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Title: Maternal health seeking behaviors and health care utilization in Pakistan

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Background: Direct estimations of maternal mortality were carried out in Pakistan for the first time. Maternal health and health issues, maternal mortality and the specific causes of death among women must be studied to improve the health care of women and better utilization of maternal health services for better public health.

Objective: The main objectives of this study are to analyze maternal health, morbidity and mortality indicators. The causes of death and health care utilization will be highlighted, hence, useful recommendations can be made to reduce maternal deaths and to attain the Sustainable Development Goal 3.1.

Method: Utilizing the data of Pakistan Maternal Mortality Survey 2019, crosstabs and frequency tables are constructed and multivariate analysis was conducted to find out the most effective factors contributing to the deaths. IBM SPSS and STATA were used for the analysis.

Results and Conclusion: 40% population surveyed was under 15, age 65 or above. Average household members were 6-7. Drinking water facility was majorly improved in both urban and rural areas. Hospital services in rural areas were mostly (54%) in the parameter of 10+ kms and Basic Health Units were mainly found inside the community. Very few urban households were in the poorest quantile while very few rural households were in the wealthiest quantile. Women education distribution showed that a high percentage of women (52%) were uneducated and only a 12% had received higher education. Maternal mortality ratio (MMR) for the 3-year period before the survey was 186 deaths per 100,000 live births while pregnancy related mortality rate was 251 deaths per 100,000 live births, which was higher compared to the MMR. Maternal death causes were divided into direct and indirect causes, where major causes were reported to be obstetric Hemorrhage (41%), Hypertensive disorders (29%), Pregnancy with abortive outcome (10%), other obstetric pregnancy related infection (6%) and non-obstetric (4%). 37% women who died in the three years before the survey sought medical care at a public sector health facility while 26% at private sector and 5% at home. A majority (90%) of women who had pregnancy complications in the 3 years before the survey received ANC from a skilled provider.

Keywords: Maternal health, antenatal care, maternal mortality rates, pregnancy related diseases