

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY TO ASSESS THE KNOWLEDGE OF ANTENATAL MOTHERS REGARDING ANTENATAL EXERCISE IN A SELECTED HOSPITAL OF KHANNA, DISTRICT LUDHIANA, PUNJAB

Gurkirat Singh¹, Tushar Handa²

^{1,2}Nursing Tutor, Faculty of Nursing, Desh Bhagat University, Mandi Gobindgarh, Punjab

Corresponding Author: Gurkirat Singh, Nursing Tutor

Faculty of Nursing, Desh Bhagat University, Mandi Gobindgarh, Punjab

Email: tutor3.nursing@deshbhagatuniversity.in

ABSTRACT

Pregnancy is a crucial physiological phase involving significant anatomical, hormonal, and psychological changes. Antenatal care plays a key role in ensuring maternal and fetal well-being, and antenatal exercises are important for improving fitness, reducing discomfort, and promoting safe labor. However, awareness regarding these exercises remains limited.

This study aimed to assess the knowledge of antenatal mothers regarding antenatal exercises and its association with selected socio-demographic variables. A descriptive research design was used, and 55 antenatal mothers attending the OPD of Civil Hospital Khanna, Ludhiana, were selected through convenient sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

The results showed that 53% of mothers had inadequate knowledge and 47% had moderate knowledge, with no participants demonstrating adequate knowledge. The mean score was 4.60 (SD = 1.31; mean percentage = 38.33%). A significant association was found between knowledge and source of information ($p \leq 0.005$), while no association was observed with other variables.

The study concludes that antenatal mothers have insufficient knowledge regarding antenatal exercises, highlighting the need for effective education and awareness programs.

Keywords: Maternal health, public health, antenatal period, education.

INTRODUCTION

Motherhood is a transformative experience marked by profound physical, emotional, and psychological changes. As Joyce Armor beautifully stated, "A mother's joy begins when new life is stirring inside..." This phase represents not only a biological process but also a significant milestone in a woman's life.

Health is a fundamental human right and a key determinant of quality of life. It is multidimensional in nature and encompasses physical, mental, and social well-being. Maternal health, in particular, is a crucial component of public health and reflects the overall development of a society. Indicators such as maternal mortality rate, infant mortality rate, and life expectancy are commonly used to assess community health.

The antenatal period, spanning from conception to childbirth, is characterized by extensive physiological and hormonal changes. These changes affect multiple body systems, including cardiovascular, musculoskeletal, and endocrine systems. During this period, women require continuous monitoring, guidance, and support to ensure safe pregnancy outcomes.

Antenatal care aims to achieve a healthy mother and a healthy baby. It provides an opportunity for healthcare professionals

to educate women about nutrition, hygiene, immunization, and lifestyle modifications. One of the most important yet often neglected components of antenatal care is antenatal exercise.

Antenatal exercises include a variety of activities such as pelvic floor exercises, breathing exercises, stretching, walking, and light aerobic exercises. These exercises provide numerous benefits, including improved posture, reduced back pain and fatigue, prevention of gestational diabetes, enhanced circulation, better psychological well-being, and effective preparation for labor and delivery. Despite these advantages, many women remain unaware of their importance and often hesitate to engage in physical activity due to fear, cultural misconceptions, or lack of proper guidance from healthcare professionals.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

A descriptive research design was used to assess knowledge levels among antenatal mothers.

Setting

The study was conducted at Civil Hospital, Khanna, District Ludhiana, Punjab.

Sample and Sampling Technique

- Sample size: 55 antenatal mothers
- Sampling technique: Convenient sampling

Inclusion Criteria

- Antenatal mothers attending OPD
- Willing to participate

Data Collection Tool

A structured questionnaire consisting of:

- Section A: Socio-demographic variables
- Section B: Knowledge regarding antenatal exercises

Data Analysis

- Descriptive statistics: Frequency, percentage, mean, median, SD
- Inferential statistics: Chi-square test

RESULTS

The socio-demographic profile of the antenatal mothers revealed that the majority (49%) were aged 20–24 years. In terms of education, 27% were illiterate while another 27% had secondary education. A large proportion (40%) belonged to “other” occupational categories. Most participants (69%) were from nuclear families, and slightly more than half (53%) resided in urban areas. Television (58%) emerged as the primary source of information among the mothers.

Regarding knowledge levels, more than half of the antenatal mothers (53%) had inadequate knowledge about antenatal exercises, while 47% demonstrated moderate knowledge. Notably, none of the participants had adequate knowledge.

The statistical findings indicated a mean knowledge score of 4.60, a median of 4.00, and a standard deviation of 1.31, with an overall mean percentage of 38.33%.

In terms of association, a statistically significant relationship was found between knowledge levels and the source of information ($p \leq 0.005$). However, no significant association was observed between knowledge and other socio-demographic variables such as age, education, occupation, type of family, and area of residence.

DISCUSSION

The study findings indicate a significant gap in knowledge regarding antenatal exercises among pregnant women, with more than half demonstrating inadequate understanding. Although most participants were in the age group of 20–24 years, their knowledge remained insufficient, showing that age alone does not determine awareness. Educational status played a key role, as less-educated women had lower awareness and relied more on traditional beliefs. Occupational background and family type also influenced knowledge, with labor workers and homemakers having limited exposure, and women in nuclear families receiving less guidance. Television was the main source of information, emphasizing the role of mass media. Key knowledge deficits were observed in areas such as pelvic floor exercises, breathing

techniques, and safe physical activity. Major barriers included fear of miscarriage, cultural misconceptions, and lack of professional guidance.

IMPLICATIONS

Nursing Practice

- Provide demonstrations of antenatal exercises
- Offer individualized counseling to mothers

Nursing Education

- Train nursing students in maternal health education
- Emphasize practical teaching of antenatal exercises

Administration

- Organize awareness and educational programs
- Develop and distribute educational materials

Public Health

- Utilize mass media campaigns effectively
- Strengthen antenatal care programs

CONCLUSION

Antenatal mothers have inadequate knowledge regarding antenatal exercises. This low level of awareness can be attributed to several factors, including limited education, prevailing cultural misconceptions, and a lack of proper guidance from healthcare professionals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends the development and implementation of structured health education programs for antenatal mothers. It also emphasizes the need for active involvement of healthcare professionals in providing counseling and guidance. Additionally, mass media should be effectively utilized to enhance awareness and knowledge regarding antenatal exercises. Furthermore, community-based interventions should be strengthened to promote better maternal health practices.

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