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Perceptions towards Birth Companions: A Review Paper

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Abstract: *The Birth companion any person chosen by the pregnant woman according her choice to give continuous support during labour and childbirth. Whom she trust greatly. The person maybe pregnant woman's husband, family member, healthcare provider, community member. The objective of this review paper to assess and explore perceptions and experiences of pregnant women, health care providers (obstetrics and gynecology specialists, residents, and midwives), female birth companions, volunteer birth companion. The review paper emphasizes birth companions encourage and support given to pregnant women during labour and child birth and make communication bridge between pregnant women and healthcare team. Birth companions provide non-pharmacological measure to pregnant mother for pain relief. Acceptance of a birth companion by healthcare providers one of the cause develop role and responsibilities of birth companion. Birth companions play a very important role for witness during disrespectful and abusive behavior to women in labour. Health professionals have knowledge about benefit of birth companions. But it is not routine practiced due to lack of adequate space and difficulty to ensure privacy. In this article, more over discuss continuous and effective support to the parturient women, by birth companion is important that she increase their knowledge regarding birth that will help the future another pregnant women, her family and the health care staff.*

Keywords: *Perceptions, Birth Companions, Labour, Support, birth*

I. INTRODUCTION

Women are the glory of creation. Pregnancy and childbirth are special events in women's lives. It can be a time of hope and joy, but it can also be a time of fear, anxiety, and pain. Anxieties can be reduced with appropriate guidance and support. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), which have replaced the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), are specially targeted at the reduction of the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births by 2030¹. A birth companion is defined as a person chosen by the mother who remains in constant presence with her and supports her during labour and childbirth.² To improve labour outcomes and pregnant women's satisfaction regarding birth experiences, WHO (2015) recommended continuous companionship during labor.³ The World Health Organization's (WHO) vision is Birth companions are a key element of quality care for pregnant women and newborns.⁴ To improve pregnant women's capability of giving birth. Every pregnant woman received psychological support. A randomised control trial revealed that those women who had a birth companion and took childbirth education were more satisfied during labour and child birth.⁴ Various randomized controlled trials revealed birth companion improve maternal and neonatal outcomes and birth companions give provide informational support, emotional support, and practical support.⁵ A Cochrane systematic review conducted by Kidist Gizachew et al (2022) showed birth companion reduce intrapartum analgesia, operative birth, dissatisfaction during childbirth experiences.⁶ WHO emphasized about benefit of birth companions.⁷ According to WHO Birth companions as a key element for quality of care of pregnant women and newborns.⁸ Companions provide bridging the communication gap between the pregnant women and health care provider.⁹ Abuja, Nigeria (2017) conducted a descriptive cross-sectional quantitative study to assess childbirth pain reduce by pregnant women's partner presence during child birth according midwives' perception. Study findings revealed maximum (90%) pregnant women's positive view that her pain reduce due to presence her partner and his emotional and psychological support.¹⁰ Various studies suggest that companions overcome limitations regarding maternity care and decrease the pressure on the service provider by bridging the communication gap between pregnant women and health care provider during delivery room delivery room.¹¹ Hilana Dayana Dodou et al (2014) conducted a mixed method study, to assess perception of post partum mother regarding contribution of a birth companion during delivery and birth. Normal delivery 20 (11 multiparous and nine primiparous) puerperal women whose selected data collected by recorded semi-structured interviews scheduled. Results showed majority 56.3% of paternal participation and 43.7% female participation as birth companion during delivery. Women felt more confident and safety, emotional and physical support, meet the parturient's needs due to the presence of known people during delivery, individual necessities of each parturient,

Therefore, continuous and effective support to the parturient women by birth¹² Women's experiences during childbirth are an important indicator of the use of maternal healthcare services.¹³

II. DISCUSSION

Joy V Summerton et al (2021) conducted a cross-sectional study to assess the experiences and perceptions of birth companions who present support given to pregnant women during labour in a rural hospital. 73 birth companions were selected by purposive sampling. A birth companion feedback book was used for data collection. Results showed that seventy-one (71) birth companions gave positive responses about the birthing experience. Maximum 71 female birth companions. (58) birth companions were relatives and 13 were volunteer birth companions. Birth companions expressed their concerns about the competency of the healthcare provider during respectful care given to pregnant women in the labor room and positive attitudes about birth companions of health care staff. Birth companions encourage and support given to pregnant women during ambulation in the first stage of labour, described the purpose of labour, when women lost confidence regarding the birthing process. Birth companions were prepared to act as a communication bridge between pregnant women and the healthcare team. Birth companions communicate to the health care provider regarding the progress of labour of pregnant women and the feelings, needs, and desires of the pregnant woman in labour to the healthcare team, and also communicate regarding non-pharmacological measures to the pregnant mother for pain relief. Acceptance of a birth companion by healthcare providers is one of the causes of the developed role and responsibilities of a birth companion. They improve their knowledge and skill by attending antenatal education classes. In this study, very few male birth companions revealed positive experiences: Birth companions play a very important role as a witness during disrespectful and abusive behavior towards women in labour and they prevent this disrespectful behavior. Positive experiences and perceptions about the role of birth companions are controlled by behavior and attitudes of healthcare providers when birth companions help and support pregnant women during labour. Birth companions witness healthcare provider's behavior towards pregnant women.¹⁴

Kidist Gizachew et al (2021) conducted a mixed method study to assess the knowledge, attitude, and practice of healthcare providers about birth companions during child birth. About 51 health care providers (include obstetricians and gynecology specialists, residents, and midwives) were randomly selected who were on duty of the labor ward during the study period in SPHMMC. In-depth interviews were used for qualitative data collection from 7 health care providers. Self-administered structured questionnaires were used for data collection of the perception and practice of health care providers of birth companions in labor wards. Results showed that 39.2% were knowledgeable and 90% had a positive attitude towards involvement of birth companions. 82.4% disagreed to allow labor companions during the labour in the labor room.

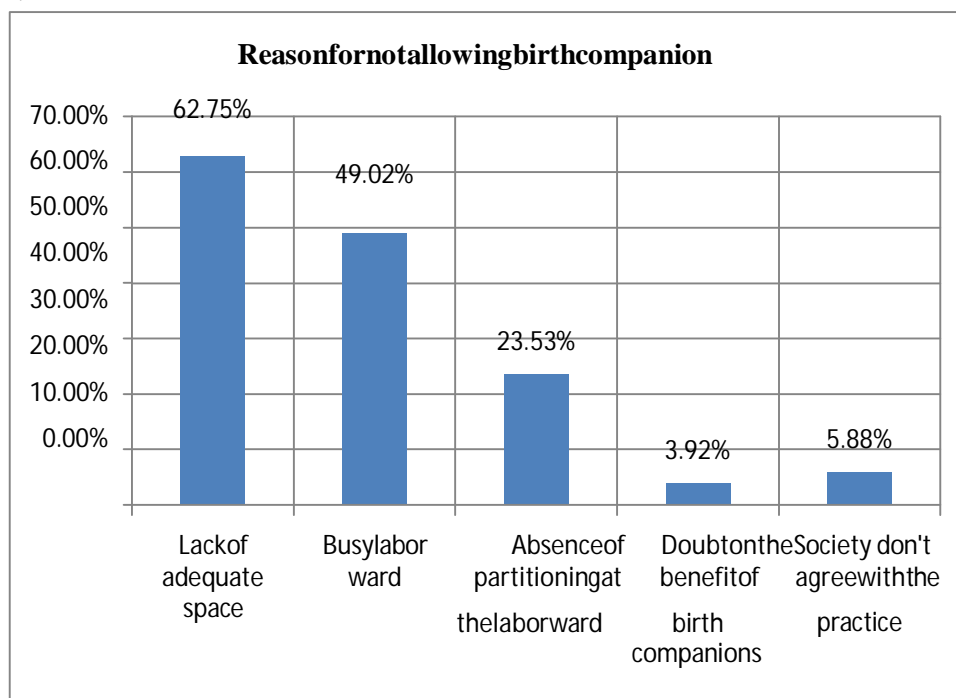


Figure 1 Bar diagram showing percentage of Reasons for not allowing birth companions according to health care provider.

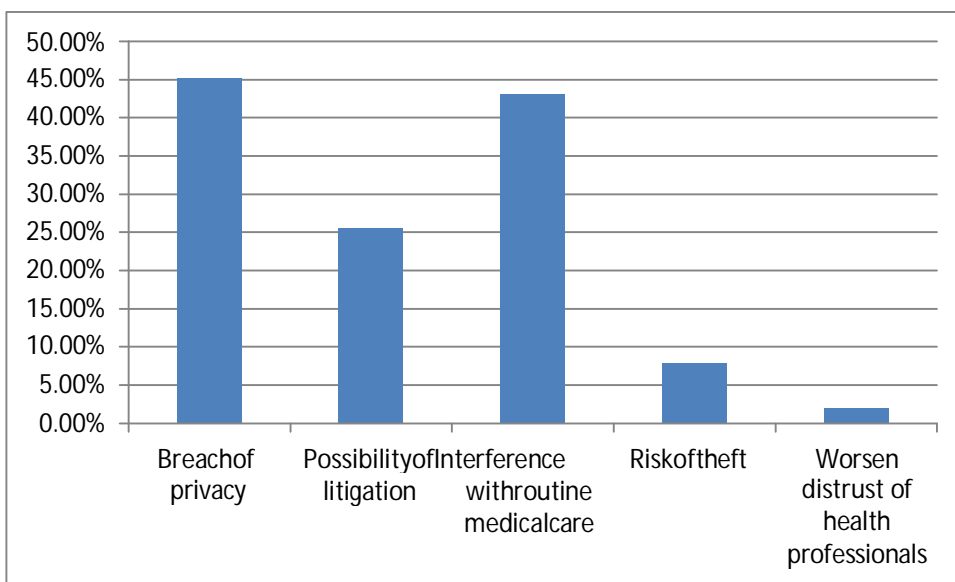


Figure 2 Bar diagram showing percentage of disadvantage for not allowing birth companions according health care provider.

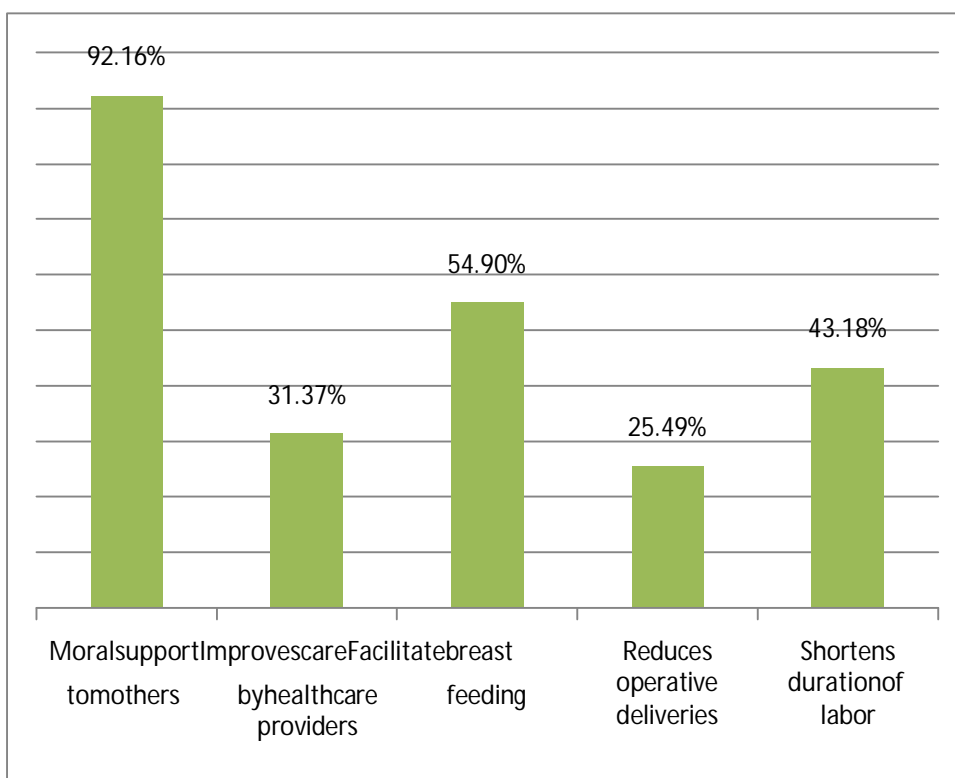


Figure 3 Bar diagram showing percentage of Benefits of birth companions inform by healthcare provider.

Birth companions is not the part of routine practice in SPHMMC. Health professionals have knowledge about benefit of birth companions. But it is not routine practiced due to lack of adequate space and difficulty to ensure privacy.¹⁵

Kidist Gizachew et al (2021) conducted a cross-sectional study to assess the perception of postpartum mothers about birth companions during child birth. About 393 post-partum women selected systematic random sampling. Data collected by interviewing. Result showed -

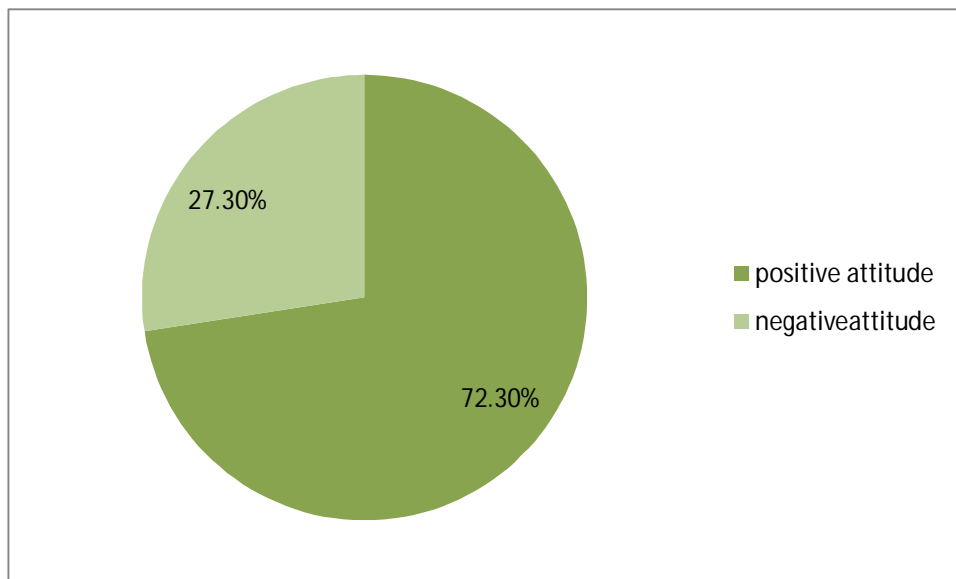


Figure 4 Pie diagram showing percentage of post-partum women attitude towards birth companions.

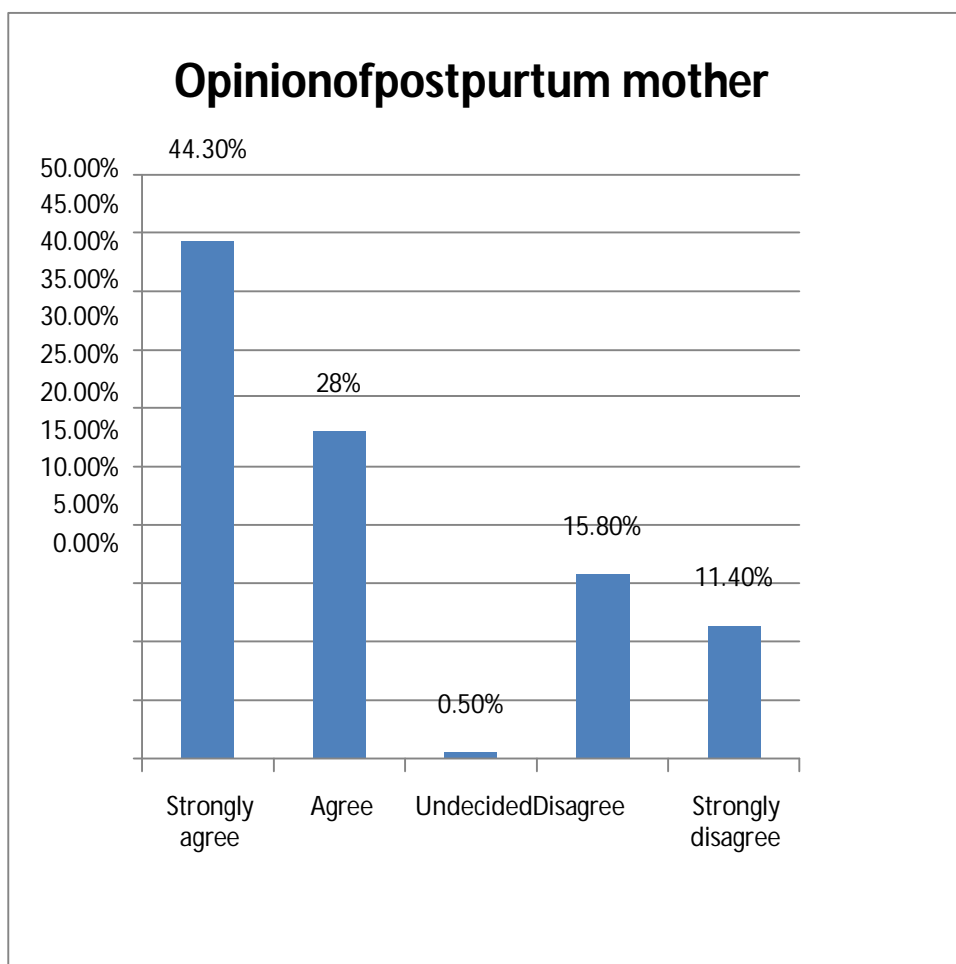


Figure 5 Bar diagram showing percentage of post-partum women's opinion about routine involvement of birth companions.

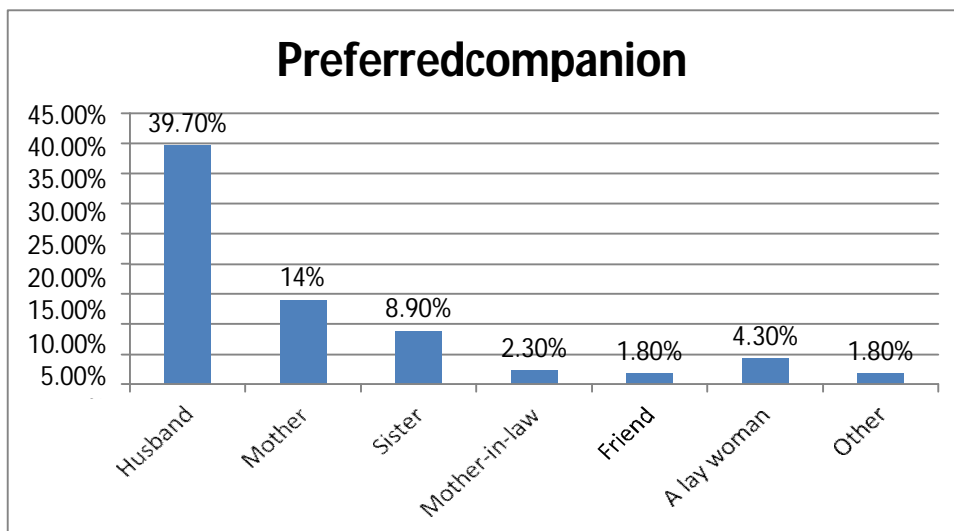


Figure 6 Bar diagram showing percentage of Preferred labor companion by post-partum women

The study showed that birth companionship during labour reduce the women who had intrapartum analgesia, operative birth, or dissatisfaction about childbirth experiences.¹⁶

Roshni Shah et al (2021) conducted a qualitative study in Nepal to explore the students' experience and perception regarding the presence of birth companions with pregnant woman during delivery in the birth centre. About 6 Bachelor in Midwifery Sciences students studying in their 2nd year and PCL Nursing students, selected as sample by purposive sampling. Heideggerian hermeneutical phenomenology approach was used in this study. Semi structured interview guide was used for data collection. Result showed from two main themes (a) midwife student's experience, (b) Pregnant woman's view on experiences of companionship. Sub theme I: Choice of birth companion

Study result revealed that pregnant woman's husband present during labor as birth companion, that helped child birth process

Subtheme II: birth companion's activities Birth companionship was present as non-pharmacological pain relief measures. Holding hands, back massage and, breathing and relaxation techniques all helped the pregnant women.

Subtheme III: responses of birth companion Result showed that maximum pregnant women's husband gladly accepted to birth companionship.

Subtheme II: views of health care students' on birth companion presence of birth companions were helpful

Analysis of data, conclude that most of pregnant women wished her husband will be birth companion. Birth companion more important both for care receivers and the care provider. Sensitization was needed for changing the attitude and values of health care provider toward the birth companionship.¹⁷

A mixed-methods study conducted by Patience Afulani et al. (2018) on companionship during facility-based childbirth in Kenya had the objective of assessing the prevalence and determinants of birth companionship, and the perceptions of care providers and women regarding companionship. To select a sample, a multistage sampling approach was used. In this study, data were collected by survey, to collect qualitative data, we used focus group discussions with recent postnatal mothers and in-depth interviews with health care providers who work in maternity units. For focus group discussions, 58 eligible mothers were purposefully chosen from one in each sub-country. Each focus group consisted of six to ten women and lasted 90 minutes; the discussion was audio recorded (24). Maternity providers were chosen for in-depth interviews based on their superior delivery performance, and 49 interviews were conducted with maternity providers from 18 facilities. Here, we used both closed and open-ended questions for an hour regarding their perception of continuous support during labour and delivery and its barriers in their facilities and audio recordings.

Qualitative data analysis using the Braun and Clarke approach (2006) and quantitative data analysis using descriptive analysis. The majority of survey respondents, 88 percent, were accompanied to the health facility by someone. Only 6% of respondents disagreed with being accompanied during labour and delivery; 29 percent were accompanied by a partner, 28% by a mother-in-law, and 29% wanted continuous companionship during labour and delivery; only 6% disagreed with being accompanied during labour and delivery.

In this study, it was reported that younger, educated, employed, and wealthier women wanted continuous labour support. The majority of working women preferred to be accompanied by their sisters and sisters-in-law. Wealthier and more educated women wanted to accompany their partners. Most of the women were happy because their partner was with them during their labor. The reason for continuous support was emotional support. Some women felt embarrassed because their birth companion discussed private matters.¹⁸

III. CONCLUSION

This review focuses on the advantages of birth companionship as chosen by pregnant women during labour and childbirth, and it can be used in low-resource settings. The late antenatal period is ideal for educating the primigravid mother and her companion about childbirth. As a result, primi gravidae must pay more attention during childbirth. In low resource settings. The World Health Organization (WHO) has recommended women have a companion during birth. A companion can be any person chosen by the woman to provide her with continuous support during labor and childbirth for improving labor outcomes and women's satisfaction with care. Birth companions are recognized as a key element in the WHO vision of quality of care for pregnant women and newborns, yet it is practiced only in some of the co-located birth centers the women's right of birth companionship should be available to all the childbearing women. For women's rights, health care providers must help a companion to encourage participation during child birth which improve the quality of care and positive childbirth experience of an expected couple. Pregnant women, health care providers (obstetrics and gynecology specialists, residents, and midwives), female birth companions, volunteer birth companion, every body positive attitude towards birth companion. Birth companionship increases vaginal delivery, decreases caesarean deliveries, decreases the need for pain medication during labor, and shortens the duration of the second stage of labour.

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