



## PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF EXERCISE AMONG PREGNANT WOMEN IN WADATA, MAKURDI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, BENUE STATE

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### Abstract

*This research study was carried out on the perceived benefits of exercise among pregnant women in Wadata, Makurdi Local Government, Benue State. The objectives of the study are to examine the perception of the benefits of exercise among pregnant women in Wadata, Makurdi Local Government Area, Benue State, to examine the importance and benefit of exercise among pregnant women in Wadata, to identify the factors affecting pregnant women's participation in exercise. The significance of the study will reveal the perception of pregnant women on exercise, educate on the benefits of regular exercise by pregnant women and factors affecting women participation in exercise during pregnancy and contribute to the body of literature in the area of exercise in pregnancy as it will serve as a valuable resource material to future researchers. A descriptive research design was used and a total number of 100 respondents were selected through simple and systematic random sampling. The instrument used for data collection was structured questionnaire. Collected data were analyzed using frequency and percentage. Findings revealed that pregnant women perceive exercise as beneficial and important during pregnancy; and age, culture and beliefs do not hinder women from engaging in exercise during pregnancy.*

**Keywords:** Benefits, Exercise, Pregnant Women

## **Introduction**

In recent years, there has been a great increase of knowledge derived from scientific studies regarding physical exercise during pregnancy (Mason, Wong, Davies & Bamber, 2010). These reflects the need to clarify their effects for mothers and fetus, as some women of child bearing age report exercising and may continue their exercise practice during pregnancy, whereas other sedentary women may start this practice only during pregnancy.

As the effect of healthy life style are well known and supported by studies that show it is safe for both mother and fetus, physical exercise is a recommended activity for pregnant women. The American College of Obstetrician and Gynecologists (2015) recommends that all healthy pregnant women follow the American College of Sports Medicine. The Centre for Disease Control and Preventions (2016) general guidelines for physical exercise by engaging in 30 minutes or more of moderate physical activity per day in the majority or preferably all days of the week. Women who were active before pregnancy may continue their activities, but change intensity and frequency over the course of pregnancy. Some researchers argue for the necessity of incorporating strength training and muscle conditioning, revising the definition of moderate exercise, and increasing the amount of vigorous intensity exercise and weekly physical activity expenditure. Aerobic exercise is recommended to maintain cardiovascular fitness and to help prevent chronic diseases, apart from avoiding excessive weight gain (Valim, Osis, Cecatti, Simony, Nascimento, Surita & Jose, 2011). They should involve large muscle groups in activities such as when walking or jogging, using stationary bicycle, treadmill, swimming, water aerobic exercises, aerobic dance, or low-impact aerobics. Regardless of the choice of activity, it is important that women find a modality of exercise which they will adhere over the long term. Those exercises that increase the risk of falling, abdominal traumas and contacts sport should be contraindicated (Valim et al., 2011). The possible benefits of increasing strength and stretching training are improvement in overall body strength, good posture and body core strengthening that may contribute in labor, birth and prevent musculoskeletal discomforts. In addition pelvic floor muscle strengthening is also an important component in pregnant women's exercise. Routine exercise is required to reduce the prevalence of urinary incontinence.

Nevertheless, there is little evidence based literature concerning these practices, so it is recommended be careful when women planning to engage in these activities, mainly when starting during pregnancy. Attention should also be paid in avoiding exercise in supine position during the second half of pregnancy in order to prevent hypotension and avoid the valsalva maneuver throughout the pregnancy. Previously, sedentary women should start with 15 minutes of exercise thrice a week and gradually increase to 30 minutes four times a week at low to moderate intensity. Active women may keep their routine exercise or perform at least moderate to vigorous exercise four times a week in sessions of 30 minutes or more. Athletes or women who have higher fitness status should be evaluated individually. Some high impact activities or sports with fall or trauma risks should be reduced. Brief warm up and cool down periods should be incorporated to each session of exercise.

## **Statement of the problem**

In Nigeria, there has been increased awareness about the benefits of exercise among pregnant women. Some clinical trials has been conducted to evaluate the effect of exercise on maternal

outcome such as low back/pelvic pain, depression during pregnancy and post partum, gestational weight gain and insulin resistance, urinary incontinence symptoms, cardiovascular fitness, and the impact of exercise on quality of life and health status perception. Musculoskeletal discomforts such as lower back, pelvic and/or joint pain are common complaints during pregnancy associated with the anatomical adaptations during pregnancy and previous risks factors. However, active women are able to better handle the condition. Musculoskeletal pain can also be attenuated with physical activity in some women who present mild pelvic and lumber discomfort. So this study is coming at the right time to assess the perception of pregnant women in Benue State on the benefit of exercise during pregnancy.

Despite the efforts of stakeholders, government and other relevant health organizations to improve or encourage prenatal exercise, there seem to be little or no improvement on the perception of the importance and benefits of exercise in pregnancy. The researcher observed this during inspection on community posting that most pregnant women have little or no knowledge of the benefits of exercise in pregnancy. More so, some pregnant women find it very difficult to engage in exercise despite knowing the benefits of exercise. Hence, this study to examine the perception of the importance of exercise by pregnant women and the factors affecting pregnant women in engaging in exercise during pregnancy in Wadata, Makurdi Local Government Area, Benue State.

### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study was to examine Perceived benefits of exercise on pregnant women in Wadata, Makurdi, Benue State. Specifically, the study will:

- i. Examine the perception of the benefits of exercise among pregnant women in Wadata, Makurdi Local Government Area, Benue State.
- ii. Examine the importance and benefit of exercise among pregnant women in Wadata, Makurdi Local Government Area, Benue State.
- iii. Identify the factors affecting pregnant women's participation in exercise in Wadata, Makurdi Local Government Area, Benue State.

### **Research questions**

The research intends to answer the following research questions:

- i. What is the perception of benefits of exercise among pregnant women in Wadata, Makurdi Local Government Area, Benue State?
- ii. What are the importance and benefits of exercise on pregnant women in Wadata, Makurdi Local Government Area, Benue State?
- iii. What are the factors affecting pregnant women's participation in exercise in Wadata, Makurdi Local Government Area, Benue State?

## Methodology

The survey research method was used for this study. This was considered appropriate because it is used to effectively investigate problems in realistic settings. The survey technique also allows researchers to examine several variables and use multivariate statistics to analyze data.

The research setting is the Primary Healthcare Centre Wadata, Makurdi local government area, Benue State. Wadata is located at the north western part of Makurdi local government area. It is made up of two constituencies - Wadata north and Wadata south, Clerk Market and Central South Mission ward, in Makurdi south state constituency. Wadata community in Makurdi local government area of Benue State was created in 1970.

Wadata is bounded in the north by River Benue, modern market in the east, Ankpa quarters in the south and the Federal Medical Centre in the East. It highly populated with a population of density of about 66,000 (National Population Census, 2006).

It is a crowded environment with poor ventilation. River Benue is the main source of water. The most dominated ethnic group is the Hausa, Tiv, Idoma, Igbo, Igede and Jukun. Majority of the residents are Muslims and Christians.

Institutions available in Wadata include; Nursery and Primary Schools, Secondary Schools and Arabic Schools. Wadata community has access to so many private health clinics and a tertiary health institution Federal Medical Centre which enables easy referral of cases. The main occupations of the people in Wadata are Fishing, Farming, Trading, Civil Service and other businesses.

The target population of this study comprised of pregnant women in Wadata, Makurdi local government area. The target population was two hundred (200) pregnant women as they came into the clinics.

The sample for this study comprised 50 pregnant women which is 25% of 200 pregnant women in the data collected from Primary Health Centre Wadata.

$$\text{Sample size estimate} = \frac{25}{100} \times \frac{200}{1} = 50$$

$$\text{Sample size} = 50$$

This study adopted the simple random sampling technique in order to ensure that every subject of the population has an equal chance of or probability of being included in the sample. This is the type of sampling design in which each sampling unit has equal and independent chance of being included or selected in the sample. This sampling design is easy to carry out and cost-effective. It is also not prone to bias. In this study, all the pregnant women in Wadata, Makurdi local government area has equal and independent chance of being included in the sample.

The instrument that was used for this study is a questionnaire which comprised closed questions covering the content in line with the objective of the study. The questionnaire had

sections “A” and “B”. Section “A” was made up of Demographic Data while section “B” comprised the main questions of the topic of the study and structured in a four likert scale measuring attitude of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree.

In order to obtain the validity of the instrument, the supervisor of this research was requested to judge the appropriateness, comprehensiveness and clarity of items in the questionnaire.

The reliability of the instrument was ascertained through a pilot study that was conducted in a similar facility as the responses collected were found reliable, valid and relevant.

The researcher personally collected data from pregnant women residing in Wadata, Makurdi local government area, Benue State. After distribution of the questionnaire, respondents were given three days to fill the questionnaire. This time frame was given so that respondents will have enough time to reflect on the items on the questionnaire in order to provide valid responses.

## Results

### Presentation of results using tables

#### Section A: Demographic Data

**Table 1: Showing the age of the respondents**

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
16-20	12	12
21-25	25	25
26-30	44	44
31-35	13	13
36 and above	6	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Field survey, 2020*

Table 1 shows that 44 (44%) of the respondents are between the age range of 26-30 years.

**Table 2: Showing marital status, level of education, religion and tribe of the respondents**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	14	14
Married	82	82
Divorced	4	4
Widowed	0	0
<b>Class</b>		
Primary education	10	10
Secondary education	24	24
Tertiary education	56	56
Others	10	10
<b>Religion</b>		
Christianity	78	78
Islam	18	18
Traditional worshipper	4	4
Others	0	0
<b>Tribe</b>		
Tiv	38	38
Idoma	32	32
Igede	14	14
Others	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Field survey, 2020*

Table 2 shows that 82 (82%) of the respondents are married, 56 (56%) have tertiary education, 78 (78%) are Christians and 38 (38%) are Tiv by tribe.

**Table 3: Perceived benefits of exercise among pregnant women**

<b>Items</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Total</b>
Pregnant women do not engage in regular exercise	42	30	18	10	100
	42%	30%	18%	10%	100
Pregnant women are often advised by health professionals to regularly exercise	64	32	4	0	100
	64%	32%	4%	0%	100
Pregnant women need regular exercise to ease delivery	76	22	2	0	100
	76%	22%	2%	0%	100

*Source: Field survey, 2020*

Table 3 shows 72 (72%) respondents agree that on pregnant women do not engage in regular exercise, 96 (96%) agree that pregnant women are often advised by health professionals to regularly exercise and 98 (98%) agree that pregnant women need regular exercise to ease delivery.

**Table 4: Importance and benefits of exercise to pregnant women**

Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total
Exercise during pregnancy helps reduce backaches, constipation and edema	62 62%	32 32%	5 5%	1 1%	100
Exercise during pregnancy improves body energy and prevent gestational diabetes	50 50%	36 36%	8 8%	6 6%	100
Exercise during pregnancy improves the women's mood	38 38%	58 58%	4 4%	0 0%	100
Exercise during pregnancy improves on general body posture	54 54%	44 44%	0 0%	2 2%	100
Exercise during pregnancy improves on muscle tone, strength, and endurance	68 68%	38 38%	2 2%	2 2%	100
Exercise during pregnancy helps the women sleep better	38 38%	56 56%	6 6%	0 0%	100
Regular activity also helps keeps the women fit during pregnancy and improve ability to cope with labour and also help her regain pregnancy shape	56 56%	36 36%	6 6%	2 2%	100

*Source: Field survey, 2020*

Table 4 shows 94 (94%) respondents agree that exercise during pregnancy helps reduce backaches, constipation and edema, 86 (86%) agree that exercise during pregnancy improves body energy and prevent gestational diabetes, 96 (96%) agree that exercise during pregnancy improves the women's mood, 98 (98%) agree that exercise during pregnancy improves on general body posture, 96 (96%) agree that exercise during pregnancy improves on muscle tone, strength, and endurance, 94 (94%) agree that exercise during pregnancy helps the women sleep better while 92 (92%) agree that regular activity also helps keeps the women fit during pregnancy and improve ability to cope with labour and also help her regain pregnancy shape.

**Table 5: Factors influencing the perception of the benefits of exercise among pregnant women**

Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total
I have not been told about antenatal exercise during antenatal clinic before	62 62%	32 32%	5 5%	1 1%	100 100
My culture and belief don't allow exercise in pregnancy	50 50%	36 36%	8 8%	6 6%	100 100
Because of my age, I don't like antenatal exercise	0 0%	34 34%	44 44%	22 22%	100 100
I did not have access to health center and clinics	4 4%	46 46%	26 26%	24 24%	100 100

*Source: Field survey, 2020*

Table 5 shows that 94 (94%) respondents agree that they have not been told about antenatal exercise before during antenatal clinic before; 86 (86%) agree that their culture and belief don't allow exercise in pregnancy; 66 (66%) disagree that because of their age, they don't like antenatal exercise; 50 (50%) agree that they did not have access to health centers and clinics.

## Discussion

### Research Question One: What is the perception of the benefits of exercise among pregnant women?

Findings revealed that 98% of the respondents have a positive perception of the benefits of exercise among pregnant women. In agreement, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) in Opiah, James & Osaji (2019) stated that exercise during pregnancy is perceived important as it increases blood circulation in the body system of a pregnant mother. Estelle, Watson, Oddie and Constantinou (2015) in corroboration, stated that there is compelling evidence of the perception of the benefits of regular exercise during pregnancy.

### Research Question Two: What are the importance and benefits of exercise on pregnant women?

From the findings, the researcher gathered that 98 (98%) agree that pregnant women need regular exercise to ease delivery. Also, in table 5, 96 (96%) of the respondents agree that exercise during pregnancy improves on muscle tone, strength, and endurance. This agrees with the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (2014) when they stated exercise during pregnancy helps reduce backaches, constipation, bloating and edema; improves body energy and prevent gestational diabetes; general body posture; muscle tone, strength, and endurance; and helps pregnant women sleep better.

In agreement, Miller (2017) said that exercise during pregnancy can help shorten the labour process, increase the chances of an unmediated birth, decrease the need for pain relief, speed up recovery after delivery, reduce the risk of gestational diabetes and hypertension, decrease the likelihood of preterm labor and birth.

### **Research Question Three: What are the factors affecting pregnant women's participation in exercise?**

Findings revealed that 66 (66%) of the respondents disagree that age is a barrier in pregnant women engaging in exercise. In agreement, Clarke and Gross (2014) records no relationship between the age of the woman and her exercise level during pregnancy. However, Rose et al. (2015) have a contrary view as they affirm that pregnant women between ages of 26-35 years engage in prenatal exercise than younger pregnant women.

It was also gathered that 86 (86%) of the respondents agree that their culture and beliefs doesn't stop them from engaging in exercise during pregnancy. This disagrees with Gaston and Cramp (2011) as listed culture and belief among the factors that may influence perception of the benefits of prenatal exercise among pregnant women.

### **Conclusion**

From the study, it was discovered that respondents perceive exercise as being beneficial and important to women during pregnancy and appreciate the fact that exercise has a great role to play in keeping pregnant women and their babies healthy and strong. It was also discovered that age, culture and beliefs are not barriers to pregnant women engaging in exercise.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher is making the following recommendations:

- i. Health workers should encourage pregnant women to engage in the various prenatal exercises recommended by their healthcare providers.
- ii. Pregnant women should endeavor to engage in exercise irrespective of their age, tight schedules, weakness of the body and other challenges.
- iii. Pregnant women should be encouraged to engage in minor domestic work at home to keep them constantly active.

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