



African Journal of Biological Sciences

Journal homepage: <http://www.afjbs.com>



Research Paper

Open Access

Conceptualizing the Perception of Dietary Practices of Women in Postpartum Care

Supriya Pottal Ray^{1*}, Ms.Paurnima Thorat²

^{1*}Ph.D (Nursing), Associate Professor Bharati Vidyapeeth (Deemed to Be University), College of Nursing, Pune.

²M.Sc - Nursing, Bharati Vidyapeeth (Deemed to Be University), College of Nursing, Pune.

*Corresponding Author: Supriya Pottal Ray

Article Info

Volume 6, Issue 14, August 2024

Received: 03 June 2024

Accepted: 04 July 2024

Published: 20 August 2024

*doi: 10.33472/AFJBS.6.14.2024.5943-5950***ABSTRACT:**

Women and nutrition have always been the two sides of the coin, as her nutritional status right from the time she is born and throughout her life cycle has a very crucial role to play. Much research has been undertaken on various age groups with a lot of focus on nutritional supplements, fortifiers, and various National Health Programmes that cater to this particular group in the population. It won't be wrong to say that women have always been viewed as vulnerable as far as their nutritional status is concerned because, throughout their entire lifetime, they undergo numerous changes, the most crucial and important being pregnancy and the postnatal period. This paper is written to conceptualize the perception of women, the typical choices they make during the postnatal period, and their perspective in defending these choices. Though it has a lot to do with the cultural influences that have flown down from one generation to the next, it is related to child-rearing practices. A balanced diet is required by the postnatal mother to fulfill the body's demands as well as nourish the newborn through breast milk. The energy requirements & demand also vary with the mode of delivery, hence there are operational guidelines listed by the Government of India through various Health Schemes for these mothers. Though the guidelines state Recommended Dietary Allowances, and awareness, and education are provided to the mothers, their choices & preferences revolve a lot around their cultural practices & influences which may lack pieces of evidence. This could be one reason for statistical pieces of evidence of malnutrition in the under-five age group or cases of iron deficiencies bearing a direct impact on maternal and newborn health. According National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-5 21.2% of women are undernourished which in turn has an effect in the postnatal period. The present study tries to conceptualize the dietary perception, choices the women, and mothers make during the postnatal period and their reasons for doing so. **Materials & Methods:** A qualitative approach was utilized, the study population was women, care caretakers of postnatal mothers, and study was conducted in a community setting catering to rural & urban areas. Data was collected for a period of 12 months, Focused group discussions & 21 In-depth Interviews were conducted. The questionnaire consisted of guiding questions that were open-ended in nature and were asked as per the experiences shared. Inclusion criteria included women who have given care to postnatal women, above the age of 40 years. Non-probability purposive sampling technique was adopted. **Result & Conclusion:** Interviews & FGDs were recorded, and transcribed, the codes, sub-themes & themes generated will bring to us an understanding of the influences the dietary habits have on lactating women. Themes emergent such as Preference for a liquid diet, porridge, good foods, hot foods, cold foods, avoidance of non-vegetarian food, certain pulses, gas-producing foods, etc., affecting the mother & baby have been dealt with in detail. The discussions generated will help in planning culturally sensitive & implementation of evidence-based practices in providing choice-based nutritional food & menu plans for lactating mothers.

Keywords: Conceptualize, Perception, Dietary Practices, Women & Postpartum Care.

© 2024 Supriya Pottal Ray, This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license, and indicate if changes were made

1. Introduction

Worldwide statistics especially in the underdeveloped & developing countries nutrition among women has always been a concern. There are many reasons foreseen for such disparity as compared to the male counterpart. Dietary consumption in terms of quality as well quality in women is always for some reason compromised, which leads to malnutrition. Reproductive cycles in women, childbearing at an early age, and co-existing anemia are a few of the reasons for the adverse consequences on the newborn. Maternal malnutrition accounts for increased mortality & morbidity in the mother as well as the newborn. South Asian women account for 24% of malnutrition globally with BMI being very low. Likewise, Obesity and higher BMI too have an adverse effect a trend seen mostly in developed countries. India has half of its women population as Anemic, adolescent girls & women in the age group of 15-49 years which account for 40% of the population are underweight, and 25% are obese. National Nutrition Monitoring Bureau has stated that in 10 Indian states which have only 10% of antenatal women consume cereals, millet, protein, energy, etc in adequate amounts.

Need of the Study

World Health Organization antenatal Care guidelines have issued 49 guidelines of which 14 are interventions specific to nutrition. There are programmes undertaken which cater to maternal, and antenatal nutrition status of the women. Anemia Mukh Bharat, POSHAN Abhiyan and many more have included community mobilization, communication change behaviour strategies to bring health resources and minimize disparities. etc. The hindrance identified was existing cultural beliefs in avoiding and restricting certain foods, cultural influences that need to be studied further to have scientific pieces of evidence. This study aims to identify these cultural practices and explore the perception of mothers related to the practices followed.

Statement: A study to conceptualize the dietary practices of women in postnatal care from selected urban & rural settings of Maharashtra.

Objectives

To conceptualize the dietary practices followed in the postnatal period by the women.

Justification of the Study

This study is undertaken to analyze the dietary practices of women in the postnatal period and the probable reasons for them doing so. The study does not challenge any of the practices but goes on to explore the ideas behind following the traditional practices.

2. Research Methodology

A qualitative research design was adopted, with a phenomenological approach, Non probability purposive sampling technique was utilized.² Focused Group Discussions & 21 In-depth Interviews were conducted with all ethical considerations. Inclusion Criteria had women above the age group of 40 years who have given care to postnatal mothers and were willing to participate in the study. The tool consisted of initial data regarding their age, occupation, marital status, and the relationship they shared with their postnatal mother. The second section dealt with a guiding questionnaire related to the dietary practices they followed, time of initiation of food, preferable choices, reason for their choices, amount of food given, special preparation, etc.

Data Analysis

Interviews & FGDs were transcribed, verbatim written, and analyzed. Codes were generated, sub-themes were developed and final themes were generated.

3. Results

The age of the participants was between 40 - 62 years, majority belonged to the Hindu religion (80%) with few Islam & Christian followers. The majority were educated up to primary (60%), and few were illiterate (10%). The majority were homemakers (80%). All the participants affirmed that the mothers they took care of were either daughters or daughters-in-law or both. All the ones they took care of were registered and received information from healthcare team members regarding diet.

Dietary Practice

Table No: 1 Analysis of the Dietary Practices

S.No	Codes	Sub Themes	Themes
1.	Porridge, Milk, Jawar roti, Nachani Roti, Bajara roti, Dal rice with ghee, All the items will be helpful <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • milk producing • will cause no harm • Easily digestible to the mother & baby • filling for baby & mother <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • produce warmth • followed in the house for ages • regular practice in the village 	Habitual Practices Milk producing foods Practiced over generation	Traditional Dietary Practices
2.	Iron-rich- Green leafy vegetable, dates, groundnut jaggery chikki, to replenish the blood loss	Food to be consumed by the mother Lactating Food Fortifying food for baby & mother	Highly recommend Lactating food
	Porridge- Easily digestible		
	balanced diet		
	soft diet		
	Green vegetable soup (fenugreek, pumpkin)		
	veg food- easily digestible		
	non-veg (Bakari soup)- excellent for bone strength		
3	Fruits(mango, raw papaya, banana) May cause colicky pain Causes diahhroea Causes vomiting milk products- buffalo's milk restricted	Foods are not consumed Told to be restricted by elders Causes harm to the baby Nausea & vomiting in	Foods restricted during lactation

		baby	
	Eggs	May increase heat	
	Non- vegetarian food/seafood vegetables (brinjal, potato)	May cause itching stitches may not heal	
	Rice, Chappati	Causes harm to the baby, stitches may not heal	
	Gas producing- cabbage Cauliflower/Potato/Banana/brinjal		
	Sour food sprouts		
	Spicy foods		
4	Shatavari	To add shatavari powder to milk	Fortifying foods for lactating mothers (galactagogues)
	Dink ladoo	Added to produce more milk	
	Dry fruits Suthwada (kharik, Khobare) Battista powder		
5	Methi	Increases milk production, hemoglobin level, does not cause cold and cough in the baby	Addition of herbs for enhancing lactation (galactagogues)
	balantkadha Drumstick leaves (shengachi shenga) Haliv Neem/Castrol oil Harira	Increases milk production High in iron	
	Turmeric powder	Antibiotic properties & Antioxidant	
6	Onion	Enhancing recovery in mother Reduces lower abdominal pain Reduces bloating of the stomach (in mother & baby) Helps in elimination	Hot preparations (foods) are given to the lactating mother for the recovery process
	Garlic soup Carom seeds(Ova) & Badishep, poppy seeds		

Traditional Dietary Practices

Traditional dietary practices are something that 100 % of the participants verbalized is something that is passed down from generation and that is why they do not question whether it's harmful or helpful for the postnatal mother and baby. They follow a practice taught to them by their elders. Verbatim “Delivery zhalyavar aai la dhoodh dele tar balala hi jaast dooddh milte”, or “jowarchi lapshi delyavar doodh vaadhete”, Tupp sharirala laabdayak asste. Paatal kheer pachayala changle aaste.

Highly Recommend Lactating Food

The majority of the participants affirmed that certain lactating foods should be given to postnatal mothers as they will enhance lactation and will be helpful to the mother and in turn to the baby. Verbatim: “Paya soup haadansathi khup changle aahe, delivery nantarche dukhne kaami hotat. (Soup from the goat's limbs is very beneficial” Jaggery & groundnut Chhiki are very helpful in increasing blood levels, which can replenish blood loss. Green leafy vegetables are very essential also vegetables are easily digestible.

Foods Restricted During Lactation

Like beneficial foods, few foods cause harm to the mother and baby and hence it is restricted during the postnatal period or till the time the mother breastfeeds. According to the participants, 75 % of them believe that fruits such as Mango, raw papaya, and banana may cause colic pain and also cause cough and cold in the baby. Buffalo's milk is heavy for digestion hence avoided for mother. Few others reported that eggs are restricted as it is considered to be hot food. Rice is prohibited as it delays wound healing in mothers with Caesarean Section. Cabbage is avoided as it produces gas.

Fortifying Foods & Herbs to Enhance Lactation in Mothers

The majority of the women 95% discussed the importance of a galactogogues diet which is very important for the lactating mother. Use of turmeric in food preparation or in milk, adding methi seeds, and use of drumstick leaves is done on an increased basis as it enhances milk production. Traditionally Dink laadoo is a preparation very typical in Maharashtrian households for postnatal mothers which has the addition of dry fruits which ensures strength and vitality for the postnatal mother. Shatavari an Ayurvedic medicated powder formula is added to milk to enhance milk production.

Hot Preparations (Foods) Are Given To the Lactating Mother for the Recovery Process

The majority of the mothers 78% recommended the use of onion, and garlic in the form of soup or use in vegetables, carom (ajwain) seeds, and fennel seeds to cure colic & abdominal pain in babies as well as mothers. They believe that the medicinal property of these foods helps in early recovery and also helps in elimination also.

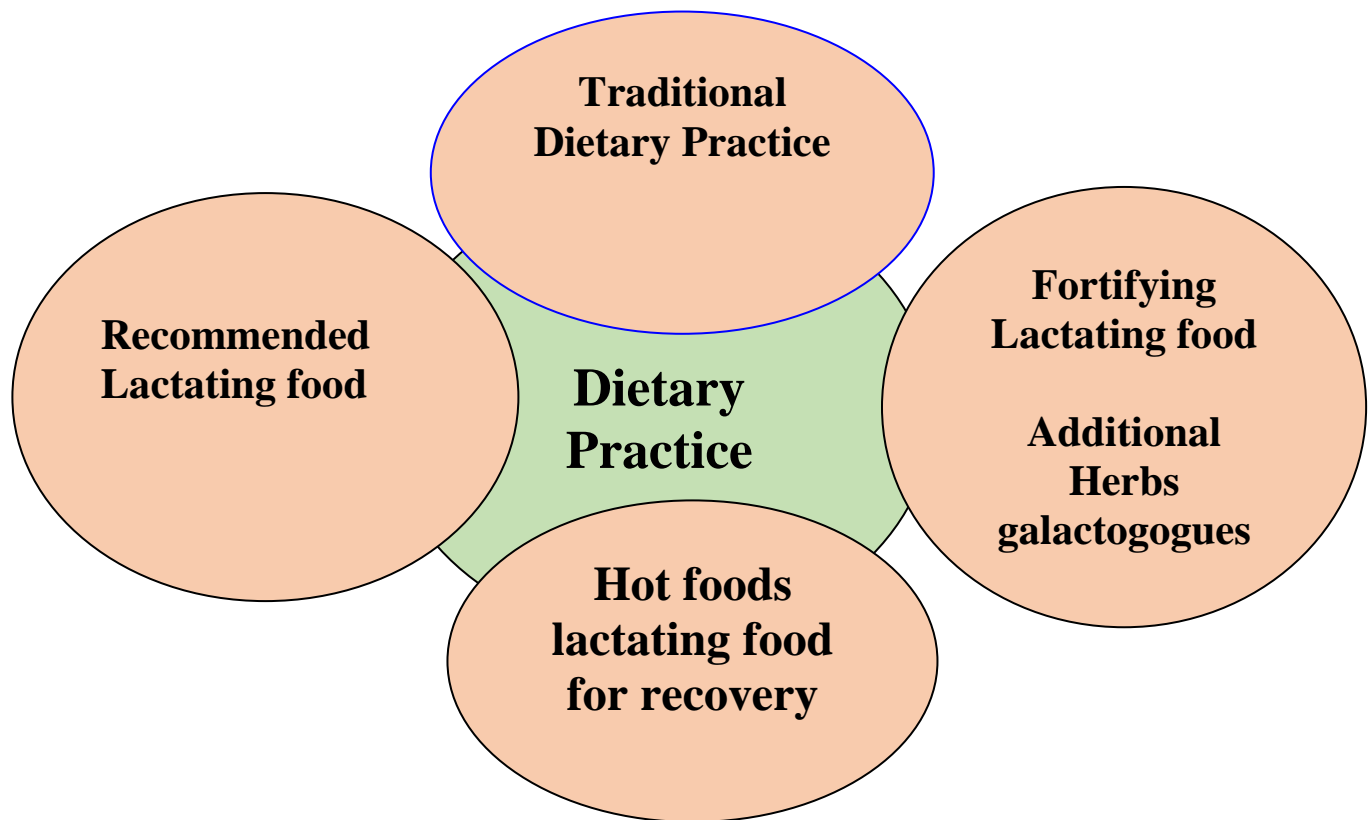
4. Discussion & Conclusion

Cultural practices regarding diet during lactation, the caregivers still have misconceptions about dietary practices like eating certain foods will cause indigestion in newborns, eating prohibited items during the lactation period will suppress the breast milk, and also eating rice will cause over distension of the newborn's abdomen. Also, the assumption of this study proved that the caregivers have some knowledge regarding diet during lactation and they must be following some cultural practices. As healthcare team members it's our prime responsibility to un-cover myths and enhance wanted behavioral change in the population.

Conflict of interest: None.

Finding Source: Nil.

Conceptualize the dietary practices followed in the postnatal period by the women.



5. References

1. Short report for the nutrient requirement of Indians, Recommended Dietary Allowances, and Estimated Average Requirements, A report of the Expert group 2020. https://www.nin.res.in/RDA_short_Report_2020.
2. Barennes H, Simmala C, Odermatt P, Thaybouavone T, Vallee J, Martinez-Ussel B, et al. Postpartum traditions and nutrition practices among urban Lao women and their infants in Vientiane, Lao PDR. *Eur J Clin Nutr* 2009; 63:323-31.
3. Bathula SS, Helena K, Avvaru K. Nutritional experiences of postpartum mothers - A qualitative study. *J Family Med Prim Care* 2024; 13:1243-8.
4. B G Bhuvaneshwari, S. Swarna. (2015); Cultural Beliefs and Practices among Postnatal Mothers in Selected Rural Areas, Tirupati. *American Journal of Diagnostic Imaging*, 4(3); 44-46.
5. Venkateswarlu, M., Pasha, M. A. M., & Fatima, A. (2019). Assessment of cultural beliefs and practices during the postnatal period in an urban field practice area of SRMC, Nandyal, Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh. *International Journal of Community Medicine and Public Health*, 6(8), 3378–3383. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.18203/2394-6040.ijcmph20193459>
6. Kaur D, Ranjan P, Kumari A, Malhotra A, Kaloiya GS, Meena VP, et al. Awareness, beliefs and perspectives regarding weight retention and weight gain among postpartum women in India: A Thematic Analysis of Focus Group Discussions and In-Depth Interviews. *J Obstet Gynecol India* 2022; 72:168-74.

8. Efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj /https://arogya.maharashtra.gov.in/pdf/Nutrition%20Situation%20of%20Women%20and%20Children%20Maharashtra_NFHS-5%208th%20April.pdf
9. UNICEF. Maternal Nutrition. Available from: <https://www.unicef.org/nutrition/maternal>
10. Zakaria Hudu, and Dujin Barma Laribick. "Socio-economic determinants of dietary diversity among women of child bearing ages in Northern Ghana." (2014). [Google Scholar]
11. Northstone Kate, Emmett P., and Rogers Imogen. "Dietary patterns in pregnancy and associations with socio-demographic and lifestyle factors." *European journal of clinical nutrition* 62.4 (2008): 471–479. doi: 10.1038/sj.ejcn.1602741 [PMC free article] [PubMed] [CrossRef] [Google Scholar]
12. Maternal dietary diversity during lactation and associated factors in Palghar district, Maharashtra, India
13. Sunil Rajpal 1, Abhishek Kumar 2, Ruby Alambusha 3, Smriti Sharma 4, William Joe 5 6PMID: 34965269
14. PMID: PMC8716033 DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0261700