

A Study of Awareness Among Adolescent Girls Regarding Child Care Practices Belonging to Different Socio-Economic Status

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INTRODUCTION

In India, marriage at an early age is still common and unfortunately institution do not provide any education regarding safe motherhood and child care. Adolescent girls are trained in different vocation and remain ignorant about mother and childcare. The first two years of child are very crucial and it is quite evident that the well being of the child and his or her future is totally dependent upon the knowledge of the mother that she has about child care. The factors like illiteracy, early marriage, socio-economic disparities also add to this. Women account for almost 49 per cent of the total population and about 46 per cent of this are girls under 20 years. The young would be mothers have little knowledge about reproduction, safe motherhood and childcare. They acquire this little knowledge from friends, relatives and sometimes from books. They are not able to have dialogue with their parents because of inhibition and social taboo. So with this little knowledge they become mothers and may face problems like early pregnancy, spacing, problem, birth control measures, health, nutrition, immunisation and other aspects of maternal and childcare.

Therefore there is a need to impart education to adolescent girls regarding maternal and childcare as this can play crucial role in child rearing, promotion of health, nutrition, socio-economic development of family, community and lowering down the maternal and child mortality rates in the country. Hence the study was undertaken with the following objective.

Objective: To examine the awareness regarding child development among adolescent girls belonging to different socio-economic status.

METHOD

Sample: Out of total blocks of Chamba district, two blocks viz, 'Mehala' and 'Chamba' were

selected. Total 6 schools were selected for the study from the blocks. In total one hundred respondents i.e. adolescent girls in the age group of 13-21 years were randomly selected for the study.

Variables: Dependent variable included prenatal care and postnatal care and independent variables were classified into two categories:

- i) Personal variables- Age and education of respondents
- ii) Socio-economic- Caste and family income

Tool: A pre-structured interview schedule was specifically formulated for the present study to meet the specified objective. Collected data were first tabulated. The per cent responses were computed for the categorization of awareness level into low and high. The statistical analysis was done by applying χ^2 test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present study was conducted mainly to examine the extent of awareness among adolescent girls regarding childcare. Data were collected through personal contact on different aspects of child-care. The personal characteristics included age and education of respondents whereas the socio-economic characteristics included occupation, caste, family, income and family type of respondents.

Awareness Regarding Prenatal Care

Diet of Mother: Majority of adolescent girls were aware of the dietary care aspects which the mother should exercise during pregnancy. The data also revealed that quite a significant number of girls of child bearing age are still unaware of the dietary aspect of prenatal care. 3/4th of the respondents were aware of the balanced diet during pregnancy. Almost half of the respondents were not aware of the fact that pregnant women should not undergo X-ray test. Very few (8 per cent) girls were aware of the normal weight gain during pregnancy. Almost all (94 per cent) were in favour

of the hospital delivery. All (100 per cent) were aware of the need of regular medical checkup during pregnancy 69 per cent of the girls were aware of the tetanus vaccination during pregnancy (Table 1).

Kapil et al. (1990) reported that a total of 86.16 per cent of urban girls of Delhi had correct knowledge about prenatal dietary care aspects. Contrary to the results of this study Verma et al. (1994) and Nehra (1995) reported that the mothers are generally unaware about the tetanus toxoid injection whereas Punia (1993) reported that most of the respondents attended antenatal clinic in Haryana only during the third trimester of pregnancy for tetanus toxoid vaccination. The women with good nutritional status normally gain about 10-12 kg weight during pregnancy.

However, pregnant women from low income group who continue to work during pregnancy gain about 6 kg weight (UNICEF, 1990).

Awareness Regarding Postnatal Care

About half the respondents (49 per cent) knew the first secretion of milk known as colostrum in preventing illness. 48 per cent were aware of the importance and regularity in breast feeding the child Majority of the girls were aware that the child should be fed 5-6 times a day. 67 per cent of the girls were knowing about the supplementary food to be given to the child at the age of 4 months. 44 per cent of the girls were aware about dangerous effect Kajal can have on the eyes of the child. 44 per cent, 75 per cent and 10 per cent of the respondents were aware of the age at

Table 1: Awareness regarding prenatal care

S. No.	Items	Responses (N = 100)	
		Correct	Incorrect
1.	Intake of balanced act during pregnancy is necessary	72	28
2.	Women should increase their normal intake during pregnancy	79	21
3.	Diet of pregnant women should be supplemented with iron and calcium	62	38
4.	Pregnant women should have regular medical check-up	100	0
5.	Pregnant women should not undergo X-ray test	48	52
6.	Pregnant women needs more hours of sleep than normal women	67	33
7.	A pregnant women should get vaccinated against tetanus	69	31
8.	Normal gestation period is 266-280 days.	94	6
9.	A pregnant women should not wear tight clothes and high heel	100	0
10.	Gradual weight gain during pregnancy is necessary	85	15
11.	Normal weight gain during pregnancy is 10-12 kg	8	92
12.	Hospital delivery is safer than home delivery	94	6
13.	The clothes and material of baby/mother used for delivery should be sterilized	95	5

Table 2: Awareness regarding post natal care

S. No.	Items	Responses (N = 100)	
		Correct	Incorrect
1.	First milk secreted which is thick yellowish in colour is known as colostrums	49	51
2.	Giving colostrums helps the new baby in preventing illness	25	75
3.	Breast feeding should be continued as long as mother can feed	76	24
4.	Fresh milk should be given with spoon and not with glass or bottle	48	52
5.	Child should be fed 5-6 times a day at the interval of 3-4 hour between two feeds	90	10
6.	The child should be given supplementary foods like dalia, kheer, mashed banana, soup of dal etc. other than mother's milk at the age of 4 month.	67	33
7.	The child should be given variety of food	95	5
8.	Applying surma/kajal in baby's eyes can be dangerous	48	52
9.	BCG vaccination should be given at birth	44	56
10.	Polio and DPTY should be given at birth	95	5
11.	The baby should be immunized against measles after 9 months	10	90
12.	During illness baby should not be vaccinated.	60	40
13.	The child suffering from diarrhoea should be given liquid and semi liquid food and not feed regularly	82	18
14.	Diarrhoea is well managed by ORS	74	26

which BCG, Polio DPT and measles should be administered respectively (Table 2).

CONCLUSION

The results indicated that quite a significant proportion of the adolescent girls belonging to Chamba district of H.P. did not know enough as expected about prenatal, dietary and medical care, physiological changes taking place during pregnancy. Regarding postnatal awareness of girls, it was found that a significant proportion of girls were less aware on weaning and feeding of infants, health, hygiene, immunisation of baby, diarrhoea and dehydration and their management.

KEY WORDS Adolescent. Knowledge. Child-rearing. Awareness. Physiological Changes.

ABSTRACT The present study was conducted to examine the extent of awareness among adolescent girls regarding childcare practices. The present study was conducted to examine the extent of awareness among adolescent girls regarding child care practices. The first five years of child is very crucial and its quite evident that the well being of the child and his future is totally dependent upon the knowledge the mother has about child care. But half of the population remain ignorant about child care knowledge and it is a matter of serious concern to our nation. There is need to impart education to adolescent girls in their important aspect of life. Because women is at the centre of all human life. She plays crucial role in child rearing, and in the promotion of health nutrition and socio-economic development of family & community. She therefore must have sound scientific knowledge about child development from conception to infancy. But for providing knowledge to the girls it is necessary to know the extent of awareness about child care practices among adolescent girls. In relation to present study hundred adolescent girls of Chamba district of Himachal Pradesh were selected as sample. A personal interview

schedule was developed and data were collected through personal interview method on different aspects of child care practices. The results indicated that quite a significant proportion of the adolescent girls belonging to Chamba district of H.P. did not know enough as expected about prenatal, dietary and medical care, physiological changes taking place during pregnancy in comparison to post natal care of children.

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