



An Assessment of Health information Seeking Behaviour of Rural Dwellers in Lala and Ga'anda Emirate Councils in Gombi Local Government in Adamawa State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study assesses the health information seeking behaviour how Health information timely use could enhance wellness among rural dwellers of the study population among rural dwellers of two selected emirate councils in Gombi Local Government Areas. The study employed descriptive survey research design. The population was 52 rural dwellers.. Sixty-two (60) copies of Questionnaire were distributed and forty nine (49) returned were found useable for the research. Data gathered were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as percentages, pie and bar charts. Findings revealed that the rural dwellers sought health information most on Blood pressure control, cancer, food, drugs, and malaria treatment respectively, It was also revealed that respondents relied mostly on Internet, Radio, TV, Books and health journals in meeting their health information needs. Is the study recommends that rural dwellers should work closely with health care providers in ensuring proper access to health information. There should be positive attitude to timely utilization of health information among rural dwellers in order to eliminate and or reduce life threatening health problems, as this will enhance their job performance and overall wellness. r Librarians should give health related issues priority attention at work. Rural dwellers should also know that productivity at work and general wellness would be challenged if adequate care and attention were not paid to their health. Rural dwellers should be encouraged to regularly go for medical check-up and they should be provided with good working condition, which is generally lacking.

Keywords: Assessment, Rural Dwellers, Health Information, Information Need, Information Seeking Behaviour,

Introduction

Information plays a significant role in the health of any every individual and daily professional and personal lives and people are constantly challenged to take charge of the information that they need for healthy living, work, fun and everyday health decisions. The



concept of information needs and information seeking has been a major issue of study in academic environment especially in the developing countries such as Nigeria. The information needs of individual are enormous and the way they accomplish are diverse and varied from one individual to another. Health is wealth, says the common slogan. Healthcare spans across all ages, genders, races, culture and geographical boundaries and is an area of concern to all population. Many countries (especially developing countries) are plagued with critical healthcare issues such as infectious and/or pandemic diseases, poor accessibility to health information, a lack of basic healthcare programme and facilities and a lukewarm attitude of health agencies to make information readily available as stipulated in Health Information policy. This is more so because of unavailability and non-frequency of use of relevant health information and poor attitude to health information utilization in time past. A study by Anyanwu, Oparaku and Benson (2016) found that inadequate training in the use of information resources, lack of access to internet amongst others were the factors militating against easy accessibility of health information. They found that stocking of medical facility libraries with current health related materials as well as automation of health and medical libraries were the strategies for solving the problems of accessibility to health information. Improving access to health information is vital to rural dwellers wellbeing and for making informed health decisions especially in performing their daily duties. Therefore, strategies must be put in place in improving access to information. Medical libraries should be equipped with adequate and current information to support the community when seeking their information needs in the library. In addition availability of information, information retrieval skills, power supply and establishment of standard library for every health facility would motivate information seeking of users.

The availability of accurate, timely, reliable and relevant health information is the most fundamental step toward informed public health action. Therefore, for effective management of health and health resources, governments at all levels have overriding interest in supporting and ensuring the availability of health data and information as a public good for public, private and NGOs' utilization. The Federal Ministry of Health's National Health Information System Policy (2019) stipulated that the role of government must extend to ensuring standardization and financing of health data infrastructure, especially with respect to establishing and strengthening relevant organizational structures for Health Management Information System (HMIS) activities. The Health Management Information System (HMIS) should also extend to procurement and installation of appropriate information technology, staff training and collection, storage, analysis, dissemination and use of health information, as well as in financing essential systems and biological research. However, the Health Management Information System (HMIS) policy document stipulated that there should be an interface between the government, the private sector and communities in order to facilitate the provision of a more comprehensive health profile of population and as a public good, the government should collect, analyse and make available, information on health status, health behavioural risks practices, prevention and containment of epidemic outbreaks and support for essential national health research, especially at the local level. Government should facilitate standardization, ensure cooperation and coordination among agencies (public and private) and make the information available to the communities and individuals for choices in matters relating to their health (National Health Management Information System Revised Policy-Programme and Strategic Plan of Action, 2019).

Information is vital to survival and decision-making at every stage of human endeavour because it furnishes an individual with facts, experiences, procedures and processes to follow in actualizing a plan. Every human therefore, needs information for progress, decision making, professionalism, expertise, practices and effective services delivery.



Literature review

The Concept of Information Need and Seeking Behaviour

The concept of “information behaviour” was coined in the late 1990s, but it traces its roots to the concept of “information needs and uses” that arose in the 1960s (Khan and Shafique, 2011). In the course of seeking, the individual may interact with manual Information systems such as a journals or a library, or with computer-based systems such as the World Wide Web (Kari, 2004). Information seeking behaviour deals with behaviour and actions exhibited by human beings in their search for information to satisfy diverse information needs (Abubakar, 2010 in Joseph, 2018). Information seeking behaviour therefore is the purposive seeking for information by individuals because of a need to satisfy goals (Kakai et al., 2004; Khan and Shafique, 2011). Information need according to Adebayo, Akanni and Busuyi (2017) is an individual or group's desire to detect and acquire information to satisfy both conscious and unconscious needs. It is the availability of different sources of information, individual characteristics, trend, career, profession and environment in which one operates, that influences and exposes people to different information seeking behaviour.

On the other hand, the concept of “information seeking behaviour” was coined in the late 1990s, but it traces its roots to the concept of “information needs and uses” that arose in the 1960s (Khan and Shafique, 2011). In the course of seeking, the individual may interact with manual Information systems such as a journals or a library, or with computer-based systems such as the World Wide Web (Kari, 2004). Information seeking behaviour deals with behaviour and actions exhibited by human beings in their search for information to satisfy diverse information needs (Abubakar, 2010 in Joseph, 2018). Information seeking behaviour therefore is the purposive seeking for information by individuals because of a need to satisfy goals (Kakai et al., 2004; Wilson, 2008).

In the work of Iota, Azuma and Nishimura (2017), they opined that Information-seeking behaviour significantly differed with respect to qualification, institution where basic education was received, job ranking, a form of employment and the environment in which Information and Communication Technology (ICT) was used. They further stated that, it is necessary to create environments that facilitate information seeking and to implement adequate information literacy education in order to support information-seeking behaviour.

According to Corragio (2011) Information needs is a state or process that is started when one perceives that there is a gap between the information and knowledge available to solve a particular problem and the actual solution of the problem. Information seeking behaviour is as old as man because man since inception has been making inquiry into the problem that confronts him. Different approaches were employed and different sources were consulted when an individual is making inquiry to satisfy his curiosity or information needs. Similarly, Bruce, Ford, Case and Given (as cited in Makinde, Jiyane & Mugwisi, 2019) stated that the study of information behaviour has developed since its inception during the 1960s when most research was geared towards understanding how professionals sought for information and the sources they consulted. Similarly, Eftekhari and Hayati (2016) also observed that information seeking behaviours exhibited by information users are derived from users information needs when they have the urge for information.

Information is a major resource that is needed in every sphere of life endeavour especially in health matters (Abubaka, 2010) and individuals seek information for different reasons such as mere curiosity, awareness, self-diagnosis and analyzing and evaluating treatment for health. Information sources are materials consulted by the information user while seeking



information. Information sources could be print resources, non-print resources. Print resources are printed books, journals magazines, etc.

Non-print resources are information held in media such as sound, visual, graphics, animation, etc. Electronic resources are born digital resources or created digital resources often in electronic form example databases, e-books, e-journals, e-databases etc. Information users make active and intentional attempts to seek up to date information from the library, electronic sources and others (Muoekebe, Ezeani & Nwankwo, 2018). Information sources could equally be categorized as primary, secondary and tertiary sources. A primary source is a first-hand information or an original created by a person who may be directly involved in the subject matter. They include fiction, diaries, autobiographies, memoirs, letters, etc. Secondary sources on the other hand are primary sources, which have been analyzed, reported, summarized and restructured. They include textbooks, book reviews, dictionaries, encyclopedias, bibliographies, etc. Tertiary sources are secondary sources further processed. Some of the secondary sources also fall under tertiary sources such as bibliography, manuals, library catalogue, etc. Anyanwu, Oparaku & Benson (2016), showed that information sources consulted by nurses include Internet, journals and books, and other medical database when seeking for their information needs.

According to Robinson (2010), if found out that when seeking information at work, people rely on both other people and information repositories (e.g. document and databases). Information sources include; textbooks, periodicals (journals), reference sources, grey literature, Electronic-resources, among others. While Mabawonku (include the date here) as quoted by Joseph (2018) highlights sources in which information can be sought to include; colleagues, internet, library, friends, family members, recognized institutions, agencies and private organization. According to the scholar, participants physically browsed library collections in search of relevant information, and the participants mentioned this strategy as important. The study also revealed that, of all the tasks performed by the individuals in their quest for vital information the methods used revealed that they relied on web-based tools such as Google, Google print, Amazon and Wikipedia for many of their information needs. Information behaviour therefore include all the behaviours individual exhibit when identifying, gathering, processing and managing information for effective work performance (Anyanwu, Oparaku & Benson 2016) From the foregoing, Information seeking behaviour can be defined as the processes of recognizing the need for information, searching for, using, and sharing it. It is usually associated with information search behaviour, information retrieval behaviour and information literacy skills.

Statement of Problem

Health is wealth, says the common slogan. Healthcare spans across all ages, genders, races, culture and geographical boundaries and is an area of concern to all population. The state of health of the population in all the three tiers of government is often assessed based on scanty information, which has been collected in a few limited surveys and research studies. The health services at the national, state and more especially in local government levels are not managed efficiently for public consumption; this is because it built based on few available data.

Preliminary investigation by the researchers from literature and experience showed that many countries (especially developing countries) are plagued with critical healthcare information dissemination issues such as information infectious and/or pandemic diseases, poor accessibility to health information, lack of basic healthcare programmes and facilities



including libraries and ICT facilities. Ariyo (1991) in Joseph (2019) opines that information assists in reducing the degree of uncertainty and ignorance in the operating environment, while Corragio (2011) avers that lack of information is the denial of choices and opportunities for living better live. Therefore, the quality of information an individual receives enhances her rightful choice of health care as the case may be. The establishment of an effective National Health Management Information System (NHMIS) by all the governments of the Federation to be used as a management tool for informed decision-making at all levels becomes a necessity. The Primary Health care (PHC) Information System (which is a sub-system of the NHMIS) was to develop a dynamic and responsive system that would provide information for strategic planning, management and operational functions of PHC activities at all levels. While the specific objectives are: to ascertain whether the health information system was developed as an effective and efficient PHC information system that would generate, transmit, store, retrieve and process PHC data, and provide the right information services to the appropriate levels of PHC management and citizens in the desired form and at the right time. The emphasis on development of the information system is to mobilize and empower local health authority and the community to undertake health care needs assessment, priority setting and implement action programs but its implementation was very poor. The development of the information system which include the promotion and support of the collection of data by the local government health authorities to improve the quality and quantity of the information and when feasible, Local Government Areas and state health authorities through using simple electronic data processing equipment for storage, retrieval and analysis of the data. This was hampered by non-implementation and the health information dissemination strategies in use was also very poor. This reason makes this study a necessity in order to ascertain, the information need and seeking behaviour of the rural dwellers among the largest emirate councils in Gombi Local Government Area of Adamawa State.

Objectives of the study

The study is guided by the following objectives:

- i. To examine the health information needs of rural dwellers in Lala and Ga'anda Emirate Councils in Gombi Local Government in Adamawa State.
- ii. To determine sources through which the rural dwellers in the selected emirate councils seeks health information
- iii. To ascertain the Information Seeking behaviour of the rural dwellers in the selected emirate councils
- iv. To identify the challenges facing rural dwellers in seeking for health information

Research Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was employed in this study. The sample of the study was fifty two respondents, drawn from the two (2) selected Emirate Councils in Gombi Local Government in Adamawa State namely; Lala and Ga'anda Emirate Councils respective.

Data collection instrument for the study was a structured questionnaire. The first section was, to elicit information on the demographic characteristics of respondents. These include; name of emirate council, educational qualification, gender and age. The second section of the questionnaire was designed to elicit information on information seeking behaviour of rural dwellers based on the research objectives. The third section of the questionnaire was designed to elicit information on health information needs of the rural dwellers in the selected district councils of Lala and Ga'anda Emirate Councils.



Fifty-two (52) copies of Questionnaire were distributed and forty nine (49) returned were found useable for the research, 40 from Lala Emirate council and nine from Gaanda Emirate council Data gathered were analyzed using tables with frequency and percentage.

Analyses of Demographic Data were Presented below:

Age of respondents

<i>Age</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>percentage</i>
Below 30 years	9	19.3
30-40 years	31	62.4
41-50	8	16.3
51 and above	1	2.0
Total	49	100

Age demographic data of respondents showed that respondents below 30 years of age were 19.3%, 30-40 years of age were 64.4% while people from age 40-50 were 16.3%, while above 51 years stand at 2.0 %.

Gender of Respondents

Male	34	69.4
Female	15	30.6
Total	49	100

The Gender of respondents revealed that female were 30.6% while male recorded 69.4%.

Marital Status of Respondents

Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	9	18.4
Married	39	79.6
Widows/Divorced	1	2.0
Total	49	100

Marital demographic data of the respondents showed that singles were 18.4%, Married 79.6% and Widowed/Divorced had 2.0%.



Work Experience

Work Experience		
Less than 5 years	9	18.4
6-10 years	15	30.6
11-15 years	16	32.7
Above 15 years	9	18.3
Total	49	100

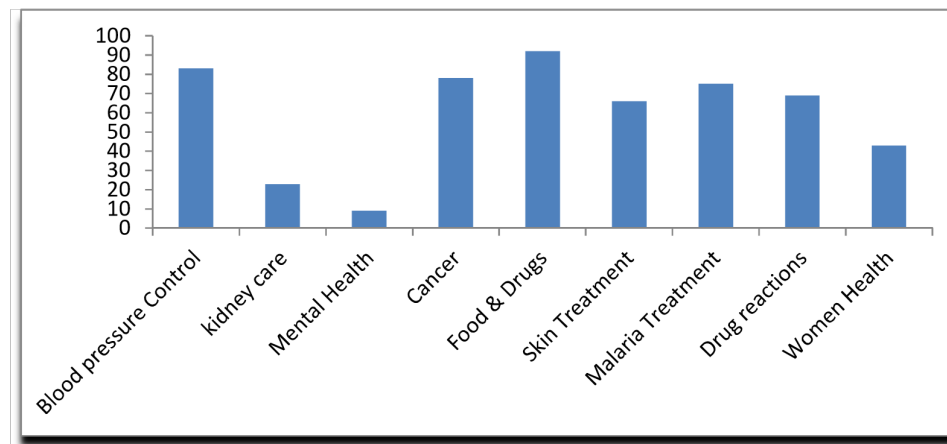
Work experience data of respondents showed that people less than 5 years recorded 18.4%, 6-10 years in experience recorded 30.6%, whereas 10-15 years had 32.7% and above 15 years recorded 18.3%.

Educational Qualification

Qualification		
Primary school certificate	2	4.1
SSCE	15	30.6
Diploma	14	28.6
HND and bachelor degree	12	24.7
Masters	5	10.0
Ph D	1	2.0

On Highest educational attainment data, respondents with just primary school certificate were 4.1% , SSCE recorded 30.6%, respondents with diploma were 28.6%, HND and bachelor degree recorded 24.7% and 10% with masters and 2.00 with PhD

Question 1: what are the health information needs of rural dwellers in the selected emirate councils?





It was gathered from the results of the issues of Assessment of Health Information Seeking Behaviour among rural dwellers of Two Selected emirate councils in Gombi Local Government as follows: blood pressure control information in illustration above shows that 82% of the rural dwellers in the study areas sought information of blood pressure, kidney care information recorded 22%, mental health information 09%, cancer related information 78%, food and drugs information 91% skin treatment information 66%, malaria treatment, prevention and control information, 75%, the implication of this is that among the respondents studied, Health information was taken serious as the study reflected high percentage in blood pressure control, cancer, food and drug, malaria treatment and control respectively.

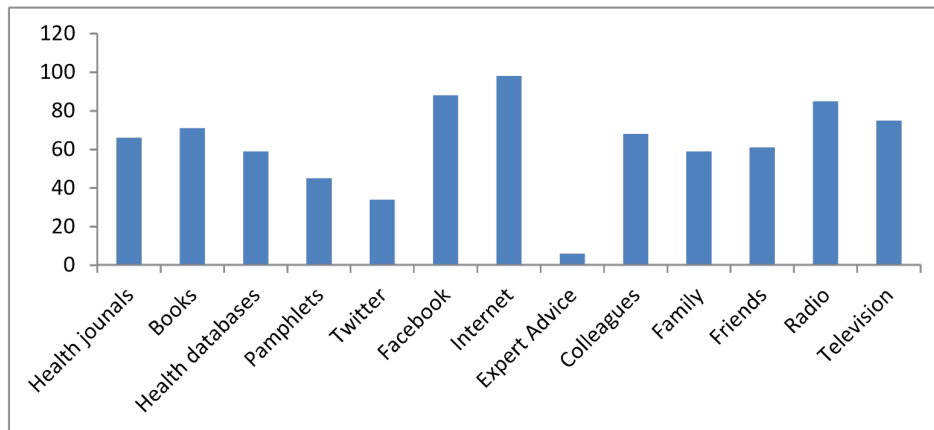
Research Question 2

What are the Health information seeking behaviour of rural dwellers in the selected emirate councils?

Respondents placed high premium on health result, which shows that the rural dwellers in the selected councils seek for information in order enjoy balanced health as they sought health information timely with response of 42% of respondents indicated strong interest in attitude and; their tendency of living well is seeking health information timely. Also, 43% of highly likely. From the above chat, it was evident that respondents (15%) showed negative attitude to health Information use because inadequate information. Respondents showed positive attitude to health information use.

Research question 3

What are the sources through which librarians seeks health information?



From the data collected on Research objective iii to Determine the sources through which rural dwellers seeks health information. The result revealed that expert advice 0.6% from Colleague 65%, Family 59%. Also from the results from the Friends 60%, Radio 98%, TV 77% respectively, analyzed data from respondents revealed that it is evident here that the researchers recorded that various sources of information were consulted highest number of response from Radio to sensitize themselves on health related issues, Internet, TV, Colleagues Health Journals and as follow; Health Journals 62%, Books, 66%, this was so because of the reliability on books, Health databases 59%, Pamphlet 42%, Twitter to-dateness and quality health information, 47%, Facebook 07%, Internet 85 %, Expert sources provided over time.



Objective 4: Challenges Facing Rural Dwellers when Seeking for Health Information. Results on research objective four shows that erratic power supply is one of the major problem with militating against rural dwellers health information seeking behaviour with 89%, attitudes of colleagues (80%), inadequate information resources in the library (80%), inadequate information retrieval skills (76%), lack of awareness about sources of health information (62%), invisible web/closed access (60%) and attitudes of library staff (58%) were the challenges faced by rural dwellers when seeking for health information. The study is in line with that of Muokebe, Enweani, Nwankwo (2018) who found lack of current materials on and lack of information literacy were the most ranking problems of information needs.

Findings and Discussion

In the study of assessment of health information seeking behaviour among rural dwellers of two selected emirate councils in Gombi Local Government. The results revealed that the health information required by rural dwellers are: blood pressure control information 82%, food and drugs 91%, cancer information 78%, Malaria treatment 75% and information on drug reactions 68%. This was so because the mortality rates of the mentioned diseases is very high not only in Nigeria but globally, and if proper health awareness campaign is not initiated on time, productivity of citizenry may be threatened in the future.

Another important finding of the research is that internet, Radio, TV, Health journals are the major sources of obtaining health information by the rural dwellers in this study. This finding is in conformity with Aina (2004) as quoted by Saha & Jena (2020) in their work titled Information Needs and Seeking Behaviour of Private Hospital Nurses of Bhubaneswar, Odisha, that with the advent of the Internet, many professionals, researchers, and highly placed individuals now seek a large proportion of their information from the Internet. It is also in agreement with this, Mandu, et al (2020) in their research on Information Needs and Seeking Behaviour of Nurses at Rivers State University Teaching Hospital, Port-Harcourt , who discovered reliance of their respondents on the Internet as a source of information.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Health information seeking behaviour and health information sources consulted by rural dwellers in two selected emirate councils in Gombi LGA. It was revealed in this research that the rural dwellers sought health information most on Blood pressure control, cancer, food and drugs and Malaria treatment. It was also revealed in the research that respondents relied mostly on Internet, Radio, TV, Books and health journals in meeting their health information needs.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following were recommended:

- i. The rural dwellers should work closely with health care providers in ensuring proper access to health information.
- ii. Health facility Libraries should be provided with adequate information that will meet the information needs of rural dwellers and the health Information providers should not deny the general public from accessing health information.
- iii. Outreach and advocacy programme should conducted for rural dwellers so that they should see the library as the most reliable place where the most desirable health information can be sought



- iv. Rural dwellers should acquire ICT skills, especially information literacy skills to enable them retrieve relevant health information from the internet and databases.

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