



Evaluating the MomConnect mHealth Platform's Influence on Early Antenatal Care Booking Among Primigravid Women in Tshwane, South Africa

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Abstract

Early antenatal care booking is vital for improving maternal and neonatal outcomes, especially for first-time mothers. South Africa's national MomConnect mHealth platform provides pregnancy-related health information via SMS. Its specific effect on early booking behaviour in urban settings requires further evidence. This study evaluated the influence of MomConnect enrolment on the timing of the first antenatal care visit among primigravid women in Tshwane, South Africa. A cross-sectional analytical study was conducted at four primary healthcare clinics. Primigravid women attending antenatal care completed a structured questionnaire. Participants were classified as MomConnect users or non-users. Early booking was defined as a first visit before 14 weeks' gestation. Data analysis employed descriptive statistics and logistic regression. Of 320 participants, 68.4% were MomConnect users. Users were 2.1 times more likely to book antenatal care early compared to non-users (adjusted odds ratio 2.1, 95% CI 1.3–3.4). The most frequently cited reason for early booking among users was receiving reminder messages about the importance of early care. MomConnect enrolment was significantly associated with increased odds of early antenatal care booking in this urban primigravid population. The platform appears to be a useful tool for promoting timely antenatal care initiation among first-time mothers. Promotion and enrolment into MomConnect should be strengthened at community and primary healthcare levels. Further qualitative research is needed to explore user experiences and potential barriers to use among different demographic groups. mHealth, MomConnect, antenatal care, primigravida, South Africa This study provides specific evidence on the association between MomConnect use and early antenatal care booking in an urban setting, informing public health strategy for maternal care engagement.

Keywords: *mHealth, antenatal care, primigravida, South Africa, programme evaluation*

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