

Challenges In The Provision And Use Of Labour Analgesia In African Countries; A Literature Review

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Background and Hypothesis

- Adequate pain relief is a human right
- “It is our duty as well as our privilege to use all legitimate means to mitigate and remove the physical sufferings of the mother during parturition” (Sir James Young Simpson in 1848).
- The use and provision of analgesia for labouring women in African countries lags behind the developed world.
- **Objectives** :To collate relevant themes from literature to highlight the challenges faced by both healthcare providers and patients in the provision and use of appropriate labour analgesia in Africa.

Study design and Methods

- Qualitative
- Arksey and O'Malley's five steps of scoping review framework
- PEO framework
- Web of Science, PubMed, CINAHL and SCOPUS search engines used to generate literature using key search terms such as '**Challenges,**' '**Labour analgesia,**' and '**Africa**' with Boolean operators 'OR' and 'AND.'

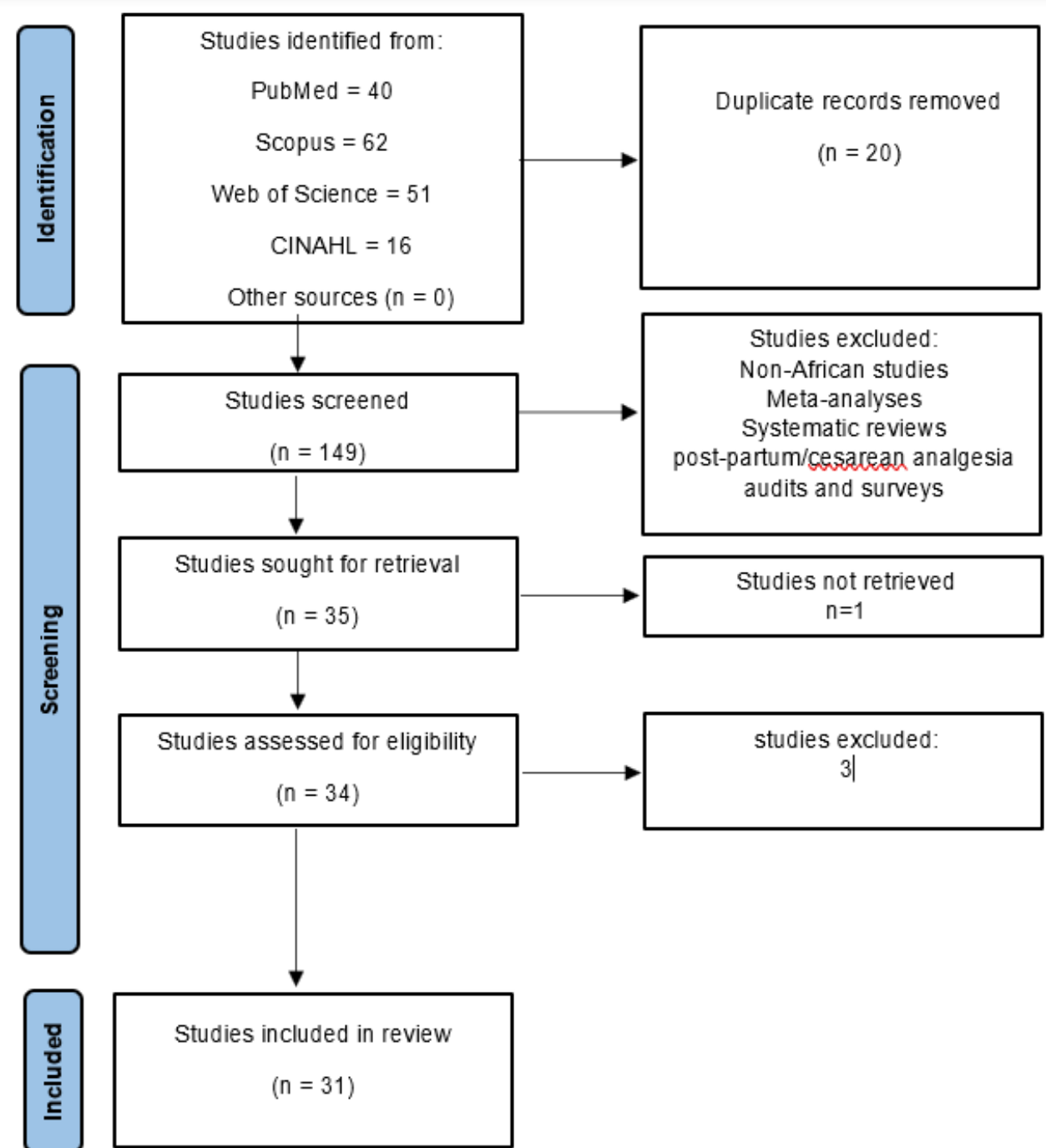


Figure 1. PRISMA flow chart of selected studies

Results

- 31 relevant papers.
- These studies represented 10 African countries: Nigeria (11 studies), Ethiopia (9), Ghana (4), and Lesotho, Uganda, Egypt, South Africa, Cameroon, Kenya and Tanzania (1 each)

Theme	Challenges
Patient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patients own cultural and religious beliefs about labour pain being God given and that it was normal to have labour pain as a physiological process • Worries about effects on baby and fears of complications • Lack of knowledge surrounding use and availability of pain management strategies during labour • Inability to afford pain management options such as epidurals
Healthcare professional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of education and training on the administration of pharmacological and non-pharmacological methods to relieve labour • Lack of training of insertion and management of epidurals • Lack of access to equipment and drugs • Overwhelming workload or staffing issues • Health care professional's own cultural and religious beliefs • Belief that labour pain is a natural physiological process
Health systems and infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of education and training to health care professionals in the provision of pain management options • Lack of drugs including opioid analgesics • Lack of equipment such as needles and catheters of labour epidural insertions • Limited teaching at undergraduate and post-graduate level of pain management strategies • Provision of posters and leaflets and information provision to women in antenatal clinics

Conclusion and Discussion

- Efforts toward lifesaving treatment and good antenatal care are a priority for women in Africa.
- The management of labour pain should not be considered a luxury
- Studies show that African women want labour analgesia for their next delivery. This shows that there is a demand for labour analgesia and that African healthcare systems have a gap to address.
- One limitation of this literature review- the bulk of the literature was extracted from Nigeria, Ghana and Ethiopia. These studies may not be representative of the challenges in provision and access to labour analgesia in all 54 countries in Africa.