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HEALTH INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF ANTENATAL WOMEN IN PUBLIC HOSPITALS IN MAKURDI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract
The paper investigated health information seeking behaviour of antenatal women in public hospitals in Makurdi local government area, Benue State, Nigeria. Three (3) research questions, a theory and descriptive survey research design guided the study. A sample size of 380 was drawn from the studied population of 7,764 registered simi-literate and literate antenatal women within the study area using Taro Yamane's 1969 formula for infinite population. Purposive sampling technique, simple random sampling technique and snowball sampling technique were adopted for the study. A self-developed 36 items questionnaire made up of three (3) clusters- A, B and C were employed. The data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency count, percentages, mean and standard deviation. The findings revealed different ways by which antenatal women exhibit their health information seeking behaviour, sources of seeking health information and the challenges faced by antenatal women in seeking health information in public hospitals. The study concluded that antenatal women usually exhibit some behaviours while sourcing for health information in public hospitals in Makurdi local government area of Benue State, Nigeria but these efforts were faced with challenges.

Keywords: Information, Health information, information seeking behaviour, antenatal women, public hospitals.

Introduction

Pregnancies are thrilling moments in women but they often bring complications as they prepare them for motherhood. Studies across literature reports that, most of these complications lead to death of pregnant or antenatal women. About 99 percent (533,000) of these deaths occur in developing regions, with sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia accounting for 86 percent of maternal deaths. Furthermore, these studies reveal that, 1 in 80 women in Nigeria die as a result of pregnancy-related complications

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(Warren et al, World Bank, Federal Ministry of Health (FMOH), Metiboba & Ezugwu, et al cited in Namadi & Msughter, 2020).

According to World Health Organization (2016), an antenatal woman is a pregnant woman who is receiving care from skilled health-care professionals, or in need of such care, at any point from the beginning of pregnancy until the onset of labor. Antenatal refers to the entire pregnancy period which required antenatal care. Antenatal care is an art of visiting hospital on regular intervals for check-ups as determined by health professionals to receive health information during pregnancy period. Information as a powerful instrument is capable of solving all pregnancy-related issues that threatened antenatal women's safety. Ojewole and Oludipe (2017) reported that, the pregnant/antenatal women often require a continuous flow of information to ensure safety of the mother and the fetus. Namadi and Msughter (2020) advanced that pregnant women seek a wide range of health information to stay healthy throughout their antenatal period.

Health information is a fundamental block builder of women's health during pregnancy. It is very vital in the treatment, management and prevention of illnesses, diseases and general improvement of antenatal women's health to avoid unforeseen circumstances. Lincetto et'al (2012) maintained that, antenatal women use health information they receive from antenatal appointments to understand their well-being, health status of their unborn child, recognition and management of pregnancy-related complications, recognition and treatment of underlying illnesses and know the test results of the various medical test conducted on them. Health information can be sought from books, journals, the internet, friends and relatives, persons at workplace or professional advisors etc. Wilson in Onuoha and Amuda (2015) confirmed that in the

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course of seeking information, an individual may interact with manual information in the form of newspaper or a library or with computer-based systems such as the web. Seeking health information during pregnancy is confronted with challenges such as inability to get correct information, insufficient time, how to locate and retrieve the needed information. Just like other public hospitals in Nigeria, antenatal women in Makurdi local government area of Benue State also seek information for their health issues during their pregnancy period.

Public hospitals in Nigeria are government-owned and are funded by federal or state ministries of health to provide subsidized medical care. These hospitals are divided into three tiers; tertiary teaching hospitals/federal medical centers offer specialized care, research and training, general hospitals are usually managed by state governments, focusing on specialized and general care and primary health centers are located in local government areas, focusing on community and essential services. Makurdi local government area of Benue State consists of primary health care facilities such as Yaikyo, Asase, North Bank, Adeke, Fiidi, Wadata and Adaka. All these facilities are efforts put in place for antenatal women in Makurdi local government area of Benue State to enable them access information for their healthy living. It is in the light of this that, this study investigated the health information seeking behaviour of antenatal women in public hospitals in Makurdi Local Government of Benue State, Nigeria.

Statement of the problem

The researcher's personal observation shows that, many antenatal women have little to no knowledge where to look for information regarding their health challenges during pregnancy, even though they are regularly seen attending antenatal care to receive information/talks. Lack of health information during this period may be a tragic

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development that is risky, catastrophic and harmful to the health of expectant mothers. It is in this light that, this study investigated the health information seeking behaviour of antenatal women in public hospitals in Makurdi Local Government area of Benue State, Nigeria.

Research questions

The following research questions guided the study:

(i) What are the ways by which antenatal women exhibit their health information seeking behaviour in public hospitals in Makurdi Local Government?

(ii) What are the sources of seeking information by antenatal women in public hospitals in Makurdi Local Government?

(iii) What are the challenges faced by antenatal women seeking health information in public hospitals in Makurdi Local Government?

Review of related literature

Theoretical framework

This study was anchored on information seeking behaviour theory which was propounded by Bekin Wilson in 1981 (Shidi, 2019). The theory emphasized that, information seeking behaviour is prompted by an individual psychological, cognitive or affective needs which have their root in personal factors, role demand and environmental considerations. Information seeking behaviour arises as a consequence of a need perceived by an information user. Antenatal women in public hospitals seek information to address their pregnancy challenges to avoid unfortunate instances during this period.

Concept of Health information

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Information is a vital ingredient for the survival of human beings. Musa (2020) affirmed that, information is any entity or form that provide answer to a question of some kind or resolves uncertainty. Therefore, information is crucial to antenatal women, it is the surest way to guarantee the safety of their pregnancies. Olander, Smith and Darwin (2018) also confirmed that, pregnancy is a time when women might be actively seeking information to protect their growing foetus. Similarly, Ojewole and Oludipe, (2017) examined pregnancy-related information need and information-seeking pattern among pregnant women attending antenatal clinic at Ikorodu General Hospital, Lagos State, Nigeria and revealed that, pregnancy outcomes could be improved if pregnant women are provided with pregnancy-related information necessary to empower them to overcome pregnancy challenges. Kalankesh, Mohammadian, Ghalandari et al (2019) stated that, pregnant women's health information can enhance their ability to perform preventive health behaviors. Ogunwuyi, Sanusi, Kadiri et al (2022) maintained that, for pregnant women to adequately live a healthy life and ensure the safe delivery of their babies, they need to seek and acquire information necessary for healthy living.

Health information seeking behaviour as exhibited by antenatal women

Information is a powerful weapon to overcome all health-related issues during the pregnancy period. It is generally regarded as pregnant women's power of seeking information from various sources to secure their safety during the antenatal period. Javanmardi et al, (2019) reported that, most pregnant women were eagerly seeking health information to learn about fetus formation and how it grows and develops, they also sought information on how and when to perform diagnostic tests as well as fetal wellbeing screening tests during pregnancy. Health information-seeking behaviour is

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broadly viewed as how individuals obtain information about health, illness, health promotion and risks (Gavgani, Qeisari and Jafarabadi, 2013). Health information seeking behaviour is simply the decision and actions taken by an individual to seek information in addressing perceived health challenges. Javanmardi et al further stated that, health Information-Seeking Behavior indicates how an individual search, finds, and uses information related to diseases, health threats, and health-promoting activities. Health information seeking behaviour is simply an existing gap in health knowledge where antenatal women bridged by obtaining the needed information using different means.

Antenatal women exhibited their search for information in diverse ways such as attending antenatal clinic for health talk, regular use of health internet to access pregnancy talk, purchase of serials on pregnancy, download of pregnancy related information on the internet etc. Noncungu and Chipps (2022) and Conrad (2022) studies revealed that, listening to health professionals, clinic talks and sometimes, pregnant women turn to the internet as a primary means of sourcing pregnancy-related information. Mumba (2015) examined the information- seeking behaviour of women attending antenatal clinic and reported that, expectant mothers at Makululu Health Centre exhibited information seeking behaviour through listening to health talks and discussions conducted at the clinic during Antenatal Clinic on monthly basis.

Sources of health information seeking behaviour of antenatal women

Health information sources entail the various platforms available for seeking health related-information to satisfy information needed. As a result, antenatal women seek information from diverse sources such as internet, family, friends, written materials from professionals and commercial institutions, public media such as

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newspapers, TVs, childbirth training classes and the discussions with health professionals (Grimes, Forsler & Newton, 2014). Ojewole and Oludipe (2017), Lincetto, Mothebesoane- Anoh and Munjanja (2012) revealed that, visiting hospitals, clinics and health facilities for health information, consulting and seeking counseling from doctors and nurses, reading of health literature and bulletins, use of mass media, keying into strongly held traditional beliefs, antenatal appointments etc. were the various sources that antenatal women look up for health information. Agyeiku and Odei (2022) noted that an individual interacts with information in the form of a newspaper or a library while seeking for facts. Information can therefore, be derived from a variety of sources including books, journals, the Internet, friends/relatives, persons at the workplace or professional advisors.

In addition, Omoanomo and Eruvwe (2020) findings also revealed that antenatal patients consult various sources for information such as doctors, nurses/midwives, friends and relatives among others. Wilson in Onuoha and Amuda (2015) findings disclosed that, in the course of seeking information, an individual may interact with manual information in the form of newspaper or a library or with computer-based systems such as the web. Lee (2016) findings revealed that, majority of health information seekers go online through search engines like Google or Yahoo using health-related websites. Olorunda in Molania, Mousavi and Ghorbani (2016) emphasized that libraries are used as source of health information by pregnant women but the level of usage is low. Mumba (2015) disclosed that printed materials such as books and journals, leaflets, women's magazines, and newspapers are the common sources of health information for pregnant women.

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Furthermore, Kamali, Ahmadian, Khajouei and Bahaadinbeigy (2017) revealed that pregnant women sourced information from printed literature, mass media, helpline phones, family, friends, colleagues, prior knowledge or experience, health centres, clinics, hospitals, physicians and midwives/nurses. Namadi and Msughter (2020) revealed that, majority of the pregnant women attended antenatal services access their information from the clinic, the mass media and during antenatal information seeking among themselves. Murugathas, Sritharan and Santharooban (2020) disclosed that, pregnant women often searched information from family members, friends, public health midwives, doctors and internet however, they showed less interest in mass media, books and journals. Sanginan (2018) findings revealed that, pregnant women often source information from the internet, mobile applications, family and friends, books and brochures. Ogunwuyi et al (2022) reported that, most pregnant women made use of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp, Blog, LinkedIn to source online health information. Despite the abundance of information sources, the well-being of pregnant women remains a major concern in the world (Mortazavi et al., 2021).

Challenges of health information seeking behaviour of pregnant women

In seeking health information, pregnant women are usually confronted with a number of challenges. Uloma and Adedotu (2013) reported challenges hindering pregnant women from accessing their information as inability to access the libraries, lack of income and time. Glenton (2002) disclosed that, use of medical terminology by the information sources, which are usually not understood by the information seeker is a major barrier for seeking health information by a pregnant woman. Ajayi and Osaknle (2013) stated that, unprofessional practices, attitudes and behaviours of Health personnel are barriers to seeking health-related information by pregnant women.

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Mulauzi and Daka (2018) listed several challenges that women face in their bid to seek information as illiteracy, poverty, distance, language barrier, inadequate services, lack of information, inadequate human resources, poor attitudes of health workers towards women and cultural practices. Javanmardi, Noroozi and Ashrafi-rizi (2019) revealed the Iranian situation on access to health information during pregnancy to include enormous duties of women at home and outside home, inability to distinguish between correct and false information, insufficient time to interact with healthcare providers, unsuccessful attempts to access various information resources, common pregnancy-related complaints, stress and anxiety.

According to Romano in Adudu and Ufuoma (2020) findings, some challenges encountered by pregnant women while seeking information are high cost of access to the internet, inadequate searching skills, low quality of some information retrieval, inability to read, and lack of access to hospital libraries. Onuoha and Amuda (2013) revealed that, lack of library and information centres, lack of income and time are the barriers to the access and use of health information by pregnant women. Carmel in Musa (2020) identified a number of barriers to information. These include lack of communication skills, patients not asking questions, inability to access information, language barrier, fear of harming the patients, lack of time for handling difficult questions, embarrassing issues, lack of awareness of individual roles and personal background assumptions.

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey research design with a sample size of 380 registered semi-literate and literate antenatal women using Taro Yamane's 1969 formula for infinite population derived from the population of 7,764 across the selected

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health facilities. Purposive sampling technique and simple random sampling technique were adopted for the study. A self-developed 36 items questionnaire titled "Health Information Seeking Behaviour of Antenatal Women Questionnaire (HINISBAWQ) drawn from objectives of the study was employed. The response options of 'Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) with four (4) point rating scale of 4,3,2,1 was adopted for the study. The instrument was trial tested and Cronbach Alpha methods was used to determine the internal consistency of the instruments. The overall reliability coefficient of 0.80 was obtained, considered as consistent and adopted for this study. Descriptive statistics of frequencies, tables, mean and standard deviation were used for data analysis. All responses with 2.5 and above mean scores were accepted as decision rules for the study.

Results and Discussion

Question 1: What are the ways by which antenatal women exhibit their health information seeking behaviour in public hospitals in Makurdi Local Government?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores of the ways by which antenatal women exhibit their health information seeking behaviour.

S/no.	Items (N=363)	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	Decision
1	Often visitation of health facilities	135	62	102	64	2.74	1.14	A
2	Reliance on internet for information	90	89	121	63	2.57	1.05	D
3	Reliance on personal networks eg friends	157	66	3	137	2.67	1.36	A
4	Accessing pregnancy related serials	140	145	48	30	2.95	1.01	A
5	Participating in pregnancy clubs	82	77	66	138	2.28	1.19	D
6	Purchasing pregnancy related books	168	98	44	53	3.05	1.08	A
7	Attending antenatal classes	39	257	36	31	2.84	0.72	A
8	Visiting libraries	36	150	108	69	2.42	0.91	D

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9	Accessing health information	136	111	30	90	2.79	1.18	A
10	Receiving health talk from professionals	90	173	37	63	2.62	1.04	A
11	Involving in antenatal group discussion	112	66	48	137	2.52	1.27	A
12	Consulting pregnancy forums/blogs	104	152	77	30	2.62	1.08	A
13	Consulting Library staff for information	53	50	120	140	2.04	1.05	D
	Cluster					**2.62**	**1.08**	**Agreed**

Key: A= Agreed, D= Disagreed

Table 1 shows that items 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11 and 12 had the mean scores of ''agreed'' ranging from 3.05 – 2.52 with corresponding standard deviation of 1.08- 1.27 respectively which is above the cut-off point of 2.50. This indicates the ways by which antenatal women exhibit their health information seeking behaviour in public hospitals in Makurdi Local Government. While items 5,8 and 13 falls within the ''Disagreed'' category with mean scores of 2.42 - 2.04, had standard deviation of 0.91 - 1.05 respectively which is below the benchmark and were not considered as ways of health information seeking behaviour by antenatal women in public hospitals in Makurdi Local Government. Similarly, Mumba (2015) findings revealed that, expectant mothers listening to talks and discussions about childbirth/motherhood from their grandmothers, during antenatal clinic, through group discussions, observations, talk to other pregnant women and consulted various people in a quest to obtain the needed information. Ojewole and Oludipe (2017) revealed the various ways antenatal women look up for health information as visiting hospitals, clinics and health facilities for health information, consulting and seeking counseling from doctors and nurses, reading of health literature and bulletins, use of mass media, keying into strongly held traditional beliefs among

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others. Conrad (2022) reported that pregnant women sometimes turn to the internet as a primary means of getting pregnancy-related information.

Question 2: What are the sources of seeking information by antenatal women in public hospitals in Makurdi Local Government?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores on the sources of health information seeking behaviour of antenatal women

S/no	Items (N = 363)	SA	A	D	SD	x̄	SD	Decision
1	Receiving talks	162	90	72	39	3.03	1.04	A
2	Consulting Internet	150	101	49	63	2.93	1.11	A
3	Journals Articles	73	55	171	64	2.38	1.00	D
4	Newspapers	44	64	135	120	2.09	0.99	D
5	Mobile Applications for Pregnancy Information	120	144	42	57	2.90	1.03	A
6	Articles in Magazines/leaflets	78	141	75	69	2.63	1.02	A
7	Nurses/Midwives	202	63	18	80	3.07	1.22	A
8	Physicians/Doctors	132	111	30	90	2.79	1.18	A
9	Health textbooks	36	150	108	69	2.42	0.91	D
10	Consulting library staff for information	100	96	47	120	2.48	1.21	D
11	Experienced Mothers/Friends	114	129	42	78	2.77	1.11	A
12	Libraries	53	50	120	140	2.04	1.05	D
	Cluster	**105**	**109**	**76**	**73**	**2.67**	**1.05**	**Agreed**

Key: A = Agreed, D = Disagreed

Table 2 shows that items 1,2,5,6,7,8, and 11 with the mean scores ranging from 3.07-2.63 with corresponding standard deviations of 1.22 - 1.02 respectively falls to ''Agreed'' category which indicates the boundary criteria for decision making of above 2.50. This shows that antenatal women sources of health information seeking behaviour were receiving talks during antenatal visits, consulting internet, using mobile applications to get pregnancy information, articles in magazines/leaflets, physicians/doctors, health textbooks and experienced mothers/friends. While items 3,4,9, 10 and 12 were disagreed as not sources of health information seeking behaviour

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of antenatal women in the study area. In agreement with this, Lee (2016) findings revealed that, majority of health information seekers go online through search engines like Google or Yahoo using health-related websites. Olorunda in Molania, Mousavi and Ghorbani (2016) disclosed that, libraries are also used as source of health information by pregnant women but the level of usage is low. Omoanomo and Eruvwe (2020) findings also revealed that antenatal patients consult various sources for information such as doctors, nurses/midwives, friends and relatives among others. Mumba (2015) reported that printed materials such as books and journals, leaflets, women's magazines, and newspapers are the common sources of health information for pregnant women.

Question 3: What are the challenges faced by antenatal women seeking health information in public hospitals in Makurdi Local Government?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores on the challenges faced by antenatal women for seeking health information

S/no	Items (N = 363)	SA	A	D	SD	x̄	SD	Decision
1	Illiteracy/ignorance of antenatal patients	108	123	81	51	2.79	1.02	A
2	Inability to meet the costs of accessing information	84	114	120	45	2.65	0.97	A
3	Lack of communication skills	90	171	39	63	2.79	1.01	A
4	Language barrier	225	9	81	48	2.54	0.75	A
5	Lack of time	204	45	51	63	3.07	1.18	A
6	Nurses and midwives Workload	171	114	54	24	3.19	0.92	A
7	Inability to access information	34	156	96	77	2.40	0.93	A
8	Lack of access to libraries	24	257	69	13	2.80	0.60	A
9	Low quality of some information retrieved	174	61	63	65	2.95	1.17	A
10	Inadequate services delivery	77	197	45	44	2.85	0.89	A
11	Lack of access to hospital libraries	66	193	43	61	2.73	0.95	A
12	High cost of access to the internet	61	174	63	65	2.95	1.17	A
13	Inadequate searching skills	207	61	30	65	3.13	1.17	A

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14	Attitudes of health professionals	147	108	48	60	2.94	1.10	A
15	Antenatal women's attitudes	129	123	48	63	2.88	1.08	A
	Cluster					**2.80**	**0.99**	**Agreed**

Key: A= Agreed

Table 4 above shows that all items ranging from 1- 15 had mean scores of 3.19 - 2.54 with corresponding standard deviation of 0.92 – 0.75 respectively which is above the cut-off point of 2.50. These indicate the challenges faced by antenatal women in the cause of seeking health information in public hospitals in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State. In collaboration with this, Ajayi and Osaknle (2013) stated that, unprofessional practices, attitudes and behaviours of health personnels were barriers to the pregnant woman information seeking behaviour. Mulauzi and Daka (2018) identified several challenges that women face in their bid to seek information as illiteracy, poverty, distance, language barrier, inadequate services, lack of information, inadequate human resources, poor attitudes of health workers towards women and cultural practices. Romano in Adudu and Ufuoma (2020) reported some challenges encountered by pregnant women while seeking information as high cost of access to the internet, inadequate searching skills, low quality of some information retrieval, inability to read, and lack of access to hospital libraries. Carmel in Musa (2020) identified a number of barriers to information which include lack of communication skills, patients not asking questions, inability to access information, language barrier, fear of harming the patients, lack of time for handling difficult questions, embarrassing issues, lack of awareness of individual roles and personal background assumptions.

Recommendations

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

1. Medical library staff should analyze seeking behaviours exhibited by antenatal women to bridge knowledge gaps, reduce information poverty and improve

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maternal health literacy. Hospitals should permit their library staff to enlighten antenatal women about consulting the library for all information of their choices during antenatal visit.

2. Medical libraries management should ensure that health information resources such as health information visuals, books, journals, pamphlets, newspapers, posters, pictures, research and technical reports, low-literacy pamphlets, documentaries and localized audio guides should be made available in these librarie**s** for easy access by antenatal women. The pregnant women should be exposed especially the literate ones to the use of internet, library, radio as sources of accessing information that will better their lives during the pregnancy period.
3. Adequate funds should be provided for medical libraries to enable them run a health-related documentaries on waiting room televisions. Library staff should always make themselves available for antenatal women to consult them for more reliable health information. Medical library staff must curate themed weekly audiovisual playlists covering pregnancy related information to play on loop over waiting room televisions. Library staff should repackage short audio dramas, podcasts and infographics in native local languages.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study shows that, antenatal women in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State often seek their health information in public hospitals using diverse ways and sources but are however, confronted with challenges that are needed to be addressed.

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