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- 9 All tables, figures, and formulae must be submitted in camera ready form, numbered consecutively in Arabic numerals, e. g Table 4
- 10 Three original copies of each paper should be submitted to:

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THE DESIRE TO LIMIT DETERMINANTS OF FAMILY SIZE AMONG OGU MARITAL PARTNERS

*Onipede Wusu, Ph.D**

Introduction

Sustainable fertility transition in a society is associated with a general willingness to limit family size. Where there are belief systems and cultural norms capable of inhibiting effective practice of family limitation, a serious threat to any reported level of fertility decline exists. For instance, Caldwell and Caldwell (2000: 126-171) observe that Yoruba women who attempted family limitation were confronted with horrible tales (some may be baseless) by their husbands' family about what had happened to women who attempted such reproductive behaviour. Similarly, Bankole (2000: 173-199) reports that the elderly members of the extended family do, at times, persuade young couples to embrace large family size by echoing the traditional belief among the Yoruba that a woman would develop health problems such as stomach trouble if she does not bear all the children in her body. To what extent do these beliefs still hold sway over the society?

The fertility decline reported for the south west (Orubuloye, 1995: 135-144 Caldwell, Orubuloye and Caldwell, 1992: 211-242) and south east (National Population Commission, 2000) may be difficult to sustain and improved upon if the existence of such societal norms that have great potential of hampering the practice of family limitation is wide spread. It is likely that the persistence of low marital contraceptive prevalence in the country in spite of almost universal level of knowledge (*Jbus*) is partly a consequence of such beliefs. An important factor underlying contraceptive use and fertility decline is the desire to limit family size. Therefore, the reassessment of the willingness to limit family size is a worthy research goal. It is against this background that this paper examines the major determinants of the desire to limit family size.

Methodology

The study is situated among the *Ogu* of southwestern Nigeria. Based on the 1991 census figure, using 2.9 growth rate, the population is projected to approximately 133, 325. The people constitute a minority ethnic group settled in hamlets, villages and towns that are scattered along *Ywa* Creek (now *Badagry* creek) in both Lagos and Ogun states.

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structure, although the chi-square values are not significant, (see table 1), the highest willingness to limit family size is reported by nuclear and single parent families. This suggests that innovative reproductive attitude is likely to be predominant in such family settings maybe as a result of the absence of elderly extended family members who tend to protect old notions that hinder such attitude.

Table 1: Percentage distribution of respondents reporting the desire for limiting family size by the selected characteristics

Characteristics	MALE (YES) n = 440		FEMALE (YES) n = 449	
	%	Total	%	Total
<i>Place of Residence</i>				
Rural	23.8	186	32.3	222
Urban	76.2	254	67.7	227
	$\chi^2 = 46.28^{**}$		$\chi^2 = 39.48^{**}$	
<i>Number of living children</i>				
≤ 2	27.7	130	26.5	151
3 - 4	42.7	103	37.1	159
5 +	52.7	207	66.9	139
	$\chi^2 = 10.80^{**}$		$\chi^2 = 51.52^{**}$	
<i>Spousal communication</i>				
Frequent	40.2	239	39.1	238
Less frequent	63.0	64	28.8	83
Rarely	41.6	137	51.9	128
	$\chi^2 = 7.05^*$		$\chi^2 = 6.21^*$	
<i>Age at first marriage</i>				
< 20	47.9	163	21.2	217
20 - 24	37.9	253	42.0	130
25 - 29	62.5	18	62.2	98
30 +	73.5	6	75.0	4
	$\chi^2 = 7.93^*$		$\chi^2 = 25.93^{**}$	
<i>Family Structure</i>				
Nuclear	73.0	129	64.1	128
Extended	27.0	254	35.9	254
Single parent	89.9	57	87.9	67
	$\chi^2 = 2.47$		$\chi^2 = 3.87$	

* Significant at $P < 0.05$

** Significant at $P < 0.01$

The logistic regression model was utilized in estimating the effect of selected variables on the desire for limiting family size with gender controlled. In coding the dependent variable, the desire for stopping childbearing is coded 1 and 0 if otherwise. This implies that the odds ratios are measuring the effect of the independent variables on a change from desiring more children to desiring no more children. Table 2 presents the models' odds ratios. In model 1 (male respondents), number of living children, age at marriage and spousal communication are related to the desire for limiting family size among men. According to the model, men who already have 3 to 4 living children are almost three times more likely to limit family size as those having two or fewer number of living children. Those having 5 or more living children are 1.64 times more likely to limit family size than those with 2 or less. This result suggests that, in the study population, the more the number of children the higher the desire for limiting family size among male respondents. With respect to age at marriage among male respondents while age group 20 - 29 is 7 percent more likely age group 30 and above is almost three times more likely to effect the desire for limiting family size than those who got married before age 20. Although family structure is not related to the desire to limit family size, nuclear structure is 47 percent more likely to encourage family size limitation than extended family. The effect of spousal communication presents no clear pattern though statistically significant. Frequent and less frequent inter-spousal communications are 47 percent and 58 percent respectively, less likely to facilitate family size limitation than situations where spousal discussion is rare.

Urban residence is over 4 times more likely to promote the desire to limit family size than rural areas. This result is not surprising since urban dwellers are those who are more confronted with the rising cost of childrearing. And urban residence tends to increase taste for life and the expectations of life is generally higher in cities. As a result, the consciousness of having the number of children that can be catered for is likely higher; consequently the desire to stop childbearing is higher.

Table 2: Odds ratios of two logistics regression models examining the effect of selected characteristics on the desire for limiting family size.

Characteristics	Odds ratios			
	Male		Female	
	Odds	S.E.	Odds	S.E.
Family structure				
Nuclear	1.47	0.24	0.71	0.24
Extended (rc)	1.00	-	1.00	-
Number of living children				
3 - 4	1.95*	0.28	2.18**	0.27
5 +	2.64**	0.27	9.83**	0.30
≤ 2 (rc)	1.00	-	1.00	-
Age at first marriage				
20 - 29	1.07	0.24	3.14**	0.23
30 +	3.87*	0.50	18.27*	1.19
< 20 (rc)	1.00	-	1.00	-
Spousal Communication				
Frequent	0.47*	0.36	1.01	0.34
Less frequent	0.58*	0.26	0.91	0.25
Rarely (rc)	1.00	-	1.00	-
Place of Residence				
Urban	4.46**	0.22	3.46	0.20
Rural (rc)	1.00	-	1.00	-
- 2 Log likelihood		568.72		527.10
Model chi-square		32.49**		85.90**

* - Significant at $P < 0.05$ ** - Significant at $P < 0.01$ rc - reference category

The female model odds ratios indicate that number of living children, age at first marriage and place of residence are significantly related to the desire for limiting family size. A woman with 3 to 4 living children is precisely 1.18 times more likely to limit family size than the one with two or fewer living children. In the same vein, having up to 5 and above living children is almost ten times more likely to lead to the desire for limiting family size than having about two. The implication of this result is that having at least 4 or 5 children is still highly cherished in the study population. This is expected in a poverty-stricken society where there is virtually no workable social security system. The belief that children will provide old-age security is likely still predominant among women. As a result, the willingness to limit family size begins at having 3 to 5 children. This result confirms the findings reported by

Shah, Shah and Radovanovic (1998: 133-138) that the desire to limit family size increases with the number of living children. This picture is similar to the case among male respondents.

With respect to age at first marriage among female respondents, while those who married between 20 to 29 years of age are over three times more likely to limit family size, those who married at age 30 and above are over 18 times more likely to limit family size, than those who got married before age 20. The result suggests that those who married after age 30 possess higher likelihood of limiting family size than those who married at younger ages. This may be related to the existence of a relationship between age at marriage and educational status and reproductive goals among women of this category. Of course most women who marry late owe their delay to schooling. Because of the educational status, they tend to possess definite respect for personal dignity and status which are not compatible with large family size; as a result their desire for family limitation is strong. The result suggests that women who married late possess modern reproductive goals. Perhaps such women prefer small family size maybe due to the high aspiration they have for their children and themselves which is likely not realizable with large family size. Also, it is likely that women in this category are conscious of the biological complications associated with delivery at age 35 and above.

Women who live in cities are over 3 times more likely to desire limiting stopping childbearing than their rural counterparts. The desire to stop child bearing is expectedly higher in urban settlement perhaps because the demands of living in such an environment cannot be married with the cost of rearing large family size. Women having large number of children that are now confronted with adverse effects of the economic crisis in the nation on family budget are likely more willing to stop child bearing.

If the two models are compared on the basis of their strengths of the likelihood of limiting family size, the impacts of the existing number of children and age at marriage are stronger among female respondents than among their male counterparts maybe because males have no problem bearing children until advanced old age. But on the whole the willingness of any spouse to limit family size, be it male or female, is largely a function of the number of children he or she already has as well as the age at which the individual got married relative to the reproductive goal.

Conclusion

This article has addressed the major determinants of the desire to limit family size. The willingness to limit family size is clearly a function of the number of living children a couple already has. In a society where childbearing is a universal expectation, it is expected that the desire to limit family size should be largely dependent on the number of living children vis-à-vis the desired number of children. The descriptive and inferential analyses indicate the existence of a directly proportional relationship between the number of living children and the desire for limiting family size. Similarly, the desire for stopping childbearing rises with increase in age at first marriage.

The result suggests, on a general note, that most couples in the society still prefer a minimum of five living children. This may be attributed to the persistence of the fear of death since infant and child mortality rates are still very high in the country. And that if women get married a little late in life they tend to have limited number of children since women who got married at age 30 and above have the highest likelihood of limiting family size. It suggests therefore that the desire to limit family size and consequently promote fertility decline is enhanced if women are given opportunities that could serve as profiting alternatives to marriage and childbearing and there should be realistic social security policy to take care of the fear of old age sustenance. Educational and economic empowerments of the female folk, not neglecting their male counterpart, will be a sure way of sustaining and improving the fertility decline so far experienced in the southern part of the country and also encourages a start in the north.

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