



RESEARCH ARTICLE

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY TO ASSESS THE ATTITUDE REGARDING BIRTH COMPANION INITIATIVE AMONG NURSES WORKING IN MATERNITY UNITS OF SELECTED HOSPITAL OF DELHI

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ABSTRACT

Background: Birth Companion Initiative is a low-cost and effective intervention to improve the quality of maternity care, including women's experience of childbirth. It is imperative to study the attitude of stakeholders towards a new initiative to determine success of its implementation. **Objective:** To assess the attitude of nurses towards Birth Companion Initiative. **Methods:** A descriptive survey was designed to assess the attitude of Nurses working in various units of maternity department of selected hospital of North India. A tool was developed and validated by the researchers which included questionnaire to collect data on background information, awareness regarding Birth Companion Initiative and a 15-item attitude rating scale to assess the attitude of nurses towards Birth Companion Initiative. A sample of 62 Nurses working in Labor Room, Gynae OPD and Maternity Wards was recruited by convenient sampling. Nurses were explained about the nature and purpose of study. Data was collected with the help of validated tool. Descriptive analysis was done to highlight the findings. **Results:** Majority (66%) of Nurses were fully aware about the concept of Birth Companion Initiative. The mean attitude score (51.19) was found to be neutral with a standard deviation of 6.82. Most (60%) of the Nurses had neutral attitude, whereas only 1.6% had unfavourable attitude towards Birth Companion Initiative. **Conclusion:** For successful implementation of the Birth Companion Initiative, it is imperative to hold discussions and training of the nurses at multiple points, in order to understand their concerns and influence their attitude.

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INTRODUCTION

Across all cultures, women have always been attended to and cared for by other women during childbirth in the past. With advancement in health care, most women now deliver in health care facilities, and with this the concept of Birth Companion has almost disappeared. Institutional deliveries in India increased from 79% in 2015-16 to 89% in 2019-21¹. Increase in institutional deliveries has led to isolation of labouring women away from their families. The Birth Companion Initiative is a program designed to enhance the quality of care during labor and childbirth by ensuring the presence of a chosen companion for emotional, informational, and physical support. This initiative is grounded in evidence showing that continuous support during labor is associated with better childbirth outcomes, including shorter labor durations, reduced cesarean delivery rates, and improved maternal satisfaction².

The World Health Organization (WHO) has emphasized the importance of respectful maternity care, recommending the integration of birth companions into standard obstetric practices as a means to uphold human rights and improve maternal and neonatal health outcomes³. Birth companions, who can be a family member, friend, or trained doula, play a crucial role in bridging communication gaps between women and healthcare providers while fostering a supportive environment for the birthing individual.³

Review of Literature: A systematic review by Bohren et al. (2017) highlighted that women who had continuous support were more likely to experience spontaneous vaginal births, less likely to require epidurals or cesareans, and reported greater satisfaction with their childbirth experience². Birth companions provide emotional support, advocacy, and assistance with non-medical needs, which can ease anxiety and promote a positive childbirth experience. Despite these benefits, implementation faces challenges, including institutional policies, healthcare provider

attitudes, and sociocultural barriers, particularly in low- and middle-income countries⁴. In India, the Birth Companion Initiative has gained traction in recent years as part of broader efforts to improve maternal and neonatal health. Studies indicate that the presence of a companion during labor can address several challenges within India's healthcare system, including overcrowding, limited healthcare provider availability, and communication gaps. A study conducted in Uttar Pradesh found that women who had a birth companion reported reduced fear and a sense of empowerment during labor⁵.

India's Ministry of Health and Family Welfare endorsed the Birth Companion Program as part of its LaQshya initiative to improve quality care in labor rooms. This program encourages healthcare facilities to allow a birth companion, typically a female relative, during labor and childbirth⁶. However, infrastructure and resistance from healthcare staff often limit its implementation. Research by Singh et al. (2020) noted that involving companions can mitigate instances of neglect and disrespectful maternity care, which remain prevalent in India's healthcare settings⁷. Despite the challenges, the initiative is a step toward achieving equity and dignity in maternal healthcare, aligning with global sustainable development goals. Research indicates that nurses generally view birth companions positively, acknowledging their role in emotional support and enhancing maternal confidence⁸. However, barriers such as limited space in labor wards, increased workload, and concerns about the companion's potential interference with clinical processes can lead to mixed attitudes⁹. Nurses may also express apprehension about companions disrupting workflows or questioning medical decisions, which underscores the importance of clear role delineation and communication. Moreover, cultural and institutional factors significantly influence nurses' attitudes. In settings where birth companions are not traditionally integrated into maternity care, nurses may exhibit resistance due to unfamiliarity or lack of training¹⁰. Conversely, in environments with supportive policies and training programs, nurses demonstrate more favorable attitudes¹¹. In conclusion, while nurses recognize the potential benefits of the birth companion initiative, their attitudes are shaped by practical, cultural, and institutional factors. Addressing barriers through education, policy reform, and infrastructure improvements can foster more supportive attitudes, enhancing the implementation of this evidence-based practice.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey was designed to assess the attitude of nurses working in various units of maternity department of selected hospital of North India. On the basis of review of literature, the research team developed a self-administered questionnaire and rating scale. The tool was validated by 5 experts of Maternal and Obstetric Nursing Department. It included questionnaire to collect data on background information, awareness regarding Birth Companion Initiative and a 15 item attitude rating scale to assess the attitude of nurses towards Birth Companion Initiative. A sample of 62 Nurses working in Labor Room, Gyne OPD and Maternity Wards was recruited by purposive sampling. Ethical clearance was obtained from the institution. Anonymity of the participants was ensured by assigning code numbers to the subjects. Nurses were explained about the nature and purpose of study. Research team introduced the study and its objectives to the sample. Rapport was developed and the tool was

administered. Data collection sheets were distributed. On an average 8-10 minutes were taken to obtain free frank response from the participants, after which the tool was collected back. Scoring for each item ranged from 1-5. Subjects with score from 55-75 were graded as having positive attitude, from 35-54 were graded as having Neutral attitude and those with a score ranging from 15-34 were graded as having negative attitude towards the Birth Companion Initiative.

RESULTS

Section 1 - Background information of Nurses

Majority of the Nurses were female (83.87%) with age above 35 years (51.61%) and working in labor room(62.90%) with working experience of below 5 years (45.16%). Most (54.84%) of them were B.Sc Nurses. 74.19% of the Nurses have not attended any training related to implementation of Birth Companionship. 48% of nurses conducted delivery in presence of birth companion. Refer Table 1 and Figure 1

Table 1. Frequency and percentage distribution of background information of nurses

N=62			
S.No.	Sample Characteristics	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1.	Age in years:		
A.	20-24	1	1.61
B.	25-34	29	46.77
C.	>35	32	51.61
2.	Gender		
A.	Male	10	16.13
B.	Female	52	83.87
3.	Department		
A.	Maternity ward	17	27.42
B.	Gyneopd	6	9.68
C.	Labor room	39	62.90
4.	Working experience		
A.	<5 years	28	45.16
B.	5-10 years	14	22.58
C.	>10 years	20	32.26
5.	Educational qualification		
A.	Diploma in Nursing	24	38.71
B.	B.Sc. Nursing	34	54.84
C.	M.Sc. Nursing	4	6.45
6.	Attended training on Birth Companion Initiative		
A.	Yes	46	74.19
B.	No	16	25.81

Table 1: Showed that majority of the nurses were female(83.87%) with age above 35 years(51.61%) and working in labor room(62.90%) with working experience of below 5 years (45.16%). Most (54.84%) of them were B.Sc. Nurses.

Table 2. Mean, median and standard deviation of attitude scores of nurses regarding Birth Companion Initiative

N-62			
Variable	Mean	Median	Standard deviation
Attitude score	51.39	51	6.82

Max. score-75

Min. score-15

Section 2 - Findings related to awareness of nurses regarding Birth companion initiative.

Table 3 shows most (60%) of the Nurses had neutral attitude, whereas only 1.6% had unfavourable attitude towards Birth Companion Initiative. Majority (66%) of Nurses claimed that

they were fully aware about the concept of Birth Companion Initiative. Refer Figure 2

Table 3. Frequency, percentage of Attitude scores of Nurses regarding Birth Companion Initiative

Attitude score	Frequency	Percentage
Negative (15-34)	1	1.61
Neutral 35-54)	37	59.68
Positive (55-75)	24	38.71

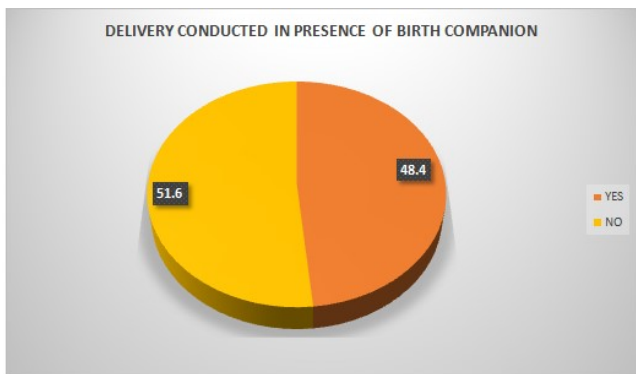


Figure 1. Frequency distribution of Nurses who conducted delivery in presence of Birth Companion

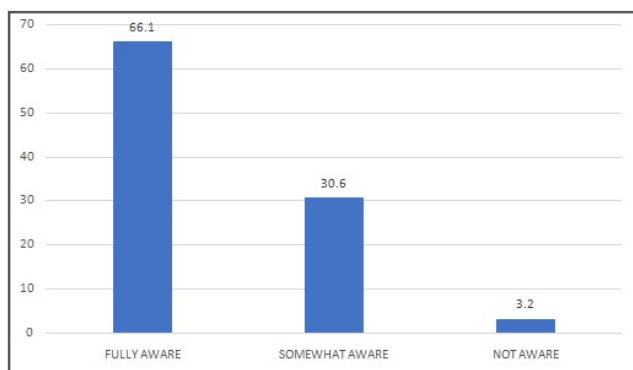


Figure 2 Bar graph showing the Frequency distribution of Nurses according to their awareness of Birth Companion Initiative

Figure 2 showed that majority (66%) of Nurses were fully aware of the concept of Birth Companion Initiative.

Section 3 -Finding related to attitude of nurses towards birth companion initiative. Most (60%) of the Nurses had neutral attitude, whereas only 1.6% had unfavorable attitude towards Birth Companion Initiative.

DISCUSSION

With the available evidence supporting benefits of Birth Companion Initiative, it is important to address the factors influencing its successful implementation in India. The attitude of health care workers determine their practices. The present study highlights the attitude of nurses working in Maternity units of a selected hospital towards Birth Companion Initiative. Findings in the present study reveals that most (66%) of the nurses were fully aware and 30.6% were somewhat aware of the Birth Companion Initiative. Similar findings have been reported by a study conducted in a tertiary care hospital of Delhi which shows Awareness of the concept of BC 53% (n=80) being fully aware, 40% (n=61) being

somewhat aware. The latter data was collected 3 years back in 2019, which might explain the slight variations from the present study.¹² Still 30.6% nurses claimed to have incomplete awareness of the BCI. According to present study majority (60%) of the nurses showed neutral attitude with a percentage of 39% and 1.61% showing positive and negative attitude towards Birth Companion Initiative. A study conducted in AIIMS, Jodhpur¹³ also shows none of the nurses showing negative attitude towards BCI, but in contrast to the present study, the study shows 73% nurses with positive attitude towards BCI. The possible explanation for the variation can be the difference in the work load, availability of adequate infrastructure and the nature of cases received by the two facilities.

CONCLUSION

For successful implementation of the Birth Companion Initiative, it is imperative to hold discussions and training of the nurses at multiple points, in order to understand their concerns and influence their attitude.

Conflict of Interest: There is no conflict of interest.

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