

Full Length Research

Accessibility and Utilization of Health Information and Safe Health Practices of Nursing Mothers in Imo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the accessibility and utilization of health information and safe health practices of nursing mothers in Imo State, Nigeria. It adopted the survey research design, census method of sampling techniques to ensuring that every nursing mothers in Imo State, Nigeria was captured. Self-constructed and validated questionnaire was used to collect data for this study. The findings show that that accessibility of health information and safe health practices of nursing mothers in Imo State, Nigeria was significant and conscientiousness and utilization of health information and safe health practices of nursing mothers in Imo State, Nigeria was positively significant. This study recommended that government at all levels should intensify sensitization effort towards achieving wider coverage of safe health practices of nursing mothers through engaging all stakeholders including agents of socialization and that stakeholders should give necessary supports to nursing mothers that will enable them initiate and continue safe health practices.

Key Words: Health, Information, Health Information, Accessibility, Utilization, Safe Health Practices and Nursing Mothers

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INTRODUCTION

Health is the general condition of the body or mind, especially in terms of the presence or absence of illnesses, injuries or impairments. Health is thus defined as a state of complete physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being of an individual and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (WHO, 2013). Good health according to Ezema and Ugwuanyi (2014) means that people remained healthy, have free access to efficient health care, better nutrition, improved living conditions, useful health information and absence of avoidable premature deaths. According to Aina (2004), Information is a crucial agent of change, a conveyor of knowledge and reinforcement of ideas and opinion. It is the life wire of any organization. Information is meant to change or increase understanding of something. It is something that changes a person's state of mind and knowledge of a subject.

Information can be used to mean man's accumulated knowledge in all subjects, in all forms and from all sources that could help users to make rational decisions. Information is central to all activities and very essential to human survival. It is crucial in every research work and it is vital to the development of any society. Timely, accurate and current information is therefore imperative at every state of research endeavour. Information has been severally defined as data that have been processed into a form that is meaningful and purposeful to the recipient or user and is real or perceived as of value in prospective decision making process (Aina, 2004: 23). Information could be defined as data that have been subjected to some processing functions capable of answering a user query, be it recorded, summarized or simply collected, that would help in decision making. Nzotta (1987), views information as all about facts gathered from various sources; the fact, according to him, can be in the form of writing or spoken, writing or even non-verbal gestures. Information can be presented via people speaking, writing, or gesture, film, letter, diary, radio and television. Ndukwe (2000) sees information to be the oil that greases the wheel of governance, programmes and activities of government, organization and individuals. Poopola (2008) highlights the economic importance of information and state that it lies in its value as a resource and also in its strategic value in decision making and planning.

Health information encompasses the continuum extending from the specific information needs of patients to a broader provision of health information for the day user (Wasike and Tenya, 2013). Similarly, Adeyoyin and Oyewusi (2015) describe health information as information on a continuum between health education and health promotion. Health information is about having the requisite knowledge which enables one to make the right decisions concerning health issues. It relates to those pieces of information that will make the user have physical and emotional stability. It contains such information as sanitation rules and regulations (environmental cleanliness), family planning, disease control, drugs, immunization, location of good hospitals and clinics, laboratory. It also includes news about international bodies and agencies responsible for global health activities such as world Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) (Uhegbu, 2007). Nwafor-Orizu and Onwudinyo (2015) and Institute for Information Law and Policy (2015) look at health information from two perspectives. While Nwafor-Orizu and Onwudinyo posit that health information is knowledge, facts and news generated from various sources, necessary for good physical and mental condition of human beings, and that it is a determinant of the right to the highest attainable standard of health including access to such information as protected by the right to exchange and import information. A nursing mother according to Cambridge English Dictionary is a woman who is feeding her baby with her own breast milk. Nursing mother refers to women that is feeding an infant or young child with breast milk directly from female human breasts rather than using infant formula from a baby bottle or other container. Being a nursing mother has been in existence in ancient times up to recent human history, where babies were carried with the mother and fed as required.

Nursing mother is used synonymously and interchangeably with breastfeeding mothers. Nursing mothers have the confidence in their ability to care for their child to prevent childhood illness (Parsa, Masoumi, Parsa & Parsa, 2015). Health and safety practices among nursing mothers include regular washing of hands, eating of appropriate nutrition, regular cleaning of toilet, sanitary condition for toileting and diaper changing. One of the safety health practices of nursing mother is breastfeeding. Breastfeeding by nursing mothers offers significant benefits as it strengthens the affective relationship between mother and child, promotes the baby development by providing the necessary nutrients in the first months of life, and protects against infection and chronic diseases. Safe health practices refer to the prevention of errors and adverse effects to people associated with health care. Nothing is more important to a nursing mother than the safety and health of both her and the child. Safe health practice of nursing mother is the prevention of harm to nursing mothers. Mitchell (2008) defined patient safety practices as those that reduce the risk of adverse events related to exposure to medical care across a range of diagnoses or conditions. Nursing mother safe health practices is a necessity in our contemporary society. Every nursing mother deserve safe health care and should have the utmost confidence that they will not be harmed during the period of nursing their child in contemporary society Nigeria and other developing countries, nursing mothers safe health practices should be given a priority. Mother baby nursing is an approaching to providing care within the immediate postpartum period that offers significance benefits to both providers and recipients of that care. Women will continue to need care during pregnancy and child birth as long as humanity continues to reproduce itself According to Abonzahr (2003), the health of mothers has long been acknowledge to be a cornerstone of public health and attention to unacceptably high level of maternal mortality has been a feature of global health and development discussion a since the 1980s. According to Aston Etowa, Price, Vukic, Hart, Macleod and Randel (2016), most public health care professionals would agree that supporting mothers and babies in early postpartum is the most effective means of ensuring that both short and long term positive health outcomes for individuals and families are attained. It has been established that women who had history of antenatal care visit during their youngest child pregnancy period, gave their birth at health institution and post natal visit initiate complementary feeding timely.

According to Amaechi, Ogugua, Unegbu, and Edem (2020), women are critical and integral part of the economic process of the country, either in the formal or informal sector, urban or rural areas. The participation of women in the

economic life of a country like Nigeria is only one aspect of their changing position in the society. Even globally, women have become increasingly visible. Etim (1995) posits that one would dare say that most topical issues in international or global development agenda is "women". Thus we have women issues, women concern, women in development etc. Varied as the definitions are, there is however, a global consensus that international development plans must include strategies for the integration of women into the development process. Access to health services and quality of health services are designed to increase health services utilization and eventually to improve health outcomes (USAID, 2015). Ezeama and Ugwuanyi (2014) describe access to adequate and timely information as very critical indicator for the overall national development and specifically very useful in combating poverty, ignorance and disease in many developing countries. Odini (2016) notes that access to health services and the quality of care administered at all levels of health care have been considered as the central determinants of health outcomes. In other words, availability and accessibility to adequate, current, and effective information systems are key factors to better health care. Undeniably, access is an important factor in the process of providing and utilizing health information in any society. Access to health information should be provided to nursing mothers, especially those who show concern or indicate felt need for it as well as those in the rural areas.

According to Olayinka, Achi, Amos and Chiedu (2014), utilization of health service is a complex behavioural phenomenon, related to the availability, acceptability, quality and affordability of services, social structures, health beliefs and characteristics of the users. Silali and Owino (2016) believe that health information empower women such as nursing mothers, to make informed choices and increase their perceptions in satisfaction of health provision towards primary prevention. In the light of the above background, this study therefore, seeks to investigate the accessibility and utilization of health information and safe health practices of nursing mothers in Imo State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions

- i. What is the relationship between accessibility of health information and safe health practices of nursing mothers in Imo State?
- ii. What is the relationship between utilization of health information and safe health practices of nursing mothers in Imo State?

Review of Related Literature

Masemola-Yenda & Mataboge (2015) carried out a study with the aim of exploring and describing access to information and decision making on teenage pregnancy prevention by females using a primary healthcare clan in Tshwane, South Africa. The researcher adopted a descriptive qualitative and exploratory research design to explore and describe the verbal reports regarding prevention of teenage pregnancy by females using a primary health care clinic. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 female participants who had been pregnant once or more during their teens. The study indicates that two themes emerged namely, access to information and decision making by female teenagers. Five categories that emerged were: access to information on pregnancy prevention, using of provided information, the use of alternative medicine with hormonal contraception, personal reason for use and use of contraception, and decisions made by teenagers not to become pregnant.

Tsehay (2014) carried out a study on *seeking of health information in rural context: Exploring sources of maternal health information in rural Ethiopia*. The study was designed to achieve four (4) specific objectives. The qualitative research, focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were utilized in the study. The study adopted a qualitative research design. The researcher employed a data collection design that combines in-depth interviews (IDIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The sample size comprises of 41 women. The study found out that lack of knowledge, perceived personal risk of health complications, and seeking a healthy life are the major factors that motivated the women to seek for information. The study showed that women have sought and use various kinds of interpersonal and media related sources to satisfy their maternity information needs during the course of their reproductive life. Of all maternity sources of health information, health extension workers and health professionals were found to be the most commonly used and trusted sources of information. Illiteracy, attitude and perception towards information providers and ignorance, relating to traditional and cultural barriers were identified as the major bottle necks of information dissemination, seeking and usage. Ramsay, Peters, Corsini and Eckert (2017) carried out a study on *consumer health information needs and preference: A rapid evidence review*. The study was guided by four (4) key research questions.

The study adopted a rapid review using an interactive, systematic, step-by-step approach. A total of 21 primary studies were appraised out of 7329 articles located for the study. Findings show that consumers access information from a range of sources and for varying purposes based on their specific needs at the time they seek it. The research findings indicate that a great deal of consumers use the internet to obtain health information; this appears to be because they found its high accessibility convenient, not because they considered it to be a better alternative to face-to-face communication with a health professional. However, despite the widespread use of the internet, evidence suggests that the doctor-patient relationship is still highly valued and that health professionals remain the preferred source of health information consumers. The study concludes that many health consumers prefer to access information from a variety of sources, including their family and friends, the internet, health professionals and written materials, it is therefore important to ensure that information is readily available in different formats and is not exclusive to any single medium.

Silali and Owino (2016) investigated *factors influencing accessibility of maternal and child health information on reproductive health practices among rural women in Kenya*. The study adopted a cross-sectional design in mixed research of quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. A total of 210 study participants were selected through cluster sampling. Data were collected through questionnaire. The findings show that the main sources of maternal health information are health professionals (doctors and nurses) and community health workers who are the main link of the community households with health facility. Socio economic factors, like level of education and source of income, strongly influenced the uptake of maternal and child health information. The study concludes that some community health workers (CHWs) are accessible and reliable sources in rural areas; they form most efficient community health linkages with health facilities, so it's important to empower them for sustainable healthcare at community level. Ojewole and Oludipe (2017) investigated *pregnancy-related information need and information seeking pattern among pregnant women attending antenatal clinic at Ikorodu General Hospital, Lagos State, Nigeria*. The study was carried out using a descriptive correlation design. A purposive sampling technique was used to derive a sample size of 228 pregnant women used for the study. Data for the study were collected from the questionnaire administered to the pregnant women. The results of the study shows that majority of the pregnant women in the study area had moderate level of pregnancy information needs and information seeking. Also, seeing the health care personnel and having knowledge of pregnancy are perceived barriers to seeking pregnancy related information. The most potent predictor of information seeking pattern among the predictor variables of the study is religion, followed by age, and by marital status, the study concludes that pregnancy outcomes could be improved if pregnant women are provided with pregnancy related information necessary to empower them to overcome pregnancy challenges.

Almoajei and Almarqabi (2016) investigated online health information seeking behaviours among pregnant women in prenatal clinics at King Saud Medical City, Riyadh. The study used a descriptive cross-sectional survey. The subjects were Saudi females who attended the antenatal clinics at King Saud Medical City in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. A convenience sample of 150 women in the waiting area of the obstetrician/gynecologist outpatient department was taken during the period of three working weeks. A total of 210 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to pregnant women, out of which, 190 were returned with 150 valid. The study found out that more than half of the respondents were using google and other research tools to find pregnancy-related health information. They also visited women's forums to obtain information about pregnancy, commercial pages for maternity and childhood health information and sometimes used YouTube, Facebook and Twitter to find educational health content. Amaechi, Ougua, Unegbu, and Edem (2020) argues that provision, accessibility and utilization of information are related and that the effect of one generates concomitant effect on the other. The author stresses that information can only be utilized if it is accessible and that accessibility of information can only be possible if it is provided. In the global world with rich information flows coming from many different sources and channels, an organization's ability to manage knowledge effectively becomes a prerequisite for success and innovations.

Adeyoyin and Oyewusi (2015) carried out a survey of the needs and utilization of health information among young adults in Abeokuta, Ogun state, Nigeria. The study focused on health information needs and utilization among young adults. Correlation research design was adopted for this study using descriptive survey method. Questionnaire were designed and used as survey instruments. A total of 1,745 copies of questionnaire were administered to the respondents. The findings indicate that nutrition ranked highest, followed by water treatment, sanitation and diagnosed medical condition among the information services needs of the young adults. Also, young adults need information services to avoid unwanted pregnancy, unsafe abortion and HIV/AIDs information. Access to health information was mostly through textbooks and newspapers/magazines. The study also finds that religious beliefs against the use of drugs ranked highest among the problems that hinder effective utilization of health information. Increases in National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) awareness, proper utilization of information services among others were recommended. Otieno, Kaseje and Kaseje (2017) investigated perspectives on utilization of community based health information systems in Western Kenya. The study adopted a survey design. Information for this study was gathered through semi-structured interviews. The interviewees were purposefully selected from various community health units

and public health facilities in the study area. The data were organized and analyzed manually grouping them into themes and categories. Results of the study show that information needs of the community included service utilization and health status information. Dialogue was the main way of information utilization in the community. It was discovered that health systems and personal challenges impeded proper collection and use of information. The study concludes that the challenges experienced in health information utilization may be overcome by linkages and coordination between the community and the health facilities. Ojong, Uga and Chiotu (2015) examined *knowledge and attitude of pregnant women towards focused ante natal care services in university of Calabar teaching hospital, Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria*. The study adopted a descriptive design and the sample size was 174 pregnant women attending antenatal care clinic in UCTH. The instrument for data collection was a three section questionnaire. Findings revealed that majority of the respondents had good knowledge and favourable attitude towards focused antenatal care. Although knowledge towards focused antenatal care is high and attitude is favourable, some weakness still exist which posed as hindrance to utilization. The study recommends intensive awareness creation on focused antenatal care for pregnant women and retraining of health workers and monitoring and supervision of health workers to improve on the hindrance identified as barriers to utilization.

Grimes and Forster (2014) x-rayed the *sources of information used by women during pregnancy to meet their information needs*. The study adopted a cross section, descriptive design. A self-administered postal survey was designed for the study. The questionnaire included closed, categorical and open ended questions. A sample size of 752 women was used for the study. Quantitative data were analyzed using frequencies, percentages and means. The two way chi-square test (χ^2) were used to determine whether the relationship between two variables was statistically significant. The findings of the study showed that women access information from a variety of sources. Discussion was found as the most frequently cited sources of information for women. The use of the internet was less than expected given the growth in access to service to services. Although many sources of information are available to women, one third of the women surveyed felt that some of their information needs during pregnancy were unmet. Breastfeeding information needs and advice on the mother's postnatal recovery were the most common topics mothers felt unformed about. Odetola (2015) carried out a study on *health care utilization among rural women of child bearing age: A Nigerian experience*. The study adopted a descriptive study, with a total sample size of 160 clients who were randomly selected for the study. The research design was non experimental. A well-structured weighted questionnaire of 38 items involving open and close-ended questions was used to interview the targeted population. The findings of the study revealed that level of education, proximity to place of residence, affordability and quality of services rendered, spousal and significant others' influences were active determinants of choice for health institutions among pregnant women in Nigeria. The study concludes that provision of adequate functioning medical equipment to the primary health care centres will be a motivating factor for childbearing women's use. The study recommends that the government should ensure adequate funding of the primary health centres for provision of necessary facilities and make health accessible to everyone at the grass root level. More so, the government should create a forum for women of child bearing age who institutions following complications at subsidizing rate especially when they cannot afford it. Kusumayati and Nakamura (2007) investigated *increased utilization of maternal health services by mothers using the maternal and child health handbook in Indonesia*. The study adopted a repeated cross sectional study. The multi-stage random sampling method was used in deriving 611, 621, and 630 mothers for the surveys in three different years respectively. Data were collected primarily by using a pre-tested structured questionnaire. The multiple logistic regression analyzes were carried out. The findings showed that utilization of maternal and child health handbook (MCHH) was found to be associated with better maternal knowledge regarding antenatal care (ANC), tetanus toxoid (TT) immunization and skilled birth attendance. It was also indicated that utilization of MCHH has the potential both to improve maternal knowledge and to increase the utilization of maternal health services. The study concludes that the effectiveness of existing community base activities in promoting maternal knowledge and behaviour can be improved by utilizing the MCHH during their health education session.

Homat, Solomons, Montenegro, Crowley and Bermudez (2014) examined *maternal health and health seeking behaviours among indigenous Mamm mothers from Quetzaltenango, Guatemala*. The cross sectional study design was adopted. A sample size of 100 pregnant and breast feeding women in four communities was used. The study showed that a variety of factors affect utilization of maternal health services by indigenous women in rural Quetzaltenango. These include socio-economic disparities, ethnic and linguistic differences, and poor access to basic resources. The current reproductive needs of women should be addressed to improve their health and increase their chance of having healthy children. However socio-economic status, lack of fluency in Spanish, and no ownership of a motorized vehicle were associated with the highest likelihood of poor utilization of services. Kotecha, Patel, Shah, Katara and Madam (2012) examined *health seeking behaviour and utilization of health services by pregnant mothers in Vadodara slums*. The study adopted a longitudinal qualitative study. A sample size of 60 women was systematically selected through random sampling. The findings indicate that almost all women (97%) used to go for antenatal care for their baby's good health and safe delivery. Majority preferred private hospital for delivery. The study proposed that it is felt that proper

health educational program should be launched to address issues such as faulty food beliefs and practices. The study also shows that women who do not avail of antenatal care are more likely to suffer from problems during pregnancy. Olayinka, Achi, Amos and Chiedu (2014) investigated awareness and barriers to utilization of maternal health care services among reproductive women in Amassoma community, Bayelsa State Nigeria. A descriptive research design was used and the study setting was Amassoma community, Bayelsa state Nigeria. The study population consists of women of reproductive age (15 to 45 years). A purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample size of 192. Data were collected using a questionnaire and descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data generated. The study revealed that the majority of the respondents have heard of maternal health services but only few actually knew the main services rendered at maternal health care services. The major variables associated with barriers to utilization of maternal health services among respondents were poor knowledge of existing services, previous bad obstetric history attitude of the health care provider etc. The study recommends that government should subsidize maternal health services in order to make it affordable, acceptable and available to women.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that access is an important factor in the process of providing and utilization of health information in any society. Access to health information should be provided to nursing mothers, especially those who show concerns or indicates felt need for it as well as those in the rural areas. Also, it should be noted that enabling environment is critical to accessibility of health information by nursing mothers. Though, there are multiple providers of health information such as the health institutions, non-governmental organizations, media houses etc, it is imperative that knowledge of the factors that constitutes barriers to nursing mothers' access to health information be established. Again, there is a clear indication that utilization of health information is a common practice both in developed and developing countries of the world. Though, different attitudes are displayed by women when seeking for health information and also, women consult many sources of health information in order to meet their health information needs. Furthermore, though records show that Nigerian women do seek for search and utilized health information sources but information about nursing mothers seeking and utilizing health information in Owerri, Imo State is rare.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive survey research design was used for this study using self-developed structured questionnaire for data collection questionnaire. The questionnaire is titled "accessibility and utilization of health information and safe health practices of nursing mothers in Imo State, Nigeria questionnaire" (UHISHPNMQ). No sample size was drawn from the population. This is because the population of the study is accessible. The census method was used to ensure that opinions of all the nursing mothers in Imo State, Nigeria were captured for the study. A total of five hundred and sixty-four (564) copies of the questionnaire were distributed to nursing mothers in Imo State, Nigeria. Out of these, four hundred and seventy-eight (478) copies of the questionnaire were duly completed and returned for analysis giving a response rate of (84.8%). Forty-eight (86) copies of the questionnaire were non-response giving a non-response rate of (15.2%). The return rate of 478 (84.8%) is adequate representation of the entire population.

Analysis

Research Question 1

How does accessibility of health information predict the safe health practices of nursing mothers in Imo State?

Table 1: Mean Responses on Accessibility of Health Information Provision and Safe Health Practices of Nursing Mothers

S/N	Accessibility of Health Information and Safe Health Practices of Nursing Mothers	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL	MEAN VALUE X	DECISION
a	Without access to health information, it will be difficult for me to have better understanding of safety health practices	246	203	17	12	478	3.43	Significant
b	I could not have been able to comply with safety health practices if not access gained to health information	225	214	23	16	478	3.36	Not Significant

c	Access to health information promote high level of safety health practices	249	209	11	9	478	3.46	Significant
d	Access to health information does not promote high level of safety health practices	257	202	13	6	478	3.48	Significant
e	Access to health information helps in deciding the best safety health practices for nursing mothers	217	212	22	27	478	3.29	Not Significant
	Significant Mean Value	3.41						

Based on the analysis as shown on Table 1, without access to health information, it will be difficult for me to have better understanding of safety health practices ($X=3.43$), access to health information promote high level of safety health practices ($X=3.46$) and access to health information does not promote high ($X=3.46$). It can be inferred that all the items in the Table have significant mean value ($X=3.41$) with the exceptions of I could not have been able to comply with safety health practices if not access gained to health information ($X=3.36$) and access to health information does not promote high level of safety health practices ($X=3.29$) that have less than significant mean value ($X=3.41$). Generally, accessibility of health information provision has positive relationship with safe health practices of nursing mothers in Imo State, Nigeria.

Research Question 2

How does the utilization of health information predict the safe health practices of nursing mothers in Imo State?

Table 2: Mean Responses on Utilization of Health Information Provision and Safe Health Practices of Nursing Mothers

S/N	Utilization of Health Information and Safe Health Practices of Nursing Mothers	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL	MEAN VALUE X	DECISION
a	Utilizing health information enables me to engage actively in safety health practices	236	227	8	7	478	3.45	Significant
b	Utilizing health information assist me in making the right decisions as it relates to safety health practices	232	228	13	5	478	3.44	Significant
c	Utilizing health information helps me determine the safety health practices adopted by nursing mothers	215	210	31	22	478	3.29	Significant
d	Utilizing health information enables me to appreciate safety health practices associated with breast feeding	212	209	39	18	478	3.29	Significant
e	I do not need to utilize health information before complying with safety health practices	33	11	220	214	478	1.71	Not Significant
	Significant Mean Value	3.04						

Table 2 shows the mean responses on availability of health information provision and safe health practices of nursing mothers is greater than the significant mean value ($X=3.04$) in four main aspects. These are; utilizing health information enables me to engage actively in safety health practices ($X=3.45$), utilizing health information assist me in making the right decisions as it relates to safety health practices ($X=3.44$), utilizing health information helps me determine the safety health practices adopted by nursing mothers ($X=3.29$) and utilizing health information enables me to appreciate safety health practices associated with breast feeding ($X=3.29$). The other reason namely; I do not need to utilize health information before complying with safety health practices ($X=1.71$) has less than the significant mean value ($X=3.04$). The significant mean value ($X=3.04$) shows that utilization of health information provision has positive relationship with safe health practices of nursing mothers in Imo State, Nigeria.

FINDINGS

The findings of the study on Table 1, research question 1 revealed that accessibility of health information provision and safe health practices of nursing mothers in Imo State, Nigeria was significant. This relationship may have arisen because without access to health information, it will be difficult for nursing mothers to have better understanding of safety health practices, access to health information promote high level of safety health practices and access to health information does not promote high. This implies that accessibility of health information provision significantly affect safe health practices of nursing mothers in Imo State, Nigeria. Mwangakala (2015) found that inadequate conditions of access to health facilities and the poor working conditions of the care providers affected the provision of quality of maternal services and health information to pregnant women. Anyaoku and Nwosu (2017) investigated extent of access to health information and sources for chronic disease patients in tertiary health institutions in South East Nigeria: Implications for libraries role. Found that large majority indicated high access to treatment information, the major source of health information was health professionals. Internet, books, newspaper, pamphlets were also sources of health information. The study concludes that health information providers can consider areas of low information access for possible focus when planning health information disseminating activities. Adeyoyin and Oyewusi (2015) carried out a survey of the needs and utilization of health information among young adults in Abeokuta, Ogun state, Nigeria and found that nutrition ranked highest, followed by water treatment, sanitation and diagnosed medical condition among the information services needed by the young adults. Also, young adults need information services to avoid unwanted pregnancy, unsafe abortion and HIV/AIDs information. Access to health information was mostly through textbooks and newspapers/magazines. The study also finds that religious beliefs against the use of drugs ranked highest among the problems that hinder effective utilization of health information. Increases in National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) awareness, proper utilization of information services among others were recommended. Access to health information be provided to nursing mothers, especially those who show concerns or indicates felt need for it as well as those in the rural areas. Also, it should be noted that enabling environment is critical to accessibility of health information by nursing mothers. Though, there are multiple providers of health information such as the health institutions, non-governmental organizations, media houses etc, it is imperative that knowledge of the factors that constitutes barriers to nursing mothers' access to health information be established.

The findings of the study on Table 2, research question 2 revealed that utilization of health information provision and safe health practices of nursing mothers in Imo State, Nigeria was significant. This implies that utilization of health information provision significantly affect safe health practices of nursing mothers in Imo State, Nigeria. Otieno, Kaseje and Kaseje (2017) investigated perspectives on utilization of community based health information systems in Western Kenya. Results of the study show that information needs of the community included service utilization and health status information. Dialogue was the main way of information utilization in the community. It was discovered that health systems and personal challenges impeded proper collection and use of information. The study concludes that the challenges experienced in health information utilization may be overcome by linkages and coordination between the community and the health facilities. Ojong, Uga and Chiotu (2015) in their study found that majority of the respondents had good knowledge and favourable attitude towards focused antenatal care. Although knowledge towards focused antenatal care is high and attitude is favourable, some weakness still exist which posed as hindrance to utilization. Kusumayati and Nakamura (2007) found that utilization of maternal and child health handbook (MCHH) was found to be associated with better maternal knowledge regarding antenatal care (ANC), tetanus toxoid (TT) immunization and skilled birth attendance. It was also indicated that utilization of MCHH has the potential both to improve maternal knowledge and to increase the utilization of maternal health services. The study concludes that the effectiveness of existing community base activities in promoting maternal knowledge and behaviour can be improved by utilizing the MCHH during their health educations session.

CONCLUSION

In the light of the findings above, conclusions was drawn. The study has successfully investigated the accessibility and utilization of health information and safe health practices of nursing mothers in Imo State, Nigeria. The study revealed that the accessibility and utilization of health information have positive significant relationship with safe health practices of nursing mothers in Imo State, Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In with the findings, the study recommended as follows:

- Government at all levels should intensify sensitization effort towards achieving wider coverage of safe health practices of nursing mothers through engaging all stakeholders including agents of socialization.
- Government should tackle the issues of issue of education for all seriously so as to create equal, affordable qualitative and accessible educational opportunities for the entire populace. This will help create an enlightened and rationale citizenry.
- Stakeholders should give necessary supports to nursing mothers that will enable them initiate and continue safe health practices.
- Government should make health information available for nursing mothers in Imo State for their safe health practices through subsidized Medicare, radio and TV jingles.
- Health workers should provide information needs of nursing mothers in Imo State for their health practices.
- Nursing mothers should consult professional health personnel for their health information through postnatal clinic.

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