

ABSTRACT

Women play an important role in the production of goods and services in any economy. For maximum production, they need to be healthy. Maternal and child health is an essential and integral element of health care programme aimed at improving general health status of women since better maternal health helps to reduce the risk of death and disability in pregnancy and child birth. On the other hand, prenatal health care is an essential component of maternal and child health care. Good prenatal health care helps to reduce morbidity and mortality on women and children. However, there is low attendance of prenatal health care especially in the rural areas. However, there is low attendance of prenatal health care especially in the rural areas. It is therefore necessary to understand factors that determine demand for prenatal health care in the rural areas. This study has investigated the determinants of prenatal health care services in Lower Nyakach Divisions of Nyando District.

To meet the objectives of the study, primary data was collected and analysed using both econometric and descriptive methods. Econometric analysis involved estimation of a log linear model using Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) estimation technique. The empirical results showed that price of prenatal health care, waiting time, perceived quality, distance traveled and the duration of the pregnancy at which the first prenatal health care visit was made are significant determinants of demand for prenatal health care.

Descriptive results showed that contrary to the beliefs that people are moving away from the traditional health care, women in the rural areas are still visiting both modern and traditional health care facilities. The results also showed that demand for prenatal visits late (between five and six months of pregnancy).

Based on the empirical findings, the study recommends that health care planners should design and modify the hours of operation of certain facilities to reduce waiting time, since waiting was found to be a significant determinant of demand for prenatal health care; that prenatal health care services should be further subsidized. On the other hand, mobile clinics should be provided to reduce distance travelled to the health care facilities. Distance was found to negatively influence demand for prenatal health care and was also a significant determinant. The study also recommends that awareness campaigns for

prenatal health care be intensified and also included in public education programmes and that when planning for health care services, the feelings and opinions of potential users should be taken into consideration. For example, health care providers can adapt some aspects of their services to satisfy the patients' expectations.