

Men's Involvement in Maternal Care during Pregnancy and Child Birth in Rural Maharashtra

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Abstract: In post-Cairo era, reproductive health has emerged as an organizational framework that incorporates men as partner in all reproductive and child health program. Attention has been drawn to the absence of men from the various reproductive health programs. Institutions like patriarchy and patriarchal relations do not give any responsibility to men and at the same time women are excluded from all decision making. Therefore, ensuring men involvement in reproductive and maternal health matters could become very important. Added advantage is the positive health benefits that male involvement could yield for women.

Recent research that deals with male involvement by and large revolves around males' relation to contraceptive use and STDs and HIV. Other aspects of maternal and child health, such as pregnancy and birth, remain largely unexplored. This paper, therefore, tries to address male involvement to maternal health issues using primary data collected from Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra. The data was collected from 1341 currently married men in the age group 15-54 years using scientific sampling techniques.

This paper explores the extent of prevalence of husbands' involvement and its determinants in two aspects of their wives' maternal health: (1) providing advice and care during pregnancy and postnatal period and (2) attending birth. The paper examines the positive health benefits of male involvement for health of women. The analysis shows that the involvement of men in providing advice and care during pregnancy and postnatal period was fairly low. Only a small proportion of men were found to be present at the time of delivery of their children. Men's availability and access to birth were found to be associated with their presence at the time of delivery. Unlike their involvement in contraceptive decision-making, men were found to be less likely to decide the place of delivery and the type of assistance to be provided during delivery of their children. However, the study establishes a strong relationship between men's involvement in maternal care decision making and (1) whether the delivery was conducted in a medical institution; (2) whether the delivery was assisted by a trained medical person. The likelihood of delivering in a medical institution is much higher in cases where husband decides the place of delivery compared to those cases where the other members of the household decide the place of delivery. Similarly, the likelihood of having safe delivery is much higher in cases where husband decides the place of delivery compared to the cases where other members of the household decide. Again, deliveries are more likely to take place in medical institutions if the husband is aware of various pregnancy and delivery complications. Therefore, the data suggests an urgent need to involve men in the maternal health programs as it has positive health benefits.

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