020, 2025 and 2030 to be 7,795, 682, 309 (7.8 billion), 8,185,613, 757 (8.2 billion) and 8,551,198,644 (8.6 billion) respectively.

The fear of the direct consequences of such rapid growth rate as worrisome as it portrays, has led to the formulation of population policies by some of the nations within sub-Saharan Africa on how to abate the rapid population growth. The researchers of this study are convinced that the realization and implementation of these population policies could lead to a significant reduction of the ever rapid population growth in African continent (as the developing and least developed countries) through continuous empirical demographic researches on the factors influencing such growth process, which of course, is the thrust of this study.

Statement of the Problem

The population situation as it were, emphasizes the enormity of the task which confronts not only individual countries, but the entire human race. The situation in Nigeria is worrisome considering the unabated or uncontrolled rapid population growth rate and the consequential effects it has on both the individuals and the entire society. It therefore becomes important for us to have a critical look at the situation in Nigeria which is compared with that of United States of America (USA) in order for us to appreciate the problem and proffer solution to it.

The total estimated population figures for Nigeria for 1990, 1995, and 2000 were 108.5, 126.9 and 147.7 (in millions) respectively. For United State of America, the figures for the same periods were 250,263.1 and 275.3 (in million) respectively. If the increase in population between 1990 and 2000 for the two countries is compared, we find that the rate is higher for Nigeria (36.30 per cent) than the USA. (10.12 percent) (UNFPA, 1994).

The social consequences of this type of rapid population growth rate are felt both in rural and urban communities of Nigeria. This may lead to situation in which population growth exceeds the capacity of the agrarian sector to support it, rural poverty and environmental degradation.

It should be noted that other existing demographic data arising from researches cannot be said to be completely useful in arriving at an accurate estimate of

demographic changes and population behaviour in the country, because of contradictions that are found here and there. Unlike the tradition of Western European demographic studies which do not emphasize the relationship between reproductive behaviour and the socio-cultural context in which they occur, African population movement can best be analyzed and understood by relating reproductive behaviour to the socio-cultural content of African societies. This of course is the gap in knowledge of the population situation in Nigeria and Africa in general which this study intends to fill. The problematic research questions that readily come to mind for this study therefore are: what are the people's attitude to the idea of reproduction and family planning system? What are the factors determining such attitudes? How can such factors be handled to achieve the desire objective of reducing fertility level? Are there wide variations between the attitudes of women in such traditional societies? It is the conviction of the researchers that answers to the above questions and other related ones can best be provided by relating reproductive behaviour to the socio-cultural context of the people with thorough demographic investigations into the various dynamics of the population of Nigeria. It is worthy of note that since the 1980s, there have been attempts to redirect demographic studies to that which see reproductive behaviour as occurring within a socio-cultural context of a given society.

The Central Senatorial District of Edo State, as our study area, has not been isolated from such a situation of changing socio-economic conditions. For this course, it is on the right context in holding the bull by the horns by x-raying male factor as it relates to reproductive behaviour among married couples of child bearing age.

Objective of the Study

The specific objectives of this study were to:

- 1) examine the influence of educational attainment on reproductive behaviour in the study area
- 2) examine the influence of belief system on reproductive behaviour in the study area
- 3) examine the state of adoption and practice of fertility control measures by married women within the study area
- 4) examine children sex preference in relation to reproductive behaviour
- 5) Look up to some recommendations on how to abate rapid population growth for sustainable development.

The Hypotheses formulated

- 1) There is no significant association between educational attainment and family size
- 2) There is no significant relationship between religious belief system and attitude to family planning
- 3) There is no significant relationship between husband's attitude to family planning and spouse's reproductive behaviour

- 4) There is no significant association between sex of children and reproductive behaviour

Literature Review

Government all over the world formulates social policies including population policies which express government's view and concern over certain issues. These policies also reflect measures which government intends to take which are meant to influence the nature and direction of movement of the issues under consideration. In short, government's social policies, including population policies, seek to contribute to national development and welfare goals through measures that directly or indirectly influence the process and overall quality of life (Igbinoria, Okonofua and Ozunde, 2005: 23).

Although there has been the need for population control in Nigeria, yet no formal official concerned was shown until 1988 when the first population policy, tagged the National Policy for Population for Development, Unity Progress and Self-Reliance was promulgated (National Population Commission, 2004:77).

The major goal of the 1988 population policy as noted in Nigeria's Baseline Report (1994) was to reduce the growth rate of the nation's population by means of voluntary fertility regulation. Unfortunately, the policy objectives have not been conscientiously implemented and hence none of them has been realized. In fact, the infant mortality and fertility rates have remained very high.

Access to family planning programmes and services has remained very low and social amenities in rural communities are non-existence. Ironically, in spite of notable failure, the policy has not been reviewed till date. Hence, the 1988 population policy remains the official population policy in Nigeria.

Of all the socio-economic status indicators of reproductive behaviour, the most widely used has been education or the level of schooling. The Level of education is seen as a powerful predictor of demographic or reproductive behaviour because of its impact on the commencement of reproductive life.

As noted by Cleland (2008), the influence of education could be seen as “highly contexts specific”. However, most research findings have shown relative relationship between level of education and people’s reproductive behaviour. Caldwell (1982), Axinn (1991) and Odu (2005) in their various studies reported the relationship between levels of education of schooling and reproductive behaviour.

The belief system of a people formed a major segment of the socio-cultural context analysis of reproductive behaviour. Belief systems as defined in this study refer to people’s organized system of ideas and mental constructions of reality on social facts which determines their ways of doing things or their world view. Some aspects of this belief system which are examined in this study as they affect reproductive behaviour are: religious belief, the role or position or authority of male adults in homes

(husband’s attitude or male dominance), kinship ties (or parental or extended family pressures) and sex preference (son’s preference). Ideal family size or desired number of children is something that is also influenced by the belief system of a people. It is important to note that the influence of belief system like other determinants of fertility or reproductive behaviour is contextual.

The influence of belief system on reproductive behaviour in Africa is very strong. This strong influence is reflected in such beliefs in the study area that no marriage is referred to as successful when a male child has not been had by the couples and that you cannot have a female child and name her “Iribhogbe”, that is progenitor or family keeper. According to Aiworiaboakuelu (2019), males are for continuity of family’s name, inheritance of family’s property and as means also of parents seeing themselves. A family without male child or children has automatically lost its position as a family because such family is already out of board. So for this singular reason, male children are preferred, because they will not only produce the needed joy for the family but also ensure perpetuity and cohesiveness of the family.

Alam (2012), having children is delightful for parents in certain ways, more important is that having male children is considered a matter of pride. Since son becomes the ‘need’, a family should have his presence. As noted by Isiugo-Abanihe (1994), family life in Nigeria is guided by normative principles,

institutions, and beliefs that vary among ethnic groups". He notes further that the characteristic male-dominant and patrilineal traditions (in Nigeria) support large family size and that men's reproductive motivation, to a large extent affects the reproductive behaviour of their wives.

David (2008), Ibisomi (2009) and James (2010), in their various studies, established a relationship between socio-cultural factors, such as gender role, cultural norms, parental pressure, religion and desired number of children and reproductive behaviour. David showed that a strong relationship exist between gender role (spouses attitude) and reproductive behaviour and also between social network (extended family, friends neighbours, political groups, church groups, youth groups, and other formal and informal associations) and reproductive collected from twenty four focus group discussion sessions in Nigeria, reported religion and culture, as key drivers of current desired number of children in Nigeria and that desired number of children did not however play a noticeable role in the observed fertility of the people (Ibisomi, 2009).

However, James (2010), in his study showed strong relationship between parental pressure, social norms and reproductive behaviour as revealed by analysis of their influence on teenage marriage and childbearing. Using determination of children's time of entering into marriage, Ushire, Eneji, Nsemo, Osonwa and Enang (2011), found a relationship between gender role and fertility behaviour among Calabar

and Oban communities in Cross Rivers State of Nigeria.

Odu; Jadumola and Parakoyi (2005):13-19), also found a strong relationship between religious affiliation husband's attitude to reproduction and reproductive behaviour Hussain, Fikree and Berendes (2000), in their studies of reproductive behaviour in Pakistan, found that pregnancies become increasing unwanted as the number of surviving sons increased and that sex of surviving children was strongly correlated with subsequent fertility and contraceptive behaviour.

Conclusively, the literature review as done here looking at the relationship between socio-economic variables, socio-cultural norm and belief system and people's reproductive behaviour, it was revealed that relationships were found to exist between them though in some cases there was no consistency in such relationships, but rather such relationships were also found to be contextual.

Theoretical Framework

Theory generates ideas that help a scientist to explain events that may be social, mechanical, electrical or even mathematical. It suggests alternative ways to solving a particular problem of interest to a researcher (Turner in Charles, 2005:4). The importance of theory in explaining reality in the course of any research cannot be over emphasized. In this study, a combination of three theoretical perspectives (the demographic transition theory, the hypothesis of cultural lag and the differential

association theory) was used to guide the orientation of this research.

The classical demographic transition theory has always been used as presenting the fertility data of developing countries as was the case of Western European countries. This postulates four stages in the population growth rate.

Stage 1: A traditional period of high birth and death rates in approximate balance

Stage 2: A high growth period affected by a lowered death rate and a continuing high birth rate

Stage 3: A transitional period during which the birth and death rates start declining and

Stage 4: The establishment of a new birth and death rates, leading to a stationary or stable population

Demographic Transition Theory (DTT) assumes further that the attainment of stage three, the 'transitional period of declining birth rate', is possible because of a combination of social-economic factors associated with what is variously referred to as urbanization, modernization or secularization or westernization, - a situation where traditional values and ideas are challenged and eventually weakened or broken down completely. However, Kirk (1972), has demonstrated that there is a new demographic transition in the developing world, a situation attributable to the diffusing of western values and ideas about fertility and family life with those of traditional ones. In this type of situation, what we obtain about fertility cannot be said

to be due to the process where by traditional values and ideas have been replaced by western values and ideas, but a type of synthesization of two differing situations. It should be noted too that in this situation, we find the persistence of certain values, either in its totality or traits despite the level of education, awareness and development attained.

The theory argues that changes in various parts or units of society do not occur at the same time and with the same degree. That change in certain units can be taken as the cause of changes that occur in other units. This non-simultaneous occurrence of changes in the various units of society which necessitates adjustment and adaptation, in some units, may be immediate for others, or it could take decades. This protracted period before final adjustment or adaptation is attained, is referred to as 'cultural lag'. The thesis of the theory advanced by Ogburn is that: the various parts of modern culture are not changing at the same rate, some parts are changing much more rapidly than others; and that since there is a correlation and interdependence of parts, a rapid change in one part of our cultural requires adjustments through other changes in the various correlated parts of culture. There are two components of this culture, the material things such as manufactured products, foodstuffs, machines, factories and other material objects. The other part is made up of such things as laws, governments, beliefs, customs etcetera. This later part is referred to by Ogburn as the adaptive culture (non-material culture). The argument of this

theory is that changes usually occur first in the former, while the later attempts to adjust or adapt to such changes. According to Ogburn (1974) “when the material conditions change, changes are occasioned in the adaptive culture. But these changes in the adaptive culture do not synchronize exactly with the change in materials culture, there is a lag which may last for varying lengths of time, sometimes indeed for many years”.

In this study, those factors that are seen as capable of reducing fertility levels or bring about changes in reproductive behaviour (such as drugs, foodstuffs, machines, etc), will be taken as the first component of our material conditions, while such conditions as believe in the decision of family planning, the believe in male child, believe in traditional values, etcetera will be taken as the adaptive culture. The view being held here is that why changes in socio-economic conditions of Nigerians (Esan people, in particular) or people in sub-saharan Africa have improved greatly, leading to the development and introduction of various fertility reducing measures, the adaptive culture features as expressed above are yet to synchronize exactly with the changes noted above. This has the effect of keeping fertility rate in these areas high, because reproductive behaviour of the people has not changed.

On the aspect of Differential Association Theory, it has the opinion that people behave differently because of the different situation affecting their attitude and behaviour. In this study, it is assumed that

people with different beliefs and socio-economic conditions will behave differently, that the differentials in the behave in cultural traditional values and the level of education will lead to differential attitude to reproduction, fertility reducing measures and child sex preference.

Methods of Research

The study area is the central senatorial district of Edo State which is also referred to as Esan Land. This area comprises five (5) Local Government Areas with a total of 51 political words. The population of study constituted the married couples of child bearing age. A sample size of 900 respondents was drawn from the entire population of interest to the researchers. Multi-stage sampling method was used in selecting 180 respondents from each Local Government Area stratified into Urban, semi-urban and rural respectively (ie, 60 respondents from each stratified area), thereby having a total of 900 respondents for five (5) Local Government Areas. Meanwhile, each local government area was stratified into three (3) areas: urban, semi-urban and rural. For the five (5) local government areas, we have fifteen (15) stratified areas (ie, 5 urban areas, 5 semi urban areas and 5 rural areas) and same number of respondents was assigned or allotted to them. Hence, each stratified area produced sixty (60) respondents and three (3) stratified areas produced one hundred and eighty (180) respondents, while the 15 stratified areas (or the five local government areas) produced nine hundred (900)

respondents as the sample size for this study. Thus, data collection was by two major types: Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods.

The adoption of both methods was to enable the researchers gather information that can give a detailed overall picture of the socio-economic and demographic profile of the study area. Data analysis was however based on percentage and chi-square (χ^2) statistical test.

However, eight hundred and seventy (870) out of the 900 respondents were subjected to survey method (the quantitative method), while the thirty (30) respondents were subjected to focus group discussion (the qualitative method).

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

The initial eight hundred and seventy (870) surveys designed had a reduction of five (5)

questionnaires, to be left with eight hundred and sixty five (865). This therefore formed the basis upon which data gathered by quantitative method were presented.

On the other hand, information gathered from thirty (30) respondents who were subjected to Focus Group Discussion were analyzed and interpreted separately to complement with the analyzed data collected through quantitative method.

Analysis of Socio-Economic and Demographic Attributes of Respondents

Percentage distribution of respondents by socio-economic and demographic attributes: “sex, education attainment, religious affiliation, age at marriage, family size, children’s sex preference, approval of family planning, husband’s attitude towards family planning, ideal number of children and current use of any family planning”.

Variable	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Sex:		
Male	364	42.08
Female	501	57.92
Total	865	100.00
Highest level of school attended:		
None	34	3.93
Koranic only	03	0.35
Primary	295	34.10
Secondary	310	35.84
Post secondary	223	25.78
Total	865	100
Religious affiliation (belief system):		
Islam	27	3.12
Christianity	778	89.94
Traditional religion	43	4.97
Others	17	1.97
Total	865	100.00
Age at marriage:		

Below 18 years	69	7.98
18 years and above	796	92.02
Total	865	100.00
Family Size		
large (above 4 children)	493	56.99
small (1-4 children)	372	43.01
total	865	100.00
Children sex distribution sex preference		
More boys	296	34.22
More girls	43	4.97
Equal number of sex	353	40.81
No particular sex preference	173	20.00
Total	865	100.00
Approval of family planning		
Yes	475	54.91
No	390	45.09
Total	865	100.00
Husband's attitude to family planning		
Approves family planning	190	52.20
Disapproves family planning	174	47.80
Total	364	100.00
Ideal number of children		
One	0	0.00
Two	6	0.69
Three	64	7.40
Four	126	14.57
Five	178	20.58
Above five	104	12.02
Up to God	387	44.74
Total	865	100.00
Current use of family planning method		
Yes	55	10.98
No	446	89.02
Total	501	100.00

Source: Field survey 2024.

Sex: the distribution on sex showed that more females than males were reached in this study. Among the total respondents reached for information, we had 364 males and 510 females representing 42.08% and 57.92% respectively. This distribution though not deliberately done, yet it was good for this type of study. Highest level of school attended: educational attainment in

the above table revealed high literacy level in the study area. The distribution showed that 831(96.07%) respondents had formal education (koranic education inclusive). The categories of primary, secondary and post-secondary school qualification had 295 (34.10%), 310 (35.84%) and 223 (25.78%) out of the 831 (96.07%) educated respondents respectively. This signifies that

majority of respondents have formal schooling and this level of education among the respondents is a pointer to the fact that the whims of nature that have prevailed and greatly affected the life of the people are gradually declining to a reasonable level and gradually eroding the traditions away in this study area.

Religious Affiliation (Belief System): the table showed the distribution of respondents according to religious affiliation. As revealed, 27(3.12%) of the respondents were muslims, 778 (89.94%) of the respondents were Christians, 43 (4.97%) of the respondent were believers of African traditional religion, while the category of others representing 17(1.97%) of respondents constituted religious groups that did not fall into any of the above categories. Such respondents belong to religious groups like the Grail Message Movement, Eckanker, Hare Krishna, and so on. However, the above distribution had shown that Central Senatorial District of Edo State (Esanland) is a highly Christian oriented environment. Although traditional and Islamic religions are older belief systems than Christianity in the study area, yet Christianity evidently is now the major belief system of the people in the area. The breakdown of the stronghold of traditional belief system is a product of many factors, such as trade, travel, missionary activities and urbanization. Islamic religion as reported by Okogie (2004), was introduced into Irrua (one of the urban towns in the study area) in 1898. Orthodox Christian

religion of catholic and protestants (Anglican church) come into influence in Ishan (Esan) around the early 1900s. Precisely, the catholic and protestant religious belief systems came into existence in the study area in 1900 and 1908 respectively. This dominance of Christianity in the study area may be attributed to the humane and persuasive activities of the early Christian missionaries, and the influence of western education which was imbibed very early by the people.

Age at Marriage: the table revealed the distribution of the respondents by age at marriage. When the total sampled population was taken together, majority of marriage took place after 18 years. The distribution showed that 796 (92.02%) of the respondents married at the age of 18 years and above, which is very significant age bracket in relation to child-bearing age, while a small number 69(7.98%) of the respondents married below 18 years.

Family Size: The table revealed the distribution of family size into two categories as large and small, showing 493(56.99%) and 372 (43.01%) of the respondents respectively. This therefore implies that large family size still prevails in the study area which is a reflection that Nigerian's current total fertility or parity is still above 6. Thus in line with the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS, 2008) that puts a parity of 6.9 for Nigeria women nearing the end of the child bearing years.

Children Sex Distribution Sex Preference: The table showed the percentage

distribution of the respondents by children sex distribution preference. It was revealed that close to half of them preferred equal children sex distribution, represented by 40.81% of the total sampled population. The respondents who preferred more boys (sons) to girls (daughters) had 296 (34.22%). This was followed by the respondents having 173 (20.00%) of the sampled population for those who gladly accept any child sex that comes to them. By the distribution in the table regarding children sex preference, the low percentage (4.97%) recorded for those who preferred more daughters (females) when compared to the percentage (34.22%) for more sons (males) clearly reflects the traditional belief of the people. Here in the study area, inheritance is through the male and descent is patrilineal and thus, no marriage is regarded as successful without a male child. Even names (such as Iribhogbe, ie family keeper) that are given to male children in the study area are a reflection of this traditional preference of male children to female ones.

Approval of Family Planning: The above table revealed, on a general note, of how respondents reacted to family planning method. Out of the total 865 respondents, 475 (54.91%) of them approved to family planning as against 390 (45.09%) of them who showed disapproval to it. However, the respondents who gave approval to family planning method as a measure of controlling high fertility rate are slightly more in number than those who had a decline to it. By this therefore, it then means that people are becoming more responsive to the use of

family planning as compared to what it used to be in times past.

Husband's Attitude to Family Planning: From the distribution above, it was revealed that 190(52.20%) of the total male respondents (364) of the sampled population approved family planning, while 174(47.80%) of them disapproved family planning. The implication of this is that wives to husbands in this category will definitely shelve the idea of adopting any method of contraceptives in controlling birth, except for the wives of the 190(52.20%) male respondents who may adopt any birth control. By this, the assured possibility of controlling large family from featuring is not very certain.

Ideal Number of Children: As shown in the table, no respondent wanted to be childless, even percentage of those who desire three (3) children was as low as 7.40%. However, the respondents who desire five (5) children and more were 178(20.58%) and 104(12.02%) respectively; while those who bent it as "up to God" for ideal number of children had 387 (44.74%) of the sampled population. In other words, close to half of sampled population posited that the issue of ideal number of children should be left to God to decide for every married couple of child bearing age.

Current Use of Any Family Planning Method: The table on this aspect revealed the distribution of respondents according to current adoption of contraception. As shown, 55(10.98%) out of the total female respondents (501) were currently in use of contraceptive measures of preventing

pregnancy while 446(89.02%) of them were not using any method.

The implication of this is that if majority of the respondents are opposed to the use of contraceptives, then the tendency of high fertility is very sure at present and in the future.

Hypothesis Testing and Interpretation

The four hypotheses formulated in this study were tested and interpreted as follows:

- 1) There is no significant association between educational attainment and family size
- 2) There is no significant relationship between religious belief system and attitude to family planning
- 3) There is no significant relationship between husband's attitude to family planning and spouse's reproductive behaviour

- 4) There is no significant association between sex of children and reproductive behaviour

Decision Rule

The decision rule states that if the calculated Chi-Square (χ^2_c) value is greater than the table value of Chi-Square (χ^2_t), the null hypothesis (H_0) will be rejected.

Symbolically, chi-square is expressed as:

$$\chi^2_c = \sum \frac{(oi - ei)^2}{ei}$$

Hypothesis one

H_0 : There is no significant association between educational attainment and family size

H_i : There is significant association between educational attainment and family size

Association between educational attainment and family size.

Educational Attainment	Family Size		Row Total
(level of Education)	Large (above 4)	Small (1-4)	
None	30	04	34
Koranic only	03	00	3
Primary	179	116	295
Secondary	175	135	310
Post-secondary	87	136	223
Column total	474	391	865

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Calculated chi-square (χ^2_c) = $\sum (oi - ei)^2 / ei = 44.73$

Table value of chi-square (χ^2_t) = 9.49

Degree of freedom (Df) = 4

Alpha level of significance = 0.05

Decision: Since the calculated chi-square value χ^2_c of 44.73 was greater than the

table value chi-square (χ^2_t) of 9.49, at alpha level of 0.05 and a degree of freedom of 4, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. This means that an association was found to exist between the level of education and family size. To ascertain how strong is this association, cramer's v contingency was calculated based on the value of the calculated χ^2 , the total sampled population and least value of (C-1) and (r -1). The calculated cramer's v value was 1.52. By this

value, the association is said to be a strong positive association.

Hypothesis Two

H_0 : There is no significant relationship between religious belief system and attitude to family planning

H_1 : There is significant relationship between religious belief system and attitude to family planning

Relationship between religious belief system and attitude towards family planning

Religious affliction	Attitude towards family planning		Row Total
	Approved	Not approved	
Islam	8	19	27
Christianity	495	283	778
Traditional religion	18	25	48
Others	10	7	17
Column total	531	334	865

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Calculated chi-square (χ^2_c) = $\sum (O_i - E_i)^2 / E_i = 20.08$

Table value of chi-square (χ^2_t) = 7.81

Degree of freedom (Df) = 3

Alpha level of significance = 0.05

Decision: Since the calculated chi-square (χ^2_c) value of 20.08 was greater than the table value of chi-square (χ^2_t) of 7.81 at an alpha of 0.05 and agreed of freedom of 3, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. This therefore signifies that there is a relationship between religious belief system and attitude toward family planning.

However, when cramer's v was used to test the strength of relationship, 0.152 value was displayed by the test which then implies that weak positive relationship exists between the variables.

Hypothesis Three

H_0 : There is no significant relationship between husband's attitude to family planning and spouse's reproductive behaviour

H_1 : There is significant relationship between husband's attitude to family planning and spouse's reproductive behaviour

Husband attitude to family planning	Spouse's reproductive behaviour		Row Total
	High (large family)	Low (small family)	
	110	80	190
	83	91	174
Column total	193	171	364

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Calculated chi-square (χ^2_c) = $\sum (O_i - E_i)^2 / E_i = 23.79$

Table value of chi-square (χ^2_t) = 3.84

Degree of freedom (Df) = 1

Alpha level of significance = 0.05

Decision: Since the calculated chi-square value (χ^2_c) of 23.79 was less than the table value of chi-square (χ^2_t) of 3.84 at an alpha level of 0.05 and a degree of freedom of 1, the null hypothesis (H_0) is accepted and rejected alternative hypothesis. This therefore implies that there is no

relationship between husband attitude to family planning and spouse's reproductive behaviour (family size).

Hypothesis Four

H_0 : There is no significant association between sex of children and reproductive behaviour

H_1 : There is significant association between sex of children and reproductive behaviour
Relationship between children sex preference and reproductive behaviour (desire for more children)

Children sex preference	The level of preference/desirous for children		Row total
	High	Low	
More boys	225	71	296
More girls	25	15	43
Equal number of sex	204	149	353
No particular sex preference	92	81	173
Column total	549	316	865

Source: field survey, 2023

Calculated chi-square (χ^2_c) = $\sum \frac{(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i} = 32.94$

Table value of chi-square (χ^2_t) = 7.85

Degree of freedom (Df) = 3

Alpha level of significance = 0.05

Decision: From the table above, since the calculated chi-square value (χ^2_c) of 32.94

was greater than the table chi-square (χ^2) of 7.85 at an alpha level of 0.05 and a degree of freedom of 3, the null hypothesis is rejected and therefore accept the alternative hypothesis. This by implication means that there is relationship between children sex preference and reproductive behaviour (ie, desirous for more children because of a particular sex needed). Therefore, to ascertain for the strength of relationship by cramer's v contingency test, it was discovered to have a fairly strong positive relationship of 0.195.

Discussion of Findings

This entertains the way for general discussion of the findings revealed in this study. From the literature review, it was established that education is widely used as an indicator of reproductive behaviour. It is seen as a powerful predictor of demographic or reproductive behaviour because of its impact on the commencement of reproductive life. As reported by Axinn (1991) and Odu (2005) in their various studies, it was found that relationship exists between levels of education and reproductive behaviours.

This study therefore unveiled that an association exists between educational attainment and family size.

The study revealed high literacy level though majority of respondents have little formal schooling. This implies that the more educated couples are the more they tend to have a family size they can conveniently handle and shun any pressure that would have made them do otherwise.

The expression above is complemented with focus group discussion as follows:

It was resolved from the discussion that education is the most widely used of the socio-economic indicators of reproductive behaviour, and that it has a feature of being able to make other variables more effective for any course intended. Hence, it has the capacity to positively influence reproductive behaviour of married couples of childbearing age (Focus Group Discussion organized in political ward 4 Eguare Uromi, Esan North-East Local Government Area).

As observed by Odu; Jadumola and Parakoyi (2005), strong relationship was found to exist between religious affiliation and reproductive behaviour as well as between husband's attitude to reproduction and reproductive behaviour. In a similar manner Ibisomi (2009) in the analysis of data collected from twenty four (24) focus group discussion sessions in Nigeria, reported religion and culture as key drivers of current desired number of children in Nigeria.

This study therefore revealed that a relationship exists between religious belief system and attitude to family planning which by implication means that religions belief system has the propensity of determining family size of married couples in Central Senatorial District of Edo State. However, there was no relationship found to exist between husband's attitude to family planning and spouse's reproductive behaviour. This implies that husband's attitude to family planning has no

determined force as much on spouse's reproductive behaviour in comparison with previous studies such as Odu et al's (2005) view point.

To complement the above with focus group discussion, the following expression was established from the discussion by respondents on religions issue as it relates to reproductive behaviour in one of the political wards, Esan Central Local Government Area.:

Religion has effect in determining life situation of the people. It has a full grip on the people hence, it pervades all aspects of life among the people. Once one marries, it becomes binding by religious belief that as far as one is fertile, and in good health, he/she can procreate as many children so desired because it is seen as God divine approval. This is why family planning is not easily patronized except on rare cases (the main resolution from the discussion of the FGD held in pol ward 9, Opoji in Esan Central Local Government Area).

It has been revealed from previous studies that no marriage is referred to as successful when a male child has not been born by the couples and that you cannot have a female child and name her progenitor or family keeper. As noted by Isingo- Abanihe (1994), "family life in Nigeria is guided by normative principles, institutions, and beliefs that vary among ethnic groups". He notes further that the characteristic male-dominant and patrilineal traditions support large family size. Sex preference is a cultural factor that

is believed to have a strong impact on people's reproductive behaviour, particularly in African and Asian countries.

The result of this study established that an association exists between sex of children and reproductive behaviour. This implies that married couples who are involved in selection of sex or in preference of a particular sex, especially male preference, always end up having large family size.

The above is complemented with the following:

In actuality, every child born is appreciable.

However, when you are married to a husband who has more than one wife, the issue of male child becomes more valued than the female child because it is the male child at this time who solidifies your marriage and position as a woman in the family as long as the marriage lasts and even after death. In fact, the pressure of the community where we live is that a married woman without male child or children means no defined and recognized position in her marriage. It has been categorically expressed that a family without male child or children is said to loss its position as a family because such family is already in the pipe line of going into extinction.

So, for this particular reason, male children are preferred, because they will not only produce the needed joy for the family but also ensure perpetuity and cohesiveness of the family. Hence, married couples avoid

all means to ensure that male child or children are among the children they have. Otherwise, any sex is desirable (Focus Group Discussion held political ward 10, Illeh-Ekpoma, Esan West Local Government Area)

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study was inspired by the need to inform decision on male factor influencing reproductive behaviour of married couples in Central Senatorial District of Edo State. From the various results of this study, it is established that customs, tradition and religious belief of the people contribute significantly to the incidence of male child preference. Thus, the following findings were drawn from the analysis and interpretation of the tested hypotheses: the existence of association between educational attainment and family size, the existence of relationship between religious belief system and attitude to family planning as well as the existence of association between sex of children and reproductive behaviour. Though the percentage for those who opted for equal number of sexes has the highest(40.81%) in the distribution, yet percentage of male children preference (34.22%) when compared with percentage of female children preference (4.97%), is far higher which by implication, is a reflection of ensuring perpetuity and cohesiveness of the family's name – tagged family progenitor.

One thing that has become outstanding is that in spite of the level of modernization

and probably the influence of westernization, some cultural traits in the study area and indeed Nigeria, have remained persistent.

On the basis of the above, the following recommendations were advanced:

Effort should be made by government through implementable policy to combat cultural practices that oppress women, preventing them from taking part in decision making of the family. For instance, instead of allowing only the husband to take decision on the number of children because he is the head and decision maker of the family, women should equally be allowed to part take in such opinion so as to make it a joint decision since children up-bringing and care solely rest on a collective responsibility of both spouses with a caring leaned more on the mothers than fathers.

The issue of male preference hinging on perpetuity of family's name and inheritance of family property as well as stability of the position of women in the family, has in the long run, led to large family size far beyond the intended desired for every couple especially when such preference is delayed in manifesting or featuring or even fails wholly to feature. To avoid the adverse effects, the researchers posit that married couples of childbearing age should embrace sexes as same importance and accept in good faith any sex of child born and therefore ready to give equal treatment to them in all aspects of life. This will not only put them in the right footing but also exposes them to be more focused on how to add to the value of life already laid down by

their parents rather than thinking and manipulating of how to inherit their parents' property. On the other hand, the married couples would have been relieved from the anxiety and stress of wishing for a particular sex. It is also the position of the researchers that the tradition which forbids women from bearing their fathers' names after they have married be abolished and introduce enforceable 'abridged name' concept that allows women to bear their fathers' names alongside their husbands' family names, as already being experienced by some married women today in Nigeria, such as the former Honourble Minister of Finance Dr. (Mrs) Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, who is currently the Director-General of the World Trade Organization.

In another policy development, a strategic arrangement should be put in place to provide population and reproductive health education for the people. This can help to change their present conservative attitude to family planning.

It is therefore a strong opinion of the researchers that if the above recommendations are implemented, unpleasant and negative effects (such as large family size, threat to both maternal and child health through a prolonged exposure of women to prolong risk of reproductive behaviour, and others) caused by male preference will be redeemed and constantly remain under control subsequently.

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