

# **Cultural Beliefs and Practices that Influence Women's Use of Maternal Health Services in Nigeria**

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## **Abstract**

**Background:** Maternal health services are healthcare services such as antenatal care, a skilled attendant at delivery, and postnatal care, provided for women during pregnancy, delivery, and six weeks after birth to reduce maternal mortality (World Health Organization [WHO], 2017).

However, due to inadequate use of these services, 810 women died globally every day in 2017, mostly from low-income countries such as Nigeria (WHO, 2019b). Nigeria's maternal mortality ratio is approximately 917 per 100,000 live births, making Nigeria the fourth-highest contributor to maternal mortality globally in 2017 (WHO, 2019a). A major predisposing factor of maternal death in Nigeria is the limited uptake of MHS resulting from cultural beliefs and practices around childbirth (Yaya et al., 2019). These cultural beliefs and practices are a way of life, some of which could be harmful around childbirth leading to preventable maternal deaths. Though many policies have been developed to reduce maternal mortality in Nigeria, most are biomedically focused on approaches to increase skilled birth attendance with little consideration given to women's cultural needs around childbirth. **Objective:** To explore the cultural beliefs and practices of Igala women in Kogi East Nigeria around childbirth that influence their use of maternal health services.

**Design and Methods:** A focused ethnographic methodology by Roper and Shapira (2000) would be employed. A purposive sampling technique will be used to recruit participants comprising of

women and nurses in both rural and urban areas to enhance a thick description. Data will be collected using semi-structured, one-on-one interviews and focus group interviews for women and nurses, respectively. Focused observations will also serve to enhance a thick description and triangulation. Data analysis will follow the approach described by Roper and Shapira (2000).

**Conclusion:** Findings of the proposed research could promote culturally-centred maternal health services to enhance maternal health outcomes in Nigeria.

### References

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