

Influence of Interpersonal Communication on Family Planning Practices among Rural Women in South East Nigeria

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Abstract : One of the leading causes of death amongst women of child-bearing age in southeast Nigeria is pregnancy. Women in the reproductive age group die at a higher rate than men of the same age bracket. Furthermore, most maternal deaths occur among poor women who live in rural communities, and who generally fall within the low socio-economic group in society. Failure of policy makers and the media to create the strategic awareness and communication that conform with the sensibilities of this group account, in part, for the persistence of this malaise. Family planning (FP) is an essential component of safe motherhood, which is designed to ensure that women receive high-quality care to achieve an optimum level of health of mother and infant. The aim is to control the number of children a woman can give birth to and prevent maternal and child mortality and morbidity. This is what sustainable development goal (SDG) health target of World Health Organization (WHO) also strives to achieve. FP programmes reduce exposure to the risks of child-bearing. Indeed, most maternal deaths in the developing world can be prevented by fully investing simultaneously in FP and maternal and new-born care. Given the intrinsic value of communication in health care delivery, it is vital to adopt the most efficacious means of awareness creation and communication amongst rural women in FP. In a country where over 50% of her population resides in rural areas with attendant low-level profile standard of living, the need to communicate health information like FP through indigenous channels becomes pertinent. Interpersonal communication amongst family, friends, religious groups and other associations, is an efficacious means of communicating social issues in rural Africa. Communication in informal settings identifies with the values and social context of the recipients. This study therefore sought to determine the place of interpersonal communication on the knowledge of rural women on FP and how it influences uptake of FP. Descriptive survey design was used in the study, with interviewer administered questionnaire constituting the instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was administered on 385 women from rural communities in southeast Nigeria. The results show that majority (58.5%) of the respondents agreed that interpersonal communication helps women understand how to plan their family size. Many rural women (82%) prefer the short term natural method to the more effective modern contraceptive methods (38.1%). Husbands' approval of FP, as indicated in the Mean response of 2.56, is a major factor that accounts for the adoption of FP messages among rural women. Socio-demographic data also reveal that educational attainment and/or exposure influenced women's acceptance or otherwise of FP messages. The study, therefore, recommends amongst others, the targeting of husbands in subsequent FP communication interventions, since they play major role on contraceptive usage.

Keywords : family planning, interpersonal communication, interpersonal interaction, traditional communication

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