

CHAPTER: 09

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MATERNAL KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEFS REGARDING NUTRITION AND CHILDHOOD NUTRITIONAL STATUS

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INTRODUCTION

Nutrition plays a crucial role in promoting health and development, contributing to improved well-being in infants, children, and mothers. It enhances immune systems, ensures safer pregnancies and childbirth, and reduces the risk of non-communicable diseases. Adequate nutrition is essential at every stage of life, with growing children requiring a balanced intake of nutrients for healthy and robust development. The critical period for providing optimal nutrition to children is within the first two years, starting from pregnancy. During this time, breastfeeding by mothers is recognized as the most beneficial way to supply essential nutrients, offering protection against diseases and fostering brain development [1].

Malnourished children are those who consume an imbalanced diet or experience nutrient deficiencies, while well-nourished children have a diet that is balanced and lacks nutritional deficiencies. It is recommended to exclusively breastfeed a child for a minimum of six months, followed by the introduction of complementary foods in appropriate quantities. Insufficient nutrition during early childhood can result in deficiencies in vital vitamins and nutrients, such as vitamin A deficiency, compromising children's immunity, increasing the risk of blindness, and making them susceptible to common childhood diseases like diarrhea [2].

RESEARCH QUESTION

What significance does maternal knowledge and belief hold in influencing childhood nutrition?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To evaluate maternal understanding and convictions concerning child feeding practices.
2. To examine the correlation between maternal knowledge and beliefs regarding child feeding practices and the nutritional status of the child.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was designed as an Observational Case Control Study, focusing on exploring factors linked to diseases and outcomes, with a specific emphasis on identifying the correlation between maternal knowledge, beliefs related to nutrition, and childhood nutritional status. The study was conducted within the Anganwadi of District-Dewas, Madhya Pradesh, with data collection facilitated by Anganwadi Workers or ANM from the mothers of the children involved. The study population comprised both malnourished and well-nourished children aged 10 to 36 months, along with their mothers enrolled at the selected AWC.

To gather information on maternal attitudes, beliefs regarding child nutritional status, and demographic and socio-economic characteristics, data were collected from children's mothers through a combination of close and open-ended questionnaires. The study spanned 90 days (3 months), and the sample size included 55 malnourished and 55 well-nourished children, aged between 10 and 36 months, along with their mothers enrolled at AWC. The sampling technique employed for participant selection was Purposive Sampling.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The background characteristics of the respondents, including age, religion, caste, education of respondents, and age of the child. The data indicate that among well-nourished children, a majority of mothers are in the age group 20-24, follow the Hindu religion, belong to Scheduled Caste, have completed graduation or above, and have children aged 1 to 2 years. Similar characteristics are observed among mothers of malnourished children, although there are variations in percentages. the maternal knowledge of respondents regarding Malnutrition. The majority of mothers with well-nourished children (83.6%) possess knowledge about Malnutrition, while 16.4% lack this knowledge. Conversely, among the mothers of malnourished children, 54.5% have knowledge about Malnutrition, and 45.5% lack knowledge on the subject. child feeding practices by mothers. Among mothers of well-nourished children, the majority (63.6%) do not breastfeed their

child, followed by 18.2% who breastfeed regularly and another 18.2% who breastfeed occasionally. In contrast, among mothers of malnourished children, 54.5% do not breastfeed, while 27.3% breastfeed regularly, and 18.2% breastfeed occasionally. This suggests that mothers of malnourished children breastfeed more than mothers of well-nourished children.

CONCLUSION

The study reveals a positive connection between maternal knowledge and beliefs and the child's nutritional well-being. Informed mothers tend to integrate essential nutritional elements into their child's diet. Prior to the survey, women participated in sessions addressing anemia and nutrition, where they were introduced to a comprehensive nutrition pyramid. Equipped with this knowledge, mothers ensured a balanced diet for their children, effectively preventing instances of malnutrition. In the surveyed area, 83.63% of mothers, falling in the 24-29 age group, demonstrated satisfactory educational levels.

REFERENCES

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