

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF MATERNAL MORTALITY ON A NATION

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### Abstract

*Not only is maternal mortality a tragedy in itself, it also have some negative consequences on children survival, nutrition and their future prospect. The husband, the elderly and the economy is not spared of its deadly venom. Thus, this paper seeks to explore the socio-economic consequences of maternal mortality on a Nation. The paper adopted the desk research method, which involve review of existing literature in the area as to harness them and come up with some useful suggestions. The paper established that the death of a mother increases the children vulnerability to illness, death and poor feeding. The risk of dying is fifteen times higher on the part of children that loss their mother than those whose mother survived. The future human capital development of the child is hampered by the death of the mother and, family fragmentation is a times may be the end result. It reduces the labour force and consequently labour productivity which have an adverse effect on the nation's economy. The paper concluded that maternal mortality has serious socio-economic consequences on a Nation and demand urgent attention. The following suggestions where put forward, skilled care before, during and after childbirth should be religiously implemented. Behavioural change for women should be encouraged, this can be facilitated with information about pregnancy, risks and healthy behaviours.*

### Introduction

In 2017, about 810 women died on daily basis from pregnancy related causes and about 94 percent of this deaths occurred in developing countries (World Health Organization, 2019).

Women in developing countries have greater risk of maternal death, compared to women in developed countries. This differential may be attributed to cultural factors, negligence on the part of government, poverty or poor educational attainment and poor health care system etc.

The death of a mother has negative consequences on the family, surviving children and the communities (Ardington, 2006).

Family Care International (FCI) and International Centre of Research on Women (ICRW) in collaboration carried out a study on the true costs of maternal mortality (Miller and Belizan, 2015). Their study unveil the costs associated with maternal mortality and also established the centrality of mortality of mother in society building.

Previous literature (Miller and Belizan, 2015, Zhou, Zhang, Ye, Wang, Huntingon and Huang, 2016, and Scott, Kendall, Gomez, Stephen, Syed, Zamen and Ceesay, 2017). Centred their studies on the true cost of maternal death: individual tragedy, impacts on family, community and nations. Effect of maternal death on the health of the husband and children

and the effect of maternal death on child survival. None of the literature reviewed examined the socio-economic consequences of maternal mortality on a Nation. Most of them dwelled on the social consequences, it is only Kirigia, Oluwole, Mwabu, Gatwiri and Kainyo (2016) that examined the economic aspect of maternal mortality on World Health Organization African countries economic growth. Thus, the objective of this paper is to examine the socio-economic consequences of maternal mortality on a nation, using desk research method.

Immediately after the introduction in section one, is the socio-economic consequences of maternal mortality in section two. This is followed by suggestions on reducing maternal mortality in section three.

### **Socio-Economic Consequences of Maternal Mortality**

Barle, Rigodon, Berman, Bauyanger, Maistrealis and Kausiwa (2015) examined intergenerational impacts of maternal mortality, qualitative findings from Malawi. Their findings established that the death of a mother increase the children vulnerability of illness and poor feeding. Truncated the children education and promote forced labour participation at an early stage of life. It also resulted in early parenthood (early marriage) thereby worsen the maternal mortality rate. The death of a mother who is the chief cook affect the nutritional intake of the child or children, this poor nutrition resulted in stunted growth and mental retardation of the child. This affect the development of the full potential of the child, thus, human capital development is affected negatively.

Moucheraud, Worku, Molia, Finlay and Yamin (2015) conducted research on consequences of maternal mortality on infant and child survival in Ethiopia. Their findings showed that a positive and significant relationship exists between maternal mortality and neonatal mortality. The implication of the above finding is that an increase in the rate of maternal mortality results in an increase neonatal (new born baby) mortality. The above underscore the germane of safe motherhood and the need to give critical attention to the issue of maternal mortality rather than treating it with kit glove. They also established that about 81 percent of babies whose mothers died has greater risk of dying before one month of age than babies whose mothers survived. This result is glaring and heart throbbing but it further underscore the imperativeness of safe motherhood. Some reasons can be deduced from the finding: First the death of a mother deprived the child the sincere nutritious breast milk of the mother. This increases the risk of illness and probability of the child dying before reaching his or her first month or even the first birthday. The death of the mother in the process of child birth also, denied the child the warm embrace of the mother and this make the child to be susceptible to early sickness. The death of the mother also implies the death of a care giver or a nurse which is very essential in the early upbringing of children. The demised of the caregiver (mother) leaved the child at the mercy of the siblings or father with its attendant consequences.

Kes, Ogwang, Pande, Douglas, Karugu and Odhianbo (2015), investigated the impacts of maternal mortality and causes of death among children in Kenya. Their findings established that the risk of dying is 15 time higher on the part of children that loss their mother, than those whose mothers survived. The result or finding also collaborated the importance of safe motherhood to child survival. Thus, maternal mortality is an ill wind to blow no good to any child. The differential in the survival rate shows the imperativeness of mother care in child

survival. They further stated that if a mother had a co-morbidity, such as HIV/AIDs or Tuberculosis maternal death, the child has 29 times risks of dying than the child whose mother survived. The implication of the above finding is that the health status of the mother during delivery to some extent determines the health status of the newly born child.

Molla, Mitiku, Worku and Yamn (2015), studied the impacts maternal mortality on living children and families in Ethiopia. They found that poor nutrition is faced by newborns and children whose mothers died in the process of delivery. Older children leave school to take care of their younger siblings and help in the family upkeep with its attendant consequences. They further stressed fragmentation of family as an endemic feature associated with maternal death and this can lead to tenuous relationships within the household with the births and prioritization of additional children further stretching the limited financial resources.

Pande, Ogwang, Kauga, Raga, Rajan, Kes and Ochiambo (2015), examined the consequences of maternal death in rural Kenya. Their findings established the existence of disruption in the households where maternal mortality is recorded. The disruption in the households affect negatively the child education and by extension further human capital development. Given this scenario if maternal death is not checkmated the future development of the country will be bleak.

Zhou, Zhang, Ye, Wang, Huntington and Huang (2016), examined the effect of maternal death on the health of the husband and children in rural China. Using a cohort study of 183 households, they found that index children who loss a mother had a higher incidence of dying, malnutrition and lack of care in relation to children whose mothers are alive. They also established the existence of higher incidence of not attending and dropping out of school among older siblings. In conclusion, maternal death has multifaceted and spillover effects on the physical and mental health of family members that are sustained overtime.

Kirigia, Olawole, Mwabu, Gatwiri and Kainyu (2006) in their paper titled "effect of maternal mortality on gross domestic product in the WHO African region". Established that a negative relationship exists between maternal mortality and gross domestic product via the following avenues.

First, maternal mortality reduce the labour force with the attendant consequence of reducing the number of people involved in active production.

Second, mothers are domestic nurse; therefore the death of a mother is a great loss to the family. The death of a mother compelled the father or some other person to reallocate work schedule as to provide care for the bereaved ward. This implies loss of economic productive time.

Third, the death of a mother has negative effect on intra-and intergenerational social value from the elderly in the family. This is because mothers care for all (husbands, wards and the elderly) and the death of mothers means the loss of care giver and this can lead to premature demise of the elderly.

The high funeral cost associated with burial most often compelled family to sell some of their assets, which in turn affect negatively or retarded economic growth.

Maternal mortality affects future human capital creation negatively. This is because the death of a mother most often than not lead to the death of the child and poor nutrition, which affect future human capital creation. Mothers play prominent role in educating, nurturing and socializing the child, therefore the death of a mother implies the death of a home teacher.

The future economic potential of the child is murdered with the death of the mother, as the child in most cases is forced to drop out of school. The untimely demise of a mother who is in active labour force may result in a fall in consumption expenditure and government tax revenue with their attendance consequences on the economy.

The female children suffered most in the event of mother's death and this has increase the rate of child abused and forced marriage which exacerbate the rate of maternal mortality. The death of mothers contributes to early child pregnancy. This is because the care giver and teacher is no more. The female children are force to fend for themselves and other siblings which exposed to them to early sex with its attendance consequences.

The death of an economic active mother in some cases result in the vicious circle of poverty in the family circle. The death of a mother also help to worsen the security situation, the loss of a mother implies the loss of a care giver and teacher, children bereft of mother are prone to join bad gangs which constitute security threat to the people. This is evidence by the growing incidence of armed robbery, kidnapping, raping to mentioned but a few.

The death of a wife also affects the quality of life of the husband. A study carried out by Zhou et al (2016) in China buttressed a direct relationship between maternal mortality and poor quality of life of husbands.

### **Suggestions on How to Reduce Maternal Mortality**

- The safe motherhood initiative launched in 1987 should be strictly adhere to.
- The government should provide antenatal and postnatal care free for women.
- Routine screening for and treatment of asymptomatic bacteria and other infectious diseases should be carried out regularly.
- Female access to prevention and treatment of malaria, and anemia should be a top government priority, giving the malaria endemic nature of our environment.
- Nutritional interventions by both government and non-governmental organization should be encouraged
- Behavioural changes for women should be emphasized as to liberate them from the deadly clog of heinous tradition, culture and superstitious belief.
- The progress of child delivery should be monitored by medical professionals and;
- the government should established a well-equipped obstetric care in the thirty-six states of the nation.

### **Conclusion**

The paper concludes that the socio-economic consequence of maternal death is quite enormous. It ranges from neonatal mortality, child labour, stunted growth, reduction in labour force to truncating of future human capital development to mention but a few. Thus, adequate attention should be giving to the issue of maternal death as to douse its socio-economic consequences.

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