

# **AWARENESS AND USE OF RADIO FOR BIRTH CONTROL CAMPAIGNS AMONG COUPLES IN RURAL AREAS OF OYO STATE**

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## ***Abstract***

Radio enlightening campaigns play a crucial role in birth control and ensure the quality health for women. Studies have shown that couples have limited access to media of mass communication promoting family planning and birth control. This study is designed to examine the awareness and use of radio for birth control campaigns among couples in the rural areas of Oyo State. The study adopted the qualitative method of research. Focus group Discussion was used to harvest the opinions and views of the respondents about the awareness and use of radio campaigns for birth control among spouses in Oyo State. The findings showed that the radio failed the integrity test regarding sensitisation about birth control in Oyo State. Findings also showed that religious beliefs play a negative role in the adoption of birth control. Findings revealed that the level of education about birth control is poor in the rural area of Oyo State. It is, therefore, recommended that health workers, health educators, non-governmental organisations and government agencies must recruit religious leaders in the conception and execution of birth control programmes in rural areas of Oyo State, and by extension, Nigeria. Traditional rulers must be sensitised on the importance of birth control. This becomes necessary because religious leaders and traditional rulers are more credible and are influential in the adoption of birth control programmes. House-to-house campaigns are also important to achieve sustainable birth control in the rural areas of Oyo State.

**Keywords:** Awareness, Radio, Birth Control Campaigns, Married Couples, Rural Areas

## **1. Introduction**

Following years of awareness-raising efforts in various media, a gap persists between the information about contraceptives and the use of enlightening campaigns on the radio (Oyedele, 2021). Ali et al. (2024) investigated the utilisation of family planning methods among couples and found that women have poor access to media messages promoting the utilization of family planning methods. The utilization of family planning methods remains a significant public health issue among women in developing nations (Ali et al., 2024). The radio medium has been identified as having the capability to reach people in far-flung, remote, and isolated populations, both in rural and urban sectors of developing societies. As Irori et al. (2022) noted, the radio medium is capable of influencing people's behaviour on matters that concern birth control. While indigenous communication media such as traditional newspapers, religious leaders, traditional rulers and radio are much effective and are used by non-governmental organisations and government at all levels to propagate campaigns about birth control in the rural areas, television is widely used in the urban centres to campaign about birth control in Nigeria (Irori et al., 2022). Irori et al. (2022) investigated media utilisation preference in birth control campaigns among women and found that radio is a more cost-effective medium for mass campaigns about birth control in Delta State. Radio has been the most effective information source about birth control, followed by the church in rural areas, and television in urban centres in Nigeria (Skrastins et al., 2013).

Birth control reduces maternal and child mortality rates in Nigeria (Irori et al., 2022). Iloh et al. (2024), while investigating the knowledge and use of insecticide-treated nets among pregnant women in Enugu Urban, found that radio remains the primary source of information about health-related issues. Birth control has been identified to foster societal development (Irori et al., 2022). Birth control, as Irori et al. (2022) maintain, is not only useful for child spacing and better family planning, but can also help curb the population explosion (Irori et al., 2022). Reducing birth rate means that the global population is becoming older (Dellamea et al., 2020). Panta et al. (2020) investigated knowledge and practice of family planning methods among women of reproductive age and found that literacy level, spousal communication, marital age, number of children, and cultural taboos are associated with the knowledge of family planning.

Information about family planning plays a crucial role in public health to control birth and ensure the quality health status of women (Panta et al., 2020). Irori et al. (2022) investigated media influence and birth control practice among male partners in Delta State and found that mass media have a great deal of influence on birth control, but challenges lie in the failure to use modern platforms to propagate information about birth control. Nigeria's population has continued to explode because an average Nigerian woman gives birth to at least five children in her lifetime (Irori et al., 2022). Encouraging women to use contraceptives is crucial to promoting their sexual and reproductive health. Birth control is made impossible in the absence of effective use of contraceptives (Cudjoe et al., 2024). One of the factors that ensure the success of family planning is the decision to control childbirth by adopting contraceptives.

Radio campaigns on childbirth control and family planning counselling have been identified to improve family decision-making with regard to the use of contraceptives. Of the contraceptives available for spacing and controlling childbirth, the IUD is the most effective

because the failure rate is less than 1% (Usi et al., 2024). Implant contraception used by women controls population explosion in developing countries like Nigeria. Nigerian demographic factors are in favour of multiple births among women. High unemployment rates, keeping women in purdah and making women full-time housewives are key factors in giving birth to many children by women. Although several contraceptive options are available for use by women, not many of them have adopted the use of contraceptives, especially in the rural areas of developing economies.

The quality of communication and intimacy determines, to a large extent, the reproductive decisions among married couples. Spousal communication has a significant relationship with the adoption of contraceptives among married couples (Kiran and Zia, 2024). As Kiran and Zia (2024) note, religious affiliation, absence of reliable information and lack of quality education affect decisions regarding childbirth control. While poor married couples have been identified as being unable to have birth control, the rich married couples are educated and have high financial status to make decisions regarding childbirth in the family. Kiran and Zia (2024) conducted a study on the impact of interpersonal communication for contraceptive use among married couples and found that educated women are more likely to discuss family planning with their husbands than uneducated women. Married couples who communicate better are more likely to adopt modern birth control options (Kiran and Azia, 2024).

Kiran and Azia (2024) opine that cultural expectations and religious beliefs are basic barriers to the adoption of contraceptive options among married couples in developing nations. Karim (2024), while investigating birth control in Singapore, found that birth control or contraceptive use is a topic that is hardly debated openly among Islamic adherents despite its importance as a method of family planning. Talmac et al., (2024) investigate contraception preferences change among couples and found that there are many couples who do not have sufficient knowledge with regard to birth control and family planning and the increase in the number of educated women have and effective access to sexual health services have increased the use of birth control methods.

Family planning is key to empowering women and crucial to reducing poverty among women in rural areas. Flint and Morisause (2017) maintain that millions of women globally do not have access to safe and effective family planning methods. Family planning awareness campaigns resulted in many men having a vasectomy in rural areas. Arokiasamy et al. (2004) investigated the relationship between female education and fertility decline and found that increasing women's formal education must be accompanied by extensive enlightenment campaigns to discourage prolific childbearing among women in rural areas. G. (2015) investigated the effects of a youth behavioural education communication campaign and found that improved communication on sexual and reproductive health between health workers and married couples is highly effective in birth control. Muhaidat and El-kharouf (2018), while investigating change in the overall fertility rates of Jordanian women in light of the use of family planning methods, found that no correlation exists between an increase in women's knowledge of family planning methods, their desire to control childbirth, their level of education, husbands' level of education and women's level of income. Male-targeted birth control, radio birth control and interpersonal contacts about birth control have been more effective in developing communities of Africa (M. et al., 2016).

Media enlightening campaigns are one technique to create knowledge and awareness toward family planning (J and A, 2015). Jacobs et al. (2017) evaluated mass media exposure

and modern contraceptive use among couples and found that media are not reaching the most vulnerable populations and poor women in rural areas. Radio birth control campaigns have a positive relationship and improved attitudes towards the adoption of birth control and improved contraceptive use in rural areas. NCT (2016) evaluated mass media family planning campaigns on the uptake of contraceptives and found that a higher percentage of the rural population listens to radio messages crafted in local dialect, and radio messages reach remote and far-flung areas of developing nations.

Asogwa (2018) noted that factors such as income level, religion and culture regulate the use of family planning methods. Radio family planning programmes were found to have a significant influence on birth control discussion among married couples in rural areas (Meekers et al., 2007). Kim and Marangwanda (1997) evaluated men's support for long-term contraception and found that football games and sports images proved effective in persuading the male audiences to support family planning, especially in the rural areas. Family planning communication campaigns have been shown to increase awareness about contraceptive use (Jato et al., 1999).

There are concerns that the radio medium, despite the pervasive and omnipresent nature of its messages, has failed in its social responsibility with regard to messages of birth control, family planning, and child-spacing among married couples in Oyo State. There are also concerns about whether main issues such as anti-pregnancy pills, the use of IUD and other anti-pregnancy methods are given adequate attention on the radio. As a result of the foregoing, the objectives of this study were to examine how frequently married couples in the rural areas of Oyo State get exposed to radio campaigns on birth control, understand the extent to which married couples in the rural areas of Oyo State adopt birth control, determine the attitude of married couples in the rural areas of Oyo State towards adoption of birth control, and to understand other methods employed couples for birth control in the rural areas of Oyo State.

The study adopted agenda-setting theory. Researchers have been interested in the effects of mass media on the audience for years. According to Relatami et al. (2024), agenda-setting theory explains how mass media influence audiences' attitudes, behaviours, and dispositions towards media messages. According to agenda-setting theory, frequent positive coverage of certain health issues could precipitate change in behaviour, belief and attitudes of the radio audience, thus making them adopt radio messages about birth control. According to agenda-setting theory, the media focus attention on some salient issues to make discussion of those issues inevitable among consumers of media messages (Buyanza-Mwidima, 2024).

The main assumption of this theory is that the media present some messages as more prominent and important than others. Birth control becomes inevitable for public discussion on the basis of the frequency of reporting and mentions in the media. To establish an agenda is also to concentrate public attention on certain health-related issues in the media (Buyanza-Mwidima, 2024).

The theory is relevant to the research because it can help predict and explain the use of radio campaigns for changing attitudinal and behavioural patterns regarding birth control among couples in rural areas of Oyo State. One of the principles of the theory is that media should be used to capture the audience's attention on a specific health issue; thus, Folarin (1998) maintains that agenda-setting theory implies that media pre-determine what issues

are regarded as important at a given time in society. The media not only set the agenda for political campaigns, but also set the agenda for health issues, including birth control among married couples. The theory assists the researchers in the investigations of factors that lead to the adoption of birth control among couples in Oyo State.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

The study employed a qualitative research method. Focus group Discussion was used to harvest the opinions and views of the respondents about the awareness and use of radio campaigns for birth control among married couples in Oyo State. A multi-stage Sampling procedure was adopted. The method is appropriate to enable us to divide the population of Oyo State into clusters. The samples began by compiling a list of all three senatorial districts in Oyo State: Oyo South Senatorial District, Oyo Central Senatorial District, and Oyo North Senatorial District. We further divided the three Senatorial Districts into local government areas. The local government areas were divided into rural-urban Local Government Areas, rural-rural Local Government Areas, and urban-urban Local Government Areas in Oyo State. Thus, the purposive sampling technique was adopted to choose Local Government Areas that are rural-rural in nature from the three senatorial districts. We purposively chose local government areas that present all features of a rural area. For this reason, we selected Afijio Local Government in Oyo Central Senatorial District, Atisbo Local Government Area in Oyo North Senatorial District and Ibarapa North in Oyo South Senatorial District. Furthermore, we chose electoral wards from each of the three local government areas that have been selected, using simple random sampling. Wimmer and Dominick (2014) posit that simple random sampling allows each member of the population to have an equal chance for being selected for a research study.

For the purpose of this study, the electoral wards that were sampled were Iware and Akinmoorin in Afijio Local Government Area, Ayeete and Idere in Ibarapa North Local Government Area and Tede and Ago-Amodu in Atisbo Local Government Area. Finally, a convenient sampling method was adopted to choose the participants to take part in the focus group discussions. As Onabajo (2015) affirms, convenient sampling is about selecting individuals who are convenient, individuals in convenient spots such as motor parks, bus stops, schools, and interviewing whoever is willing to answer or whoever accidentally comes along. Examining the three entire political wards is difficult and almost impossible; researchers selected participants based on their proximity to test their opinions and awareness of radio birth control campaigns. A Focus Group Discussion guide was used to gather data. We use the FGD guide to enable us to have effective access to the opinions, cultural and religious beliefs, and attitudes of the respondents in sync with the research objectives. Three married couples participated in each of the six political wards, making 36 participants.

Thirty-six respondents participated in the study. 18 married women and 18 married men to ensure gender balance. Data gathered from the focus group sessions were analysed thematically and we made inferences about participants' awareness, belief and use of radio campaigns for birth control.

## **3. Results**

### **3.1. Theme 1. Exposure to Birth Control Campaigns on Radio in Oyo State**

The data from the FGD showed the participants' exposure to birth control campaigns on the radio. Individual participants aired their views and opinions about their exposure to birth



control campaigns on the radio. Providing more insights into focus group discussions, a female participant said:

I have never heard any campaigns about birth control on the radio. We usually listen to the Broadcasting Corporation of Oyo State (BCOS) radio more at Tede here. However, no message about family planning or birth control has been reported on the radio. We only listen to health drama about HIV on BCOS radio every Friday night. Only our pastors in church have discussed the issues of family planning and birth control with us. The birth control message given by our pastors has made some couples give birth to a number of children they can take care of. However, some married couples still believe in giving birth to many children due to illiteracy and the nature of work they do to earn a living.

Another participant at Ago-Amodu town, Atisbo Local Government Area, said:

Birth control campaigns on the radio are very rare. Most programmes we hear on the radio are about the government. Hardly do radio people tell us about health issues such as birth control. The only time we heard about health issues on the radio frequently was during COVID-19, when the movement of people was restricted. However, our imams have discussed the issues of family planning and birth control with us

A male participant in Tede, Atisbo Local Government Area, said:

Our exposure to radio campaigns on birth control in this town is very poor. Not many of us have access to listen to the radio every time because of the nature of our jobs. Almost 95% of us are farmers in this town. And as a result, we hardly stay home to listen to the radio campaigns. Even most of our wives are traders who rarely stay home to get information about birth control or family planning on the radio. But whenever I travel to the state capital in Ibadan, I usually listen to radio campaigns on birth control.

The findings showed that the radio failed the integrity test regarding sensitisation about birth control in Oyo State. From the different submissions by respondents/ participants, birth control-related messages are getting through to religious leaders.

### **3.2. Theme 2. Adoption of Birth Control among Married Couples in the Rural Areas**

The data from the focus group discussion showed the adoption of birth control or family planning among married couples in the rural areas of Oyo State. Participants expressed diverse views on the adoption of birth control. Shedding more light on the issues of adoption of birth control, a female participant at Iware, Afijio Local Government Area of Oyo State said:

My husband and I have not adopted birth control. Although we have heard messages on birth control on the radio, and we have also watched messages relating to family planning on television, with the relevant benefits of adopting birth control. But our religion does not permit birth control or family planning. It is God who gives children and they are gifts and blessings. So, we cannot stop God's blessing and gifts.

Another female participant at Akinmoorin in Afijio Local Government Area said:

We have not used either pills or IUD to control birth, space births or family planning. What we do as a couple is to have sexual intimacy when I know I cannot become pregnant. Whenever we wish to have sexual intimacy, and it is unsafe, my husband uses the withdrawal method to prevent unwanted pregnancy. Besides, my religious beliefs forbid the use of anti-pregnancy pills or methods. So, what we do is to play it safe to avoid unwanted pregnancy.

A male participant at Iware, Afijio Local Government Area, said:

My wife and I have not adopted the use of birth control before. Although I hear people talk about birth control in churches, markets, and group discussions. I have never discussed birth control with my wife. However, we use condoms to have sexual intimacy to prevent unwanted pregnancy because we have finished childbirth.

Similarly, findings showed that religious beliefs play a negative role in the adoption of birth control. Many respondents/participants, because of their religious background, are unwilling to embrace birth control.

### **3.3. Theme 3. Attitudes of Married Couples towards adopting childbirth control**

The data from the focus group discussion showed the attitude of married couples towards the adoption of birth control in rural areas of Oyo State. Participants stated diverse views on their attitudes towards the adoption of birth control. Shedding more insights on this, a participant at Ayeete in Ibarapa North Local Government Area said:

The preference for birth control in Ayeete is very poor. Married women in this town treat IUD and anti-pregnancy pills with suspicion. They believe it may be dangerous for their health. The level of education here is very low. Even radio campaigns on birth control, when they reach a place like this, people may not accept it until a respected individual prods them to embrace such messages.

Another female participant at Idere, Ibarapa North Local Government Area, said:

Married women like me respond favourably to issues of birth control or family planning when it comes from health workers, but not on the radio. Health workers would take their time to explain what you stand to benefit when birth control is embraced, but the radio may not tell you all the benefits. So, people like me respond favourably to messages about birth control from health workers or opinion leaders in our agrarian community.

A male participant at Ayeete, Ibarapa North Local Government, said:

It is against the spirit of our culture to prevent a child from coming into the world. To me, the issue of birth control should not even arise in the first place because it is God who takes care of us, whether adults, the aged or children. As a result, the issue of birth control is not good.

Also, findings revealed that the level of education about birth control is poor in the rural areas of Oyo State. While some participants maintained that birth control is against their cultural beliefs, others maintained that they prefer birth control messages coming from health workers, but not the radio medium.

### **3.4. Theme 4. Other Methods adopted by married couples for birth control**

The data from the focus group discussion revealed the attitude of married couples towards the adoption of other means for birth control in rural areas of Oyo State. Participants expressed diverse views about other methods they adopted for birth control. Revealing more on other means of birth control, a female participant at Iware, Afijio Local Government Area, said:

My husband and I have been used to having sexual intimacy even after we have stopped giving birth to children. However, whenever we finish sexual intimacy, I will pour salt into a half cup of water as a means of birth control.

Another female participant at Tede, Atisbo Local Government Area, said:

After I finish the 'deed' with my husband, I sip lime fluid as a means of birth control. We do not have enough resources to buy pills or do IUD as a means of birth control. So, what we do is to make use of natural methods we know.

A male participant at Ayeete, Ibarapa North Local Government Area, said:

My wife and I normally study her safe period to have safe sex. But most times, I use withdrawal methods on her as a means of birth control.

Participants revealed that there are other methods that are used as a means of birth control apart from IUD, pills and others. Many of them maintained that they use lime fluids, salt and water, and sex withdrawal methods as a means of birth control.

## **4. Discussions**

The findings showed that the radio failed the integrity test regarding sensitisation about birth control in Oyo State. From the different submissions by respondents/participants, birth control-related messages are received through religious leaders. Buttressing the findings, an earlier study conducted by James (2019) maintained that radio messages are too elitist and cannot be easily understood by people in rural areas who are predominantly illiterate. Even when messages are disseminated in their dialect or local language on the radio, they still exhibit an apparent inability to comprehend the message. James (2019) further noted that religious leaders and other opinion leaders play a crucial role in the adoption of certain health issues.

Similarly, findings showed that religious beliefs play a negative role in the adoption of birth control. Many respondents/participants, because of their religious background, are unwilling to embrace birth control. Supporting the findings, Wulifan and Bagah (2015) noted that Birth control has triggered concerns among the Muslim population with regard to the acceptability gap and effective use of modern contraceptives. Besides, many Islamic clerics are very cautious in discussing the subject of birth control in the midst of their religious faithful (Wulifan and Bagah, 2015).

Also, findings revealed that the level of education about birth control is poor in the rural areas of Oyo State. While some participants maintained that birth control is against their cultural beliefs, others maintained that they prefer birth control messages coming from health workers, but not the radio medium. Findings by Kiran and Zia (2024) confirm that religious affiliation, the absence of reliable information, and a lack of quality education influence decisions regarding childbirth control. While poor married couples have been



identified as being unable to have birth control, the rich married couples are educated and have high financial status to make decisions regarding childbirth in the family.

Participants revealed that there are other methods that are used as a means of birth control apart from IUD, pills and others. Many of them maintained that they use lime fluids, salt and water, and sex withdrawal methods as a means of birth control.

## **5. Conclusions and Recommendations**

Radio alone cannot sensitise married couples about birth control. Church leaders or pastors are more credible when it comes to enlightenment about birth control and family planning. Consequently, health workers, health educators, non-governmental organisations and government agencies must recruit religious leaders in the conception and execution of birth control programmes in rural areas of Oyo State, and by extension, Nigeria.

Religious and cultural beliefs are the two main impediments to achieving sustainable birth control in most rural areas of Oyo State. Therefore, traditional rulers must be sensitised on the importance of birth control. This becomes necessary because religious leaders and traditional rulers are more credible and are influential in the adoption of birth control programmes. They must be sensitised about the importance of birth control to also sensitise members of their religious sect, and their subjects in their domains.

House-to-house campaigns are also important to achieve sustainable birth control in the rural areas of Oyo State. A traditional newsperson must be recruited to disseminate vital messages to people in rural areas about the need for birth control. A traditional newsperson understands people's culture and can explain health issues to their targets such that they understand his messages.

## **Ethical Clearance**

Ethical consent was sought from the participants used in this study. They were informed that the exercise was purely for academic purposes and that their participation was voluntary.

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## **Conflict of Interest**

There is no conflict of interest.

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