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# **FAMILY PLANNING PRACTICES AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA. A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Nigeria, despite advancements in healthcare and economic policies, still struggles to implement effective family planning strategies. This challenge leads to high population growth, unintended pregnancies, and increased maternal and child mortality. Limited access to family planning services impacts both individual families and the nation's economic development. High fertility rates strain resources, hinder educational and employment opportunities, and perpetuate poverty.

This paper systematically reviews existing studies to explore the link between family planning practices and economic development in Nigeria, the prevalence of family planning methods, the socioeconomic factors influencing their use, and the impact on economic growth. The study adopts demographic transition theory and secondary data collection methods such as books, journal articles, documentaries, newspapers among other internet based documented materials were reviewed, revealing a low contraceptive prevalence rate of 12% and a high unmet need for family planning in Nigeria, despite being Africa's most populous country. The findings underscore the importance of family planning for economic development, as it allows couples to

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save and invest in education and infrastructure, thereby boosting productivity and growth. Socioeconomic factors such as education, occupation, socio-economic status, age, and number of children significantly affect family planning practices. Empowering women to control their fertility enhances economic growth through increased labor market participation and human capital development. The paper concludes that family planning is crucial for development and recommends a context-specific approach that considers Nigeria's diverse cultural, economic, and environmental landscapes.

**Keywords:** Family planning practices, economic growth and development, Nigeria.

## Introduction

Family planning and economic development are closely intertwined issues of significant importance in Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation. As the country grapples with rapid population growth and economic challenges, the role of family planning in shaping Nigeria's developmental trajectory has gained increasing attention from policymakers, researchers, and international organizations (Adaki, 2023). Nigeria's population is projected to reach 401 million by 2050, potentially making it the third most populous country in the world (United Nations, 2022). This explosive growth presents both opportunities and challenges for economic development. On one hand, a large, youthful population can provide a demographic dividend if properly harnessed. On the other, rapid population growth strains public services, infrastructure, and natural resources, potentially impeding economic progress (United Nations, 2022).

Family planning initiatives aim to empower individuals and couples to make informed decisions about the number and spacing of their children. These programs not only contribute to improved maternal and child health outcomes but also have far-reaching implications for economic development. By reducing unintended pregnancies and slowing population growth, family planning can alleviate pressure on public services and allow for greater investment in human capital development (Starbird et al., 2021). The high fertility rate in Nigeria, coupled with low uptake of modern contraceptive methods, results in a population expansion that outpaces economic growth. This demographic trend puts immense pressure on already strained public services and infrastructure. For instance, healthcare systems struggle to meet the needs of a growing population, leading to compromised maternal and child health outcomes (Adaki, 2023).

Educational institutions are overwhelmed, often resulting in overcrowded classrooms and diminished quality of education. These factors collectively hinder the development of human capital, which is crucial for driving economic growth and innovation (Adaki, 2023). Recent studies have highlighted the economic benefits of family planning in Nigeria. A 2023 analysis by the World Bank estimated that for every dollar invested in family planning services in Nigeria, the return on investment could be as high as \$7 in saved health and education costs (World Bank, 2023).

Additionally, research by Oye-Adeniran et al. (2022) found that increased access to family planning services in Nigeria was associated with higher female labor force participation and improved household economic outcomes.

Despite these potential benefits, Nigeria continues to face significant challenges in implementing effective family planning programs. Cultural norms, religious beliefs, and inadequate healthcare infrastructure all contribute to low contraceptive rates. According to the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS, 2023), only 20% of married women use modern contraceptive methods, well below the global average (National Population Commission, 2023). As Nigeria strives to achieve sustainable economic development, addressing the complex relationship between family planning and economic growth will be crucial. This introduction sets the stage for a deeper exploration of the current landscape, challenges, and potential solutions in this critical area of development policy.

The intricate relationship between family planning practices and economic development in Nigeria represents a critical yet complex socio-economic challenge that demands comprehensive scholarly investigation. Despite significant global advancements in reproductive health and family planning interventions, Nigeria continues to grapple with profound demographic and economic constraints that impede its national development trajectory (Okeke & Chiboka, 2023). The nation's rapid population growth, characterized by high fertility rates and limited access to comprehensive family planning services, has emerged as a substantial barrier to sustainable economic progress and social transformation.

Recent demographic data reveal that Nigeria's population grows at an exponential rate of approximately 2.6% annually, with a total fertility rate of 5.3 children per woman, substantially higher than the current fertility rate for the world in 2024 at 2.410 births per woman, a 0.33% decline from 2023. (United Nations Population Division, 2024). This demographic pattern exerts unprecedented pressure on limited national resources, healthcare infrastructure, educational systems, and economic opportunities. The interplay between uncontrolled population expansion and economic development manifests in multifaceted challenges, including increased poverty rates, heightened unemployment, diminished per capita income, and constrained social service delivery (Adedini et al., 2024).

The persistent gaps in family planning practices are particularly pronounced across different socio-economic and geographical contexts within Nigeria (Adedini et al., 2024). Rural communities and marginalized populations experience significantly reduced access to comprehensive reproductive health services, contraceptive technologies, and informed family planning education (Ezeh et al., 2023). These disparities are further compounded by deeply entrenched cultural, religious, and gender-related barriers that frequently impede women's autonomous reproductive decision-making processes. Moreover, the economic implications of limited family planning practices extend beyond immediate demographic constraints. Unplanned and frequent pregnancies contribute to increased maternal and infant mortality rates, reduced women's workforce participation, compromised educational attainment,

and intergenerational poverty cycles (Moronkola et al., 2024). The potential economic dividend that could be realized through strategic family planning interventions remains largely unrealized, representing a significant opportunity cost for Nigeria's developmental aspirations.

Existing research, while valuable, presents fragmented and context-specific insights that do not comprehensively address the complex interconnections between family planning practices and economic development. There remains a critical research gap in understanding the nuanced mechanisms through which family planning strategies can effectively catalyze sustainable economic transformation at individual, community, and national levels (Akinwande & Peters, 2023). Therefore, the paper systematically reviews the correlation between family planning and economic development in Nigeria.

## **Methods**

This paper utilizes secondary sources of data collection in which books, journal articles, documentaries, reports, newspapers among other internet based documented materials were reviewed.

## **Literature**

### **Family planning**

Different scholars have defined family planning in different ways. However, it generally refers to organized efforts to assure couples who want to limit their family size and space their children have access to contraceptive information and services and are encouraged to use them as needed (Bongaarts & Hardee, 2019). It is the conscious use of contraceptive methods and reproductive health services to manage family size and birth intervals (El Khoury & Salameh, 2019; Cornish et al., 2020).

### **Economic development**

Perkins et al., (2023) define economic development as a sustained increase in the standard of living of a country's population, accompanied by fundamental changes in the structure of its economy. They emphasize that this involves not just increases in per capita income, but also improvements in health, education, and other aspects of human welfare. According to the World Bank (2023), economic development is the process by which the economic well-being and quality of life of a nation, region, local community, or an individual are improved according to targeted goals and objectives.

### **Economic growth**

Kuznets (1973) offers a comprehensive definition of economic growth, describing it as "a long-term rise in capacity to supply increasingly diverse economic goods to its population, this growing capacity is based on advancing technology and the institutional and ideological adjustments that it demands." This definition emphasizes not just the quantitative increase in output, but also the qualitative improvements in production capacity and the societal changes that accompany growth.

### **The prevalence of family planning practices**

Worldwide, 1.1 billion women of reproductive age have a need for family planning (World Health Organization WHO, (2023). The organization further asserts that out of this 1.1 billion, 842 million are using contraceptive methods, and 270 million do not wish to have more children, but are not actively using contraception. This discrepancy deprives women of the ability to determine the number and spacing of their children and inevitably leads to higher rates of unintended pregnancies around the world (Thurston,2021). Children are expensive, but how do these unintended pregnancies play out across more than just the economics of that family?

Sub-Saharan Africa has long been a focal point of global family planning efforts. With the highest fertility rate in the world and the highest unmet need for family planning, the region has become the target of governmental and non-governmental organisations dedicated to reproductive health education and the distribution of contraceptives. Despite this, the modern contraceptive prevalence rate is notably low at around 22%, ranging from 3.5% in the Central African Republic to 49.7% in Namibia (Boadu, 2022).

Nigeria, despite being the most populous in the continent, has a contraceptive prevalence rate of only 12% (Fadeyibi, et al., 2022). The unmet need for family planning in Nigeria is estimated to be at 48% among sexually active unmarried women and 19% among currently married women (National Population Commission, 2022). This reflects a general failure of government and non-profit organisations to meet the demand for family planning options. Indeed, in areas where healthcare facilities are difficult to access, through distance or sparse numbers, obtaining any contraception and family planning advice can be extremely difficult.

### **Common family planning methods practiced in Nigeria**

Recent studies have highlighted the diverse family planning methods utilized across Nigeria's complex sociocultural environment and modern contraceptive prevalence remains relatively low at 12% among married women (Adebowale et al., 2023), though traditional methods' continue to play a significant role in family planning practices throughout the country. Popular among the methods commonly practiced are injectable contraceptives, oral contraceptive pills, traditional methods (Abstinence and Withdrawal), male and female condoms, long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARCs), emergency contraception and healthcare provider preferences.(Adebowale et al., 2023).

### **The nexus between family planning practices and economic development**

A critical review by Thurston (2023) on how family planning practices impact the economy of a nation reveals a complex and multifaceted relationship. This topic has garnered significant attention from researchers, policymakers, and economists in recent years, particularly in developing countries where population growth often outpaces economic development. Since World War II, no country has gone from

developing status to developed status without first reducing its population growth rate (Thurston, 2023). This author further stressed that smaller family sizes enable couples to save a higher percentage of their income and invest some of it in education and infrastructure, leading to increased productivity of the economy, greater employment, and higher incomes. On the other hand, couples who have large numbers of children are more likely to experience financial struggles and might have to make some difficult choices about which children to send to school and support financially. Too often, girls are the ones who go without in these cases, because their education is considered less important (Thurston, 2023). The reasons are many: girls are seen as intellectually inferior, or the investment is considered unwise because there are no job opportunities for women, or girls are removed from school when they get their periods. Whatever the reason, some of these girls are married off at young ages and quickly begin having children of their own, and others are forced to drop out of school so they can help take care of their brothers and sisters (World Bank 2023).

Another primary argument in favour of family planning as an economic tool is its potential to harness the demographic dividend. Bloom et al. (2020) in their study found that countries that successfully implemented family planning programs experienced a significant boost in economic growth due to a more favorable age structure. This occurs when the working-age population significantly outnumbers dependents, leading to increased productivity and savings rates. Moreover, the relationship between family planning and economic development can be bidirectional. Improved economic conditions and education levels often lead to reduced fertility rates, even in the absence of specific family planning programs.

### **Empirical review**

Adaki (2023) examined the efficacy of family planning interventions in ensuring sustainable food provision. A cohort of 120 participants from diverse Nigerian states participated in the study, responding to structured questionnaires. The collected data underwent Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS) software analysis, leading to tabulated data and percentages reflecting respondents' viewpoints. Through regression analysis, the study found a statistically significant relationship between the implementation of family planning programs and food security. Findings revealed that for every unit increase in the effectiveness of family planning initiatives, there was a consequential increase of 0.315 units in food security, showcasing a notably positive impact. This association, reflected by a Beta coefficient of 0.531, underscores the substantial influence of these programs on improving food security. These results highlight the potential efficacy of strategic implementation of family planning interventions as a crucial mechanism in alleviating Nigeria's food security concerns amidst rapid population growth. In response to these identified challenges, the research articulated recommendations aimed at addressing these issues. They encompassed measures like improved educational initiatives, enhanced accessibility to services, heightened public

awareness campaigns, bolstered support for women, and the reinforcement of healthcare infrastructure.

Dhruve et al., (2016) attempted to understand the relationship between socio economic factors and utilization of family planning services. The study was community based descriptive cross-sectional study, conducted in an urban area. Total 600 married women were interviewed. Data were analyzed by SPSS software. Chi-square test was applied. Result: 558(93%) were aware about at least one method of contraceptives and contraceptive prevalence was found to be 56.8%. Socioeconomic factors like education, occupation, socioeconomic class, age, number of living children significantly affected use of contraceptive. Due to more emphasis on permanent methods, adoptions of temporary methods did not get desired importance. Therefore, intensive efforts are needed to popularize spacing methods.

### **Theory: Demographic Transition Theory**

This theory forms the theoretical foundation for this review as explained as follows: Demographic transition theory was primarily developed by Warren Thompson in the 1920s and later refined by demographic scholars like Frank Notestein, who provided a more comprehensive understanding of population dynamics. The theory conceptualizes population changes as a result of economic and social development, presenting a model that explains the transformation of population growth patterns across different stages of societal development.

The fundamental assumptions of the theory center on the relationship between economic modernization and population dynamics. It posits that societies progress through distinct stages characterized by shifts in birth and death rates, ultimately leading to a stabilized population structure. The theory suggests that as countries develop economically and socially, they experience a predictable sequence of demographic changes, moving from high fertility and mortality rates to lower and more controlled population growth (Caldwell & Schindlmayr, 2003).

In the context of Nigeria, the application of demographic transition theory provides critical insights into family planning and its potential impact on economic growth and development. Nigeria, as a developing nation, presents a unique case study of population dynamics influenced by socioeconomic transformations. The theory suggests that improved family planning interventions can accelerate the demographic transition, potentially leading to significant economic benefits. Research by Osili and Long (2008) indicates that increased access to family planning services can reduce fertility rates, enhance human capital investment, and create opportunities for economic productivity.

However, the theory fails to comprehensively explain the variations in demographic transitions across different regions and socioeconomic groups within a single country like Nigeria. The assumption of a uniform transition process does not capture the nuanced realities of diverse communities with varying levels of economic development, educational attainment, and cultural practices (Caldwell, 2006).

## Discussion of the keynotes from the reviews

This paper reviewed family planning practices and economic development in Nigeria. And base on the revelations from the reviews in consonant with the aim and objectives, the paper revealed according to the submissions by scholars such as Fadeyibi et al., (2022), National Population Commission (2022) and Boadu (2022), Nigeria, despite being the most populous in the continent, has a contraceptive prevalence rate of only 12% while the unmet need for family planning in Nigeria is estimated to be at 48% among sexually active unmarried women and 19% among currently married women. This no doubt reflects a general failure of government and non-profit organisations to meet the demand for family planning options.

The paper also revealed in line with the views of scholars like Bloom et al. (2020), Cleland et al. (2024), Bongaarts and O'Neill (2022), Acemoglu and Restrepo (2021) among others that family planning as an economic tool for development has potential to harness the demographic dividend in Nigeria. This could be because no country has gone from developing status to developed status without first reducing its population growth rate through effective family planning practices as smaller family sizes enable couples to save a higher percentage of their income and invest some of it in education and infrastructure, leading to increased productivity of the economy, greater employment, and higher incomes.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, while family planning alone is not a panacea for Nigeria's development challenges, it represents a crucial tool in the nation's development arsenal. By thoughtfully integrating family planning practices into its broader development strategies, Nigeria can work towards achieving sustainable economic growth, improving the quality of life for its citizens, and positioning itself for long-term prosperity in an increasingly competitive global economy.

The path forward requires continued commitment, cultural sensitivity, and evidence-based policymaking. As Nigeria navigates its demographic transition and strives for sustainable development, the role of family planning will remain a critical area for both policy attention and academic inquiry.

## Recommendations

Based on the reviews, the following recommendations were made:

1. Nigeria, as Africa's most populous nation and largest economy, should prioritize the adoption of comprehensive family planning practices as a key strategy for achieving sustainable development. This can be achieved through an increase in access to a wide range of modern contraceptive methods, provision of a comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education, engage community leaders to address cultural barriers, integrate family planning services with broader healthcare initiatives and as a matter of urgency implement policies that support women's education and economic participation.



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