

Maternal Health Care Mirage: A Study of Maternal Health Care Utilization for Young Married Muslim Women in India

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Abstract : Background: Indian Muslims, compared to their counterparts in other religions, generally do not fare well on many yardsticks related to socio-economic progress and the same is true with maternal health care utilization. Due to low age at marriage a major percentage of child birth is ascribed to young (15-24 years) Muslim mothers in, which pose serious concerns on the maternal health care of Young Married Muslim women (YMMW). A thorough search of past literature on Muslim women's health and health care reveals that studies in India have mainly focused on religious differences in fertility levels and contraceptive use while the research on the determinants of maternal health care utilization among Muslim women are lacking in India. Data and Methods: Retrieving data from the National Family Health Survey -3 (2005-06) this study attempts to assess the level of utilization and factors effecting three key maternal health indicators (full ANC, safe delivery and PNC) among YMMW (15-24 years) in India. The key socio-economic and demographic variables taken as independent or predictor variables in the study was guided by existing literature particularly for India. Bi-variate analysis and chi square test was applied and variables which were found to be significant were further included in binary logistic regression. Results: The findings of the study reveal abysmally low levels of utilization for all three indicators i.e. full ANC, safe delivery and PNC of maternal health care included in the study. Mother's education, mass media exposure, women's autonomy, birth order, economic status wanted status of child and region of residence were found to be significant variables effecting maternal health care utilization among YMMW. Multivariate analysis reveals that no mass media exposure, lower autonomy, education, poor economic background, higher birth order and unintended pregnancy are some of the reasons behind low maternal health care utilization. Conclusion: Considering the low level of safe maternal health care utilization and its proximate determinants among YMMW the study suggests educating Muslim girls, promoting family planning use, involving media and collaboration between religious leader and health care system could be some important policy level interventions to address the unmet need of maternity services among YMMW.

Keywords : young Muslim women, religion, socio-economic condition, antenatal care, delivery, post natal care

Conference Title : ICPD 2014 : International Conference on Population and Development

Conference Location : Paris, France

Conference Dates : December 30-31, 2014