

# IMPACT OF MATERNAL EDUCATION AND HEALTH AWARENESS ON CHILD HEALTH IN KANDAHAR PROVINCE, AFGHANISTAN

Mohammad Azeem Zmarial Kakar

Dr. Deborah Hume, Thesis Supervisor

## ABSTRACT

Improving child health and decreasing child mortality still remains a challenge to the government of Afghanistan. According to UNICEF, Afghanistan ranked 16<sup>th</sup> among the countries with high child mortality (2015). Kandahar province located in the southern part of Afghanistan also suffers from poor child health. Inadequacy of maternal education, lack of health awareness, and intricate cultural and social practices in the province shapes the health-related behavior of mothers.

The result of the study indicates that maternal health awareness is a significant predictor of health-supportive behaviors regardless of geographic location. Mothers with high health awareness were more likely to use contraceptives, made frequent clinic visits during pregnancy, preferred hospital births, received immunization for their children in proper time, complied with World Health Organization's breastfeeding guidelines for their children, and avoided utilization of spiritual and herbal remedies for their ill children.

Contraceptive use in women was associated with autonomy of women. However, very limited number of women in the sample were able to make independent decision regarding their and their child's health. However, the study did not find any significant relation of health awareness on child's nutritional status of the children.

Satisfactory improvement of child health in the province requires government to address other determinants of health in addition to maternal health awareness. Even though health awareness was found significant factor of health related behaviors, but relying merely on maternal health awareness would not be accompanied with significant outcome if addressing other determinants of health are ignored.