



Knowledge, Attitude, and Contraceptive Preferences Among Postpartum Women in Izzi, Ezza South, and Ikwo Local Government Areas of Ebonyi State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Background: The fertility rate is high and the contraceptive prevalence rate is very low in Nigeria. Thus, women in Nigeria are exposed to the dangers of unwanted and unplanned pregnancies.

Objective: The current study aimed to determine the levels of knowledge, attitudes, and contraceptive preferences among couples in selected health facilities in Ebonyi State so as to recommend a package of intervention to increase contraceptive uptake.

Methods: This cross-sectional descriptive quantitative study used questionnaires administered by the researchers themselves among 128 postpartum women who were current users of contraceptive methods in Izzi, Ezza South, and Ikwo local government areas of Ebonyi State, Nigeria from January 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017. Informed consent was obtained from participants. Data was analyzed using SPSS version 20. Simple percentages were used to report categorical variables.

Results: The study results showed that most of the respondents (49%) had a secondary education, were aged above 20 years, and were mainly employed as civil servants with an average monthly income of \$47.20. About 69% had less than 5 living children. Most respondents knew about contraception as a means of delaying pregnancy or limiting the number of children (37%) and recommended its use for family/society (46%). The most commonly used contraceptive methods were implants and injectable ones, while the IUD was the least preferred. Both implants and injectable contraceptives were recommended by friends and believed to be highly effective.

Conclusion: The current study showed that knowledge and positive attitude of participants towards family planning was high, comparable to studies in other parts of the world. Further research on determinants of postpartum use of family planning methods among this population is recommended.

Keywords: Knowledge, Attitude, Practice, Postpartum Contraception, Nigeria

1. Background

In Nigeria, the fertility rate is high and the contraceptive prevalence rate is very low.¹ Therefore, women in Nigeria are exposed to the dangers of unwanted and unplanned pregnancies. In Ebonyi State, Nigeria, the demand for family planning is about 15%, while the unmet need for contraceptives among women who are currently married is 30%.² Contraceptive use for spacing the births of children is 13.1%, while contraceptive use for limiting the number of children in a family accounts for 7.5%.² The rate of demand for contraceptives varies among women; those with no education comprised the lowest rate (16%) compared with

those who had a primary (35%) or secondary school (34%) education.² The total fertility rate (TFR) in the state is 5.3%.² The tendency to use a contraceptive method depends upon the individual's attitude as well as his/her preference of particular methods. Knowing individuals' perceptions and preferences can help control and predict clients' behavior, and as is well-known, predicting and controlling behavior will help community health practitioners determine the myths and misconceptions among women regarding the different contraceptive methods. It will also help the development of a package of intervention that can be applied to increase uptake. Furthermore, it is important

to note that, although sexual relationships, pregnancy, and childbirth are necessary and cannot be avoided, the social and cultural environment also determines the attitudes and preferences of women regarding contraceptive methods.

There is limited data in Nigeria regarding the knowledge, attitude, and practice of postpartum contraception, as many believe that the immediate postpartum period is a safe haven and conception is unlikely. However, this period represents a missed opportunity to encourage couples to use contraception, as they may never return for an intervention after leaving the hospital and may only present with another pregnancy within a very close interval.

2. Objective

The aim of this study was to determine the levels of knowledge, attitudes, and contraceptive preferences of postpartum women regarding different contraceptive methods in selected health facilities in Ebonyi State, southeast Nigeria, so as to recommend a package of intervention to increase contraception uptake.

3. Methods

This cross-sectional descriptive quantitative study used questionnaires that were administered by the researchers themselves to 128 postpartum women who are current users of contraceptive methods in Izzi, Ezza South, and Ikwo local government areas of Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The study period was from January 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017. Simple random sampling was done. A sample of 128 was determined using Taro Yamane formula,³ stated as:

$$n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$$

where n = corrected sample size, N = population size, and e = margin of error (MoE) ($e = 0.05$ based on the research conditions).

Respondents were approached, informed about the study, and invited to participate. Those who accepted were recruited and gave informed consent. The researchers personally administered the questionnaires⁵ to participating women on the spot (interviewer administered questionnaire) and collected data on sociodemographic variables and contraceptive knowledge, attitude, and use. Data was analyzed using SPSS version 20. Simple percentages were used to report categorical variables.

4. Results

At the end of data collection, 123 out of an initial 128 respondents completed the study, giving a response rate of 96%.

Table 1 shows that most of the respondents were married, were above 20 years of age, had a secondary education, and were employed as civil servants. Most of the respondents were married.

Table 2 shows that most of the people interviewed had less than 5 children and were willing to delay their next pregnancy for 2 years.

Table 3 shows that most of the respondents knew about contraception as a means of delaying pregnancy or limiting

Table 1. Demographic Information

Variables	Frequency, N = 123	Percent
LGA		
Ezza South	41	33
Ikwo	45	36.5
Izzi	37	30.5
Education		
No education	7	5.3
Primary	42	34
Secondary	60	48.9
Tertiary	14	11.7
Occupation		
Jobless	7	5.2
Farmer	31	25
Trader	42	34.4
Civil servant	42	34.4
Other jobs	1	1
Religion		
No religion	9	7.7
Traditional believers	22	17.6
Christians	91	74.7
Marital status		
Single	15	12.5
Married	96	77.9
Divorced	4	2.9
Cohabiting	8	6.7
Gender		
Male	1	0.8
Female	122	99.2
Age at marriage		
As teenagers	39	30.8
20 years	23	18.8
Above 20 years	61	49
Occupation of spouse		
Jobless	1	1.2
Farmers	28	22.9
Traders	39	31.3
Civil Servants	48	38.6
Other jobs	7	6
Spouse's monthly earnings		
Less than \$28	34	27.4
More than \$28	89	72.5

the number of children (37%) and recommended its use for family/society (46%). Most of the respondents (32%) had no complications using the various methods.

Table 4 shows that the most preferred contraceptive methods were implants and injectables, while the IUD was the least preferred method. Both implants and injectables were recommended by friends and believed to be highly effective.

5. Discussion

Awareness of contraceptive methods does not necessarily lead to practice of contraception.⁴ Maternal mortality can

Table 2. Obstetrics Information

Variables	Frequency, N = 123	Percent
Number of living children		
Less than 5	85	68.7
5 children	25	20.5
More than 5 children	10	8.1
Number of deceased children		
Lost no child	55	44
Lost 1 child	31	25
Lost 2 children	13	10.7
Lost 3 children	2	1.8
Not disclosed	22	17.9
Intended Number of Children		
Less than 8 children	79	63.7
8 Children	25	20.6
More than 8 children	19	15.7
Age of last baby		
7 months	98	79.8
More than 7 months	25	20.2
Plan for next pregnancy		
Less than 1 year	12	10
1 year	21	17
2 years	55	45
3 years	26	21
4 years	9	7

be substantially reduced if families are aware, access and use contraceptive services.⁵

The current study showed that almost half of the respondents (49%) had a secondary education, were aged above 20 years, and were employed mainly as civil servants. Previous studies have shown similar associations with the use of contraception.⁶⁻⁹ However, a regional study showed other determinants, such as religion and ethnicity.⁷ While in the southwest more users had attained a tertiary education and were older,⁸ the current study was conducted in the southeast and identified more women with a secondary education and a younger age as users of contraception. The reason is that women of the southwest generally get married later in life, because they want to achieve a higher educational status compared with those of southeastern descent.

The average monthly income of respondents in the current study was \$47.2. Although the knowledge of contraception can be high as in the present study, a low income may be responsible for the lack of use. Studies have shown a relationship between income and contraceptive use.¹⁰⁻¹² A lower income is associated with non-use of contraception. Most of the respondents in this study were employed; another study showed that employment is associated with contraceptive use.¹³ About 69% of respondents had less than 5 living children, and most of them knew about contraception as a means of delaying pregnancy or limiting the number of children. This finding is consistent with those of previous reports.^{14,15} Obviously,

Table 3. Knowledge and Attitude

Question	Responses	Frequency, N = 123	Percent
What do you understand about family planning?	I don't know.	16	13
	It is a way of delaying pregnancy or limiting the number of children.	45	37
	It is a way of delaying pregnancy only.	35	28.3
What do people in your neighborhood think about family planning?	It is a way of limiting the number of children only.	27	21.7
	I don't know.	17	14
	They think it can make someone sick.	24	18.7
What do you think	They think it is not necessary.	34	28
	They think it is useful to family and society.	48	39.3
About family planning?	I don't know.	10	7.4
	It can make someone sick.	14	11.1
What family planning method have you used before?	It is not necessary.	41	33.3
	It is useful to family and society.	58	46.3
What problem did you have using the method?	I don't know.	9	7.4
	None	15	12
	Natural method	24	19.4
	Male condom	30	24.1
	Female condom	1	0.9
	Loop (IUD)	23	19
	Oral pills	8	6.5
	Injection	3	2.8
	Implant	25	20.4
	Withdrawal	6	4.6
	What did you do as a result of the problem?	None	39
Headache		13	10.4
Nausea and vomiting		2	1.9
Weight change		1	0.9
Abnormal bleeding		12	9.4
Absence of sexual pleasure		13	10.4
Allergies		1	0.9
Painful menstruation		26	20.8
Abnormal vaginal discharge		16	13.2
Nothing		42	34
What did you do as a result of the problem?		Continued with method because the problem had stopped	24
	Continued with the method despite the problem	15	12.3
	Discontinued and changed to another method	13	10.4
	Discontinued without changing to another method	13	10.4
	Blamed those who suggested using the method and the healthcare workers that provided it	9	7.5
	Discouraged others from using the method which caused the problem	7	5.7

the various family planning interventions have contributed immensely to this level of awareness. Women in the past were likely to have an unmet need for spacing their pregnancies relative to women in the current era.¹⁶

Table 4. Contraceptive Methods Preferred

Method	Reasons for Preference	Frequency, N=123	Percent
Implant	Safer, no side effects, high effectiveness, it stays a longer time and helps space pregnancies, education, recommended by friends	40	32.3
Injectables	No need to daily remember pills, has high effectiveness Recommended by friends	40	32.3
Condom	The freedom it gives, protects against STIs and pregnancy, it's accessible and convenient, used by friends' husbands	27	22.9
Natural Method	Has no side effects	10	7.3
Oral Pills	Easy to take	5	4.2
IUD	Do not need frequent check-ups, long-lasting	1	1

The most commonly used contraceptive methods were implants and injectables, while the IUD was the least preferred. This compares to a study conducted in northwestern Nigeria which reported women as preferring injectable contraceptives and the IUD, but which also showed a lower preference for implants.¹⁷ Poor utilization of implants in northwestern Nigeria compared to the current study may occur because the implants are a relatively new method, they can only be inserted by specially-trained health workers, and they are unlike the injectable that does not require any additional training. The current study showed that both implants and injectables were recommended by friends and were believed to be highly effective.

In this study, 39.3% of the participants felt that their neighbors thought family planning is useful to the family and society, 28% think it is not necessary, 18.7% think that it can make someone sick, while 14% could not express their feelings. This means that the use of contraceptive methods can be affected positively or negatively depending on the views of clients' neighbors and friends. Some researchers suggest that it is not just the physiological experience of side effects that influence women's decisions, but the specific type of side effect and how it is perceived by women, their partners, and the community.^{18,19} In the

current study, neighbor's opinion had a positive effect on contraceptive use, most likely because of the attainment of a good education.

The limitation of this study is that individual opinions, which are usually subjective, were assessed. Moreover, this study is mainly descriptive and has not made any inferences or tests of statistical significance. Furthermore, the 3 LGAs selected are not necessarily representative of the entire state; therefore, a more extensive study that includes more LGAs is recommended.

6. Conclusion

The results of this study showed that most of the participants had high knowledge of and a favorable attitude towards contraception. The contraceptive methods most used and preferred by participants are implants, condom, and injectables. Future studies are necessary to determine the sociodemographic and obstetrics correlations with postpartum contraceptive use and gaps in health systems that can affect the use of contraception postpartum.

Authors' Contributions

All authors contributed equally to this Study.

Conflict of Interest Disclosures

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest. The opinions expressed in this paper are those of the authors and not those of the authors' affiliated institutions.

Ethical Approval

Ethical approval and informed consent for this study were obtained.

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Research Highlights

What Is Already Known?

The contraceptive prevalence rate is known to be generally low in Nigeria, and Ebonyi State is not exempt from this statistic. There is, however, limited data in Nigeria regarding the levels of knowledge, attitudes, and practices of postpartum contraception as many think that the immediate postpartum period is a safe haven and conception is unlikely

What This Study Adds?

This study reports the levels of knowledge, attitudes, and contraceptive preferences among couples in selected health facilities in Ebonyi State and made recommendations to increase contraception uptake.

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