



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Nursing

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY ON ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES REGARDING ANEMIA AND ITS PREVENTION AMONG WOMEN IN RURAL WESTERN MAHARASHTRA

KEY WORDS:

Maj. Nagalakshmi Yeruva

Maj S Arya Asokan

Lt Col (s) Meenakshi Manocha

Maj Monika Sharma

Background: Anemia remains a pressing public health issue, especially among women in rural India. Despite national efforts like Anaemia Mukht Bharat, prevalence remains high. This study assesses the knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) related to anemia and its prevention among rural women in Virar, Maharashtra. **Methods:** A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 200 women aged 18 and above in Pushpanagar Dongri, Virar. Data were collected using a structured interview schedule divided into demographic details and KAP-related items. Conventional sampling was employed. **Results:** 47.5% of participants had heard of anemia, yet 46.5% were unaware. About 33% had good knowledge, 35% had moderate, and 32% demonstrated poor knowledge. Attitude assessment revealed varied understanding; 33% agreed anemia is a serious health concern. In terms of practices, only 29.5% had consumed iron-folic acid (IFA) tablets in the past year. Although 70% practiced hand hygiene before meals, a significant number still walked barefoot, potentially exposing themselves to worm infestations.

SECTION B – ASSESSMENT OF KNOWLEDGE TOWARDS ANEMIA

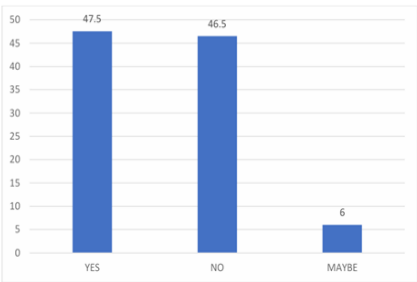


Fig. 4.1 Depicts that maximum number of participants i.e. 47.5 % knew about anaemia whereas 46.5% participants were unaware about anaemia.

Conclusion: The findings underscore the urgent need for community-based health education interventions targeting anemia awareness and prevention, particularly among socioeconomically disadvantaged rural women.

ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION

Anemia is a condition characterized by a reduced capacity of the blood to carry oxygen, primarily due to decreased hemoglobin levels or red blood cell counts. It remains a significant public health concern in India, particularly among women of reproductive age. According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5, 2019–21), 57% of Indian women aged 15–49 are anemic. This burden is higher in rural communities, often due to inadequate nutrition, low literacy, limited healthcare access, and poor awareness.

In Western Maharashtra, despite government programs and nutritional supplementation drives, the burden persists, reflecting a gap between policy and community-level implementation. This study investigates the knowledge, attitudes, and practices concerning anemia and its prevention among women in a rural region of Maharashtra to identify gaps and inform future interventions.

Objectives

1. To assess knowledge regarding anemia and its

prevention.

2. To evaluate the attitude of rural women toward anemia.
 3. To examine the anemia prevention practices adopted by these women.

Methodology

Study Design And Setting

This was a community-based, descriptive cross-sectional study conducted in Pushpanagar Dongri, Virar, a rural locality in Western Maharashtra. The setting was selected for its representation of typical rural demographics and accessibility for researchers.

Sample Size And Sampling

A total of 200 women aged 18 years and above participated. Conventional sampling (non-probability) was used. Inclusion criteria included women residing in Pushpanagar Dongri, willing to provide consent. Those under 18 or unable to understand Hindi or English were excluded.

Data Collection Tool

Fig 4.12 Requirement of iron supplementation for good health

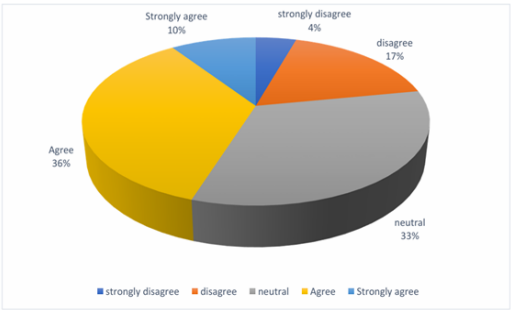


Fig 4.12 Depicts that majority of the participants i.e.36% agree that iron supplementation is required for good health while 17% disagree to it and 33% has no idea about it.

A structured interview schedule was employed, consisting of two sections:

- **Section A:** Demographic details (age, marital status, education, socioeconomic status, occupation, dietary habits, menstruation details).
- **Section B:** 30 items divided into three domains:
- **Knowledge (10 items):** Assessed awareness of anemia, symptoms, causes, risk groups, prevention.
- **Attitude (10 items):** 5-point Likert scale measuring perspectives on seriousness, susceptibility, treatment beliefs.
- **Practice (10 items):** Examined actual behaviors like IFA tablet intake, diet, hand hygiene, and health-seeking behavior.

RESULTS

Demographic Profile

- **Age:** Majority (40.5%) were aged 18–39 years.
- **Education:** 25% had only primary education; 23% were illiterate.
- **Socioeconomic Status:** 42.5% belonged to the lower-middle class.
- **Diet:** 37.5% followed a mixed diet; 31% were vegetarian.

Knowledge Findings

- Only 47.5% had heard of anemia.
- 42.5% did not know its causes; 36.5% cited poor diet; 13.5% mentioned worm infestation.
- 49% believed pregnant women were most vulnerable.
- Just 56% agreed anemia was preventable.

Knowledge Scores:

- **Good Knowledge:** 33%
- **Moderate Knowledge:** 35%
- **Poor Knowledge:** 32%

Attitude Assessment

- 33% agreed anemia is a serious concern.
- 36% believed iron supplementation is necessary.
- 34% believed dietary changes alone could cure anemia.
- 45% would seek medical help if symptomatic.

The rest were either unsure or disagreed, indicating significant attitudinal ambiguity.

Practice Patterns

- Only 42.5% had checked hemoglobin in the past year.
- 70.5% had not taken IFA supplements.
- 69% had dewormed in the past 6 months.
- 70% practiced handwashing before meals.
- 57% walked barefoot outside, increasing worm exposure risk.
- 50.5% consumed pulses daily; 68 reported frequently skipping meals.

DISCUSSION

This study reinforces that anemia is not only a clinical issue but a deeply social one, influenced by knowledge, behavior, socioeconomic factors, and cultural practices.

Comparison With Existing Studies

Findings correlate with studies from West Bengal, Odisha, and Gujarat reporting similar anemia prevalence (60–70%) and knowledge gaps. In a 2019 study in Delhi, anemia prevalence among adolescent girls was 57.7%, rising to 63.8% by 2021. These statistics echo our findings in terms of low awareness, poor dietary habits, and limited supplement use.

Another comparative study in Indonesia showed iron deficiency anemia prevalence of 21.1% in girls and 9.4% in adult women, with low hemoglobin levels averaging 11.20 g/dL. In our study, participants demonstrated similar poor knowledge and limited preventive actions despite higher risk exposure.

Barriers Identified

- Low educational status limits access to health information.
- Cultural practices such as barefoot walking and skipping meals increase risk.
- Misinformation and lack of health communication around supplementation.
- Limited motivation for preventive care in absence of symptoms.

Recommendations

1. **Community Health Education:** Deploy Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) to conduct regular awareness sessions on anemia symptoms, prevention, and treatment.
2. **Nutrition Interventions:** Promote consumption of iron-rich foods (green leafy vegetables, pulses, jaggery, fortified cereals).
3. **Supplement Distribution:** Ensure consistent IFA and deworming tablet provision through Anganwadi centers.
4. **Behavior Change Communication (BCC):** Use visual aids and folk media to reshape attitudes and beliefs.
5. **Policy Integration:** Strengthen implementation of Anaemia Mukht Bharat by involving local self-governments and SHGs.
6. **Men's Involvement:** Future research should include male participants, as gender-sensitive strategies may improve household dietary choices and care-seeking.

Limitations

- The sample size was limited to 200, potentially affecting generalizability.
- The study focused solely on women, excluding men and adolescents.
- Duration was short (one week), possibly limiting seasonal variations in diet or health behavior.

CONCLUSION

The study reveals moderate knowledge and poor attitudes and practices regarding anemia among rural women in Western Maharashtra. Despite national efforts, community-level barriers persist. Education, targeted health communication, and improved access to supplementation and deworming remain crucial. This study highlights the critical need for holistic, culturally-sensitive interventions to reduce anemia prevalence and improve women's health outcomes in rural India.

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