

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Male involvement in maternal healthcare through Community-based Health Planning and Services: the views of the men in rural Ghana

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Abstract

Background: The need to promote maternal health in Ghana has committed the government to extend maternal healthcare services to the door steps of rural families through the community-based Health Planning and Services. Based on the concerns raised in previous studies that male spouses were indifferent towards maternal healthcare, this study sought the views of men on their involvement in maternal healthcare in their respective communities and at the household levels in the various Community-based Health Planning and Services zones in Awutu-Senya West District in the Central Region of Ghana.

Methods: A qualitative method was employed. Focus groups and individual interviews were conducted with married men, community health officers, community health volunteers and community leaders. The participants were selected using purposive, quota and snowball sampling techniques. The study used thematic analysis for analysing the data.

Results: The study shows varying involvement of men, some were directly involved in feminine gender roles; others used their female relatives and co-wives to perform the women's roles that did not have space for them. They were not necessarily indifferent towards maternal healthcare, rather, they were involved in the spaces provided by the traditional gender division of labour. Amongst other things, the perpetuation and reinforcement of traditional gender norms around pregnancy and childbirth influenced the nature and level of male involvement.

Conclusions: Sustenance of male involvement especially, husbands and CHVs is required at the household and community levels for positive maternal outcomes. Ghana Health Service, health professionals and policy makers should take traditional gender role expectations into consideration in the planning and implementation of maternal health promotion programmes.

Keywords: Male involvement, Community-based Health Planning and Services, Traditional gender norms, Women's roles, Perpetuation and reinforcement, Maternal healthcare

Background

The need to promote maternal health in Ghana led to the government's commitment to extend maternal healthcare services to the door steps of rural families through community-based health planning and services (CHPS). The CHPS programme uses community health officers (CHOs) to provide a range of services including antenatal

care (ANC), postnatal care (PNC) and emergency delivery [1, 2]. By reducing geographic barriers to healthcare, the CHPS strategy enables the Ghana Health Service (GHS) to reduce health inequalities and promote equity of health outcomes [2, 3]. The implementation of CHPS requires the cooperation of the health sector and involvement of all stakeholders, especially men, in the provision and reception of healthcare [3].

The need for male involvement in maternity care can be traced back to the 1994 International Conference on

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