

# Christians' Attitude towards Family Planning in Southwestern Nigeria: A Sociological Problem of Analysis and Evaluation

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## ABSTRACT

**Aim of the Study:** The debate on whether Christians should engage in family planning is as old as Christian history. Previous studies on Christian participation in family planning have focused more on the medical perspective with little attention paid to the level of involvement of Christians particularly in South-western of Nigeria. This paper examined the Christian view vis-a-vis medical views of family planning.

**Methodology:** Both qualitative and quantitative methods were adopted in this research and description approaches were used to analyses the data.

**Findings:** The work discovered the relevance of family planning in national development and what an individual, family, community and the nation as a whole could do to stabilize or promote national development through family planning. In doing this, the position of Roman Catholic Church was critically examined because it was totally different from the general position of the other Christians. Roman Catholic frowns at family planning in its entirety except the natural method.

**Conclusion:** It was therefore recommended that serious considerations be given to the health of mother and child; and that the number of children per family should be according to the size it would be able to cater for.

**Keywords:** Christian's Attitude, Family Planning, Nigeria, Problem of Analysis and Evaluation.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Family planning concerns everybody, irrespective of social background and religious affiliation. Many couples, probably because of financial problems and contagious diseases in the society, have come to realize the need for family planning (Ahmed et al., 2024; Arif et al., 2024). Local, state and national governments are also clamouring for the need to employ family planning methods, often because of the alarming rate of population growth. To achieve their aims and aspirations, these governments establish family planning units to enlighten and educate the citizenry on the need for family planning. The global clamour for family planning necessitated this paper, which looks at the issue from the Christian

perspective. Thus, the paper would examine the different views on the family planning and their relevance to Christianity.

Different definitions on the concept of family planning have been presented by experts, with each having its own unique characteristics. Thus, this write up would give a critical look at several definitions given by different people. The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF, 2003) defines family planning as the deliberate initiative taken by couples or individuals to determine and achieve their preferred number of children, as well as to manage the timing and spacing of their births. Consequently, family planning is facilitated through the use of contraception and the management of involuntary infertility.

Family planning, according to Werner (1998) and Adigun (2004), is to have the number of children you want and when you want them. Ikulayo (2003) defined family planning as a way of limiting family size to a number which the family can conveniently take care of. Ikulayo stated that it is a method to check population explosion by spacing childbirth. Thus, family planning is a means by which a couple determine the number of children in the family (Azmat et al., 2023; Devaraj et al., 2024).

As defined by the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (2002), family planning refers to a strategy aimed at managing the number and timing of children within a family, utilizing contraception or various birth control methods. This definition indicates that family planning involves a deliberate approach to controlling both the quantity and spacing of children, employing contraceptive techniques and other methods deemed appropriate by individuals or couples. Similarly, the Merriam-Webster Medical Dictionary (2002) describes family planning as the practice of restricting the number of children born. Thus, family planning is seen as something that has to do with the methods and procedures adapted by an individual to limit childbirth. Conversely, the Minnesota Department of Health (2004) defined family planning as the voluntary actions and planning undertaken by individuals prior to pregnancy to either prevent, postpone, or attain a pregnancy. The department outlines family planning services to include counseling and education, pre-conception care, screening, laboratory tests, among other offerings. This definition agrees that to delay, prevent or achieve pregnancy, there is need for planning by the individual, couple, group, family or, perhaps, society. Thus, such a family planning is individual-based and voluntary (Zhu, 2024; Mooney et al., 2024).

Maududi (1967) and Lemu (2004) also stated that family planning is a voluntary, individual measure to space or regulate family size, either for economic or health reasons. Hence, family planning serves as an opportunity to plan a family, especially in terms of size. Consequently, every definition here seems to be subject to individual's point of view, perhaps based on personal involvement or experience. One may, thus, conclude that, although there are slight variations in the use of language by the profoundest of these definitions, one issue of focus in all the definitions is the fact that family planning involves child spacing, and that all methods take the health of the individual paramount. The advantages of family planning include the fulfilment of parental obligations on the children, the promotion of good health and a decent way of life. However, among the negative effects of not adhering to family planning methods are premature death and permanent bareness (Jiaz, 2024; Rehman and Hussain, 2023; Hellwing et al., 2024).

This paper aims to explore the relevance of family planning in national development and what an individual, family, community and the nation as a whole could do to stabilize or promote national development through family planning. As a result of this, the position of Roman Catholic Church is critically examined because it is totally different from the general position of the other Christians. Roman Catholic frowns at family planning in its entirety except the natural method. They have unique moral belief towards the contemporary practice of family planning and this may indirectly affect the national development. Catholic doctrine holds that God created sexual intercourse to be both unitive and procreative. The deliberate attempt to alter fertility or the marital act with intention of preventing procreation is considered sinful by the Catholic Church. In this regard, the Catholic condemns artificial birth control methods while abstinence is considered morally acceptable.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This study employed the mixed-method of quantitative and qualitative techniques and description approaches were used to analyse the data. In other words, primary and secondary sources of data were of paramount importance in the work. The primary data was collected using questionnaires, in-depth interviews (IDI), and focus group discussions (FGDs). In contrast, the secondary data was obtained from pertinent journals, official publications regarding Christians' perspectives on family planning, as well as magazines, newspapers, texts, conference papers, handbooks, bulletins, hospital records, government documents, relevant websites, and gazettes that pertained to the topic. The study was conducted in south west Region of Nigeria which consists of five states namely Ekiti, Ondo, Osun, Oyo, Ogun and Lagos state. The researcher considered some factors in selecting these states. Thus the respondents had first-hand experiences and information on the subject matter. This study adopted purposive and random sampling techniques. For the questionnaire survey, a sample size of 2,400 respondents was selected. This was based on sample determinants for research activities according to R. V. Krejcie (1970). The questionnaire administration was carried out in the three senatorial districts of each states in the South-western Nigeria. That is, four hundred (400) respondents each drawn from each state while a grand total was two thousand four hundred (2,400) respondents for the research work. The in-depth interview (IDI) was conducted with ninety (90) purposely selected Christians: 24 clerics (4 in each state), 30 hospital workers (5 in each state) and 36 members of the general public (6 in each state) based on their experiences. These amounted to a total of ninety (90) IDI respondents. In addition, three to twelve focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted among the public in the six states. Interview responses were analysed using summative content. All their responses and views were incorporated in body of this work.

### *2.1 Medical Views on Family Planning*

There is no doubt that family planning, in the medical perspective, comprises methods and devices available to help individuals and couples decide the number of children they will have. It also deals with how to use contraceptives to prevent conception; in extreme cases, surgical sterilization is involved (Fashola, 2000). There are many methods of family planning. Some are applicable only to the female, while others to the male. There are three natural methods and some artificial methods.

### *2.2 Natural Family Planning Methods*

There are ordinary family planning methods designed by man and woman to avoid unwanted pregnancy. The first is known as the fertility awareness, periodic abstinence or rhythmic method. This method involves abstaining from sexual intercourse during a woman's menstrual cycle to prevent the possibility of pregnancy, or alternatively, employing a barrier method for contraception. The method has no side effects, because it is natural. Therefore, natural family planning refers to any of several means using the woman's natural body rhythms, to avoid pregnancy; thus allowing the couple to engage in sexual intercourse with a lowered risk of pregnancy. This focus on the woman's natural rhythms makes this method to be named 'rhythm method'. The different methods under this approach are discussed below.

**a. Abstinence:** This involves the avoidance of sexual intercourse. It is the best and surest method of preventing pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease. It requires a great discipline on the part of the couple. It is possible for determined individuals to shun and reject sexual overtures if they are disciplined (Ikulayo, 2003).

**b. Safe Period or Rhythm Method:** It involves avoiding sexual intercourse during the ovulation period and having sexual activities outside this period, when the female reproductive system is infertile, so that conception does not take place. Safe period is also known as rhythm method. The Catholic denomination calls it a billing method. This requires no gadgets or medical equipment other than a calendar for proper marking of days of the month (Werner, 1998).

**c. Withdrawal Method or Coitus Interruptus:** As the name suggests, this is the deliberate withdrawal of the penis during the act of sexual intercourse, so that it does not ejaculate inside the vagina. The success of this method is very doubtful because some sperm might escape through the seminal fluid before ejaculation, this leading to pregnancy.

### ***2.3 Artificial Methods of Contraception***

The artificial methods involve the use of external gadgets to effect adequate contraception. Therefore, it is advisable to consult medical doctor in the field of family planning (such as a gynecologist) before using any artificial means of contraception. It must be understood that all gadgets of contraception have corresponding side effects. The side effects are the risk involved in the use of gadgets. These methods are discussed below.

**a. Condom Use:** Condom is a rubber sheath or cap worn by the male over the penis during sexual intercourse, to prevent semen from entering the vagina. A condom thus forms a barrier between the organs and prevent direct contact. It is effective in preventing pregnancy. It is effective in preventing pregnancy. It is also effective in avoiding sexually transmitted diseases (Ikulayo, 2003; Edfho, 2004).

**b. The Diaphragm:** A diaphragm is also a rubber sheath or cap, but that is worn by the woman through the vagina, to the neck of the womb. It does the same work as the condom. However, it does not prevent transmission of sexually transmitted diseases.

**c. Oral Contraceptive Pills:** The pill consist of tablets composed of the two female sex hormones, namely, estrogen and progesterone. The pill, when taken, operates by maintaining a high level of the hormones in the body which prevents the development of a mature ovum. The risk involves is that future pregnancy may be disturbed, difficult or impossible.

**d. Intra Uterine Device (the Coil):** The coil is made of copper or plastic. It is inserted by a gynaecologist, under sterile conditions, into the uterus to prevent pregnancy. However, the woman may grow lean and her appetite may be affected (Adigun et al., 2004).

**e. Tubal Ligation:** This is a surgical way of effective a permanent contraception, by cutting of the uterine tubes (the fallopian tubes) of the woman. This is alright if the couple do not want any child for the rest of their lives (Folorunsho, 2004).

**f. Vasectomy:** This is also a surgical way of effecting a permanent contraception of sterilization in the male by the tying and cutting of the vas deferens.

### ***2.3 Christian Views of Family Planning***

Before the 20th century, contraception faced widespread condemnation from all significant branches of Christianity, including influential Reformers such as Martin Luther and John Calvin. In contemporary Christian denominations, there exists a wide range of perspectives on contraception. This raises the question: Should Christians utilize birth control? For many Christian couples, this question presents a considerable challenge. A plethora of books and websites address this topic, frequently advocating for their interpretations as the sole 'correct approach' for devout couples.

The topic of birth control generates significant debate among Christians. Some individuals argue that any method that may hinder conception constitutes an attempt to 'play God' and contravenes divine teachings. Conversely, others view all forms of contraception as permissible, even those that may terminate a developing embryo. Additionally, there exists a range of perspectives among individuals who accept certain birth control methods while rejecting others.

Eventually, the Christian couple will need to determine the ideal size of their family. God instructed Adam and Noah to populate the earth (Genesis 1:28; 9:1), yet this directive appears less relevant to contemporary society, given that the earth seems to be sufficiently populated. Whether a family has many children or just a few can be equally valid. While the New Testament does not provide specific guidance

on family size, there are various factors that influence the decision for a Christian family. Among these considerations, the health of the mother should be a primary factor in making this choice.

## ***2.4 Reasons for Family Planning in Christianity***

It is of paramount importance to consider some of the rationale for the family planning in Christianity. First, should the doctor say that it is unwise for a woman to go through pregnancy, the issue may well be decided. Thus, if childbearing constitutes health risk to a woman or if she faces frequent problems at the period of delivery, a couple should opt for birth control.

Second, in today's economy, the ability of a man to provide for his family should be considered. If a man cannot cope with the burden of having many children, he can limit the number of his children to the size he would be able to cater for. I Timothy 5:8 states: 'But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever'. In essence, it may be necessary to obtain larger living spaces, provide more food, cover additional clothing expenses, and manage increased tuition costs. Consideration should also be given to the age of a parent when their child enters adolescence. Raising and educating children can be particularly challenging for those who are retired or reliant solely on social security.

Third, abortion is the taking of human life and is considered by Christians as contrary to God's law (Exodus 20:13; Matt. 19: 17, 18). But there is a reason that a Christian can consider abortion as non-criminal: when the life of a woman (prospective mother) is threatened. When a Christian is faced with a chronic sickness that would affect the pregnancy, abortion may become necessary on the recommendation of a doctor. This is not a common occurrence, but it has happened to some Christians.

Fourth, if there is a likelihood that the health of a child, in the light of the ill-health of a parent (in such conditions as acquired immune deficiency syndrome, AIDS), family can be positively considered. Such a parent may decide to stay away from sexual relation, so that the disease condition is somewhat contained (Sulaiman, 2005).

Fifth, after the first child, a couple may find reasons, medically or physiologically, why they may not attempt childbearing again. There is no room for criticism when a family chooses to have only one child. Thus, parents alone have the right to determine the number of children in their family, and nobody can take this right from them.

## ***2.5 Methods of Family Planning and the Christian Viewpoint***

We may ask: In view of the controversy and politics behind birth control issues, why is the church (or Christians) involved in family planning? The reason is twofold. First, the church recognizes that for some countries (such as India, Japan and China), there is the problem of overpopulation. Second, the church realizes that for individual families and, especially, women in an urban setting, many children may present a rather unbearable burden. Jesus commended the foresight of the man who counted the cost before building a tower, to be sure of being able to finish the job properly (Luke 14:28-30). Is not such foresight equally important for those who wish to build a family? The responsibility to take care of a child takes a long period before such a child gets economic independence. From pregnancy to adulthood, the child looks on its parent for sustenance. If these specifications are carefully considered and followed, there would be peace in the home; poverty would be minimised; and divorce would be averted (Afe Orolu, 2005).

Besides, the Church, in its wisdom, actively promotes the exploration of human nature and the principles that regulate fertility. Consequently, it advises parents to examine their own fertility patterns, enabling them to plan and nurture their families in a genuine relationship with God. This is why the Roman Catholic Church endorses various natural family planning methods, including the billings, ovulation methods, withdrawal method and abstinence.

The home should be a place where comfort, joy and peace are found. But often, such expectations are unrealised because of the so-called 'careless pregnancies'. The implications of this include high risk of foetal death, birth defect, infant or child mortality, maternal mortality, nutrient deficiency for mother and child - all of which could be contained through effective family planning methods or programmes. Thus, it is advisable for Christians make use of available modern artificial contraceptive, alongside traditional contraceptive methods.

## ***2.6 The Position of Roman Catholic Church About Family Planning in South-Western Nigeria***

In many parts of the world, information concerning birth control technique is needed to assist in designing family planning programmes and to make them more effective and result oriented. Several decades ago, family planning was regarded as a taboo in Nigeria and, in fact, across numerous African nations. Children were perceived as blessings from God, and any efforts to control birth were deemed sinful and sacrilege to God. Today, the opinion has changed totally in favour of family planning which has necessitated the community-based distribution of contraceptives. Family planning therefore becomes a crucial aspect of population; it is no more new in human society, except its methodology.

Moreover, African countries like Ghana, Kenya and Egypt have population policies and initiated national family planning programmes while others like Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra-Leone have adopted family planning organizations to provide clinical services to the willing clients (Odudele, 2006). There is no doubt that population in Nigeria is increasing at an alarming rate. Family planning is an indispensable and potent instrument for checking increase in population. The importance of family planning finds its relevance in the Alma Afa 1978 declaration on the adoption of primary health care as a key towards health for all by the year 2000 where maternal and child health including the family planning is one of its component (Oscar, 1998).

However, the church and various social, cultural, traditional and educational organizations have embraced family planning except the Roman Catholic Church. This seems to be a dangerous awakening in the church as it negates the contemporary question of national unity and development. Ikulayo (2003) remarks that if children are spaced to an interval of between two and three years, the health and welfare of each child as well as that of the mother could be well catered for and effectively managed. For sustainable development to be attained in Nigeria, there must be control of birthrates. Odudele (2006) observes that development promotes the welfare of present and future generations. It is pertinent to note that programmes that promote the status of employment and education of women might be beneficial because employed or better educated women have fewer children than the unemployed or less educated ones.

In the beginning, God created Adam and Eve. He blessed them to be fruitful, multiply and replenish the earth (Gen. 1: 27-28). God's initial mind or plan for mankind is to live on earth not to die. It was sin that brought death and reduction to mankind. Only Noah and his family survived the flood. According to the Roman Catholic therefore, if family embarked on family planning the earth would not have been replenished as commanded by God in Genesis 9:7. Hence, you and I would not have been born.

Biblically, they have the belief that God the author and originator of family never commanded us to reduce our family size. She opines that it was sin that has made mankind to come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). No matter the size of a family or of the earth as a whole, mankind would have been living peacefully, healthy and longevity. Thus, sin has brought suffering and death unto mankind (Roman 6:23).

The Catholic Church recognizes the need for family planning that is for couples to have as many children as their circumstances make practical. To them, any step taken to prevent pregnancy except the natural one is thus considered an offence against the law of God and of nature. Those who indulge in such artificial act are branded with the guilt of a grave sin. The physical, economic, psychological and social reasons or benefits for limiting the number of or spacing children notwithstanding, the Catholic Church

however approves of only the natural family planning by which married couples make legitimate use of only natural dispositions. This method allows a couple to limit the size of their family by identifying times of infertility and potential fertility in the woman in order to achieve or avoid pregnancy.

In accordance with her teachings, the Catholic Church therefore condemns the use of artificial birth control method while encouraging total abstinence during high fertility times for couples trying to avoid pregnancy. Catholic doctrine holds that God created sexual intercourse to be both unitive and procreative. The deliberate attempt to alter fertility or marital act with the intention of preventing procreation is considered sinful by the Catholic Church. In this regards the Catholic Church condemns artificial birth control method while abstinence is considered morally acceptable.

In spite of the medical considerations or reasons for family planning, it is an abomination to Catholic Church. To them, disregarding family planning will lead to increase in birth rate and more population. This will be of great help to such society or country especially during the war time. Such community will be able to have able men to defend the said community against external aggression. Thus, population is a signal to military strength of a given country.

Some people who have previously engaged in family planning said it may have negative effect on the body system of the woman concerned. They testified that it disturbs the placenta of the concern woman as a result of the drug to be taken in the process at regular intervals. The major good that natural family planning does is that, women's are not disturbed. It does not have any side effect which is detrimental to the body. The nature of woman's body seems to be computerized and programmed; and varies from one woman to another. This is why Catholic Church believes that nothing should be done to disturb the natural setting, except in the cases of sickness and child birth, and this will take sometimes for the body to adjust.

Additionally, natural family planning takes into cognizance the will and approval of God (Afe Orolu, 2005). It will enlighten the know-how of our couples, when to do the act of sex to achieve or not to achieve pregnancies, and achieve the choice of their mind in sex determination. It is also believed that natural family planning will reduce divorce and raise the status of woman in our society. From the interviews conducted, the Catholic Church teaches the following tenets about family planning:

1. That only parents have the right to decide how many children they have.
2. That neither the state, church nor any other organization can take this right from them.
3. God has provided fully sufficient natural physiological mechanisms for men and women to regulate their fertility.
4. It is never legally permissible to directly or indirectly induce an abortion.
5. The belief that contraceptive sterilization is morally wrong.
6. All artificial birth control methods are deemed immoral as they pose harm to the man, the woman, the unborn child, the nursing child, or jeopardize the well-being of human society. It therefore forbids its members to use the pill, the Coil (I.U.D), the condom, foams, jellies, the diaphragm, all other devices, the withdrawal method, sterilization and abortion.
7. Finally, the church, in its wisdom, promotes the exploration of human nature and the principles that regulate fertility. Consequently, it advises parents to examine their own fertility patterns, enabling them to plan and nurture their families in a genuine relationship with God. This is why the church recommends the various methods of Natural Family planning such as Abstinence, Billing Ovulation Method (i.e. Safe period or Rhythm method) and withdrawal method or Coitus Inter Ruptus.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH-WESTERN NIGERIA

The results of the study revealed that family planning helps in minimizing the family living and brings about a comfortable life since the family will have enough resources to live on. Also, the expenses of the parents will not be unnecessarily much. In other words, family planning helps the privileged Christians to be able to afford their family needs since they are not much in the family and they will acquire little sum of money to take care of themselves and meet their needs.

Generally speaking, Christians believe that family planning help them to cater for their children effectively by being able to share the word of God with them and to know where they are lacking in their Christian life. That is, there is abundant and sufficient provision for the manageable family such as good education, hospital care, clothing etc.

Family planning in medical and social context is to relief the biased mind about ill-health, poverty and death. Hence, the reduction of family size. Disregarding or ignoring family planning can also lead to unemployment of many able-bodied people. There is no doubt, over population pave way for joblessness and this in turn will result to high cost of living and low standard of living of the people in a given society. Thus, the impact of family planning can be viewed under the following sub-heading based on the interaction with the concerned public:

**Technological Advancement:** Ikulayo (2003) describes technological development as the application of science to the practical aims of human life or as the change and manipulation of the human environment. It is therefore worthy of note that family planning helps to boost the technological development of a country like Nigeria. This will enhance much more money in circulation and whoever planning to establish a small scale business may be favoured by the government.

**Educational Development:** Education is a social process that thrives through a network of human relationships and interactions. As a result of this, family planning has been able to determine the level of expenditure on educational needs of their children. When the majority of a nation's populations are educated, the country will witness rapid development. There is no doubt that family has greater control over the timing of the child bearing, broadens woman employment options and increase economic returns from education and thereby raising incentives for further studies.

**Economic Stability and Transformation:** Family planning helps to develop the economic situation of the country. Adigun (2004) believed that economic development is the process whereby simple low-income are transformed into modern industrial economy. Besides, Ajeigbe (1989) stated that family planning have been able to improve and help the economic development of the nation due to the low level of birth rate which results into increase in resources of the nation. By this, the economy will develop. He also said that family planning will help to avoid serious socio-economic and health hazards of the family members and the entire nation.

**Social Development:** Family life could be seen as the context for the promotion of social welfare (Odudele, 2006). Oscar (1998) argues that family planning has helped to limit the level of malnutrition, poor housing, clotting, education and even love and affection needed by the children to make them fit socially into the society. To him, this consequently has helped to reduce or eradicate children delinquencies, such as pocket picking, prostitution, drug pushing, armed robbery and other social vices which are prevalent among Nigerian youths today.

#### 3.1 Recommendations

Viewing the importance of family planning in the society, the following suggestions are made for their implementation by the Catholic Church, government, relevant agencies and concerned individuals.



1. Catholic Church leaders and government should set up an enlightenment campaign within the grassroots to orientate Catholic Church members and the people in general on the relevance of family planning in national development
2. There should be recruitment of enough medical officers on family planning to handle the work in each (Catholic Church) Clinic, health centres and hospitals.
3. Catholic Church and government should try as much as possible to supply the necessary materials to the clinic, health centres and hospitals for effective practice of this exercise.
4. Couples should be discouraged from having more than four children so as to enable them maintain the family adequately.
5. Catholic Church and government should train people freely, so as to have more personnel to teach people on the importance of family planning.
6. If a person cannot cope with the burden of child rearing, he/she should control the process of conception. The risks of foetal death, birth defect, infant mortality, maternal mortality, nutrient deficiency and poverty can be contained through effective family planning methods. It is not a crime for a Christian to engage in family planning; in fact, this would help him/her fulfill his/her parental obligations and live a healthy and decent life.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

This paper has observed that family planning is not a new concept in Christianity. It should be noted, however, that the Roman Catholic Church, among others, regard modern artificial family planning as cruelty to human life - despite the fact that it allows the parent to fulfill his/her parental obligation and promotes healthy and decent living. Generally, abortion is condemned in Christianity; but with some consideration that it should only be allowed in extreme cases, such as the case of rape, chronic illness, doctor's recommendation and so on. Reversible methods of family planning, such as the use of pills and condoms, are equally accepted in Christendom.

A few decades ago, artificial family planning was once considered a taboo in most African societies, as a child was seen as a gift from God/the gods. Even today, many people in the society still refused to be identified with discourses or activities of family planning, because they claim it goes against God's will (Afe Orolu, 2005). From the Christian world view, the first purpose of marriage, it would seem, is procreation (Genesis 1:22); hence, it is considered contrary to the will of God for married people to refuse to have children, because they wish only to enjoy themselves and avoid the responsibilities of parenthood. Thus, all forms of contraception, from the Christian world view, should not be considered a violation of God's word. Although there is no teaching in the New Testament on the ideal size of a family, the health and well-being of prospective mother and child should be a deciding factor.

In the light of the above discussion, I wish to submit that family planning is a noble and commendable venture. It is obvious that the role family planning plays in national development cannot be over-emphasized. In fact, it is a vital tool for the promotion of national development. It is therefore of paramount importance for married women and men to sincerely consider the relevance of family planning in national development. It is also a very crucial aspect of matrimonial homes which must be maintained in order to have a stable, sand and healthy society especially in Nigeria.

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