



Skilled Birth Practice and Traditional Birth Attendant Preference in pastoralist Communities of Afar, Ethiopia: A community-based Cross-sectional Study

Authors

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Background

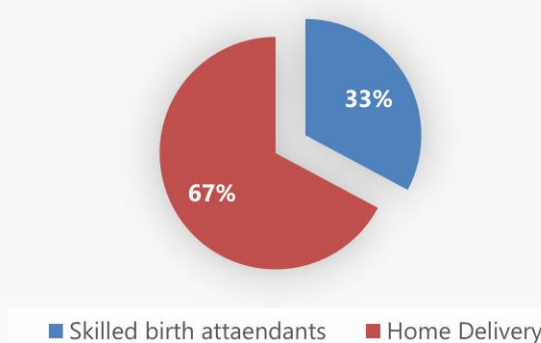
- Maternal mortality remains high, with **most deaths in low-income countries, especially sub-Saharan Africa**
- In Ethiopia, **facility-based delivery is still low**, particularly in pastoralist regions like Afar
- Skilled Birth Attendants (SBAs)** are critical to prevent complications and maternal deaths
- Preference is influenced by **cultural practices, trust, accessibility, and distance to health facilities**
- Evidence on **TBA preference in pastoralist communities remains limited**

Methods

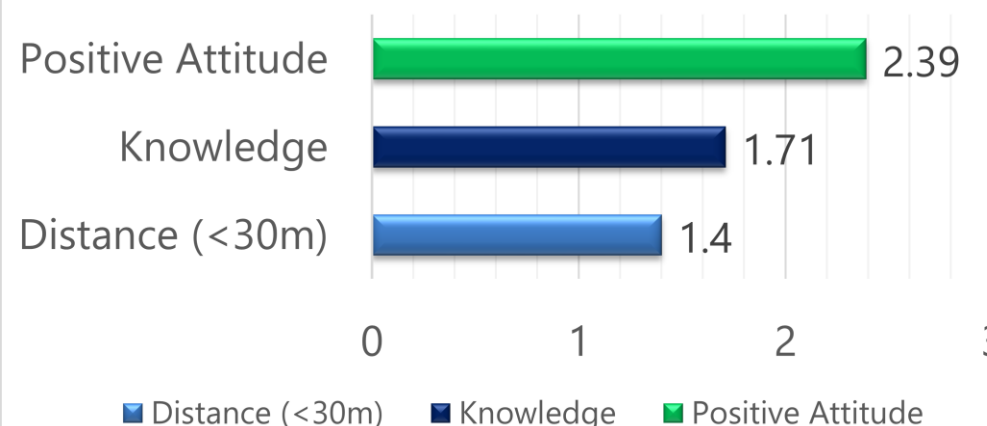
- Study Design**
 - Community-based **cross-sectional study** with **mixed methods (quantitative + qualitative)**
- Study Setting**
 - Conducted in **9 districts, Afar Region (pastoralist community)**
- Study Population**
 - Mothers with children <24 months**
 - Total sample: **846 participants**
- Sampling Technique**
 - Multistage sampling** (district → kebele → household)
 - Systematic random sampling** for participant selection
- Data Collection**
 - Quantitative:** Structured face-to-face interviews
 - Qualitative:**
 - Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)
 - Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)
- Data Analysis**
 - Quantitative:**
 - Descriptive statistics
 - Logistic regression (AOR, 95% CI)
 - Qualitative:**
 - Thematic analysis
- Ethical Considerations**
 - Ethical approval obtained
 - Informed consent** and confidentiality ensured

Results

Prevalence of Skilled Birth attendants



Factors associated with skill Birth Utilizations



Key Themes

- Strong Community Trust in TBAs**
 - TBAs are widely accepted and trusted
 - Long-term relationships with families
- Accessibility and Affordability**
 - TBAs are nearby and available anytime
- Cultural Compatibility**
 - TBAs respect local beliefs and traditions
 - Allow preferred birthing positions
 - Provide traditional rituals and care practices
 - Health facilities lack culturally appropriate services
- Psychosocial Support**
 - TBAs offer continuous emotional support
 - Provide companionship during labor and postpartum
- Domestic Support Roles**
 - Assist with household chores and childcare
 - Reduce women's workload during pregnancy
 - Provide holistic care beyond delivery
- Health Education and Referral**
 - TBAs act as advisors and counselors
 - Support referral to health facilities when needed
- Health System Barriers**
 - Long distance and lack of transportation
 - Shortage of drugs and supplies
 - Unfriendly provider attitudes

Quotes

“People follow the advice of TBAs because of their long relationship with families.”

“There is no nurse or doctor nearby... women would have to walk long distances to reach a health facility.”

“TBAs help with household responsibilities and reduce the burden on pregnant women.”

“TBAs allow women to prefer birthing positions.”

“Some healthcare providers are unfriendly.”

“Women prefer not to expose their bodies to male health workers.”

Recommendations

- Improve access to health facilities** (expand services, transport, and maternity waiting homes)
- Strengthen community awareness** on obstetric danger signs and benefits of skilled care
- Incorporate cultural practices** into facility-based care to improve acceptance
- Improve health worker attitudes** to ensure respectful and compassionate maternity care
- Enhance transportation and emergency referral systems** in remote pastoralist areas

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