

# Assessment of Awareness and Utilization of Natural Method of Family Planning Among Married Women of Reproductive Age in Shinkafi Town, Katsina State, Nigeria

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## Abstract

*The study was conducted on assessment of awareness and utilization of natural method of family planning (NFP) among married women of reproductive age in Shinkafi town. Specifically, to determine the proportion of married women of reproductive age who practice natural method of family planning, identify common method of NFP methods practiced by the women, determine the factors hindering married women of reproductive age from utilizing natural method of family planning and to identify methods of improving utilization of NFP. The research was descriptive in nature, convenience sampling technique was used and 310 respondents were sampled out of 1600 target population. The instrument used for this study was self-structured interview of which 310 were distributed. The data was analyzed using frequency distribution tables. The findings of the study shows that 35% of the respondents practiced NFP, the common method that is practiced is olden natural methods (such as 'Laya', 'Guru/Kiri'), lack of awareness and illiteracy were identified as factors hindering the practice of NFP and the ways of improving utilization are counselling and peer influence. It is recommended that the nurses should explain the benefits and importance of natural method of family planning to the married women of reproductive age and their husbands. Therefore, government should be involved in creating awareness about natural method of family planning through all means that will reach the community in a comprehensible and understandable ways.*

**Keywords:** Assessment, Awareness, Family Planning, Reproductive age, Utilization

## INTRODUCTION

Among the 1.9 billion women of reproductive age group (15-49 years) worldwide in 2019, 1.1 billion have a need for family planning; of these, 842 million are using contraceptive methods, and 270 million have an unmet need for contraception (Kantorová, 2020). There are various types of natural family planning methods, this includes based body temperature, cervical secretion (Billing's ovulation method), calendar method, symptom-thermal method, standard day's method, lactational amenorrhea method, cycle beads, coitus interrupts (withdrawal method). Natural family planning and preventing pregnancies by observation of naturally occurring signs and symptoms of the fertile and infertile phases of the menstrual cycle, with avoidance of intercourse during fertile phase can be used to prevent pregnancy (WHO, 2012). In this method no drugs, devices, or surgical procedures are used to avoid pregnancy. Most people who choose NFP do so for religious or personal reasons. Natural methods are also known as fertility awareness-based methods.

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Based on observation, family planning is to certain degree utilized in Shinkafi Town but some are not practicing the natural method especially among people with non-formal education due to cultural beliefs, norms, taboos and religious factors.

Therefore, this research is designed to access the awareness and utilization of natural method of family planning among married women of reproductive age in Shinkafi Town. Specifically, to determine the proportion of married women of reproductive age who practice natural method of family planning, identify common method of NFP methods practice by the women, determine the factors hindering married women of reproductive age from utilizing natural method of family planning and to identify methods of improving utilization of NFP.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The research is descriptive in nature and the study was conducted in Shinkafi town. Shinkafi town is one of the rural towns in Katsina State, North West, Nigeria. It is bounded by Dustin Safe 6 km Northwest, Yan Daki 7 km Northwest, Dandagoro 10km South and Makurda 10km East. The populace is predominantly Hausa and Fulani and others who came to the town on government duties or businesses. According to the 2016 population census, the population of Shinkafi is 8,200; married women 1, 600, unmarried women 1,800.

The study target population are all married women of reproductive age, ranging from 14-49 years (those who are within the age of giving birth in Shinkafi Town), so as to obtain their views and opinions on the awareness and utilization of natural method of family planning. Krejcie and Morgan table of sampling is used in determining number of the study respondents in which out of 1,600 married couple 310 were selected as sample.

Self-constructed questionnaire and check list for structured interview were used as data collection instruments.

Data obtained from the respondent were analyzed using appropriate descriptive statistical tools which include frequency distribution table and figures based on the responses of respondents after the questionnaire and structured interview were retrieved.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Results**

The responses of the respondents were analyzed, summarized and presented in the tables. Table 1 shows that 35% of the respondents practice one of the methods of NFP, while 65% do not.

**Table 1:** Respondents responses on whether they practice any natural method of family planning

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	107	35%
No	203	65%
Total	310	100%

Table 2 show that 86% of the respondents practice olden traditional methods of NFP.

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**Table 2:** the commonest natural method of family planning that women practice in the area

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Billings ovulation method	0	0%
Lactational amenorrhea	45	14%
Calendar method	0	0%
Olden methods (Kiri, Laya, Gurya, Rimi, Paro,)	265	86%
Total	310	100%

Table 3 shows that 30% of the respondents expressed that the factor that hinder them from using NFP are lack of awareness and illiteracy respectively, while 20% stated that the factor is lack of cooperation from husband.

**Table 3:** the factors that hinder the utilization of natural method of family planning

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lack of awareness	93	30%
Illiteracy	93	30%
Religious beliefs	0	0%
Lack of cooperation from the husband	62	20%
Any other	62	20%
Total	310	100%

Table 4 shows that 30% of the respondents agreed that utilization of NFP can be improved through counselling and peer influence respectively, 26% agreed with health awareness, while 14% agreed with public enlightenment.

**Table 4:** Methods of improving utilization of natural method of family planning

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Health awareness	78	26%
Public enlightenment	46	14%
Counseling the women on it's importance	93	30%
Peer influence	93	30%
Total	310	100%

## DISCUSSION

In the study 35% of the married women of reproductive age that participated in the study practice various methods of natural family planning. This is similar to the findings of the study conducted in the Urban Hall Community, Northern Saudi Arabia which revealed that most women were aware and have a positive attitude towards NFP (Alenezi, & Haridi, 2021). More so, the proportion of married women of reproductive age who practice natural method of family planning was low. This can be related to the findings of the study by Matthias, *et al.* (2017) in which out of 2560 respondents that - cut across different western countries - participated in his study and filled an online questionnaire revealed that forty-seven percent had previously used contraceptives. Ninety-five percent of women and 55% of men said using NFP has helped them to know their body better. Large majorities of men (74%) and women (64%) felt NFP helped to improve their relationship while <10% felt use of NFP had harmed their relationship. Most women (53%) and men (63%) felt using NFP improved their sex life while 32% of women and 24% of men felt it was unchanged from before they used NFP. Seventy-five percent of women and 73% of men said they are either "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their frequency of sexual intercourse.

Also, according to Ajayi, *et al.* (2018), of the current users of any contraceptive methods, in the Southwestern Nigerian States, about half (44.3%) were using a traditional contraceptive method which include withdrawal, periodic abstinence and standard day/rhythm and lactational amenorrhea. This is contrary to this research findings where all the women who practice Natural Family Planning, practice the olden traditional types of the method like Kiri, Laya, Gurya, Rimi, Paro, and Herbs, among which the most common is Kiri tie on waist, practice by 86% of the women.

The natural method of family planning was found to be effective among those who practice it in the area. This is in agreement with National Health Scheme (2021) which categorically stated that “if natural family planning instructions are carefully followed, this method can be up to 99% effective.

In this study, lack of awareness and illiteracy about NFP methods were seen as the factors hindering married women of reproductive age from utilizing natural method of family planning. This is similar to the study conducted by Umar *et al* (2019) at the reproductive health clinic of Ahmadu Bello University Teaching Hospital, Zaria, Nigeria which revealed that lack of awareness (24%), been single (17%), unknown reason (17%), irregular menstrual cycle (10%), and fear of method failure (8%) are the major factors that hinder practice of NFP. Similarly, Gonie (2018) shared similar view that low contraceptive prevalence rate might be attributed by husband opposition, religious beliefs, concern and fear of side effects. Having more than seven deliveries and birth interval less than 24 months between the last two children were determinants of contraceptive use.

In alignment to this study some of the above factors are right but others in this study include lack of awareness , illiteracy ,religious beliefs and lack of cooperation from the husband or lack of interest from the women herself and fear of failure.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, it is a vital and essential aspect of life as it's the only method that enables couples to plan the desired family size that they can take good care of which result in the upbringing of reliable children with good potentials. The study revealed the assessment of awareness and utilization of natural method of family planning among married women of reproductive age in Shinkafi Town. Findings revealed that the women are aware but did not practice them, instead they practice the olden traditional ones except for LAM which some practice. However, some factors that hinder the practice of natural method of family planning were identified and also the factors that can improve the practice of natural method of family planning were discovered and the following recommendations were made.

- i. Nurses should explain the benefits and importance of natural method of family planning to the married women of reproductive age and their husband during health talk and community interactions.
- ii. Nurses should correct myth and misconception about natural method of family planning.
- iii. Health care givers should counsel the married women on the utilization of natural methods of family planning and allow them to choose the method of their choice.

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