

Husband's support during maternity: voices of couples from a low-income community in Mumbai , India

Research demonstrating the benefits of male involvement in family planning and prevention of sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS is widely known. However, little is known with regard to male involvement in promoting better practices related to safe motherhood and infant health, reducing domestic violence and promoting gender equality. Understanding the differences in husband-wife perspectives of male involvement is vital to reproductive and child health programmes aimed at encouraging male involvement in maternity. Nevertheless, very few studies have provided both husband and wife's perspectives. This paper makes an attempt to understand couples perspective of husband's involvement during pregnancy and provide reasons for differences in perception.

A systematic random sampling procedure was used for the selection of 500 couples (husband and wife) where women were either pregnant or had delivered a baby in the past six months. Structured interviews were held separately with wife and husband during January-September, 2005 in two large low-income communities of Mumbai. Information was elicited on socio-economic and demographic characteristics, husband's support and knowledge regarding maternity, autonomy of women, gender attitudes, and domestic violence. Bivariate, kappa statistics and multivariate statistical techniques are used to understand male involvement during maternity. In addition, 40 In depth interviews were conducted among men (20) and women (20). The information from case studies are analysed using Atlas Ti package through the use of codes and sub codes.

The findings from the qualitative study were integrated with findings from previous research relating to male involvement and research questions were

formulated. Thus information was collected with respect to the following five aspects:-

1. Discussion regarding ante natal care: Husband and wife discussed regarding ante natal care and health of the woman during pregnancy
2. Preparedness regarding measures to be taken in case of emergency: Husband and wife have planned regarding measures to be taken in case of emergency (viz. arrange for transportation, plan to take leave, save money for the pregnancy, give/keep money with wife).
3. Assistance provided in household chores: Husband and wife report of assistance provided by husband in a) taking care of the children, b) cleaning the house, c) washing utensils/clothes, d) cooking, e) fetching water, f) lifting heavy objects.
4. Providing emotional support: Husband and wife report of a) husband enquiring about diet of woman, b) husband spending more time with wife, c) husband reporting of being more affectionate, d) husband reporting of being less angry to the wife.
5. Accompanying the woman to the ANC clinic: Husband accompanied the wife for at least one ANC checkup during the current pregnancy.

Construction of dependent variable: For the purpose of analysis, the above mentioned aspects have been converted into five dependent variables. These variables have been constructed based on the responses of the couples. If both husband and wife have responded positively of an aspect, the variable is coded as 'yes' and else 'no'.

The extent of male involvement is measured in terms of a) discussion regarding ante natal care and checkup, b) preparedness regarding measures to taken in case of emergency, c) husband assisted in the household chores, d) emotional support provided during pregnancy, e) husband accompanied wife for ante natal checkup Around half of the couples have reported of male involvement during maternity. Both husband and wife providing same response with respect to

indicators of male involvement varied from 20.8 percent to 60.3 percent. However the percentage of husband-wife agreement on the various indicators of male involvement ranged from 55percent for husband providing emotional support to 80 percent in the case of accompanying to the antenatal clinic. The multiple logistic regression analysis identified planned pregnancy (OR= 1.782), men knowing about pregnancy complications (OR=2.14), women having the ability to decide to seek health care (OR = 1.743) and possessing money (OR= 2.52) as the significant predictors of husband's support during pregnancy. On the contrary, involvement was less in the case of men fearing community sarcasm in case they help wife (OR = .445), belonged the joint family (OR = .644) and spousal age difference of more than 10 years (OR= .322). Education of the woman and parity were identified as predictors of agreement between the responses of wife and husband.

Preliminary results clearly suggests that understanding male involvement behaviours from only wife's perspective may not provide comprehensive picture of the various cultural nuances underlying husband's support during pregnancy in a community. Hence, for designing successful intervention programmes, both husband and wife's perspectives need to be considered. Further analysis would be presented in the full paper.