

K. SAFO^{1,3}, D. OPOKU^{1,2}, R. ADU³ and K.MENSAH¹

¹School of Public Health, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana.

² Department of Health Care Management, Berlin University of Technology, Germany.

³Seventh Day Adventist Hospital, Kwadaso-Ghana.

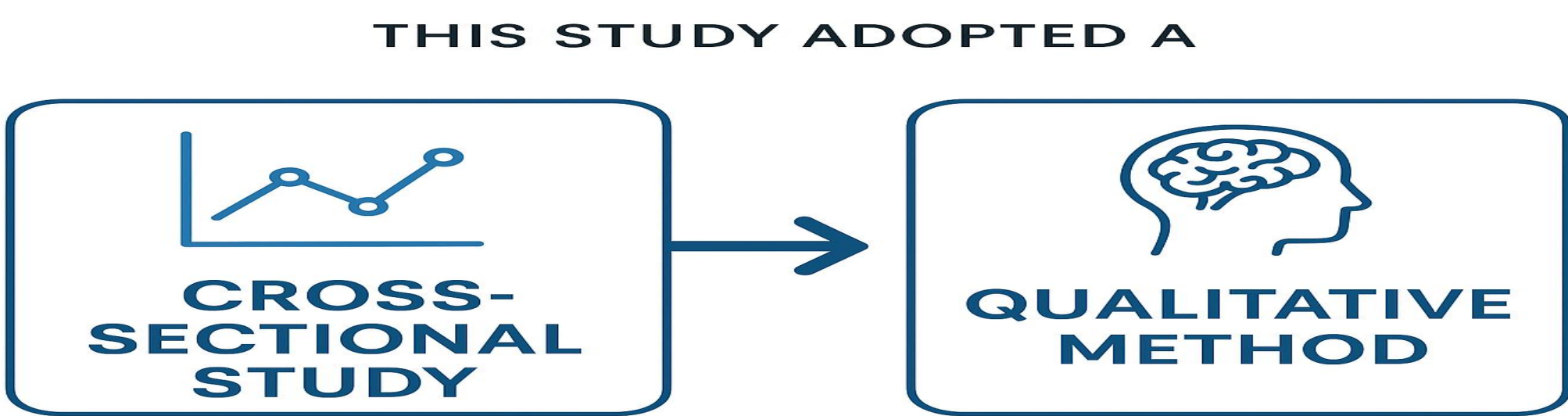
INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 pandemic affected health-seeking behavior globally. This also affected patient physical attendance in Ghanaian facilities as well as healthcare practitioner (HCPs) face-to-face consultations. Pre-and post-natal referral systems in Ghana are riddled with many gaps, including unstructured referral networks. WhatsApp has been identified that the effective use of mobile phones for health (mHealth) could reduce unexpected negative outcomes.

OBJECTIVE

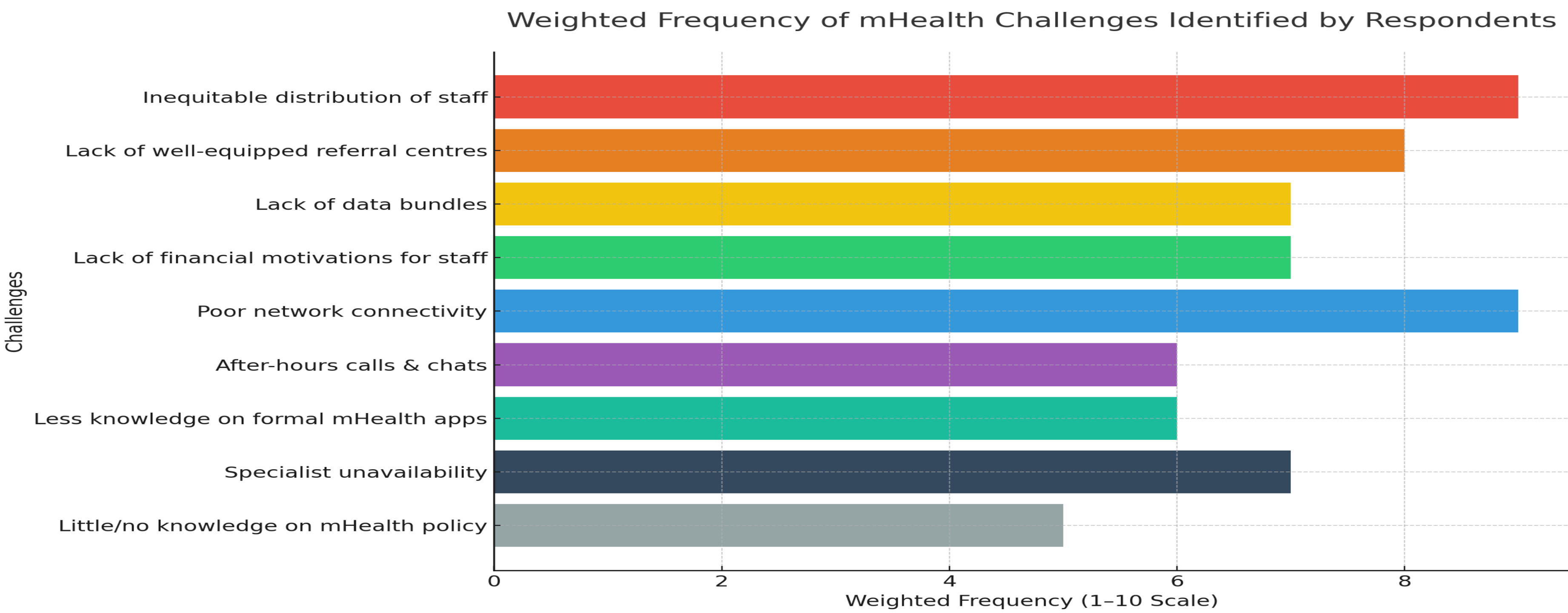
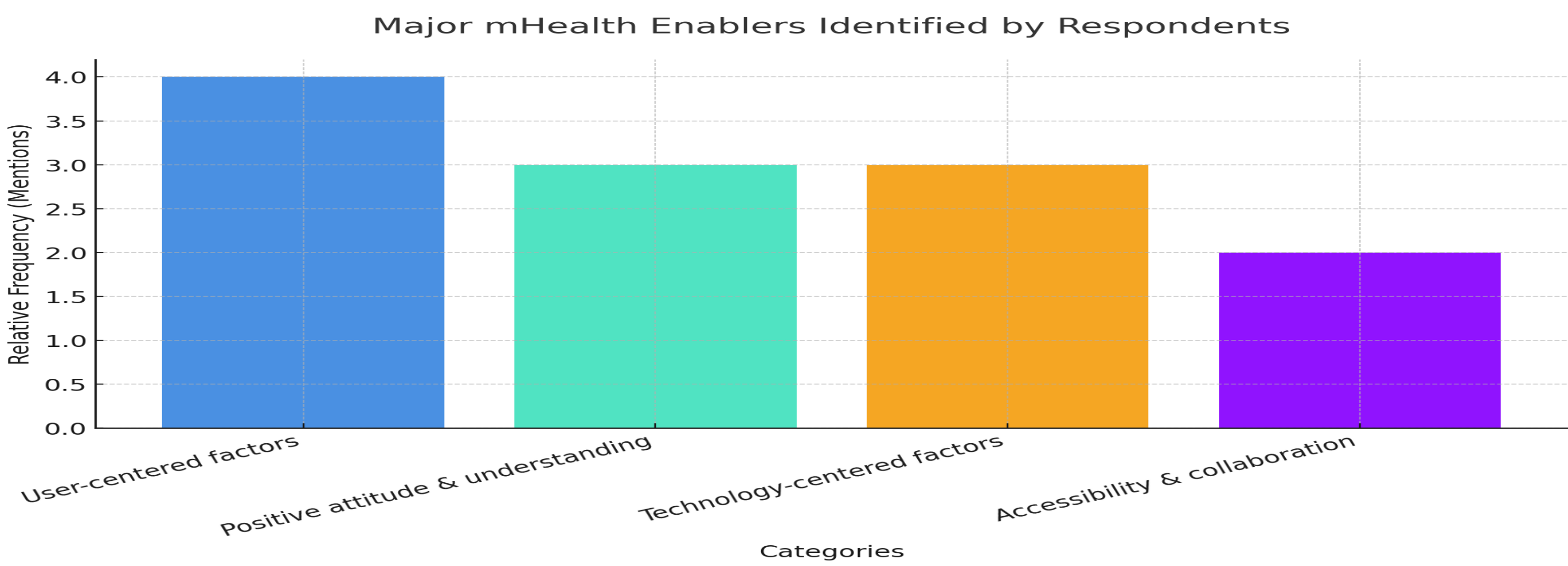
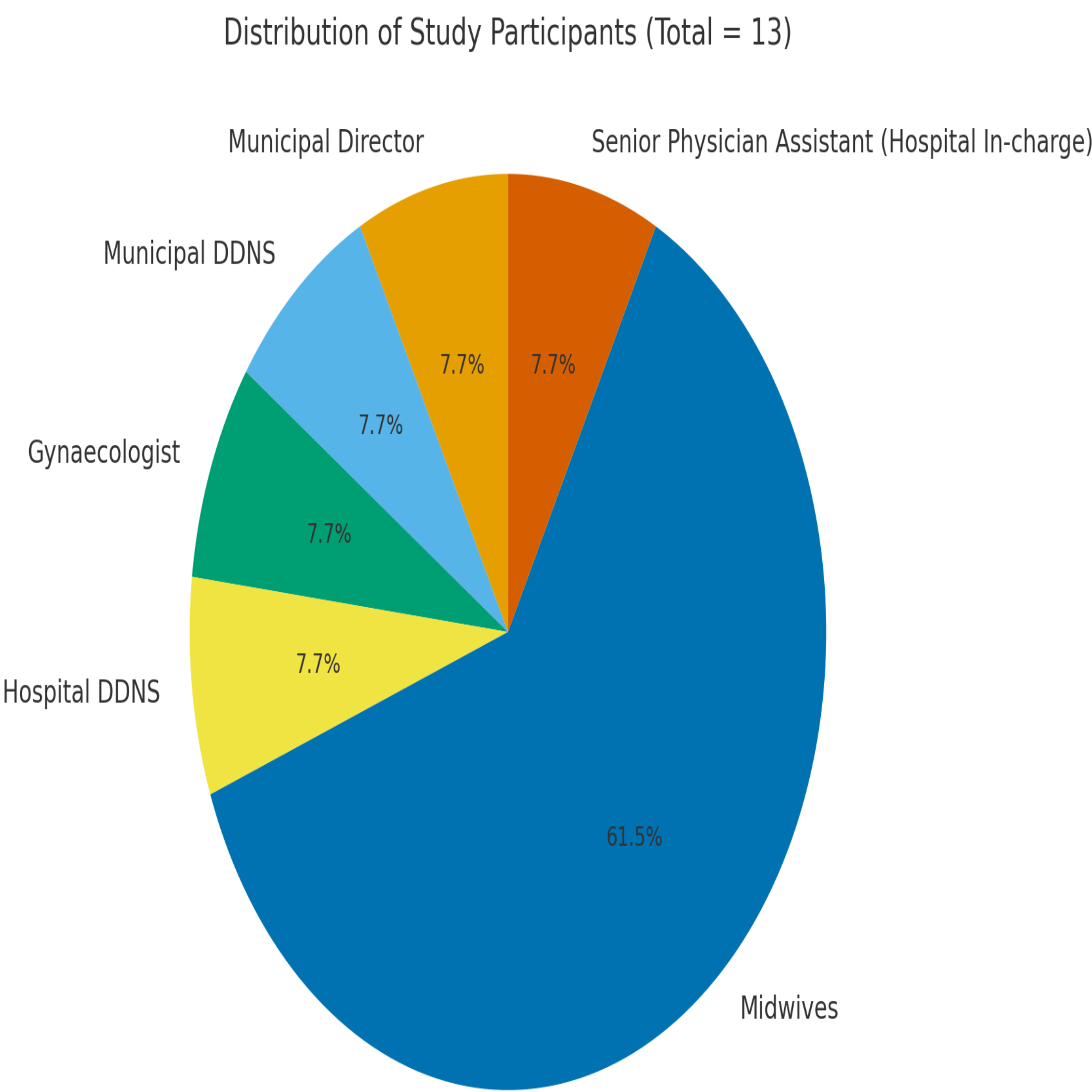
The aim of the study is to assess the utilization of informal WhatsApp for pre-and postnatal referral services in health facilities in Kwadaso Municipality. More specifically, the study assessed the enablers and challenges before and after the utilization of a WhatsApp mHealth for maternal health-related referrals during the COVID-19 pandemic.

METHOD



A purposive sampling method was used for qualitative data using key informant interviews (KIIs) for 13 healthcare professionals (HCPs). This was analyzed thematically.

RESULTS



CONCLUSIONS

The study results show that the use of WhatsApp mHealth for maternal health care referrals can be used as a communication tool for all referrals. There is a need to continue streamlining inter-municipality facility referral procedures due to challenges associated with the usage of informal WhatsApp which has been recognized as possibly contributing to decreasing mother and child mortality.

REFERENCES

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