

A Folk's Theory of the MomConnect (mHealth) Initiative in South Africa

Authors : Eveline Muika Kabongo, Peter Delobelle, Ferdinand Mukumbang, Edward Nicol

Abstract : Introduction: Studies have been conducted to establish the effect of the MomConnect program in South Africa, but these studies did not focus on the stakeholders' and implementers' perspectives and the underlying program theory of the MomConnect initiative program. We strived to obtain stakeholders' perspectives and assumptions on the MomConnect program and develop an initial program theory (IPT) of how the MomConnect initiative was expected to work. Methods: A realist-informed explanatory design used. The interviewer was performed with 10 key informants selected purposively among MomConnect key informants at the a national level of NDoH South Africa. The interview was done via zoom and lasted for 30 to 60 minutes. Introduction and abduction inferencing approaches were applied. The deductive and inductive approaches were performed during the analysis. ICAMO hereuristic framework was used to analysed the data in order to get key informants expectations on how the MomConnect will work or not. Results: We developed three folk's theories illustrating how the key informants' expected the MomConnect to work. These theories showed that the MomConnect intended to provide users with health information and education that will empower and motivate them with knowledge which will allow the improvement of health services delivery among HCPs and improvement of the uptake of MCH services among pregnant women and mothers and decrease the rate of maternal and child mortality in the country. The lack of an updated mechanism to link women to the outcome was an issue. Another problem enlightened was the introduction of the WhatsApp program instead of SMS messaging, which was free of charge to women. Conclusion: The Folk's theory developed from this study provided an insight into how the MomConnect was expected to work and what did not work. The folk's theory will be merged with information from candidate theories on synthesis review and document review to develop our initial program theory of the MomConnect initiative.

Keywords : mHealth, MomConnect program, realist evaluation, maternal and child health, maternal and child health services, introduction, theory-driven

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