



RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Critical Examination of the Relevance of Family Planning in Church and Society

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ABSTRACT

Family planning is the consideration of the number of children a person wishes to have, including the choice to have no children and the age at which they wish to have them. Some of the factors that may influence family planning significantly include marital situation, career or work considerations, financial situations and so on. Where there is sexual activity, family planning may involve the use of contraception (birth control) and several other techniques to control the timing of reproduction. Other aspects of family planning also of vital importance, apart from contraception include sex education, prevention and management of sexually transmitted infections, pre-conception counselling and management and infertility management. In consonant with the definition adduced by United Nations and the World Health Organization, family planning invariably encompasses services leading up to conception. Abortion is not typically recommended as a primary method of family planning. Contemporary notions of family planning tend to place a woman and her childbearing decisions at the center of the discussion. It is usually applied to a female-male couple who wish to limit the number of children they have or control pregnancy. Family planning has the advantage of reducing teenage birth rates and birth rates for unmarried women. In 2006, the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) issued a recommendation, encouraging men and women to formulate a reproductive life plan, to help them in avoiding unintended pregnancies and to improve the health of women and reduce adverse pregnancy outcomes. There are several benefits of family planning including spacing births for healthier pregnancies, thus decreasing risks of maternal morbidity. For many, the purpose of family planning is to ensure that any couple, man or woman who has a child has the resources that are needed in order to complete this goal. With these resources, a couple can explore the option of natural birth, surrogacy, artificial insemination or adoption. On the other hand, if the person does not wish to have a child at a specific time, they can utilize the methods that are needed to prevent pregnancy, such as birth control, contraceptives or physical protection and prevention. There are several reasons why woman do not use contraceptives. These reasons include religious reasons, limited access to transportation in order to access health clinics, lack of education and knowledge and opposition by partners, families or communities. Definitely, poorer women and those in rural areas often have less access to family planning services. This can lead to higher rate of unintended

pregnancies, increased risk of HIV and other STI's, limited choice of contraceptive methods and several other problems. Family planning has reduced the burden of childbearing on women. As a result of having to raise fewer children than before, women are no longer so economically dependent on their partners.

INTRODUCTION

Family planning is so important to the church and society. The abject poverty we find in families today result from a lack of control in children bearing. This work shall give the strategies for birth control, and thereby enhancing the productivity of our church and society.

The Various Reasons for Having Children.

There are several reasons for having children. Such reasons include:

Children are unique gift of eternal creativity. -This implies that God has endowed the husband wife with a unique ability, unshared by any other creature in the universe to create another human being with a freewill, an eternal soul, and a capacity to pass on that unique gift to his children. In other words, the husband and the wife have the peculiar ability to create an eternal person.

Children provide blessing for a lifetime. The Bible simply identifies children as blessing. That is "reward from the Lord" (Psalm 127:3 and 5). Children invariably bring blessing to us; and the joys and blessing of having children far exceeds any expenses or responsibility that may be suffered in the process of doing so.

Children are a real expression of love – when married couples become "one flesh" they combine their genes in a God-given way and produce a one –fresh person that merges both of them. It is therefore evident from a union of this nature that it is the plan of God that children be an expression of their parents' love.

Children satisfy the natural instinct of man- It is a natural thing to marry, give birth to children and become a grandparent. God has given certain instinct to man that functions in accordance with his design for him. These instincts produce that natural feeling essential to a happy life. Parenthood is one of such instincts (Karen 2017; Jaurigueet al., 2023).

The Meaning and Need for Family Planning

Jelliffe, a celebrated Professor, defines family planning as: "a way of spacing pregnancies at the best intervals and when desired, to limit the number of children to what the family can afford." (1962). Family planning means precisely what it says, that with the use of a variety of contraceptive techniques, a couple may look forward and determine not only how many children they will have, but when. The spacing of a family can be as important as the actual number of children in it.

It means also that families must cut their coat according to their size, to maintain human poise.

Our age is one that cherishes the values of responsible parenthood, family planning and responsible conception and procreation. Advances in medical science in recent time has made it highly imperative to bring human fertility under rational control. Iwe, An eminent Professor notes that:

- Gone are the days when uncontrolled fertility and irrational procreation and domestic painlessness were permitted through.
- Ignorance or pious illusion to shatter domestic comfort, to debase
- Family standard of living, to jeopardize the future of children and

- The health of the mothers, to escalate feminine mortality rate, and
- Compromise domestic harmony (1979).

Family planning is expedient because there is a vital social problem of the ever-increasing growth rate of the world 's population. The rate of population growth poses a threat to food supplies and many other essential materials.

Only control of birth every-where can remedy this world-wide problem. It is more important to have the resources that must be utilized in taking care of children that to have the children themselves. In the light of these, family planning has the following objectives:

1. To encourage the building of a healthy family.
2. To help parents to understand the value of having only those children for whom they can provide adequate care, good food, clothing, education and housing.
3. To advice and help those who want children, but have not gotten them.
4. To enable women to take more active part in the affairs of the community as a result of child spacing.

The following things too are to be done to achieve family planning objectives:

1. Establishment of family planning clinics at different Centres
2. Such Centres will disseminate information and give advice.
3. Mass education (Sandra 2022; Hossain et al., 2024).

The afore said spacing of the children too will have the following benefits:

1. Only the number of children the family wants are born and only when the couple want these children.
2. Mother's health is better
3. Prepare children for life
4. Families will be more comfortable.
5. Families can save money for a rainy day.
6. Emotional development of each child is guaranteed (Lattaye 1976; Rashad et al., 2024).

THE METHODS OF BIRTH CONTROL

There are various methods of birth control. We shall examine each of them in turn.

The Pill-It is estimated that eight to ten million women in the united states are on the Pill. When it first came out, the number of adverse side effects reported made many women reluctant to use it statistically. The pill is less hazardous to life and health than smoking. The Pill must be prescribed by a physician. When the tablets are taken as directed, it is believed that they control ovulation, for no egg ripens. Thus sperm may freely enter the oviducts without the tendency of conception occurring. In this way the oral tablet provides the advantage of protection at all times (Akpabio 2021).

Condom- The condom, often referred to as a prophylactic, sheath, or rubber, is the world's most often used artificial method for conception control and the second most widely used method in U.S.The condom has several advantages. It is available at drugstores without a medical prescription. It is free from side effects; visible proof of effectiveness is available immediately after intercourse. It is simple and easy to use, and it places the responsibility for birth control on the husband, which some wives view as a distinct advantage.

The IUD- The IUD is also called the intra-uterine device. It is a kind of birth control method that can easily be discontinued when a couple wants the wife to become pregnant. An intra- uterinedevice is a soft, flexible plastic loop or irregular shaped disc which a physician must insert through the cervical

canal into the uterine cavity, using a small tube about the size of a soda straw. This procedure can be done in any doctor's office. And it is seldom painful.

Diaphragm- The diaphragm is a strong lightweight rubber cap somewhat smaller than the palm of the hand. The thin rim of the diaphragm is made of a ring-shaped, rubber-covered metal spring. Because the spring is flexible. The whole diaphragm can be compressed and passed easily into the vagina. The distance from the back wall of the vagina to the public bones varies from woman to woman. For this reason, diaphragms are made in a variety of sizes.

The diaphragm acts as a barrier or deflector, preventing sperm from entering the uterus (Bongaarts 2020).

Vaginal foam- Vaginal foam contains spermicidal. Spermicidal products used by themselves for the control of conception since they contain chemicals which, when placed in the vagina, will kill sperm without harming the delicate vaginal tissue. These products are available in three forms, namely: foam, cream and a synthetic gel. they are so effective that only one application is required before each act of intercourse. Women have found this method to be safe, effective and reliable (Kearney 2015).

Rhythm method – The rhythm method for controlling conception requires abstinence from intercourse during the days just after ovulation. It attempts to avoid conception by permitting sperm to be present in the woman only when the ripened egg is thought to be absent. No product is used in this method.

Coitus interruptus – This is also called the withdrawal method. It is generally considered a weak practice, because it imposes great restrictions on both partners at the very time each should feel the most free in the act of love. Also, it fails to take cognizance of the fact that some sperm are usually present in the lubricating fluids, secreted from the penis during sexual excitement before ejaculation or climax. Only one sperm is needed to fertilize the egg and that one may be well on its way before even ejaculation takes place.

Family Planning Clinics

In recent times, we have contraception available to everyone. Advice is now free to any woman who cares to seek for it. she can go either to her own family doctor (General Practitioner) or to a family planning clinic. These clinic are sometimes being set up by private voluntary organizations, such as Family Planning Association (FPA) and staffed with highly experienced and sympathetic doctors, specially trained for this purpose (Alakija 1986).

Efforts have been made not only to set up clinics, but also to train doctors who work in them. Contraception have also been available in these clinics as right for all woman.

The Need to Involve Men in Family Planning

Evidently, family planning should not only be the exclusive preserve of woman. Men should also be included. Perhaps, family planning programmes have focused basically on woman since they bear the risks and burden of pregnancy. Most contraceptives are for women. Many providers have assumed that woman have the greatest interest in protecting their own reproductive health.

However, in recent times, interest in and commitment to involving men in reproductive health has deepened because of the following reasons:

1. Growing concern about the spreading HIV/AIDs and other STDs such as Chlamydia and gonorrhoea.
2. Evidence of ill effects of some behavior on the health of women and children
3. Survey findings and study also confirms that many men approve family planning
4. Greater recognition that in many culture men make decision that affect women's reproductive health as well as their own (Trussel 2011).

Therefore, the equal participation of women and men in all areas of family and household responsibilities, including family planning, child rearing and housework, should be promoted and encouraged by the government. Also special efforts should be made to emphasize men's share responsibility and promote their active involvement in responsible parenthood, sexual and reproductive behavior, including family planning, parental and child health, prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV, prevention of unwanted pregnancies and so on.

The Need for Churches to Encourage Family Planning

Organized religion must understand that, it will be hypocritical and unrealistic to talk about decency in standard of living and yet adhere to ineffective, antiquated and morally impracticable means of conception reproduction control. Decency in standard of living can definitely not be realized without a rational and well-planned control of female fertility and human reproduction.

The church therefore must make sure the community is awakened to the fact that ineffective family planning and irresponsible and unchecked reproduction affects families and nation. Castle, a renowned Professor has wisely noted that: "The quality of the next generation is jeopardized because there is a strong inverse correlation between child health and family size; and rapid increase of the child population delays educational innovations and improvement" (1972).

CONCLUSION

The church and society therefore, must desist from paying lip-service to the objectives of family planning. They must take it upon themselves the task of supporting, promoting and suggesting effective measures of family planning. This kind of step, will in a great proportion help in maintaining acceptable standard of living, worthy of human dignity, as well as create a bright future for the younger generations.

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