

Prevailing Practices of Rural Mothers Regarding Construction, Use and Care of Diapers

H. Saggu¹, Sukhminder Kaur² and V. Gandotra³

Department of Apparel and Textile Science and Human Development, College of Home Science, Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana 141 004 Punjab, India

Mobile: ¹<09779677700>, ²<9463503991>, ³<918283819591>;

E-mail: ¹<harsaggu@yahoo.co.in>, ²<sukhminderkuar@pau.edu>, ³<gandotra_vandana@pau.edu>

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ABSTRACT This study was carried out on rural mothers of Jalandhar district in Punjab state. Most of the rural mothers made use of diapers up to the age of six months. Soft cotton material was preferred by them being low in cost, easy to wash and wear as well as durable too. None of the rural mothers used plastic diapers for babies at home except during travelling. Colour, design and attractiveness of the diapers were least preferred by them. They also narrated the reason for diaper rash for being wet and tight by majority of the mothers followed by use of synthetic/blended material, use of hard soap, never boiled, disinfected and bleached under sunlight.

INTRODUCTION

Proper clothing for the baby is an important aspect in child care as the baby's skin is very soft and hence easily chaffed. So their clothes must be safe, light weight, warm and pliable. Absorbency is the most important trait of any diaper because poor absorption causes baby's skin to be exposed to persistent dampness which can lead to diaper rash.

The literature also reveals that the three 'musts' in a baby's clothing are warmth, comfort and hygiene. Babies heat up and cool off quickly than do grown-ups because they have much more skin surface in relation to weight. Thus, they have to be watched carefully in sudden changing climates. A new born baby is much more susceptible to fever producing infections, many of which can be transmitted by clothing. Baby sleeps 80% of the time during first few months of life and must have comfortable clothing for sleeping (Vatsala 2003).

As per observation of the investigator while working with farm women during the extension training course, quite a number of farm women did not follow the right practices of diaper folding, its use and care. It was noted that 'diaper rash' was quite common among rural babies. As a result the skin around the diaper area become red and raw and developed little pustules (Devadas and Jaya 2000).

Also the new born is prone to infections, many of which are most likely to be transmitted by clothing, if proper care is not exercised. Therefore the mothers need to be educated, skill fully trained and must acquire the knowledge about basic requirement of the baby in order to give them the best of care and comfort regarding the use and care of diapers being used during infancy. Thus, keeping in mind and to assess the prevalent practices undertaken in the rural area with the following specific objectives:

- (1) To determine the prevailing practices of rural mothers regarding care and use of diapers.
- (2) To find out the type of materials used by rural mothers for making homemade diapers.
- (3) To provide guidelines for proper use, care and maintenance of diapers.

METHODOLOGY

This study was undertaken in rural areas of Punjab state in the years 2011-12. Four villages namely Bundala, Rakhra, Dallewal and Dosanj Khurd were randomly selected from Jalandhar district. A sample of 120 mothers was randomly selected having infants of six months from middle class families. The criteria followed for sample selection was the educational level of the respondents, that is, they should be at least

matriculate and able to read and write the local language.

A self-structured interview schedule pertaining to background information and for construction, use and care of diapers was prepared to determine the prevailing practices of rural mothers. Data were collected by personally interviewing the respondents. The background information of the respondents included age, education, occupation, monthly income as well as the type of family. The second part of the interior schedule was aimed at getting information related to type of fabrics and colours used by mothers for making drapes type of diapers made at home; method of washing drapers and the reasons or nappy rash. Frequencies and percentages were calculated to analyse the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Background Information

The respondents for the present study were rural mothers of age group ranging between 20 years to 35 years having one of their children with an age upto six months. Majority of the mothers, that is, 58.33 percent were having two children where as 26.67 per cent of them had only one child and the rest 15 per cent had three children.

It was revealed that an average number of the respondents, that is, 54.17 per cent made use of diapers for babies up to the age of six months; whereas 29.17 per cent of the respondents used diapers up to three months only and a small number of them, that is, 16.66 percent of them used diapers upto one year. Hence most of the mothers started wearing panty to the toddler after the age of six months and rest of them at the age of three months and one year respectively. It was revealed through discussion with the participants while collecting the data.

Table 1 indicates the prevailing practices of respondents regarding material used for diaper making. It was found that majority of the respondents (70%) used poplin fabric, whereas 54.16 per cent used flannel, muslin fabric was used by 28.33 per cent and terrycot and toweling material by 20 per cent of respondents. A very small number of respondents, that is, 8.33 per cent made use of *khadi* fabric. It was concluded that most of the respondents were aware of the type of fabrics suitable for making diapers for bodies

same of them were using remnant cotton fabrics available at home.

Table 1: Type of fabrics used by mothers for making diapers (n=120)*

Type of fabric being used	f	(%)
Poplin	84	70.00
Muslin	34	28.33
Voile	30	25.00
<i>Khadi</i>	10	8.33
Flannel	65	54.16
Toweling material	24	20.00

Table 2 represents that nearly 51.66 percent of respondents made diapers of any fabric colour available at home. Dark shade was preferred by 20 per cent of respondents followed by light brown (23.33%), white (21.66%) and cream (8.33%) colour.

Table 2: Preferences of mothers for colours used in homemade diapers (n=120*)

Colours	f	%
White	26	21.66
Cream	10	8.33
Light brown (skin)	28	23.33
Dark shade	24	20.00
Colours of anyfabric available at home	62	51.66

*Multiple responses

Table 3 reveals the type of diapers usually used by respondents for their babies. It was found that nearly 38.33 per cent used triangular diapers without strings for their babies, whereas 33.33 percent used triangle shaped diapers with strings. Square cloth in different folds and shapes of diapers was used by only 3.33 percent of respondents. As the diapers were required in quite a good number so many mothers also made use of diapers to the newly born of their elder siblings and cousins.

Table 3: Type of diapers being home made for infants by mothers (n=120)*

Type of diapers	f	%
Triangular without strings	46	38.33
Triangular type with string	40	33.33
Square shaped	4	3.33
Square cloth with multiple folds	2	1.66
Rectangular with velcrotape	26	21.66
Plastic/disposable diapers	12	10.00

*Multiple responses

Table 4 represents the prevailing practices of respondents regarding cleaning and washing of diapers. It was observed that 55 per cent of respondents washed the diapers with soap and water whereas 51.66 per cent respondents rinsed them in just plain water. About 25 percent respondents dried the wet diapers after use as such in the sun and only a small number of them, that is, 27.66 percent boiled the diapers. The practice of boiling the diapers once in a month was prevalent among 10 per cent of respondents. It was found that most of the respondents either reused diapers by washing them in plain water or washing with soap. Some of them were drying wet diapers without rinsing them. A miniscule number of respondents used disinfectant in the last rinse of wash water.

Table 4: Cleaning and washing of diapers (n=20)*

Methods used for cleaning	f	(%)
Drying wet diapers without rinsing	30	25.00
Rinsing in plain water	62	51.66
Washing by applying soap	66	55.00
Boiling: Once a week fortnightly/ once a month	5/12	4.16/ 10.00
Use of disinfectant in the last rinse	6	5.00

*Multiple responses

Table 5 represents that nearly 33.33 per cent used diapers not rinsed properly and 17.50 per cent used tight diapers, that is, smaller in size. A negligible number of respondents (5%) used diapers made from blended fabric. Only 6.66 per cent never boiled and dried them under sun. It was concluded that many of the respondents were not much aware about nappy rash since some of the infants in the usages were suffering from skin rashes due to diapers.

CONCLUSION

Majority of the respondents preferred to buy diapers of low cost which were easy to wash and wear and durable also. Secondary preferences were given to colour, design and attractiveness of the diapers. Diapers in white

colour were preferred by majority of the respondents.

Table 5: Reasons given by the respondents for the cause of baby's infection (n=120)*

Reasons	f	%
Use of wet diapers	21	17.50
Diapers not disinfected	14	11.66
Diapers not rinsed thoroughly	40	33.33
Not boiled and dried in sun	18	15.00
Use of tight diaper	21	17.50
Diaper made from blended fabric	6	5.00
Not aware of any reason	18	15.00

*Multiple responses

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ♦ Mothers need to be educated by organizing training courses relating to appropriate child care and rearing practices. Diapers should be clean and absorbent to avoid skin problems. Mild soap and through rinsing present skin irritations.
- ♦ Practical training should be given regarding construction of homemade diapers out of easily available soft cotton material. Cotton is hygienically safe as it can be boiled at hot temperature.
- ♦ Make them aware of the problems to be faced by the baby with the use of plastic diapers during training programmes.
- ♦ Gram *sevikas/Anganwari* workers should be trained so that they can impart knowledge and skills to the mothers since they are in constant touch with them.

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