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## **INFORMATION NEED AND SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF PRACTISING NURSES IN NIGERIA; THE CASE OF OUR LADY OF LOURDES HOSPITAL IHIALA.**

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### **Abstract**

This research adopted a survey design which sought information from respondents on the Information needs and seeking behaviour of practising nurses in Nigeria: the case of Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital Ihiala. The population comprised fifty-two (52) practising nurses in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital Ihiala. There was no sampling because the whole population was studied since it is small and manageable. The nominal role of Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital was used to derive the population of the study. A questionnaire entitled “Information Seeking Behaviour of Nurses Questionnaire (ISBNQ)” was developed by the researcher, validated by experts and used for data collection. Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient was used to obtain a reliability coefficient of 0.84. Data were collected and analysed using mean scores. The findings revealed that practising nurses in the Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital Ihiala need information on education and training, information to improve knowledge in clinical areas, care and management of patient, HIV/AIDS, immunization among others, nurses obtain the needed information mainly through their working colleagues, working colleagues such as nurses and doctors were accepted as the most adequate information source, lack of current materials on nursing and lack of information literacy were the most ranking problems of information needs of nurses. Based on the findings, recommendations include among others that the management of the hospital should provide training, workshops and other current information sources to managers, clinical nurse specialists and doctors since nurses seek information from them.

**Keywords:** Information, Information needs, Information seeking behaviour, Information sources, Nurses, Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital.

## **Introduction**

The most important tool used in the realization of the objective or goal of any profession is information. Information is needed for the progressive growth of an individual, a group, or a profession so as to keep abreast with the most recent development. According to Issa, Bashir, and Saka (2012) information is processed data, facts or ideas that can convey intelligible meaning for use. Luka as cited in Ogbo, Uzuagba, and Nwebiem (2017) defined information as data of value in planning or any stimulus that eliminates uncertainty and helps in decision making. They further explained that information expands or corrects man's view, therefore, nobody is a tabula rasa.

Information need arises when there is a problem to solve. Information is needed in all professions for current awareness, knowledge update, problem solving and even recreational purposes. Information need is construed in the sense of data or a set of data specially required that will enable the user to make an appropriate decision on any related problem facing him or her at any particular time (Solomon as cited in Emmanuel,2012). The identification of information needs of a person, group or profession, makes information seeking paramount. In other words, information need leads to the means of seeking for that information.

The manner with which a person searches, gathers, or sources information is the information seeking behaviour of that person. People seek information for personal use, knowledge updating and development. In the words of Kakai, Ikoja-Odongo and Kigongo-Bukenya (2004), information seeking behaviour is the way people go about searching for information. Information seeking behaviour is the purposive seeking of information as a consequence of a need to satisfy some goal. Wilson, as cited in O'Leary and Ni Mhaolrunaigh, (2012) identified information seeking as a component of information behaviour which he defined as the purposive seeking for information as a consequence of a need to achieve some aims. During

information seeking, the seeker may interact with manual information systems such as a newspaper or a library, or with computer-based systems such as the Web.

Information sources are materials consulted by the information user while seeking information. Information users make active and intentional attempts to seek up to date information from the library, electronic sources and others. It is worthy to also note that the advent of information technology has revolutionized information services and has brought about considerable changes in the information seeking behaviour of users (Adetola, Simeon, Adebowale, & Anyim 2016). Nurses tend to rely on their own experience or on information from other people, usually nursing colleagues. This reliance on people to provide information comes at the expense of text and internet resources which are generally not viewed as useful and are only accessed on a limited basis. Resources providing a direct link to research information such as libraries and research journals are rarely used (O'Leary, & Ni Mhaolrunaigh, 2012).

All over the world, the nursing profession, like other professions undergo great changes, both in terms of practice, methods, education and training Ajayi, (2005). Nursing is a science that promotes quality of life as defined by population, communities, families, and individuals, throughout their life experience from birth through the end of life. Nursing encompasses autonomous and collaborative care of all ages, families, groups and communities, sick or well in all settings (Turner, Satvri, Revere, & Altamore, 2008). Operationally, nursing is the practice in which a nurse assists the individual sick or well in the performance of those activities conducive to health or its recovery (or to peaceful death).

An individual formally trained in nursing practice is a nurse. A nurse could be male or female. They are seen as an essential group of health workers. Nurses work mostly in hospitals usually headed by medical doctors. Nurses irrespective of their specialty or work setting treat patients, educate patients and the public about various medical conditions. The nurses record patient's

medical histories and symptoms, perform some diagnostic tests, analyse results, operate medical machineries, administer treatment and medication and help in patient follow up and rehabilitation (Anyanwu, Oparaku, Benson, 2016). Nurses also educate the public on warning signs, symptoms of diseases, diet, and nutrition and exercise program. Nurses observe the patients and record their observations. Nurses form the majority of clinical employees of hospitals and they are consulted more than other health workers.

It is their duty to implement the doctor's prescription and orders; and maintain surveillance over patient health. The nurses administer the drugs prescribed by the doctors/physicians on the patients. The importance of nurses cannot be overemphasized because they play a crucial role in health care delivery. They perform these functions under the directives of the medical doctors, their boss. They help the doctors, pharmacists and laboratory scientists to provide effective health care to patient. To say the least, nurses coordinate all health care activities of patient in their care.

The role of nurses in health care delivery cannot be over-emphasized. Information is a very crucial tool for nurses and how they acquire and use the information are key determinants of their performance. This recognition underpins the nurses need for access to useful information and necessary skills for using such information (Nwagwu and Oshiname, 2009). The inability of nurses to obtain the needed useful information for their job portends great danger as they are likely to fall back on whatever little and outdated information within their reach. Studies identified lack of computer skills, lack of information literacy, unwillingness of fellow nurses to release information, lack of current information materials in nursing among others as the problems that hinder nurses from meeting their information needs (Ajayi, 2005; Anyanwu, Oparaku, Benson, 2016; Ocheibi and Buba, 2003). This situation will result in the decrease in their performance on the job, and will affect health care delivery in the country negatively.

In view of the crucial role nurses play in ensuring that people are healthy both physically

and mentally, their real information needs should be known to enable them have the right kind of information they require for the provision of effective services to patients in their care. It is against this back ground that the researchers seek to establish the information needs and information seeking behaviour of practising nurses in Our Lady of Lourdes General hospital Ihiala Anambra State.

### **Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Ihiala**

Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital Ihiala was established in 1938 to take care of the clinical needs of the people within Ihiala Local Government Area and even beyond. It is located in the heart of Ihiala city. It is situated by Onitsha - Owerri Express road, directly opposite St. Martins Catholic Parish Ihiala not too far from Ihiala Local Government Headquarters. It was established by the catholic diocese of Onitsha, but today, due to expansion in the church, it belongs to the newly carved out diocese of Nnewi. The hospital is being managed by the church under the direct care of Reverend Fathers and Sisters. It is divided into the hospital and the school of Nursing.

The hospital has a total of 31 magnificent buildings. These buildings house the school of nursing, the various wards, theatre and labour room, the accounts section, private offices, pharmacy, mortuary and the library. It has a total of nine wards. There are 17 medical doctors, 52 practicing nurses and other categories of employees too numerous to mention. The nurses work for 8hrs per day and 40hours per week.

### **Purpose of the study**

The study described here involved an investigation of the information needs and information seeking behaviour of practising nurses in Our Lady of Lourdes General Hospital Ihiala, Nigeria. Specifically, this study seeks to;

1. determine the work-related information needs of the practising nurses in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital Ihiala.
2. find out the information sources used by the nurses.

3. establish the adequacy of the information sources used by nurses in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital.
4. identify the impediments to nurses information needs.

### **Literature review**

Ajayi (2005) studied the information needs and information seeking behaviour of professional nurses at the Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospital (OAUTH) Ile Ife, Nigeria. The result is that nurse's need current information. The results of this study show that professional nurses in the Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospitals' Complex are aware that they need current information for effective and efficient professional practice. They obtain this information mainly through attending meetings, seminars, conferences, etc., and to a lesser extent through the use of the library and computerized information, as well as contacts with colleagues and personal journals.

Anyanwu, Oparaku, Benson, (2016) in their study on information needs of nurses for effective healthcare delivery in Nigeria, a case study of Federal Medical Centre Owerri Imo State used 300 nurse's population and sample of 171. The findings of the study revealed that the nurses had need of information to care and manage patients as well as to improve their knowledge in clinical areas. Internet, Journals and books were the major sources consulted by nurses even though they still consult other medical database. The nurses are not satisfied with the information sources they consult. The factor militating against easy accessibility to health information among nurses include inadequate training of nurses in the use of information resources, among others., The study concludes that the medical libraries should carry out user's study to enable them meet the information need of nurses.

O'Leary D.F. & Ni Mhaolrunaigh S. (2012) in their research titled the information seeking behaviour of nurses; where is information sought and what processes are followed, a sample of 29 nurses were explored. Their findings include that in decision-making, nurses accessed other people, especially nursing colleagues, the most frequently. Sources that provided prepackaged information such as guidelines were favoured over sources that provided access to original research, among others. The process of information-seeking for routine and non-routine decisions was different. Nurses making routine decisions relied mostly on their experience and an assessment of the patient. In non-routine decision-making, participants experienced more uncertainty about their decisions. Accordingly, sources of information used were more varied and the information-seeking process more extensive. The study highlighted the complexities of establishing whether information used in decision-making is research based or not.

Ocheibi and Buba (2003) in their study on information needs and information gathering behaviour of doctors in Maiduguri Nigeria used a total of 225 medical doctors from both government establishments and the private hospital and 158 questionnaires were returned. 50 or 31.6% of the respondents needed specific medical information, 39 or 24.7% needed general medical information while 19 or 20% of the respondents needed reference information, 21 or 13.3% needed research and teaching information while 100.3% needed information for preparing publications.

Argyri, Kostagiolas, and Diomidous (2014) carried out an investigation on the information seeking behaviour of nursing staff of a private hospital in Greece. A survey was conducted through a specially designed questionnaire distributed to registered nurses of a major private Hospital in Athens. The study revealed that the information needs of nurses are related to their work role and include information for nursing interventions and hospital infections control. The online scientific content is considered as the main source of information, while lack of time is considered as the main obstacle when seeking



information. They recommended that development of appropriate information services and information literacy skills for nurses is required.

## **Method**

For the purpose of this study, descriptive survey design was adopted. The area of study is Ihiala, South East, Nigeria. A total of 52 practising nursing staff of Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital formed the target population of the study. The whole population was used for the study because it was small and manageable. This is in line with the assertion of Bernard (2012) that if a population of study is less than 200, the entire population should be used for the study. The nominal role of Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital was used to derive the population of the study. A self-constructed questionnaire titled Information Seeking Behaviour of Nurses Questionnaire (ISBNQ) was used for data collection. It was validated by two lecturers in the department of Library and Information Science of Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University. Their corrections were effected in the final draft of ISBNQ. Split half method for testing reliability was applied to obtain a reliability of the instrument using 10 nurses from Kezanders Hospital Mgbidi in Imo state. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient was used to obtain a reliability co-efficient value of 0.84 which seems enough for the study. ISBNQ questionnaire was administered to 52 nurses in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital Ihiala. The ISBN questionnaire was administered personally by the researchers. In this research on information needs and seeking behaviour of nurses, 52 questionnaires were administered to nurses in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital Ihiala, out of which 45 valid questionnaires were filled and returned by the respondents representing 81.9% return. Data collected were analysed through the use of simple percentages, mean scores and tables. The mean of 2.50 and above were regarded as agreement to the items while 2.49 and below were regarded as disagreement to the items.

## Presentation of results

**Table 1; Information needs of nurses**

S/N	ITEMS	MEAN	DECISION
1.	Education and training	3.5	Accepted
2.	Information to improve knowledge in clinical areas	3.5	Accepted
3.	Information to support lifelong learning	2.6	Accepted
4.	Immunization	3.0	Accepted
5.	New drugs/new remedies	2.9	Accepted
6.	Anatomy and physiology	3.2	Accepted
7.	HIV/AIDS	3.5	Accepted
8.	Government activities	2.1	Rejected
9.	Occupational hazards	2.4	Rejected
10.	Care and management of patient	3.0	Accepted
11.	Maternal and child health	2.8	Accepted
12.	Use of computers in medicine	2.3	Rejected

The result in Table 1 shows that the nurses accepted 8 out of the 12 items. Items 1 (education and training), 2 (Information to improve knowledge in clinical areas), 7 (HIV/AIDS), have the highest level of acceptance with the mean scores of 3.5 each. Item number 3 (Information to support lifelong learning) has the lowest acceptance with the mean score of 2.6. However, Items 8 (Government activities), 9 (Occupational hazards), and 12 (Use of computers in medicine) were rejected with the mean scores of 2.1, 2.4, and 2.3 respectively. The result in Table 1 agrees with the findings of Anyanwu, Oparaku, Benson (2016) who studied the information needs of nurses for effective health care delivery in Nigeria. They discovered that nurses need information to improve practice in clinical areas and for care and management of patient. This result is equally in line with the findings of Nwagwu and Oshinaime (2008) whose study shows that nurses need information on new drugs / new remedies. Use of computers in medicine was rejected by the nurses. It could be that many of the nurses studied are not computer literate as a result of lack of interest on computers. This finding differs from that of Ajayi (2005) who found that nurses mostly use modern technology (computers inclusive) in nursing practice.

**Table 2; Sources of information used by nurses**

S/N	ITEMS	MEAN	DECISION
1.	Nursing colleagues	3.5	Accepted
2.	Nursing magazines	2.2	Rejected
3.	Other health professionals like doctors	2.9	Accepted
4.	Databases	2.0	Rejected
5.	Textbooks	2.5	Accepted
6.	Clinical nurse specialists	3.0	Accepted
7.	Medical / Health libraries	2.5	Accepted
8.	Conferences workshop and trainings	2.4	Rejected
9.	Nursing journals	2.6	Accepted
10.	Internet search engines	2.5	Accepted

In Table 2, seven items were accepted while three items were rejected. Item 1 (Nursing colleagues) has the highest acceptance with the mean score of 3.5. Items 5 (textbooks), 7 (Medical / Health libraries), 10 (Internet search engines) have the lowest acceptance level with the mean scores of 2.5 each. Item 4 (Databases) was the most rejected item with the mean score of 2.0. However, items 2 (Nursing magazines) and 8 (Conferences, workshop and training) were also rejected with the mean score of 2.2 and 2.4 respectively. The results from this table tallies with the findings of O’Leary, & Ni Mhaolrunaigh, (2012) that nursing colleagues dominated as information-givers. Internet databases and journals, were accessed less frequently. From this table, one can see that nurses use internet search engines more than databases. This is because internet search engines gained more acceptance than internet databases. This finding is similar to the findings of Hider et al. (2009) that nurses use internet search engines for information seeking.

**Table 3: Adequacy of information sources**

S/N	ITEMS	MEAN	DECISION
1.	Nursing colleagues	3.7	Accepted
2.	Nursing magazines	1.8	Rejected
3.	Other health professionals like doctors	3.8	Accepted
4.	Databases	2.3	Rejected

5.	Textbooks	2.5	Accepted
6.	Clinical nurse specialists	2.9	Accepted
7.	Medical / Health libraries	2.4	Rejected
8.	Conferences workshop and trainings	2.3	Rejected
9.	Nursing journals	2.5	Accepted
10.	Internet search engines	2.5	Accepted

From Table 3, the respondents accepted the adequacy of 6 (Nursing colleagues, Other health professionals like doctors, Textbooks, Clinical nurse specialists, nursing journals, internet search engines) out of the 10 items listed. Item 3 (Other health professionals like doctors) has the highest degree of acceptance with the mean score of 3.8. Items 5 (Textbooks), and 9 (Nursing journals) have the least acceptance, their mean score 2.5 each. Nursing magazine which is item number 2 has the highest rejection as indicated by the mean score of 1.8. Item 7 (Medical / Health libraries), has the lowest rejection with the mean score of 2.4. The most adequate information sources for the practising nurses include nursing colleague, other professionals like doctors, and clinical nurse specialists. This finding agrees with the findings of Mwenda and Njoroge (2017) that nurses consider working colleagues as the most useful information source.

**Table 4: Impediments to the information needs of nurses**

S/N	ITEMS	MEAN	DECISION
1.	Lack of access to internet	3.0	Accepted
2.	Inadequate training of nurses in the use of conventional information resources	2.5	Accepted
3.	Lack of current materials on nursing	3.8	Accepted
4.	Lack of users' study/survey to ascertain the information needs of nurses	2.8	Accepted
5.	Lack of computer skills	3.2	Accepted
6.	Unwillingness of some colleagues to share information	2.7	Accepted
7.	Lack of information literacy skills.	3.5	Accepted

It could be noted from Table 4 that the respondents accepted that all the items are impediments to the information needs of practising nurses. However, item 2 (Inadequate training of nurses

in the use of conventional information resources) has the lowest level of acceptance with the mean of 2.5. Item 3 (Lack of current materials on nursing) has the highest degree of acceptance, mean score 3.8. The item with the most acceptance include lack of current materials on nursing, lack of information literacy, and lack of computer skills. This finding tallies with the assertion of Anyanwu, Oparaku, Benson, (2016) that lack of access to internet and inadequate training of nurses in the use of information resources are the major problems of information seeking of nurses.

### **Conclusion and recommendation**

Understanding what information sources nurses use to make decisions can aid policy makers and management in providing research information in a form that will be accessed and used by nurses. The results of this study show that practising nurses in the Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital Ihiala need information on education and training, information to improve knowledge in clinical areas, care and management of patient, HIV/AIDS, immunization among others. Nurses obtain the needed information mainly through their working colleagues. To a lesser extent, nurses obtain information through databases, nursing magazines and trainings. Working colleagues that is nurses and doctors were accepted as the most adequate information source. Lack of current materials on nursing and lack of information literacy were the most ranking problems of information needs of nurses.

It is therefore recommended that;

1. The management of the hospital should provide training, workshops and other current information sources to managers, clinical nurse specialists and doctors since nurses seek information from them. These would enable them to supplying current, research-based information to the nurses.

2. Currently the government vigorously fights HIV/AIDS, they should sponsor nurses, to relevant trainings so as to ensure they keep abreast of the latest developments in this field.
  
3. The librarian should liaise with the Nigerian Library Association (NLA) and Medical Library Section of Nigerian Library Association should go on advocacy visit to management of hospital to intimate them of the importance of medical library in improving the services offered by nurses and other health professionals well-equipped.
  
4. The hospital management in collaboration with the librarian should train the nurses on information literacy skills and computer literacy.

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