

# Male Partner Involvement In The Utilization Of Antenatal Care Services In Kidera, Buyende District, Uganda: Cross Sectional Mixed Methods Study

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## Research

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# Abstract

## Background:

Antenatal care, one of the pillars of safe motherhood, is a proven concept aimed at reducing maternal and neonatal morbidity and mortality. It is largely a health preventive and promotive activity. In order to foster its utilization and the desired benefits, the males who are largely key decision makers especially in patriarchal societies have to be involved. This concept of male involvement (MI) is essential in curtailing the gender inequality and improves the family livelihood. Although different strategies have been employed to woo males into ANC clinics, their involvement is largely lacking in Uganda. This study reports level of males' involvement, their knowledge and attitudes of ANC and influencing factors .

**Methods:** This was a cross sectional community descriptive study that employed quantitative and qualitative methods. Our qualitative data study was based on the phenomenological design and rooted into the Grounded theory. For quantitative study, 135 adult males were recruited and collected data analyzed using SPSS software (version 24) while for qualitative data collection, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were held for 60 males and each transcript was analyzed by two researchers using NVIVO software version 12. Coding was done and themes developed.

**Results:** Male involvement as assessed based on different activities was between 51.1 % and 85.2 %. Although 77.8% had ever accompanied their partner for ANC, only 9.6% did so on at least 4 occasions and 88.9% never received any supplementary service during the visit. Significantly males were generally knowledgeable and had positive attitude towards ANC. Also 65.4% reported their partner felt comfortable once accompanied.

However during FGDs, males described ANC as a room for checking pregnant women, time wasting and unpleasant for the males with no privacy and rude staff. They were further wary of being tested as a couple for HIV. Despite challenges, ANC couple attendance was credited with potential of fostering unity.

**Conclusions:** Male involvement is improving in Uganda but more needs to be done in educating men about their importance in ANC. Couple friendly infrastructure that ensures privacy, staff training that ensures customer care tailored towards being more sensitive and responsive to couples' may improve MI.

## Background

Male involvement (MI) is an all-encompassing term, referring to the various ways in which men relate to reproductive health problems and programs, reproductive rights and reproductive behavior. It is considered to be an important cornerstone for improving maternal health globally. It calls for the need to change men's attitude and behavior towards women's health, make them more supportive of women to and during use of health care services and sharing childbearing activities. Furthermore it emphasizes that men's understanding of their responsibility for their sexual and reproductive behavior as well as their