

# EXPLORING THE LEVEL OF AWARENESS AND PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AMONG REGISTERED NURSES IN PUBLIC HEALTH FACILITIES IN KADUNA STATE, NIGERIA

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## ABSTRACT

*Quality assurance (QA) in healthcare plays a critical role in enhancing patient outcomes and improving service delivery. This study examined the level of awareness and perceived importance of QA among registered nurses in public health facilities in Kaduna State, Nigeria. A descriptive cross-sectional survey design was adopted. The study population comprised registered nurses working across tertiary, secondary, and primary healthcare facilities. A total of 60 nurses were determined by Cochran's formula and selected using a stratified random sampling technique to ensure proportional representation across facility levels. Data were collected using a structured, researchers-developed questionnaire divided into four sections. The instrument's content and face validity were reviewed by three healthcare quality experts, and a reliability test yielded a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.82, indicating high internal consistency. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation. The demographic characteristics of respondents reveal that majority of the respondents are female, (58.3%), within the ages of 30-39 (36.7%), have RN as the highest qualification (30%), with 5 to 10 years of experience (40%) and did not receive training in QA (56.7%). This study shows that the level of quality awareness assurance among respondents is high ( $\bar{x}=3.1$ ) and the perceived importance of quality assurance among respondents is very high ( $\bar{x}=4.2$ ). Further findings reveal that the key challenges and obstacles that hinder the effective implementation of quality assurance practices among registered nurses are lack of training and capacity building ( $\bar{x}=4.5$ ), staffing and workload issues ( $\bar{x}=4.1$ ) and communication and supervision ( $\bar{x}=4.1$ ). Respondents recommended QA workshops and active involvement in QA planning. These findings underscore the need for targeted educational and institutional strategies to enhance nurse engagement in quality assurance.*

**Keywords:** Quality Assurance; Awareness; Perception; Nursing; Healthcare.

## INTRODUCTION

The pursuit of high-quality healthcare has become a global priority, with quality assurance (QA) recognized as a cornerstone of effective health systems. QA refers to the systematic processes put in place to ensure that health services meet established standards, improve patient safety, and achieve desired health outcomes. In low and middle income countries like Nigeria, quality assurance in public health facilities remains a significant challenge, often hindered by resource constraints, limited training, and inadequate staff involvement. Nurses are central to the delivery of healthcare and are often the first point of contact for patients. Their active participation in quality assurance programs is essential for sustaining improvements in service delivery. However, their contributions depend largely on their awareness of QA principles and their perception of its importance in clinical settings.

In Nigeria, particularly in Kaduna State, public health facilities cater for a large proportion of the population. Despite this, there is limited empirical evidence on how well nurses understand and value QA practices within these facilities. Understanding this awareness and perception gap is critical for designing effective interventions aimed at strengthening QA implementation at the grassroots level. This study, therefore, seeks to explore the level of awareness and perceived importance of quality assurance among registered nurses in public health facilities in Kaduna State. It aims to generate evidence that could guide training, policy formulation, and practice enhancements

in nursing care and health service delivery. Despite numerous policy reforms and guidelines aimed at improving healthcare quality in Nigeria, public health facilities continue to experience significant gaps in service delivery. Among the contributing factors is the inadequate integration of quality assurance (QA) practices into routine clinical care. Although QA frameworks exist, their successful implementation heavily depends on the awareness, understanding, and commitment of frontline healthcare workers particularly nurses, who form the largest segment of the healthcare workforce and are directly involved in patient care.

In Kaduna State, where public health institutions cater for a diverse and growing population, the consistent delivery of quality care remains a major concern. Reports of patient dissatisfaction, medical errors, and inconsistent standards of practice indicate that existing QA mechanisms may not be effectively implemented. This raises questions about whether the nurses who are central to patient care are adequately aware of QA principles and perceive them as critical to their professional practice. Preliminary observations and anecdotal evidence suggest that many nurses may view QA as an administrative or managerial function rather than a shared clinical responsibility. Additionally, limited access to QA training, unclear implementation guidelines, and the absence of regular evaluation and feedback mechanisms may further reduce nurse engagement in QA processes. Given the pivotal role nurses play in healthcare delivery, understanding their level of awareness and perceived importance of QA is essential. Without this insight, quality improvement efforts may remain superficial or ineffective.

This study holds considerable significance for nursing practice, healthcare management, and policy development in Kaduna State and similar settings. By exploring the level of awareness and perceived importance of quality assurance among registered nurses, this study provides empirical evidence that can inform targeted interventions to strengthen the

implementation of QA initiatives.

For nursing professionals, the study highlights areas where additional training and sensitization may be needed to ensure active participation in quality improvement efforts. For healthcare administrators, understanding nurses' perceptions will aid in designing supportive strategies, allocating resources, and integrating QA responsibilities into daily clinical workflows.

From a policy perspective, the findings can guide the development or revision of quality assurance frameworks that are more inclusive of nursing staff, fostering a culture of quality and accountability. Additionally, nursing education institutions can benefit by incorporating findings into curricula, ensuring that upcoming nurses are better prepared to engage with QA principles from the outset of their careers. Ultimately, improving nurses' awareness and perception of QA is expected to contribute to enhanced patient care, reduced errors, improved patient satisfaction, and better health outcomes across public health facilities. Therefore, this study seeks to address the level of awareness and perceived importance of quality assurance among registered nurses in public health facilities in Kaduna State, Nigeria.

## **GENERAL OBJECTIVE**

To assess the level of awareness and perceived importance of quality assurance among registered nurses in public health facilities in Kaduna State, Nigeria.

## **SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

1. To assess the awareness level of quality assurance among registered nurses in public health facilities in Kaduna State, Nigeria.
2. To determine the level of perceived importance of quality assurance among registered nurses in public health facilities in Kaduna State, Nigeria.

3. To identify the key challenges affecting quality assurance among registered nurses in public health facilities in Kaduna State, Nigeria.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the awareness level of quality assurance among registered nurses in public health facilities in Kaduna State, Nigeria.
2. What is the level of perceived importance of quality assurance among registered nurses in public health facilities in Kaduna State, Nigeria.
3. What is the key challenges affecting quality assurance among registered nurses in public health facilities in Kaduna State, Nigeria.

## METHODOLOGY

**Design:** This study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey design.

**Target Population:** The target population included registered nurses employed across tertiary, secondary, and primary healthcare institutions within the state.

**Sample Size Determination:** Due to the absence of an exact figure for the total population of nurses, a sample size of 60 was determined by Cochran's formula.

**Sampling Size Technique:** A stratified random sampling technique was employed to select 60 respondents and ensure proportional representation from each level of the healthcare system.

**Instrument:** Data were collected using a researcher-developed structured questionnaire, which was informed by a comprehensive review of relevant literature and guided by Donabedian's framework for evaluating healthcare quality. The questionnaire comprised four sections:

1. Demographic information
2. Awareness of quality assurance practices
3. Perceived importance of quality assurance
4. key challenges affecting quality assurance.

**Validity:** To ensure the instrument's validity, content and face validity were established through expert review.

**Reliability:** while a pilot study involving 15 registered nurses was conducted to assess its clarity and consistency. Based on feedback from the pilot study, minor revisions were made. Cronbach's alpha coefficient score was calculated to assess internal consistency, yielding a value of 0.82, indicating acceptable reliability.

**Method of Data Collection:** Data were collected through the administration of structured questionnaires, which were personally distributed by the researchers during participants' work shifts to ensure convenience and maximize response rates.

**Method of Data Analysis:** Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, to summarize demographic data and responses to Likert-scale items. The awareness and importance scales were scored and averaged to provide insight into overall trends.

**Ethical Approval:** Prior to distribution, participants were informed about the purpose of the study and assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Participation was strictly voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents. The approach ensured that nurses had adequate time to complete the questionnaire without disrupting their professional responsibilities.

## RESULTS

The demographic profile of the 60 respondents is presented in Table 1. The age of participants ranged from 22 to 58 years, with a mean of 36.4 years, suggesting a workforce composed largely of mid-career professionals. Female nurses represented 58% of the respondents, while 42% were male, reflecting the gender distribution commonly seen in the nursing profession.

In terms of educational qualifications, the majority of the respondents held RN or RN/RM certificates, followed by Post-Basic and B.Sc.

Nursing qualifications, indicating a workforce with varying levels of formal nursing education. Most respondents had between 5 and 10 years of experience (40%), while 28% had more than 15 years. These findings imply that the sample includes a balanced representation of both early and seasoned professionals.

Notably, only 43% of respondents reported having received formal training in quality

assurance, highlighting a significant gap in professional development efforts related to QA in nursing practice. The demographic characteristics of respondents reveal that majority of the respondents are female, (58.3%), within the ages of 30-39 (36.7%), RN (30%), with 5 to 10years of experience (40%) and did not receive traing in QA (56.7%).

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

| Variable                     | Category           | Frequency (n=60) | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|----------------|
| <b>Gender</b>                | Male               | 25               | 41.7           |
|                              | Female             | 35               | 58.3           |
| <b>Age Group (years)</b>     | 20–29              | 12               | 20.0           |
|                              | 30–39              | 22               | 36.7           |
|                              | 40–49              | 16               | 26.7           |
|                              | 50 and above       | 10               | 16.6           |
|                              | RN                 | 18               | 30.0           |
| <b>Highest Qualification</b> | RN/RM              | 15               | 25.0           |
|                              | B.Sc. Nursing      | 17               | 28.3           |
|                              | Post-Basic         | 6                | 10.0           |
|                              | Others             | 4                | 6.7            |
| <b>Years of Experience</b>   | Less than 5 years  | 8                | 13.3           |
|                              | 5–10 years         | 24               | 40.0           |
|                              | 11–15 years        | 11               | 18.3           |
|                              | More than 15 years | 17               | 28.3           |
| <b>QA Training Received</b>  | Yes                | 26               | 43.3           |
|                              | No                 | 34               | 56.7           |

The awareness of quality assurance among respondents is described in Table 2, with mean scores indicating moderate familiarity with QA ( $\bar{x}=3.4$ ) and knowledge of QA indicators ( $\bar{x}=3.4$ ), a relatively good understanding of QA

goals ( $\bar{x}=3.2$ ), limited awareness of workplace QA policy ( $\bar{x}=2.8$ ), and restricted formal training in QA ( $\bar{x}=2.7$ ). This study shows that the level of quality awareness assurance among respondents is high ( $\bar{x}=3.1$ )

**Table 2: Awareness of Quality Assurance**

| Statement                  | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|----------------------------|------|--------------------|
| Familiarity with QA        | 3.4  | 0.8                |
| Workplace QA Policy        | 2.8  | 1.0                |
| Understanding QA Goals     | 3.2  | 0.7                |
| Formal Training Received   | 2.7  | 0.9                |
| Knowledge of QA Indicators | 3.4  | 0.8                |

The perceived importance of quality assurance among respondents is described in Table 3, with high mean scores indicating strong agreement that QA improves patient outcomes ( $\bar{x}=4.5$ ), nurses play a vital role in QA ( $\bar{x}=4.2$ ), QA promotes accountability ( $\bar{x}=3.1$ ), lack of QA

leads to errors ( $\bar{x}=4.0$ ), and QA is essential in professional development ( $\bar{x}=4.1$ ). This study indicate that the perceived importance of quality assurance among respondents is very high ( $\bar{x}=4.2$ ).

**Table 3: Perceived Importance of Quality Assurance**

| Statement                      | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|--------------------------------|------|--------------------|
| QA improves patient outcomes   | 4.5  | 0.5                |
| Nurses play a vital QA role    | 4.2  | 0.6                |
| QA promotes accountability     | 4.1  | 0.7                |
| Lack of QA leads to errors     | 4.0  | 0.9                |
| QA in professional development | 4.1  | 0.6                |



Table 4 observed that the key challenges and obstacles that hinder the effective implementation of quality assurance practices among registered nurses are Lack of Training and Capacity Building ( $\bar{\chi}=4.5$ ), Staffing and

Workload Issues ( $\bar{\chi}=4.1$ ) Communication and Supervision ( $\bar{\chi}=4.1$ ) while Institutional Policy Gaps ( $\bar{\chi}=2.8$ ) and Need for Inclusion and Participation ( $\bar{\chi}=2.7$ ) are not challenges and obstacles

**Table 4: The Key Challenges and Obstacles That Hinder the Effective Implementation of Quality Assurance Practices among Registered Nurses**

| Statement                              | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|----------------------------------------|------|--------------------|
| Lack of Training and Capacity Building | 4.5  | 0.5                |
| Institutional Policy Gaps              | 2.8  | 1.0                |
| Staffing and Workload Issues           | 4.1  | 0.7                |
| Need for Inclusion and Participation   | 2.7  | 0.9                |
| Communication and Supervision          | 4.1  | 0.6                |

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study examined the level of awareness and perceived importance of QA among registered nurses in public health facilities in Kaduna State, Nigeria. The demographic characteristics of respondents reveal that majority of the respondents are female, within the ages of 30-39, have RN as the highest qualification, with 5 to 10years of experience and did not receive training in QA.

This study shows that the level of quality awareness assurance among respondents is high. This study is not consistent with Alotaibi and Federico (2017) who found that many nurses lacked adequate understanding of quality improvement principles, especially in low-resource settings. This study is in contrast with Akinyemi et al. (2020) who reported that only a minority of nurses in public hospitals were fully aware of institutional QA policies, indicating a knowledge gap that could hinder quality initiatives.

This study indicate that the perceived importance of quality assurance among respondents is very high. (Mensah et al., 2021). This study is consistent with Obi et al., (2022)

who observed that nurses with postgraduate qualifications or those working in tertiary hospitals often report higher level of perception. This study support Chukwu et al., (2019) who reported that nurses are more likely to have higher perceived importance of quality assurance with Organizational culture, leadership support, and availability of QA resources. This study is in contrast with Osei and Boateng (2018) found that nurses in Ghana have low perceived importance of quality assurance. This study is not consistent with Eze & Agbo, (2020) who observed low perceived importance of quality assurance in Nigeria.

This study concluded that the key challenges and obstacles that hinder the effective implementation of quality assurance practices among registered nurses are Lack of Training and Capacity Building, Staffing and Workload Issues and Communication and Supervision. This study is not in line with Umeh and Okeke (2020), who recognize absence of well-disseminated and enforced QA protocols as the key challenges and obstacles that hinder the effective implementation of quality assurance practices. This findings are supported Okoroafor et al. (2020) who noted that

Nigerian health facilities often lack the structural support needed for consistent quality improvement

## CONCLUSION

This study underscores the urgent need to enhance awareness and practical engagement with QA among nurses in public healthcare. Despite strong recognition of its value, lack of exposure and systemic constraints hinder effective implementation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Organize Structured QA Training:** Ministry of Health and hospital administrators should provide regular QA workshops for nurses.
2. **Policy Development and Communication:** Clear, written QA policies should be developed and circulated in all departments.
3. **Nurse Involvement:** Include nursing staff in QA committees and decision-making processes.
4. **Supportive Supervision:** Nurse Leaders should provide continuous mentorship on QA practices.
5. **Regular Audits and Feedback:** Establish routine QA monitoring and feedback mechanisms.

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