

## Abstract

Every day, approximately 800 women die from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth worldwide; and almost all these deaths occur in low-resource settings, (WHO, 2012). Antenatal care is one of the four pillars of the Safe Motherhood strategy developed and implemented in most developing countries to reduce maternal mortality. This study was carried out to assess factors influencing the utilization of antenatal care services in Layibi division.

The study had four specific objectives; to determine the prevalence of antenatal care services utilization, to identify the socio-demographic factors influencing utilization of antenatal care services, to identify the individual factors influencing utilization of antenatal care services, and to identify the health system factors influencing utilization of antenatal care services, among women of reproductive age in Layibi division, Gulu municipality.

A cross-sectional study design was used. Researcher administered questionnaires were used to collect data using purposive sampling, from 392 women of reproductive age whose last births were in the last 5 years. Among the information gathered were those on the respondents' background characteristics, last pregnancy and frequency of last antenatal care visit(s).

The study found that 57% of women in Layibi division attend antenatal clinics to the minimum number of times (four times), as recommended by WHO. Age ( $\chi^2 = 30.49$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), Marital status ( $\chi^2 = 21.37$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and education level ( $\chi^2 = 37.61$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) were the sociodemographic factors that influenced the utilization of antenatal care services among women of reproductive age women in Layibi division. Individual factors such as Parity ( $\chi^2 = 4.48$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), awareness ( $\chi^2 = 8.63$ ,  $p < 0.003$ ), and knowledge ( $\chi^2 = 90.73$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), were also found to influence utilization of ANC services among women of reproductive age in Layibi division. Health system factors were found to have no significant relationship with utilization of ANC services among the women of reproductive age in Layibi division.

In conclusion, the ANC services utilization level in Layibi division is still below the recommended percentage by the MOH; given the percentage of those who reported for antenatal visits at least four times during their last pregnancies.

In addition, the study concluded that socio-demographic and individual factors influence utilization of antenatal services more than health system factors.

This study recommends that sensitization about the benefits of antenatal care services should be done to ensure that more parents are encouraged to go for them.

In addition socio-demographic factors (like age, education level and marital status) and individual factors (like knowledge, awareness and number of children) should be the considered when designing antenatal care services for mothers.

Furthermore, other similar studies should be carried out in different parts of the country to establish and compare antenatal care prevalence so as to work towards its improvement.