

## Perceptions of use of maternal healthcare services in rural communities of Osun state

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### ABSTRACT

This study determined the perceptions of the use of maternal healthcare services by women in rural communities of Osun state, Nigeria. Multistage sampling procedure was employed to select 125 respondents for the study. A well-structured and validated interview schedule was used to collect relevant data from the respondents of the study. Data collected was analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Majority (76.0%) of the respondents were within the ages of 20 and 30 years, only 4.8% had no formal education. Information sources available to most respondents were radio (69.6%) and television (67.2%). The mostly encountered constraints to the use of maternal health facilities included distance of the facilities ( $\bar{x}=0.656$ ), financial incapability ( $\bar{x}=0.512$ ) and transportation problem ( $\bar{x}=0.456$ ). More (52.0%) of the respondents had unfavourable perception about the use of maternal health facilities in the study area. The study established significant positive relationship ( $r=0.455$ ) between knowledge of maternal health and perception of the use of the facility. The study concluded that there is need for substantial re-orientation to encourage the use of maternal health facility in order to reduce maternal mortality in the study area.

**Keywords:** Rural dwellers, maternal health, perception of use, health information

### INTRODUCTION

Maternal health is the healthcare given to women during preconception, conception and post natal period to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity. Lack of access to quality medical services in the rural setting is compounded by some factors including, social, cultural, economic inequities, gender inequality, burden of work, food insecurity and lack of special dietary requirements. Boserup (1990) said that frequent child bearing and physical agricultural work combine to impoverish women's health. She maintains that these factors help to explain the high maternal mortality or morbidity women experience in the rural areas.

Reducing maternal mortality and morbidity through increased service utilisation in turn requires public health interventions built on clear understanding of women's perception of maternal care services within their cultural context (Lubbock and Stephenson, 2008). This explains how women perceive any maternal healthcare services made available to them, which are also in consonance with their culture and beliefs, which will finally determine its level of usage. Uzochukwu *et al* (2004) identify that patients' perception of quality of care is one of the major determinants of uptake of healthcare services including maternal health services. It measures level of satisfaction of healthcare services received from health facility. This gives a highlight on various shortcomings of the maternal healthcare services made available to women which could have an adverse effect on their utilisation of the service.

Therefore, emphasis need to be laid on the perception of use of health facility by the rural

women during conception because they are the major economic drivers and their health is critical to long-term sustainable economic development in Africa. This study therefore examined the perception of the use of maternal healthcare services in rural communities of Osun state, Nigeria.

The specific objectives were to identify sources of information on maternal health care services, determine the respondents' level of knowledge on maternal health care services, examine the constraints to the use of maternal health care services and ascertain the perception of respondents on maternal healthcare services in the study area.

### METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Osun state while the population of the study constitutes the women of reproductive age in the rural communities in the state. Multistage sampling procedure was employed to select 125 respondents for the study. Two (2) local government areas (Ayedade and Egbedore) were selected from the rural local government stratum purposively, based on the prominence of Primary Health Centres (PHC) that offer maternal healthcare services. Two health centres each from Oke-Elu, Ode-Omu, Ido-Osun, Olorunsogo were randomly selected. Fifty percent of the average number of persons that attend antenatal clinic was selected giving a total number of 125 respondents. Percentages and mean were used to describe the data. Test of relationship between knowledge and perception of maternal healthcare services was carried using Pearson's Product Moments Correlation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Socioeconomic characteristics

Result in Table 1 reveals that the mean age of the women of reproductive age in the study area was 28 years. This indicates that majority of the respondents were within the child bearing ages which made them relevant for the study. In terms of educational attainment, 46.4% of the respondents were secondary school leavers while 32.0% had tertiary education. This result is expected to affect the use of maternal health facilities as women with higher educational status have been found to play a greater role concerning their maternal health than those who are less educated (Obiageli *et al*, 2014). Table 1 also indicates income distribution of respondents with mean income of ₦18,000 per annum. This implies that the income level of the respondents in the study area is fairly low, which is expected to affect their utilisation of the Maternal Health Care Services (MHCS). Addai (2000) stated that women in higher socioeconomic groups tend to exhibit patterns of more frequent use of maternal health services than women in the lower socioeconomic groups. The result also shows that 51.2% of the respondents had between 4 and 6 persons in their households. With the mean family size of the respondents at 4, the respondents have fairly moderate family sizes. Family size may be an indication of financial resources at the disposal of

the respondents to take care of basic needs, including the healthcare services.

**Table 1: Frequency distribution of respondents based on their Socioeconomic characteristics, n = 125**

Variables	Percentage
<b>Age</b>	
20-30	76.0
31-41	23.2
42-52	0.8
<b>Educational Status</b>	
Non-Formal Education	4.8
Adult Literacy	5.6
Primary education	11.2
Secondary education	46.4
Tertiary education	32.0
<b>Family income</b>	
None	5.6
<₦10,000	31.2
₦10,000 - 20,000	32.0
₦21,000 - 30,000	15.2
>₦31,000	16.0
<b>Family size</b>	
1-3	44.0
4-6	51.2
7-9	3.2
> 9	1.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

### Sources of information about maternal healthcare services

Result in Table 2 shows that radio was the most available source of information to most (69.6%) of the rural women, followed by television (67.2%). Babalola and Fatusi (2009) opined that the use of media to disseminate consistent messages about maternal health services could help to increase enlightenment and hence better knowledge and perception about the use of the facilities.

**Table 2: Distribution of respondents by sources of information**

Source of Information	Percent
Friends	55.2
Radio	69.6
Television	67.2
Monthly meeting	28.8
GSM	47.2
Husband/Relatives	6.4

### Respondents' constraints to maternal healthcare services

Result in Table 3 suggests that the major constraint to the utilisation of MHCS was long distance to health centres (ranked 1<sup>st</sup>) and financial incapacitation (ranked 2<sup>nd</sup>). This connotes that the closer the healthcare services to the respondents, the better it will be utilised thus enhancing good and healthy living of both mother and child. Also, provision of free or reduced cost of healthcare services will boost utilisation of MHCS in the study area. Transportation problem was yet noted as another important constraint to the use of maternal healthcare services in the study area. This shows that access to a good road network because of distance to the facilities, could affect usage and patronage of the rural people of healthcare centres. Inaccessible roads and transportation systems are chaotic in most developing countries (Ibekwe, 2010). Thus, when a person takes a decision to seek medical attention, it may require covering appreciable distance to reach the healthcare facility.

**Table 3: Distribution of respondents' constraints to maternal healthcare services**

Constraints	Mean	Rank
Long distance to healthcare	0.656	1
Financial incapacitation	0.512	2
Lack of or poor transport	0.456	3

Unsatisfactory services of healthcare	0.456	3
Previous uneventful delivery at health centre	0.416	4
Husband's disapproval	0.344	5
Unfriendly attitude of health workers	0.336	6

**Respondents' knowledge of maternal healthcare**

Result on Table 4 shows that more (59.2%) of the respondents possess appreciable knowledge on maternal healthcare. This finding is in agreement with that of Yar'zever and Said (2013) who found respondents' knowledge about maternal health facilities in rural areas to be good. Such health knowledge is considered to be one of the key factors that enable women to be aware of their health status in order to know when to seek appropriate health services (Zhao *et al*, 2009).

**Table 4: Distribution of respondents by knowledge of maternal healthcare**

Knowledge level	Percent
Low level	59.2
High level	40.8
Total	100.0

**Respondents' perception of maternal services**

Result from Table 5 shows that more than half (52.0%) of the respondents had unfavourable perception toward maternal healthcare service. This finding reveals that the proportion of respondents with positive and negative perceptions about the maternal healthcare services is on the border lines. This may be expected given the fact that the divides of maternal healthcare knowledge was also on the borderline. This finding implicates lack of appropriate orientation of the people in the study area about maternal health.

**Table 5: Distribution of respondents by perception to maternal healthcare services**

Category of Perception	Percentage
Favourable	48.0
Unfavourable	52.0

**Relationship between the respondents' knowledge and perception of maternal healthcare**

The result of the test of relationship between knowledge and perception of maternal healthcare services shows that there was significant ( $r=0.455$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ) relationship between the variables. This implies that the knowledge of the respondents affected their perception about the use of maternal healthcare facility in the study area. This finding is in line with that of Addai (2000) who found that knowledge was identified as a major structural variable that could influence the decision on

whether or not to utilise antenatal care services which is a component of MHCS.

**Table 6: Correlation between the respondents' knowledge and perceptions about maternal healthcare**

Variable	r-value	p-value
Knowledge vs. Perception on MHCS	0.455	0.000

**CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In conclusion, the study shows unfavourable perception about utilisation of maternal healthcare services among rural dwellers in Osun State, although the respondents have an average knowledge of the use of MHCS in the study area. This calls for more enlightenment and health education programmes that will enable the women form positive attitude towards the maternal healthcare services and its use.

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