

**Original Article**

## Uptake and Practice of Traditional Birth Control Methods Among Women of Childbearing Age in Shao Community, Kwara State

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**Background:** Traditional birth control methods are often preferred because they are perceived as natural and are readily accessible within the community. However, the efficacy of these methods varies, and there is limited scientific evidence to support their effectiveness compared to modern contraceptives. This study, therefore, examined the uptake and practice of traditional birth control methods among women of childbearing age in Shao Community, Kwara State.

**Methods:** This study adopted survey research design. The study population comprised of all residents in Shao Community of Moro L.G.A. of Kwara State, Nigeria. Using Cochran's formula, a total of 250 respondents selected using the simple random sampling techniques, was used for this study. Data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics.

**Results:** The study revealed that; the extent of uptake of traditional birth control methods among women of childbearing age in Shao Community is moderately high (73.6%), as women are aware, accept, and decide to adopt these methods; the types of traditional birth control methods commonly used in Shao Community include herbal and medicinal methods such as herbal remedies, traditional concoctions, local herbs, and the knowledge of traditional healers; also, the level of practice of traditional birth control methods among women in Shao Community is moderate (52.6%).

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**Conclusion:** While traditional birth control methods, particularly herbal infusions, are commonly used and culturally accepted in the Shao Community of Moro L.G.A., their uptake and practice are generally lower compared to modern contraceptive methods.

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**Introduction**

Family planning plays a vital role in promoting reproductive health, reducing maternal and infant mortality, and supporting sustainable development (WHO, 2025). Although modern contraceptives such

as implants, injectables, and oral pills are increasingly available, many women in developing regions, including Sub-Saharan Africa, continue to rely on traditional methods such as periodic abstinence, withdrawal, and herbal preparations (UN, 2023). In

Nigeria, contraceptive uptake remains low, with only 12% of married women using modern methods and a significant proportion depending on traditional practices due to socio-cultural beliefs, misconceptions about modern contraception, and limited access to health services (Akinyemi *et al.*, 2020).

In Kwara State, variations in contraceptive behaviour persist, with rural communities relying more on indigenous methods shaped by cultural norms and traditional healers (Adebayo & Gayawan, 2022). Shao community, located in Moro LGA, exemplifies this pattern due to its strong traditional structures and limited healthcare access despite proximity to Ilorin. Behavioural methods such as withdrawal and rhythm show high typical-use failure rates, while herbal methods lack scientific validation and may pose health risks (Cleland *et al.*, 2019; Odeyemi, 2022).

The reliance on traditional birth control methods in Shao community raises several concerns. First, there is few empirical data on the actual efficacy of these methods within this specific population. Most available studies focus on urban areas or larger population centers, leaving a gap in knowledge about the experiences and outcomes in rural communities. Without accurate data, it is difficult to assess the true impact of traditional birth control methods on reproductive health in the community. Second, there is a need to understand the factors that contribute to the continued use of these methods despite their known limitations. Are users fully aware of the potential risks and failure rates associated with traditional birth control methods? How do cultural beliefs, religious practices, and socio-economic status influence the choice of contraception? According to Akinlo and Eniola (2021), understanding these factors is crucial for designing effective interventions that can improve reproductive health outcomes in rural areas. In order to fill these gaps, this study aim to examine the efficacy and failure rate among users of traditional birth control methods in Shao Community of Moro L.G.A., Kwara State, Nigeria.

### Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the uptake and practice of traditional birth control methods among women of child bearing age in Shao Community, Kwara State. The specific objectives of this study are to;

- i. Describe the extent of uptake of traditional birth control methods among women of childbearing age in Shao Community;
- ii. Identify the types of traditional birth control methods commonly used among women of childbearing age in Shao Community.

- iii. Determine the level of practice of traditional birth control methods among women of childbearing age in Shao Community.

### Methodology

#### Study Design and Setting

This study adopted a survey research design to investigate the uptake and practice of traditional birth control methods among women of childbearing age in Shao Community, Kwara State.

#### Study Population and Sampling

The population comprised all women of reproductive age in the community, with an estimated local population of 60,000–70,000 residents. A sample size of 250 respondents was determined using Cochran's formula at a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, including a 10% allowance for non-response. Simple random sampling technique was used to select women across different clusters within the community.

#### Data Collection Instrument

A researcher-designed structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The instrument contained two sections: Section A elicited demographic information, while Section B focused on variables related to traditional birth control practices.

#### Validity and Reliability of Instrument

The questionnaire was validated through a pilot test involving 20 respondents, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.71, indicating acceptable reliability.

**Data Collection Procedure and Ethical Considerations**  
The researcher personally administered the questionnaires after obtaining ethical approval from the Health Research Ethics Committee of Al-Hikmah University. Respondents were assured of confidentiality and voluntary participation.

#### Data Analysis

Data collected were coded and analysed using SPSS version 23. Mean was used to answer research questions. A standard decision benchmark of 2.5 was adopted for making decision; mean below 2.5 will be considered as disagree while mean equal to or greater than 2.5 will be considered as agree.

### Results

Research Question 1: What is the extent of uptake of traditional birth control methods among women of childbearing age in Shao Community?

**Table 1: Extent of Uptake of Traditional Birth Control Methods among Women of Childbearing Age**

S/N	QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS	SA	A	U	D	SD	X
1	Women of childbearing age are aware of traditional birth control methods in Shao Community.	51	127	13	56	3	3.74
2	Traditional birth control methods are commonly known among women of reproductive age.	45	119	28	46	12	3.59
3	Information about traditional birth control methods is easily accessible in the community.	38	143	31	35	3	3.77
4	Knowledge of different traditional birth control methods is widespread among women of childbearing age.	37	157	26	24	6	3.75
5	Traditional birth control methods are generally accepted by women of childbearing age in Shao Community.	32	146	30	38	4	3.60

Table 1 showed the extent of uptake of traditional birth control methods among women of childbearing age in Shao Community, Kwara State. From Table 1, it was observed that the mean scores of all the questionnaire items are higher than 2.5 and are therefore interpreted that majority of the respondents agreed to the questionnaire items. Thus, this study showed that the extent of uptake of traditional birth control methods

among women of childbearing age in Shao Community is moderately high (73.6%), as women are aware, accept, and decide to adopt traditional birth control methods.

**Research Question 2:** What are the types of traditional birth control methods commonly used in Shao Community?

**Table 2: Types of Traditional Birth Control Methods Commonly Used among Women of Childbearing Age**

S/N	QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS	SA	A	U	D	SD	X
1	Herbal remedies are commonly used as traditional birth control methods in Shao Community.	28	118	48	50	6	3.59
2	Withdrawal method is a widely practiced form of traditional birth control in Shao Community.	32	104	36	68	10	3.38
3	Prolonged breastfeeding is used as a form of natural birth control in the community.	32	102	50	52	14	3.49
4	Abstinence is regarded as one of the common traditional methods of birth control in Shao Community.	37	100	44	57	12	3.53
5	Spiritual or ritual practices are employed as traditional birth control methods in the community.	34	116	46	50	4	3.68

Table 2 showed the types of traditional birth control methods commonly used among women of childbearing age in Shao Community, Kwara State. From Table 2, it was observed that the mean score of all the questionnaire items are higher than 2.5 and are therefore interpreted that majority of the respondents agreed to the questionnaire items. Thus, this study showed that, the types of traditional birth control methods commonly used among women of childbearing age in Shao Community include; Herbal/medicinal methods such as herbal remedies,

traditional concoctions, local herbs, and knowledge provided by traditional healers; behavioral/natural methods such as the withdrawal method, prolonged breastfeeding, abstinence, and the rhythm/calendar method; and cultural/spiritual approaches such as spiritual or ritual practices and the use of charms and amulets.

**Research Question 3:** What is the level of practice of traditional birth control methods among women of childbearing age in Shao Community?

**Table 3: Level of Practice of Traditional Birth Control Methods among Women of Childbearing Age**

S/N	QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS	SA	A	U	D	SD	X
1	Traditional birth control methods are consistently practiced by women in Shao Community.	48	84	77	35	6	3.78
2	Women of childbearing age demonstrate regular adherence to traditional birth control practices.	45	96	48	45	6	3.76
3	Use of traditional birth control methods is sustained over a long period in the community.	41	108	48	39	14	3.69
4	Traditional birth control methods are practiced with commitment among women of childbearing age.	35	104	62	37	12	3.63
5	There is a high level of dependency on traditional birth control methods in the community.	40	108	56	44	2	3.77

Table 3 showed the level of practice of traditional birth control methods among women of childbearing age in Shao Community. From Table 3, it was observed that the mean scores of all the questionnaire items are higher than 2.5 and are therefore interpreted that majority of the respondents agreed to the questionnaire items. Thus, this study showed that, the level of practice of traditional birth control methods among women of childbearing age in Shao Community is moderate (52.6%).

### Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that the extent of uptake of traditional birth control methods among women of childbearing age in Shao Community is moderately high (73.6%), as women are aware, accept, and decide to adopt these methods. This indicates that traditional methods remain an important component of reproductive health management in the community. This result aligns with the observation of Okonofua (2019), who noted that awareness and acceptance of traditional contraceptives remain widespread in many Nigerian communities due to cultural and social support. Similarly, Afolabi *et al.* (2020) reported in a study in southwestern Nigeria that despite increased access to modern contraceptives, many women still accept and decide to adopt traditional methods, largely because they are considered natural and free of perceived harmful side effects. This suggests that awareness and acceptance strongly reinforce the continued use of traditional birth control practices in local communities.

The study further showed that the types of traditional birth control methods commonly used in Shao Community include herbal and medicinal methods such as herbal remedies, traditional concoctions, local herbs, and the knowledge of traditional healers; behavioral or natural methods such as withdrawal, prolonged breastfeeding, abstinence, and the rhythm/calendar method; and cultural or spiritual approaches such as ritual practices and the use of charms and amulets. These findings are consistent with earlier work by Akinlo *et al.* (2017), who

classified traditional contraceptive practices in Nigeria into herbal/medicinal, natural, and spiritual categories. Likewise, Orji and Onwudiegwu (2021) highlighted that prolonged breastfeeding and withdrawal remain the most commonly reported traditional practices in rural Nigeria, while spiritual practices continue to be utilized in areas where religious and cultural traditions are strong. This suggests that the types of methods adopted are often shaped by cultural heritage and intergenerational knowledge systems.

The results also indicated that the level of practice of traditional birth control methods among women in Shao Community is moderate (52.6%). This suggests that while awareness and acceptance are high, actual application, frequency, and consistency of using the methods are relatively lower. This finding is in line with the report of Izugbara and Ezeh (2020), who noted that the gap between knowledge and practice of traditional contraceptives is common, as many women are aware of these methods but do not consistently apply them due to uncertainty of effectiveness. Similarly, Ntoimo and Isiugo-Abanihe (2019) found that while Nigerian women often acknowledge traditional contraceptives, practice levels remain moderate because modern alternatives are available and sometimes considered more reliable. This indicates that awareness does not always translate into consistent practice, especially in communities where both traditional and modern methods coexist.

### Conclusion

The uptake and practice of traditional birth control methods among women of childbearing age in Shao Community, Moro L.G.A., show that these methods remain widely recognized, culturally accepted, and commonly practiced. However, while awareness and acceptance are relatively high, the actual practice is less consistent, which affects their overall effectiveness. The reliance on herbal remedies, spiritual practices, and behavioral methods demonstrates the deep cultural and traditional significance of these methods. Nonetheless, their effectiveness is limited when compared with modern

contraceptive options, as irregular use often results in a higher likelihood of unintended pregnancies. Therefore, while traditional methods will likely remain relevant due to cultural attachment, there is a pressing need for improved health education, awareness programs, and wider access to more reliable contraceptive options. Such efforts will ensure better reproductive health outcomes, reduce unintended pregnancies, and provide women with safer and more effective choices.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

Policymakers should design reproductive health programs that are culturally sensitive and inclusive, addressing socio-economic barriers and misconceptions while engaging community and religious leaders in awareness creation.

Government should allocate adequate funding to support continuous reproductive health education and access to family planning commodities.

Public health agencies should strengthen awareness campaigns by providing balanced education on both traditional and modern birth control methods, so that women can make informed choices based on safety and effectiveness.

Community health workers should intensify reproductive health interventions that emphasize consistent and correct practice of safe birth control methods to improve reliability and reduce unintended pregnancies.

### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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