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## **NUTRITION AND DIETETICS INFORMATION NEEDS AND SOURCE PREFERENCES OF NURSING MOTHERS IN EDE METROPOLIS, OSUN STATE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Access to timely information is crucial to planning and decision making. Nursing mothers are part of information users that seek for information relating to nutrition and dietetics. Review of extant literature has identified various causes of infant mortality and other health challenges resulting from malnutrition. However, none identified lack of access to timely nutrition and dietetics information as one of the causes. Therefore, this study focused on nutrition and dietetics information needs and source preferences of nursing mothers in Ede Metropolis. The study adopted a survey method as it is the best method to collect data from sample of individuals. Questionnaire was the main instrument used for data collection. The population of the study consisted of 291 nursing mothers. Random sampling technique was used to select 210 sample size from two hospitals, namely: Ede Muslim Hospital, Ede (97 nursing mothers) and Osun State Maternity Health Center, Oja-Timi, Ede (113 nursing mothers). The study found that majority of the respondents need information on balanced diet, multivitamins, food safety and food hygiene, with less attention on adequate diet. Also, oral (face-to-face) discussion with doctors and nurses, family and friends and other nursing mothers were the most commonly used information sources by the respondents. It was also discovered that television and Internet were the most preferred information sources, although not among the most commonly used sources. Also, high cost of accessing information and difficulty in accessing doctors or nurses for information were the two major challenges experienced by the respondents. The study recommends, among others, that there is need for the hospital management to engage nutritionists and dieticians; review the procedures in booking a visit/appointment with doctors and nurses to make such less difficult; need for hospitals to have libraries within their premises and also engage librarians that have adequate knowledgeable of information repackaging service.*

**Keywords:** Information needs, Information sources, Nursing mothers, Nutrition in formation, Dietetics information, Ede metropolis



## **Introduction**

It is a common knowledge that eating nutritious and healthy food is crucial to human development and healthy living. Nursing mothers in Africa generally, face myriads of challenges include coping with high rate of infant and maternal mortality and other health related issues as a result of poor feeding or poor health care delivery system (Olonade, Olawande, Alabi & Imhonopi, 2019). World Health Organization (2021) reported that about one- third of pregnant women in West Africa did not attend antenatal care visits. Antenatal care visits are one of the major sources where expectant mothers can have access to nutrition and dietetics and other health related information from professionals; that may benefit them during pregnancy and even after delivery, when they eventually become nursing mothers (UNICEF, 2021).

Furthermore, Food and Agriculture Organization (2019) reported a rapid increase in undernourishment of West Africans since 2015. Similarly, World Health Organization (WHO) (2013) and Gundersen and Ziliak (2015) linked lack of access to adequate food and under-nutrition to health and nutrition challenges as well as increase in infant mortality rate. It is also on record that large population of Nigerian women and households live in abject poverty (World Bank, 2020). Such low income households may have to ration foods and cut down nutrients and calories in order to save cost. This may result in stunted growth, weakened immune system and development of ailments such as kwashiorkor. To address this, nursing mothers may seek for information that can help them make decisions on what types of nutritional intake to adopt.

Access to timely information is crucial to planning and decision making. Access to information is also recognized by the United Nations as one of the fundamental human rights; because a better informed society is a liberated society (United Nations, 2022; González, 2022). This underscores the important role of information in daily lives by providing the basic nutrients needed to solve many problems. Nursing mothers are part of the general public that needs information on daily basis to take decisions, or plan for certain tasks. Such needs certainly include health information (Ruthven, Buchanan, & Jardine, 2018; Lee, 2018). While health information may be deemed general in that there are various aspects of health, specifically, nursing mothers will require information on what to eat or give to their babies (nutrition) and at what quantity (dietetics) that may not only nourish and develop the body but also fight illnesses.

As a corollary to information needs, information is sought from available sources. More so, proliferation in the use of ICT has given rise to cheaper and easy access to information acquisition and sharing. Although, these may depend on affordability of required digital devices and services: such as smart phones, Internet or data subscriptions, among others. While this may seem plausible, however, it may be difficult for low income earners in rural areas and towns in Nigeria. Also, literacy level is relatively low and out of school children, especially girls, is also high. Also, many homes do not yet have access to Internet and use social media. These may hinder their access to up to date information offered by the Internet, but left with traditional sources like TV, radio and newspapers or other informal channels like friends and families or discussion with doctors or nurses.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Information needs vary from one individual to another, depending on some factors, which may include environmental factors, profession, academic level or the need to know or satisfy a state of curiosity. Consequently, information is sought from various



sources that the information seeker has confidence in and the assurance that such sources will quench the information thirst. Furthermore, nursing mothers are part of information users that seek for information relating to their well-being. Therefore, it is expected that they seek for information on various topics and from various sources.

Also, poor nutrition or diets is a precursor to infant diseases and contributed as one of the leading factors causing high infant mortality rate (World Health Organization, 2021, Ewepu & Enoch, 2022). However, from all the previous studies that have identified various causes of infant mortality and other health challenges, none identified lack of access to timely health information as one of the causes; as access to health information is a preventive health measure (Gutiérrez-Velasco, Liébana-Presa, Abella-Santos, Villar-Suárez, Fernández-Gutiérrez, & Fernández-Martínez, 2021). Information on nutrition and dietetics are needed by nursing mother to identify, among others, the type of food and diets to take to improve lactation, physical and mental well-being of themselves and their wards. However, much is not known about their information needs and seeking patterns, especially as it affects their nutrition and dietetics. While many research abounds on various challenges facing nursing mothers globally, only a few exist on the types of nutrition and dietetics information needs and seeking behaviours, as it affects nursing mothers in developing nations like Nigeria. Also, sources consulted and challenges they faced in acquiring such information have not been empirically identified and found in the literature.

Not having access to this type of information may affect concerned stakeholders in formulating favourable information services delivery policies and may also prevent the nursing mothers from having access to timely information which may, on the long run, lead to increase in infant or maternal mortality rate or other related health challenges. To this end, this study sets out to investigate nutrition and dietetics information needs and means of seeking information to meet those needs among nursing mothers in Ede Metropolis, Osun State.

### **Research Questions**

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the nutrition and dietetics information needs of nursing mothers in Ede Metropolis, Osun State?
2. From which sources do nursing mothers in Ede Metropolis seek for nutrition and dietetics related information?
3. What are the most preferred nutrition and dietetics information sources used by nursing mothers in Ede Metropolis?
4. What are the challenges faced by nursing mothers in Ede Metropolis in seeking nutrition and dietetics information?

### **Methodology**

This study adopted the survey research design as it is the best method to collect data from sample of individuals (Ponto, 2015). The choice of this method According to The population of the study consisted of all registered nursing mothers from January-April, 2022, in two selected hospitals in Ede metropolis, namely: Ede Muslim (private) Hospital, Ede (128 registered nursing mothers) and Osun State Maternity Health Center, Oja-Timi, Ede (163 registered nursing mothers), both in Osun State. Therefore, the total population of the study was 291 nursing mothers across the two hospitals.



The sample size for the study consisted of 210 nursing mothers that were randomly selected from the two hospitals. A total of 97 nursing mothers were selected from Ede Muslim Hospital, Ede, while 113 nursing mothers were selected from Osun State Maternity Health Center, Oja-Timi, Ede. The selection of the sample size was based on sample size suggestion by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample table (See Appendix 1). Also, a self-designed questionnaire was the major instrument used for the study, supported by personal observation and 210 copies of the questionnaire were administered from which 149 (70.95%) were returned and used for the analysis (See Table 1).

**Table 1: Population and Sample Size of the Study**

S/N	Hospital	No of Population	Sample	No of Questionnaire Administered	No of Questionnaire Returned
1	Ede Muslim Hospital	128	97	97	83
2	Osun State Maternity Health Center, Ede.	163	113	113	66
<b>Total</b>		<b>291</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>149 (70.95%)</b>

The copies of the questionnaire were administered directly on the respondents by the researchers, who visited the two hospitals on special days dedicated for children immunization, so as to have access to a larger number of the respondents. Also, the researchers assisted some respondents who did not understand English Language to translate the questions into Yoruba Language. The distribution is presented in Table 1.

### **Data Analysis and Results**

**Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents**

Age	Frequency	%
16-20	21	14.09
21-30	75	50.33
31-40	46	30.87
41years above	7	4.68
<b>Total</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Qualification</b>		
Primary	21	14.09
Secondary	84	56.37
Higher Education	44	29.53
<b>Total</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Occupation</b>		
Traders	70	46.97
Self employed	45	31.47
Civil servants	22	14.76
Others	12	8.05
<b>Total</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>100</b>

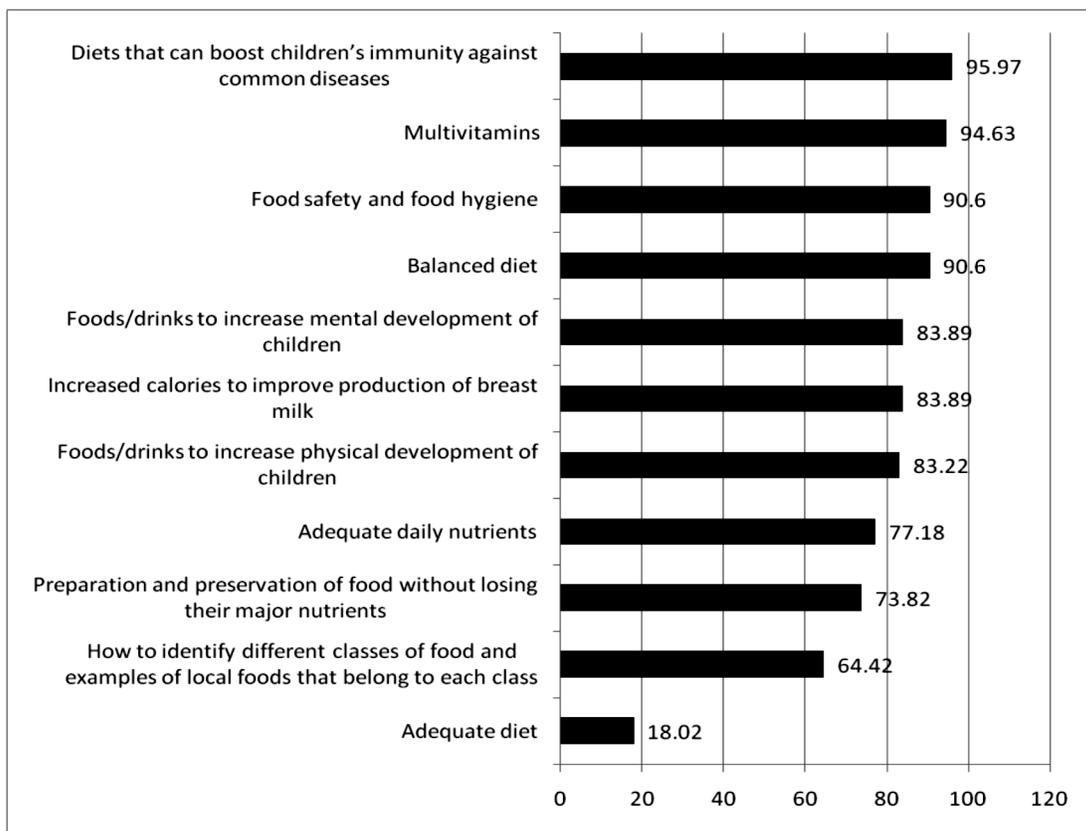
Table 2 shows the demographic distributions of the respondents. It is shown that 21(14.09%) of the respondents are between the ages of 16-20, 75(50.33%) between



the age of 21-30, 46(30.87%) between the age of 31-40, while the remaining 7(4.68%) are above 41years of age. This implies that majority of the respondents are within ages 21-30 while also the 14.09% for those between the ages of 16-20 is also significant. These can be tagged underage or teenage mothers, who are mostly out- of- school girls. Also, in terms of the highest educational qualification of the respondents, Table 1 shows that 21(14.09%) of them have primary school certificate, 84(56.37%) with secondary school certificate, while 44(29.53%) have higher Education certificate. This implies that majority of the respondents have secondary school certificate.

In term of their occupation, it was revealed that 70(46.97%) of them are trader, 45 (31.47%) are self-employed, 22(14.76%) are civil servants while 12(8.05%) have other occupations such as unemployed, students etc. This simply implies that majority of the respondents are traders. This may be due to the fact that Ede is a town with no major industry. So it is expected that most of its dwellers will be traders.

**RQ 1: What are the Nutrition and Dietetics Information Needs of Nursing Mothers in Ede Metropolis, Osun State?**



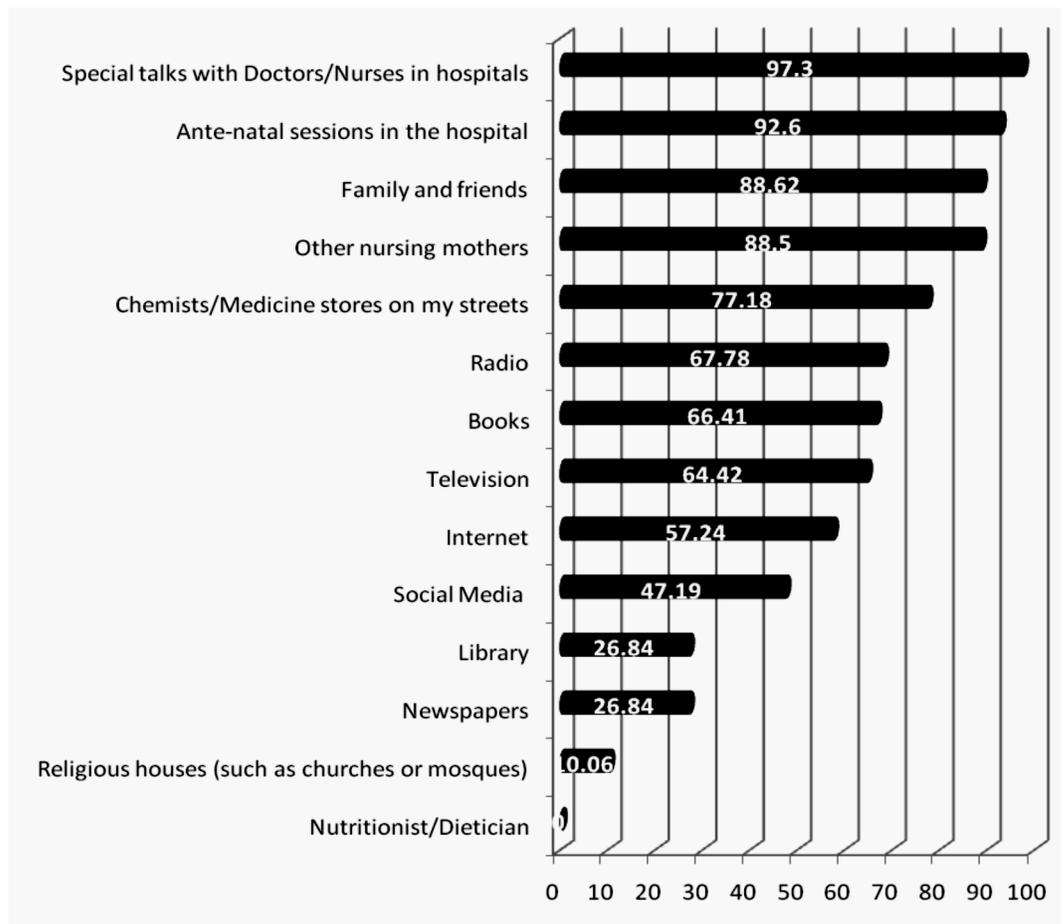
**Figure 1: Nutrition and Dietetics Information Needs of the Respondents (n=149)**

Figure 1 shows different types of nutrition and dietetics information needs of the respondents and that their major types of nutrition and dietetics information needs were on diets that can boost children's immunity against common diseases (95.97%), followed by information on multivitamins (94.63%). Furthermore, some 90.6% also need information on food safety and hygiene, and balanced diet, respectively, while



83.89% claimed to need information on foods/ drinks to increase children’s mental development and food to improve breast milk production, respectively. The least information needs were information on adequate diet (18.02%). This implies that majority of the respondents cared less about adequate diet but only concentrated on balanced diet and food and diets to prevent common diseases.

**RQ 2: What are the Available Nutrition and Dietetics Information Sources Utilized by Nursing Mothers?**



**Figure 2: Nutrition and Dietetics Information Sources Mostly Used by the Respondents (n=149)**

From Figure 2, it is evident that majority of the respondents (145; 97.3%) sought for nutrition and dietetics information through special talks with doctors and nurses in the hospitals, followed by 92.6% through ante-natal sessions in the hospitals. Also, 88.62% sought for information through family and friends while 88.5% claimed through other nursing mothers. Also, it is evident that 77.18% sought for information from street medicine stores, radio (67.78%), and books (66.41%). Furthermore, it is worth noting that only 26.84% claimed to use library and newspapers while no respondents use nutritionists and dieticians. Personal observation of the researchers showed that there is no library within the premises of the two hospitals and no functioning township library in the town. The only available township library and one Islamic township library in the



town are already moribund. Those that claimed to use library may have access to library services elsewhere.

**RQ 3: What are the Preferred Source(s) of Information by the Nursing Mothers in Ede Metropolis?**

**Table 3: Preferred Sources of Information by the Respondents**

SN	Information Sources	Mostly Preferred (%)	Preferred (%)	Not Preferred (%)
1	Television	88 (59.06)	41 (27.51)	20 (13.42)
2	Internet	85 (57.05)	24(16.11)	40 (26.85)
3	Ante-natal sessions in the hospital	85 (57.04)	25 (16.78)	39 (26.17)
4	Special talks with Doctors/Nurses in hospitals	84 (56.38)	52 (34.89)	13 (8.72)
5	Other nursing mothers	75(50.33)	53 (35.57)	26 (17.45)
6	Family and friends	75 (50.33)	58(38.93)	16(10.74)
7	Chemists/Medicine stores on my streets	54 (36.24)	24(16.11)	71 (47.65)
8	Books	52 (34.89)	35 (23.49)	62 41.61)
9	WhatsApp	35 (23.49)	52 (34.89)	62(41.61)
10	Facebook	33 (22.15)	55(36.91)	61(40.94)
11	Religious houses (such as churches or mosques)	26 (17.45)	19 (12.75)	106(71.14)
12	Radio	25(16.78)	64 (42.95)	60 (40.27)
13	Library	18 (12.08)	26 (17.45)	105(70.47)
14	Newspapers	15 (10.07)	18 (12.08)	116(77.85)
15	Instagram	8 (5.37)	26 (17.45)	115(77.18)

Table 3 shows the most preferred sources of nutrition and dietetics information from those available to the nursing mothers. It is evident that majority (88; 59.06%) respondents preferred television. Also, 57.04% preferred Internet and ante-natal sessions, while 56.38% also claimed to mostly prefer special talks with Doctors/Nurses in hospitals. Also, it should be noted that majority (70.47%) claimed not to prefer the library, while 77.85% also claimed not to prefer newspapers. This level of preference is a reflection of sources used as indicated in Figure 2.

**RQ 4: Challenges associated with accessing nutrition and dietetics information by Nursing Mothers in Ede Metropolis**

Respondents were asked to identify various challenges associated with seeking for, and accessing nutrition and dietetics information. Responses are presented in Table 4.



**Table 4: Challenges with Accessing Nutrition and Dietetics Information (n=149)**

SN	Challenges	Frequency	(%)
1	High cost of accessing necessary information	138	92.62
2	Difficulty in accessing doctors or nurses for information	133	89.26
3	Scarcity of needed information materials	98	64.42
4	Lack of access to social media	93	66.41
5	Distance to the sources of information	93	66.41
6	Lack of nutritionist in hospital	85	57.05
7	Lack of access to radio	58	38.92
8	Lack of mobile phones	40	26.84
9	Information are not available in the Language understood	32	21.47
10	Difficulty in accessing information sources and formats	32	21.47
11	Lack of library	30	20.13
12	Lack of access to television	30	20.13

Table 4 shows various challenges associated with accessing needed nutrition and dietetics information by the respondents. It was found that the major challenge in this regard was high cost of accessing necessary information by nursing mothers 138 (92.6%). This was followed by difficulty in accessing doctors or nurses for information 133(89.26%), scarcity of needed information materials 98(64.42%) and lack of access to social media 93(55.41%). Furthermore, some 57.05% claimed lack of nutritionists in hospitals was a challenge, in addition to 32(21.47%) who claimed that nutrition and dietetics information were not available in the language they understood or in desired format. Also, 30(20.13%) claimed lack of libraries and access to television were challenges they faced in accessing nutrition and dietetics information.

### **Discussion of the Findings**

The study shows that a significant percentage of the respondents were between age brackets of 16-20 years and were already nursing mothers. Teenage pregnancy or motherhood is a common occurrence in many of the developing countries in Africa. This may be attributed to high level of poverty and high level of out of school children which made many teenagers got pregnant and start motherhood, when they were expected to be enrolled in secondary or tertiary schools preparing for the future. This is in line with Joel (2021), who noted that teenage pregnancy remains a problem in Nigeria and discovered through a survey that 19.2% of young women aged 15 to 19 in Nigeria had started having children, with 3.1% having given birth before their 15<sup>th</sup> birthday. Also, the finding revealed that majority of the respondents only had primary and secondary education, which is a major concern that they could not further their education. This corroborates Adeyeye's (2020) findings that 72 percent of children, who finish primary education in Nigeria, did not further to secondary school.

The findings also revealed that respondents need different types of nutrition and dietetics information. The most common types of nutrition and dietetics information needed were information on diets that can boost children immunity against common



diseases, multivitamins, food safety/hygiene, and balanced diet while seeking for information on adequate diet received less attention. This is similar to Lee (2018) who found that information on nutrition and dietetics was the third most sought information among nursing mothers in the United States. This current finding is also an indication that respondents concentrated on getting food to eat without recourse to getting adequate diet. This may not be unconnected with high level of poverty affecting most people in the country, in line with the World Bank (2020) observation.

Furthermore, the study revealed that respondents have access to various nutrition and dietetics information sources. The most common type of information sources available to, and used by the respondents are mostly oral (face-to-face) sources, which include special talks with doctors and nurses in the hospitals, anti-natal sessions in the hospital and also, through friends and families; and other nursing mothers. This is also similar to Heather, Della, and Michelle (2014) and Lee (2018) whose findings contradicts that of Quaidoo (2018) finding that online resources were the most popular source used to seek information on nutrition. Furthermore, less attention was on library, social media, newspapers, and religious houses. Also, it is noted that there were no nutritionists/dieticians in the two hospitals. This is in line with the findings of Sutter, Fiese, Lundquist, Davis, McBride, and Donovan (2018) that majority of 93.7% nursing mothers did not have access to nutritionists and dieticians as sources of information in the United States.

The less use of library, newspapers and social media may not be unconnected with the level of education of the respondents as majority of them only had primary and secondary education. One other underlining factor may be social status, which may still be linked to the educational status of the respondents; as those with less education may not be socio-economic buoyant enough to access information from the social media and newspapers. This was attested to under the challenges indicated by the respondents in accessing nutrition and dietetics information as high cost of accessing information top the list. People with less education and income may find it difficult to spend money on things like buying newspapers or data to access information on social media, which results into less access to Internet services (Swenson & Ghertner, 2020; Paul, 2021). Also, despite the facts that many of the national dailies have special columns for nutrition and healthy diets, many of the respondents did not harness this opportunity. This may not be unconnected with their lack of access to library and Internet services, where they can access daily newspapers.

Findings also revealed that television, Internet and ante-natal sessions in the hospitals and special talks with Doctors/Nurses in hospitals were the most preferred sources of information by the nursing mothers. This finding is similar to Megan, Price, Monaghan, Sim, Hunter and Little (2017), Lee (2018) and Ashraf (2021). This is an indication that the respondents preferred information in multimedia formats. However, television and Internet are not among the most commonly used sources. This may be attributed to high cost of having access to the Internet and poor power supply to access television service. Furthermore, the respondents face various challenges in accessing nutrition and dietetics information. The most common challenges are high cost of accessing information; difficulty in accessing doctors and nurses; scarcity of needed information materials and lack of access to social media. High cost of accessing needed information may not be unconnected with high cost of internet data subscription coupled with high level of poverty experienced by majority of Nigerians. Also, as majority of the respondents claimed that doctors/ nurses are the main source of



nutrition and dietetics information available to them, yet they are difficult to access. This may be due to low number of available doctors/nurses in the country, coupled with high level of job demands expected of the available few. This finding is in line with Olawale (2015), Ashraf (2021) and Uwugiaren (2022) that reported low rate of nutritionists and dieticians in Hospitals which has led to patients not having access to preventive health information relating to nutrition and dietetics, thereby making them to use alternative sources.

### **Conclusion**

This study explored the nutrition and dietetics information needs of nursing mothers in Ede Osun State, the criteria nursing mothers consider when selecting an information source, and how source characteristics impact nursing mothers. The findings of this research have provided empirical facts that will be useful for policy makers in the area of information provision for the nursing mothers in Ede, Osun State. Also, the study has contributed to knowledge by exposing the types of nutrition and dietetics information needs of nursing mothers in Ede, Osun State and the challenges they faced in seeking for such information.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that:

1. The hospitals management need to employ the services of qualified nutritionists/dieticians to give related information to the public as it was discovered that such personnel were not available in the two hospitals. Also, there is need for the hospital management to review the procedures in booking a visit/ appointment with doctors and nurses to make such less difficult as it was found out that many of the nursing mothers rely on them as information sources.
2. Also, there is need to emphasize the need for hospitals to have libraries within their premises. This will serve as an alternative source of information in addition to what the doctors and nurses will give. Such libraries should be equipped with multimedia resources as it was discovered that multimedia resources is the most preferred information format indicated by the nursing mothers. Furthermore, librarians to be recruited to manage such hospital libraries should be those who are knowledgeable in information repackaging service and are good at interpreting to Yoruba Language as lack of information in related languages is one of the challenges to accessing information.
3. Also, there is need to revive the moribund township libraries in Ede metropolis and equip them with necessary information resources, personnel and faculties to make them give adequate information to the public. Township libraries will give free access to information as high cost of accessing necessary information was discovered to be a major challenge.
4. Religious houses like churches and mosques can also play a key role in the provision of access to information materials. They can organize seminars where qualified nutritionists and dieticians will be invited to talk to the congregation on related topics. Also, they can buy and keep newspapers and other related information resources where the public can have access to related information. This is because a significant percentage of the respondents claimed that they preferred religious houses as sources of information.



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