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4 **Prevalence and determinants of neonatal danger signs in**
5 **northwest Ethiopia: a multilevel analysis**

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18 **Abstract:**

19 **Background:** There is association between neonatal danger signs and neonatal deaths.
20 Hence, understanding the factors associated with the occurrence of neonatal danger signs
21 help reduce the stagnating neonatal mortality in countries like Ethiopia.

22 **Method:** A cross sectional community and facility linked study was conducted in 39 kebeles
23 in Amhara region, North Gondar Zone of Ethiopia from March 3-18, 2016. A representative
24 sample of 1,150 mother-newborn pairs were included in the study. Percentage was used to
25 calculate the prevalence. Multilevel analysis was used to identify individual and kebele level
26 characteristics associated with the occurrence of neonatal danger signs.

27 **Result:** The result showed that around a quarter, 286 (24.9%), of the newborns experienced
28 one or more danger signs during the neonatal period. Significant differences were found
29 between groups/kebeles in the occurrence of danger signs. At individual level, having low
30 birth weight (AOR= 0.65; 95% CI: 0.48-0.88) and maternal danger signs during pregnancy
31 and delivery (AOR= 1.93; 95% CI: 1.41-2.65) were found to be significantly associated with
32 the occurrence of neonatal danger signs. At group/kebele level, antenatal care coverage
33 (AOR= 0.35; 95% CI: 0.13-0.93) and year of health extension workers experience (AOR=
34 0.91; 95 % CI: 0.84-0.99) were significantly associated with the occurrence of neonatal
35 danger signs.

36 **Conclusion:** The prevalence of neonatal danger signs is high. There are individual and
37 kebele level characteristics associated with occurrence of danger signs in newborns.
38 Expanding maternal health services and strengthening the health extension program is
39 critical. **Key Words:** neonatal danger signs, newborn danger signs, newborn illnesses

40 **Background**

41 The neonatal period marks the transition from intrauterine to extra uterine life. Usually the
42 transition is smooth. Sometimes however, the process can be complicated leading to neonatal
43 mortality(1).

44 Every day, an estimated 7,700 newborns die globally(2). The vast majority of these deaths
45 happen in resource limited settings including Ethiopia(3). Linked with the high prevalence of
46 home delivery in developing countries, most neonatal deaths occur at home(4).

47 Even though global efforts halved neonatal mortality from 4.7 million to 2.8 million between
48 1990 and 2013(5), the contribution of neonatal deaths to under five childhood mortality
49 consistently grew from 37% to 44% in the same period(6)(7). The reason being a slow
50 decline in neonatal mortality compared to under-five deaths(6)(8).

51 Similar trends are also observed in Ethiopia. According to the Ethiopian Demographic and
52 Health Survey (EDHS), neonatal deaths declined from 49 deaths per 1000 live births in 2000
53 to 29 deaths per 1000 live births in 2016(9). However, the reduction was slow and
54 sometimes stagnant resulting in a growing contribution to under-five mortality(10).

55 UNICEF and WHO identify the following nine symptoms as danger signs in newborns: 1)
56 Not feeding since birth or stopped feeding, 2) Convulsions, 3) Respiratory rate of 60 or more,
57 4) Severe chest in-drawing, 5) Temperature $\geq 37.5^{\circ}$ C, 6) Temperature $\leq 35.5^{\circ}$ C, 7)
58 movement only when stimulated or not even when stimulated, 8.)Yellow soles (sign of
59 jaundice) and signs of local infection and, 9) Reddened or pus draining umbilicus, skin boils,
60 or pus draining eyes(11).

61 These danger signs in newborns are nonspecific and each danger sign can be a sign of almost
62 any disease or illness (12). Lack of knowledge about these neonatal danger signs is also a
63 major barrier to treatment seeking (13–16), which may ultimately lead to neonatal
64 death(12,17).

65 Better understanding of neonatal danger signs and the factors that affect their occurrence is
66 very important to help reduce neonatal mortality. Evidence is also scarce on the factors
67 responsible for newborn danger signs. This study is conducted to determine the prevalence of
68 and identify factors operating at multiple levels; individual and contextual factors; that are
69 associated with the occurrence of neonatal danger signs.

70 **Methods**

71 **Study design, setting and source population**

72 A cross sectional community and facility linked study was conducted from March 3-18, 2016
73 in North Gondar Zone of Ethiopia. North Gondar is in Amhara region located in the
74 northwest part of Ethiopia (18). The zone has 24 woredas (districts). According to the
75 Central Statistical Agency (CSA), in 2017, the total projected population in the zone based
76 on the 2007 national population and housing census was 3,654,920 of which 1,847,631
77 (51%) were males (CSA, 2017). As of 2016, the zone has 9 government hospitals, 126 health
78 centers and 563 health posts. There are also many private clinics most of them located in
79 urban areas.

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82 **Study population**

83 Women who delivered live babies in the past six months. Health extension workers and
84 health posts found in the study area were included in the study. Health extension workers
85 (HEWs) are female, salaried, frontline health workers that provide basic health promotion
86 and disease prevention services to rural communities in Ethiopia. The HEWs provide the
87 services in house to house visit and at a health post.

88 **Variables**

89 **Outcome variable**

90 The occurrence of neonatal danger signs during the first 28 days of life was the outcome
91 variable.

92 **Independent variables**

93 Individual and kebele level characteristics were examined for possible associations with
94 neonatal danger signs. Kebele is the smallest political administrative unit below district with
95 an estimated average population size of 5000. The conceptual framework depicting the
96 assumed relationships between kebele and individual level characteristics with the outcome
97 variable is shown below (Figure 1).

98 **Individual level variables**

99 Individual-level variables included maternal and neonatal characteristics. Maternal
100 characteristics included: maternal age, occupation, exposure to health education, gravidity,
101 insecticide treated nets (ITN) use during the last pregnancy, whether the pregnancy of the
102 indexed child was wanted or not , occurrence of maternal danger signs during pregnancy and

103 the uptake of skilled birth attendance during the last delivery. Newborn characteristics were
104 measured based on the reports of the mother. These included; occurrence of danger signs in
105 the newborn, birth weight, and sex of the newborn.

106 In settings where children are not often weighed at birth, the mothers' report of the size of
107 their babies at birth is used as the proxy for the child's weight(10). In this study, birth weight
108 of the newborns was measured by asking mothers to rate the birth weight of the indexed
109 newborn as very small, small, normal, big and very big. Newborns rated as very small and
110 small were re-categorized as small and those rated normal and above were rated as normal
111 during analysis. In addition, household wealth index was constructed using principal
112 components analysis. The wealth index was weighted for urban and rural areas before
113 producing the combined wealth index.

114 **Kebele level variables**

115 Groups of mothers and newborns are clustered within kebeles. There is one health post in
116 each Kebele providing basic disease prevention and health promotion services for the kebele
117 population. Health post level service coverage and other health related data were taken as
118 kebele level characteristics. These included coverage of at least one antenatal and postnatal
119 care, number of health extension workers (HEWs) working at each health post and the
120 average number of days HEWs spend for house to house visit per week and the experiences
121 of HEWs in years.

122 **Sample size and sampling**

123 Two population proportion formula was used to calculate sample size using statcalc in Epi-
124 Info version 7.1.5.0. Variables taken from two studies were used to calculate the sample

125 size(15,19) Sample sizes were calculated independently based on the two studies by
126 assuming 95% confidence level ($1-\alpha$), 80% power ($1-\beta$) and unexposed to exposed ratio of
127 1:1. The larger calculated sample size based was 388. With a design effect of 2, and non-
128 response rate of 10%, the final sample size was 854 mother-newborn pairs. This study was
129 part of a bigger study with a sample size of 2,158 mothers. Of this sample, 1,150 of the
130 mothers had delivered a live baby in the past six months. Hence, the sample size was taken as
131 sufficient for this study.

132 A multistage stratified cluster sampling technique was used to select the mothers. First, 39
133 kebeles were randomly selected from three districts (Debank, Dabat and Wogera)
134 proportional to the size of kebeles in the woredas. Then, villages or “Gotes” from the
135 selected kebeles were randomly selected. Data was collected from mothers in all eligible
136 households in the clusters or “Gotes”. Kebele level data was collected from health posts
137 service statistics reports and interviews with HEWs.

138 **Data Collection**

139 Fifty four data collectors and five supervisors, all of them with at least first degree in health,
140 were recruited and received two day training. A pretested structured interviewer administered
141 questionnaire was used to collect data on individual level characteristics. The questions were
142 adapted from different surveys. Structured questionnaire was used for data collection from
143 HEWs and health posts.

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145

146 **Data Processing and Analysis**

147 The data was entered and cleaned using Epi-Info version 7.1.5.0. Data cleaning was made by
148 running frequencies and descriptive statistics. The cleaned data was exported to STATA
149 version 13 for analysis.

150 **Descriptive analyses**

151 First, exploratory descriptive statistics was applied to understand the nature of the data. The
152 frequencies of each of the categories within the explanatory variables were calculated. The
153 overall study area prevalence was also estimated. Multiple response analysis was conducted
154 to determine the prevalence of each danger signs.

155 **Modelling approaches**

156 Two-level multivariable logistic regression was applied to account for the hierarchical nature
157 of the data and to get unbiased estimate of regression coefficients. Three models were fitted
158 in the analysis. Model one, the empty or unconditional model, decomposed the total variance
159 in the dependent variable in to individual and group/kebele level variances. The portion of
160 the total variance explained by kebele level characteristics was measured by the intra-class
161 correlation coefficient (ICC). The chi-squared test that compares the empty nested model
162 with the classical logistic model was used to test the significance of kebele level
163 characteristics in explaining the total variance of the outcome variable. Model two included
164 all the individual-level variables (maternal and neonatal). In model two, we assessed the
165 compositional effect of kebeles in explaining the variance among the groups (kebeles).
166 Model three encompassed the combined effect of individual and kebele-level characteristics.
167 With the third model, we determined the significance of individual and kebele level
168 characteristics in explaining the variances among the groups.

169 **Fixed effects**

170 The relationships between individual and kebele-level characteristics with the occurrence of
171 neonatal danger signs were reported in term of odds ratios with p-values at 95% confidence
172 interval.

173 **Random effects**

174 Random effects that measure the variations among the groups/kebeles were expressed in
175 terms of Intra-class correlation (ICC).

176 **Model fitness & precision**

177 The log likelihood of the models were estimated to assess the fitness of the model relative to
178 the other models. Variance Inflation Factor was used to test the presence of multicollinearity
179 in the model. Stata software package of version 14 was used for the analyses. Statistical
180 significance of the predictor variables were determined by two tailed Wald test at a 5% level
181 of significance.

182 **Ethical Considerations**

183 The study was reviewed and approved by the University of Gondar Institutional Review
184 Board (IRB). Permission was obtained from all kebeles in the study areas. During data
185 collection, study subjects were asked for oral informed consent. For adolescent mothers
186 below the age of 18, informed consent was taken as per the National Research Ethics Review
187 Guideline's recommendation for emancipated minors and with the approval of the IRB. All
188 study participants were invited to participate voluntarily in the study. In addition, they were
189 informed on the potential benefits, harms, the confidentiality and the possibility of
190 withdrawing from the interview even without giving reasons. All interviews were conducted
191 in private settings.

192 **Result**

193 **Socio-demographic characteristics**

194 A total of 1,150 mother-newborn pairs were included in the study. Most, 1,059(92.1%), of
195 the mothers resided in rural areas. The mean (\pm SD) and median (IQR) age of the mothers
196 were 27.5(\pm 6.7) and 27(10) years, respectively.

197 Nearly a third, 393 (34.1%), of the mothers were young aged 15-24 years. Farming was the
198 main, 1,066(92.7%), source of livelihood in the study areas. The majority, 743(64.6%) and
199 938 (81.6%), of the mothers were illiterate and had history of two or more pregnancies,
200 respectively. Most of the deliveries, 713(62.0), for the indexed newborns were attended by
201 unskilled birth attendants. Nearly all of the pregnancies for the indexed newborns,
202 1,126(98%), were spaced less than 24 months. More than a quarter, 271(23.6%), of these
203 pregnancies were unintended (Table 1).

204

205 **Table 1: General characteristics of the study population: individual characteristics;**
 206 **northwest Ethiopia, March 2016**

Variables	Number (%)	Danger sign	
		Yes	No
Maternal characteristics			
Wealth index			
Poorest	217 (18.9)	72	145
Poor	230(20.0)	55	175
Medium	234(20.3)	60	174
Rich	221(19.2)	41	180
Richest	248(21.6)	58	190
Age			
15-19	119(10.3)	33	86
20-24	274(23.8)	62	212
25-29	292(25.4)	77	215
>30	465(40.4)	114	351
Educational status of mother			
Illiterate	743(64.6)	188	555
Able to read and write	38(3.3)	13	25
1-4 th grade	117(10.2)	32	85
5-8 th grade	149(13.0)	29	120
9-10 th grade	84(7.3)	18	66
11-12 th grade	8(0.7)	2	6
Higher education	11(1.0)	4	7

Mothers Occupation			
Farmer	1066(92.7)	263	803
Government employee	12(1.0)	4	8
Other (merchant, daily laborer)	72(6.3)	19	53
Gravidity			
1	212(18.4)	55	157
2-5	709(61.7)	170	539
>6	229(19.9)	61	168
Birth Attendance			
Unskilled (including HEWs)	713(62.0)	187	526
Skilled	437(38.0)	99	338
Pregnancy was unintended			
Yes	879(76.4)	210	669
No	271(23.6)	76	195
Health education by health extension workers			
Yes	518(45.0)	108	410
No	632(55.0)	178	454
Heard about danger signs before			
Yes	474(41.2)	92	382
No	676(58.8)	194	482
Neonatal characteristics			
Sex of newborn			
Female	571(49.7)	139	432
Male	579(50.3)	147	432

Birth weight			
Small	611 (0.53)	174	437
Normal	539 (0.47)	112	427
Birth order			
1 st	215 (0.19)	53	162
2 nd	194 (0.17)	53	141
3 rd	182 (0.16)	41	141
4 th	183(0.16)	39	144
$\geq 5^{\text{th}}$	376(0.33)	100	276

207

208 The percentage of male and female newborns was almost the same. A little more than half,
209 611 (53%), of the newborns were rated to have small birth weight at the time of birth. A third
210 of, 376(33%), the newborns were either the 5th or more children in the family (Table 1).

211 The coverages of maternal health services (antenatal care (ANC), skilled delivery and
212 postnatal care), and the average number of health extension workers, their experience in
213 years and the average number of days they spent in house to house visit and community level
214 health related activities is shown below (Table 2).

215

216 **Table 2: General characteristics of the study population: Kebele level variables**

Health Post level characteristics	Mean (\pm SD)
At least one or more ANC coverage in the Kebele	0.65 (\pm .23)
PNC coverage in the Kebele	0.59 (\pm .23)
Skilled birth attendance	0.43(\pm .22)
Average number of days HEWs spend in the community	2.3 (\pm 1.46)
HEWs average year of experience in years	7.78(\pm 2.89)
Number of HEWs working in the Kebele	2.05(\pm .55)

217

218 **Prevalence of neonatal danger signs**

219 The mothers reported that around a quarter, 286 (24.9%), of the newborns experienced one or
220 more of the WHO defined danger signs during the neonatal period. Mothers from the poorest
221 households reported the highest percent of cases of neonatal dangers signs (Table 1).

222 The commonest neonatal danger sign reported was fever, 213(74.5%), followed by fast
223 breathing and difficulty breathing, 127 (44.4%) and 107 (37.4%), respectively. The least
224 reported danger sign was yellow soles and feet (jaundice), 14 (4.9%) (Table 3).

225

226 **Table 3: Distribution of neonatal danger signs, northwest Ethiopia, March 2016**

Danger signs	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Fever	213	28.00	74.50
Hypothermia	48	6.30	16.80
Fast breathing	127	16.70	44.40
Difficulty of breathing	107	14.10	37.40
Red swollen and pusy eye	55	7.20	19.20
Red swollen and pusy umbilicus	65	8.50	22.70
Convulsion	22	2.90	7.70
Floppiness and absence of movement	28	3.70	9.80
Yellow soles and feet (jaundice)	14	1.80	4.90
Inability to suck	82	10.80	28.70
	761	100.00	266.10

227

228 **Random effects**

229 Significant heterogeneity was observed among kebeles. The ICC calculated based on the null
 230 or empty model was significant at 0.094 implying that 9.4% of the total variance in the
 231 occurrence of neonatal danger signs was attributed to the differences among kebeles/groups.
 232 This also implies that the correlation between newborns living in the same kebele in the
 233 likelihood of having neonatal danger sign was 0.09.

234 A significant reduction in kebele-level variance was observed in model two. This indicated
235 the significance of the compositional effect (individuals within the kebeles) in explaining the
236 between group variance.

237 However, we extended model two by introducing kebele level characteristics to form model
238 three. In the final model (model three), kebele-level variance was significantly reduced
239 further after adjusting for both individual and community-level characteristics.

240 **Fixed effects**

241 Fixed effects of model two show the associations between individual-level characteristics
242 and the occurrence of neonatal danger signs when kebele-level characteristics were not
243 considered. Fixed effects of model three show the associations of both individual and kebele-
244 level characteristics with neonatal danger signs.

245 After considering both individual and kebele-level characteristics in model three, it was
246 observed that newborns with normal birth weight were 35 percent less likely to experience
247 neonatal danger signs (AOR 0.65; 95% CI 0.48-0.88) compared to small birth weight
248 newborns. Other newborn level characteristics in the study were not significantly associated
249 with neonatal danger signs.

250 Similarly, a maternal level characteristic was also found to be significantly associated with
251 neonatal danger signs. Newborns delivered by mothers who experienced one or more danger
252 signs during pregnancy and delivery had 93% higher odds of having neonatal danger signs
253 compared to newborns delivered from mothers who did not experience danger signs
254 themselves (AOR 1.93; 95% CI 1.41-2.65).

255 Some kebele level characteristics were also significantly associated with the occurrence of
256 neonatal danger signs in newborns. Antenatal care coverage of the kebele and year of health
257 extension workers experience were associated with neonatal danger signs (AOR 0.35; 95%
258 CI 0.13-0.93 and AOR 0.91; 95 % CI 0.84-0.99), respectively (Table 4).

259

260 **Table 4: Associations between neonatal mortality and individual and community level**
 261 **determinants**

Variables	Model one	Model two	Model three
		AOR (95%CI)	AOR (95%CI)
Fixed Effect (OR, 95% CI, P-value)			
Individual level determinants			
Wealth index			
Poorest		1.06(.62-1.85)	1.08 (.58-2.00)
Poor		.82 (.48- 1.43)	.84 (.45-1.55)
Medium		1.08(.65- 1.78)	1.09(.62-1.92)
Rich		.85 (.52-1.38)	.86 (.50-1.48)
Richest		1 (reference)	1(reference)
Age			
15-19		1(reference)	1(reference)
20-24		.74 (.41-1.34)	.73(.40-1.33)
25-29		.95 (.50- 1.80)	.94(.49-1.79)
>30		.83 (.42- 1.64)	.82 (.41-1.63)
Educational status of mother			
Illiterate		1(reference)	1(reference)

Able to read and write		1.29(.61-2.74)	1.30(.61- 2.79)
1-4 th grade		1.10(.66-1.82)	1.11(.67- 1.84)
5-8 th grade		.73(.43-1.26)	.76(.44- 1.31)
9-10 th grade		.91(.46-1.81)	.93(.47- 1.83)
Preparatory and college		1.34(.34- 5.35)	1.32 (.33-5.28)
Mothers Occupation			
Farmer		1 (reference)	1(reference)
Government employee		1.41 (.17-11.74)	1.44(.17-11.96)
Other		1.07 (.52-2.17)	1.14(.55- 2.37)
Gravidity			
1		1(reference)	1(reference)
2-5		.85(.50-1.44)	.86(.51-1.46)
>6		.97(.49-1.90)	.10 (.50-1.95)
Birth Attendance			
Unskilled (including HEWs)		1(reference)	1(reference)
Skilled (HC/Hospital)		.93(.64-1.35)	.98(.67-1.42)
Pregnancy unintended			
Yes		.90(.63-1.27)	.91(.65-1.29)

No		1(reference)	1(reference)
Health education by health extension workers			
Yes		.84(.59-1.18)	.89(.63-1.25)
No		1 (reference)	1(reference)
Heard about danger signs before			
Yes		.71(.50- .10)	.73(.52-1.03)
No		1 (reference)	1(reference)
Birth weight			
Small		1(reference)	1(reference)
Normal		0.67(0.49-0.90)*	.65 (.48- .88)*
Sex of newborn			
Female		1(reference)	1(reference)
Male		1.02(.76-1.36)	1.01(.76-1.36)
Birth order			
First	215	53	162
Second	194	53	141
Third	182	41	141
Forth	183	39	144
≥Fifth	376	100	276

At least one ANC attendance			
Yes		1.06 (.63-1.76)	1.03(.62-1.70)
No		1(reference)	1(reference)
Use of ITN during the indexed pregnancy			
Yes		1.38(.92-2.06)	1.29(.86-1.94)
No		1(reference)	1(reference)
Danger sign during pregnancy and delivery			
Yes		1.99 (1.45-2.73)**	1.93(1.41-2.65)**
No		1(reference)	1(reference)
Community level determinants			
ANC coverage (one or more)			.35(.13-.93)*
Skilled birth attendance coverage			1.93(.62- 6.00)
HEWs average experience in years			.91(.84- .99)*
Average number of days HEWs spend in household visit and in the community			1.05(.92-1.20)
Number of HEWs working at the Health post			1.05(.73-1.51)
Residence			
Urban			1(reference)
Rural			1.24(.59-2.63)
Random Effect			
Area Variance	0.34	0.21	0.13

Rho-ICC	9.4%	6%	4%
Log likelihood	-628.61	-596.48	-590.59

262 *p<0.05, **p<0.001

263 **Model fit statistics**

264 There was a progressive increase in the negative log likelihood observed in model one,
265 model two and model three. This implies that model three explained the determinants better
266 than either model one or two.

267 **Discussion**

268 This study investigated the association of maternal, neonatal and kebele level characteristics
269 with the of occurrence of neonatal danger signs. It also tried to determine the prevalence of
270 danger signs in general and specific danger signs in particular among newborns in the study
271 area.

272 In this study, more than 90 percent of the variability in the occurrence of danger signs in
273 newborns was explained by individual characteristics. This shows that individual level
274 characteristics (the kebele composition) were more important than the group/kebele level
275 characteristics in determining the occurrence of danger signs in newborns.

276 The prevalence of neonatal danger signs was found to be 25%, which means that one in
277 every four newborns in the study area experienced one or more danger signs in the first 28
278 days of life. This implies a significant burden of morbidity among the most vulnerable
279 member of human beings; newborns. Similar finding was also reported in a study conducted
280 in Ghana(20).

281 Both individual and group level characteristics were significantly associated with the
282 occurrence of the danger signs. At individual level, birth weight of the newborn, as judged by
283 the mother, was found to be an important factor in predicting the occurrence of neonatal
284 danger signs. Even if there were no prior studies found on predictors of neonatal danger signs
285 in particular, many studies showed that low birth weight is an important predictor of neonatal
286 mortality (17,21–23).

287 Newborns from mothers that experienced danger signs during the indexed pregnancy and
288 delivery were associated with higher odds of having danger signs in the newborns. This
289 indicates that danger signs during pregnancy are important predictors of danger signs in
290 newborns. This strengthens the need to follow up mothers with danger signs to avoid
291 undesired outcome of both the mother and the newborn.

292 Coverage of at least one antenatal care was significantly associated with reductions in
293 neonatal danger signs. Studies in Ethiopia and Kenya showed that mothers that attended
294 antenatal care were more knowledgeable about neonatal danger signs than mothers that did
295 not(24,25). Mothers with better knowledge of neonatal danger signs also tend to have better
296 health and care seeking behavior (14). Hence, the effect of antenatal care attendance on the
297 occurrence of neonatal danger signs in this study could be because of better knowledge of
298 danger signs among mothers that attended antenatal care, which might have affected better
299 care seeking behavior resulting in reduction in the occurrence of neonatal danger signs.

300 Health extension workers experience was negatively associated with the occurrence of
301 danger signs in newborns. Long years of experience could mean better knowledge of the
302 area, culture and care seeking behavior of the community. This knowledge of the area might

303 have helped the health extension workers to plan and implement health promotion and
304 disease prevention activities that positively impact the occurrence of danger signs in
305 newborns.

306 **Conclusion**

307 This study demonstrated that the burden of illness among newborns is high in the study area.
308 It also revealed that both individual and kebele level characteristics determine the occurrence
309 and non-occurrence of danger signs in newborns. Individual level characteristics (the kebele
310 composition) were also found to be more important than the group/kebele level
311 characteristics in determining the occurrence of danger signs in newborns.

312 Improving coverage of maternal health services, particularly antenatal, delivery and postnatal
313 care, is important to reduce neonatal danger signs and thereby reduce the associated neonatal
314 mortality. Educating mothers about neonatal danger signs during pregnancy and delivery and
315 strengthening the health extension program is critical. Most importantly, strengthening
316 postnatal home visits of both the mother and the newborn is important to identify and treat
317 newborn danger signs early.

318 **Limitation of the study**

319 One of the limitation of this study could be a recall bias associated with the length of time
320 mothers were expected to report their experience. To reduce this bias, the interviewers
321 mentioned each danger signs one by one and gave mothers adequate time to respond. A
322 prospective cohort study may give more estimates of the determinant of newborn danger
323 signs.

324 **List of Abbreviations**

325 ANC: Antenatal Care

326 AOR: Adjusted Odds Ratio

327 CBNC: Community Based Newborn Care

328 CI: Confidence Interval

329 EDHS: Ethiopian Demographic and Health Survey

330 HEP: Health Extension Program

331 HEWs: Health Extension Workers

332 ICC: Intra-Class Correlation Coefficient

333 iCCM: integrated Community Case Management

334 IQR: Interquartile Range

335 ITN: Insecticide Treated Nets

336 SD: Standard Deviation

337 SDG: Sustainable Development Goal

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342 **Declarations**

343 **Ethics approval and consent to participate:** This study received ethical clearance from the
344 University of Gondar Institutional Review Board (IRB), Ethiopia. Permission was obtained
345 from kebele administrations. Verbal informed consent was obtained from the study
346 participants. For adolescent mothers below the age of 18, informed consent was also taken as
347 per the National Research Ethics Review Guideline's recommendation for emancipated
348 minors and with the approval of the IRB. This method of data collection was approved by the
349 IRB of the University of Gondar

350 **Consent for publication:** Not applicable

351 **Availability of data and Materials:** The dataset contains individuals' private information
352 and can't be shared publicly. However, data can be made available from the corresponding
353 author and up on permission of the University of Gondar based on reasonable requests.

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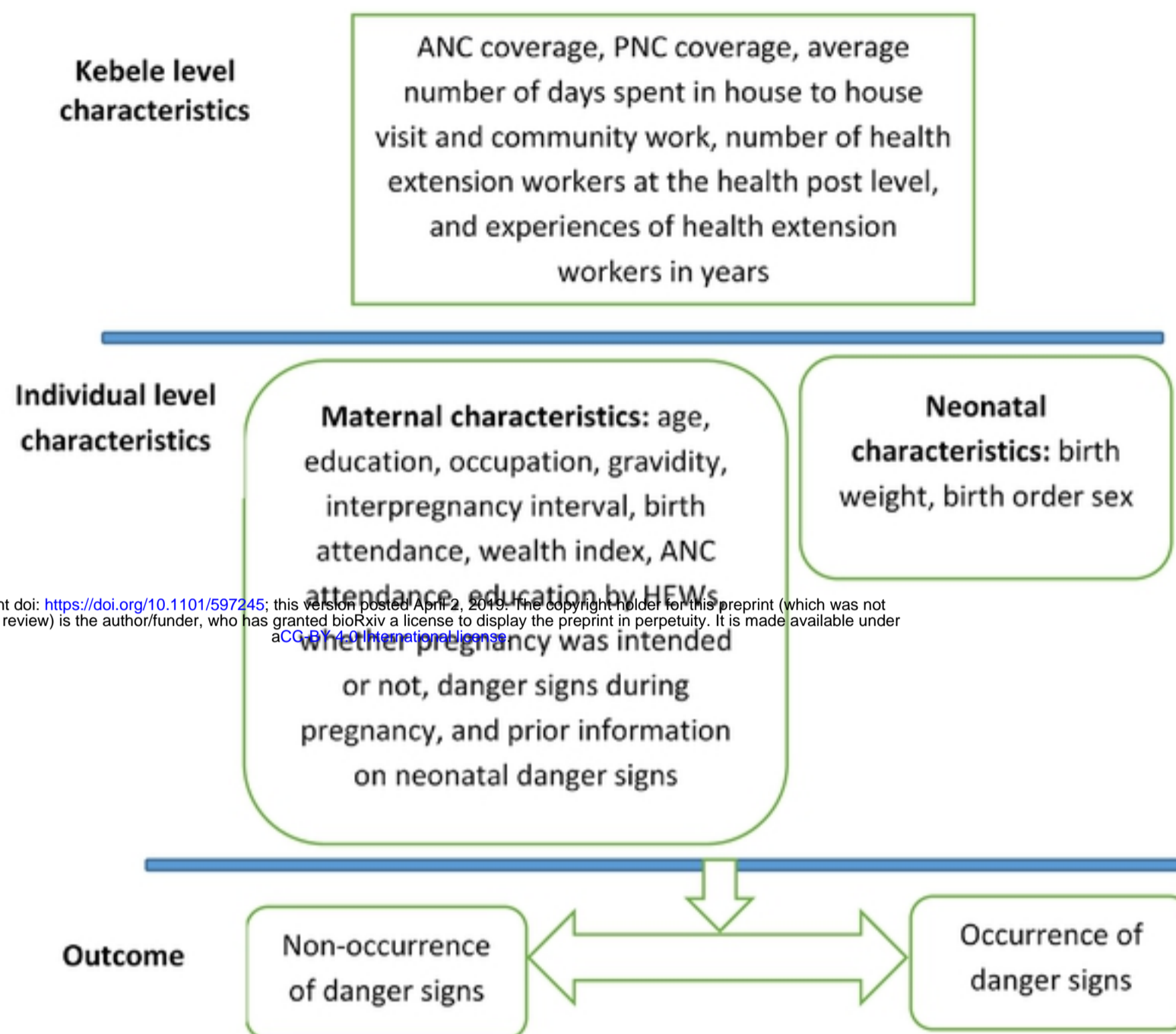
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Figure 1: Conceptual framework for individual & Kebele-level determinants influencing neonatal danger signs