

# **Fear of Side Effect as a Barrier to Long Term Contraceptive Use in Southwest, Nigeria**

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## **Background:**

Nigeria's fertility has remained high, with total fertility rates reducing only marginally from 6.0 in 1990 to 5.5 in 2013<sup>1</sup>. The value of the effective use of contraceptive methods in preventing unwanted pregnancy in our community has been highlighted in many studies. Unfortunately, despite a good contraceptive awareness, studies have shown a disappointingly very low contraceptive usage in Nigeria. This is believed to be due to several barriers including lack of access, socio-cultural and religious factors, partner's opposition and fear of side effects of contraceptives<sup>2,3,4</sup>. The 2013 National Demographic Health Survey puts the contraceptive prevalence for modern child spacing method for the South western region at 24.9%<sup>1</sup>, which is the highest for any region in the country but is still a far cry from other developed countries. Fear of side-effects is a commonly cited reason for contraceptive discontinuation. Many studies have found that while some of these are based on actual health related side-effects, many fears are based on rumors, rather than personal experience<sup>5</sup>, and this fear have been found to influence their desire to use FP<sup>6</sup>.

## **Main Research Question:**

This study was conducted to explore the fear of side effect as a barrier to the uptake of modern long term contraceptives among women in South west Nigeria. The study aimed at finding out if the experience of side effects among women in the South western States was real or rumoured? This was determined by the number of women who have either experienced a side effect from using a contraceptive or had seen someone experienced a side effect.

## **Methodology:**

This descriptive cross sectional study was carried out in Ogun state, South west, Nigeria and the target population were women of reproductive age group. The estimated population of women of reproductive age group in the State was 1,083,484. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select the respondents from a total of 6 communities from 6 local government areas in the state. Stage 1, from a sample frame of 20 local government areas, 6 local government areas were selected using simple random sampling method. In stage 2, a list of communities in each local government was made and one community was selected randomly from each list. In stage 3, respondents were recruited using convenience-sampling technique. All the women who presented at the Primary Healthcare facilities in the selected communities for scheduled Infant welfare visits from June 2013 to October 2013 were invited to participate in the study and those who consented, were interviewed.. A sample size of 384 was arrived at using the Leslie Fischer's formula for population greater than 10,000, but to increase representativeness and to make up for non-response, a total of 612 pre-tested semi-structured questionnaires were administered.

**Result:**

Most of the respondents in this survey were in the age range of 21 and 30 years (61.6%), followed by those in the range of 31 to 40 years (29.5%). The mean age of the respondents was  $28.54 \pm 5.69$  years. Most of them were married (97.0%), had a minimum of secondary school education (49%), and self-employed (68.5%). Some of the respondents understood contraception to mean prevention of unwanted pregnancy (48.5%) while for others contraception was for limiting the family size (32.5%). Their source of information was mainly the health personnel (52.6%). Majority of the respondents (94%) of the respondents have heard of child spacing before and 62% of the respondents have used a modern contraceptive, while more than half of the women (54.1%) had heard of side effects of modern contraceptive but only about 21% had experienced any form of side effect in their life. The commonest side effects mentioned by the respondents were excessive menstrual bleeding (46%), infertility (19%), weight gain (12%) and unwanted pregnancy (12%). Another 45% of the respondent claimed to have seen someone with a side effect of child spacing. About 58% of these respondents said they are scared by the information of the side effect that they have heard. There is no statistically significant association between the level of education of the respondent and their use of a modern contraceptive in the past nor with their feeling about anyone using contraceptives ( $p > 0.005$ ).

**Knowledge Contribution:**

Awareness and knowledge seemed to be on the increase especially through health personnel who provide health promotion activities on family planning as well as counselling to clients. The fear of side effect however remains high and may be a barrier to acceptance and uptake of Long term Contraceptives. FP Programs focused on dispelling the fear of side effect using community health education will go a long way in addressing this. The findings of this study also show the need for appropriate screening and counseling of clients in other to reduce side effects which scares people away from taking up contraceptives as for every one woman with a side effect, three other women will be scared of taking a contraceptive. The findings indicate that programmatic efforts should be geared towards providing information related to side effects of contraceptives through intensive community mobilization and mass media campaigns. These approaches can lead to increases in modern family planning use and subsequently improved maternal and child health in Nigeria.

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