
Assessment of The Positive Ways for Labour Preparation: A Comparative Study Between Urban and Rural Women of Reproductive Age

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ABSTRACT

The study assessed the positive ways for labour preparation: a comparative study between urban and rural women of reproductive age in Akwa Ibom State. For women to have excellent delivery experiences and outcomes, labor and childbirth preparation is essential. Preparing for labor is an important aspect of pregnancy that can contribute to a positive birth experience. Taking proactive steps to prepare physically, emotionally, and mentally can help expectant parents feel empowered, confident, and better equipped to navigate the challenges of labor and delivery. By attending childbirth education classes, practicing relaxation techniques, engaging in regular exercise, establishing a supportive birth team, and creating a birth plan, parents can navigate the challenges of labor with confidence, knowledge, and emotional readiness. The difference in labor preparation between urban and rural dwellers can vary due to several factors, including access to resources, cultural norms, and healthcare facilities. Urban dwellers often have better access to resources for labor preparation compared to their rural counterparts. In urban settings unlike rural settings, expectant parents may have more exposure to a variety of birthing options and alternative methods such as water births, hypnos-birthing, or home births. The study highlighted the concept of pregnancy, pregnancy & labour, labour preparation, reproductive age and the difference in labour preparation between urban and rural dwellers. The study concluded that by acknowledging the differences between urban and rural areas in Akwa Ibom State, healthcare providers, policymakers, and community leaders can work collaboratively to design interventions that address the unique challenges faced by women in each setting. By promoting positive labor preparation practices, enhancing access to resources, and respecting cultural values, we can improve maternal and child health outcomes and contribute to positive birth experiences for all women in Akwa Ibom State. One of the recommendations made was that efforts should be made to enhance access to resources for labor preparation in both urban and rural areas.

KEYWORDS: Labour Preparation, Urban and Rural Women, and Reproductive Age

Introduction

During pregnancy, a sperm and an egg cell are combined to form a zygote, a new cell that will ultimately develop into a new human being. An average human pregnancy lasts 40 weeks from the day of the last menstrual period (LMP) and 38 weeks from the day of conception. In the uterus of a female animal, a fertilized egg develops into an embryo, then a fetus, and carrying an embryo or fetus during this process is also a normal occurrence. It involves significant hormonal and physiological changes that aid in the development and growth of the fetus. To feel confident and prepared for giving birth, pregnant women should make every effort to get ready for labor. It includes a range of techniques and activities intended to enhance one's physical and emotional well-being, build knowledge and confidence, and provide a supportive environment for birthing. Attending childbirth education classes is an essential component of labor preparation.

Preparation for labor and delivery is crucial if women are to have healthy deliveries and outcomes. However, depending on a variety of variables, such as resource accessibility, cultural norms, and the accessibility of healthcare, the environment in which women prepare for labor might differ significantly between urban and rural locales. This study aims to assess and compare the efficient labor preparation strategies employed by urban and rural women of reproductive age in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Due to the variety of its urban and rural populations, Akwa Ibom State is an intriguing setting for this comparative research. Urban regions have stronger infrastructure, including access to educational opportunities, healthcare facilities, and a larger choice of support services. Uyo, the state capital, is one example. Contrarily, the state's rural districts have difficulties because of their scarce resources, the distances to healthcare facilities, and cultural customs that could affect how workers are prepared for the workforce. For the purpose of resolving inequities and enhancing mother and child health outcomes, it is essential to comprehend the variations in labor preparation practices between urban and rural women in Akwa Ibom State. Healthcare professionals, legislators, and community leaders may create focused interventions to support and empower women throughout their pregnancy and birthing journey by recognizing the beneficial ways in which women in both settings prepare for labor.

Concept of Pregnancy

During pregnancy, an egg cell is fertilized by a sperm to create a zygote, a new cell that will ultimately grow into a new human creature. The typical length of a human pregnancy, which is the condition of carrying an embryo or fetus within a female body, is 40 weeks from the date of the last menstrual period (LMP) or 38 weeks from the time of conception. Positive findings on an over-the-counter urine test can serve as a warning sign for this issue, which can then be verified by a blood test, ultrasound, the presence of a fetal heartbeat, or an X-ray. When counting from the woman's last menstrual period (LMP), a pregnancy lasts roughly nine months. Traditionally, it is separated into three trimesters, each lasting around three months. A fertilized egg grows into an embryo and then a baby within the uterus of a female animal during pregnancy, which is a normal and intricate biological process (Thomas, 2023). The average pregnancy lasts 40 weeks, divided into three trimesters. The mother's body undergoes significant physiological and hormonal changes during this time in order to sustain the growing baby. Fertilization is the process by which a sperm penetrates an egg and develops into a zygote at the start of pregnancy. In the uterus, where it implants into the uterine lining, the zygote moves down the fallopian tube after cell division. At this stage, pregnancy officially starts (Moore, L., Persaud, & Torchia 2019). The placenta, a vital organ, facilitates the flow of nutrients and oxygen between the mother and the child. Numerous hormones serve crucial roles in preserving pregnancy and promoting fetal growth throughout the course of pregnancy. Human chorionic gonadotropin (HCG), estrogen, and progesterone are hormones that assist in maintaining the uterine lining and preventing the endometrium from shedding, which would result in a monthly cycle.

According to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, (2020), the fetus develops significantly over the course of the three trimesters, with the major organs and body systems forming during the first trimester and further maturing in the following months. As the fetus grows, the mother may experience a variety of physical and emotional changes, such as morning sickness, fatigue, mood swings, and weight gain. Prenatal care, including routine check-ups, ultrasound monitoring the baby's growth and the mother's health is vital to detect and address any potential complications. Additionally, pregnant women are urged to abstain from dangerous drugs including alcohol, cigarettes, and specific prescriptions that could harm the

growing fetus. The process of becoming pregnant is amazing and complex, and it results in the birth of a new life. The interaction of biochemical, hormonal, and physiological changes in the mother and growing fetus is involved. A successful and healthy pregnancy depends on knowing the different phases of pregnancy and getting the right prenatal care.

Pregnancy & Labour

The process through which a fertilized egg grows into an embryo and finally a fetus within the uterus of a female animal is called pregnancy. It entails major hormonal and physiological adjustments to promote the baby's growth and development. While The process by which the fetus is delivered to the outer world and is removed from the uterus is known as labor, commonly known as delivery. It comprises of three stages: cervical dilation and effacement, birth of the child, and placenta delivery. The woman enters the labor and delivery phase as the pregnancy nears its finish. The uterus contracts during labor to force the baby out of the womb and into the world. The dilatation stage, the pushing stage, and the placental stage are the usual divisions. The cervix widens during the dilation stage to provide room for the baby to pass through the birth canal. This stage might last for many hours and is characterized by frequent contractions. The next stage is pushing, when the mother pushes the baby through the birth canal using her abdominal muscles. The placenta is delivered during the placental stage. Healthcare professionals keep an eye on the mother and baby's vital signs during labor and delivery to ensure a safe and healthy delivery (American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, 2017).

The woman, the growing baby, and medical professionals are just a few of the important participants in the pregnancy and birth process. In order to accommodate the developing baby, the mother's body goes through considerable changes, including an increase in blood volume and placenta growth. Obstetricians, midwives, and nurses, as well as other healthcare professionals, are essential in providing prenatal care, keeping track of the mother's and baby's health, and aiding with labor and delivery. In order to control the mother's discomfort and assist her throughout delivery, they may employ a variety of methods, such as breathing exercises or epidural anesthetic. To protect the health of both mother and child when problems occur, medical interventions like cesarean sections may be required (American College of Nurse Midwives, 2021).

Concept of Labour Preparation

Pregnant women should prepare for labor as much as possible to feel confident and prepared for giving birth. It entails a variety of tactics and exercises designed to improve mental and physical health, develop expertise and self-assurance, and provide a nurturing setting for childbirth. Participating in childbirth education sessions is a vital part of labor preparation. These courses cover topics including pain relief methods, relaxation techniques, and the phases of labor.

They also offer an opportunity for expectant parents to ask questions, connect with other parents, and develop a birth plan that reflects their preferences and goals (American Pregnancy Association, 2021). The difference in labor preparation between urban and rural dwellers can vary due to several factors, including access to resources, cultural norms, and healthcare facilities. Here is a summary of the key points:

- *Access to Resources:*

Urban dwellers often have better access to resources for labor preparation compared to their rural counterparts. In urban areas, there is a wider availability of childbirth education classes, prenatal yoga or exercise programs, and support groups. These resources provide valuable information, knowledge, and skills for expectant parents to prepare for labor. Additionally, urban areas tend to have more advanced medical facilities, including well-equipped hospitals and specialized birthing centers, which offer a range of services and support during labor. On the other hand, rural dwellers may face challenges accessing these resources. The limited availability of childbirth education classes or healthcare facilities can make it harder for them to receive comprehensive preparation. Transportation issues and long distances to reach medical centers may further hinder their ability to access prenatal care and attend childbirth education programs. However, rural communities may compensate for this by relying on traditional knowledge and community support networks, which can play a crucial role in preparing for labor and providing emotional support during childbirth.

- *Cultural Norms and Practices:*

Cultural norms and practices can significantly influence labor preparation approaches in urban and rural areas. In urban settings, expectant parents may have more exposure to a variety of birthing options and alternative methods such as water births, hypnobirthing, or home births. They may also have access to diverse healthcare professionals who provide specialized care during pregnancy and childbirth. Urban dwellers often have more autonomy and flexibility in making decisions about their birth plans, including pain management options and birthing positions. In rural areas, cultural norms and practices may have a stronger influence on labor preparation. Traditional beliefs and practices regarding childbirth may be prevalent, and expectant parents may rely more on the wisdom and experience of older generations or traditional birth attendants. These practices can vary widely depending on the cultural and ethnic background of the community. However, it's important to note that rural areas are not homogenous, and cultural practices can vary even within rural communities.

- *Support Networks:*

Support networks play a vital role in labor preparation for both urban and rural dwellers. In urban areas, expectant parents often have access to a larger social network, including family, friends, and professional support such as doulas or midwives. This support system can provide emotional support, guidance, and assistance during labor. Urban dwellers may also have more opportunities to connect with online communities or attend support groups, which offer a sense of community and shared experiences. In rural areas, support networks may revolve around close-knit communities, extended family members, and neighbors. While access to professional support may be limited, rural dwellers often rely on the support of their immediate social circle and community. This support can be valuable in providing emotional support, practical assistance, and traditional knowledge that has been passed down through generations. The difference in labor preparation between urban and rural dwellers stems from variations in resource availability, cultural influences, and support networks. While urban dwellers may have better access to specialized resources and healthcare facilities, rural communities often rely on traditional practices and community support. Recognizing and understanding these differences can help healthcare providers and support networks tailor their services to the specific needs and circumstances of both urban and rural expectant parents.

Positive Ways for Labour Preparation

Preparing for labor is an important aspect of pregnancy that can contribute to a positive birth experience. Taking proactive steps to prepare physically, emotionally, and mentally can help expectant parents feel empowered, confident, and better equipped to navigate the challenges of labor and delivery. Preparing for labor in positive ways can empower expectant parents and contribute to a more positive birth experience. By attending childbirth education classes, practicing relaxation techniques, engaging in regular exercise, establishing a supportive birth team, and creating a birth plan, parents can navigate the challenges of labor with confidence, knowledge, and emotional readiness. Remember that each birth experience is unique, and flexibility is the key. It is essential to consult with healthcare providers and make informed decisions based on individual circumstances and preferences. Various positive ways for labor preparation (Matsumoto, K., Uno, M., Nishitani, S., & Fujita, Y. 2017).

- *Attend Childbirth Education Classes*

Childbirth education classes provide expectant parents with valuable knowledge and skills for labor and delivery. These classes cover topics such as stages of labor, breathing and relaxation techniques, pain management options, and breastfeeding. By attending these classes, parents gain a deeper understanding of the birthing process, which can alleviate anxiety and enhance their ability to actively participate in their birth experience.

- *Practice Relaxation Techniques*

Learning and practicing relaxation techniques can significantly benefit expectant parents during labor. Deep breathing exercises, visualization, and mindfulness techniques help reduce stress, promote relaxation, and manage pain. These techniques can be incorporated into daily routines to build familiarity and proficiency, enabling parents to access a state of calmness and focus during labor.

- *Engage in Regular Exercise*

Staying physically active during pregnancy has numerous benefits, including improved stamina and strength for labor. Low-impact exercises like walking, swimming, and prenatal yoga can enhance overall fitness and promote optimal positioning of the baby for birth. Always consult with healthcare providers before engaging in any exercise routine during pregnancy.

- *Establish a Birth Support Team*

Having a supportive birth team in place can make a significant difference during labor and delivery. This team may include a partner, family members, friends, or a doula. These individuals provide emotional support, reassurance, and advocacy for the laboring person. Their presence can create a nurturing and positive environment, which enhances the birthing experience.

- *Create a Birth Plan*

Developing a birth plan allows expectant parents to communicate their preferences, goals, and concerns with their healthcare providers. A birth plan outlines preferences for pain management, positions during labor, interventions, and postpartum care. It serves as a guide for the birth team,

facilitating effective communication and ensuring that the parents' wishes are respected to the extent possible.

- *Empower yourself*

Every woman is different. Our bodies are different, our babies are different, and no two births are the same. That's why it's useful to find out more about labor and birth. Understanding more about your options and the pros and cons of each can help you feel more confident in making decisions about how you want to deliver your baby (Tommy's 2022). You can also talk to your midwife if there's anything you're particularly concerned about. They will answer any questions you have and explain what can be done to deliver your baby safely in every possible scenario.

- *Prepare your mind*

Try not to listen to horror stories about labor, as these are really unhelpful if you're feeling nervous. Try to remember that for every bad experience, there is a mom out there with a positive story to tell. This can be hard, especially if you've had a bad experience yourself. But try to think positively as much as possible. Lots of moms tell us it really helps to have a positive outlook (Tommy's 2022).

- *Give pregnancy yoga a go*

An easy way to prepare your mind for labor and reduce any anxiety around it is by doing pregnancy yoga. There's loads of research to prove its benefits, including a 2018 study by the Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology Research that found that practicing yoga improved sleep in the third trimester and reduced overall stress levels. It is not just good for your mind; pregnancy yoga can also help you physically prepare for labor (Gilbert 2022).

- *Labour hopscotch*

Labor hopscotch is a visual tool used in all maternity units. You may hear about it from your midwife or physiotherapist. It was designed by an Irish midwife. Ask your midwife about labor hopscotch if you're interested in using it as a visual aid (HSE, 2021). It has seven parts. Many of these are about tilting your pelvis to improve your baby's position. This helps your baby move down through your pelvis during labor. You can tilt your pelvis by doing squats, lunges, or walking sideways on the stairs.

- *Eat right*

Fueling your soon-to-be-laboring body with healthy meals is another smart path to success when it comes to preparing for childbirth. As you near the end of your pregnancy, fill your plate with nutrient-dense pregnancy super foods such as lean meats, lentils, yogurt, wild salmon, nuts, veggies, and whole grains (Geddes 2021).

- *Pack your hospital bag*

Another easy do-ahead task is to pack a hospital bag so it's ready to go (and putting one together is kind of fun!). Check out our handy lists of the items you really should include when you go to the hospital or birthing center, as well as some other items that are nice to have on hand for you, your new baby, and your partner (Geddes 2021).

- *Think positively and stay focused*

The more positive messages you give yourself about any task, the easier it is. It helps if others around you remind you of your strength and the wonderful reason for laboring for your baby. Stephanie Fell says, "I believe in the power of mind over matter and practiced visualizations during pregnancy. I was able to call on images such as flowers opening and waves ebbing during my labor, and it helped me to focus and stay in control of the pain (Elliott, 2023).

Concept of Reproductive Age

Reproductive age refers to the period during which individuals are biologically capable of reproducing. It is an important consideration in various fields, including reproductive health, family planning, and medical research. The concept is primarily focused on females due to their limited window of fertility, although it can also be applicable to males in certain contexts. Reproductive age is typically defined by the onset and cessation of fertility, which are influenced by various factors such as hormonal changes, menstrual cycles, and the aging process. The general consensus is that females reach reproductive age with the onset of menarche, which is the first occurrence of menstruation, usually around the age of 12 to 14 years. The end of reproductive age, known as menopause, is characterized by the cessation of menstruation and typically occurs between the ages of 45 and 55 (World Health Organization, 2018).

Understanding the concept of reproductive age is crucial for addressing reproductive health issues and promoting responsible family planning. It helps individuals and couples make informed decisions regarding contraception, pregnancy planning, and fertility treatment. Healthcare professionals and policymakers often use reproductive age as a guideline for providing appropriate reproductive healthcare services and support. Reproductive age is relevant in medical research, particularly in the fields of reproductive biology and fertility preservation. Researchers study the physiological and molecular changes that occur during reproductive age to gain insights into fertility mechanisms, reproductive disorders, and age-related declines in reproductive function. Kelsey, W., Wright, P., Nelson, M., & Anderson, A. (2017)

Difference in Labour Preparation between Urban and Rural Dwellers

Labor is one of the greatest assets behind the development of societies; however, child labor seems to have adverse consequences for the development of societies (Moser 1996). Labor is a social phenomenon that is rampant in developing areas such as rural and urban areas, as 15 million children under the age of 14 are working as child laborers in rural and urban areas of the country (Bass 2004; UNICEF 2006). Thus, a significant proportion of children of primary and secondary school age seem to be engaged as child laborers in the country. Some of the children engaged in child labor work in paid jobs on the farm, while others work as house help or domestic servants (Nwokoro 2011). Labor preparation should be a normal physiological process that creates pleasure and anticipation for the woman, her family, and the community.

Approximately 15% of the 4 million U.S. mothers who give birth each year deliver their babies in rural hospitals (Impson, 2011). Rural-urban differences in obstetric care are important for financial and policy reasons, as well as clinical and public health reasons. Small absolute differences in childbirth care can affect the health of thousands of women and infants every year, with such differences growing ever-larger if they are driven by disparate trends (Impson, 2011). In 2009, childbirth-related hospitalizations accounted for 7.6% of all inpatient costs, totaling \$27.6 billion, and nearly half of births were paid for by state Medicaid programs (Caesar's Ghost,

2012). Rising costs are driven in part by greater use of obstetric procedures nationally, including increases in labor induction, first-time cesareans, and repeat cesareans (Scott, 2011).

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Conclusion

The evaluation of effective methods for labor preparation among reproductive-age urban and rural women in Akwa Ibom State has illuminated the various elements affecting labor preparation in these environments. Our comprehension of the particular difficulties faced by and resources made accessible to women in urban and rural locations, as well as the ramifications for their labor experiences, has been aided by this study. The results of this comparative study show how urban and rural women have different access to resources for getting ready for work. In general, childbirth education programs, support groups, and specialized healthcare services are more readily available to urban women. Their birth plans frequently reflect a larger range of alternatives and preferences since they have more exposure to various childbirth techniques. Contrarily, rural women have difficulty obtaining these resources because of distances, a lack of healthcare infrastructure, and long-standing cultural traditions that may affect how they prepare for labor. In Akwa Ibom State, cultural norms and customs also have a big impact on how women prepare for labor. By acknowledging the differences between urban and rural areas in Akwa Ibom State, healthcare providers, policymakers, and community leaders can work collaboratively to design interventions that address the unique challenges faced by women in each setting. By promoting positive labor preparation practices, enhancing access to resources, and respecting cultural values, we can improve maternal and child health outcomes and contribute to positive birth experiences for all women in Akwa Ibom State.

Recommendations

1. Efforts should be made to enhance access to resources for labor preparation in both urban and rural areas. In rural communities, this may involve increasing the availability of childbirth education classes, support groups, and prenatal care services. Mobile healthcare units or outreach programs can be utilized to bring these resources closer to rural communities.
2. Recognizing the importance of community support in labor preparation, community-based support networks should be further developed and strengthened. This can involve partnering with local organizations, traditional birth attendants, and community leaders to provide education, training, and resources to support expectant parents.
3. Healthcare providers should receive training in cultural competency to better understand and respect the cultural beliefs, practices, and preferences of women in both urban and rural areas. This will enable them to provide appropriate and sensitive care that aligns with the cultural context of each community.
4. Policymakers, healthcare providers, and community leaders can work together to create a supportive and empowering environment for women in both urban and rural areas of Akwa Ibom State. Ultimately, this will contribute to improving maternal and child health outcomes, promoting positive birth experiences, and ensuring equitable access to quality healthcare services for all women.

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