

SENSE MAKING OF ANTENATAL INFORMATION BY PREGNANT WOMEN IN NON-WESTERN CULTURES: USING WIECK'S SENSE MAKING THEORY AS A LENS

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Abstract

This paper explored how pregnant women in Non-Western settings make sense of Antenatal Information. To achieve the objective of the study, Wieck's Sense making theory was used as a lens. A qualitative case study research design was adopted for the study. A purposive sample of 15 pregnant women who registered for antenatal care in the General Hospital were interviewed for the study. The study found that five constructs of the theory; Retrospective, Extraction of Cues, Social, Ongoing and Plausibility explained how pregnant women in the study setting make sense of Antenatal information given to them at the Clinic. The study recommended that further multi-case study researches should be encouraged since Nigeria is multi-cultural in order to develop a formal theory or extend theory to Antenatal Information Use. The study also recommended that spouses should be encouraged to accompany their pregnant wives to the clinic as a social outing; and that mothers-in-law and local midwives be incorporated into antenatal programs so as to change the narratives for future generations.

Introduction

Maternal mortality statistics has continued to highlight the abysmal state of healthcare systems in Sub-Saharan Africa (Usman, Audu, Abubakar, Isa & Sanusi, 2018). This is exemplified by the fact that Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for ninety-nine percent of the global maternal mortality. This translates into 800 women dying daily from complications related to preventable issue associated with pregnancy and child birth. The severity of the menace of maternal mortality is underscored by the concerted efforts of Governments worldwide in making maternal mortality the third goal in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This goal targets a Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) of less than 70 deaths per 100,000 live births by 2030. More so, several Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) support pregnancy related health programs either by working solo or as partners with Government agencies within the confine of the law (Fadeyi, 2007). Other than NGOs, United Nations agencies like World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), are intensifying efforts to reduce pregnancy mortality.

All these endeavors have suggested Antenatal care information services as one of the viable solutions to maternal mortality. For instance, the WHO has built capacities of midwives, doctors, and other health workers. UNICEF has contributed to reducing pregnancy mortality through funding of emergency obstetric care, supporting and financing sensitization campaigns on good prenatal care, organization and training of medical personnel to be able to prevent mother-to-child transmission of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and encouraging girl-child education as part of the antenatal care information services.

Statement of the problem

Nigeria is second to India in the rating of countries with high pregnancy mortality globally (WHO, 2015; Sawicki et al, 2011; Longo et al. 2010 Kidney, Singh and Darroch, 2009). The country is considered one of the most dangerous places in the world to give birth (Polycarp, 2018). 109 women of this figure die daily in Nigeria (Izugbara, Wekesah & Adedini, 2016). Northern Nigeria accounts for the highest maternal mortality rate in Nigeria. Kaduna State for example has a maternal mortality rate of 1025/100,000 live births (Akhaine, 2018).

Empirical inquiries into this problem has shown that one of the possible remedies to reducing high maternal mortality is the utilization of Antenatal Care Information services by pregnant women (Izugbara, Wekesah & Adedini, 2016; Akhaine, 2018; Yani, 2019). Antenatal care information services are preventive information that allows for early identification and management of life threatening illnesses and conditions to the mother and her infant during the period of gestation (Fagbamigbe & Idemudia, 2015). It influences health behavior; build women's confidence in their ability to give birth; informing them about pain relief; preparation for parenthood; and promote breastfeeding (Ingegard Ahlden, Siw Ahlehagen, Dahlgren, & Josefsson, 2012). Thus, antenatal information comprises a range of educational and supportive measures that help women to understand their own social, emotional, psychological and physical needs during pregnancy, labour, and motherhood (Corragio, 2011). However, even with the importance of Antenatal care information services and the fact that in Kaduna state, antenatal care information services are free in primary health care centres, the state still has high maternal mortality rate. The state also has low uptake of the Antenatal care information services, (Yani, 2019).

In order to reduce this high mortality rate among pregnant women in Kaduna state, there is the need to explore how pregnant women make sense of the Antenatal information that is given to them at the Antenatal clinics they attend. A promising perspective to exploring the way pregnant women make sense of information is by using Wieck Sense making theory as a lens.

Sense Making and Utilization of information

In scholarly circles, making sense of information precedes the use of such information or not (Dervin, 1983). Making sense of information is described as the development mental frames from past experiences that provides plausible models upon which to evaluate ambiguous information. The development of these mental frames, according to Wieck (1993) is an ongoing exercise that starts from the recognition of cues from past experiences or from social interaction, these cues become frames that are used by groups to make sense of similar or ambiguous situations, after which actions are taken. This presupposes that information is utilized only when it makes sense to the individuals that are given the information.

The utilization of antenatal information is therefore dependent on the sense that is made of it. Utilizing antenatal information by pregnant women improves good pregnancy outcome, increases survival of the pregnant woman and longevity (Boulos, Maramba, and Wheeler, 2006). Thus, the use of antenatal information as an effective approach to reducing the risk associated with pregnancy complications (Haliu, Gebremariam, and Alemseged, 2010) is a product of the sense that pregnant women make of the information.

Wieck's Sense making Theory

Wieck's Sense making theory arose from Karl Wieck's work on "Sensemaking in organizations". Sense making is the process involved in understanding information which will aid in deciding whether or not to take action. Wieck postulated that people frame the continuous flow of experience by noticing some aspects or cues extracted from the environment and imposing labels and categories on them and ignoring others. To understand use or non-use of information, we need to understand what influences people to notice some cues or data and not others as part of sense making. When people make positive sense of information they use it. But when they do not make sense of it or they make negative sense of the information, they do not use the information.

Constructs of Wieck's Sensemaking Theory

Wieck's sense making theory has seven distinguishing constructs that set sense making apart from other explanatory processes (Wieck's, 1995). These seven constructs include Identity Construction, Retrospect, Enactment of Sensible environments, Social, Ongoing, Extracted cues, and Plausibility.

Theoretical Literature of previous studies that adopted Wieck's Sense making Theory

In the quest to develop this theory, several scholars have used Wieck's Sense-making theory in different disciplines, contexts and situations using different research designs and data analysis methods. This theory has been particularly used as theoretical framework for studies that explored the way groups make sense during emergencies. This section discusses some of these studies.

In the field of Higher Education, Parrish (2015) examined how Catholic university leaders make sense of undocumented student access and the roles stories play in the sensemaking of these leaders. This study adopted Leadership theory and Karl Wieck's sense making theory as theoretical frameworks. The study is a qualitative research. Semi structured interviews were used to collect data from leaders in 12 US Catholic Universities. Data collected for the study were analysed using thematic analysis. The study found that leaders are continuously engaged in ongoing sensemaking, constantly asking on behalf of their schools, "What's going on here? What's the story?" As leaders become more familiar with circumstances that have the potential to have an effect on their institutions, that is, as leaders extract environmental cues to create plausible accounts of what is going on—they reduce the equivocality that results from an overabundance of possible meanings from which to choose from.

Maran's (2016) study in the field of Humanities, explored how staff members and volunteers at a non-profit human service organisation make sense of and enact the idea of quality in their environments. The study employed an interpretive approach and took the form of a single-case holistic case study. Using thematic analysis, several themes emerged from the data, which suggest that in order to deconstruct the idea of quality, as it exists in the minds and behaviours of organisational members, it is critical to obtain insight into the social and context driven processes that influence sensemaking. The study found that Wieck's theoretical insights were instrumental in terms of analyzing and „making sense“ of the data presented in this study. His insights were pivotal in terms of explaining why and how quality was made sense of and enacted in the organisation. The sensemaking paradigm is concerned not necessarily with practices and events as they exist on the surface“, but rather how people construe and make sense of them. Therefore,

while certain staff and volunteer members in the organisation might not necessarily agree with certain quality practices, they might tend to adhere to them due to various factors described previously. Consequently, by obtaining insight into the social and context driven processes that influenced sensemaking, the idea of quality as it existed in the minds of mental health professionals and how it was enacted in the organisation could be deconstructed.

Wang (2016) undertook a study in the field of educational leadership aimed at guiding the group members to better interpret the ongoing process of organizational sensemaking in an educational change climate in Finland. 12 participants were invited to present their comments towards the work done by the leading group. The study adopted a qualitative research methodology and a case study research design. Cyberspace was preferred as the main instrument. Cyberspace provides the versatility as the research platform offer chances in an arena that is not geographically restricted. In addition, there was no consideration regarding traveling, recording or transcribing. Moreover, an online survey could lead the informants to be more willing to articulate their real ideas. Content analysis was used to analyze the data collected for the study. The study found that in the curriculum reform process, individuals faced evolving disorder, enabling some changes through time. As a result of these changes, a seemingly correct action “back then” became an incorrect action “now”. Therefore, retrospect is of significance in diagnosing mistakes in an educational change process. Members will look back to their previous experience when they are confused about the emerging information. The study also found that social context might include the previous discussion with other members, or a document describing the latest policies. It was common to see that team members were willing to share what they considered essential in such a dynamic context. The emerging information did not bring efficiency with sharing. It might be another paradox of being confused: the more you shared, the more you became confused; the more you became confused, the more you wanted to share with others. The study also revealed that when the Finnish National Board of Education attempted to reform the curriculum from the central to the local, each member in the leading group played a key role, as they were both the recipients and the executors of the new policy. However, as the preparation work proceeded, the common understanding demanded that the group members to make sure they had correctly interpreted the reform plans, or if they had developed the proper strategies. Personal interpretation cognitively reflected the schemata of individuals. The schema acted as the mental model enabling people to match emerging information and thus, determined “what do they mean. This study highlighted the constructs of the theory that explained the sensemaking process of individuals in the study. Based on the sense made, the reform was accepted.

In the field of Strategic human relations management and labour relations, Medina (2017) examined how immigrants make sense of their employability and end up in the cleaning sector in Gothenburg, Sweden. The study adopted two theories; Weick’s sensemaking theory and the Dual market theory. The study adopted the qualitative research methodology and data was collected using semi-structured interviews with immigrant employees, personnel managers and CEOs in cleaning companies in Gothenburg, Sweden. The study found that immigrants make-sense of their labour integration in the cleaning business based on their identity construction as immigrant or foreigners and the limited occupation opportunities that this implicate in the social context in which live. Their perceived employability is not different from the population in general. However, is in a disadvantaged position, as the connections draw on usually to secondary sectors as cleaning. The cleaning sector offers an entrance to the labour market and an income, but cannot provide with more than this, as the same sector is subject to stereotypes and marginalization from the society.

The employability of an individual is a key aspect to understand labour integration, particularly of immigrants. Labour integration goes beyond an income; it creates a social link and the social interaction between the organization and the individual shape both. In the case of the individual, shapes present and future occupational identity. And regarding the organizations it shapes their management practices.

Banks (2018) examined the sensemaking process of Assistant Principals (Aps) as they adjudicate office discipline referrals. APs, the school personnel primarily responsible for determining student disciplinary consequences, are integral and understudied members of the educational community. The study was predicated on the need to reduce the well-documented number of black males disproportionately excluded from the learning environment and to combat the negative cumulative effects of these unbalanced practices. By examining and discussing the sensemaking processes utilized by APs when making disciplinary decisions, a gap in literature has been addressed providing a reference point for future researchers, as well as tools to improve the professional practice of school practitioners and social justice advocates. The study adopted Wieck's Sensemaking theory as theoretical framework. This study adopted an exploratory, qualitative approach delivered through a multi-case study design. The participants within the study were secondary APs who shared similar experiences as urban secondary school administrators, yet their experiential backgrounds differed. The secondary APs are employed at the site district, which is located in an urban local in Southeast Texas. The study found out that the construction of identity informed the disciplinary approach of APs, including their use of exclusionary discipline. Retrospect was heavily practiced by the participants of this study, particularly when attempting to determine the truth from students while investigating an office discipline referral. The study also revealed that through questioning strategies, careful listening, and synthesis of information, APs engaged in a dual retrospective cycle to evaluate information and achieve a clearer picture of the truth. The first retrospective cycle began with fact finding via investigative methods. The second cycle occurred concurrently with the first cycle and informed the understanding of the AP as she/he discovered new information, generating connections from previous events. The participants of this study played an active role in shaping their environment through coaching culturally incompetent teachers which serves as an opportunity for teacher growth and reduction of the racial discipline gap.

Methodology

Qualitative case study design was adopted for the study. The design was adopted because this study explored in-depth the way pregnant women make sense of antenatal information they receive at General Hospital, Kafachan. The phenomenon being "the way they make sense of antenatal information". The natural setting and the real-life context being the General Hospital, Kafachan. 15 pregnant women that are registered for Antenatal Care services and have attended 4 antenatal lectures were purposively selected for the study. Semi-structured interview and non-participant observation were used to collect data for the study.

Results

The constructs of Wieck's sense making theory that explains the understanding of pregnant women on the antenatal information they receive during antenatal clinic in General Hospital in Kafachan

Karl Wieck's Sensemaking theory explains the use and non-use of information by groups of individuals based on their understanding of the situation at hand. The theory has seven constructs; 1) Identity Construction 2) Retrospect 3) Enactment of Sensible environments 4) Social 5) Ongoing 6) Extracted cues, and 7) Plausibility.

In the context of this study, five of the constructs explained the understanding of pregnant women on the antenatal information they receive during the antenatal clinic in General Hospital, Kafanchan. These includes:

Retrospection: The retrospection process is about subjectively selecting moments out of the past experiences to help guide the process of understanding and decision making (Humphreys, Ubasaran and Lockett, 2012). An individual chooses what to reflect on in order to have insights for decisions towards the future. The decisions cannot be objective as they are based on the subjectively selected moments of the past. The ability to forecast the future is strongly dependent on how the past has been comprehended. It does not mean the decision making is a replica of the past but rather the lived experiences provide wisdom and knowledge to make sense of the present in order to predict the future. Pregnant women who visit General Hospital, Kafanchan use their experiences in the past to gauge the information they receive at General Hospital, Kafanchan. For example, they believe that their forefathers did not have these types of information but they lived healthy lives and nowadays with the use of these types of information more women die during birth. A participant remarked that "...*No wonder pregnant women lose their lives more these days than when I was growing up in the village where there was no clinic/advice from medical practitioners...*" They believe these types of information have unpleasant consequences and causes ill health to women.

Extraction of Cues: Individuals extract and notice cues/events that fit the template of their mental modelling (Weick, 1995). Cues are minimal sensible structures that are drawn from existing frames. Cues exist in frames and not the other way round. Frames include ideologies, paradigms, theories, tradition and stories. In this study setting, pregnant women see these types of information as western agenda to rob them of their little resources. They also believe the use of these types of information entails copying westerners that they do not trust. Participant 5 opined that "*We are only copying the westerners*"

Plausibility: Plausibility means that if we lack information, we settle for what is most likely. As Goffman (1974) said, we would rather have some explanation than none at all. A plausible understanding is like a map that enables the sense-makers to have a better grasp of what is taking place in their environment. Plausibility refers to thinking that is reasonable to the sense-maker but also resonates well with other people. The reasonableness of thoughts and actions take place when they are innovatively and coherently constructed retrospectively by using past experiences and expectations. The aim of plausible reasoning is to provide clarity on observable phenomena for a good story to tell. The story to tell must be understood by other people. The story is never a perfect narrative of reality. Pregnant women in this study setting do not use antenatal information because of the distrust of the information and their perceived usefulness of the information. The information also contradicts their culture and religion and so they hold on to the plausible explanation they have on how to manage their pregnancies as dictated by their experiences and their culture. Participant 5 noted that,

“I think the manufacturers connived with the medical practitioners to deceive us so that we can patronize their products. This is because they give us a list of what to eat to remain healthy. Some of these foods end up causing more harm than good. I don’t follow their advice. I eat what I have and I am strong and healthy I think the information is not useful”.

Social: The meaning of any particular phenomenon is socially constructed. The social construct is process in which individuals need interactions with peers in order to translate what is going on in an environment (Maitlis, 2005). Interactions include face-to-face conversations, previous discussions, meetings, protocols, and other types of interactions that spread across an organization. Social interaction establishes an organizational environment, which is constantly changing because of social interaction. Social interactions influence the environment and the way sense is constructed. For example, cultural practices are transmitted through folktales, social gatherings or during festivals. In this study setting pregnant women in Kafanchan make sense of antenatal information through their interactions with their mothers, mothers-in-law and their friends that transmit their cultural beliefs through the aforementioned channels of transmission. These conversations and interactions provide the context for sense making and utilization of information. Participant 2 stated that *“she got advice from her mother in law who advised her not to take pills or any method of family planning given to her at the hospital because, when the need for her to conceive again would come she would not be able to...”*. Also, participant 4 reported that, *“My friend advised me to use the traditional medicine for spacing my children”*.

Ongoing: Ongoing implies a sequential process that flows on and on. That is, we are constantly making sense of what is going on around us and building on that sense to make more of it in the future. The key thing about on-going flows in sensemaking is not that the quest for meaning making never gets to a stage where a sense that has been arrived at is acceptable. Instead, whenever there is some form of interruption and change, such interruptions and changes triggers flow towards sensemaking of the interruption or change. This explains why sensemaking never begins or stops. In this study setting, pregnant women make sense of antenatal information and do not use it from everyday experiences, they believe for example that the drugs they are advised to take do not cure STDs and traditional herbs are better natural and do not have consequences. Participant 14 put it this way:

“I know that they (medical personnel) don’t have much knowledge of these diseases (STDs). The traditional medicine providers give us detail information and the remedy to this STDs. I think the herbal medicine is better than all these stories that have no end and no remedy”.

Conclusion

The study established that five of the constructs of Weick’s sense making (Retrospection, Extraction of cues, social, plausibility and Ongoing) explain the understanding and consequently the use of antenatal information among pregnant women at General Hospital Kafanchan.

Recommendation

Based on the finding of this study, the study recommends that:

1. The Ongoing and Social constructs should be used to enhance the utilization of antenatal information among women. Antenatal information provision should be ongoing, it should be incorporated into routine talk shows on TV and Radio programs.
2. Husbands should be encouraged to attend antenatal clinics with their spouses so that it becomes a social event like going out.
3. Mothers-in-law and local midwives should be coopted into the antenatal care service providers. Their participation in the program will help change the narrative for future generations and this will serve as a tool for retrospection and extraction of cues upon which sense will be made by future generations.

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