

Thesis Title Women's Status and Fertility in Nigeria
Name David Olugbenga Ajagun
Degree Master of Arts
 (Population and Social Research)

Thesis Supervisory Committee

Kerry Richter, Ph.D.

Buppha Sirirassamee, Ph.D.

Date of Graduation 10 MAY B.E. 2536 (1993)

ABSTRACT

The objectives of this study are to describe the status of women in Nigeria, examine its effects on fertility, and investigate how improving the status of women could help to reduce gender inequalities, thereby setting off changes to reduce fertility. These questions were investigated using the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey, which was conducted from April to October 1990. The sample size was 6,097 currently married women aged 15-49 years.

The results of the univariate analysis suggest that women's status was generally low. The majority of the sample were ruralites, and had no formal education. The data on primary and higher schooling indicates bright prospects for the improvement of women's status. Although a majority of the sample worked, the type of jobs most of them did were not in the formal sector. Child marriage was also very rampant and the sample as a whole showed little or no use of contraceptives. About

two-thirds of the respondents said their desired family size was "up to God", which suggests they lack self determination.

The bivariate analysis reveals that currently married women who resided in urban areas and those who were Christians had higher educational attainment and were possibly in a higher status job. The small family size desire among these women is also associated with higher age at first marriage, a higher prevalence of discussions on the number of children between husband and wife, and the practice of contraception. The chi-square statistical tests showed significant association between all the variables, and so all the hypotheses stated which centered on socioeconomic status, discussion about number of children and desired family size were accepted.

Based on the summary of findings and the conclusions made, some policy recommendations were drawn. These include legislation and enforcement of 18 years as the minimum age at first marriage; greater access to family planning services; opportunities for rural women to earn income in order to reduce the socioeconomic differentials in women's status; reaching men through education/informational campaigns about family size; and further investigations into the subject matter using primary source of data gathering.