

Assessment of the Knowledge and Utilization of Family Planning Services Among Women of Reproductive Age in Nasarawa State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Family planning is a vital component of reproductive health and remains central to achieving sustainable development and improving maternal and child health outcomes. Despite its proven benefits, utilization of family planning services in many parts of Nigeria, including Nasarawa State, remains below expected levels. This study assessed the knowledge and utilization of family planning services among women of reproductive age (15-49 years) in three Local Government Areas Keffi, Lafia, and Akwanga of Nasarawa State. The study also examined the socio-demographic, cultural, religious, and spousal factors influencing the use of contraceptive methods within the study areas. A descriptive cross-sectional study design was adopted. Data were collected from 271 women who were selected using a multi-stage sampling technique. Findings revealed that out of 271 women, 178 (65.7%) were aware of different types of family planning, with 69 (25.5%) demonstrating good knowledge, 141 (52.0%) average knowledge, and 61 (22.5%) poor knowledge. An equal percentage of respondents, 219 (80.8%), reported obtaining family planning information from social media and health workers. This was followed by 76 (28.1%) who identified television and radio as their main sources. In addition, 75 (27.7%) received information from friends and family, 71 (26.2%) from community outreach programmes, while 35 (13.1%) mentioned religious leaders as their primary source of family planning information. Among users, modern contraceptives were more common, with condoms 55 (72.7%) being the most frequently used, followed by pills 28 (36.4%), injectables 25 (32.5%), implants 13 (16.9%), and natural methods 16 (20.8%). The main barriers to utilization included side effects (46%) indicated side effects as a reason for not using any family method, and 32.8% indicated they were not sexually active. Partner disapproval was indicated by 9.5%, followed by no access (8.5%), lack of information (8.5%), religion (6.3%), planning pregnancy (5.8%), tradition (2.1%), and cost (1.1%). A majority 172 (63.5%) didn't know about the extent of the accessibility, 57 (21%) indicated that it is very accessible, 41 (15.1%) indicated that it is somewhat accessible, and 1 (0.4%) indicated that it is not accessible. However, only 120 (44.3%) found the services affordable, while 151 (55.7%) cited cost or distance as barriers to regular use. Most respondents, 195 (72.0%), described service providers as friendly, but 76 (28.0%) noted stock-outs and long waiting times as challenges. Chi-square analysis revealed significant relationships between age ($\chi^2 = 41.199$, $p < 0.001$), marital status ($\chi^2 = 23.452$, $p = 0.002$), education level, and spousal support ($p < 0.05$) with family planning utilization. Despite high awareness of family planning methods among women in Nasarawa State, actual utilization remains low due to fear of side effects, cultural and religious barriers, and limited partner support. Improving male involvement, addressing misconceptions, and enhancing access to affordable, quality services are crucial to increasing family planning uptake.

