

## Child Spacing and Children Education In Ekiti State, Nigeria.

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study investigated the influence of child spacing on children education among the secondary school students in Irepodun/Ifelodun Local Government Area, Ekiti State. The sample consisted of one hundred parents of students randomly selected using simple random sampling techniques from different secondary schools in Irepodun/Ifelodun Local Government Area, Ekiti State, Nigeria. A self design questionnaire prepared by the researcher was used to collect data for the study. Thereafter, the data collected through the administered questionnaire were analyzed using frequency count and simple percentage which was used to find out the influence that child spacing may exert on the education of the children. The study revealed among other things the link between parent level of education and child spacing and its consequences upon children educational chances, it was recommended that couples should bear it in mind that the time interval between the births of children exert significant effect on their education. Therefore, they (couples) should seek adequate information that will help them to practice healthy pregnancy timing and proper children spacing. However, the government of the day should include sex education in the school curriculum and sponsor social workers for workshops, seminars and publications of sex education matters so as to assist people to know the healthiest child spacing techniques that will increase children educational chances.*

Keywords: child spacing, Children, Education.

### **Background of the study**

Child spacing is a term that is often used as a part of a family. It means figuring out when you have the first baby and subsequent ones. Child spacing is an important health intervention for both child and mother, studies sponsored by United States of Agency for International Development (USAID) has helped to establish health pregnancy timing and birth spacing as an important intervention to improve on the child's and mother's health. Child spacing can be made possible by the use of family planning methods, family planning is a method by which couples decide for themselves when to begin to have children, how many children to have, how far apart to have them and when to stop having children. (Owuamanam, 1988)

The family planning also helps the couples to have a limited number of children who they will be able to adequately cater for and send to better schools where they will acquire the best quality (qualitative) education possible.

Orubuloye (1987), described family planning as a method normally used by the population expert as a conscious effort made by the couples to determine the spacing of their children and to select the method or methods to be employed in order to achieve their desired family planning size. Family planning can also be described as a process by which individuals or couple space the conception, pregnancy and child bearing at intervals mutually agreed by both husband and wife or child that they can conveniently cater for.

The traditional African society favored large family system. The accumulation of many wives and having many children by men in those days may not arise only from a desire to building a formidable workforce for their farmland, but may also be a result of their desire to conform with the norms and values of the society, because the traditional attitudes and practices in Nigeria generally esteem and favor high fertility and large family size, in fact it was a common saying that man procreates God natures. Ojofehintimi (2001) said it is logic to deduce that the more the number of wives in the family, the more the number of children in the family and that has a serious implication for the success of the family. This also appears having serious effect on the level of academic achievement of their children and many other needs that may facilitate their academic achievement. It is generally observed that, despite the concerted effort of the government, homes, schools, mass media, religion, organizations, Parent Teachers Association (P.T.A) the society at large and other agencies of education, to effect or ensure a very good change in the quality of education for children, many school children are yet found to be poor academically. This may be due to many factors among which are factors residents in the school system, such as relationship among human resource in the school (i.e. the relationship among the school head, the teachers and students) school physical structures, school curriculum, poor financing among others.

Factors resident in the society lies in the presence of social segregation thriving in the society whereby federal government schools and unity secondary schools are established for children from rich families and other schools are established for the poor. Factors resident in the child include the state of health, physical problems, and emotional problems, cognitive and intellectual disabilities. Others include concentration (during teaching learning process), reading habits, and skill and so on.

Previous work on this topic has raised interesting questions. Rodriquez (2001) compared results identical structural models for nine countries and found that a woman's education and age, time period, and length of the previous birth interval all

had substantial effects on birth interval length. They found little differences between intervals closed by births of order three, orders 4 – 5, 6-8, once these other factors were controlled and concluded that parity is a relatively unimportant variable.

Li and Darling, (2008) analysed the determinants of birth interval for five countries. They found significant and important difference in child spacing for the following variable; countries, ethnicity, age at first birth, urban experience and sex of preceding birth. Unlike Rodriquez (2001), he discovered that education had relatively little effect on interval lengths except at the higher birth orders. This may however be as a result of the effect of education operating through the age at first birth. Newman and Pittman (2001) posited that actual birth spacing is the result of a combination of factors such as parent's desired spacing as expressed through breastfeeding, mixed feeding and contraceptive use; other biological factors which may cause desired spacing not to be achieved (e.g. sub fecundity, poor health and nutritional status); periods of abstinence because of separation and other intermediate variables. These proximate determined by individual, household and community factors and circumstances.

Household level factors provide a variety of normative, economic and other influence on the proximate factors, and the community factors are seen as operating through these individual and household factors and the proximate factors to affect spacing (Guilkey, 1988).

Despite these advances in the study of birth interval dynamics, our understanding has been modest (Rindfuss, 1997). One important reason is that although excellent details on the dependent variables were collected, little detailed on socio-economic information was obtained. Other reasons have been specification error, poor data quality and omission of such proximate variable as coital frequency and the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases. Nevertheless, we also have some factors resident in the family, influencing the level of academics performance of school children; they include interrelationship among family members, socio-economic status of parent and death of one or both parents, divorce and separation between couples. The length of time between births and children also affects intellectual development of a child right birth.

Many researchers have dwelt much on these factors that affect children academic performances. However, for the purpose of this study the researcher focused on child spacing as one of the prominent factors that exert influence on child's academic performance. It is very reasonable to think that when children are properly spaced in a family, the parents will be able to adequately meet the personal needs and many other needs that will facilitate the academic achievement of the children in the school. The goal of family planning is to achieve the number of children desired with appropriate spacing and timing to ensure optimal growth and development of each

family member (Hatcher, (1977) and Mange, (1991). Failure to plan a pregnancy can adversely affect the health of individual, the health of the child and the health of the family as a whole.

It is on record that 50% of the pregnancies occur within 6 months after the start of sexual intercourse. Family planning information should preferably reach young people before they start sexual activity. It has been noted by some researchers. Despite this low use of contraceptives at initiation of sexual life, very few (6.4) women in our study reported that they were hoping to get pregnant. It would appear therefore that without contraception, most pregnancies occurring in this period would be unwanted. (Oguntimehin, 2008)

In developing countries especially in Africa, modern family planning still appear new and not wholly accepted by the population which does not have family planning “awareness” over the last 30 years. Meanwhile several attempts have been made to improve family planning operatives in Africa, but there seems to be no political will and commitment towards it.

### **Statement of the Problems**

It was observed that despite the concerted effort of the government and other agencies of education in ensuring a very good change in the educational sector and ensuring that the right knowledge, skills and attitudes are imparted to school children in various schools across the country, many reasons, and one which could be poor birth spacing.

According to the Population’s Studies (2001), it was deduced that there are a number of explanation of why a shorter birth intervals may be associated with increased risk of infant’s death. A short preceding interval may be the result of premature birth. The presence of a young for coping with a premature baby. There may be problems of competing for a resource in the family, which is likely to be acute closely following birth, occurs. The observable problem is that most of the students in Irepodun/Ifelodun Local Government Area, Ekiti State perform below the academic set standard. There are records of high academic failure, absentee from the school, inability to learn effectively, lack of concentration during teaching-learning process, sleeping in the classroom and so on.(Ogunlade and Egunjobi,2014) The research work will specifically look at child spacing problems that may result from short birth intervals and its influence on children education or child academic achievement. A lot of factors may be responsible for such conditions, one of which could be child spacing which the researcher is interested in finding out.

**Research question and hypotheses.**

One research question was raised and two hypotheses were generated for research purpose:

Research question 1. Is there any difference between child spacing and student's academic achievement?

Ho1 There is no significant relationship between parent awareness of child spacing and child education.

Ho2 There is no significant relationship between level of education of women and their child spacing.

**Research Method**

The research design used for this study was the descriptive research design of the survey type. It involves the act of describing differences and preparing factual reports on an observed phenomenon. The method is also used because of its relevance to the study and for its simplicity for everyone to understand. The population for this study consists of parent of students in the twelve public secondary schools in Irepodun/Ifelodun Local Government area. The sample for the study consists of 100 parents selected through their children from 5 secondary schools using purposive random sampling techniques. The parents were randomly selected using simple random sampling techniques in schools in Irepodun/Ifelodun Local Government Area. The researcher personally visited the selected schools, these schools gave the researcher the opportunity to explain the purpose of giving questionnaire to the students concerned in the selected secondary schools to give to their parents, so as to remove suspicion concerning what the questionnaire is meant for, whether it might affect them or their parents as not to answer faithfully or not. In each of the randomly selected secondary schools, twenty students were given a copy of questionnaire each and they all returned them. The main instrument used for this study was self-developed structure questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of two sections A and B. Section A contained items on demographics data on the respondent while section B contained items on the variables identified in the study. The design questionnaires were given to the researchers colleagues, who did necessary corrections to ensure content and face validity of the questionnaire. While test-retest method was used to guaranteed reliability of the instrument at 0.7 coefficient at 0.05 level of significance. The data were analyzed using frequency counts and simple percentages, which was used to find out the influence that child spacing might exert on child's academic performance. The percentages of responses given to each research question were calculated and findings were analyzed based on such percentages.

## Result and discussion

**Research Question 1:** Is there any different between child spacing and academic achievement of school children?

**Table 1: The influence of child spacing on children education**

S/N	QUESTIONNAIRE QUESTIONS	AGREED	%	DISAGREED	%
1.	The time interval between the number of children may affect their level of academic performance.	70	70	30	30
2.	Well-spaced children will have more access to education than non-properly spaced children.	68	68	32	32
3.	When children are properly spaced, parent will be able to adequately meet their personal needs that will facilitate their academic achievement.	70	70	30	30
4.	A too short time interval between the births of children may have adverse effect on their intellectual development.	55	55	45	45
5.	Too short birth-to-birth spacing is associated with competition for academics resources among children in the family.	80	80	20	20
6.	Well-spaced children have more opportunity to perform better academically than poorly spaced children.	58	58	42	42

The above table shows that 70% of the respondents agreed that time spacing interval between the births of children may affect their level of academic performance, while only 30% of them disagreed. 68% among them agreed that well-spaced children will have more access to education than non-properly spaced children, whereas, 32% respondents against the statement. 70% of the respondents indicated that when children are properly spaced parents will be able to adequately meet their needs that

will facilitate their academic achievement, while 30% of them is not true. 55% of the respondents were of the opinion that a too short time interval between the births of children may have adverse effect on their intellectual development, while 45% of them disagreed with the statement. 80% of the respondents support the statement which says “too short birth-to-birth spacing is associated with competition for educational resources among children in the family, whereas, 20% of the respondents disagreed with the statement. 68% of the respondents said; well-spaced children have more opportunity to perform better academically than poorly spaced children while 42% of them said it cannot be true.

**Table 2: Chi-square ( $X^2$ ) Analysis showing the relationship between knowledge of child spacing and children education.**

		Have knowledge on child spacing			Df	$X^2_{cal}$	$X^2_{table}$
		Yes	No	Total			
<b>Children Education</b>	Children perform very well	30(88.2)	04(11.8)	34(34)	4	294.358	7.81
	Children perform well	25(96.1)	01(3.84)	26(26)			
	Children perform averagely	20(90.9)	02(9)	22(22)			
	Children perform very poor	03(21.4)	11(78.5)	14(14)			
	Children perform poor	02(50)	02(50)	04(04)			
	Total	80(80)	20(20)	100(100)			

$P < 0.05$

The chi-square ( $X^2$ ) reveals that  $X^2_{cal}$  (294.358) is greater than  $X^2_{table}$  (7.81) at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between women knowledge of child spacing and children education.

Table 2 shows that 30 out of 34 respondents who had knowledge of child spacing have their children performing very well. In contrast, 13 out of 18 respondents who lack knowledge of child spacing have their children performing very poorly in schools.

Ho2 There is no significant relationship between level of education of parent and their child spacing.

In order to test the hypothesis, the total and mean scores on child spacing were obtained. The mean scores were compared among holders of different educational qualifications at 0.05 level of significance using one way Analysis of variance (ANOVA). The result is shown in table 3.

**Table 3:**

**One way ANOVA Summary of Analysis of Educational Qualification and Child Spacing.**

Source	SS	Df	MS	F-cal	F-table
Between Groups	141.051	3	38.35	23.77	2.60
Within groups	1934.42	86	16.22		
Total	21075.478	87			

P<0.05

Table 3 reveals that the effect of educational qualification on child spacing is significant at 0.05 level (F = 23.77, p<0.05). The null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is a significant difference between the level of education of parent and their child spacing.

In order to detect the sources of significant difference, Scheffe Post-Hoc Analysis was used. The result is presented in table 4.

**Table 4: Scheffe Post-Hoc Analysis of Education Qualification and Child Spacing.**

Educational Qualification	N	Mean	Primary	Secondary	Higher Education	None
Primary	15	11.42			*	*
Secondary	25	10.35			*	*
Higher Education	45	8.60				



None	15	8.74				
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The mean difference is significant at 0.05 level

Table 4 shows that there is significant difference between the child spacing pattern of holder of primary school certificate and holders higher education certificate. Holders of primary school certificate and those without formal education also shows significant difference. Holders of secondary and higher education certificate, secondary school certificate holders and people with non-formal education also indicate significant difference in each case at 0.05 level.

## Discussion

The study was carried out on child spacing and its influence on children education among students in Irepodun/Ifelodun Local Government area, Ekiti State. It was discovered that parent awareness have significant effect on their child spacing pattern likewise their children education, this agree with Mobs (1999) who reported that mother's information and knowledge about child spacing influences the academic performance of their children. Apart from the mother who is the potential user of contraceptive, other household members, community norms and house help. Social institutions also have important effects on her knowledge and information. A women's family situation and friends influence both her ability and desire to space children (Ogundana 2003). Women who have spaced children provide the new mother with models to emulate and advise her on how to space children successfully. Household members may help a woman to space her children so as to be able to take good care of their children mostly their education. Ojofehintimi (2001) said it is logic to deduce that the more the number of wives in the family, the more the number of children in the family and that has a serious implication for the success of the family. This also appears having serious effect on the level of academic achievement of their children and many other needs that may facilitate their academic achievement.

The finding of the hypothesis on influence of education made it clear that education is a very important determining factor of child spacing. The effect of education according to this result is curvilinear. The result shows that relative to those mothers who have no education, have no longer spacing duration although considering the mean distribution both the secondary and tertiary education categories do influence the duration of child spacing.

In the study of Oluwadare (2003), he affirmed that group of educated women agreed to space their children for upward of two years before another one. He explained further that the new elite are now going back to the old ideas of child spacing and doing better by adopting good sanitation. But Oni (1998) report shows that while women

with no formal education space children for over thirty six months, women with post-secondary education stopped child spacing at about nine months.

Meanwhile, Jellife and Jellife (1998), Jain and Bongarts (1991) reported that it is common to find women with more formal education space their children. In the analysis of Ducan (2004), Oguntimehin (2008), they explained that the association between education and socio-economic status on one hand and the extent of child spacing on the other hand cannot be proved to be causal factors from their studies, nonetheless the association suggest that as urbanization, education and standard of living increase the overall practice of child spacing will decrease unless other changes counteract them. Since education is synonymous to the social class that one belong to in the society and the type of employment one does and the level of environment one operates the need therefore be that educated mothers should be encouraged to utilize their education to appreciate the importance of child spacing to the extent that the illiterate mothers will even use them as a reference point to space their children to enhance good academic performance. It is as well found out that poor academic performance is common among children born to mothers with limited education.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings, it could be drawn that the time interval between the births of children exerts certain influence on children education, when children are properly spaced, their parents will be able to adequately provide for their personal needs that will give them (the children) more opportunities to do well academically.

Properly spaced children can be easily provided with some important needs such as good feeding, clothing, parental care, love and good education but poor child spacing have adverse effect on child nutrition and intellectual development and promotes competition for educational resources among children in the family.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made: -

1. Couples should bear it in mind that the time intervals between the births of their children exert significant influence on the education.
2. New couples should seek adequate information that will facilitate a healthy child spacing (healthy birth timing) for them.
3. Nigeria schools should restructure the school curriculum by laying emphasis on effective aspect of development, rather than the cognitive aspects alone.
4. There should be a Guidance Counselor in every school as stipulated by New Educational Policy (6-3-3-4) through the help of Counselors; Students will be exposed to the right knowledge of sex education and child spacing.

5. The government should include sex education in the school curriculum; relevant seminars should be sponsored by the government. Also government should sponsor social workers to workshops on sex education matters which assist people to know the healthy child spacing techniques.

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