

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGION

**A STUDY OF FAMILY PLANNING PRACTICES AMONG THE
MUSLIMS OF ASHAIMAN**

BY
ABDULLAH MOHAMMED SADIQ

10636685

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DECLARATION

I, Abdullah Mohammed Sadiq declare that, this research work, with the exception of references which were cited from other works of researches, is the result of my own research work carried out in the Department for the study of Religion, University of Ghana, Legon.

ABDULLAH MOHAMMED SADIQ

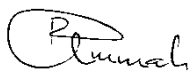
(CANDIDATE)

SIGNATURE 

DATE: 14TH JULY, 2022.

DR. RABIATU AMMAH

(SUPERVISOR)

SIGNATURE 

DATE: 14TH JULY, 2022

DR. HUSSEIN IBRAHIM

(SUPERVISOR)

SIGNATURE 

DATE: 14TH JULY, 2022.

DEDICATION

I bequeath this work to the memory of my father who did not live to see this stage of my life. I also dedicate it to all Ashaiman Muslim Communities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am immensely grateful to Almighty Allah for seeing me through the completion of this work. I am indebted to him for the immense strength, patience, endurance, supervision and knowledge that He granted me throughout this study.

I also extend my deepest indebtedness to my revered supervisors; Dr. Rabiatu Ammah and Dr. Hussein Ibrahim of the Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana, Legon for their guidance, support and supervisory role.

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Finally, I cannot forget my beloved wife for her patience, understanding, support and motivation.

ABSTRACT

The state of poverty among Muslims in Ashaiman is very high. Yet, Muslims continue to produce children in large numbers relative to their earnings. This poverty situation has affected the quality of family life. Family planning practice by Muslim couples is also very low. It is for this reason that this research was organized to examine the situation.

For this purpose, Muslim couples, Religious leaders and family planning officials in the Ashaiman Municipality were interviewed to collect data for this study. At the end of the research, it was discovered that men have the final say in matters concerning family planning practice. Women are not normally given the opportunity to contribute to discussions concerning the subject. This has led to some of them secretly accessing family planning services even without the knowledge and agreement of their spouses.

Based on the findings outlined above, the researcher suggests that men's superiority over women should be discouraged in order to open the opportunities for all to come together to make decisions regarding the peaceful co-existence and progress of the family. Husbands should not be the only ones to decide when to embark on family planning. It is prudent the engagement and involvement of relevant religious leaders in family planning are sought. All these stakeholders must be educated on the issue of family planning due to the erroneous conviction held by some Muslim men that Islam scowls and condemns the practice.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 General Introduction

According to the WHO, family planning is “a deliberate effort of couples to regulate the number and spacing of births in order to improve the condition of their family”.¹ Sheikh Ishaak Nuamah, explained family planning as “the total approach to the management of the family in which birth control is just one”.² For Nii-Amoo and others, it is “the factors that may be considered by a couple in a committed relationship and each individual involved in deciding if and when to have children”.³ These definitions emphasize the need for collective decision on issues related to family decisions. However, some religious motivations encourage couples to have more children because they are considered blessings from Allah. Quite a number of verses in the Qur’an and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) highlight the importance of procreation and maintenance of progeny. For instance, Allah declares in the Qur’an

“O mankind! Be careful of your duty to your Allah who created you from a single soul, and from it created its mate, and from them twain, has spread a multitude of men and women.”⁴

In a hadith, the Prophet is reported to have advised Muslims to:

“Marry women who are loving and fertile, for I will be proud of your great number before the other nations on the Day of Resurrection.”⁵

¹ . WHO, *Ensuring Human Rights in the Provision of Contraceptive Information and Services* (2014).

² . Sheikh Ishaak N, *Marriage a Lifelong Vow*, (Accra: Anest Company LTD, 2004).

³ . Nii-Amoo D.; Alex C. E; Tom O., *Does Discussion Of Family Improve Knowledge Of Partners Attitude Towards Contraceptives?* (Guttmacher Institute Press, 2014).

⁴ . Qur’an 4:1

⁵ . Ibn Hajar, A, *Fathal-Ba-ri- bi-Sharh.Sah. ih.al-Bukhari* (Cairo: Da-r al-Rayya-n lil-Turath, no date), 9: 111

Based on the texts above, Najat El Hamri, offers an opinion that some Muslims conclude that Islam disagrees with family planning. For these Muslims, the question of large numbers of children is not important because Allah provides for their sustenance and that of their children.⁶

1.1 Background to the study

The last few decades have witnessed so much debate over the matter of procreative health and family planning. The 1971 Rabat conference on ‘Islam and family planning’ and the 1990 Indonesian congress on ‘Islam and population policy’ offered the motivation for Muslim majority states to adopt appropriate strategies in family planning programmes in order to advance knowledge on child and maternal health. Irrespective of these strives, the ‘1994 International Conference on Population and Development; chalked an important landmark in the discussion about reproductive health. Through the application of the International Conference on Population and development conference, Egypt, Bangladesh and Indonesia are some of the countries that have witnessed declines in their fecundity rates.⁷

According to Bulatao Rudolfo, the inadequate family planning approaches and contraception needs affect 10-40% of women who are in marriages. All these women are within their reproductive age in unindustrialized countries. This accounts for the high

⁶ . El Hamri, N, *Approaches to family planning in Muslim communities, BMJ Sexual & Reproductive Health* 36, no. 1, 2010): 27-31.

⁷ . El Hamri, Najat, *Approaches to family planning in Muslim communities, BMJ Sexual & Reproductive Health* 36, no.1, 2010: 27-31.

population rates in these countries.⁸ Finger William, also opines that, religious and cultural orientation play significant roles in the attitude of people towards family planning in Muslim countries.⁹ For these reasons, there is low level of awareness culminating into misconception about family planning. Part of this misconception stems from the fact that family planning is often regarded as a borrowed concept from the west, hence it is marked out as a purely western philosophy.

Those *who do not support the concept of family planning* believe that human beings have the divine mandate to populate and develop the earth. For this reason, they have to continue to give birth in order to fill the earth. They are not afraid to give birth to many children because Allah has promised to take care of them and their families. This confirmed in the following verses. Allah states in the Qur'an.

*“He brought you forth from the earth and delegated you to inhabit and develop it”.*¹⁰

*“And Allah has made for you spouses of your own kind and has made for you, from your wives, sons and grandsons, and has bestowed upon you good provisions.”*¹¹

Some Muslim scholars hold contrary views. They argue that, no person is charged with a burden he/she cannot bear as expressed in Qur'an 2:286. They argue that excessive fertility rate increases the chances of health risk, brings about economic hardships to families and inability for parents to ensure proper upbringing of children. The whole notion is built on the belief that the deliberate decision to space out births actually inhibits

⁸ . Bulatao, R, *The Value of Family Planning Programmes in Developing Countries*, (RAND cooperation, 1998), 17

⁹ . Finger, W, *Unmet need affects millions*, (Family health International Publication, 1999), 19

¹⁰ . Qur'an 11:61

¹¹ . Qur'an 16:72

the suffering of all those concerned. This is especially seen in the assertion that the Prophet Mohammed (SAW) supported the use of coitus interruptus, or withdrawal. This was a primitive precedent designed to achieve family planning.¹² To them, family planning is important in delaying and controlling the timing of births for specific period to enhance both the health of mothers and the living conditions of children.

In the Ashaiman Muslim community, I have observed that, husbands play dominant roles in most family matters. As bread winners, they are the ones who have major say in family matters including family planning which is likely to make the woman unable to contribute her mind when it comes to family planning. It is unlikely that women bring sexual and family planning issues to the surface. They are not given the opportunity to initiate discussions on these with their husbands. Meanwhile, they play major roles in the upkeep of their children. Inadequate awareness of family planning is one of the main problems for parent's inability to take good care of the family. However, Islam places a high premium on the comfort and success of family life. It is against this background that this research is carried out to examine the situation of family planning in the Ashaiman Muslim community to ascertain the challenges of its use and offer suggestions to ameliorate those challenges.

¹². Abdurahim, O., *Family Planning in the Legacy of Islam*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 1.

1.2 Statement of the problem

I have observed casually the state of poverty among Muslims in Ashaiman, yet they bring forth many children. This poverty situation has affected the quality of Muslim family life. The domineering roles men have over their wives as bread winners of the family has made them the only ones to decide on when to practice family planning. The women are not given the opportunity to contribute their minds when it comes to family planning issues. This has led to most women to clandestinely seek succor at family planning clinics in the absence of and endorsement of their respective husbands. Most often, this generates a whole lot of tensions among couples which sometimes lead to a dissolution of the marriage when their husbands come to know that their wives had actually done family planning and also attempted to hide it from them. All these have contributed to low or inadequate family planning practices among Muslims of Ashaiman. It is for these reasons that this research intends to investigate the situation of family planning and to suggest how family planning can help improve Muslim couples' ability to provide for themselves and their families the basic necessities of life.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main aims of this research work are to:

1. Explore the concept of family planning in Islam.
2. Examine the level of awareness of family planning among Ashaiman Muslims.
3. Discuss the challenges facing Muslims on the use of family planning in Ashaiman.
4. Investigate low involvement and acceptance to family planning by males.
5. To make recommendations.

1.4 Research Questions

The main research question guiding the study is: What is the situation of family planning in Ashaiman? To examine this, the following subsidiary questions are also necessary.

1. What is the attitude of Muslims towards family planning?
2. Where do Muslim couples get information on family planning?
3. What are the factors affecting the practice of family planning?
4. What roles do religious leaders and family planning activists play in the practice of family planning?
5. What factors account for male's low involvement in family planning?
6. Is Islam anti-family planning?

1.5 Scope of the Study

This research is carried out among Muslim residents of Ashaiman Municipality especially in Old Turaku, Zongo Laka, Zongo Parliament, Zenu Zongo where Muslims are in majority. Ashaiman was chosen as a study area because it has a large population of Muslims. There is low acceptance or inadequate family planning practice leading to high birth rate which has resulted in a lot of economic hardships.

1.6 Methodology

In order to carry out any research work successfully, an appropriate methodology for data collection is necessary. This enables the researcher to gather the pieces of information needed for the study. For this reason, the researcher used the following methods of data collection for the study.

The research combined both theological and phenomenological approaches. According to Frank Whaling, dogmas, doctrines, and all issues borne out of faith can be referred to as a theological approach.¹³ This approach is appropriate in understanding the concept of family planning from the perspectives of the Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet (S.A.W).

The research also used the phenomenology approach. By this method, the researcher distanced himself from all previous knowledge about the people and the community of the study area. This would not affect the outcome of the research. According to Clive *Epoche* is “the absence of presupposition which would influence resultant understanding and outcomes.”¹⁴

1.7 Data collection

Sources of information for this research were categorized into primary and secondary. The primary sources included participant observation and interviews. The researcher asked the permission of the health workers to participate in their health talk sessions on family planning. The researcher also interviewed Muslim married couples, some selected Islamic preachers, some selected Imams and religious leaders. The researcher visited some selected family planning centers and interviewed the health officials on the number of Muslim couples who patronize the health facility to request for family planning services and the involvement of the men in assessing family planning services. In addition

¹³ . Frank W, *Theological Approaches in Peter Connolly, Approaches to the Study of Religion*, (London: York House Typographic Ltd, 2004), 229.

¹⁴ . Clive E, *Phenomenological Approaches in Peter Connolly, Approaches to the Study of Religion*, 77

to the primary sources of data collection, the researcher also relied on the secondary source in the form of extracts from existing religious scriptures and other published literature on aspects of the subject of the research. Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din al-Hilali and Muhammad Muhsin Khan's interpretation of the meanings of the noble Qur'an were used as major sources for exergical purposes¹⁵. Similarly, The Holy Qur'an English translation of meaning and commentary of Yussif Ali for commentary on some selected verses was also used.¹⁶ 'Tafsir Al-mizan' is another Qur'an commentary work which was also used in order to come out with clear understanding of issues concerning the subject of the research¹⁷. These works served as the basis for interpreting injunctions in the Qur'an concerning the family and family planning in Islam. The traditions of the Prophet as the second source of Islamic law on family planning and the use of contraceptives was also considered as a secondary source of data for this work.

The first group of people the researcher interviewed were eighteen (18) Muslim couples. This was to enable him gather information on their awareness of family planning, who among them decides on family planning and the involvement of the men on family planning. The next group the researcher interviewed were three (3) health workers at the various family planning centres. They have in-depth knowledge on the challenges some Muslim women face when they visit the facility to request for family planning services. Four (4) Muslim preachers, Four (4) Imams and Two (2) religious leaders from Sunni

¹⁵ . Taqi-ud-Din al-Hilali, M., and Muhsin Khan M., "Translation of the Meanings of the Noble Qur'an in the English Language." King Fahd Glorious Quran Printing Complex, Madina (2013).

¹⁶ . Ali Y., *The Holy Qur'an, English translation of meaning and commentary*, (Saudi-Arabia: King Fahad Printing press, 1946)

¹⁷ .Tabatabai M., H., *Al-Mizan Fi-tafsirl Qur'an*

and Shia sects were also interviewed. This enabled the researcher to gather information on their attitudes towards family planning and their jurisprudential positions on family planning.

1.8 Theoretical framework

Although the concept of family planning does not have an equivalent terminology in Islam, several verses of the Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet determine the framework within which it functions. The Islamic concept of 'al-Maulud' (fertility) encapsulates the scriptural texts that addresses the aspects of the Muslim family life with respect to family planning. 'Al-Maulud' is expressed in the hadith reported by Abu Dawud which states that:

*"Marry women who are loving (al-wadud) and fertile al-maulud), for I will be proud of your great number before the other nations on the Day of Resurrection."*¹⁸

According to Sheikh Muhammed Salih Al-Munajjid, the Hadith above is a section of a long Hadith partly addressing the issue of marriage. In the Hadith, two people asked the Prophet on separate occasions concerning the women they intended to marry. They inquired whether they could marry ladies who came from wealthy and honourable families but could not give birth. The Prophet advised them not to marry the ladies. He then recounted the Hadith above. Sheikh Muhammed Salih Al-Munajjid adds that the Hadith encourages men to marry women who give birth. To be able to determine the fertility of women, one should observe the mothers and sisters of those women. Muslim

¹⁸ . Ibn Hajar, A, *Fathal-Ba-ri- bi-SharhiSah. ih.al-Bukhari* (Cairo: Da-r al-Rayya-n lil-Turath, no date), 9: 111

couples who will wish to have children after marriage give less importance to family planning. They ascribe literal meaning to ‘al-maulud’ and over-emphasize God as a provider and de-emphasize human agency in taking care of children as expressed in

Qur’an 16:72. The verse says:

“and Allah has made for you spouses of your own kind and has made for you, from your wives, sons and grandsons, and has bestowed upon you good provisions.”¹⁹

Not only does the literal understanding limit the use of contraceptives in many Muslim communities, but some fathers regard family planning as a structured means of murdering their offspring. Qur’an 17:31 is applied in this understanding. The verse says:

“and kill not your children for fear of want. We shall provide sustenance for them as well as for you. Verily the killing of them is a great sin.”²⁰

Although ‘al-Maulud’ encourages procreation, some scholars interpret the Hadith within a context of quality instead of quantity. To them, proper upbringing of children is more important than focusing on a huge family. Therefore, procreation should not bring hardship to the family. This idea is evident in several scriptural texts. For instance, Allah states in the Qur’an.

“Allah charges no soul except to its capacity.”²¹

Furthermore, if fertility brings economic burden to the family and leads to parent’s inability to cater for their children and educate them according to the principles of Islam,

¹⁹ . Qur’an 16:72

²⁰ . Qur’an 17:31

²¹ . Qur’an 2:286

then they have to regulate their fertility to the level where it ceases to perpetuate such implications. Family planning therefore becomes necessary in this regard.

1.9 Literature review

Many books have been written on family planning and Islam, abortion and birth control. However, there is no single work focusing on the study of family planning practices among Muslims of Ashaiman. Questions of family planning and birth control have been discussed and researched into by several scholars. There are no books printed to show how good a Muslim's life should be in line with what is happening in the contemporary society since family planning is one of the contemporary issues. To provide a broader understanding into family planning from the literature under review, it is very important to categorize them under the following sub headings. *Definition of family planning, Marriage and family life, Islam and the use of contraceptive, reasons for the use of contraceptives to achieve family planning and methods of contraceptives.*

1.10 Materials on definition of family planning

Sheikh Ishaq Nuama, *Marriage, A lifelong Vow* defines family planning as

“the total approach to the management of the family in which birth control is just one”²²

Other definitions of family planning include the one given by the World Health Organization as

²² . Sheikh Ishaq, N, *Marriage A Lifelong Vow*. (Sha Miqlut Ventures, Kumasi-Ghana)

“a deliberate effort of couples to regulate the number and spacing of births in order to improve the family life at the micro level and to contribute to sustainable development at the macro level, thus the national level. Family Planning allows couples to achieve the desired number of children, the spacing and timing of their birth”²³

McDonald Mosley, (2010), *Family Planning and the Burden of Unintended Pregnancy*, also regards family planning services as instructive, inclusive therapeutic or communal activities which position individuals, minors inclusive, to be able to freely decide the exact number as well as spacing of their children. They are also at liberty to select the method they consider most appropriate to achieve.²⁴

Nii-Amoo Dodoo, (2014), *Does Discussion of Family Improve Knowledge of Partners’ Attitude Towards Contraceptives*, also defines family planning as the multiple influences that may be taken into consideration by a couple who are involved in a committed relationship. Also, the individuals involved are at liberty to decide the number of children they wish to have and when to have them. Furthermore, family also decide the appropriate age to have children. What really influences these factors are all external in nature. They include matrimonial condition, career contemplations, pecuniary situation, and any incapacities that may have a bearing on the capability of the couple to conceive and nurture children. All these factors come in the wake of several other contemplations, in the event that they are sexually active.²⁴

²³ .WHO, *Ensuring Human Rights in the Provision of Contraceptive Information and Services*, (2014).

²⁴ . Nii-Amoo D; Alex C. Ezeh; Tom O. Owuor. *Does Discussion Of Family Improve Knowledge Of Partners Attitude Towards Contraceptives?* (Guttmacher Institute Press,2014)

Mischell, D. R. (2010), *Family Planning: Contraception, Sterilization and Pregnancy Termination* views family planning as the use of contraception and other techniques to regulate the exact timing of reproduction. Other commonly adopted approaches are sexuality tutoring, inhibition and management of infections that are sexually transmitted, counseling that is geared towards preconception and infertility management as well.²⁵

1.11 Materials on marriage and family life

One of the books that the researcher reviewed which talks about marriage and family in Islam is the book of Hammudah Abd al-Ati, (1977), *the family structure in Islam*. He discusses a matrimonial union as “a religious duty, a moral safeguard and a social necessity”.²⁶ According to him marriage is a pious obligation in the sense that both couples are answerable to whatever they do in their marriage life. The husband is supposed to provide clothing, food, shelter and any other responsibility that brings about happiness, peace and tranquility to the family. The wife should also respect her husband and fulfil all her marital responsibilities as the mother of the house. Allah has instituted marriage in Islam to serve as means of satisfying ones sexual desire, to bring calmness to one’s heart and to produce children. Hamuda Abdul A’ati’s book, *the family structure in Islam* is relevant to this research because it discusses marriage and family life in Islam which forms part of this research’s second chapter.

²⁵ Mischell, D. R. *Family Planning: Contraception, Sterilization and Pregnancy Termination*. (Mosby Elsevier Publication, 2010).

²⁶ . Hamudah A, *The Family Structure in Islam* (Maryland: American Trust Publications, 1977), 52.

Abdur Rahman I Doi, (1984) *Shari'ah, The Islamic Law* explains the ultimate purpose of Islamic marriage as means of bringing up the offspring and not the number of offspring to bring forth. It is indeed an act of wrongdoing towards society to neglect responsibilities towards children. This is a crime towards the parents themselves. This implies that any child who does not have access to the emotional and psychological support systems and is not exposed to strict Islamic way of life early on in life is likely to develop a myriad of anti- communal behavioral patterns. Such children are most likely to end up as criminals and full of corruption. In the absence of a stable family life which is ruled by Islamic order and castigation, a child will not have the Islamic conscience and value of righteousness. He further explains that a marital union in Islam, broadly speaking, is a means of ensuring emotive and sensual gratification, a function of procreation as a form of worship of Allah and obedience to His Messenger. This means that, marriage from an Islamic point of view is meant to ensure procreation of the same offspring.

In his assertion, the practice of marriage is mandatory for any man who is able to satisfy the dowry demands and also capable of taking adequate care of a wife and children. It is also compulsory for any man who is of a sound mind and is plagued by the fear that should he fail to marry, he stands the chance of falling into sexual immorality like fornication and other forms of sexual sins. Marriage is also obligatory for any woman without any viable means of economic survival and also fears that it is possible for the sensual desires to lead her to committing any form of sexual sin. However, marriage is also suggested for a person with a demonstrated unshakeable will and therefore able to effectively keep his sexual urges in check. This is one sure way of ensuring that he or she does not become a victim to the wiles of Satan who has a single aim to lure people into

his kingdom. However, it is absolutely important for a person who is of the firm belief that marriage will in no way interfere with his staunch devoutness to Allah. It is therefore against this background that marriage is not binding on a believer who does not wish to have children. Abdur Rahman I Doi's position and explanations on marriage in Islam are also useful in the second chapter of this research where the researcher explains in detail the duties and responsibilities of Muslim couples.

Khalifah A. H. (2009), *Islam and Birth Control* discusses the benefits of marriage. He mentions that marriage provides the means by which children are produced, gives tranquility to oneself, and brings settlement to the heart.²⁷ He regards the survival of the offspring as the most important advantage saying: procreation is the origin and for its sake marriage has been enacted and legalized for the purpose of maintaining the offspring and so as to keep the world from being devoid of mankind, lust has been created only as compelling and inciting force for keeping the generation.

Al-Kawthari, M. A (2006), in his *Birth Control and Abortion in Islam*, expresses an opinion that, there is a profound emphasis in the Qur'an on the matter of tranquility and relieve with two Quranic verses (7: 89 and 30: 31) where it has been stated that the objective of creating man and a woman is for each to find rest and calmness in the other. Therefore if procreation will deprive man of this peaceful living, then it should be prevented. He considers getting married to a barren and menopausal woman as something

²⁷ . Khalifah A. H. *Islam and Birth Control*. (Pakistan: Lahore. 2009)

permissible. From the views presented above, it is true that the Islamic marriage seeks to achieve several purposes. We should therefore, not accept the one-sided view point in respect of marriage which is the multiplication of children or giving birth to many children while ignoring the other purposes of marriage which are equally important in family life.

1.12 Materials on contraception in Islam

Musallam, B.A., (2008). *Sex and Society in Islam* posits that the references in the Holy Qur'an do not concern the use of contraception. However, when the Quran is ambiguous on any particular issue, Muslim scholars will usually turn to analogy, reasoning or consensus. Therefore since the Qur'an is not explicit on the use of contraceptives, there has been diverse views as to the permissibility of contraceptive use for fertility regulation.

He further states that the primary aim of marriage in Islam is procreation. Hence, it is a sin against nature and biological disposition to control births or prevent conception through the use of contraceptives. He states further that a careful analysis of the Holy Qur'an reveals that there is no text or evidence ruling out the inhibition of conception or decrease in the total number of children but there are numerous traditions (Hadiths) of the Holy Prophet that indicate the possibility. Musallam's work serves as a guide to the researcher as he discusses contraceptives in detail in the second chapter of the study.

Amin, S., and Hossain, S., (2005). *Women's Reproductive Rights and the Politics of Fundamentalism* discuss that the Hanafi Islamic jurists establishes a definite difference

between inhibition of conception and abortion, authorizing and consenting to the prevention of conception and ruling out abortion. By corresponding reasoning, different approaches of contraception is permissible in Islam provided the sole aim is the prevention of pregnancy, and would not lead to permanent loss of fertility. The Hanafi jurists went further to broaden their argument in support of obstructing the entrance of the uterus (cervix) with the agreement of the husband. This indicates the acceptance and possible use of some modern artificial contraceptives.

1.13 Materials on reasons for the use of contraceptives to achieve family planning:

In Islam, actions are judged by intentions. Islam does not also support any action or act that causes pain and suffering to the body as Allah mentioned in the Qur'an. The verse says: *"Allah desires for your ease: He desires no hardship for you"*.²⁸

In another verse it says:

*"He has not laid upon you in religion any hardship."*³⁰

These two verses suggest that a Muslim should disassociate himself or herself from any hardships, pain and suffering.

Shahidullah, A. (2006). *Family Planning in Islam* discusses available reasons Muslim couples should use contraceptives to plan their family as follows:

²⁸ . Qur'an 2:185

³⁰ . Qur'an 22:78.

1. When the woman's health is endangered, for example, if the woman is already breastfeeding, it would be harmful both to herself and her child if she becomes pregnant.
2. If either one or both couples have an infectious disease since such diseases may be transmitted to the unborn child or one of the couples.
3. If it is established that there is a genetic defect that can be transmitted to the unborn child.
4. If the husband's finances cannot cater for more children.
5. If the wife wants to rest between pregnancies.

Shahidullah's work is relevant to this study as it provides a broader understanding to the researcher when discussing the above sub topic in chapter two.

1.14 Materials on methods of contraceptives

Wood, C., (2007). *Vasectomy and Sterilization* discusses the methods or techniques couples could adopt to plan their family. According to him, these methods are grouped into reversible and nonreversible.

The reversible are temporary in nature whereas the nonreversible methods are permanent in nature. The reversible methods include vaginal foaming tablets, condoms, Intra-uterine device (IUD), diaphragm (cervical cap), Norplant Implants, withdrawal method, injectable and oral contraceptive pills. These methods have the same purpose which is to prevent the sperms from reaching the uterus. This prevents fertilization from taking place in the ovum. The permanent methods include Permanent-female sterilization and vasectomy for males. In these methods both couples undergo surgical operation in order

to render them permanently incapable of procreation. Wood's book, Vasectomy and Sterilization is relevant to this research because it discusses methods of contraceptives which forms part of this research's second chapter.

1.15 Relevance of the Study.

This study is important for three main reasons:

In the first place, it serves as a source of reference for students with the desire to do research on related subjects and also useful for resource persons who want to do scholarly work and presentations on Islam and family planning. Secondly, the outcomes of the study would be useful for health professionals and policy makers with respect to contributing towards planning relevant culturally sensitive interventions to address the problem of maternal and child mortality and to improve quality of life. Thirdly, the study would be used as a medium to highlight and conscientize the public on the importance of family planning to the socioeconomic development of a nation.

1.16 Limitations of the study.

The difficulties encountered centered on the unwillingness of the respondents especially the females to speak directly to a male researcher. Some mentioned that it was against their religion to speak to another person on issues concerning their family without the consent of their husbands. Others who responded to the questions were a bit shy. This somehow affected the flow of the conversation. Subsequently, a female friend intervened

and assumed an intermediary role between the researcher and some of the female respondents.

Furthermore, some of the respondents spoke 'Dagbanli' and 'Twi' which the researcher is deficient in. This problem of language barrier was later solved when a friend offered a helping hand to interpret some of the responses from the respondents.

1.17 Structure of the work

The study is structured into five chapters. The first chapter focuses on the general introduction of the research which consists of the background to the study, statement of the problem, research questions, objectives of the study, scope of the study, methodology, data collection , data collection methods, theoretical framework, literature review, the relevance of the study, limitations of the study and structure of the study.

Discussions around family planning in Islam are taken up in chapter two.

Chapter three discusses the Ashaiman Muslim Community and data on the situation of family planning among the Muslims of Ashaiman.

Chapter four deals with Presentation and discussion of data.

Chapter five discusses summary, recommendations, conclusions and suggested areas of further research.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CONCEPT OF FAMILY PLANNING IN ISLAM

2.0 Introduction

The researcher has introduced “A study of family planning practices among the Muslims of Ashaiman in chapter one and stated therein the reasons for research into this topic as to critically investigate the concept of family planning and to identify the types of contraceptives permitted in Islam, to examine the level of Muslim awareness of family planning, to discuss the situation of Muslims of Ashaiman on family planning. This chapter discusses the family in Islam, the concept of planning and other sources of Islam, the Qur’an and Sunnah of the Prophet, sources of information for couples on family planning, justifications for the usage of contraceptives to achieve family planning, different procedures of contraceptives and the influence of Islamic culture on contraception by Muslims. The chapter provides better understanding of the family planning concept and the discourses given by Muslim scholars as far as family planning in Islam is concerned.

2.1 Family

The word family is defined by the Cambridge International Dictionary of English as “a social set of people consisting of a parent or parents and their children”. The definition of family by Webster Dictionary can be paraphrased as a collective group of people existing under a single roof and with one definite one head. Family could also refer to fundamental component of humanity traditionally. It normally consists of two individuals

who are parents engaged in the task of raising their children. Again, a definition of family could be a group of two people or more (one of whom is normally the householder) connected biologically, matrimonially, or through adoption and existing together in harmony. All these people thus related and connected (including related subfamily members) are regarded as affiliates of one single family. A Muslim family on the other hand, involves couples who are legally joined together (husband and wife) together with their children. Family in Islam also refers to parents, relatives and other kinsfolks. A Muslim family is established through the dual means of relationship or association by blood and a matrimonial union. Allah (SWT) says:

“And it is He Who has made man from water: Then He has set up relationships of family and marriage: And your Lord is ever All Powerful (over all things).”²⁹

Two important distinctions of Muslim family are widely accepted. The first is the rudimentary family unit that consists of husband and wife (man and woman). This type of family unit is established solely through a matrimonial union and family members which include all persons related by blood. This group also consists of both husband and wife. It does not matter if they live together or not. The initial family came into being when the first man and woman were created. These were

Adam and Hawa (Eve). Allah (SWT) Says:

“And (remember) when your Lord said to the angels; “I will create a vicegerent on earth.” They said: “Will You place in there, one who will make mischief and shed blood in there? While we (indeed) celebrate Your Praises and glorify Your Holy (Name)? He said: “I do know what you do not know.”³⁰

²⁹ . Qur’an (25:54)

³⁰ . Qur’an 2: 30

³³ . Qur’an 4: 1

Then Allah (SWT) formed beings after his own image. He created them man and woman.

This explains the genesis of the initial husband and wife. Allah (SWT) states in the

Qur'an:

“O Humankind! Fear (and respect) your (Guardian) Lord, Who created you from a single person (Adam) and from him, He (Allah) created his mate of similar nature, and from both (the two of them) spread (like seeds) countless men and women -And fear Allah, through Whom you demand your mutual (rights), and revere (and respect) the wombs (that bore you): For Allah always watches over you.”³³

Here Allah (SWT) definitely makes mention of the fact that He created the first human as His viceregency here on the earth. Initially, He first of all positioned the first couple in paradise under a single condition.

“And We said: “O Adam! You and your wife live in the Garden; and eat of the plentiful things in there (wherever and whenever) you want; But do not approach this tree, or you will run into harm and transgression.”³¹

It was when this state was fragmented that the first couple was sent back to the earth again. They were given another condition. Allah (SWT) states:

“We said: “Get you all down from here; And if, surely, there comes Guidance to you from Me; Those who follow My guidance, for them there shall be no fear, and they shall not suffer.”³²

From the holy Qur'an nevertheless, the word family is often used by Prophets to mean their children and wives. For example, Prophet Musah (Moses) used the word family to refer to his family when he was travelling back from 'Madyan' to Egypt. Allah says:

“Then, when Musah (Moses) had fulfilled the term, and was travelling with his family, he saw a fire in the direction of Tur (mount). He said to his family: Wait, I have seen a fire; perhaps I may bring you from

³¹ . Qur'an 2: 35

³² . Qur'an 2: 38

*there some information or a burning fire-brand that you may warm yourselves*³³

As seen from the verse, Musah appeared unhappy about the effect of the weather on the family thus; he was to explore for fire to enable the family warm themselves against the cold weather. This shows that Musah was mindful of his family. The show of Care and concern for a family may be training for spiritual improvement as it was done by Musah. Here there is the need for families to be kept together and catered for. Allah has warned believers in the Qur'an to be attentive of their families by stating:

“Oh you, who believe, save yourselves and your families from hell-fire”.³⁴

Family here is explained by most scholars especially Al-Muraghi to mean wives and children. It hence shows that Muslims are advised to care for their family and this can be made possible by preparation. According to Doi

“The Family is the heart of the Islamic society, and marriage is the only way to bring about such an establishment. It only makes sense that Islam sets up the rules to standardize the operation of the family whereby both spouses can find peace, love, and security and relatedness”.³⁵

Doi adds that it is the desire of Islam to establish a society that is exemplary. This is why particular attention is paid to the family affairs of believers. If the foundation of the family is strong, the foundation of the nation will be strong. Therefore Islam does not leave the rules of the individual members of the family to mere human speculation. The

³³ . Qur'an 28:29

³⁴ . Qur'an 66:6

³⁵ . Doi, A.I, *Shari'ah: The Islamic Law* (Nigeria: A. S. Nooredeen Publication, 2007).

Holy Qur'an charges male Muslims to take up their responsibilities by taking intensive care of their wives so as to allow peace, love, and security to exist within their families.

Allah states:

*“Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has given one more [strength] than the other, as such they support them from their means. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in [the husband's] absence what Allah would have them guard. [First] as to those women on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill conduct, admonish them, [next] refuse to share their beds and [last] beat them [lightly] but if they return to obedience, seek not against them means of annoyance”.*³⁶

In ensuring that, there exist peace and love in Muslim families, Allah has acknowledged in this verse that men are to take control of managing the issues of the family proactively. This shows that the menfolk are the safeguards and maintainers of the women and the whole family. This duty is put on men to make them show a great sense of accountability in the administration of their families. In view of this, Tabataba'i says:

*“In a family circle the relationship of parents to their children is like that of the roots of a tree to its branches because the continuity and survival of the branches of the tree depend upon its roots. Parents are also the founders of the children's life. Since the human society is comprised of the two categories, i.e., parents and children, parents are the main roots of the human society.”*³⁷

In respect of this, it is very clear that children must rely on their parents for continued existence. Noncompliance on the part of parents to provide good care and safeguarding to the children due to lack of possessions (to cater for these large families) may lead to them becoming burdens. This may lead to their failure to survive or fit properly into the

³⁶ . Qur'an 4:34

³⁷ . Tabataba'i M. H. *Islamic Teachings in Brief*, (Ansariyan Publication: Qum: 2004).

social order. This kind of life style affects and reduces the progress of Muslim communities and the whole nation at large.

2.2 Duties and Rights of the Muslim family.

Duties according to Muhammad Hussein Tabataba'i is

“Work that a man must perform for the benefit of someone and the work that a person performs is called duty or obligation.”³⁸

Both the man and the woman have their duties and functions to be carried out as a husband and a wife for the effective management and progress of the family. The father who is the head of the family should ensure that his family is adequately taken care of; he must feed them, cloth them, provide them with shelter and above all educate his children in accordance with the teachings of the Islamic faith and to a level of his finances.

To start with, education is the right of children and it is the duty and responsibility of the parents or the Muslim couples to train the children to grow morally, spiritually and physically. Children should properly be brought up through the efforts of the parents especially the mother in order to help them fit into any society they find themselves when they grow. According to Imam Ali bin Abi Talib:

“The right of a child upon his father is that he should give him a nice appellation, train him well and teach him the Qur'an”.³⁹

³⁸ . Tabataba'i M.H, *Islamic Teachings in Brief*, (Ansariyan Publication: Qum:2004)

³⁹ . Sayyid Ali., R., *Nahjul Blagah*, (Darul-kitab-lubaani: Beirut, 1982, Saying number 399)

In another narration, by Imam Sajjad said in the *Manla-Yahduruhu –Faqihi*, he said:

“The right of a child is that you know he has emerged from you and in this world his right and wrong are attributed to you. You are responsible for his fine teachings and training, guiding him to his Lord Almighty and Gracious, and, assisting him to obey Him. Therefore be sure that if you do a favor to your child, you will obtain it and if you act viciously against him it will come back to you too.”⁴⁰

In both narrations the education of children to become useful to the society are emphasized. Therefore parents must make conscious efforts to train their children in and outside school. As training children in school is expensive, parents may plan the number of children they bring forth since all children have equal rights to education. The poverty stricken nature of Ashaiman Muslim community has made some families to deny the girl child access to education. The reason given is that they do not have enough money to enroll all their children in school. But Allah does not discriminate when He praised those who attain some level of knowledge. Allah says:

“Allah exalts those who believe among you and those who have knowledge, to ranks”.⁴¹

Denying the girl-child education means denying her this exaltation of Allah as outlined in the Qur’an. The traditions of the Prophet acknowledge the need for a girl child to seek knowledge because it is a duty incumbent on them to search for it. The Prophet said;

“Seeking of knowledge is a duty incumbent upon every Muslim man and woman”.⁴²

⁴⁰ . Sheikh Sadouq, M., *Manla-Yahduruhu –Faqihi* Volume 2, page 622.

⁴¹ . Qur’an 58:11

⁴² . Al-Maglisi Baaqir, M., *Bihar-Anwar*, Volume 1, p 213

He further when he praised the women of ‘Ansar’

*“What excellent women the women of al -Ansar are, their bashfulness could never curb them from learning the rules of religion”.*⁴⁶

It is therefore evident from the traditions above that equal educational opportunities be given to all children (male and female). Parents should not use financial constraints to deny the girls access to education.

Children have the right to life and it is the responsibility of both parents to ensure that the lives of both the unborn and born child are protected. No circumstance should compel the parents to take the lives of their children. Allah warns those who kill their children due to economic hardships. Allah states in the Qur`an:

*“And kill not your children for fear of poverty. We provide for them and for you. Surely, the killing of them is a great sin.”*⁴³

If economic hardship is the reason to end the life of some of the children to have a sizeable number that can be catered for, then the parents may resort to family planning. Preserving the life of both born and unborn child is the sole responsibility of the father.

Allah states:

*“And if they (women) are pregnant then spend on them until they deliver.”*⁴⁴

This implies that the father shall take care of the pregnancy from day one until delivery.

The woman however is tasked with the mandate of fulfilling the right of suckling the child when born. Generally, scholars admonish mothers to mandatorily suckle their

⁴³ . Qur’an 17:31

⁴⁴ . Qur’an 65:6.

babies. Even if the child or the baby decides to stay away from breast milk, the services of a wet nurse should be hired. Allah has reasonably exhausted the rights of nursing in the Qur'an by saying:

*“The mothers shall give suck to their children for two whole years, (that is) for those (parents) who desire to complete the term of suckling, but the father of the child shall bear the cost of the mother's food and clothing on a reasonable basis. No person shall have a burden laid on him greater than he can bear. No mother shall be treated unfairly on account of her child, or father on account of his child. And on the (father's) heir is incumbent the like of that (which was incumbent on the father). If they both decide on weaning by mutual consent and after due consultation, there is no sin on them. And if you decide on a wet nurse for your children, there is no sin on you, provided you pay what you agreed on a reasonable basis. And fear Allah and know that Allah is All-Seer on what you do”.*⁴⁵

Even though the Qur'an has cautioned Muslim parents to fulfill the right of suckling by suckling the baby for two whole years, it has also given the parents an option to wean the baby before completing the two years term. It is a fact that some women who exclusively breastfeed their babies do not see their monthly menstrual flow and this may prevent pregnancy naturally. Some women when they start to see their monthly menstrual flow they immediately wean their babies. Completing two years term of suckling which is by way of fulfilling the right of suckling, may also be considered by parents as a natural method of contraceptive to achieve family planning if they do not have faith in the modern methods of contraceptives.

⁴⁵ . Qur'an 2:233

2.3 Planning in Islam.

Generally, planning is seen as the procedure of carefully thinking through the activities that are necessary to attain an expected objective. It is the initial action that is geared towards achieving an end that is expected. It involves determining previously an intended action, the actual time for implementation, the manner of doing it as well as the doer of the action. Planning is crucial because it sets the stage for the future and reaches a conclusion about tackling a particular situation in the distant future. It is crucial because it adequately prepares towards any unforeseen circumstances. This way the future cannot catch us unaware.

Planning is present in all types of institutions and households. It is important for families to adequately plan because of the uncertainty of the future. Therefore, the art of planning is a fundamental necessity that is crucial for the endurance, development and achievement of any group.

2.4 Significance of planning in the Qur'an

The significance of planning in the Qur'an can be attested to by the story of Prophet Musah (AS). When Allah sent him to go to Egypt and preach to Firawn(Pharaoh) and his people, he accepted the order and spelt out his plans in the following verses:

*“Oh my Lord! Expand my chest (with faith, knowledge, and affection); ease my task, and remove the impediment from my speech, so they may understand what I say: and give me a minister of my family, Aaron, my brother; add to my strength through him, and make him share my task”.*⁴⁶

⁴⁶ . Qur'an 20:25-32

It is possible to identify three principal elements which are necessary in effective planning. Firstly, Musah (AS) adequately prepared for the task ahead which is preaching. The success of every preacher depends to a large extent on person's acquaintance with facts, understanding and genuine conviction. All these elements are necessary because they work together to ensure that the preacher is poised to overcome any obstacles and impediments. It is clear from the life of Musah (AS) that he was more than willing to expose both his heart and mind to in a bid to accept more thoughtful conviction and understanding. These were necessary for the accomplishment of his duty fruitfully. The next component in Prophet Musah's (AS) planning was to effectively handle the hindrance of effective communication. It may be due to the fact that the actual art of language presentation might have been a contentious issue for him. Perhaps the differences in the language and customs of the various tribes of Midianites and the Qubits of Egypt also presented a problem. It must be noted that there is a connotative twist to every language. This twist is only accessible to native speakers of the language. It is also possible for others to come to an understanding of the language if they take the pains to learn it well. It is stated in a separate verse in the Qur'an that Musah depended on the assistance of Haroon (AS) who was his brother. This brother of his never departed from Egypt. Musah relied on him to be the effectual communicative channel.

"And my brother Aaron, he is more eloquent in speech than I..."⁴⁷

Although Prophet Musah (AS) had received his initial training in Egypt, he was not conversant with the traditions of Egypt because it had been a long time since he left Egypt. It is possible that Musah had completely forgotten about the customs and

⁴⁷ . Qur'an 28:34

traditions of his birthplace because he had stayed for a long time in *Madian* (Northwest of the Arabian Peninsula. According to Hafiz Ibn Kathir in *the Stories of the Prophets*.⁴⁸ Biblical scholars are of the view that Musah (AS) was well into 80 years old by the time he came back to Egypt. History points out more towards language differences than a physical impediment to the question of communication. The wider implication of this is that ability to master language effectively is a crucial tool in delivering the message of Allah. Everyone God calls, ought to be eloquent in the language of his listeners. It was absolutely not possible for Prophet Musah (AS) to effectively execute his mission without accurate planning. The prophet needed to plan carefully how he was going to execute his divine agenda. The final element worthy of consideration is the issue of logistics and sustenance. This refers to the presence of human elements and useful tools needed to back him in his bid to carry out his assigned mission. The plan of the prophet included the inclusion of his brother Haroon (AS). His brother was to act as a corporeal and ethical support base. All the three elements listed above points to how the prophet intended to strategically approach Pharaoh (Firawn) of Egypt. It is obvious that before the prophet approached Egypt, he had a definite plan. Additionally, it can be deduced that all the plans of Musah ((AS) centered on issues relating to the art of preaching.

Herein the full positive impact of planning is felt.

Another issue that pointed to the effectiveness of planning is what Prophet Ibrahim (AS) came up with in the erection of ‘Ka’bah.’ As part of his initial plan was to think of factors which help him build the house of Allah, ‘Ka’ba. He considered land, labour and raw

⁴⁸ . Ibn Kathir H. *The stories of the Prophets*, (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform;Damascus, 2017)

materials. Prophet Ibrahim and his son worked together as labourers. They chose hillock, elevated from the surroundings and stones as the raw materials.

Another point is the famous hadith of Allah's plan; in that He has the entire creation, your existence, my existence, and everything that we know planned with precision and detail, 50,000 years before He even created any of it. All these stories act as a guide to inspire true Muslims to plan intelligently.⁴⁹ It must be prudent that the plans Muslims come up with be intuitive and extends far into the future. They must be geared towards the attainment of a specific goal. Moreover, it is important

Muslims must remain focused and that nothing distracts him from achieving his mission. The man of vision has the ability to see beyond present immediate circumstances. The success of a plan depends on accurate construction that takes into cognizance both intuition and vision.

It is possible for planning to be effective so long as it is based on farsightedness. It does not matter if the plan is short or long term one. It goes without saying that both Allah (SWT) and His Prophet adore and esteem people who have the ability to plan effectively. It therefore beholds on Muslims to develop the aptitude plan effectively. The ability to plan indicates a high level of understanding and wisdom. Additionally, the Qur'an enjoins all adherents to follow the example of Allah (SWT) as they watch him in his ways. They should pattern their planning towards that of Allah (SAW) as he forms His creations.

⁴⁹ . Tabataba'i M.H, *Tafsir Al-mizan*

*“Verily, all things have We created in (planned) proportion and measure”.*⁵⁰

Also Allah states in the Qur’an

*“No misfortune can happen on earth or in your souls but is recorded in a plan before We bring it into existence”.*⁵¹

It is obvious that these selected verses attest to the fact that the conception and consequence of every construction is done in conformity to a definite plan. Thus, Allah (SWT) declares categorically that He does everything in accordance to a fixed process and a record. This is what all genuine Muslims should emulate. Besides, the Qur’an frequently seeks to put Muslims in remembrance that Allah (SWT) is indeed the unsurpassed designer. An example of this is seen in how Allah talks carefully about His preparation or the symbols of His Faultless Plan in the Quran:

*“Do you not see that Allah sends down rain from the sky, and We produce thereby fruits of varying colours? And in the mountains are tracts, white and red of varying shades and [some] extremely black. And among people and moving creatures and grazing livestock are various colours similarly. Only those fear Allah, from among His servants, who have knowledge. Indeed, Allah is Exalted in Might and Forgiving.”*⁵²

According to the Tafsir Imam Ibnu Kathir, in these verses Allah (SWT) shows his cautious crafting of the normal environment to be indicative of one of His signs or symbols. His Plan takes into cognizance of everything. The plans of any individual do

⁵⁰ . Qur’an (54: 49)

⁵¹ . Qur’an 57: 22

⁵² . Qur’an 35: 28-29

not really matter since in the end, Allah is the ultimate Decider.⁵³ This is specified in the Quran:

*“Has it not become clear to those who inherited the earth after its [previous] people that if We willed, We could afflict them for their sins? But We seal over their hearts so they do not hear.”*⁵⁴

It is stated thus in the Tafsir of Imam Ibnu Kathir, “Did they then feel secure against Allah's plan. None feels secure from Allah's plan except the people who are the losers.⁵⁵ However, planning from Allah (SWT) should not deter Muslims from planning. In this context of family institution, Muslims must acknowledge His supremacy in doing strategic planning. Planning is helpful and will provide advantages to any family institution.

2.5 Significance of planning in the hadith

Despite Prophet Muhammad’s deep-seated conviction in the ability of Allah (SWT) to offer a perfect protection for him irrespective of the circumstances, the prophet still carefully planned his migration meticulously and with a great deal of care. This goes a long way to prove to Muslims that it is very prudent for them to plan every single one of their actions. It does not matter the position they find themselves in. It beholds on all Muslims to carefully plan their actions by considering all the different aspects of their plans. This is one sure way they can attain success on all fronts. Muslims should follow the example of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in planning. He was a great planner. There

⁵³ . Abu Syaikh., A., M., *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*. Volume 9, (2013), P187

⁵⁴ . Qur’an 7: 100

⁵⁵ . Abu Syaikh., A., M., *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, Volume 9, (2013), P56

were numerous examples of him planning, telling others to plan, and working with others on plans. For example during the Hijrah, he selected Muslims to leave Makkah at different times. He wanted to make sure that the journey was as safe as it could be. Before every battle, he spoke to his Companions to determine what the best strategies and tactics would be. The Battle of the Trench utilized a trench tactic of Salman al-Farsi who stated this tactic worked well for the Persians. Another incident of Prophet planning is during the battle of Badr by draining the well at Badr, positioning the Muslim fighters on Badr's hills and Sa'id bin Muath strategy of erecting a housing for the Prophet. The escape of the Prophet was even planned to the minutest detail in the event of defeat. This attested to evidence of a meticulous and practicable vision. Hence, in spite of pressing conditions, it is prudent for a Muslim to be knowledgeable and not forget the overriding objective or mission that is in sight.⁵⁶ In a different area, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) strongly encouraged Muslims to write wills to plan for death. If he did not believe in planning for the future, he would not have advised Muslims to write wills that usually would not take effect for several years. He saw planning as an important step in achieving a variety of goals.

2.6 Importance of planning a family in Islam

According to Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi, the decision to accurately plan a family is a private matter. Normally people plan their families for various reasons. The reasons vary from economic to health. It must be noted that it is absolutely acceptable in

⁵⁶ Beekun. R. I *Strategic Planning and Implementation for Islamic Organizations*. (International Institute of Islamic Thought: 2006)

Islam. For Rizvi, nowhere in the Qur'an or hadith states categorically that birth control is not tolerable. It is also not mandatory for couples to have children.⁵⁷ However, its benefits go to all the three components of the family; the mother, the father and the children. To the mother family planning makes it possible for her to recuperate her strength after delivery. The mother is also able to provide the necessary care and attention the family deserves to thrive. She is also able to have more time for her family and personally advance her life. In case she is suffering from any illness after birth, she has the chance to successfully recuperate and regain her strength. It is possible for Children of families who plan their families to have all the kindness, sanctuary, affection, and attention they so much deserve. It is narrated from Imam Ali bin Abi Talib that:

“One of the two (means) of affluence is to have few dependents.”⁵⁸

In Islam there is no ceiling place for a number of children a couple should have.

Everything on the financial capacity of the father involved.

The father is not even left out in the benefit of effectively planning a family. His burdens are lifted, and he has a reduced burden of caring effectively for the family.

The man is in a position to adequately provide all the fundamental needs of the family. These include sufficient provision of food, shelter, education, and a better future. He is able to have time for his family as well as his own individual

⁵⁷ . Sayyid Muhammad R, *Marriage and Morals in Islam*,

⁵⁸ . Sayyid Ali., R., *Nahjul Blagah*, (Darul-kitab-lubaani: Beirut, 1982, Saying number 141)

progression and it gives him enough time to treat himself and recover fully when he is infected with a sexual transmitted disease.

2.7 The legal objective of a Muslim family

A Muslim family is established through marriage and that reasons for its formation are not far from marriage; as marriage is defined by Takyi Baffour as

*“a union between a man and a woman for the procreation of children”.*⁵⁹

This suggests that procreation among others is one of the purposes of Muslim family. The lawful aim of a Muslim family includes sexual gratification.⁶⁰

For Sheikh Yussuf Al-Qardawi the main purpose of Muslim family is to give birth to children and in an attempt to fulfill this motive Muslim couples satisfy themselves sexually. He added that the sexual desire in men can only be satisfied with one's legitimate spouse and it helps the couples to release pressure and tension.⁶¹

One other legal objective of a Muslim family is that it offers the community with complete descendants who are morally upright. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said:

⁵⁹ . Takyi B, *Marital instability in an African society: Exploring the factors that influence divorce processes in Ghana. Sociological focus* 34, no. 1 (2001), 77-96.

⁶⁰ . Amini, I, *Principles of Marriage and Family Ethics*. (Ansariyan publications, 2006).

⁶¹ . Al-Qaradawi, Y. *The lawful and the prohibited in Islam.*(Islamic Book Trust, 2001)

*“Marry the loving, child-bearing women for I shall have the largest numbers [of followers] among the prophets on the day of Resurrection”.*⁶²

One of the basic essences of marriage is the provision of offspring who are worthy of integrity. Perhaps this explains why most people get worried when they are not able to have children after years of marriage. They often employ all forms of help from professional sources to reverse this trend. This justifies Zachariah’s prayers to God which states:

*“Do not leave me heirless Lord, You are the best of heirs”.*⁶³

He again prayed in another verse saying:

*“Lord, grant me by your own grace virtuous offspring. You are the hearer of all prayers”.*⁶⁴

Therefore, the aim of having a family is to be in possession of off-springs who are morally upright. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) sanctions this in his words:

“Choose well for your children and seek to marry the competent.” For Sheikh Nuaamah,

*“a Muslim family is established for two main objectives: procreation and socialization”.*⁶⁵

⁶² . Ibn Hajar, A, *Fathal-Ba-ri- bi-SharhiSahihal-Bukhari* (Cairo: Da-r al-Rayya-n lil-Turath, no date), 9: 111

⁶³ . Qur’an (21: 89)

⁶⁴ . Qur’an (3: 38).

⁶⁵ . Sheikhh Ishaak N, *Marriage a Lifelong Vow*, (Accra: Anest Company LTD, 2004).⁷⁰ Qur’an 25: 74.

Despite the fact that procreation is the main objective of Muslim family, Muslim couples should not just think about giving birth to as many children as possible. Rather, they should think and plan on the number of children they can cater for.

The establishment of a prototypical family that others can look up to is another obligation of Muslims. Other families should emulate the good deeds of Muslim families. The Muslim family should follow closely the leadership of Prophet and thereby prove that it is not really hard to strictly follow Islamic teachings. In effect, this remains the single most effectual objective of any family as stated in this prayer:

“And those who say, ‘Our Lord, grant us from among our wives an offspring comfort to our eyes and make us an example for the righteous”⁷⁰

Lastly, Muslims also aim at giving birth to off springs who are without sickness and can assist their parents in old age as well as offer prayers for them after their death. This justifies Zachariah’s prayers to the Almighty thus:

“Now I fear my kinsmen when I am gone. [I have no hope of their continuing my mission] for my wife is barren, so grant me a successor from Yourself, to be my heir and to be the heir of the House of Yaqoob(AS); and make him, O my Lord, acceptable to you”⁶⁶

The Prophet (S.A.W) also said: “When a human being dies, his work comes to an end, except for three things: ongoing charity, knowledge (by which people) benefit from, or a pious son who prays for him”

⁶⁶ . Qur’an 19:5-6).

2.8 Reasons for the use of contraceptive

According to the Holy Qur'an, Allah the Almighty wishes and desires for His servants ease and enjoyable life and does not wish for their hardships and sufferings. It says:

“Allah desires for you ease: He desires no hardship for you”⁶⁷

In another verse it says:

“He has not laid upon you in religion any hardship.”⁷³

These two verses imply that any way of life that may lead believers to hardships, suffering and difficulties should be avoided because God the Almighty does not desire it for His creation. Imam Al-Ghazali states that for the sake of protecting the wife's life from the risk of child-birth or in the case of financial difficulties that befall the family, the use of contraceptive can be justified. Sheikh Ahmad al-Shabarasi pointed out the validity and the reasons for the use of contraceptives as follows:

1. In the event of a woman's deteriorating health. For instance, if the woman already has a child who is breastfeeding, it would be detrimental to both mother and child if she becomes pregnant.
2. If either one or both partners have a disease that can be transferred to their child.
3. If the husband's finances are insufficient to support an additional child or children.
4. Genetic defect that can be transmitted.
5. When the wife needs chance to rest between pregnancies.

⁶⁷ . Qur'an (2:185).

⁷³ . Qur'an (22:78).

Considering the reasons presented by al-Ghazali and Sheikh Ahmad Shabarasi, the use of contraceptive should be encouraged.. It has been observed in the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet that believers can practice birth control. All the four Sunni and Jafari Schools of Thought generally ruled that the use of contraceptives 'is *'makruh'* (undesirable) but not *'haram'* (forbidden).

The primary aim of birth control is to bring about wanted births. Many people hold a wrong view of birth control. What they think anytime they hear birth control is that it refers to an effort not to give birth to children or that pregnancy should be aborted. This is not right. Birth control is an effort to plan for desired or anticipated births. That is to make suitable preparation for the incoming child. This preparation embraces what the mother will need, how to take care of the pregnancy to ensure its slow and advanced development.

2.9 Methods of contraceptives

Many different methods of contraceptives exist. The common ones people often use is investigated to see if they are acceptable in Islam or not. Permissibility has been determined by the definition of the beginning of pregnancy according to the Islamic point of view, this is when an ovum that is fertilized is rooted onto the lining of the uterus. Hence, anything that inhibits such implementation is acceptable. On the other hand, whatever axes pregnancy after attachment is often considered *'haram'*. The permissible methods are also reversible.

2.10 Permissible methods (reversible)

These refer to all those methods which actually involves surgical operation. It is also possible for such methods to be reversed. The implication is that anytime the man or woman desires to stop using a particular method, it can be stopped and the effects reversed. This means as soon as the woman desires to be pregnant, she can go off that particular method. The methods are outlined below:

1. Oral contraceptives

These are referred to as birth control pills. They work by inhibiting pregnancy because they interfere with ovulation. These birth control pills work by changing and regulating the levels of hormones. They effectively suppress the signals from the hormones which are necessary for the glands to release eggs or ovum. They are meant to be taken orally on a predetermined schedule for twenty days or more in the period of each menstrual cycle. The whole essence of these pills is to prevent ovulation. This means that in Islam they are acceptable. However, there is another set of pills that only work after sex. They are referred to as ‘morning-after pill’ or the recently developed postinor 2 pill. Also, since those pills functions as preventing the implanting of a fertilized ovum, it is allowed in Islam. Hence, these pills can only be taken after sex but not when pregnancy has been confirmed.

2. Depo-Provera

Depo-Provera functions in much the same way as the pills. However, it is not taken orally but injected once in three months. These and other are contraceptives that are administered by injection are allowed because they are not harm-causing and again they are reversible.

3. Intrauterine Devices (IUD)

The intrauterine devices are either plastic or metal objects which are manufactured in a variety of shapes. They are fixed inside the uterus. It is not exactly clear how the IUD works. There are two different opinions as to how they actually work. One group state that it inhibits fertilization. The other group assert that it actually prevents the implantation of a fertilized ovum from planting itself in the uterus. Pregnancy can only be said to occur after successful implantation. This therefore makes it permitted in Islam. The differences of the medical experts does not really matter.

4. Barrier devices

These are the devices that inhibit the sperm from swimming into the uterus. Barrier devices include the use of condom which traps the sperm in and prevents it from entering the woman, the use of a diaphragm to cover the cervix, cervical cap, or vaginal sponge.

There is also the use of substances referred to as spermicidal which have the aim of rendering the sperms infertile. The sperms are sterile before they get to the ovum. Since all these barrier devices are not used during pregnancy, they are permitted in Islam as effective means of birth control.

5. Abstinence during fertile period

Three fundamental procedures are necessary to forecast ovulation. These are necessary so that the couple involved will not engage in sex when the woman is in her six days fertile season. These three procedures are

- (i) Ovulation Method: It is possible for a woman to detect her fertile period by the kind of discharge that comes from her cervix into the vagina. The onset of

cervical mucus discharge implies a fertile period. So, pregnancy can be avoided if no sexual intercourse takes place.

- (ii) Rhythm Method: this method bears close resemblance to the ovulation method. It however means the woman will have to observe her periods for a year in order to know when she is in her fertile phase.
- (iii) Temperature: With this method, the temperature of a woman determines if she is in her fertile season or not. A rise in temperature implies that she is. All these methods are effective in the prevention of pregnancy. However there exists more innovative ways of detecting ovulation. This may be done by the use of an ovulation test kit. These kits are designed to indicate the periods when the woman is most fertile and very likely to become pregnant. These methods may be tempting and difficult to practice in the sense that it is during this fertile period that a woman desires and yearns for sexual intercourse.⁶⁸

6. Withdrawal or coitus interruptus ('Azl')

Coitus interruptus or 'azl' implies the withdrawal of the male sex organ just before ejaculation. This is a widely used method of birth control. It is on record that Muhammad bin Muslim and Abdur Rahman bin Abi Abdillah Maymun asked Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (A S) questions about the withdrawal. The Imam said:

*"It is up to the man; he may spill it wherever he wants."*⁶⁹

⁶⁸ . Wood, C., (2007). *Vasectomy and Sterilization*

⁶⁹ . Al- A'mili bin Hussain, M., *Wasail ash-Shi'a*, vol. 14, p105

This suggests that husband can spill the sperm outside to prevent the semen from reaching the ovaries. However, in another hadith, Muhammad bin Muslim narrated from Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq as follows:

*“In case of a slave-girl, it is allowed, however, in case of a free woman, I dislike it unless it had been so stipulated at the time of marriage”.*⁷⁰

Imam al-Shawkani has made an effort by compiling some of the sayings of the Holy Prophet with regard to 'azl' in his work '*Nayl al Awtar*'. Some of them are quoted below: Jabir bin Abdullah narrates “We used to practice 'azl' in the Prophet's life time while the Qur'an was being revealed”. In another version of the same hadith it reads “We used to practice 'azl' during the Prophet's life time and he was informed about this and he did not stop us”. “A man came to the Holy Prophet and said, I have a slave-girl, and we need her as a servant around the palm groves. I have sex with her, but I am afraid of her becoming pregnant. The Prophet said, practise 'azl' with her if you so wish, for she will receive what has been predetermined for her.” The above traditions indicate that the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) was aware of the practice of 'azl' in his lifetime but he did not stop Muslims from practicing it.

The opinions of the four Sunni Schools of Thoughts and the Ja'fari School of Thought are also important with regard to 'azl'. For example, Imam al- Nawawi, a scholar of the Shafi'i School of Thought explains that: 'azl' implies an engagement in sex and just before the man reaches ejaculation, the penis is withdrawn and the sperm spilled anywhere but outside the vagina. This act is 'Makruh' in any condition whether the women consent or not. So long as the woman is in agreement, it is not considered as

⁷⁰ . Al- A'mili bin Hussain, M., *Wasail ash-Shi'a*, vol. 14, p106

‘haram’ (forbidden). However, if she disagrees, there are two views and the popular opinion is that which the majority of Muslim scholars uphold that it is not *haram* (forbidden). Imam Anas b. Maalik of the Maliki School of Thought states that “a man has no right to practice ‘azl’ with his wife without her consent”. Ibn Qudamah, a jurist of the Hambali School of Thought says that the practice of ‘azl’ in the absence of any justifiable reason is considered improper or ‘*makruh*’ though it is not a forbidden act. ‘Azl’ should not be engaged in if the woman is not in full agreement. It is important to note that all the authorities above realized the need to seek permission from the wife because it is her right to enjoy maximum pleasure in the act of sexual intercourse and to have children. The Ja’fari School of Thought is of the opinion that the practice of ‘azl’ with a free woman is only permitted with her specific permission but allows for the establishment of the woman’s consent as precondition in the marriage contract. It is important to note that all the five Schools of Thought acknowledge the need to seek permission of the wife because it’s her right to enjoy maximum sexual pleasure and to have children.⁷¹

8. A 2-Year exclusive breastfeeding

This method is natural and reversible as well. The Qur’an stipulates a must follow principle of breastfeeding that is protracted. This serves the purpose of physiologically leading to effective spacing between pregnancies. This indicates the permissibility and even reassurance of spacing out births. Below are the verses from the Qur’an which reassure infant breastfeeding for at least two years which leads to the creation of prolonged breastfeeding as a birth control mechanism.

⁷¹ . Al-A’mili Zainuddin, A., *Sharh Lumu’ah*, vol. 2, page. 28

The mothers shall give suck to their offspring (breastfeed) for two whole years.⁷²

*In pain did his mother bear him, and in pain did she give him birth.
The carrying of the (child) to his weaning is (a period of) thirty months.⁷³*

In these verses, the Qur'an is emphatic about the need for the child to be breastfed for at least two years. It has been established by science that breastfeeding has enormous benefits. Paramount is the building up of the immunity of the child. A strong immunity implies effective prevention of infections. Breast milk is also a rich source of nourishing nutrients that is also hygienic. Furthermore, protracted breastfeeding leads to the prevention of pregnancy. Thus, it can work as an effective birth control mechanism. The lactating mother can safely heal from all ailments and she can regain her strength. The efficacy of breastfeeding as a safe means of preventing pregnancy is lessened as the baby is weaned off the breast. This might be the time when artificial contraceptive methods can be employed to inhibit pregnancy.

2.11 Prohibited methods (nonreversible)

These methods involve surgical operation which will permanently make both the man and the woman incapable of procreation. Consequently, both the woman and the man are rendered permanently incapable of the biological reproduction. Imam Al- Nawawi points out that for destroying the veins of testicles with the (intake) of camphor or any other

⁷² . Qur'an 2:233

⁷³ . Qur'an 46:15

similar thing is a type of castration and castration is ‘haram’ (prohibited). Islamic scholars stand against irreversible methods of contraceptives on the grounds that the Prophet forbade castration. Wood Clive argues that castration involves removing the testicles, the organs which produces both sperms and other male hormones that are necessary for the maintenance of masculinity; his sex drive inclusive. It is reported from Sa’d Ibn Waqas:

“Allah’s Messenger objected to Uthman Ibn Ma’zun living celibacy. If he had given him permission, we would have had ourselves castrated”⁷⁴.

It is again reported from Abdallah Ibn Masud that:

“We were on expedition with the Holy Prophet and we had no women with us. We said, should we have ourselves castrated? He, [the Prophet] forbade us to do so”⁷⁵.

Irreversible Methods of sterilizing men and women are not permissible because Islamic Jurists have used the prohibition of castration as an analogy to consider it as ‘haram’.

Below are examples of prohibited (nonreversible) methods of contraceptives.

1. Vasectomy

Wikipedia defines vasectomy as the surgical procedure that ensures male sterilization or perpetual contraception. It is a procedure where the small tubes in the scrotum are cut and sealed in a bid to prevent sperm from entering into the urethra. Once sperm cannot enter the urethra, the female cannot be fertilized. After a vasectomy procedure, though the body does produce sperms, the body absorbs them.

⁷⁴ . Khan, M., M., *Sahih Bukhari*. (Peace Vision, 1979), kitab Nikah, Vol 7, Hadith no. 5.

⁷⁵ . Ibn al-Hajjaj, M, *Sahih Muslim*, (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Fikr; 1983). kitab Nikah, Vol 3, 553-4

2. Tubal ligation

This is when the fallopian tubes of the woman are permanently sealed or totally removed.

This way the eggs cannot be fertilized by sperms for further implantation. Tubal ligation is actually a lasting method of female sterilization and birth control.

2.12 Conclusion:

This chapter examines the concept of family planning in Islam. In it is learnt that Islam attaches so much importance to the family. This is because it is the foundation of every society. It is considered that the family forms the nucleus of the Islamic society. Society can only be established through marriage. The Holy Qur'an charges male Muslims to take up their responsibilities by taking care of their wives and children. They should ensure that love, peace, unity and security prevail in their families. It is also learnt in this chapter that effective upbringing of Muslim children by providing them with their basic needs and moral training will assist them grow into decent and well trained human beings.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ASHAIMAN MUSLIM COMMUNITY AND THE SITUATION OF FAMILY PLANNING PRACTICE BY THE MUSLIM COUPLES

3.0 Introduction

The Ashaiman Muslim community is located within The Ashaiman Municipal Assembly which is one of the 254 Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) in Ghana. It is part of the MMDAs in the Greater Accra Region. Ashaiman Municipality was carved out of the then Tema Municipality, now Tema Metropolitan Authority, as one of the newly created Districts in 2008 by LI 1889 and Local Government Act of 1993 (Act 462), Ashaiman Municipal Assembly. The administrative capital is Ashiaman. It is located about four kilometers the North of Tema and about 30km from Accra. Ashaiman shares boundaries on the North and East with Kpone Katamanso District Assembly, on the South with the Tema Township, and on the West with Adjei Kojo Township, all of Tema Metropolitan Assembly. The closeness of Ashaiman to Tema and Accra makes it relatively easy for residents to have unfettered access to social facilities and infrastructure such as good roads, water, hospitals and electricity. It also serves as a dormitory town for workers in most industries in the Tema Township.

3.1 Historical Origin of Ashaiman.

History has it that Nii Amui is the founder of Ashiaman. It was during the 17th century that he migrated there from Tema. The name of the new settlement was known as ‘Ashaiman’ which means the town of Ashai or Ashia’s town. Two of his brothers later joined him. They were Nii Ashai and Nii Oko. As time went on, other migrants from the

Ama area joined them. These new group of migrants settled at Lebanon which is a suburb of Ashiaman. Among the earliest settlers are Ewes who came in from the Volta Region. Currently, Ashaiman is a bustling multi-ethnic commercial center. It is on record that Ashaiman houses close to fifty different ethnic groups. Due to the strategic location of Ashiaman, it is home to a lot of migrants who have come there in search of job opportunities. Perhaps the construction of the Tema harbor and the railway line somewhere in the 1950s made the town economically attractive. As the migrants settled there, they were very comfortable because accommodation and other facilities were relatively cheap.

3.2 Religious affiliation of Ashaiman

Muslim population which comprises of (*Tijaniya, Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama'a, Ahmadiya and Shia*) is the second largest after Christianity. One may argue that 2021 population census statistics on Muslims in Ashaiman should have been used for this study. However this work was done in 2019, at a period long before the 2021 census. Below is the population of Ashaiman

Municipality by religious affiliation according to the 2010 Population and Housing Census. "The population of the municipality is dominated by Christians (Catholic, Protestant, Pentecostal/Charismatic and other denominations). These represent approximately (83.1%). Muslims constitute the second largest group (16.5 %) and traditionalists group is the least (0.4 %) in the municipality."⁷⁶ According to the data

⁷⁶ . Ghana Statistical Service, October, 2014

presented above, the population of Muslims in Ashaiman is the second largest after Christianity. Muslim family sizes range between four (4) and twelve (12) according to my own observation with the highest being fifteen. Naturally, in Islam there is no limit to the number of children Muslim couples should raise. The choice lies with them depending on their financial standing.

3.3 Data on the situation of family planning practice

To complete the study, 20 married couples (10 males and 10 females) respondents were sampled using the snowballing sampling technique. 8 of the female respondents were traders, a teacher and a nurse. The ages of the 8 female respondents fell between 22years and 36years while the ages of the other 2 female respondents fell between 37 years and 39 years. Among the 10 female respondents only 2 were literates and the rest of the 8 female respondents were not literates. 6 of the male respondents were unemployed, 3 were traders while 1 was a civil servant. The ages of the 7 male respondents fell between 25years and 39years while the ages of the other 3 male respondents fell between 40 years and 45 years. Among the 10 male respondents only 1 was literate and the rest of the 9 male respondents were illiterates. Similarly, 6 Islamic scholars from the Tijaniyya, Ahlusunnah wal Jama'a, Ahmadiya and the Shia groups were purposively sampled for their religious knowledge and opinion on family planning practices. Lastly 3 health officials from 3 family planning clinics were also purposively sampled for their in-depth knowledge on family planning and the role they play in the consumption of family planning within the Ashaiman Municipality.

3.4 Decision making on family planning by the Muslim couples

Family planning decisions are very significant in the management of family affairs of most Muslim communities. Family planning decisions are dependent on a number of factors such as; awareness of family planning services, involvement in practicing family planning, discussion of family planning issues among spouses and types of family planning methods being discussed among couples.

3.4.1 Awareness of family planning services

In a response to family planning awareness by 10 Muslim couples, 6 couples answered in the affirmative, 2 couples provided a negative response to the issue on awareness of family planning services in the municipality and 2 couples provided no response.⁷⁷ Those who answered in the affirmative further identified the hospitals and clinics and the media houses as their main sources of information.

In connection with the awareness of family planning, some religious leaders in the municipality from different religious groups were interviewed. These included the Deputy Chief Imam of Zenu, Sheikh Mohammad Salis Abubakar (Shia), the proprietor of Imam Mahdi Educational complex and the Chief Imam of the Sisala community of Ashaiman (Shia), Sheikh Idris Musah Dumah, Sheikh Ibrahim Yakubu, the Imam of the Ashaiman Middle East Central Mosque (a Sunni) and Sheikh Muaaz Mohammed Klum (a Tijani), a teacher at Nurumustafia Islamic School. All these scholars and Imams stated that family planning is in agreement with Islamic precepts.⁷⁸ These results go a long way

⁷⁷ . An interview with Muslim couples on their awareness to family planning at Zongolaka, Ashaiman on the 16th of May. 2020.

⁷⁸ . An interview with leaders of Tijaniyya, Ahlusunnah and Shia on the 16th May, 2019

to prove that all the religious leaders totally agree with the general public that family planning is not a detestable concept in Islam. This makes it permissible in Islam. However, it is important to that increased educational attainment correlates positively with acceptance of family planning. Among religious leaders, there is the need for intensified education on the benefits of family planning and that it is acceptable in Islam. These findings are in consonance with the Holy Qur'an. The Holy Qur'an is in favour of natural fertility control. Hence it encourages mothers to nurse their children for two years.

The Qur'an says:

"The mothers shall engage in the lactation of their offspring for two years". Qur'an (2:233).

The responses from the Islamic scholars point to the fact that, Islam does not reject family planning. However they are concerned with the long term effects of family planning methods which have the potential of making the woman unable to give birth again.

In an interview with Female respondent A. (married woman) she reported the following:

"Hmm! It is difficult to discuss family planning issues with my husband. The men claim we the women have no say in decision making. My husband is the one who will decide when to make love to me even if I am not in the mood. He decides the number of children to have. I even find it difficult to talk about family planning with my husband because I don't want him to call me a bad woman".⁷⁹

In another interview with female respondent B, she narrated the following:

"Hehehe! As for me I know I am in a big trouble. I went to see a nurse at Ashaiman Polyclinic to access family planning without my husband's knowledge. I was put on the pill. I choose to practice family planning because I already have five children and my husband is not working. We find it difficult to take care of them. The pressure is too much on me because I am the only one who works and feeds the family.

⁷⁹ .An interview with female respondent A at Zongolaka, in Ashaiman on the 16th of May, 2019 ⁸⁵.
An interview with a female respondent B at Turaku, Ashaiman on 16th of May, 2020.

Currently my husband has sent me to my parents when he saw the family planning pill in my bag and he called me a prostitute. My marriage is at stake and I do not know when he will accept me back.”⁸⁵

These responses suggest that family planning decision making is not common among Muslim couples and that women are not involve in decision making regarding this issue.

3.4.2 Involvement in practicing family planning

When respondents were asked to indicate their involvement in practicing family planning, 2 couples provided positive responses while 8 couples rejected the idea of their involvement in family planning.⁸⁰ These findings contributed to the low acceptance and patronage of family planning resulting in high birth rates among the Muslims. The Muslim scholars mentioned earlier in this study, when asked about their public involvement in family planning, all acknowledge that they preached on Friday prayer and week end Da’wa sessions about family planning and the need for Muslims to plan their daily activities. However, observations of the researcher on the ground reveals that either the Ulama are not preaching well or Muslims are not responding to the sermons they preach. Otherwise, what may account for the persistence of this practice in the study area.

3.4.3 Discussion of family planning issues among couples

In answering the question as to whether Muslim couples discuss family planning issues among themselves, 2 couples provided positive responses. However, while 8 couples

⁸⁰ . An interview with Muslim couples on their involvement in family planning, at Ashaiman Zongo dated 16th of May, 2019.

rejected the idea of discussing family planning issues among spouses.⁸¹ The study again discovered that in families that have had exposure to secular education, both couples initiate discussions concerning family planning. However, in families that had no exposure to secular education, the couples do not discuss family planning issues. They may seek advice from family planning agents or marriage counselors in their respective communities. As far as discussions on family planning are concerned from the Muslim scholars have revealed that, they have made public pronouncements regarding family planning through preaching in the year preceding the survey. Another form of family planning discussions relate to public lectures organize by Muslim scholars on family planning-related issues. Three out of five Muslim scholars in the Ashaiman Municipality reported that they had educated their congregation on the benefits of family planning. Some of these scholars also asserted that they had engaged in vigorous family planning over the years.

3.4.4 Types of common family planning methods

In response to the types of family planning methods discussed by couples, 3 couples cited two-year exclusive breastfeeding revealed by Allah in the Qur'an. They also cited the use of contraceptives and withdrawal method which tally with similar practice of the Prophet's time. The rest of the 7 couples revealed that they are not interested and do not discuss any of the methods of family planning.⁸² It is noteworthy that, during the survey above two categories of respondents were identified. While the first category believes

⁸¹ . An interview with Muslim couples on their discussion with spouses about family planning issues, at Turaku, Ashaiman, on the 17th of May, 2019

⁸² . An interview with couples on family planning methods, at Turaku, Ashaiman on the 17th of May, 2019

and practices one of the methods of family planning the second did not believe in any of the methods of family planning. The reasons provided to support the responses of the first group as indicated above are that some Muslim families regard family planning as very prominent in forecasting future development of families. They also believe that, the effective implementation of family planning will create an enabling environment for proper upbringing of children as well as providing respite for the couples as bread winners of the family.

The study further revealed that, the first group of couples could not choose which particular aspect of family planning is more effective than the other since they are all considered aspects of family planning identified in this study (abstinence, contraceptives usage, two years exclusive breastfeeding and the withdrawal method). All these have contributed equally to effective execution of family planning. For the majority of those who do not believe or discuss any of the family planning methods, they believe that it is Allah who takes care of them and their children and that they will bring forth as many children as they can. Taking into consideration all the discussions in this section, some Muslim couples sometimes practice family planning with the consent of both spouses. If all Muslim couples will accept and practice family planning it will give them opportunities to take full control of taking care of their families. This establishes a relation with Buckley's assertion that, Muslim parents should love and maintain their families since it is a religious duty upon every Muslim parent to carry out their

responsibilities by taking care of their families as required by God and the Sunnah of the Prophet.⁸³

Responses from the interview schedules of the Muslim scholars to a series of questions confirmed that, scholars are well versed in the various forms of family planning. The different areas such as abstinence, withdrawal and two years exclusive breast feeding were the topics they preached during their Da'wa sessions. Theologically, this is in line with the Shar'iah. However, it still remains to be seen how these efforts have impacted ordinary Muslims in the study area in the acceptance of family planning practices.

3.5 Respondents' attitude towards family planning

Like other couples, the Muslim couples have specific interventions for their respective families on child care and effective management of family affairs in the Ashaiman Muslim community. Usually, such specific interventions for Muslim families are set during the period of the growth of the family size. After agreeing to the fact that family planning programmes come as specific interventions towards the alleviation of the suffering of Muslim families, the following specific interventions were revealed by the study in this section.

⁸³ . Bucley , S.,. *Islamic parenting*. (U.S.A: Baker Book House Company, 2001).

3.5.1 Perception on Practicing Family Planning

In response to questions posed to 10 couples on their perception to family planning, 7 of them indicated that it is good to practice family planning, 2 couples rejected the idea that family planning is good to practice and 1 couple did not contribute to the discussion.⁸⁴ The Muslim scholars during the interview revealed that family planning is a way to improve the quality of family life. The researcher summarized the following reasons given by scholars to justify their position:

*“A Qur'anic verse makes it clear that God will provide for all offspring and Muslim scholars may not want to suggest otherwise, even though most do not contest the acceptability of family planning. The Muslim scholars, however, are particularly supportive of methods that they perceive to be physically harmless”.*⁸⁵

The issue of major concern to most Islamic scholars was the type of family planning method to adopt. The negative health implication was a major reason why some people avoided certain methods.

3.5.2 Regulation on the Number of Children in Muslim Marriages

With regards to whether there is a rule in Islam regulating the number of children Muslim marriage couples should have, a couple responded in affirmative to this issue. However, a significant part of the respondents representing 8 couples held an opposing opinion to the regulation on the number of children in Muslim marriages. In finding out what factors

⁸⁴ .An interview with married couples on their perception to family planning at Zenu, on the 17th of May,2019

⁸⁵ . An interview with Muslim scholars during Da'wa session at Zongolaka central mosque, Ashaiman, on the 18th of May, 2019

or reasons made them not discuss with their partners the number of children they would want to have, the responses were that having children is the sole prerogative of the man and therefore there is no need discussing with his partner, they do not see the need to discuss with partners because they believe it is God who gives children and therefore any number given to them by God is okay with them. A woman is expected to bring forth all the children she has in her 'stomach' and therefore there is no need to discuss the number of children with her. But the women also said they prefer having less children to many children because it makes them to look younger and keep their bodies in shape.

Another couple indicated their lack of views to contribute to the discourse on the number of children Muslim marriage couples should have.⁸⁶ There is a kind of relationship between the findings on the number of children in Muslim marriage and assertions put forward by Doi . According to Doi, marriage in Islam generally represents emotional and sexual satisfaction, a function of procreation as a form of worship of Allah and obedience to His Messenger. He indicates further that, the practice of family planning may be considered as a disobedience to the Creator. This means that, marriage from Islamic perspective is intended to perpetuate the permanence of species and procreation of the same offspring. In view of this, family planning could be used as mechanism of regulating birth spacing and not the number of children Muslim should have in their matrimonial homes.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ . An interview with married couples during a naming ceremony at Lebanon, Ashaiman, dated 18th of May, 2019

⁸⁷ . Doi, A.I, *Shari'ah: The Islamic Law* (Nigeria: A. S. Nooredeen Publication, 2007).

3.5.3 Decision to Attend Family Planning Sessions

In terms of whether Muslim marriage couples do attend family planning sessions organized by family planning agencies in the Ashaiman Muslim community, 2 couples held the view that they do attend such family planning sessions. To them, family planning is very important because it costs less to take care of fewer children. 7 couples provided an opposing view to the issue being discussed. According to them family planning is not necessary because it is Allah provides for them and their children. They further disclosed that attending family planning sessions takes much of their time. A couple considered the issue very strange and decided not to take part in the deliberations concerning attendance to family planning sessions.⁸⁸

When the Muslim scholars were asked who should attend a family planning session, they fully and vehemently agreed that decision should be left to the couple. Most of the scholars were in favor of a joint decision regarding the planning of their respective families. They however did not agree with the notion that either of the couples can take a definite decision on family planning.

3.5.4 Implementing Lessons Learnt from family Planning Sessions

In response to the question on whether they implement the lessons learnt from family planning education, 2 couples expressed affirmative response, 7 couples indicated

⁸⁸ . An interview with married couples at Turaku, Ashaiman, dated 18th of May, 2019.

negative responses to the successful implementation of the lessons learnt from family planning education.⁸⁹

The couples who responded in affirmative to the implementation of lessons learnt from family planning session stated that they are comfortable with the methods of family planning discussed. For those couples who rejected the idea of implementation lessons learnt from family planning lesson said the family planning methods discussed does not favour them. The males also said the methods are not male friendly. In the estimation of the Muslim scholars, contraceptive options such as 2 years exclusive breastfeeding, withdrawal and the calendar methods are highly permissible in Islam so many Muslims who are aware of such services patronize them. Many Muslims are in favour of the breastfeeding and withdrawal methods because it was mentioned in the Shari'ah sources. On implementing lessons learnt from family planning education, the Muslim scholars advised that, the calendar method was spontaneously mentioned as one of the prudent methods of family planning. Most of them recognize this method as acceptable from an Islamic point of view.

3.6 Male involvement, approval and practice of family planning

The involvement of males in family planning methods implies their tacit agreement in the act. There is the mutual encouragement by all stakeholders to encourage men to be part of the family planning process. There should be the implementation of programs that is geared towards the inclusion of men in family planning programs. If men are involved

⁸⁹ . An interview with married couples at Zongolaka, Ashaiman on the 18th of May, 2019.

in planning the family, it will much more effective as compared to the inclusion of only women. Men should be regarded as a distinct group of people who are capable of increasing awareness on issues relating to family planning.⁹⁰ The concept of male involvement in family planning is broad in nature. The programme of action adopted by the International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo 1994 highlights the need for the inclusion of men in family planning programs. Their involvement is absolutely crucial in parenthood that is responsible. They indeed have a crucial role to play in ensuring responsible sexual behavior. Use of family planning methods for men is one important aspect affecting male involvement in family planning. Male involvement in the acceptance, support and practice of family planning are dependent on the following of factors: approval to family planning, men accompanying their spouses to family planning clinics, spousal support in family planning, the ways men support their spouses, whether family planning should be the sole responsibility of men, and whether family planning is the responsibility of both male and female.

3.6.1 Men's approval to family planning

In a response to the question posed on whether they will approve of their spouse to practice family planning, 3 men during the interview indicated their approval of their partners to practice family planning and 7 men said they will not approve of their spouses

⁹⁰ . Toure, L *Male Involvement in family planning, A review of Selected Programme initiatives in Africa*, (Academy for Educational Development, Washington DC, 1996)

to practice family planning.⁹¹ During the interview it was revealed that, men's non approval of family planning is the result of the fact that women would take advantage of the use of contraceptives to flirt with other men. They also believe that some family planning methods like the condom interrupts sexual satisfaction. Also, quite a number of them also mentioned religion for non-approval of family planning. Other reasons given were the fact that, it has severe side effects. Those who indicated their approval to family planning believe that it helps them to plan the number of children they would want to have. They also claim that it helps improve the health status of mothers and their children.

3.6.2 Men accompanying their spouses to family planning clinics.

In a response to the question to test if they go with their wives to the family planning facilities, 7 men stated that they do not go with their spouses. The reason is that it is time consuming and they see family planning as women's business. Only 3 men go with their wives to such facilities. According to them, their spouses are happy and the nurses accord them respect each time they go with their wives to the clinic.⁹²

3.6.3 Spousal support in family planning

A question to determine the level of support of men for their partners revealed that 7 men do not support their spouses in family planning. Only 3 men support their partners in

⁹¹ . An interview with married men at Turaku, Ashaiman during a naming ceremony, dated 19th of May, 2019

⁹² . An interview with married men, at Turaku, Ashaiman on their willingness to accompany their spouses to a family planning clinic, dated 19th of May, 2019.

family planning.⁹³ Arguments advanced by respondents for the abysmal male support is that family planning is the business of the woman while the man's responsibility is to concentrate on how to make money to feed the family and to provide for other needs. Respondents were asked another question as a follow-up to the first one. One respondent expressed the view that actually supported their partners in family planning. They stated that they do so by approving of contraceptive methods suitable for both of them, by accompanying them to the family planning clinic, by taking good care of their new offspring, being responsible, helping to seek skilled healthcare in case of sickness and by providing financial support to their partners to pay for the cost of family planning services. The researcher further interviewed a public health nurse at the Ashaiman Polyclinic to ascertain the level of support Muslim men give to their spouses. Below is what she said:

*"A client came for Norplant, apparently without the husband being in the know. Unfortunately for her the husband got to know of it later. Surprisingly the husband brought her back to the facility early the following morning for it to be removed. I tried in vain to let the couples understand that it is very dangerous to remove it. I therefore made the woman to sign a document indicating her consent, which she readily agreed."*⁹⁴

Again, when asked, on average the number of males who visited her facility for counseling on issues concerning family planning in a month, her answer gave an indication that male involvement is not encouraging. She was in agreement with the

⁹³ . An interview with married men, at Turaku, Ashaiman on their support for their spouses to family planning, dated 19th of May, 2019.

⁹⁴ . An interview with a public health nurse at the Ashaiman polyclinic on male support to family planning, on the 20th of May, 2019.

general consensus that most men are not willing to address issues relating to family planning.

3.7 Efforts made by Service Providers to involve Males in Family Planning:

In an attempt to ascertain the level of male engagement in most family planning schemes the health providers in Ashaiman Polyclinic were asked their views on the involvement of men in family planning methods. Some of the health workers include a Community Health Officer, a Midwife, and a Public Health Nurse. The interactions revealed the following strategies;

*“There have been considerable efforts in addressing the issues of male involvement in family planning. According to the service providers the strategies that they are engaged in include the following; Public Health Education has been introduced in the local dialect on the local FM stations emphasizing the need for men to be involved in the family planning and exposing the benefits of family planning to the public. Again, community durbars have been going on which chiefs, Islamic scholars and opinion leaders are involved. The economic and health benefits of family planning are explained to them. Also, misconceptions are explained to the people and their fears and anxieties allayed. According to the Public Health Nurse at the Polyclinic, some of the Muslim women hold the belief that using contraceptives makes a woman barren, it also makes a woman become more promiscuous and the tendency to cheat on her husband is high. Moreover, the men also hold the misconception that condom does not give the required satisfaction during sex. Another strategy is the use of men support groups which have been established in the communities, work places, mosques, and ‘Ataya base’ to educate their colleagues on the need to accept and practice family planning. This strategy if carried out effectively has the chance of sending family planning messages to friends and households and its subsequent use and acceptance of contraceptives. Lastly, an enactment of a national policy on family planning, which seeks to give incentives to families who limit their family size, as it is done in China, would to some extent help men to come for follow-up and other services on family planning matters”.*⁹⁵

⁹⁵ . An interview with Community Health Officer, Midwife, and Public Health Nurse on the 19th of May, 2019

3.8 Challenges of family planning practice

Marriage as respected institution in Muslim culture has many traditions. Fischer, for example, opines that a married person commands respect among colleagues. This is why it marks the beginning of a socially accepted platform for the adult Muslim.⁹⁶ Harris states that, marriage is both a religious duty and a social transition from childhood to womanhood. For the men, marriage symbolizes responsibility in society since they are expected to take care of their wives and children.⁹⁷ This responsibility of men taking care of their children and wives may be easier when couples agree to practice family planning. Family Planning services include the provision of health services that are geared towards the provision of easy to afford preventive health services. It is restricted to the use of contraceptives. It equips people to be armed with relevant information relating to holistic sexual care. It makes sure that there are available resources that equips especially women with what they need to know about their sexual health. But this cannot be achieved without challenges. During the survey, the following have identified as some of the challenges or factors influencing the practice of family planning by the Muslim couples.

3.8.1 *Son preference as an obstacle to family planning*

Son preference is a significant factor that influences contraceptive decisions. Marie Stopes International, a family planning service provider, situated in Ashaiman explains son preference as follows:

⁹⁶ . Fischer, A. M. *State Growth and Social Exclusion in Tibet: Challenges of recent economic growth*, (No. 47. NIAS press 2005).

⁹⁷ . Harris, G. S. *Coping with Crisis*, (Turkey: Westview Press 1985).

*“Traditionally, sons stay in the family home when they get married, whereas daughters go to live in the home of their in-laws. Sons are regarded as important and should ideally outnumber daughters, as they will be the ones who will earn and support the family. More women than men reported that sons are important, suggesting that wives may feel pressure to bear male children for a better economic future because if a woman’s spouse dies, she will be dependent on the son. A married woman is likely to be under constant pressure from her husband and in-laws to deliver a son. Regardless of educational background or social status, son preference is deeply ingrained in the Muslim community”.*⁹⁸

The researcher observed a female professional teacher narrate her story during family planning counselling session and she reported the following.

*“My husband prevented me from using contraceptives until I had a son as my sixth child. A bride who does not bring a son into the family receives negative attention from family members as well as from the community. If a woman doesn’t bear enough children, especially sons, she will feel “shame,” not only in front of her in-laws but also in front of the whole community. There is also this fear that her in-laws will be tough on her, that her life will become hard and that she will go through depression. For these reasons, my husband’s approval of family planning often depends on one or two sons being born”.*⁹⁹

3.8.2 Misconception about family planning

This is a view or opinion that is incorrect based on faulty thinking or understanding, religion and culture. In other words, a misconception is a conclusion that is wrong because it is based on faulty thinking or fact that is wrong. It is clear from the interview conducted on the Muslim couples especially men that are not in favour of family planning because of certain misconceptions and rumours associated with the concept. Thus, when

⁹⁸ . An interview with health officer D at Marie Stopes International, Ashaiman branch, during family planning counselling session dated 19th of May. 2019.

⁹⁹ . An interview with a married woman E at, Ashaiman on the 19th of May, 2019

respondents were asked about some of the misconceptions and rumours associated with family planning, some men were of the opinion that it encourages promiscuity, unfaithfulness and mistrust. Other misconceptions mentioned by some of them are outlined graphically below:¹⁰⁰

- “Only unfaithful women practice family planning”
- “Family planning promotes promiscuity”
- “Family planning is not for men but women.
- “By practicing family planning, you are encouraging your wife to engage in prostitution”
- “The fact that one is using a family planning method gives her the opportunity to engage in other extra- marital affairs without getting pregnant”.
- “Family planning is also meant to reduce Muslim population”
- “Family planning is a way of challenging God’s authority”
- “The people who practice family planning are acting against God’s will since it is God who provides and takes away children.
- “Family planning takes away the natural gift of God for men to have children”.
- “Family planning burns up all the woman’s eggs and she cannot give birth again”
- “Family planning can also lead to barrenness”
- “Family planning can also lead to barrenness”

¹⁰⁰ . An interview with married men at Turaku, Ashaiman on misconceptions about family planning, dated 19th of May, 2019.

- “Family planning is also equated with murder since those who practise it are indirectly killing innocent children in the womb”

These misconceptions and rumors arise from the fact that only wives and not husbands are counseled by family planning providers thereby denying males the opportunity to have vital information about family planning. As such, any little information about the subject is derived from their wives and female relatives and not from the appropriate sources.

3.8.3 Fear of side effects

“Fear of side effects may decrease family planning uptake. Many modern contraceptives contain hormones that can cause certain side effects in some women. Depending on the method being used, these may include breast tenderness, headaches, weight gain, lack of regular menstrual bleeding, nausea, and loss of bone density with continued use over many years”.¹⁰¹

*“These potential side effects often form the basis for a wide range of misconceptions. For example, where women’s ability to bear children is key to their socio-economic status, they frequently fear that the temporary prevention of pregnancy with contraception can lead to permanent infertility with sustained use”*¹⁰²

“Some women may believe that lack of a monthly period signals a dangerous buildup of blood inside their bodies. Some believe that nausea that can be caused by an oral contraceptive which may be a sign that acid in the pill is burning their stomach or ovaries”.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ . Lisa M., *Limits to Modern Contraceptive Use Among Young Women in Developing Countries: A Systematic Review of Qualitative Research*, no. 1 (2009): 3-6,

¹⁰² . Lisa M., *Limits to Modern Contraceptive Use Among Young Women in Developing Countries: A Systematic Review of Qualitative Research*, 6 no. 1 (2009): 3,

¹⁰³ . Nadia D., *Misinformation and Fear of Side-Effects of Family Planning*, 14, no. 4 (2012): 421-33.

*“Others also believe that contraceptive pills accumulate in some other body organs”.*¹⁰⁴

Fear of side effects, is one of the reasons why some women discontinue using contraception, which can result in unintended pregnancies.

3.8.4 Education

The level of education is a crucial determinant in the utilization of family planning services. In the early part of this chapter, it was discovered that couples in the study area who have had access to secular education discussed issues of family planning together whereas those who do not have secular education may not discuss family planning together.

*“Moreover, Awingura has shown the relationship between education and contraceptive use. For example, if an individual is ignorant about family planning and its benefits, there is the likelihood that he/she might not practice it. Educated women are more likely to practice family planning compared to less educated women”.*¹⁰⁵

Additionally, during the interview, it was revealed that the educational status of couples determine women’s attitudes toward the choice of family planning.¹⁰⁶ Majority of the respondents demonstrated lack of understanding by indicating that, family planning

¹⁰⁴ . Sarah C., *Contraceptive Discontinuation: Reasons, Challenges, and Solutions*, (2015),

¹⁰⁵ . Awingura, P. A., & Ayamba M. A., *Factors influencing the uptake of family planning services in the Talensi District, Ghana*. (*Pan African Medical Journal*, 2015), 20(10).

¹⁰⁶ . An interview with a married but educated woman, at Turaku, Ashaiman, dated 20th of May, 2019.

¹⁰⁶ . Omedi, G., *Influence of women factors on modern contraceptive Usage among currently married women in Malawi*. (*Research on Humanities and Social Sciences* 2015), 5(10), 156-164.

service providers, instead of helping in family planning, rather wanted women to be barren for life, which resulted in refusal by some of them to practice family planning.

*“Buttressing more on the influence of education on contraceptive use, in Malawi, Omedi observed that women with basic educational qualifications were practicing family planning, than their counterparts with no educational qualifications”.*¹⁰⁷

Not only is education of women important in decisions regarding contraceptive use, male partner education is of equal importance, as it is linked to high contraceptive uptake by women. This view was affirmed by Omedi through findings in Malawi.

*“It was observed that, women who had some knowledge on contraceptives, and whose partners had some educational qualification, were more likely to use contraceptives than their counterparts, who had no contraceptive knowledge and had partners with no educational qualification”.*¹⁰⁸

3.8.5 Social and cultural challenges

Having many children is considered because it means more hand helps on the field. Due to high mortality rates, families tend to have more children for some to survive. Many children are viewed as security for old age. The number of children also defines the social status of the family. Public opinion in the age old traditions favours large families. In male dominated societies, men consider it below their dignity to use contraceptives. According to Hasan, many women around the world face a lot of challenges as far as the use of family planning is concerned.

¹⁰⁸ . Omedi, G., *Influence of women factors on modern contraceptive Usage among currently married women in Malawi*. (Research on Humanities and Social Sciences 2015), 5(10), 156-164.

*“Child spacing as basic human right endorsed by the United Nations, allows couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children”.*¹⁰⁹

This leads to fewer complications related to pregnancy and childbirth. This also improves overall health and decreases dependency on health care services.

*“Entire communities also benefit, as women who can access family planning can better provide for their existing children, from food to education and housing. They will also be better placed to access education and work opportunities, thereby making a greater contribution to the economy”.*¹¹⁰

*“The obvious benefits, discriminatory family planning policies, poor or no services, lack of information and education, and irregular or no supplies, can all restrict access to and use of family planning”.*¹¹¹

3.9 Conclusion

Chapter three discusses Ashaiman Muslim Community and the situation of family planning practices by Muslims of Ashaiman. It also discusses the historical origin and the religious affiliation of Ashaiman. Data on the situation of family planning by Muslims of Ashaiman was presented and analyzed. In the analysis it was revealed that Muslim couples, especially the females, face some challenges in the practice of family planning to the extent that some of them would sneak to access family planning services without their husband’s knowledge. One other challenge was male dominance in the decision making when it comes to family planning. The men felt since they are the breadwinners

¹⁰⁹ . Hasan, Z. *Microfinance in Nigeria and the prospects of introducing its Islamic version there in the light of selected Muslim countries' experience.* (2008).

¹¹⁰ . Hasan, Z. *Microfinance in Nigeria and the prospects of introducing its Islamic version there in the light of selected Muslim countries' experience.* (2008).

¹¹¹ . Hasan, Z. *Microfinance in Nigeria and the prospects of introducing its Islamic version there in the light of selected Muslim countries' experience.* (2008).

of the family, they are the ones to decide whether to take up family planning service or not. Despite the challenges outlined in this chapter and the indication of low patronage or acceptance of family planning among Muslim couples especially the men, the family planning service providers outlined a number of interventions to improve Muslim male involvement in family planning and to provide a wider coverage among the males.

Again the chapter also discusses factors that affect the practice of family planning by the Muslim couples. The next chapter is devoted to discussing the data as obtained from the interview responses of the situation of family planning practices by the Muslim couples as well as those from the interview with the Muslim scholars and family planning service providers.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF DATA

4.0 Introduction

This chapter, therefore seeks to present the analysis and findings of the study for discussion as set out in the research objectives. It also discusses how the educational level of respondents affect their decision making on the family planning practice. The views of Muslim scholars on the practice of family planning are discussed in this chapter. The chapter also discusses the responses from the interview conducted in chapter three. Family planning methods being discussed among couples, the low or inadequate support men give to their spouses in the practice of family planning, attitudes hindering the practice of family planning, family planning decisions by the couples and ways to improve the utilization of family planning practices constitute the themes for discussion.

4.1 Educational level of respondents

The role of educational qualification which was captured under the factors affecting the acceptance and practice of family planning is very essential in the appreciation of family planning issues. Family planning basically entails the management of family affairs for Muslim homes couples with appreciable level of education would have more advantages than those with very low or no formal education. One can argue with high level of certainty that, the different educational backgrounds of respondents have contributed to different opinions and views emanating from the various Muslim families found to be practicing family planning methods and other contraceptives. The researcher's

interactions with the respondents further revealed that education has a greater influence on the nature of the understanding of the couples concerning issues relating to family planning.

In connection with the awareness of family planning, it was obvious that, all the four representatives of the Tijaniyyah, Ahlusunnah, Ahmadiya and Shia groups believed that family planning is in consonance with Islamic precepts. The results indicated that religious leaders believe that family planning is acceptable within the tenets of Islam. However there were other opposing views that had it that, family planning is 'haram' (that is, forbidden by Islam). When the religious leaders were asked about their public involvement regarding family planning, they all replied that they had preached for family planning in the year preceding the survey. All the selected religious leaders reported that they had given lectures more than three times in the past year on family planning-related subjects. They elaborated on relevant thematic areas such as the health benefits of family planning as well as relationships and Islam.

The responses from the clerics further point to the fact that, Islam does not reject family planning or birth control. However they were concerned with the long term effect of family planning which has the potential of making the women barren.

The positive response on the involvement of Muslim couples in family planning as stated in chapter three was necessitated by the fact that, their respective families were increasing in terms of size which gradually calls for child spacing. This particular finding relates to Underwood's assertion that child spacing in family planning is permitted among Muslim

communities. This indeed motivated some of the families contacted for this study into using family planning services.

The study again discovered that, in most literate families however, both couples initiate the discussions concerning family planning. In illiterate families however, it is rather the opposite direction where advice is sought from family planning agents or marriage counselors in their respective communities.

4.2. Types of family planning methods being practiced.

The types of family planning methods being discussed and practiced among Muslim couples center on the precise number of children considered to be appropriate for marriage couples. The reasons provided to support the responses indicated above were most Muslim families regard family planning as very pertinent in forecasting the future development of families. They also believe that, effective implementation of family planning will create an enabling environment for proper upbringing of children as well as providing respite for the couples as bread winners of the family. The study further revealed that, the couples could not select a particular effective family planning method over the other since they considered all the aspects of family planning identified in this study (abstinence, contraceptives usage, a-two year exclusive breastfeeding and the withdrawal technique) as contributing equally to the effective implementation of family planning methods. Taking into consideration all the discussions in this section, Muslim couples who practice family planning do so with the consent of both spouses. The cumulative effect of the processes identified in relation to the family planning offers the

marriage couples the opportunity to demonstrate their full responsibilities on taking care of their families. Deducing from the demonstration of absolute responsibilities by Muslim families on taking care of their families, a relation is therefore established with Buckley's assertion that, Muslim parents should love their wards. That it is a religious duty upon every Muslim parent to carry out their responsibilities by taking care of their families as required by God and the Sunnah of the Prophet.¹¹²In spite of the fact that, some Muslim families rejected family planning, the fact still remains that, Muslims are allowed to practice family planning. In supporting this assertion, Akhtar holds the position that, issues pertaining to sexual intercourse in Islam have been obscured by Islamic scholars for long and these adversely affect Muslim families concerning child spacing and care in the institution of marriage.¹¹³

The religious leaders having perceived family planning as a way to improve the quality of family life, are reluctant to justify family planning for pragmatic reasons. They refer to a Qur'anic verse which makes it clear that God will provide for all offspring and religious leaders may not want to suggest otherwise, even though most of them do not contest the acceptability of contraception. The religious leaders, were particularly supportive of methods that they perceive to be physically harmless. The safety of specific methods was also a major concern for religious leaders. The most common reason given to avoid certain methods was their potential to cause negative health effects.

¹¹² . Buckley, S., *Islamic parenting*. (U.S.A: Baker Book House Company, 2001).

¹¹³ . Buckley, S., *Islamic parenting*. (U.S.A: Baker Book House Company, 2001).

On issues concerning who should attend family planning sessions for the family as found during the survey, the study strongly agrees that taking decisions based on mutual understanding allows for decisions to be made jointly by both husband and wife. The clerics have shown their acceptance on couples deciding together on family planning practices. Correspondingly, there was robust dissimilarity with the statements that the husband or the wife alone should be responsible for decisions regarding family planning.

Concerning the programmes of family planning during the interviews, there were considerable uncertainty among religious leaders about the acceptability of some of the modern contraceptive methods in Islam. The religious leaders held that family planning methods that are injurious to the body and permanently make the woman unable to bear a child again should be discouraged. Inferring from the findings on couples attending family planning sessions, the researcher assumes that, the frequency of the occurrence of the family planning sessions is very obvious and could influence the ways of lives of Muslim marriage couples who are committed to the meetings organized by family planning agencies. There is the possibility of the couples benefitting from educational programmes organized by the agencies concerned.

The study also threw more light on implementing lessons learnt from family planning education programmes. The couples who responded in affirmative to the implementation of lessons learnt from family planning session stated that they are comfortable with the methods of family planning discussed. For those couples who rejected the idea of implementing lessons learnt from family planning lesson said the family planning

methods discussed does not favour them. The males also said the methods are not male friendly.

On implementing lessons learnt from family planning education, the religious leaders advised that, traditional methods (a 2-year exclusive breastfeeding, withdrawal and the calendar method) are considered to be permitted by the majority of respondents who are aware of these contraceptive methods. The favourable attitudes toward breastfeeding and withdrawal were attributable to the fact that these methods are mentioned explicitly and favourably in Islamic jurisprudence.

4.3 Male support in family planning.

From the research findings it is evident that majority of the men do not support their spouses when it comes to family planning activities. These overwhelming proportion of males who do not support their spouses in family planning practices in the Ashaiman Muslim communities is a strong reason that, family planning is women's business. Again most of the respondents mentioned that, family planning practitioners always concentrate on women to the neglect of their male counterparts. This makes it unattractive for men to accompany their spouses to these clinics. Others also responded that, much time is wasted at the facilities as one needs to spend several hours waiting for their turn to be attended to. However men have to be at work to earn incomes. This according to them has made it impossible even if they wished to accompany their spouses to the family planning clinics. The abysmal support of many men in family planning practices was also, largely due on their socio-cultural and religious orientations. Culturally, matters

concerning sexual issues, in traditional Ghanaian setting may be considered as sacred. Ashaiman where this research was undertaken is not an exception. This has made very difficult for men to openly discuss issues on family planning. As already shown, religion forms an essential component of the individual's life and therefore has enormous influence on their decisions, depending on the type of religion they belong to, and the doctrines of their religion.

From the discussions above, it can be realized that, men in the Ashaiman Muslim community do not give much support to their spouses in family planning practices. These attitudes of the men one way or the other affect the uptake of family planning even among women in the district, to the extent that some of them, have to hide behind their husbands to do it.

On the negative attitudes of men on spousal support, a public health nurse was interviewed by the researcher interviewed at the Ashaiman Polyclinic. This was to solicit her views on male involvement in family planning. She cited a very intriguing experience she had with a client who came for Norplant, apparently without the husband being in the known. Unfortunately for her the husband got to know of it later. The husband brought her back to the facility early the following morning for it to be removed. According to the nurse, she tried in vain to let the couple understand that it was very dangerous thing to do. According to the nurse, she tried to convince this woman to change her decision. The woman was therefore made to sign a document indicating her consent, which she readily agreed. Again, when asked, averagely the number of males who visited her facility for counseling on issues concerning family planning in a month, her answer

gave an indication that male involvement is not encouraging. She therefore agreed with the general views held by many that, men are adamant in issues pertaining to family planning.¹¹⁴

4.4 Approval of family planning practice.

The survey on the approval of family planning by the male spouses in chapter three revealed that majority of the men interviewed disapproved of family planning practice while only few of the men approved and supported their partners. Reasons they gave for their disapproval stem mainly from, socio-cultural, perceptions of the side effects and religion. Culturally, they believe that the more children they have the more respect they command among their peers. They, would not want to do anything to stop their spouses from bringing forth children. On the issue of religion, they indicated that, once it is spelt out clearly in the Holy Book to bring forth and fill the earth, they do not see any reason why they should approve of family planning, whose ultimate aim is to cut down the number of births. The above findings tally with the assertion by Ijadunola, who contended that the major reasons for non-approval of family planning by men were the fear of side-effects and perception of family planning as being against religion.¹¹⁵

The practice of family planning by men has for some time now been a subject for concern among family planning activists all over the world. This concern has brought about a paradigm shift on men and women in family planning programs. The argument advanced

¹¹⁴ . A report given by a public health nurse at the Ashaiman polyclinic on male support to family planning, on the 20th of May, 2019.

¹¹⁵ . Ijadunola K. T., et al. *Men's knowledge of and attitude with respect to family planning in a suburban Nigerian community*. (Niger J Med 15(3) 2006), 260-5.

for the inclusion of males in family planning programs is the fact that men would not only encourage and support their partners in contraception, but would also influence the policy environment to be more conducive to developing male related programs. As rightly put by Toure.

“Male involvement should be understood in a much broader sense than male contraception, and should refer to all organizational activities aimed at men as a discrete group, which has the effect of increasing the acceptability and prevalence of family planning practice of either sex.”¹¹⁶

However, it is evidenced from the research findings that, much needs to be done on issues relating to male involvement, if they are to move along with the rest of the world in trying to get many men playing active roles in family planning programs. This is because the findings from the interview revealed that family planning practice is not encouraging, since a large proportion of the male respondents interviewed asserted that, currently they were not using any family planning method to either delay or avoid pregnancy. Further the information gathered from the male respondents on low family planning practice showed that they would have used family planning methods if they had other alternatives apart from the condoms and vasectomy, as is available to their women counterparts. This assertion was once again reiterated in an interview of Mr. L on the 19th of May, at Turaku, Ashaiman when the researcher asked about his view on the use of condom as a family planning method. This was his response.

*“Using the condom as a family planning method to me is as if putting a toffee together with the wrapper into my mouth”.*¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ . Toure, L *Male Involvement in family planning, A review of Selected Programme initiatives in Africa.* (Academy for Educational Development, Washington DC 1996), pp4-7

¹¹⁷ .An interview with Mr. L on the 19th of May, 2019 at Tuaku Ashaiman.

For this reason he would rather not have sex than to use any family planning method. He suggested among others that a more robust research should be conducted into coming out with male-specific family planning methods that will be comfortable to them. Globally, men have not shared equally with women the responsibility for fertility regulation. While family planning efforts have been directed almost exclusively towards women, the lack of male involvement may also reflect the limited options available to men. Current methods for men are either coitus-dependent, such as the condom or withdrawal, or permanent method such as vasectomy.

4.5 Attitudes hindering male support in family planning practices.

To be able to discuss the attitudes, beliefs and perceptions hindering male support and involvement in family planning, the researcher explored the following variables during the interview; reasons given for not using family planning methods, reasons for not attending family planning clinics and finally, what prevents men from discussing the number of children to have in future.

Firstly, majority of the respondents do not use family planning, because they perceive it to interrupt sexual satisfaction. They believe that family planning practice leads to side effects. Therefore they are not always comfortable using any family planning method that they do not have adequate knowledge about. Finally because of their religious affiliations and beliefs.

Secondly, men do not attend family planning clinics because; they believe that too much time is spent at the facility in trying to get family planning counseling from family planning practitioner. There is also no confidentiality at the facilities. Many people are most likely to hear what you would have wished was discussed in confidence. The facilities are far away from their residencies and lastly, they do not attend family planning clinics due to the attitudes of some health professionals. They claimed that some of the nurses exhibit certain negative behaviours which sometimes put them completely away from the facility. An interview with Mr. J on the 19th of May, 2019 at Zongolaka Ashaiman on his experiences when he visited a family planning clinic. Below is his response:

“I went there very early so that I could be attended to in good time, so as to go to work afterwards. After waiting for a long time, though official opening hours was far past, the nurse suddenly appeared. I was happy, confident they would be attended to by the nurse soon. Surprisingly, not only did the nurse refuse to greet me and others who were with me, nor apologize for her lateness, she also sat on her desk reading newspaper. I gathered the courage to approach her and to make her understand that I have been waiting for her for quite some time now. No sooner did I finish my submission, than the nurse retorted, “Gentleman if you think you are in a hurry you can go away”. I therefore exchanged words with the nurse and vowed from that day onwards, never to step foot in any family planning facility.”¹¹⁸

On what prevents the men from discussing the number of children they intend to have in future, their response were that, having children is the prerogative of the man and therefore need not seek the opinion of his spouse. Children are gifts from Allah and therefore mere mortals like them cannot change the will of God. Hence their reason for not discussing it amongst themselves. Lastly a woman must have all the children from

¹¹⁸ . An interview with Mr. J on the 19th of May, 2019 at Zongolaka Ashaiman

her womb; therefore there is no need to discuss the number of children to have with a spouse.

4.6 Ways to improve male involvement in family planning practices

Radio has been noted as one of the active means of interactive to the general public.

To educate the Muslim community and to provide more information on family planning and to improve on men's support for their wives, radio stations in collaboration with Ashaiman Municipal Health Directorate should introduce phone-in sessions to either serve as an avenue for further clarification or as a form of soliciting feedbacks from listeners. Again, the radio as an effective means of disseminating information in Ashaiman is necessary because almost all the Muslim households has at least a radio.

Also, Community Health Nurses, Community Health Volunteers should begin to address their family planning and health messages to men and also women, While at the same time, assuring the couples of their support and cooperation when they both mutually agree to practice family planning. In addition, field-workers including Community Health Officers, Public Health Nurses and community Health Volunteers should approach men to explain and answer questions about health and family planning services. Occasionally, family planning sessions should be organized for the men and to encourage open discussion of family planning among men groups, especially during marriage ceremony where men separate themselves from the women and sit in groups.

Similarly important targets are the male community Associations. This includes 'Ataya' base, mosque committee, committee of Imams, Da'wa committee and Parents

Association of Islamic schools which are particularly common in most communities throughout Ashaiman. Members of these groups are usually organized to provide social, religious and financial support to its members. The Community Health Officers and Community Health Nurses should visit these groups of men during their meetings to discuss family planning with them. This effective measure shall help increase their appreciation of family planning while decreasing the perceived disadvantages or misconceptions, fears and their anxieties.

Also, many men should be encouraged to enroll in the various nursing training colleges, by dispelling the notion that nursing as a profession is only for women. It is believed that when many men are encouraged into the various Nursing Training Colleges, it would help increase the number of male health providers who would attend to the needs of men especially on issues concerning reproductive health and family planning. This has become necessary because all the personnel of the health facilities the researcher conducted the interviews, lamented on lack of male care providers with whom men would be comfortable to work with.

Finally the role of Muslim preachers, Islamic scholars and Imams cannot be overlooked. They must preach to men the need to accept and support their wives to practice family planning. Religious leaders have consistently and publicly declare their support for family planning by preaching to their congregations on Fridays and at weekend Da'wa sessions. They should mention the benefits couples gain when they accept and practice family planning. The benefits of family planning according to the clerics were found to include enabling couples to plan for the number of children they can adequately cater for.

It also enables the couples to produce healthy children thereby resulting in lively homes. Family planning as the study further reveals gives mothers the opportunity to gain their lost energies in the previous child birth before the next one. The concept of family planning as the study stresses also makes it possible for the parents to have ample time to work and feed their families as expected.

4.7 Conclusion.

This chapter has discussed the responses from the interviews conducted by the researcher. The data for this section was obtained from one on one interview with Muslim couples, health officials of family planning clinics as well as the religious leaders. The interview centered on some selected themes such as family planning methods being discussed among couples, the low or inadequate support men give to their spouses in the practice of family planning, attitudes, beliefs and perceptions hindering family planning uptake, family planning decisions by the couples and ways to improve the utilization of family planning practices. The next chapter summarizes the whole research work, discusses the findings, concludes and provides some recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

There is no doubt that family planning enables couples to plan the number of children they can adequately cater for. It also enables couples to produce healthy children and in lively homes. Family planning, as the study reveals, gives mothers the opportunity to gain their lost energies before the next birth. The concept of family planning, as the study stresses, also makes it possible for parents to have ample time to work to feed their families as expected. But the Muslim couples in Ashaiman do not appreciate these benefits that family planning bring to them. Rather they see family planning, as the research revealed, as an attempt to deny them sexual satisfaction with their wives, an attempt to make their wives cheat on them and an attempt to make them unable to father children any more. These perceptions men have about family planning and their domineering role over their wives as breadwinners made them the only ones to decide when to practice family planning. The level of male support and involvement in family planning practice has been poor and discouraging with majority of the men not doing anything to support their partners in family planning practices. This has led to most women secretly going to maternal and child health clinics without the approval of their husbands. This most often generates a lot of tension in the marriage and can sometimes lead to divorce when their husbands later discover that their spouses hide to do it. These negative attitudes Muslim men have about family planning have contributed to low or non-use of family planning by the couples resulting in high birth rate leading to economic hardships within families. It is against this background that the research was done to

identify the gaps in the practice of family planning and how family planning can help to improve the health of mothers and how it can help improve people's ability to provide for themselves and their families the basic necessities of life.

5.1 Summary

The study was structured into five chapters. The researcher in chapter one introduced the work by stating the problem of the study, the aims and objectives, the main research question guiding the work and the scope of the research. Furthermore, the various methods of data collection which included, interviews and personal observations were also discussed. The Islamic concept of '*al-Maulud*' (fertility) as the theoretical framework was also discussed. In addition, important and appropriate literature under the following sub headings were reviewed; materials on definition of family planning, materials on marriage and family life, materials on contraception in Islam, materials on reasons for the use of contraceptives to achieve family planning and materials on methods of contraceptives. The chapter also discussed limitations, organization and relevance of the study.

Discussions around the concept of family planning in Islam took place in chapter two. Important themes discussed were family as the basic unit of society traditionally consisting of two parents raising their children. Rights and duties of family were also discussed. The researcher has discussed the concept of planning and its significance in the Qur'an and in the Sunnah of the Prophet and established the basis upon which Muslims may plan their families. Reasons for the use of contraceptives to achieve family

planning and methods of contraceptives were among the themes dealt with in this chapter. Following the methods of contraceptives, permissible and prohibited methods were identified. Permissible methods of contraceptives were identified as methods which do not cause injury or permanent disability to the body and can be reversed should the need arises.

For example, two years exclusive breastfeeding and 'azl' (withdrawal). Unlike permissible methods of contraceptive, Prohibited method was seen to be nonreversible and injurious to the body. Examples included, vasectomy and tubal ligation. Finally, the jurisprudential positions of the five Muslim School of Thoughts were also discussed in this chapter. They all agreed that there was no verse in the Qur'an condemning family planning but rather supported 'azl' as a method by which Muslims can practice family planning because it was practiced during the Prophet's era.

Chapter three discussed the study area that is Ashaiman Muslim community and the situation of family planning practice by Muslim couples. Historical origins of Ashaiman and her religious affiliations were discussed. Also, data analysis on the situation of family planning practice by the Muslims of Ashaiman was dealt with. Data for the analysis were obtained from interviewing Muslim couples to know the situation on the ground as far as family planning is concerned. Islamic scholars representing the Tijaniyya, Ahlusunnah, Ahmadiya and the Shia groups were purposively sampled for their religious knowledge and opinions on family planning practices. Health officials from family planning clinics were also purposively sampled for their in-depth knowledge on family planning and the role they play in the family planning practices within Ashaiman Municipality.

Discussion of data obtained from respondents constituted chapter four. The researcher identified the challenges Muslim couples face in family planning practice and ways to improve on the practice of family planning.

Chapter five presented the summary, findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study. On the recommendations, the researcher offered solutions to improve on the acceptance and practice of family planning by Muslim couples. The researcher Also, suggested areas that further research into the subject can be made.

5.2 Conclusion

Generally Muslim women like to practice family planning but inadequate male involvement and support in family planning has been identified as one of the factors affecting the practice of family planning and acceptance by the Muslim community. The Muslim men see family planning as an attempt to deny them sexual satisfaction with their wives, an attempt to make their wives cheat on them and an attempt to make them unable to father children any more. The domineering role men have over their wives as breadwinners of the family has made them the only one to decide on when to practice family planning. The level of male support and involvement in family planning practice has been poor and discouraging with majority of the men not doing anything about it to support their partners in family planning practice. This has led to most women secretly going to the maternal and child health clinic to meet the public health Nurses without the

approval of their husbands. This most often generate a lot of tension in the marriage and sometimes leading to divorce when their husbands later discover their spouses hide to do it. These negative attitudes Muslim men have about family planning has contributed in low or non-use of family planning by the couples resulting in high birth rate leading to economic hardships. The Muslim men expressed their disapproval to practice family planning because there was no variety of contraceptive methods available to them. The condom they cited as means of denying them sexual satisfaction. They also cited family planning facilities available in the municipality as male unfriendly. The Muslim scholars unanimously agreed that there was no single verse in the Qur'an and Hadith of the Prophet condemning family planning. They have suggested withdrawal method ('azl') as one of the contraceptive methods and other methods which do not cause permanent deformity to the body and can be reversed if the couples later wish to have children.

The study was aimed at finding out the situation of family planning practice by Muslim couples of Ashaiman and what accounted for the inadequate or low acceptance and practice of family planning by Muslims of the community. The study also dealt with the concept of family planning in Islam to acknowledge the position or the stance of Islam as far as family planning is concerned. All the five jurisprudential Imams concluded that there was no single verse in the Qur'an or in the Hadith of the Prophet prohibiting the practice of family planning. They rather confirmed 'azl' as a method of contraceptive that was being practiced during the era of the Prophet. The study further discussed other permissible methods of contraceptives which are not injurious to the body and are also reversible should the couples decide not to continue with the methods. The Islamic

concept of '*al-Maulud*' (fertility) summarizes the scriptural texts that address the aspects of the Muslim family life with respect to family planning, where the Prophet advised Muslim men to marry women who are fertile to produce more children for he the Prophet to be proud of the high numbers of his 'Ummah' on the day of resurrection. The concept of '*al- maulud*' (fertility) encourages procreation. However, if fertility brings economic burdens to the family and leads to parent's inability to cater for their children and educate them according to the principles of Islam, couples have to regulate their fertility to the level where it ceases to perpetuate such implications. Family planning therefore becomes necessary in this regard.

In order to understand the situation of family planning practice by Muslim couples of Ashaiman and the challenges they face in the practice of family planning, Muslim couples, the clerics representing the Tijaniya, Ahlusunnah, Ahmadiya and Shia groups as well as officers at the family planning clinics were interviewed using phenomenological and theological approaches. In the final analysis, this study reached the following conclusions:

- (1) Muslim couples in Ashaiman are aware of family planning services offered by the family planning service providers in the Municipality. They identified the hospitals, clinics and the media houses as their main sources of information.
- (2) Clerics of the various Muslim groups created awareness of family planning through their week end Da'wa sessions and Friday sermons where they confirmed that family planning is in consonance with Islamic precepts. The position of the clerics points to the fact that, Islam does not reject family planning, however they are concerned with

the long term effect of family planning methods which have the potential to make the woman unable to give birth again.

(3) On the decision making with regards to family planning, it was revealed that women were not involved in the decision making. A female respondent who was bold to access family planning without the consent of her husband was later divorced by her husband when he found out that she sneaked to access family planning service.

(4) The study revealed that majority of the Muslim couples do not get involved in the practice of family planning neither do they discuss family planning issues among themselves. In addition, with most literate families, both couples initiate the discussions concerning family planning unlike in illiterate couples. These findings contributed to the low acceptance and patronage of family planning resulting in high birth rate among the Muslims.

(5)The study also identified some challenges Muslim couples face in the practice of family planning. These include preference for male children. In this circumstance the husband whose wife gives birth to female children will continue to demand male children from the wife until she gives birth to male child. This no doubt increases the number of children couples bring forth.

(6) misconceptions about family planning such as family planning promotes promiscuity, family planning is not for men but women, by practicing family planning, you are encouraging your wife to engage in prostitution, only unfaithful women practice family planning among others.

(7) Similarly, fear of side effects and education are some of the factors or challenges affecting the utilization and uptake of family planning.

(8) Finally, the role of religious leaders cannot be overlooked. The study showed real commitment of religious leaders in preaching to the Muslim couples on the prospects family planning brings to them. The prospects of family planning, according to the religious leaders, include enabling couples to plan for the number of children they can adequately cater for. Family planning enables the mother to regain her health after delivery; gives her enough time and opportunity to love and provide attention to her husband and children; gives more time for her family and own personal advancement and when suffering from an illness, gives her enough time for treatment and recovery.

Family planning provides an opportunity for children to have proper attention, security, love, and care they deserve. This is in relation to the narration by Imam Ali bin Abi Talib that: “One of the two (means) of affluence is to have few dependents.” In view of this family planning benefits the father in the sense that it lightens his burden and responsibility in supporting his family, it enables him to give his children their basic needs (food, shelter, education, and better future), it gives him time for his family and own personal advancement and it gives him enough time to treat himself and recover fully when he is infected with sexual transmitted diseases.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the conclusions outlined above and in order to improve the utilization and practice of family planning among Muslims of Ashaiman, the researcher suggests the following to Muslim families, religious leaders, family planning service providers and the government:

(1) To Muslim families, they should, as part of the preparation for the marriage, set their objectives and plans on the number of children they want to bring forth for effective management and control. They should recognize each other's contribution to the development of the family. They must be aware of their rights and obligations as well as the Islamic teachings regarding family and household chores and how to accomplish them. Men's superiority over women should be discouraged in order to open the opportunities for all to come together to make decisions with regard to peaceful co-existence and progress of the family. Husbands should not be the only ones to decide when to practice family planning.

In fact, communication between husbands and wives about contraception and couple counseling using media should be encouraged.

(2) Messages about equal value of sons and daughters should be integrated into family planning messages and programs. Communications underscoring the equal value of sons and daughters based on Islamic principles will enhance the reception of the message to value girls as well as encourage Muslim families to provide equal educational opportunities for boys and girls. Fostering girls' education, in turn, increases their

likelihood of employment. This change will contribute to changing social norms by showing that women can support their parents by bringing income to the household. This will solve the problem of sons' preference in family planning.

(3) Empowering women through literacy education, training in interpersonal communication, participation in groups and income generation activities increases their self-confidence. This makes it easier for them to discuss birth spacing with their spouses. Integrating family planning components into existing women's empowerment projects or incorporating empowerment elements into family planning programs will increase contraceptive use.

(4) Access to family planning services is vital to the health and future of mothers leading to safe motherhood. The ability to plan the number and spacing of births increases the likelihood of positive health outcomes for women, men, and their children. Improving knowledge about contraception and ensuring access to effective family planning options for residents in need are essential to decreasing unintended pregnancies.

(5) Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommends the involvement of religious leaders family planning practices. This is critical in view of the important role they play in society and the kind of respect they command among their followers. They should be trained in family planning issues so that they can disseminate correct

information on family planning issues during their regular sermons and preaching to their congregations.

(6) They should also be actively engaged in advocacy for the promotion of other reproductive health issues including improvement of maternal and child health outcomes. This would make them appreciate the importance of family planning in their overall economic, social and health development.

(7) More importantly, these religious leaders should also take it upon themselves to dispel the wrong notions that Islam is against family planning by referring to the relevant scriptures, actions and deeds of the Prophet which favour the practice of family planning. This will definitely have positive impact as far as their attitude towards family planning is concerned

(8) The fact that misconceptions and rumours act as barriers to the acceptance and practice of family planning by Muslim men, pre-supposes that effective ways of counteracting these should be found and implemented. It is in this regard that one believes strongly that if the practice of family planning is to be accepted by the majority of the population especially Muslim men, there is the need to bring on board religious leaders especially Imams and Islamic scholars in the development of messages and community educational programmes that will disseminate accurate reproductive health and family planning education. Such information should be supported by religious framework of action.

(9) The religious leaders should recommend the inclusion of family planning in the religious and moral education curriculum and should be taught in the Islamic schools at all levels.

(10) To the family planning officials and government, it is recommended that education family planning practices be stepped up. The aim here is to dispel the misconceptions and rumours associated with the concept. To address these militating factors identified in the study as barriers to the practice of family planning, there is the need for the appropriate agencies in family planning, such as the government to employ trained and qualified staff to provide accurate, relevant and regular education (information) on family planning to men. Such information should focus not only on the overall benefits of family planning to the man, family and society in general but more particularly on the misconceptions and rumors which serve as barriers to practicing family planning.

(11) In view of the influential role of men in decisions affecting all aspects of life including contraceptives, it is proposed that only male family planning clinics manned by only male service providers be established to provide counseling services, skills in couple communication and family planning information and services. This will provide an environment of trust and confidentiality for the men to share their concerns and fears about the concept. It will also tackle the misconceptions men have about family planning

which appear to suggest that family planning is an attempt to deny them of sexual satisfaction.

(12) As a matter of policy, the Ministry of Health and its allied agencies and facilities should make it a requirement for men to witness their wives labour and delivery at the maternity and delivery wards. This will make them appreciate the suffering and agony that their wives go through during child birth; and whether as loving and caring husbands, it is useful exercise to continually put them through such experiences at the least opportunity without taking into consideration the wife's interest and health.

(13) The Ministry of Health in collaboration with developmental partners involved in the provision of family planning services, need to enhance large scale training of service providers in quality care, client follow up, communication skills, counselling, referral, feedback and provision of a wide choice of methods available for men.

(14) In order to make these recommendations workable, all stakeholders such as Muslims, religious and opinion leaders and central government in the study area need to invest more in education, training and other forms of empowerment.

5.4 Suggested Areas for Further Research

The subject of family planning and reproductive health covers a very wide area. This particular research could only zero down on one aspect. Therefore the researcher wishes to recommend other equally relevant related areas that need further research. These include:

- (1) The role of Muslim clerics in sustaining family planning in Muslim communities in Ghana.
- (2) A study of family planning in consolidating development in Muslim families in Ghana.

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Muslim female respondent A, interviewed 16th May, 2019 at zongolaka -Ashaiman.

Muslim female respondent B, interviewed 16th May, 2019 at Turaku- Ashaiman.

Muslim married men interviewed 19th May, 2019 at Turaku Ashaiman.

Muslim scholars, interviewed 18th May, 2019 at Zongolaka Central Mosque, Ashiman.

Public health nurse V, interviewed 20th May, 2019 at Ashaiman Polyclinic.

Sheikh Ibrahim Yakubu, interviewed 11th May, 2019 at Ashaiman-Middle east.

Sheikh Idrisu Dumah, interviewed 11th May, 2019 at Zenu- Ashaiman.

Sheikh Mohammed Salis Abubakar, interviewed 10th May, 2019 at Zenu, Ashaiman.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Interview questions for married Muslim couples on the situation of family planning practice.

Sex of respondent.....

Age of respondent.....

Occupation of respondent.....

Educational level of respondent.....

Do you know about family planning? Yes/ No

If your response is yes, then what is the source of your information?

Are you aware of family planning services in the Ashaiman Municipality? Yes/ No

Do you visit the family planning clinics to access the family planning services available?

Yes/ No

If your response is yes, what motivated you into accessing family planning service?

Does your husband involve himself in family planning decision making? Yes/ No

Please explain your response.

Do you discuss family planning issues with your spouse? Yes / No

If your response is yes, then who leads the discussion?

What type of family planning methods do you discuss?

Do you decide with your spouse on the number of children to bring forth? Yes/No

Do you sometimes hide to request for family planning services without your husband's consent? Yes/No

If your response is yes, then what happens if he later finds out?

Is family planning helpful? Yes/No

Please explain your response.

Are Muslims allowed to practice family planning? Yes/No

Is there a rule in Islam regulating the number of children Muslim marriage couples should have?

Do you attend family planning sessions organized by family planning clinics in the Ashaiman Municipality? Yes/No

If your response is yes, then what lessons do you learn from the family planning sessions?

Do you implement the lessons learnt from family planning sessions?

Will you approve of your wife to practice family planning? Yes/No. Please explain your response.

Will you accompany your wife to family planning clinic? Yes/No. Please explain your response.

Will you support your spouse to practice family planning? Yes/No. Whose responsibility is it to practice family planning?

What factors influence your decision to practice family planning? Have you conceived again after practicing family planning? Yes/No

Please explain your response.

Appendix B

Interview questions for religious leaders.

Name.....

Education.....

Status.....

Mosque.....

Locality.....

Number of children.....

As a religious leader, what do you know about family planning?

What is Islam's view on family planning?

Are Muslims allowed to practice family planning? Yes/No

Please explain your response.

Do you practice family planning? Yes/No

Please explain your response.

Does Islam specify on the number of children Muslim marriage couples should have?

Yes/No.

Please explain your response.

At what avenue do you preach about family planning?

What were some of the topics on family planning do you discuss?

Which family planning methods will you recommend to Muslim couples?

Do you agree that children are viewed as a source of blessings and family planning therefore disregards the objective of procreation in marriage? Yes/No

Please explain your response.

Do you agree that family planning is infanticide? Yes/No

Please explain your response.

Do you agree that large population is ordained by Islam and failure to achieve it deviates from the right path? Yes/No

Please explain your response.

Do you agree that family planning is an attempt to reduce Muslim population?

Appendix C

Interview question for family planning service providers

Name.....

Hospital/clinic.....

Status.....

What family planning service do your outfit provide for couples?

How often do Muslim couples visit your facility?

How often do Muslim women visit your facility? Does your facility have special service for men? Yes/No

Please explain your response.

Do Muslim men visit your facility and request for your service? Yes/No

Please explain your response.

What methods of family planning do you have for men?

Which methods of family planning do men usually prefer?

Is your facility male friendly? Yes/No

Please explain your response.

Do you have separate consulting room for men? Yes/No

Please explain your response.

Do Muslim men accompany their wives to your facility? Yes/No

Please explain your response.

Are you satisfied with the level of male involvement in accessing family planning service? Yes/No

Please explain your response.

Does your facility provide family planning counseling service? Yes/No Please explain your response.