

CULTURAL BELIEFS AND PRACTICES REGARDING MATERNAL HEALTH: A CASE STUDY OF RURAL AREAS OF PUNJAB

Altaf Ghani*

PhD Student, University Malaysia Sarawak Malaysia,
Pakistan altafghani71@gmail.com

Zamri bin Hj Hassan

Senior Lecturer, University Malaysia Sarawak Malaysia, hizamri@unimas.my

Dolly Paul Carlo

Senior Lecturer, University Malaysia Sarawak Malaysia, pccdolly@unimas.my

ABSTRACT

People are strongly influenced by practices and beliefs whether they are based on custom or tradition, and these beliefs are difficult to change just by requesting scientific evidence. Traditional beliefs are more focused on pregnancy and childbirth than other aspects of life, making women more susceptible to them. This research study mainly focused on cultural beliefs which are contributing in determining the reproductive life of women in Pakistan particularly of rural areas. This research used a hybrid technique for data processing and interpretation. This approach mixed both qualitative and quantitative methods, and required researchers to seek and explain reality in its natural setting. Field data collection was carried out in Punjab's area; Jampur which is the tehsil headquarters in District Rajanpur, Punjab, Pakistan. Married women having at least one child were selected through purposive sampling. It was concluded that women in Jampur preferred to follow indigenous food habits, advised by their elders, during pregnancy. Women depend on their husbands or mother-in-law regarding maternal healthcare decisions. According to health professionals, the maternal health depends on the education and social status of families. The ordinary Pakistani woman will continue to endure a high risk of maternal death and would leave behind stories of misery, prejudice, and vulnerability if social and cultural practises are not addressed in broad integrated policies aiming at improving maternal health in the area. Findings of this study will be helpful for the health service providers to arise with worthwhile mechanisms to make their services women-friendly and accessible to the youth. Likewise, this study will also contribute to an in-depth understanding of the processes underlying social identities in shaping women's reproductive health-seeking behaviors. The study will be helpful for organizations that are working for maternal health and population welfare such as National Institute of Population Studies (NIPS) and also for policy-making bodies, including national health policymakers and Pakistan population policymakers.

Keywords: Maternal health, Cultural Beliefs, Motherhood, Indigenous healing, Maternal food habits.

INTRODUCTION

Cultural and social norms play a significant role in governing social structures as well as shaping the behavior of people that's why they are inseparable from daily interactions (Ministry of Health [MoH], 2019). It is a worldwide phenomenon that health concerning dynamics that govern human behavior are rooted in different perspectives (Omer et al., 2021) comprised on physical, social, cultural, economic and religious contexts (Shaikh & Hatcher, 2004). For instance, women's mobility restricted by culture even in emergency obstetric condition may lead them to a risk (Omer et al., 2021), and studying women's beliefs is very important in this regard.

* Corresponding Author