

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY TO ASSESS THE LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE REGARDING MALNUTRITION AND ITS PREVENTION AMONG MOTHERS OF UNDER-FIVE CHILDREN AND TO DETERMINE THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN KNOWLEDGE SCORES AND SELECTED SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES IN SELECTED AREAS OF AMLOH TOWN, PUNJAB.

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ABSTRACT

Nutritional deficiency illnesses are a significant public health issue in India and other developing nations, affecting 55% of childhood deaths. Mothers play a crucial role in providing children under five with the necessary nourishment for growth and development. To help children establish healthy eating patterns from an early age, exposure to healthy food and eating patterns at home and beyond the family should encourage favourable attitudes towards good nutrition. This is especially important for children between the ages of zero and five. The aim of the study is to assess the level of knowledge regarding malnutrition and its prevention among mothers of under 5-year children in community area, Amloh, Punjab.

Material and Methods: A descriptive survey approach has been utilized in the study to assess the knowledge regarding malnutrition, its prevention and control among mothers of under-five children's.

Results: The results show that 17.5% of mothers had adequate knowledge, 47.5% had moderately adequate knowledge and 35.0% had inadequate knowledge regarding dietary practices in prevention of malnutrition. The calculated chi-square values were more than the table value at the 0.05 level of significance.

Conclusion: There is no significant association between the level of scores and other demographic variables. This includes Age of the mother, educational status, occupation, type of family, monthly income of family, religion, and source of health information. In the study it was concluded that most of the women have moderate knowledge that is 47.5% and only 17.5% women have adequate knowledge.

Keywords: Malnutrition, Under-five children, Maternal knowledge, Prevention

Introduction

A well-nourished child population is essential for building a healthy and productive society. Proper nutrition enhances children's physical growth, cognitive development, and learning abilities, ultimately contributing to national development. Malnutrition, whether due to deficiency or excess of nutrients, continues to be a major health challenge.

Children under five years of age are particularly vulnerable, as this is a critical period for growth and development. During early childhood, eating habits are formed, and children tend to imitate adult dietary behaviours. Therefore, mothers and caregivers play a crucial role in shaping healthy eating practices. Nutritional status reflects the balance between nutrient intake, absorption, and utilization. Maintaining this balance is essential for optimal growth, reproduction, and overall health. Promoting awareness among mothers regarding malnutrition and its prevention is therefore vital to improving child health outcomes.

OBJECTIVES

- To assess the level of knowledge regarding malnutrition and its prevention among mothers of under-five children
- To determine the association between knowledge scores and selected sociodemographic variables

Operational Definitions

- **Knowledge:** Information and awareness regarding malnutrition and its prevention
- **Malnutrition:** A pathological condition resulting from deficiency or excess of essential nutrients
- **Prevention:** Measures taken to avoid nutritional deficiencies or excess
- **Mothers of under-five children:** Women having children aged 1–5 years
- **Under-five children:** Children below five years of age

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Several studies highlight gaps in maternal knowledge regarding malnutrition:

- Tahilramani G et al. (2021) found that 30.7% of mothers

were unaware of causes of malnutrition, emphasizing the need for education programs.

- Anas Abdulrahman Aljohani (2020) reported that 62.25% of mothers had knowledge, influenced by demographic factors.
- ChetanBharmuAmbupe (2020) found that most mothers had average knowledge regarding prevention.
- Kalpana Ganesh Sawane (2019) observed that only 34% of mothers had good knowledge.
- Midhun Ashok (2019) reported low awareness of protein-energy malnutrition among mothers.
- Sonika Sangra (2019) found gaps in knowledge, attitude, and practices among mothers.
- Jessily Elsa George (2019) reported that 63% of mothers had moderate knowledge.

Materials and Methods

Research Approach

A descriptive survey approach was used to assess knowledge regarding malnutrition and its prevention.

Research Design

A non-experimental descriptive research design was adopted.

Research Setting

The study was conducted in selected areas of Amloh town, Punjab.

Target Population

Mothers of under-five children residing in village Salani.

Sample and Sampling Technique

A total of 40 mothers were selected using a non-probability purposive sampling technique.

Demographic Variables

Consist of items seeking information regarding socio demographic characteristics of mothers, such as: obtaining personal information about subjects i.e., age (in years), birth order in family, type of family, academic standard,

educational status of mother, educational status of father, occupation of mother, occupation of father, family income per month, source of information.

Self-Structured Knowledge Questionnaire

The tool consisted of two sections:

- Part A: Demographic variables
- Part B: Knowledge questionnaire (30 multiple-choice questions)

Each correct answer was awarded 1 mark. Total score ranged from 0 to 30.

Reliability of Tool

Reliability was established using:

- Test-retest method: Karl Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.9$)
- Split-half method: Spearman-Brown formula ($R = 0.9$)

The tool was found to be highly reliable.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected from 40 mothers in village Salani after obtaining informed consent. Each participant completed the questionnaire in approximately 15 minutes. The purpose of the study was explained prior to data collection.

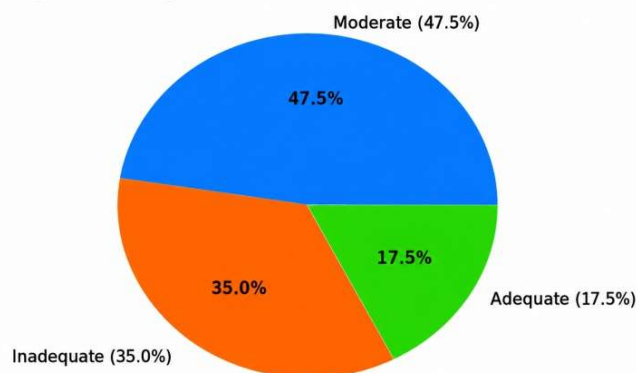
Plan of Data Analysis

The study aims to organize data in a master data sheet, analyze demographic variables using descriptive and inferential statistics, and assess the knowledge level of mothers of under-five mothers using frequency and percentage distribution. The Chi square test will be used to determine the association between perceived academic stress and selected demographic variables, with a significance level of $p < 0.05$.

FINDINGS

The knowledge regarding dietary practices in prevention of malnutrition of 40 mothers in which 19 (47.5%) of the mothers had moderate knowledge, 14 (35.0%) had inadequate knowledge and 7 (17.5%) had adequate knowledge

Knowledge on Dietary Practices for Prevention of Malnutrition (n=40)



DISCUSSION

The study analyzed the knowledge of 40 mothers, with 7 (17.5%) having adequate knowledge, 9 (47.5%) having moderately adequate knowledge, and 14 (35%) having inadequate knowledge. The data showed that the majority of mothers had a low level of knowledge about dietary practices to prevent malnutrition. The mean score for each area was 0.56%, 0.86% for causes, 1.20% for healthy dietary habits, 4.58% for nutrient deficiency diseases and nutrient rich diets, 0.26% for prevention, and 0.15% for complications. The findings are consistent with the findings of 40 mothers of under five children selected using non-probability purposive sampling technique. The study found that 35% of mothers had inadequate knowledge, 47.5% had moderately adequate knowledge, and 17.5% had adequate knowledge regarding protein energy malnutrition.

The study found a significant association between mothers' knowledge of dietary practices and malnutrition prevention, based on six demographic variables: age, education, occupation, monthly income, religion, and source of health information. However, other demographic variables like family type, number of under five children, and food consumption types showed no significant association.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the majority of mothers (55.5%) have moderate knowledge regarding malnutrition and its prevention, while only (17.5%) possess adequate knowledge. There is a clear need for targeted educational interventions to enhance maternal awareness and promote better nutritional practices among under-five children.

Conflict of interest:

There are no conflicts of interest

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