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Short Note

Impact of educational intervention on knowledge of mothers regarding childcare and nutrition

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Abstract

The study aimed at providing educational intervention to mothers regarding knowledge on childcare and nutrition. The study adopted a pretest post test research design. A total sample of 60 mothers was selected from two clusters of villages, one of which served as experimental group and other acted as control group. The tool consisted of a self structured questionnaire schedule covering aspects of child care and nutrition. All mothers were first pre tested regarding their knowledge on nursing neonatal and infant care, health, child's growth, behaviour and nutritional aspects. Intervention consisted of educating mothers in the experimental group for a period of six months. All the mothers were then post tested on the above aspects. Significant differences were seen in all the aspects of child care and nutrition between experimental and control group.

Key words: Education, childcare, nutrition, knowledge of mothers.

Children are the future of any nation. In India about three fourth of the infants population lives in villages. It is imperative to preserve this wealth and to promote their well being through exercising utmost care in order to make them healthy and to protect them from deadly diseases. It is well established that the welfare of a child and his future are totally dependent upon the care and attention bestowed upon him before and after birth. Care of children has always traditionally been the forte of mothers irrespective of education, income and social class differences. Motherhood can be defined as the biological process of giving birth to exercising control over responsibility for one's young (Aurora, 2001). The important task of motherhood is to fulfill physical, emotional, social, intellectual and moral needs of children. There is no doubt that a mother plays an important role in this regard. Attitude of mothers towards breast feeding, weaning are important factors that ultimately lead to inculcation of basic discipline and personality development. Challenging living conditions and work hours undermine the capacity of mothers to provide optimal care for children whereby compromises are sometimes made in keeping the children clean, hygienic preparation of food especially in the absence of reasonably adequate services as reported by Nair and Radhakrishanam (2004). Comparative studies by Sheeba et.al 2003 on home environments of children in deprived urban setting revealed that poor home environment which contributed to the difference in their developmental status.

Poor knowledge on the part of mothers can lead to disastrous results in the field of care giving, a mother has to regulate the child's behaviour, attitude, outlook and home environment in the family since there are basic factors that influence the growth of children. If the mothers are not acquainted with knowledge pertaining to feeding growth and behavior of children, it might affect the rearing of their children. Providing timely education in the form of intervention to the mothers could fill these gaps in knowledge. With this objective the present study aimed at providing educational intervention to mothers regarding knowledge of child care and nutrition.

This study adopted pre and post-test research design with a specific period of intervention. A total sample of 60 mothers and their female infants in the age group of 6 months to 12 months were selected from two clusters of villages of Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh. One village served as an experimental village where in 30 mothers were taken and 30 mothers were selected in the control group from second village. Pre testing was done on all the mothers regarding their knowledge in different aspects of childcare (nursing, neonatal and infant care, health, child growth and behaviour) and nutrition. The intervention consisted of educating mothers of infants in experimental group only.

Intervention programme aimed at providing scientific education regarding neonatal and infant care, nursing mother, health and nutrition of infants, pregnant and lactating women, growth and development of children and behaviour of children. Knowledge was imparted for a period of 6 months through various techniques of lectures, demonstrations and discussions. The mothers in the control group were devoid of any king of such experience. Mothers in both groups were then post tested to see the effect of intervention on their knowledge. Children's cognitive, motor and behavioral development can be affected by their nutritional and health status. Poor socio cultural environments including poor physical resources such as over crowded homes with poor sanitation at home are detrimental to intellectual development (Mcgregor, Salt and Ramsey, 1988).

The knowledge of mothers regarding aspects of childcare and nutrition is given in Table 1 and Table 2. It can be seen that at the initial phase i.e. during pre testing, mothers had similar levels of knowledge on all the aspects. After providing intervention, it was observed that the mean scores of mothers in both groups had shown an increase but as compared to the control group, the experimental group mothers has better knowledge on different aspects of childcare knowledge and nutrition, highly significant differences were obtained in case of knowledge regarding neonatal and infant care, nutrition, health aspects, child's growth and child's behaviour. Compared to the control group, increased scores were seen between two groups in these aspects also. In a study done by Van den Boon (1994) on the influence of temperament and mothering, it was found that after giving intervention, mothers were significantly more responsive, stimulating and controlling of their infants behaviour than control group mothers. Care given, crowded and chaotic conditions have been found to be less responsive and more restrictive, controlling and punitive to the children. Increase in number and percentages of mothers in experimental group were found in various child rearing aspects. Significant differences were found in the beliefs like feeding water/sweetened water / honey to newborns, bad practice of putting oil in ears and eyes and importance of colostrum, management of diarrhea requires a combination of ORS and medicines as prescribed by doctors.

In a country like India where the rural population accounts for nearly 60 percent, the literacy rate of this group in case of women is very low. We all know that education can bring about many changes in people, more appropriately in case of women as when we educate one woman we educate the whole family. In the present study, right kind of education was given to the women regarding aspects of childcare and through the intervention period of one and half years, their wrong beliefs were negated. The results in this regard are in agreement with a study done by Sharma (1999) that found mother's attitudes towards Colostrum feeding to the newborns were positive in most case that must be given after one hour of birth to the newborns. An earlier report by Kaul and Abrol (1997) found that educated mothers are supposed to have better knowledge of hygiene and health needs and practices

Among people there is a strong belief that giving sweetened water or honey as a first food for the neonate would reflect on a pleasing personality of the infant. This was seen in present study where majority of the women thought to give this kind of thing to the newborn. After giving the proper education to mothers majority of them believed that this was a good practice. Sharma (2003) found that about one third of the mothers preferred honey as first food to babies given after birth.

Table 1. Aspects of childcare and nutrition among mothers of experimental and control group

Aspects	Pre test			Post test		
	Experimental	Control	t-value	Experimental	Control	t-value
Nursing	13	13.13	0.67	13.28	13.36	0.18
Neonatal and infant care	18.22	18.66	1.38	23.75	21.25	9.08
Nutrition	10.67	9.95	2.93*	17.05	15.21	9.06
Health	18.53	18.11	1.54	26	22.2	15.4
Child's growth	10.02	10.95	1.32	11.16	10.75	2.2
Child's behaviour	20.7	20.48	0.88	26.67	24.63	7.3**
Total	91.32	91.3	0.22	118.42	107.41	18.11**

* Significant at 5% level of significance. ** Significant of 1% level of significance.

Table 2. Belief of mothers regarding childcare practices and nutrition

Aspects	Pre test			Post test		
	Experimental	Control	t-value	Experimental	Control	t-value
Colostrum is essential for infants	46 (63)	45 (57.6)	0.01	68(93.1)	39 (50)	7.21*
There is not need to feed / water/ sweetened water/ honey to newborns	34 (46.5)	38 (48.7)	1.58	64 (87.6)	36 (46.1)	6.31*
Putting oil in ears and eyes in bad practices	42 (57.5)	40 (51.2)	0.18	58 (79.4)	36 (46.1)	4.40
It is not necessary to give semisolid or soft foods to the child	55 (75.3)	52 (66.7)	0.69	69 (94.1)	52 (66.7)	4.64*
By the age of one year baby should be able to eat adult food	63 (86.3)	61 (78.2)	0.95	68 (93.1)	57 (73)	3.26*
It is necessary to boil and cool drinking water for young children.	57 (78)	58 (79.4)	0.25	70 (95.8)	55 (70.5)	4.46*
Diarrhea should be managed will with ORS fluids and there is no need to give medicines	61 (83.5)	71 (97.2)	0.45	73 (93.5)	64 (82)	4.23*
Brushing teeth regularly should be a regular practice for toddlers	69 (94.5)	74 (94.8)	0.29	71 (97.2)	72 (92.3)	1.22
There is no need to toilet training child before 1 & 1.5 years	40 (54.7)	32 (41.0)	1.06	52 (71.2)	34 (43.5)	3.32**
Diarrhea and vomiting are associated with teething	37 (50.6)	30 (38.4)	0.79	62 (84.9)	29 (37.1)	7.54**
Deworming should be done for child in once in 6 months	60 (78.5)	55 (70.5)	1.31	69 (89)	52 (66.7)	4.64*
Children should not be ridiculed and compared between siblings.	56 (67.7)	55 (70.5)	0.56	65 (89)	54 (69.2)	2.84*

Figures in parenthesis denotes standard deviation

* Significant at 5% level of significance.

** Significant of 1% level of significance.

The infants most frequent caretaker in his earliest months is his own mother, and it is his mother who, whether directly through her behavior towards him or indirectly through others aspects of environment she provides for him, plays a large part in determining the nature and extent of his experience during his first year. If mothers are given proper knowledge and scientific education of child care practices such as nursing, neonatal and infant care, nutrition, health, child's growth and behavior, it is imperative they would exercise their knowledge on children thereby reducing the incidences of faulty fads and beliefs and rearing their children in an environment that promotes growth and positive development.

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