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Focus

CULTURE, MEDIA & FILM

Trends in maternal health facilities utilization and women's autonomy in Nigeria (2013-2018): Attainment of sustainable development goals-5

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## Abstract

Maternal health has emerged as a global priority because of a significant gap in the status of the mother's wellbeing between the developed and the less developed countries. Women's equality and empowerment are one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, aimed at ending and eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls both in public and private spheres. The Decision-making power of women is one of the essential factors which influence maternal healthcare service utilization. This study aims to assess the association between women's autonomy and the use of healthcare facilities for delivery in Nigeria. In all, a total of (n = 19,654), 2013 NDHS and (n = 21,340), 2018 NDHS women were analyzed in this study. The association of the socioeconomic and demographic variables, women's autonomy, and healthcare utilization was analyzed using Pearson's chi-square test in the bivariate and binary logistic regressions. Bivariate analysis indicated that all the background factors across the five years preceding the survey have a significant association with the women's autonomy during their last pregnancy ( $P < 0.001$ ). The utilization of healthcare facilities was found to be high and encouraging among Nigerian women. The participation of women in the decision-making process regarding healthcare should be increased for better utilization of healthcare facilities for delivery in Nigeria. These findings made, are based on the recommendations which provide women with equal opportunity of having access to education, health care, decent work, and decision-making processes, which will fuel sustainable economies and humanity at large for all ages in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** autonomy, maternal health, women's autonomy, SDG 5, utilization

**Subjects:** D6D7I14

## 1. Introduction

The sustainable development goals seek to address the key challenges of the 21st century, especially as related to poverty, inequality, and violence against women. The achievement of these lofty goals could be hampered without a paradigm shift in women dependency especially in terms of the choice, timing and the use of healthcare services. While the women also have critical roles to play in all of the SDGs, the non-use of medical facilities could heighten the already high level of maternal morbidity and mortality including that of their infants. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2019) declares a high number of maternal deaths in some parts of the world, which reflects inequities in access to health services and highlights the gap between rich and poor. Nearly 100% of global maternal deaths occur in developing countries, with more than half of these deaths occurring in sub-Saharan Africa and almost one-third happening in South Asia. More than half of maternal deaths occur in fragile and humanitarian settings (WHO, 2019; World Bank Group, 2014). Nigeria, one of the developing countries, accounts for nearly 20% of all global maternal deaths (WHO, 2019). Records indicate that between 2000 and 2015, the maternal mortality rate in Nigeria has reduced from 1,170 deaths to 814 deaths per 100,000 live births, representing (30.4%) decrease (Adamu Hauwa Suleiman, 2011; WHO, 2018).

Despite various national and international initiatives to improve maternal health, more than half a million women from developing countries die each year as a result of complications related to pregnancy and childbirth (Ronsmans & Graham, 2006; WHO, 2005, 2019). While virtually all developed countries have made appreciable progress in curbing the menace of maternal mortality, the terrible rates in Nigeria and other sub-Saharan African countries remain worrisome (F. Fagbeminiyi Fasina & Oni, 2017; WHO, 2019). Besides, between 2000 and 2017, Southern Asia has achieved the greatest overall reduction in maternal mortality ratio with a decline of nearly 60%, from maternal mortality ratio of 384 down to 157 (WHO, 2019).

Additionally, four other sub-regions relatively shared similar experience in terms of MMRs during this period. These include Central Asia, Eastern Asia, Europe, and Northern Africa. According to UN inter-agency estimates, it was observed that from 2000 to 2017, global maternal mortality ratio has declined by 38% from 342 deaths to 211 deaths per 100,000 live births (Hollowell et al., 2011; World Bank Group, 2014; WHO, 2019). Hence, Nigerian mothers should intensify their effort in the utilization of modern healthcare facilities for delivery.