

**CULTURAL BELIEFS, PRACTICES AND EXPERIENCES REGARDING HOME BIRTH AMONG RURAL WOMEN IN MYANMAR**

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M.A. (HEALTH SOCIAL SCIENCE)

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**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study is to understand cultural beliefs and practices during the pregnancy period, childbirth (intra-partum) period, and postpartum period regarding home birth among rural women, to describe home birth experiences among rural women, and to know how women`s cultural beliefs and practices regarding home birth are shaped in the socio-cultural-economic contexts among rural women in Myanmar. Qualitative research design was used and data was collected by means of ethnographic interview and participant observations from August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014 to December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

The findings of this study showed that the factors influencing rural home birth women to give birth at home were 1) home birth cost is less, 2) having supporters when the baby is delivered at home, 3) home birth is a traditional practice (ancestors, mother, and sisters also gave birth at home), 4) home birth is our cultural norm, 5) when giving birth at home the mother can follow traditional practices, 6) mothers experienced no problems during their first home birth, 7) they did not have any problems related to pregnancy, and 8) the midwife did not tell them to go and deliver baby at hospital. In addition, the health care provider (health assistant) is another source of advice and influences women to give birth at home. The health assistant encouraged women to give birth at home as giving birth at home is good. Cultural beliefs practiced by rural home birth women during pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum period do not aim to affect mother and baby`s health, but this study found that some cultural beliefs practiced by rural home birth women during pregnancy and the postpartum period have harmful effects on the mother and baby`s health. Furthermore, some cultural beliefs practiced by rural home birth women have gradually diminished. Regarding the experiences of rural home birth women, rural home birth women felt that giving birth at home is free and enjoyable, free and safe, free and peaceful, free, fulfilling, safe and no stressful.

Health care providers should be aware of rural home birth women`s cultural beliefs and practices that have harmful effects on the mother and baby`s health and should educate rural home birth women, rural home birth women`s mothers and mother-in-laws, and neighbours to promote maternal and child health, especially in rural areas in Myanmar.

**KEY WORDS: RURAL WOMEN/ HOME BIRTH/ CULTURAL BELIEFS AND PRACTICES/ EXPERIENCES/ MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH**

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