

AWARENESS AMONG ADOLESCENT GIRLS REGARDING CHILD CARE PRACTICES IN ALMORA DISTRICT OF UTTARAKHAND

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ABSTRACT

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 it's quite evident that the well being of the child and his future is totally dependent upon the knowledge the mother that she has about child care. Women plays crucial role in child rearing, and in the promotion of health nutrition and socio-economic development of family and 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 100 adolescent girls of Almora district of Uttarakhand 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 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.

INTRODUCTON

Adolescence (10-19) is a phase of life which has recently gained recognition as a distinct phase of life with its own special needs. This phase is characterized by acceleration of physical growth and, psychological and behavioral changes thus bringing about transformation from childhood to adulthood. The majority of adolescents in India experience early pregnancy, childbirth and enter motherhood without adequate information about maternal health issues like proper immunization, pregnancy complications, about healthy diet, routine check-ups, child rearing and bearing practices. Information about these issues could help them reduce their pregnancy related health risks.

Existing studies have concentrated on adolescents' knowledge of other areas of reproductive health, but little is known about their awareness and knowledge of safe motherhood issues. The first two years is very crucial for a child and it is quite evident

that the well being of the child and his/her future is totally dependent upon the knowledge of the mother that she has about child care. The factors like illiteracy, ignorance, early marriage, gender bias, and 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 and magazines. They are not able to discuss with their parents because of hesitation and social taboo. So with this little knowledge they become mothers and may face problems like early pregnancy, spacing, birth complications problems, birth control measures, health, nutrition, immunization and other aspects of maternal and childcare (Das and Ahmed,1995). Therefore there is a need to impart education to adolescent's girls regarding maternal and childcare as this can play crucial role in child rearing, promotion of health,

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nutrition, socioeconomic development of family, community and lowering down the maternal and child mortality rates in the country. Thus, an attempt has been made in this paper to examine the awareness regarding child care practices among adolescent girls.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Almora district of Uttarakhand state (India). Out of total eleven blocks of Almora district, two blocks viz, 'Hawalbagh' and 'Takula' were selected. Total 6 villages were selected for the present study from the selected blocks. In total 100 respondents i.e. adolescent girls in the age group of 14-20 years were randomly selected for the study. Sample contains dependent variable included prenatal care and postnatal care and independent variables i.e. Personal variables like age and education of respondents and socio-economic variables like caste and family income. A pre-structured interview schedule was specifically formulated for the present study to meet the specified objective. The data were processed, tabulated and classified. Analysis was done on the basis of data organized.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Majority of the adolescent girls (65%) were in the age group of 16-19 years, unmarried, belonged to nuclear families (72%), and had farming as main occupation (63%) of family. Further majority of the respondent's belonged to upper middle class (55%)

and more than half of the girls were educated up to high school (54%) and majority were (78.33%) belonged to low socio economic status.

Awareness regarding prenatal care

Prenatal care also known as antenatal care refers to the medical and nursing care recommended for women before and during pregnancy. The aim of good prenatal care is to detect any potential problems early, to prevent them if possible, and to direct the woman to appropriate specialists, hospitals, etc. if necessary. The availability of routine prenatal care has played a part in reducing maternal death rates and miscarriages as well as birth defects, low birth weight, and other preventable infant problems. Majority of adolescent girls (76%) 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 (24%) of child bearing age are still unaware of the dietary aspect of prenatal care. Very few (8 per cent) girls were aware of the normal weight gain during pregnancy. Ninety seven of the adolescent girls were in favour of institutional delivery as it is save and protective for both mother and new born child whereas 98 per cent of the adolescent were aware of the need of regular medical checkup during pregnancy and 55 per cent of the girls were aware of the tetanus vaccination during pregnancy. Seventy per cent of the adolescent girls aware that pregnant women needs more hours of sleep and rest than normal women whereas

Table 1: Awareness regarding prenatal care among adolescent girls n= 100

S.No. Items	Responses	
	Aware (f)	Not aware (f)
1 Intake of balanced diet during pregnancy is necessary	76	24
2 Women should increase their normal intake during pregnancy	82	18
3 Pregnant women should have regular medical check-up	98	2
5 Pregnant women needs more hours of sleep than normal women	70	30
6 A pregnant women should get vaccinated against tetanus	55	45
7 Normal gestation period is 266-280 days	92	8
8 A pregnant women should not wear tight fitting clothes	100	0
9 Gradual weight gain during pregnancy is necessary	80	20
10 Normal weight gain during pregnancy is 10-12 kg	8	92
11 Institutional delivery is safer than home delivery	97	3

92 per cent of the girls knew that the normal gestation period are 266-280 days (Table 1).

Kapil (1990) reported that a total of 88 per cent of urban girls of Delhi had correct knowledge about prenatal dietary care aspects. Contrary to the results of this study Verma (1994) and Nehra (1995) reported that the mothers are generally unaware about the tetanus toxic injection whereas Punia (1993) reported that most of the respondents attended antenatal clinic in Haryana only during the third trimester of pregnancy for tetanus vaccination.

Awareness regarding postnatal care

Postnatal is the period beginning immediately after the birth of a child and extending for about six weeks. Regarding first milk secretion 32 per cent of the adolescent girls knew that the first secretion of milk known as colostrums helpful preventing illness. Forty eight per cent girls were aware that fresh milk should be given with spoon and not with glass or bottle. Majority of the girls (93%) were aware that the child should be fed 5-6 times a day. Sixty five per

cent of the adolescent girls knew about the supplementary food to be given to the child at the age of 4 months. Forty five per cent of the girls were aware about dangerous effect *Kajal* applied to the eyes of new born baby whereas only 15 per cent girls were aware about the BCG (Bacille Calmette Guerin) vaccination which should be given at birth time. BCG is the only vaccine available today for protection against tuberculosis. It is most effective in protecting children from the disease. Majority of the girls (81%) did not know that Polio and DPT (DPT or DTAP is an immunization or vaccine to protect against the diseases diphtheria, pertusis, and tetanus. Five doses are commonly given to children between the ages of two months to five years old) should be administered at the time of birth to new born baby. It was very astonishing that only 8 per cent of the girls knew that the new born baby should be immunized against measles after 9 months whereas 53 per cent of the respondents were aware about that when child suffering from diarrhoea should be given liquid and semi liquid food items like *dal ka*

Table 2: Awareness regarding postnatal care among adolescent girls **n=100**

S.No. Items	Responses	
	Aware (f)	Not aware (f)
1 First milk secreted which is thick yellowish in colour is known as colostrums	32	68
2 Giving colostrums helps the new baby in preventing illness	20	80
3 Breast feeding should be continued as long as mother can feed	78	22
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	93	7
6 The child should be given supplementary foods like <i>dalia</i> , <i>kheer</i> , mashed banana, <i>khidhi</i> , soup of <i>dal</i> etc. other than mother's milk at the age of 6 month	65	35
7 The child should be given variety of food	95	5
8 Applying <i>kajal</i> in baby's eyes can be dangerous	45	55
9 BCG vaccination should be given at birth	15	85
10 Polio and DPT should be given at birth	19	81
11 The baby should be immunized against measles after 9 months	8	92
12 During illness baby should not be vaccinated	55	45
13 The child suffering from diarrhoea should be given liquid and semi liquid food and not feed regularly	53	47
14 Diarrhoea is well managed by ORS	79	21

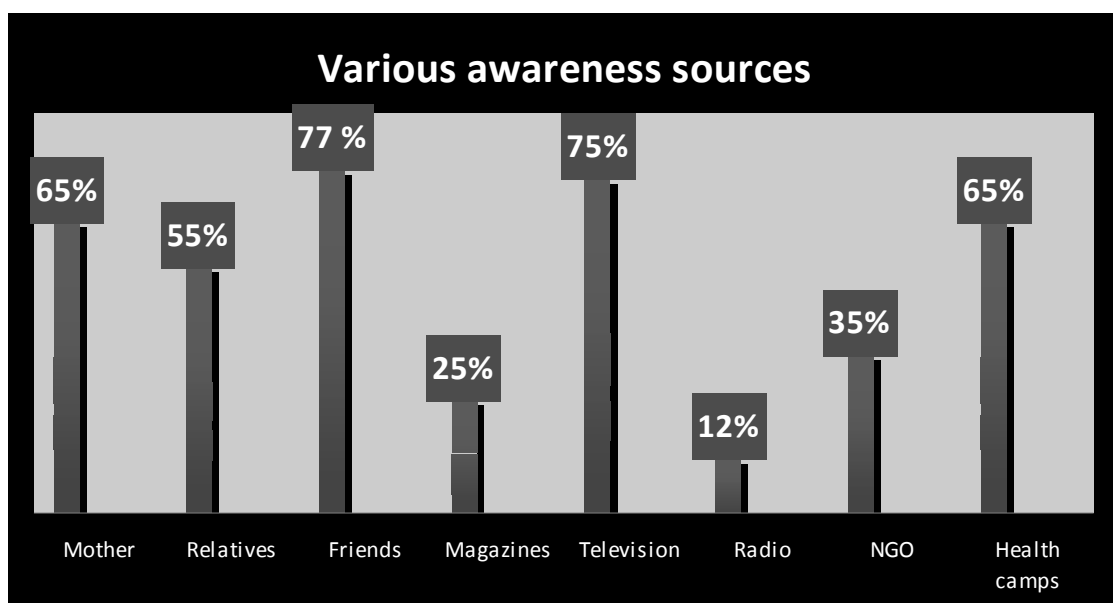
pani, vegetable soup, mash fruits and vegetables. About Oral Rehydration Solution, 79 per cent of the adolescent girls had knowledge about it (Table 2).

Sources of awareness among adolescent girls

Data in fig.1 depict the general sources of awareness among rural adolescent girls about child care. Mother is the person who is close to girl, 65 per cent of the respondents mother's told them about different child care practices by words of mouth whereas 55 per cent relatives were the main source of information(*Mausi, chacha, nani, dadi* and neighbourhood females). Seventy seven per cent respondents shared their knowledge from friend of their same age, where they discussed various issues and problem in child health and how to care best. Very few of the rural adolescent girls (25%) read the

magazines as they had no proper accessibility whereas majority of the respondents (75%) main source of information was television further they discussed that in *Doordarshan* different programmes such as women and health, social advertisement showed how to care child and what are the necessary point to be kept in mind for child rearing. Very few respondents (12%) listen sometimes radio programmes like *Sakhi Saheli* and *Pitara* where they provide information related to child care. NGOs like Uttarakhand livelihood mission, *Jan apoorti Kendra, Sanjeevani, Mahila Vikass* were providing the information to rural women and girls by organizing exhibitions and by personal visits(35%)besides that 65 per cent of the respondents main source of awareness was health camps organized by state health board, public and private hospitals.

Fig1: Awareness sources among adolescent girls regarding child care practices



CONCLUSION

The results indicates that quite a significant proportion of the adolescent girls belonging to Almora district of Uttarakhand did not know enough as expected about prenatal, dietary and medical care and 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, immunization of baby, about BCG vaccination, diarrhoea and dehydration and their management. It is recommended that the girls should be empowered by improvement in their nutritional and health status and upgrading home, life and vocational skills. Besides that equipping the girls on family welfare, health, hygiene and information and guidance on existing public services, along with mainstreaming of school girls into formal or non-formal education.

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