

**A study on Knowledge, Awareness and Perception of Mothers' of under Five Children
Regarding of Malnutrition of (Savli and Kawant Taluka of Baroda District)**

Divya Vasava

Assistant professor

Faculty of Social Work, The Maharaja Sayajirao University, Vadodara, Baroda

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ABSTRACT

The nutritional status of under five children is a sensitive indicator of country's health status as well as economic condition. Nutrition and health are the two faces of the same coin. Nutrition is in fact fundamental pillar of human life. There are many nutritional problems that affect large portions of our children and malnutrition has been identified as a major public health and nutritional problem in India. Approximately 20 percent of children under the age of four suffer from severe malnutrition. It not only leads to childhood morbidity and mortality but also leads to impairment of physical and possibly of mental growth of those who survive. Studies have investigated risk factors for malnutrition. The education of women, especially, has been found to play a central role in improving the health of children. Mother's nutrition-related knowledge, attitudes, and practices tend to be strongly associated with children's nutritional status. Mothers are the foremost providers of primary care for their children. This paper throws light on the mother's knowledge awareness and perception regarding malnutrition as well as socioeconomic and cultural risk factors in relation to children's malnutrition in Savli and Kawant taluka of Baroda district, Gujarat. 130 data had been taken for the study. Obtained results clearly indicated that Most of the family's economic condition was not so good, although they were from a low socioeconomic background; most of the mothers were not earning additional income for the family. Because of poor economic condition they were not able to spend much amounts on vegetables and fruits. They used grains and bean dishes as a staple food on regular basis rather than green vegetables. Mothers were aware about the nutrition but they were not aware about the risk factors because of lack of nutrition in child, they were not aware about the disease that cause of child death. The main contributing factor for under five malnutrition was found to be poverty. Poverty is one of the crucial factors that play an important role in malnutrition problem.

Key words: - Nutrition, Health, knowledge, awareness and perception, Malnutrition, Social. Cultural and Economic Factor, poverty.

Background

Eliminating hunger and malnutrition is one of the most fundamental challenges facing Humanity (Lomborg 2004) Malnutrition is one of the most devastating

problems worldwide and is inextricably linked with poverty. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh recently described the problem of Malnutrition as 'a matter of national shame'. Malnutrition and its

associated disease conditions can be caused by eating too little, eating too much, or eating an unbalanced diet that lacks necessary nutrients. Many factors have been associated with malnutrition. These include the socioeconomic (e.g., occupation, educational background and the standard of living); cultural (e.g., religion and caste); the demographic (e.g., age and marital Status) and dietary characteristics (Griffiths and Bentley 2001.) The present study has been formulated to assess mother's knowledge, awareness and perception regarding child malnutrition. Past studies have investigated risk factors for malnutrition. Maternal education regularly emerges as a key element of an overall strategy to address malnutrition. Mother's nutrition-related knowledge, attitudes, and practices tend to be strongly associated with children's nutritional status. Nutritionally educated mothers can bring up their children in a healthier way. The health-care-seeking attitude of mothers, how they utilize available health resources in response to their children's illnesses, is another factor that can affect children's health and nutritional status. Most of the mothers were aware about the nutrition that should be provided to children but they had no Knowledge of the cause of malnutrition and the symptoms of disease that cause by protein energy malnutrition. Common foods may be prepared and used in different ways in various regions and tribal community.

Fried bread (fried dough) is a main part in the family and is eaten with foods such as stews, soups, and bean dishes. One of the major causes for malnutrition in India is gender inequality. Due to the low social status of Indian women, their diet often lacks in both quality and quantity. Women who suffer malnutrition are less likely to have healthy babies. In India, mothers generally lack proper knowledge in feeding children. Consequently, new born infants are unable to get adequate amount of nutrition from their mothers. (WHO) The link between poverty and food insecurity was clear in mother's perceptions of the problem of malnutrition. The study depicts many other factors like cultural, social that contribute to malnutrition besides food insecurity. When income decreases, the quality and quantity of food also decreases. Evidence shows that when unemployment and low wages are presenting factors, families eat cheaper food, which is less nutritious, leading to weight loss and malnutrition (UNICEF, 2009). The standard answer from mothers about the causes of malnutrition was captured as poverty. There is a lack of education and knowledge awareness is very less in rural area. Malnutrition is preventable well in advance; Improving mother's educational levels and providing mothers with information they need on children care also important components of a strategy to improve nutrition.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The present study was a community based study has been undertaken in Savli and Kawant Taluka of Baroda District, Gujarat during 2011-2012 and was descriptive as well as exploratory in nature. The samples survey has been undertaken from the area covered and 130 mothers were selected randomly for personal interview. Those having children but not under five years were excluded from the study. The variables in the study were; ages of mothers, education of mothers, income, family size and ages of children. An interview schedule was prepared questions on demographic data, as well as social, economic and cultural factors that influence malnutrition problem and mother's Knowledge, awareness and perception regarding Malnutrition. and mother's response recorded. The data was tabulated and analyzed statistically.

RESULTS

The experiences of the participants are presented in the form of results, interpretation and relationship between domains. This section has been further divided into six sections according to the objectives. The main idea with which the research was initiated was to identify: Social and Economical Factors contributing Malnutrition, Prenatal care taken by mothers during pregnancy, Cultural factors and Breastfeeding practice, Knowledge of

Mothers on Nutrition and Malnutrition and Causes of Malnutrition as perceived by Mothers.

The results of the study have highlighted the abilities, knowledge and practices of mothers in the nourishment of the children and prevention of malnutrition.

The Major Findings of the Study were Characteristics of the Sample

The mother's age range was between 21-25 or even less than 20 years. The status of women is readily linked to child nutrition. A malnourished mother will give birth to a baby of low birth weight – the single most important predictor of child survival. Early marriage in adolescent girls, who are malnourished themselves and have not, yet, attained physical and mental maturity, leads to early pregnancy and birth of undernourished children.

Study has pointed out the significant role of women's education in infant and child malnutrition. Assessment of mother's education showed that 45.4 % mothers studied primary school, followed by middle school 27.7% and 16.9% mothers were illiterate, while only 10 % mothers studied High school. It inferred from the data analysis that, educational status of mothers were very low in the selected study area. Mother's education can generate different types of intrahousehold effects in reducing the risk of malnutrition.

70 % families don't have sanitation and water facilities, It is very important to note that water and sanitation facility is the basic facility of the people even though most of the family deprived from that basic facility.

Regarding the economic condition the data revealed that most of the family income was between Rs. 1001/- 3000 56.2 % their financial condition was not so good. Although they were from a low socioeconomic background; most of the mothers were not earning additional income for the family. They were not able to spend much amount on green vegetables and fruits; they depended on the local available food. Even they don't have proper facilities for cooking food.

Regarding the pre natal care it was noted that 60% mothers visited hospital regularly for check up during pregnancy, 56.2% mothers take multivitamins medicine during pregnancy, 64.6% respondents take enough rest during pregnancy

In reference to cultural factors and breastfeeding practices it was observed that 73.1% of the respondents used grains and bean dishes as a staple food on regular basis, 70.8% respondent's family there were no any type of discrimination in family, it was noted that 62.3% child were delivered in hospital, 62.3% children had not given any pre-laterals at the time of birth, 66.9% mothers breastfed the child immediately

after birth, 42.3% breastfed the child on schedule, regarding breastfeeding practice it is observed that 48.5% mothers said that breastfeeding should provide to child till 1 year, 80% mothers believed that weaning food should be provided to child after 6th month.

Study has pointed out the mother's knowledge on nutrition and malnutrition.

It was noted that 99.2 % mothers believed that green vegetables are highly nutritional foods, 35.4% mothers thought that malnutrition is like excess nutrition and least nutrition, 54.6% mothers believed that poverty is one of the major cause of malnutrition, 63.1 % mothers don't know the types of PEM, 63.8% mothers don't know the common symptoms of PEM, 46.2% mothers did not aware about the prime indicators of malnutrition, 60.8% mothers did not maintain any weight record of their child, 61.5% mothers response that to prevent PEM the child should give high protein and energy food,

With reference to causes of malnutrition perceived by mothers it was observed that

55.4% mothers believed that because of poverty the malnutrition problem exist in our society, poverty is one of the crucial factor that play an important role in malnutrition problem, 84.6% mothers believed that malnutrition is a serious problem, 79.2% mothers believed that malnutrition problem in mothers also effects

on fetus or baby during pregnancy time, **40%** mothers response that to prevent malnutrition child should give balance diet food, **84.6%** villages don't have any PHC in village.

Concluding Remarks

Awareness of mothers regarding nutrition of their children exists but they did not aware about the risk factors of Malnutrition, it can be further improved with basic health education, awareness and proper counselling by the health workers. So it can be conclude with one nice quote.

“Teach a mother to be healthy and she will teach the rest of mankind”

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