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Research Article

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KNOWLEDGE OF CHILD SAFETY AMONG NURSING MOTHERS ATTENDING A TERTIARY HEALTH SETTING IN BENIN CITY

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INTRODUCTION

Children are fragile and tend to explore their physical environment without fear or caution and this action can results to harm, injuries and even death, hence child safety is very paramount. This study investigates knowledge of child safety among nursing mothers attending a tertiary healthcare setting in Benin City. The study was directed with three research questions which used the survey research design. 124nursing mothers who attended the post natal care clinic between May to November 2023 served as the respondents which were purposively selected in relation to dispersed clinic days. A researcher developed questionnaire after validation and reliability (0.81) tested was used for data collection. 120 questionnaires were retrieved duly completed after administration and data analyzed using frequency counts, percentages and Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The study findings revealed that nursing mothers have significant knowledge about child safety; the most common childhood injuries include falls, poisoning, drowning, burns and nursing mothers are well educated about child safety during post natal clinic. The study therefore recommended that health facilities should provide health knowledge on child safety to nursing mothers especially when they come for post natal care and simple preventive facilities and methods such as labeling, enclosed cabinet should be provided by government and hospital management to ensure child safety practices are implemented among others.

Keywords: child safety, knowledge, practice and child health

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Introduction

Having children comes with a lot of responsibilities, and one proximal responsibility is to ensure the safety of children in and outside the home. Child Safety involves the protection of a child or children from danger or situations that can be harmful. It concentrates on protecting infants and young children from harm, dangers and diseases that may arise at home or in child care settings. Children need to have a safe environment, and since they often lack the skills to protect themselves, which makes them more susceptible to harm and danger caregivers, parents and early childhood educators must possess the required knowledge, attitude and skills to ensure child safety. Safety is an important part of popular discourses about how parents should raise their children. The Safety and Protection of Children and their implications for health are current themes in research ,and the study of child safety has also stood out ,given the range of morbidity and mortality levels due to external causes in childhood, the concern with the quality of the environment the child lives on and the impact on his/her development. Thus, the promotion of child safety and health is very relevant. In primary health care, childcare, with regard to health promotion, including child safety, aims to guarantee child growth.

Most societies believe that children have a special right to be kept safe. Laws and agencies have been set up by Government and other Institutions, to ensure that children are protected (Mexa,2019). For example, The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was signed on 20 November, 1989 by 140 Countries. It deals with child-specific needs and right. These laws cannot be duly enforced without the caregiver or parents, since they have a direct access to the kids than the law or agencies. Parents can also be able to protect these rights, which includes right to safety if they have knowledge of it. When little or no attention is paid to the Child's safety, this can result to accidents like; poisoning, falls, burns, choking or suffocation, abduction, abuse and injuries that can affect the child's health, growth and development. In some cases, they can result in diseases and illnesses, which can lead can be life threatening and in severe cases, death can occur. The Knowledge and practice of Nursing mothers about Child Safety refers to the understanding of Nursing Mothers about Child safety and actions taken to ensure the safety of children. According to the World Health Organization (2014) every year, about 830,000 children die from home accidents worldwide. This corresponds to 2,000 child deaths in a day and majority is from developing countries including Nigeria. In addition, majority of children (millions) have been referred to hospital due to home accident-related to injuries, eventually resulting in permanent disabilities. Equally, in Europe and worldwide home injuries are classified as the fourth leading cause of deaths. Though the actual number of accidents and associated harms cannot be established, home accidents are greater than traffic and occupational accidents (Tanir, 2012).

El-Sabely, Yassin and Zaher (2000) contend that ignorance and negligence of the mother is one fundamental cause of accidents in the home. They further argued that it is significant to improve the mother's knowledge, attitude and practice in order to prevent accidents at home. In a study by Ibrahim (2014), 40% percent of deaths which could have been prevented were due to home accidents. A mother's knowledge of such factors associated with child accidents would be helpful in recognizing those factors that pose a threat to the child's health, thereby providing the needed insight for preventive actions for child safety.

Children are exposed to injury risk as they grow and develop. Accidents; fatal and non-fatal, are principal hazards to the preschool children. Home Safety and accident prevention are thus child health trouble today. A lot of children feel harmless and safe in their home, yet unfortunately at home is where most deaths and injuries happen (Alper, 2013). Children have little control over their environment, which increases their risk of accidents and death (World Health Organization, 2009).This makes them highly dependent on their available caregiver which in most cases is the mother. So the mother decides what is safe or what is not safe for the child and she arrives at this decision based on what she knows about the safety implications of a particular situation on the physical, mental and social health of the child. Mothers are always in direct contact with their children at home particularly from infancy and through the preschool age. Ensuring information about safety measures in home accidents, particularly for mothers, are especially important in injury care for children and in reducing incidence of injuries among children as many adverse consequences of injuries can be averted if mothers know what actions to take (Eldosoky, 2012; Çinar&Görak, 2003).

They are responsible to provide safer home environment, to take protective measure and to audit safety of living spaces of children coupled with close supervision (Carlsson, Udén, Håkansson&Karlsson, 2006). According to a Research by; Nour,Alharbi, Alawneh, Al Ansari, Al– Luqmani, Alharbi,et al. (2017), The knowledge of mothers about different aspects of home accidents are generally lacking. Regarding the suitable place to save detergents, 71.88% of mothers correctly know that they should be kept in a high cabinet; however, only 7.81% of them correctly know that they should use cold water fomentation and anti-burn ointment if their child has a burn. Similarly, only 4.69% correctly know what to do in the event of a short circuit and they should shut down the electricity source, ask for help and inspect the airway of their injured child; 10.94% of mothers correctly know the precautions needed for prevention of domestic injuries that include warning children of potential hazards (Mathur, Mehra, Diwan& Pathak, 2018), keeping the emergency number, having first aid kit and fire extinguisher; and only 3.13% of mothers correctly know that they should turn off the gas supply, call your gas supplier and open doors and windows in case of a gas leak. About 71% of mothers doesn't correctly know what to do in cases of chemical poisoning and that they should avoid gastric washing, forced vomiting or giving acids like lemon juice. In a study conductedin Ibadan Southwest Local Government Area, Nigeria, knowledge of mothers was assessed on the types, causes and prevention of domestic accidents among preschool children, fall from slippery floor in the house, burn from hot water/pap/tea and cuts from sharp objects such as blade or knife were identified by 744 (98.4%), 735 (97.2%) and 741 (98.0%) respondents respectively(Howe, Hurtly, Abramsky, 2006).

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Other types of domestic accident identified by the respondents were drinking of poisonous substances like kerosene (92.9%), swallowing of objects like pin, seed or beads (91.9%), eating of soap (92.3%), touching of electrical outlets (93.7%), hitting a child during parental fight (84.9%) and fall from mother's back (77.8%) (Arulogun,Ikolo&Oluwasanu, 2013).

In a research carried out in Egor Local Government Area in Benin city, Edo state, Nigeria among 240 mothers, 204 (85.0%) of the respondents had good knowledge of child injury and violence. Also, 134 (55.8%) of the respondents reported that their child had suffered injury and violence within the previous year before the study. The commonest injury the respondents' children were exposed included falls 58 (43.3%) and cuts 43 (32.1%). 161 (67.1%) of mothers displayed poor practice of child injury and violence prevention and control. In a situation where the mother fails to recognize an unsafe situation or behaviour, the safety of the child can be jeopardized leading to illnesses, accidents and in some cases death. It is against this premise; the researchers want to investigate the knowledge of child safety among nursing mothers attending a tertiary health setting in Benin City.

Research Questions

1. What is the knowledge level of Nursing Mothers attending a tertiary healthcare setting about Childsafety?
2. What are the common childhood injuries/accidents reported by the nursing mothers?
3. Are nursing mothers educated about child safety during post natal care?

Method and Materials

This study adopted the survey research design. Survey research design is a procedure used in obtaining information from a sample or relevant population that is familiar with ideas relating to the objectives of the study (Nwogu, 2001). The Population of the research is all the Nursing mothers with the post natal clinic of the University of Benin Teaching Hospital, Benin City as at September 2023 with a total of two hundred and eighty two (282) nursing mothers. The purposive sampling technique was used to select 124 respondents with recognition to the different post natal clinic days. A researcher developed questionnaire was used for data collection which was duely validated. The reliability of the instrument was tested using split half approach and cronbach alpha correlation was used to determine the coefficient of 0.81.The questionnaire is in two sections. Section A contains particulars of the respondents (Demographic data) such as: age, marital status, highest level of educational qualification, occupation and number of children. Section B contains eighteen (18) questions. These questions are based on the research questions raised by the researchers. The questionnaire was adequately validated and the test re-test was used to ascertain the reliability of three weeks interval and 0.77 was obtained as the coefficient of reliability after the two set of scores were subjected to Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis. Data were collected by nursing staff in the unit after they were trained on the purpose and modalities of administration. 120 questionnaires were retrieved that were duely filled. The Data collected in this study were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages and Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis.

Results and Discussion of findings

Research Question 1: What is the knowledge level of child safety among Nursing Mothers attending a tertiary healthcare setting?

Table 1.0: Results of knowledge of child safety among nursing mothers

Knowledge of child safety	A	**B**	**C**	**D**			**Total f/%**
Child safety is concerned with?	Limiting exposure to danger and harm. 104 (86.6%)	Allowing children to take care of themselves. 10 (8.3%)	None of the above. - -	All of the above 6 (5%)	- **-**	- -	**120** **100**

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Who plays the most important role in promoting a child's safety?	Mother 48 (40%)	Nanny - -	Father 10 (8.3%)	Both parents 62 (51.7%)	- -	- -	 **120** **100**
Ignoring a child's safety can?	Affect the general growth and development of the child 35 (29.2%)	Helps the child to learn safety 0 0	Expose them to harm 30 (25%)	A and C 55 (45.8%)	- -	- -	 **120** **100**
Most childhood injuries occur	At school 37 (30.8%)	On the road 19 (15.8%)	Outside the home 23 (19.2%)	At home 41 (34.2%)	-	-	 **120** **100**
Which of these forms of childhood injuries and accidents are very common?	Fall 40 (33.3%)	Poisoning 45 (45.8%)	Burns 6 (5%)	Drowning 0 0	Cuts 29 (24.2%)	Choking and suffocation - -	 **120** **100**

Table 1.0 shows the knowledge of child safety of the respondents. The table reveals that 104 (86.6%) of the respondents are of the opinion that child safety is concerned with limiting exposure to danger and harm, 62 (51.7%) agrees that both parents play the role of promoting a child's safety, 55 (45.8%) affirms that ignoring a child's safety can affect the general growth and development of the child and expose them to danger, 41 (34.2%) are of the opinion that most childhood injuries occur at home, while 45 (45.8%) agrees that poisoning is the accident that is very common to a child. From the figures and percentage of table 4.7, the researcher can categorically state that child safety is concerned with limiting exposure to danger and harm to a child, both parents plays the role of promoting a child's safety, ignoring a child's safety can affect the general growth and development of the child and expose them to danger, most childhood injuries occurs at home, and food poisoning is the accident that is very common to children.

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Research Question 2: What are the common childhood injuries/accidents reported by the nursing mothers?

Table 2.0: Results of knowledge of child safety among nursing mother

Childhood injuries/accident	**F**	**%**
Falls	42	35
Drowning	14	11.7
Burns and scalds	12	10
Poisoning	32	26.7
Dislocation	4	3.3
Cuts	12	10
Fracture	4	3.3

Table 2.0 revealed several childhood injuries and responses among nursing mothers. From the responses, falls have the highest response (35%)as the most common childhood injuries. Poisoning (26%) is the second highest common childhood injuries. Again, the least common childhood injuries are dislocation and fracture (3.3%).

Research Question 3: Are Nursing Mothers educated about Child safety during post natal care?

Table 3.0: Child safety during post-natal care

Child safety during post-natal care	**Yes**	No	**Total (%)**
During post-natal care, mothers are taught how to keep their children safe	120 100	0 0	**120** **100**
Post-natal care educates mothers on protecting their child from infectious diseases	113 94.2	7 5.8	**120** **100**
Mothers are educated about proper nutrition for their infants during post-natal care	115 95.8	5 4.2	**120** **100**
Post-natal care helps reduce the risk of infant mortality	106 100	14 11.7	**120** **100**
During post-natal care, mothers are taught how to stay healthy, to promote the child's health	120	0	**120**

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	100	0	**100**

Table 3.0 reveals the knowledge of nursing mothers of child's safety during post-natal care. The table revealed that 120 (100%) of the respondents affirms that during post-natal care, mothers are taught how to keep their children safe, 113 (94.2%) agrees that post-natal care educate mothers on protecting their child from infectious diseases, 115 (95.8%) are of the opinion that mothers are educated about proper nutrition for their infants during post-natal care, 106 (88.3%) affirms that post-natal care helps mother reduce the risk of infant mortality, while 120 (100%) agrees that during post-natal care, mothers are taught how to stay healthy, to promote the child's health. From the figures and percentage of table 4.8, the researcher can objectively state that mothers are taught how to keep their children safe during post-natal care, mothers are educated about how to protect their children from infectious diseases during post-natal care, mothers are educated about proper nutrition for their infants during post-natal care, post-natal care helps to reduce the risk of infant mortality, and mothers are taught how to stay healthy, to promote the child's health.

Discussion of Findings

This section discusses the findings of the study. The findings are discussed drawing inferences from author's views in the literature review and relating them to the researcher's point of view based on the result of the study.

Research question one revealed that nursing mothers are well educated and have the knowledge of child safety. Child Safety generally involves the protection of a child or children from danger or situations that can be harmful. It concentrates on protecting infants and young children from harm, dangers and diseases that may arise at home or in Child care settings, and from the findings of this study, one can clearly see that child safety is concerned with limiting exposure to danger. From the findings of this study, ignoring a child's safety can affect the general growth and development of the child, as well as expose them to danger. The home is supposed to be the safest place for a child, but according to the finds of this study, most childhood injuries occur at home and this is in line with Ibrahim (2004) study which states that 40% of deaths which could have been prevented were due to home accidents, and according to the findings of this study, poisoning is the form of accident that is very common amongst children, and this is in agreement with Abhulimhen-Iyoha&Okolo, (2012) that states that accidental childhood poisoning is one of the recognized causes of childhood morbidity and mortality in Nigeria.

Research question two revealed that there are common childhood injuries such as falls, drowning, burns, poisoning, dislocation, cut and fracture. This childhood injuries are common at home, schools and other social settings. Falls is the most common childhood injury, this finding corroborate that of Arulogun, Ikolo&Oluwasanu, (2013). Poisoning from food, chemicals, drugs and other similar liquid revealed a strong prevalent among the childhood injuries. This finding corroborate that of (Mathur, Mehra, Diwan & Pathak, (2018),

Research question three was aimed at finding out if nursing mothers are educated on child safety during post-natal care, and according to the findings of this study, nursing mothers are well educated on child safety during post-natal care as they are taught how to keep their children safe, educated on how to protect their child from infectious diseases, educated about proper nutrition for their infants, taught how to stay healthy to promote the child's health, this finding corroborate with that of Howe, Hurly &Abramsky, (2006). The importance of child safety cannot be overemphasized especially with the surge in the rate of infant mortality and morbidity, and this an area where post-natal care is of huge benefit to society as a whole, and from the findings of this study, post-natal care helps reduce the risk of infant mortality. According to (UNICEF, 2001) A baby born in Nigeria is 30 times more likely to die before age five than one born in an industrialized country, infant and child mortality rates are exceedingly high, and Nigeria ranks 15th highest in the world among countries with high under-five mortality. These make it necessary for nursing mothers to be educated on child safety, and one way of effectively doing this is through post-natal care.

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Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was revealed that Nursing mothers have a reasonable knowledge of Child safety, falls and poisoning are the most common childhood injuries reported by nursing mothers attending the tertiary health care setting. And that there are differences in their knowledge of child safety based on their educational status.

Recommendation

With regard to these findings and conclusion, the following recommendations are made:

- Health facilities should provide health knowledge on child safety to nursing mothers especially when they come for post natal care.
- Simple preventive facilities and methods such as labeling, enclosed cabinet should be provided by government and hospital management to ensure child safety practices are implemented.
- Community women groups should add child safety to their agenda especially for young nursing mothers to promote knowledge and skills of child safety at home, schools and other social settings.
- Parents Teacher Association (PTA) should as matter of urgency discuss child safety in meetings to promote the needed knowledge, skills and practice of child safety

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