

KNOWLEDGE OF PREGNANT WOMEN REGARDING NUTRITION AND DIETARY INTAKE IN AN URBAN SLUM AREA OF LAHORE, PAKISTAN

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Abstract

Aim: The overarching aim of this study was to assess pregnant women knowledge regarding healthy diet and nutritional intake in an urban slum area of Lahore, Pakistan.

Method: A survey design was used to assess women's knowledge regarding nutrition during pregnancy. Non-probability convenience sampling technique was used to recruit a total of 100 participants. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect the required data. Data was analyzed using SPSS version 18.

Results: Majority of the women had no knowledge about a well-balanced diet and nutrition during the span of pregnancy. The results showed that majority of the participants (34 %) were illiterate that could be one the reasons of unawareness among pregnant women. Most of the participants (68 %) expressed their need to be provided health education regarding nutrition during pregnancy.

Conclusion: The findings of this study suggest that women from urban slums and rural areas should be provided knowledge regarding dietary intake during pregnancy. For healthcare providers, it is necessary to assess and provide knowledge regarding dietary intake during pregnancy.

Key Words: Knowledge, Nutrition, Pregnancy, Balanced Diet, Awareness, Women

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birth defects, and decreased physical and mental potential of the child⁶.

Literature suggests that pregnant women are interested in receiving health education regarding nutritional intake during pregnancy⁷. However, most of the health workers specifically the nurses and midwives are not well clued-up about nutrition during pregnancy. They are not well educated and well versed to teach the appropriate techniques and approaches to help out pregnant women with their proper diet and required weight management⁸.

In addition lack of attention and poor dietary intake may deteriorate the health status of women, therefore; a mothers need to be protected in every spheres of their nutrition. There is a dearth of local studies on the awareness of pregnant women regarding adequate nutritional intake. Few studies conducted so far, have focused on folic acid deficiency and nutritional supplement²⁻⁸. Therefore, it is important to explore the knowledge of pregnant women regarding nutrition during pregnancy.

METHODOLOGY

A simple descriptive survey was used to carry out the current study. A sample of 100 women was included from

INTRODUCTION

Nutrition is one of the key aspects of human life that plays a role in vigorous conception and fetus growth. Nutrition is the intake of adequate, balanced and enriched food containing protein, vitamins, fats, minerals and other micronutrients essential for the growth of the individual as well as for the prevention of diseases. Poor nutrition can lead to reduced immunity, increased susceptibility to diseases, impaired physical and mental development, and reduced productivity¹. A range of nutritional disorders extend at different levels of human life cycles such as growth retardation in fetus, protein energy deficiency in children, non-communicable diseases in adults². The

nutritional ingestion and its assessment have changed rapidly over past few years. However the initial focus of nutrition is on the pregnant women towards its impartiality in terms of having sound health, and on the other hand consequences of malnutrition can induce towards nutritional disorders³. Mother diet is an imperative determinant of outcomes of pregnancy. Malnutrition during pregnancy and its consequences to the maximum of its level affect the health and long term outcomes of the population⁴. Maternal nutritious status can have an effect on the child health as organically it directly connects mother and child during pregnancy and lactation⁵. Insufficiency of certain essential nutrients is connected with maternal complications and death, fetal and newborn death,

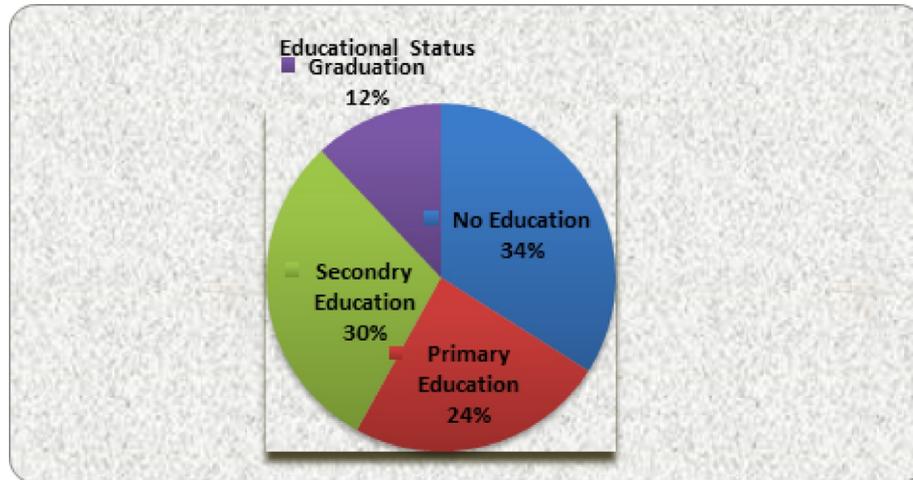
the village of Karol community Lahore. A self-administered questionnaire was used to assess the knowledge level of women regarding nutrition during pregnancy. The questionnaire was developed in Urdu language for the convenience of participants. All the ethical considerations of study were taken care during data

collection. Informed voluntary written consent was obtained from participants. Participants were recruited through convenient sampling technique. Data were analyzed through SPSS and Microsoft Excel software.

RESULTS

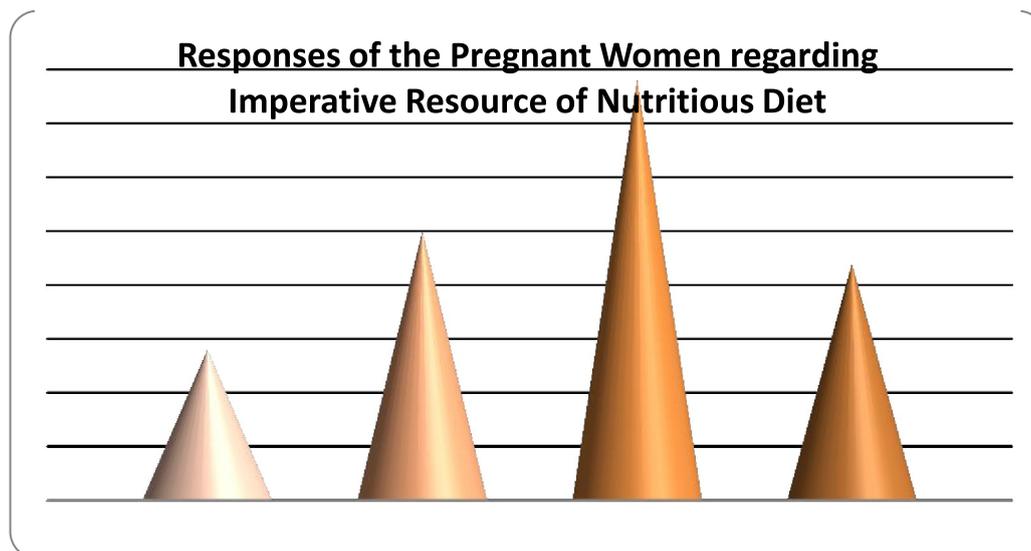
The main demographic characteristic of the sample was the young age of participants. The mean age of respondents was 26.98 ± 4.8 . Since most of the women were young, therefore they must be the prime focus for a nutritious awareness programme.

Figure 1:



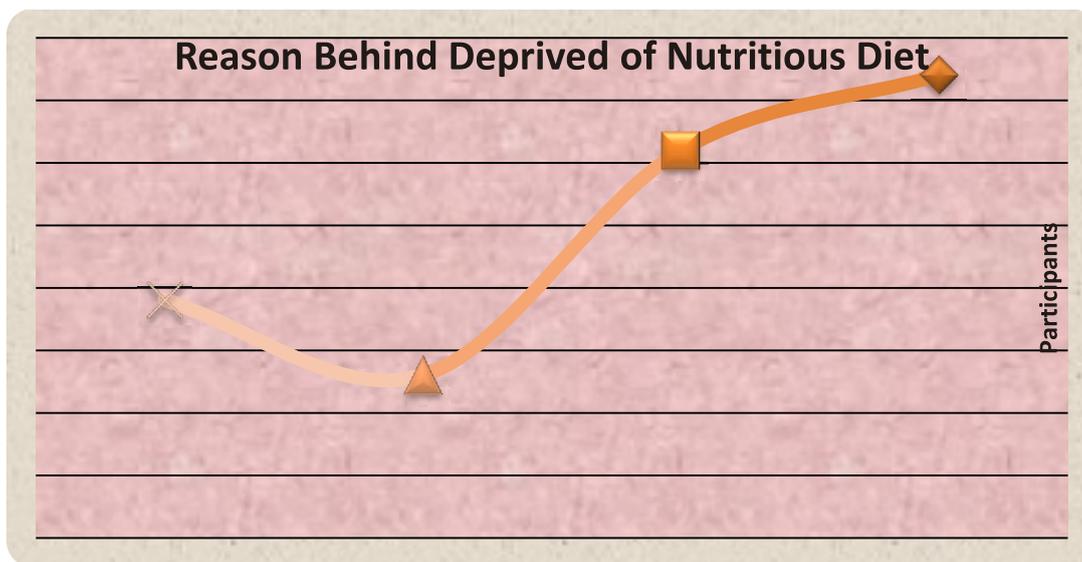
The educational status of participants showed that majority of the women (34%) had no formal education, (24 %) had primary education, (30 %) had secondary education while only 12 % were graduates (Figure 1).

Figure 2:



Regarding the source of balanced diet that is essential and significant during pregnancy, it was noted that (39 %) of the pregnant women responded that potato, peas, leafy green vegetables are important for a healthy pregnancy, (22 %) responded for fish, meat and milk, (25 %) of the participants replied that banana, apricot, berries and mangoes (fruits) are very indispensable part of nutrition during pregnancy. Only (14 %) of the participant were in favor to have all the above mentioned nutrients for a healthy pregnancy.

Figure 3:



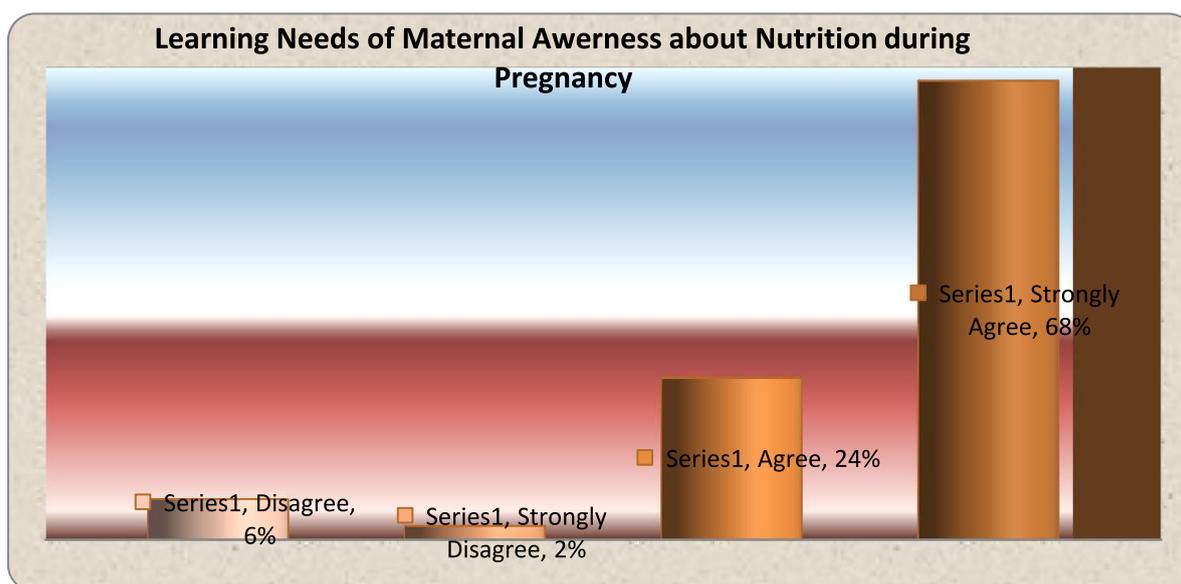
In response to question regarding different reasons for not getting nutritious diet, participants noted that low income level (38%) and lack of education 31 %, lack of awareness 13 %, and all factors 18 %.

Table 2: Poor Nutrition Contribution to Health Tribulations:

Yes	No	Don't Know
73 %	15 %	12 %

Majority of the participants (73%) depicted their answers that, yes poor nutrition leads to health problems to both the mothers and fetus, while the remaining of the respondents were unaware in this regard.

Figure 4:



As far as the need for health education regarding healthy nutrition during pregnancy is concerned, majority of the participants (92%) were in favor of health education (4). Women, therefore, need educational sessions and programs to plan healthy diet before conception, during pregnancy and in post natal period.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight the need for health education of pregnant women. As the majority of the participants were found illiterate or they were having the primary level of education, it could be one of the reasons of their unawareness about the required diet in pregnancy. The general female literacy rate in the country is low, therefore; special attention should be given to female education. This general literacy of female may help reduce maternal and infant mortality and morbidity. In addition, the current study also reported that the knowledge of most of the women with regard to the importance and awareness of nutritious diet during pregnancy was not up to the mark. Literature shows that pregnant women are supposed to take care of their nutrition during pregnancy to cope up with the growing demands of the fetus and mothers therefore they need to include vegetables, fruits and meat in their diet⁹. The reduction in poverty and education of female can play a vital role to build healthy societies. Nutritious diet during pregnancy can have an imperative reduction in the risk of preterm birth and it improves the fetal growth. It also prevents the risk of still birth and infants born small for gestational age¹⁰.

CONCLUSION

There is a dire need for motivational efforts to educate women for early antenatal visits and balanced diet during pregnancy. For those young women who have no formal education, special awareness programmes may be designed regarding pregnancy, child bearing and child rearing. All women should be assessed for their education needs for healthy pregnancies during their routine antenatal visits. Health care professionals, including nurses, should educate women regarding healthy diet during pregnancy.

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