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## Health seeking behaviour of mothers of 37 to 60 months children from Tharu community Kailali Nepal

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### Abstract

Nepal is a multicultural and multi ethnic underdeveloped country. Among those cultural and ethnic groups, Tharu community residing in Kailali district of Nepal are educationally as well as economically backward. Thus, with the objective of exploring health seeking behaviours of 37-60 months children from the study area, the data were collected through questionnaire survey. 121 mothers of targeted children were participated as respondents. The results were found mostly miserable. The findings of the study were such that only 59.6% visited hospital for regular check up during ANC, only 22.3% used iron tablet, 28.9% had got additional food, however 100% gave birth of babies in the health centers.

**Keywords:** ANC, health-seeking, PNC

### 1. Introduction

Nepal is an underdeveloped country; people of Nepal are suffering from different kinds of problems including health. Among these problems, nutritional deficiencies are seen as major challenges. Similarly, health seeking behaviours of parents plays vital role for the proper development of children. Pokharel states the reasons of poor maternal health status in Nepal. "The poverty, illiteracy, women's low status in the society, lack of access and difficult geographical terrain are major reasons for poor maternal health status in Nepal" (2012, p. 125). Similarly, he opines about the health seeking behaviour of mothers as low socio-economic status, Illiteracy and poverty in women are the major challenging features of pregnancy and children birth. Health seeking behaviour during pregnancy and child birth was defined as the women having attended whether government (including sub-health post/ health post, PHC or hospitals) or private institutions during birth and number of antenatal care (ANC) visits (2012, p. 125).

In the empirical studies, Chomat and his colleagues found the causes of poor maternal health are as extreme poverty, poor education, and poor access to basic resources were prevalent. Out of 100 women 14–41 years old, 33% did not use the formal health care sector for antenatal care; the majority consulted a traditional birth attendant. Only 13% delivered in a hospital. Lower socioeconomic status, lack of fluency in Spanish, and no ownership of a motorized vehicle were associated with the highest likelihood of poor utilization of services (p. 113).

In addition, the study done by Janicke, Finney, & Riley suggests that maternal perceptions of child health and maternal emotional functioning influence the decision-making process involved in seeking health care on behalf of children. Effective management of paediatric health care use needs to address broader needs of the child and family beyond solely the child's health, most notably maternal functioning (2001).

Thus, this study aimed to explore the status of health-seeking behaviours of mothers from the study area.

### 2. Methodology

This research was an explorative based on mixed method. This study is non-experimental cross sectional. The study was carried in Tharu community of Kailali district. The main purpose of this study was to find out the health seeking behaviour of mother. The data were collected through self-administrated questionnaire survey and focus group discussion.

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The respondents of the survey were mothers of 37-60 months children from the study area. The total no of respondents were 121.

Collected data and information were analysed and interpreted with quantitative descriptive way. Sample was analysed in the SPSS statistical method and showed in percentage. The quantitative data obtained from the field were edited, tabulated and finally analysed through applied statistics and using an appropriate computer package, namely “Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS)”, which facilitated the process of data analysis in a more precise and appropriate way for data analysis.

**3. Discussion**

Health is everything. Therefore, everybody should be careful for his or her health status. Pregnancy period is known as the critical period for mother and baby. Medically, four times check-up is known as compulsory for pregnant woman, besides that as the recommendation of doctor, use of Iron tablet, additional diet and other required medicine are also known as mandatory.

As the importance of health check-up during the Antenatal Check-up (ANC) and Postnatal Check-up (PNC) period, the study raised the questions on the health seeking behaviour of mothers and collected the information of their practices.

**3.1 Antenatal check up**

Antenatal check-up is known as the regular check-up of pregnant woman until the birth of baby. According to Government of Nepal, minimum four times check-up before the delivery is requirement.

**3.1.1 Hospital check up**

During the study, information was collected about the health seeking behaviour of mother during the time of pregnancy. Regular health check-up is important because pregnancy period is understood as the critical period.

**Table 1: Hospital check up**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	YES	72	59.5	59.5
	NO	49	40.5	100.0
Total		121	100.0	

(Source: Field Survey 2017)

Table 1 shows that out of 121 respondents, 72 (59.5%) reported that they had visited hospital for health check-up during the pregnancy period, and 49 (40.5%) reported that they had not visited hospital. The data present that health-seeking behaviour was found worse in the Tharu communities.

**3.1.2 Checking-up times**

As the medical rules set in Nepal, minimum four ANC checks-up are mandatory for the safe delivery. So respondents were asked about their practices of visiting the health post for ANC check-up. The options of the question were given as i) less than 4 times or ii) 4 or more than more times.

**Table 2: Checking times**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than 4 times	71	98.6	98.6
	More than 4 times	1	1.4	100.0
	Total	72	100.0	

(Source: Field Survey 2017)

Table 2 shows that out of 72 respondents, 98.6% (71) had visited less than 4 times followed by only 1.4% (1) had visited four and more than four times during the pregnancy period for ANC.

The results do not support the baseline survey report of Tanahu that “81% of mothers had attended the antenatal check-up in clinic in the survey areas (United Mission to Nepal, 2003, p. 45)”. As Government of Nepal has made mandatory for ANC 4 times. However, there is no 100-percentage visit in the health service centres for ANC check-up. Why it has been happened to the pregnant women, the researcher put the query during Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The following stories reflect the awareness level and barriers for ANC check-up.

**# Story 1**

I am Mansuri Tharu, I live in Hasuliya-3, Kailali. I am 26 years old now. I live in near health facilities village though I have not checked-up 4 times during my pregnancy. In the health post, there are male persons who check-up us. I feel shy to show my stomach to them. I don't like to touch my body with other male. In our community, we women are not allowed to touch by other male.

The above story is the representative of many village women who still have no awareness regarding their health and child. If there were female persons who check-up pregnant women, it would be better. Thus, there must have government policy to prepare adequate number of health facilitators in those health centres. As well as awareness level of health check-up increase importance during pregnancy period through different programs.

**3.1.3 Use of Iron Tablet**

Mothers need more iron to support the increased maternal RBC mass during pregnancy. This supplies the growing baby and his/her placenta in the third trimester; baby needs to build enough iron stores to last the first 6 months of his /her life. This will help the baby be healthy after birth and reduce his/her chance of an iron deficiency. That's why it is so important to take 16-20 mg of iron daily.

**Table 3: Use of Iron Tablet**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	YES	27	22.3	22.3
	NO	94	77.7	100.0
	Total	121	100.0	

(Source: Field Survey 2017)

This above table shows that, among 121 respondents, 22.3% mothers had used iron tablet during their pregnancy while 77.7% mothers had not used the iron tablet. From the above data we can say that the condition of using iron tablet is also worse at that community.

**3.1.4 If Yes**

During ANC and PNC period, regular hospital check up is very good for both mother and child. Thus, a question of the questionnaire was about whether pregnant mothers visited hospital during ANC and PNC period. Among those who were visited hospital, form them also asked whether they visited hospital up to delivery or even after delivery up to 45 days.

**Table 4:** Visit of pregnant mothers to the hospital check up

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Up to 9 months	6	22.2	22.2
	Up to 45 days from delivery	21	77.8	100.0
	Total	27	100.0	

(Source: Field Survey 2017)

Though the condition of using iron tablet is not satisfactory, however, 22.3% of mothers had used the iron tablet during their pregnancy. Among them, only 22.2% mothers had used the iron tablet up to 9 months while 77.8% mothers used it only up to 45 days from delivery. So it seems that, most of the pregnant mothers had not used iron tablet as per the mandate of WHO and ministry of health.

**3.2 Use of additional food during pregnancy period**

Maintaining a healthy balanced diet is important for maintaining optimal health throughout life. Maintaining a healthy diet before and during pregnancy helps to protect both the pregnancy mother and her developing baby from immediate and long term health risks.

A woman's nutritional status during pregnancy depends on the availability of nutritional resources. Woman's macronutrient and micronutrient requirements increase during pregnancy and it is even more important that she consumes food which will give her both the energy and the specific micronutrients which are essential for maintaining her and her growing baby's health. To find the uses of additional food during pregnancy period, some questions were asked to mothers. Their answers are listed below.

**Table 5:** Use of additional food during pregnancy period

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	YES	35	28.9	28.9
	NO	86	71.1	100.0
	Total	121	100.0	

The results of Table 5 shows that out of 121 total respondents, only 35 (28.9%) had got access of additional food during pregnancy period. There may be different factors of depriving of additional food. One of the factors is economic crisis. Next may be lack of knowledge about the importance of additional food.

**Table 5a:** Types of additional food during pregnancy period

	If Yes			Total
	Green Vegetable	Pulse	Meat/Fish	
YES	1	23	11	35
NO	1	0	0	1
Total	2	23	11	36

(Source: Field Survey 2017)

Table 5 shows that among 121 mothers, only 35 mothers had had additional food during their pregnancy period. Among 36 mothers, 1 mother had used green vegetable, 23 mothers had used pulses and 11 mothers had used meat/fish as an additional food during pregnancy.

**3.3 Place of delivery**

Home delivery is unhygienic environment is common in Nepal. The place of delivery is a crucial factor, which affects the health and well- being of mother and new born. The percentage of birth attended by skilled health workers remain lower in South Asia is 45% as a compared to other Asian regions (Save the Children Nepal, 2013). The percentage of institutional delivery is 20% in Nepal whereas 97% in Sri Lanka and 39% in India. The government of Nepal have launched free delivery services (even it pays Rs.500, 1,000 and 1,500 according to the region) at any public health facilities with safe delivery incentive program to save maternal and new born lives by encouraging more women to deliver their babies in health facilities. To find their delivery places, this researcher had asked some questions regarding place of delivery. The answers given by respondents as listed below.

**Table 6:** Place of delivery

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Health post / Hospital	120	99.2	99.2
	Community birthing centre	1	.8	100.0
	Total	121	100.0	

(Source: Field Survey 2017)

Table 6 shows that almost all or 99.2% of mothers had delivered in Health Post /Hospital whereas only 1% had delivered in Community Birthing Centres. It shows that there is not a problem of home and unhygienic delivery system at that community due to its location because Hasuliya is the central point of that community. In addition, the health institutions launched by GOs and INGOs are centralized at that community.

**4. Conclusion**

Mothers' role to bear and rare children is very important. The present study was carried out to explore the health-seeking behaviours of mothers of 37-60 months children from Tharu community of Kailali district. The data show that knowledge of health-seeking practice of mothers is very poor. Very few responded reported about regular health check-up during ANC period. Similarly, they have a little knowledge of using Iron tablet and additional food. However, all of the respondents reported that they gave birth of children in the health centres. Thus, from government sectors as well as from non-government organizations it is

needed to aware public about health seeking practice during ANC and PNC.

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