Determinants of use of skilled attendants at birth in East Gonja district of the Northern Region

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Introduction: In the late 2003, Government of Ghana introduced a policy exempting women in the four poorest regions of the country (Northern, Upper East, Upper West and the Central) attending public and private health facilities from paying user fees for delivery care.

The strategy intended to get high levels of facility delivery and thereby to lower maternal morbidity and mortality. In year 2005 the strategy was increased to the remaining six (6) regions of the country (Bosu et al, 2007). Despite this free delivery care policy, the East Gonja District still records low skilled attendants at birth of about 37.9% with maternal mortality of 3 per 1000 live birth (East Gonja District Health Directorate, 2016).

Objectives: The study examines the association of maternal factors, access to reproductive health services, socio-cultural factors and the use of skilled attendants at birth.

Methods: The research approach was quantitative approach. I carried out primary data analysis of a cross sectional study design. A purposive sampling technique was used to interview 345 eligible mothers’ respondents (15-49years), who had children less than one year of age prior to the study. Collected data were coded and summarized using excel and exported into STATA and SPSS 14.1 for analysis. Multivariable logistic regression model was carried out. Adjusted odds ratio (AOR) and their 95% confidence intervals were calculated. P value less than 0.05 were considered significant.

Results: Among the mothers who were interviewed of their last birth, 37.97% (n=131) were delivered with skilled birth attendant while 60.87% (n=210) were delivered with unskilled birth attendants. Attending ANC was equally important, 92 (26.67%) women attended ANC during pregnancy and 253 (73.33%) did not attend ANC during pregnancy.

Conclusion: Less than 40% of women deliver with skilled birth attendants (that’s 37.9%). The woman’s educational level, her partner level of education, ANC attendants and occupation, cultural factors, parity are associated with a woman accessing skilled attendants at birth.

Keywords: Skilled attendants, Delivery, Birth, Maternal health, Obstetric care, East Gonja District and Antenatal care (ANC).