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Knowledge of Mothers About Nutrition of Child Under Five Years of Age

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ABSTRACT

Malnutrition among the children is often caused by the synergistic effects of inadequate or improper food intake, repeated episodes of parasitic or other childhood diseases such as diarrhea, and improper care during illness (Pelletier 1994; Ruzicka and Kane 1985). Demographic characteristics such as the child's age and sex, birth intervals (both preceding and following), and mother's age at childbirth are also associated with child nutrition. Household socio-economic characteristics also determine to a large extent the nutritional status of children, and a positive relationship between socio-economic status and the ability of mother to provide adequate food and primary care has been observed. In this context, this study aims at assessing the knowledge level of mothers about Child nutrition and their association with the socio economic and demographic conditions. The knowledge levels of mothers on breast feeding, supplementary food and food consumption and preservation measures were assessed by obtaining information from the mothers. The association of knowledge level and socio economic and demographic characteristics have been verified statistically.

Keywords : Breast Feeding, Supplementary food, Food Consumption, Nutrition

Introduction

Nutrition has major effects on health. Nutrition refers to the availability of energy and nutrition to the body's cell in relation to body requirements. Malnutrition refers to any imbalance in satisfying nutrition requirements. Malnutrition among the children is often caused by the synergistic effects of inadequate or improper food intake, repeated episodes of parasitic or other childhood diseases such as diarrhea, and improper care during illness (Pelletier 1994; Ruzicka and Kane 1985). The most commonly cited factors are food availability and dietary intake, breastfeeding, prevalence of infectious diseases, access to health care, immunization against major childhood diseases, vitamin. Demographic characteristics such as the child's age and sex, birth intervals (both preceding and following), and mother's age at childbirth are also associated with child nutrition. Child nutrition is a prime importance and ensuring that kid gets the required amount of good nutrition is one of the responsibilities of the parents. Household socio-economic characteristics also determine to a large extent the nutritional status of children, and a positive relationship between socio-economic status and the ability of mother to provide adequate food and primary care has been observed.

In this context the present study is planned to study the knowledge and perception of mothers having children less than five year of age about child nutrition.

Objectives

The prime objectives of this study are:

1. To examine the knowledge of mothers with children under years of age about child nutrition.
2. To determine the relationship between socio- demographic characteristics of mothers with the knowledge of mothers towards child nutrition under five years of age.

Data and Methods

A detailed schedule for adoption of the interview method to elicit information was administered to all the selected mothers in the Hospital. 300 mothers have been identified randomly with children less than 5 years of age for this study.

To measure the knowledge of mothers about the breast feeding, the right time of initiation of breast feeding, frequency of breast feeding per day and the duration of breast feeding were the information obtained from the mothers. The right time of starting supplementary food for children, frequency of supplementary feeding per day and water intake per day, balanced food from animal and vegetables, composition of food and food preservation measures were the information obtained from mothers to assess the knowledge of mothers about supplementary food. The knowledge of mothers about food consumption was assessed by obtaining answers for ten statements related to food consumption. Scores were given to the responses of mothers. On the basis of the scores, mothers were classified in to three levels of knowledge categories such as low, medium and high. Then the mothers in the three levels were cross classified with their socio-demographic characteristics. The associations between the knowledge levels and their socio-demographic characteristics have been verified with the help some statistical tools.

Knowledge about Breast feeding

Mothers knowledge about the right time of starting as breast feeding after birth, the frequency of breastfeeding per day and the minimum duration of breastfeeding were obtained by asking related questions to measure the knowledge level of mothers about breastfeeding, each right answer has been given score 1 and 0 for the wrong answer. The total score is 3, the scores 0-1 indicates low knowledge level, the mothers scored 2 have been classified as medium level of knowledge and the mothers scored 3 are assessed as higher level of mothers. Accordingly to the helps of score the mothers have been classified as 3 levels such as low, medium and high. Hence the mothers have distributed according to their knowledge levels and socio-economic demographic characteristics. From the table 1, it is observed that there is no significant association between religions and the knowledge of breastfeeding. There is no significant association between the caste and the knowledge level of mothers.

The association between family type and the level of knowledge is also significant at 1 percent level. While analyzing

the relation between educational qualifications and the knowledge about breast feeding, the 'P' value (0.012) is lesser than the table value. Hence it is statically proved that there is a significant association between education level of mothers and the knowledge level. The association between the age of mothers and the knowledge level is no significant. While analyzing the age at marriage of the mothers with there knowledge level about breastfeeding, though it seems to be some positive association between the age at marriage of mothers and their knowledge level, it is statistically proved that there is no significant association as the 'P' value (0.15) is greater than the table value (0.05).

Table No: 1 Percentage Distributions of Respondents by Social Characteristics and Level of Knowledge about Breastfeeding

Social Economic and Demographic Characteristics		High	Medium	Total
Religion	Hindu	86.4	13.6	100.0
	Christians	75.0	25.0	100.0
	Muslims	75.0	25.0	100.0
	Total	80.0	20.0	100.0
Caste	SC/ST	87.5	12.5	100.0
	MBC	85.7	14.3	100.0
	BC	76.9	23.1	100.0
	Others	77.8	22.2	100.0
	Total	80.0	20.0	100.0
Domicile	Rural	84.6	15.4	100.0
	Urban	78.4	21.6	100.0
	Total	80.0	20.0	100.0
Type of Family	Nuclear	75.0	25.0	100.0
	Joint	88.9	11.1	100.0
	Total	80.0	20.0	100.0
Education	P G and above	100.0	-	100.0
	U G	86.4	13.6	100.0
	Diploma	71.4	28.6	100.0
	Below H.Sc	81.8	18.2	100.0
	Illiterate	66.7	33.3	100.0
	Total	80.0	20.0	100.0
Current Age	Below 20 yrs	100.0	-	100.0
	20-30 yrs	80.6	19.4	100.0
	31& Above	77.8	22.2	100.0
	Total	80.0	20.0	100.0
Age at Marriage	Below 20 yrs	66.7	33.3	100.0
	20-30 yrs	83.8	16.2	100.0
	31& Above	75.0	25.0	100.0
	Total	80.0	20.0	100.0
Occupation	House wife	76.9	23.1	100.0
	Vendor	66.7	33.3	100.0
	Daily wages	100.0	-	100.0
	Agriculture	100.0	-	100.0
	Private	66.7	33.3	100.0
	Government	77.8	22.2	100.0
	Others	100.0	-	100.0
	Total	80.0	20.0	100.0
Family Income	Below Rs.2500	83.3	16.7	100.0
	Rs.2500-5000	75.0	25.0	100.0
	Rs.5001-7500	76.5	23.5	100.0
	Rs.7501-10000	100.0	-	100.0
	10001 and above	100.0	-	100.0
	Total	80.0	20.0	100.0

The existence of significant association between the occupation of the mothers and the knowledge of breastfeeding has been proved statistically. The association between the income level and knowledge is significant at 5 % level.

Mothers' knowledge about supplementary foods

To measure overall knowledge of mothers supplementary foods the responses obtained from the mothers for the questions relating to the starting time of supplementary foods, frequency of food intake per day frequency of drinking water per day, the sources of balanced foods, quality of food and the important and benefits of food preservation measures. To assess the knowledge levels, scores were given as 1 for correct answer and 0 for the wrong answer. Hence the total score for a mother with maximum knowledge is 6, and the minimum knowledge is 0 then the mothers categorized in to categories according to the scores as low medium and high.

The 'P' value (0.008) is lesser than table value (0.05). Hence, there is a significant association between the caste and the knowledge level of mothers. The association between family type and the level of knowledge is also significant at 1% level. The Statistical analysis proved that there is no significant association between educational levels of mothers and the knowledge level, since the 'P' value is (0.109). The association between the age of mothers, income level and the knowledge level is significant at 1% level. It seems to be some positive association between the age at marriage of mothers and their knowledge of level; it is statistically provide that there is a significant association between age at marriage and knowledge of mothers.

The existence of significant association between the occupation of the mothers and the knowledge of supplementary food also proved statistically.

Table No: 2 Percentage Distributions of Respondents by Social Characteristics and Level of Knowledge about Supplementary Food

Social Characteristics		High	Medium	Low	Total
Religion	Hindu	100.0	-	-	100.0
	Christians	80.0	15.0	5.0	100.0
	Muslims	87.5	12.5	-	100.0
	Total	90.0	8.0	2.0	100.0
Caste	SC/ST	100.0	-	-	100.0
	MBC	100.0	-	-	100.0
	BC	84.7	11.5	3.8	100.0
	Others	88.7	11.3	-	100.0
	Total	90.0	8.0	2.0	100.0
Domicile	Rural	76.9	23.1	-	100.0
	Urban	94.6	2.7	2.7	100.0
	Total	90.0	8.0	2.0	100.0
Type of Family	Nuclear	93.7	6.3	-	100.0
	Joint	83.3	11.1	5.6	100.0
	Total	90.0	8.0	2.0	100.0
Education	P G and above	100.0	-	-	100.0
	U G	90.9	4.5	4.5	100.0
	Diploma	85.7	14.3	-	100.0
	Below H.Sc	90.9	9.1	-	100.0
	Illiterate	88.9	11.1	-	100.0
	Total	90.0	8.0	2.0	100.0
Current Age	Below 20 yrs	100.0	-	-	100.0
	20-30 yrs	93.5	6.5	-	100.0
	31& Above	83.3	11.1	5.6	100.0
	Total	90.0	8.0	2.0	100.0
Age at Marriage	Below 20 yrs	88.9	-	11.1	100.0
	20-30 yrs	89.2	10.8	-	100.0
	31& Above	100.0	-	-	100.0
	Total	90.0	8.0	2.0	100.0

Occupation	House wife	84.6	7.7	7.7	100.0
	Vendor	100.0	-	-	100.0
	Daily wages	83.3	16.7	-	100.0
	Agriculture	100.0	-	-	100.0
	Private	100.0	-	-	100.0
	Government	88.9	11.1	-	100.0
	Others	100.0	-	-	100.0
	Total	90.0	8.0	2.0	100.0
Family Income	Below Rs.2500	100.0	-	-	100.0
	Rs.2500-5000	80.0	15.0	5.0	100.0
	Rs.5001-7500	94.1	5.9	-	100.0
	Rs.7501-10000	100.0	-	-	100.0
	10001 and above	100.0	-	-	100.0
	Total	90.0	8.0	2.0	100.0

Knowledge about food consumption

Table No: 3. Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Social Characteristics and Level of Knowledge about Food Consumption

Social Economic and Demographic Characteristics		High	Medium	Total
Religion	Hindu	77.3	22.7	100.0
	Christians	60.0	40.0	100.0
	Muslims	87.5	12.5	100.0
	Total	72.0	28.0	100.0
Caste	SC/ST	75.0	25.0	100.0
	MBC	71.4	28.6	100.0
	BC	69.9	30.1	100.0
	Others	77.8	22.2	100.0
	Total	72.0	28.0	100.0
Domicile	Rural	38.5	61.5	100.0
	Urban	83.8	16.2	100.0
	Total	72.0	28.0	100.0
Type of Family	Nuclear	68.7	31.3	100.0
	Joint	77.8	22.2	100.0
	Total	72.0	28.0	100.0
Education	P G and above	-	100.0	100.0
	U G	72.7	27.3	100.0
	Diploma	85.7	14.3	100.0
	Below H.Sc	63.6	36.4	100.0
	Illiterate	77.8	22.2	100.0
	Total	72.0	28.0	100.0
Current Age	Below 20 yrs	-	100.0	100.0
	20-30 yrs	67.7	32.3	100.0
	31 & Above	83.3	16.7	100.0
	Total	72.0	28.0	100.0
Age at Marriage	Below 20 yrs	77.8	22.2	100.0
	20-30 yrs	67.6	32.4	100.0
	31 & Above	100.0	-	100.0
	Total	72.0	28.0	100.0
Occupation	House wife	67.9	23.1	100.0
	Vendor	100.0	-	100.0
	Daily wages	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Agriculture	66.7	33.3	100.0
	Private	100.0	-	100.0
	Government	61.1	38.9	100.0
	Others	100.0	-	100.0
	Total	72.0	28.0	100.0

Family Income	Below Rs.2500	100.0	-	100.0
	Rs.2500-5000	70.0	30.0	100.0
	Rs.5001-7500	64.7	35.3	100.0
	Rs.7501-10000	75.0	25.0	100.0
	10001 and above	66.7	33.3	100.0
	Total	72.0	28.0	100.0

To assess the overall knowledge of mothers about various foods and the age at which the food items should be consumed by children, scores were given to the responses obtained for various statements relating to the consumption of food from the mothers. For positive statements, 2 score was given to 'yes' answer, score 1 was given to 'Don't know' answer and 0 score was given to 'No' answer. For the negative statement, score 2 for the answer 'No', 1 for 'Don't know' answer and 0 for 'yes' answer. Accordingly, the total score for maximum knowledge is 20. The score for the minimum knowledge is '0'. Finally the total score of all mothers were summarized, and classified as < 7 for low knowledge, 7 to 13 for medium knowledge and 14 and above for high knowledge about food consumption.

The analysis of the level of knowledge about food consumption shows that there is significant association between religion and this level of food consumption. It is also inferred that all the mothers who engaged as vendors, private sector existence of significant association between the occupation of the mothers and the knowledge level about food consumption. Hence the association between income level of mothers and their knowledge level has been proved as significant.

Conclusion and Policy Suggestions

The association between the knowledge level of mothers about breast feeding and Religion, Caste, Domicile, Current Age and Age at marriage of the mothers are not significant. Education of mothers has no association with the level of Knowledge on supplementary food. With the help of the above inferences, the association between various socio economic and demographic Characteristics and the knowledge level of mothers about food consumption were tested statistically. It can be inferred that the Religion, Domicile, Education and the present Age of the mothers were significantly associated with the knowledge level at 0.01% level.

Mothers from nuclear families, majority of them are employed, should be allowed to practice breastfeeding even when working. Government should make provisions to all working mothers. Educating the fathers and mothers of child relating to the right times of starting supplementary food, time of introducing food to the children will improve knowledge and perception level of mothers about child nutrition. Special efforts are to be taken in order to educate the illiterate mothers on nutrition education as their knowledge level is low.

Curiosity for education should be induced in the minds of people in the low income group by selecting attractive educational topics and concerns should be made in select topics such as tasty and nutritious snacks for children with less money.

To educate about breastfeeding practices, this should be done at the middle school level where through health science education, young girls can learn about the importance of colostrums, and the recommended time duration for breastfeeding for the better growth of the child this should be incorporated in the primary school curriculum.

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