

**Original Article**

Quality of Healthcare Services on the Health Outcomes of Postpartum Women in Health Institutions Within Ilorin Metropolis

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ABSTRACT**Background**

Postpartum care is a critical yet often neglected aspect of maternal healthcare in Nigeria. Financial, cultural, and institutional barriers limit access to quality services, contributing to preventable maternal morbidity and mortality.

Aim and Objectives

This study assessed the influence of healthcare service quality on postpartum health outcomes among women in Ilorin Metropolis. It examined women's satisfaction with postpartum care, the relationship between care quality and physical and emotional health outcomes, and the impact of care quality on maternal–newborn practices.

Methods

A descriptive cross-sectional design was employed, involving 343 postpartum women attending public and private health facilities across Ilorin West, East, and South Local Government Areas. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed with descriptive statistics and Chi-square tests.

Results

The Chi-square analysis revealed a significant association between facility type and perceived quality of postpartum care χ^2 (df= 1, p = .000) which indicates that the quality of care received by postpartum women varies by the type of health facility. Women in private facilities reported higher satisfaction with skilled providers, respectful treatment, and privacy. Quality of care was significantly associated with maternal–newborn practices χ^2 (df= 2, p = .000), including early breastfeeding, immunization adherence, and postnatal follow-up.

Conclusion

Healthcare facility type and quality strongly influence postpartum outcomes. Improving standards in public facilities is essential to enhance maternal and infant health.

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Introduction

The quality of postpartum healthcare services is critical for improving maternal and newborn health outcomes (Yee *et al.*, 2021). High-quality care includes the availability of skilled healthcare professionals, essential medical supplies, adequate infrastructure, and comprehensive services such as breastfeeding support, mental health screening, and routine postnatal checkups. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2022) emphasizes that continuous postpartum care can significantly reduce maternal morbidity and mortality, particularly in settings where access to maternal health services is limited. In Nigeria, maternal healthcare continues to face substantial challenges, with postpartum care often receiving less attention compared to antenatal and intrapartum services, thereby increasing the vulnerability of women to preventable complications during the postnatal period (Ramsey-Soroghae *et al.*, 2024).

Physiological recovery following childbirth is a central component of postpartum health. For women who experience vaginal delivery, recovery typically involves healing of the perineum, management of postpartum bleeding, and uterine involution, during which the uterus gradually returns to its pre-pregnancy state (Nelli, 2024).

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of this study to assess the influence of the quality of healthcare services on the health outcomes of postpartum women in health institutions within Ilorin Metropolis.

Specific Objectives

1. To assess postpartum women's satisfaction and perceived quality of healthcare services received in health institutions within Ilorin Metropolis. 2. To examine the influence of quality maternal healthcare services on the physical health outcomes of postpartum women in Ilorin Metropolis.

Research Questions

What is the level of satisfaction and perceived quality of healthcare services among postpartum women in Ilorin Metropolis? How does the quality of healthcare services influence physical postpartum health outcomes?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were analyzed to guide the study;

H₀: There is no significant association between the type of health facility attended and the perceived quality of postpartum care among postpartum women in Ilorin Metropolis.

H₁: There is a significant association between the type of health facility attended and the perceived quality of postpartum care among postpartum women in Ilorin Metropolis.

H₀: There is no significant association between the quality of care received and maternal newborn care practices among postpartum women in Ilorin Metropolis.

H₁: There is a significant association between the quality of care received and maternal newborn care practices among postpartum women in Ilorin Metropolis

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform and guide various stakeholders, including policymakers, healthcare service providers, and women in Ilorin Metropolis, towards enhancing postpartum health needs.

Methodology

A quantitative cross-sectional study was conducted among postpartum women (≤6 weeks post-delivery) attending child immunization services in selected public and private health facilities in Ilorin Metropolis. Six facilities across the three LGAs were selected based on patient load and service availability. The sample size of 343 respondents was determined using Fisher's formula

$$n = \frac{z^2 pq}{d^2}$$

and respondents were selected through a multistage sampling technique (which include Simple random sampling of facilities and Systematic random sampling of participants). Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled "*Quality of Healthcare Services on the Health Outcomes of Postpartum Women in Health Institutions within Ilorin Metropolis.*" Reliability was established using the test-retest method on 20 respondents, with a result of greater than 0.7, to ensure the instrument's reliability. Ethical approval (ERC/MOH/2025/01/376) was obtained from the Kwara State Ministry of Health, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 25 using descriptive statistics, while chi-square tests were performed at a 0.05 level of significance

Result and Discussion**Table 1: Socio-demographic**

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Age	15–19 years	31	9.87%
	20–24 years	63	20.06%
	25–29 years	157	50.00%
	30–34 years	47	14.97%
	35 and above	16	5.10%
Marital status	Married	236	75.16%
	Divorced/Widower	78	24.84%
Religion	Islam	204	64.97%
	Christianity	94	29.94%
	others	16	5.10%
Educational level	No formal education	63	20.06%
	Primary	79	25.16%
	Secondary	141	44.90%
	tertiary	31	9.87%
Occupation	Unemployed	94	29.94%
	Student	16	5.10%
	Self-employed/Trader	126	40.13%
	Civil servant	31	9.87%
	Private sector employee	31	9.87%
	Other	16	5.10%
Number of children	One	31	9.87%
	Two	79	25.16%
	Three	63	20.06%
	Four and above	141	44.90%
Health facilities	Public (Government) hospital	220	70.06%
	Private hospital	94	29.94%

Table 1: Indicates that half of the respondents (50%) were aged 25–29, showing that most postpartum women in Ilorin are within prime reproductive age.

Table 2: Satisfaction & Perceived Quality of Services

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Were you attended to by skilled healthcare professionals	Yes	204	64.97%
	no	110	35.03%
Did you experience respect and dignity during care?	Yes	94	29.94%
	no	220	70.06%
Was your privacy adequately protected?	Yes	220	70.07%
	no	94	29.93%
Were your health concerns adequately addressed	Yes	126	40.13%
	no	188	59.87%
Approximate waiting time before receiving care	Less than 30 minutes	16	5.10%
	30–60 minutes	63	20.06%
	1–2 hours	79	25.16%
	More than 2 hours	157	50.00%
Which essential service did you receive that was most useful	Postpartum medical check-up	47	14.96%
	Blood pressure monitoring	31	9.88%
	Pain assessment/management	47	14.97%
	Breastfeeding support	16	5.10%
	Family planning counselling	31	9.87%
	Baby immunization services	110	35.03%
	Health education on postpartum danger signs	16	5.05%
	others	16	5.15%
Overall quality of care received	Excellent	79	25.16%
	Good	94	29.94%
	Fair	110	35.03%
	Poor	31	9.87%

Table 2: Indicates that Skilled care: 64.97% of postpartum women were attended by skilled professionals; 35.03% were not However 29.94%

experienced respect and dignity during care whereas a much high 70.06% did not.

Table 3: Physical Health Outcomes

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Which health issue was most significant after delivery	Excessive bleeding	109	34.71%
	High blood pressure	63	20.10%
	Fever or infection	79	25.16%
	Severe abdominal/pelvic pain	31	9.87%
	Breast complications	16	5.10%
	Difficulty urinating or defecating	16	5.6%
Were you informed of postpartum physical danger signs before discharge	Yes	141	44.90%
	no	173	55.10%
If you experienced complications, did you seek medical care	Yes	188	59.87%
	no	126	40.13%
Did the care help you recover physically without major complications	Yes	110	35.03%
	No	157	50.00%
	Not sure	47	14.97%

Table 3 indicates that Excessive bleeding (34.7%), infection/fever (25.2%), and high blood pressure (20.1%) were the leading postpartum complications, while others were less frequent. Only 44.9% of women were informed of danger signs before discharge. Among those affected, 59.9% sought care, but just 35.0% fully recovered revealing significant gaps in postpartum care in Ilorin Metropolis.

Discussion

This study revealed that most postpartum women in Ilorin Metropolis were within the active reproductive age group, married, and multiparous, which aligns with findings from national and regional studies (NPC & ICF, 2021; Tiruneh *et al.*, 2022). Although a majority of respondents were attended to by skilled healthcare providers, significant gaps were observed in respectful care, privacy, and waiting time, particularly in public health facilities. Over half of the women reported waiting more than two hours before receiving care, a factor known to negatively influence service satisfaction and health outcomes (Bohren *et al.*, 2019; Oyeneyin *et al.*, 2021).

Physical postpartum complications such as excessive bleeding, infections, and hypertensive conditions were common, consistent with previous Nigerian studies (Allagoa *et al.*, 2021). However, less than half of the respondents were informed about postpartum danger signs before discharge, which may explain the low rate of complete physical recovery observed. The significant association between quality of care and maternal–newborn practices highlights the importance of timely counseling, skilled care, and facility standards in improving breastfeeding initiation, immunization uptake, and postnatal follow-up. These findings underscore the need for strengthening quality standards, particularly in public health facilities, to improve postpartum physical health outcomes and overall maternal care delivery.

Conclusion

The study concludes that while skilled postpartum services are available in Ilorin Metropolis, deficiencies in respectful care, counseling, follow-up, and mental health support negatively affect maternal and newborn outcomes. Postpartum care remains underprioritized within maternal health services.

Recommendations

The study recommends strengthening service quality through provider training, improving public health facility infrastructure, enhancing community-based health education, and reducing financial barriers through expanded health insurance coverage to improve postpartum outcomes in Ilorin Metropolis.

Public Health Impact

Highlights critical quality gaps in postpartum healthcare services in Ilorin Metropolis, particularly in respectful care, waiting time, counseling, and follow-up services. Informs policymakers and health managers on the need to strengthen quality standards in public health facilities to reduce preventable maternal morbidity.

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