

ATTITUDINAL INDICES AS CORRELATE OF MATERNAL/CHILD HEALTH CARE SERVICES UTILIZATION IN AKPABUYO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

Author's Details: Akah, L. U. & Emeribe, V. C. Department of Human Kinetics & Health Education University of Calabar, Calabar (2) Edem, EME. M. A.-University of Calabar Teaching Hospital Calabar, Cross River State

Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between attitude indices and utilization of maternal/child health care services among women in Akpabuyo Local Government Area (LGA) of Cross River State, Nigeria. The study isolated and examined mothers' level of education, distance to health care facilities, attitude of health care givers, cultural beliefs, and the utilization of maternal health care services. A validated and reliability certified structured questionnaire was used to generate data from 150 subjects among nursing and pregnant mothers using the convenience sampling technique. Data generated were analysed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics. The result of the analysis showed that level of education of mothers, distance to health facilities, attitude of health care givers, and cultural beliefs were significantly related with utilization of maternal/child health care services in Akpabuyo Local Government Area of Cross River State. Based on the result of the study, the following recommendations among others were proffered: Advocacy and practical approach to the girl-child education should be pursued by the government at all levels; and that adult literacy education should be instituted in Akpabuyo Local Government Area, with maternal and child health as a core component of the programme.

INTRODUCTION

Primary Health Care as a strategy to make health care accessible to all, irrespective of where they live or work (WHO 2004), has indeed brought maternal and child health care services nearer to the people, even in the remotest areas. Even though maternal health care services have suffered serious neglect from past administrations in Nigeria, especially during the military era as observed by Carr-Hill (2007) there has been renewed effort since the restoration to democratic rule in the last 13 years. These efforts have culminated in the free maternal and child health care services at both the Federal and state levels of Government.

Akpabuyo Local Government Area is predominantly an agricultural setting. The main stay of the people is farming and fishing. The population of the area is 367, 523 people. The area shares the Atlantic Coast land with Bakassi Local Government Area and Cameroon Republic, and lies between 4° and 5° 40' and longitude 8° 25' and 8° east of the equator.

Pregnant mothers and their children have access to free medical care. The study area (Akpabuyo Local Government Areas) at the time of this study has over thirty-eighty (38) health facilities Ekanem (2005) however, it may be important to note that the above figure is mainly made up of primary Health Care facilities. This implied that each ward in the area had about two health facilities. The figure sounds very encouraging.

But it is disturbing that despite these improvements in maternal and child health care

services and access to health facilities, maternal and child mortality rate has been on the upward surge. Dagu (2004) UNICEF (2001), Nginya (2006), and Akah (2011) among other scholars observed that the morbidity and mortality rate among children and mothers is very high, especially in rural areas. As shown in the data of Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) and that of National Demographic Health survey, maternal mortality rate stands at 704 per 100, 000 live births. This is twice higher in the rural areas; while infant mortality Akpabuyo as an adjoining Local Government Area to the Calabar Metropolis is fast developing. The area is hosting a cement factory (UNICEM) and other state government sponsored projects such as housing estate and private establishments that are springing up. A number of civil servants working in Calabar are resident in the area. It is the oboles Local Government Area to the Calabar metropolis which is the center of governance. Rate is at 105 per 1,000 live births, and under-five mortality rate has been placed at 178 per 1,000.

Okafor and Regulto (2004) posited that rural dwellers in Nigeria under-utilize maternal and child health care services. Akah (2011) in the same vein noted that accessibility and utilization in rural settings is low compared to the urban areas in Cross River State. This study thus sought to investigate the reason for low utilization of maternal and child health care services in Akpabuyo Local Government Area of Cross River State.

Educational status is measured by the number of years of formal training. Elo (2002) posited that

higher education and demand for quality health care are positively related. He noted that well educated mothers are more likely to utilize health care services, access information, and use such information to better their health and that of their family.

Becker, David, Ronald and Robert (2003), Mosely and Chen (2004), Musra (2007) and Adegoroye (2008) among other scholars observed that educated and high socio-economic class mothers have been found to utilize maternal and child health care services much more than the uneducated/lowly educated women and those of low socio-economic status. Other factors found to influence patronage of maternal and child health care services include distance cultural barriers, poor road network, especially in rural areas; attitude of health care providers; level of education of care givers; cultural beliefs religion; lack of motivation of health workers; among others (Akah, & 2011; Egwu, 2006; Nwosu, 2007, & Adegoroyy, 20008). As observed above, despite the increasing investment of government into the health sector such as the free maternal and child health care services, (NHIS) among others, maternal and child morbidity and mortality has not reduced but rather is on the increase. Death of mothers and children are found to be resulting from preventable diseases such as malaria, diarrheal, and acute respiratory tract infections. This study is focused on finding out attitudinal indices influencing women towards utilization of maternal health care services in Akpabuyo Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Methodology

The research design adopted for this is the survey design. The design is appropriate for studies which are intended to assess existing conditions or determine the nature of a situation as it exists at the time of investigation. This study investigated attitude indices as correlate of utilization of maternal and child health care services. The variables which were considered very important with regards to the setting of this study (Akpabuyo Local Government Area)

Results

The results of the analysed of identified variables are presented in tables 1-4

Table 1

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of relationship between mothers' level of education and utilization of maternal health care services

Variables	$\sum X$	$\sum X^2$	$\sum Y$	$\sum Y^2$	$\sum Xy$	r-calculated
Mothers' level of education (x)	16.64	55.76				

included mothers' level of education, distance to health care facility, attitude of health care providers, and cultural beliefs, as they relate with utilization of maternal/child health care services.

Thus four hypotheses postulated to guide the conduct of the study are:

1. There is no significant relationship between mothers' level of education and the utilization of maternal health care services in Akpabuyo Local Government Area.
2. Distance to health care facilities does not significantly relate with utilization of maternal health care services by mothers in Akpabuyo Local Government Area.
3. Attitude of health care providers does not have any significant relationship with utilization of maternal health care services in Akpabuyo Local Government Area.
4. Cultural beliefs and utilization of maternal health care services does not significantly relate among mother in Akpabuyo Local Government Area of Cross River State.

A sample size of 150 was drawn from pregnant and nursing mothers. Convenience sampling technique was utilized for the process of data collection.

The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed by the researchers titled "questionnaire of attitude indices and utilization of maternal/child health care services." The questionnaire which was validated and reliability certified was divided into sections A and B. Section A contained items which sought the demographic data of the respondents, while section B which was made up of 30 items designed to test the variables considered in this study.

The questionnaire was tested in a trial study using women from Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State. The split half technique was used to estimate the reliability of the instrument, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.81. Pearson Product Moment statistics was employed in the analysis of data generated for this study.

53.04 0.98

Utilization of maternal
Health care services (y) 15.38 50.45

Significant at 0.05; df = 148; critical r = 0.195

Table 2

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis determine relationship between distance to health facility and utilization of maternal health care services (N = 150)

Variables	$\frac{\sum X}{\sum y}$	$\frac{\sum X^2}{\sum y^2}$	$\sum Xy$	r-calculated
Distance to health facility (x)	13.56	37.52		
				31,09 0.92
Utilization of maternal Health care services (y)	13.33	35.86		

Significant at 0.05; df = 148; critical r = 0.195

Table 3

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of relationship between attitude of health care providers and utilization of maternal health care services (N = 150)

Variables	$\frac{\sum X}{\sum y}$	$\frac{\sum X^2}{\sum y^2}$	$\sum Xy$	r-calculated
Attitude of health care providers(x)	11.95	30.29		
				31.09 0.92
Utilization of maternal Health care services (y)	13.48	37.88		

Significant at 0.05; df = 148; critical r = 0.195

Table 4

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of relationship between cultural beliefs and utilization of maternal health care services (N = 150)

Variables	$\frac{\sum X}{\sum y}$	$\frac{\sum X^2}{\sum y^2}$	$\sum Xy$	r-calculated
Cultural beliefs (x)	13.76	38.56		
				21.77 0.97
Utilization of maternal Health care services (y)	7.96	12.96		

Significant at 0.05; df = 148; critical r = 0.195

Discussion

The result as presented in table on indicated that the calculated r-value of 0.98 greater than the critical r-value of 0.195 at .05 level of significance and 148 degree of freedom. This result showed that there is a significant relationship between mothers level of

education and utilization of maternal/child health care services among dwellers of Akpabuyo Local Government Area. This result agreed with the findings of Becker, Ronald and Robert (2003) who asserted that mothers level of education positively related to demand for quality

maternal and child health care services. Elo (2002) also observed that women with higher education are more aware of health problems and better access to health care services and information. The implication of this study is that since majority of mothers in Akpabuyo Local Government Area are of low educational status (mainly primary and secondary school leavers) as shown in the demographics segment of the instrument and a survey conducted, maternal and child health care services would be under-utilized. Opportunities available to them may not be maximized.

The result of hypothesis two analysis showed that calculated r -value of 0.99 is greater than the table r -value of 0.195 at 0.05 level of significance with 148 degrees of freedom. This result revealed that distance to health facility significantly affected the utilization of maternal/child health care services in Akpabuyo Local Government Area. This result corroborated the findings of Akah (2011) and Handerson (2003). They noted in their similar findings that distance to health facility is a very important variable to utilization of health care service. Akah (2011) posited that utilization of services decreases with increase in distance to such facilities. This finding implied that the spread of the facilities in Akpabuyo Local Government Area may be lopsided, given the statistics of primary health care facilities, or it may be that some of them are not well equipped and thus non-functional. This shows that much is still to be done to improve access to health care services, especially among women and children.

In the same vein the third null hypothesis was rejected. As shown in table 3, the calculated r -value of 0.92 was greater than the table r -value of 0.195 at .05 level of significance at 148 degree of freedom. This implied that attitude of health care providers significantly affect the utilization of maternal/child health care services in the area of this study. The result is in consonance with the assertion of Akah (2011) and Egwu (2006) who noted that attitude of health workers affect patronage of health care services. They posited that attitude of health workers to clients and service delivery is poor due to poor motivation of the work force on the side of her employers. Akah (2011), further posited that rural areas utilization is low due to some reasons among which include low quality of staff and ill-equipment of the staff. The implication is that qualities of staff and job performance may be low in Akpabuyo Local Government Area. A well trained and adequately motivated work force in the health sector in Akpabuyo Local Government Area is grossly lacking.

The result as shown in table 4 indicated that calculated r -value of 0.97 is greater than the table value of 0.195 at 0.05 level of significance and 148

degree of freedom. This result led to the rejection of the null hypothesis and retaining of the alternate. It thus showed that cultural beliefs significantly relate with utilization of maternal/child health care services. The finding is in consonance with the submissions of Adegoroye (2008), Nwosu (2007) and Egwu (2007), who observed cultural beliefs and cultural barriers as factors that affect the patronage of health care services, especially in the rural areas. The implication of this finding suggest that the dwellers of Akpabuyo Local Government Area have confidence in the traditional care givers; and the cultural views about illnesses, as it affects mothers and children may be strong among dwellers of Akpabuyo Local Government Area. Even though the orthodox medicine holds out a better hope for the people of Akpabuyo, they are less disposed to it. This may also suggest that the health care services available to them have not proved effective.

Conclusion

Conclusively this study showed that level of education of mothers, distance to health facilities, attitude of health care givers, and cultural beliefs significantly relate with utilization of maternal and child health care services in Akpabuyo Local Government Area. It may be important to note that many studies conducted in rural settings appear to corroborate the results of this finding.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were proffered based on the outcome of this study:

1. Governments at various levels should advocate for and practically work hard to improve the education of the girl-child.
2. Adult literacy education should be instituted in Akpabuyo Local Government Area, especially for mothers. Maternal/child health issues should be the core component of such programme.
3. The Akpabuyo Local Government Area in collaboration with the Cross River State Government should work hard to ensure even distribution of primary health care facilities. It is important also to ensure that the PHC services are adequate.
4. The health care givers should be retrained. The bench mark with regards to educational qualification of health care giver should be raised; they should be adequately remunerated and motivated.
5. Government, NGOS and Health Agencies should carry out public awareness campaigns in Akpabuyo Local Government Area with the intent to increase awareness level of especially

mothers on maternal/child health care services and how they care benefit from them.

Area, Imo State. An unpublished MPH Thesis.

REFERENCES

- Adegoroye, A. (2008). A community Health Care. Lagos: Macmillan Publishers.
- Akah L. U. (2011). Comparative analysis of the effect of poverty level on health practices of urban and rural dwellers in Cross River State, Nigeria. An unpublished Ph.D Dissertation: Graduate school, University of Calabar.
- Becker, S. David, H. P. Ronald, H. G. and Robert, E. B. (2003). The Determinant of use of maternal and child health services among the Philippines. Health Transition Review, 3(1), pp. 77-89.
- Carr-Hill, R. (2007). Access and utilization of health care services. London: Royal society of medicine Press.
- Dagu, A. G. (2005). Knowledge, attitude and practices in health. Health Journal 16(2), pp 199-208.
- Egwu, I. N. (2006). Primary Health Care practice in Nigeria: The theory, practice and perspectives. Lagos: Elmore Publishers.
- Ekanem, N. T. (2005). Primary Health Care System in Nigeria: Theory, practice and perspective. Lagos: Elmore Publishers.
- Mosely, W. H. and Chen, L. C. (2004). An analytical framework for study of child survival in developing countries. Population and Development Review, NO 10.
- Musra, V. (2007). Rural health development in Tanzania. Assen: Van Gorcum.
- Nginya, J. K. (2006). Rural women: Experiences of maternity care overview. An annual Hospital Prenatal survey. Columbia.
- Nwosu, U. M. (2007). Factors affecting utilization of government rural health facilities in Obioma Ngwa Local Government
- Okafor, C. B. and Regutto (2004). Women's health care providers view of maternal practices and services in rural Nigeria. Journal of family planning 2(5), pp. 353-361.
- UNICEF (2001). Children's and women's rights in Nigeria: A wake-up call. Situation Assessment and Analysis. UNICEF.