



TRADITIONAL FOOD PRACTICES DURING PRENATAL AND POSTNATAL PERIOD AMONG TRIBAL WOMEN FROM JAJPUR DISTRICT

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Abstract

Food taboos have a big influence on pregnancy women as they have been followed by many generations and they also form part of their culture. Additional reasons for women to avoid certain foods include their fear for possible miscarriage and difficulties during delivery. Some women observe these food taboos because of their own previous experience or that of other women. Other women observe these food taboos because it is a symbol of respect for elders. This avoidance of food usually does not conform to the modern medical view about the appropriate types and quantity of foods needed by pregnant women to safeguard ideal maternal fetal nutrition. Community based cross-sectional study carried in tribal areas of Jajpur district. A household survey was conducted in sukinda block to identify pregnant women and recently delivered in last three months. A total of 80 mothers were selected for study. Mothers were interviewed using structured questionnaire after obtaining informed consent. Data analysis was carried out using both qualitative and quantitative data. Quantitative data was tabulated and statistically analyzed using SPSS. Qualitative data was interpreted based on the information collected from the field. Those cultural beliefs and food restrictions of tribal society have much negative impact on the prenatal period of women belonging to that particular tribal community. It is obvious that some mothers avoid the consumption of fruits and vegetables that are rich in nutrients, protein and vitamins as well due to lack of proper information regarding the nutritional benefit. The findings clearly represent that traditional food practices are a major reason for their food avoidance in the crucial period of a mother.

Keywords: Traditional Food Taboos, Prenatal, Postnatal.

**INTRODUCTION
PREGNANCY AND TABOO**

Soon after the discovery of pregnancy the expectant mother draws the kind attention of her people. In general, she gets usual treatment from her family in all respects with a slight variation and that is in the amount of care and social taboo. Her life is put to some type of routine most of the tribes do not observe any rites of pregnancy though there are some exceptions. The general notion of the tribal people is that all the customary and religious ceremonies be performed after the child is born. Prenatal care finds some what a small place in the tribal people. Most of the tribes do not care much about the expectant mothers. She continues to do her odd jobs and cannot enjoy any relaxation from the normal burden of domestic duties. Some well-to-do households of different tribes or tribal joint families spare their pregnant women at the sixth or seventh month from the hard daily routine of work and allot them some light work fieldwork or work involving certain things is avoided. In India and middle India like the Santal, Munda, Ho Gond etc, having either joint or extended families. The Munda and Ho women work hard right up to the seventh or eighth month. In the ninth month, the expectant mother does little light work if she feels bored.

The diet of an expectant mother is not special. She is given the usual meal and no special dish is prescribed in general throughout tribal India with a few exceptions. A few tribes believe that certain foods are staple, good and certain others are harmful.

Taboos, restrictions and preferences are marked in practically all the Indian tribes in one form or the other, most common being the prohibition against seeing or attending a funeral and touching the corpse as a precaution to protect the child in the womb from evil spirits. The expectant mother is forbidden to visit a few jungles and hill areas of the neighborhood, or the burial ground and is advised not to pass under a few old and big trees. During night she is supposed not to go to a distant place for fear of being caught by haunting spirits. Remaining in the village itself during the pregnancy is preferred.

In middle India, a Munda expectant mother is not allowed to touch seeds. If this is violated they would not sprout and if they did and grow half of the plant would either go dry or the field itself would turn barren. Next, her movement in the night is confined to the house for fear of a Churin who tries to make friendship with the women to destroy her womb.

96% of the traditional and 98% of the transitional women are restricted against eating papaya during pregnancy. The reason is that it is believed to cause abortions. The practice is also found in other communities of South Indian (Rajyalaksmi, 1969). Black fruits like berries, neredu fruits (myrtuscyminusmrox) grapes, nuts etc. are avoided by 46% of traditional and 38% of transitional women for the taboos are that 'Nallachevva' (Nalla-Black, Chevva Disease) will occur and child will be born black in colour if mother eat black coloured fruits during pregnancy eggs were tabooed by 30 percent of traditional and 28 percent of transitional



women, as eggs are believed to cause flatulence and heat. Roots and tubers specially potato is not eaten by pregnant women of traditional (28%) and transitional (22%) groups. The reason behind it is that potato is believed to result in flatus particularly in children and nursing mothers the similar belief is prevalent with regard to pumpkin and so 10 percent of traditional and 6 percent of transitional women avoided them. Some of the other food like juggery, ground nuts Bengal gram dal is also restricted because they are believed to heat up the body systems and produce flats in children.

The causes for avoiding majority of the foods are observed to be wrong concepts and beliefs, among the tribal mothers (Vimala and Ratnaprabhu published). From the nutritional status of mother which may in turn affect the child's health.

If the above said movement taboos during pregnancy are not followed properly, they believe that will be complicated delivery and that they will have harmful effects a dead body are particularly tabooed as it believed some evil spirits, which however these places will do harm to the mother as well as to the baby in the womb.

Some types of foods are restricted for a particular span of time and the reason for such time factor has its own reasons some foods are avoided for a certain period of time and for specific reason as well. These kinds of avoidances are in context to the specific phase of the human life cycle which comprise of pregnancy, birth, lactation, and period of illness or sickness.

The temporary food avoidances are more concerned of vulnerable groups including the pre and post pregnancy. Some of these restrictions may appear to be odd from an experimental perspective, however, there is regularly an unnoticed logic behind it. Women must be aware of their nutritional intake during pregnancy period and must understand what should be done to ensure the successful delivery of a healthy child. The temporary food avoidance also includes the principles of fasting during the prenatal period.

TRADITIONAL FOOD CULTURE AND TABOOS

Good nutrition is important, but it assumes greater importance women during their pre and post pregnancy period. During pregnancy nutritional, needs are higher and meeting those needs will have a positive effect on the health of both the mother and her unborn baby. A pregnancy without negative effects of poor nutrition on the health is the best possible nutritional state. Nutrition deserves special attention during pregnancy and breastfeeding because of the high nutrient needs and the critical role of appropriate nutrition for the fetus and infant poor maternal diet could be a barrier to women's health so it must be maintained properly.

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The cause for avoiding, majority of the foods are observed to be wrong concepts and beliefs, among the tribal mothers (vimala and Ratnaprabhu published).From the nutritional point of view avoidance of foods during pregnancy can cause more damage to the nutritional status of mother which may in turn affect the child's health. **Hitnal (2015)** through a cross sectional study revealed that 299 young women believed in that hot and cold during pregnancy. 39% of them avoided cooling foods. Eating Non-veg was considered harmful during pregnancy. Other reasons for abstaining from animals' food were 1. A version to sight/or smell of such food. 2. Poor digestibility. 3. Fear of harming the fetus. Again, a study conducted Maduforo (2010) on traditional belief and taboos on the feeding practices and nutritional status of pregnant women in Nwangele Local Government Ares. The result of the survey showed that 54% of pregnant women adhere to traditional belief and food taboos; 38% of women were malnourished and 62% were whether the range of expected body weight. Similar finding on the dietary practices were examined by Karim at el (2005), the Chinese women in Kualalampur. According to the study, hot and cold foods were avoided. Rice, Chicken and Pork were consumed in large amounts, most vegetables and fruits were considered "cold and were prohibited during confinement.**Kristin (2013)** while examining upon the dietary rules and practices the Okhaldhunga District of Nepal found that majority of nutritious foods and fluids were eaten preferentially and other were abstained from, during pregnancy some of the subjects believed that chili and sour food should be avoided. The findings are not consistent with the hot and cold model of explanation as eggs, meat and honey, which should be eaten in pregnancy are considered hot, even though alcohol is considered a hot substance and main reason for avoiding alcohol in pregnancy is



the experience of alcohols toxic influence on the fetus. Intervention programmes that provide nutritional advice can then address these health concerns and the assumption that underlie successful pregnancy and delivery given the deep-rooted nature of its cultural beliefs.

Materials and Methods

Study area

A survey was conducted in the tribal area of jajpur district. The Jajpur district has selected as the study area as predominantly populated by scheduled tribes (Santal, Bhuyan, Kolho and mankedia). Jajpur district is located on the east cost of Odisha Literacy rate is below the state and national coverage. Female literacy is only 25 per cent. PDs and other social security schemes are defunct. The Panchayat Raj Institutions in the region are not active well. Operational area Sukinda block has 60 per cent of tribal population as this is Integrated Tribal Development agency (ITDA) blocks.

Sampling

A total 80 women between 16 – 25 years were interviewed and they were chosen purposively based on their experiences in prenatal and postnatal period.

Data Collection

Data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected using household schedules, interview and observation method. The secondary data was collected from various literature published book etc.

Data analysis

Data analysis was carried out using both qualitative and quantitative data. data was analyzed quantitative data was tabulated and statistically tabulated and analyzed using SPSS. Qualitative data was interpreted using based on the information collected from field.

Result and Discussion

Table 1. Socio demographic profile of study participants

Variable	frequency	percentage
Age		
16 to 20 years	39	48.7
21 to 25 years	41	51.2
Education		
Illiterates	28	35
Standard 1 to 5 th	31	38.7
6 th to 10 th	15	18.7
+ 2 & above	6	7.5
Occupation		
House wife	43	53.7
Daily Labourer	27	33.7
Selling of leaf /vegetable/ Mahuli/ Handia	10	12.5
Types of family		
Joint family	64	80
Nuclear family	16	20
Family income/ month		
≤ Rs2000/-	32	40
Rs.2000- 3000	29	36.2
Rs.≥ 3000	19	23.7
Main source of income		
Agriculture	30	37.5
Business	12	15
Job	11	13.7
Labourer	27	33.7



A total of pregnant women were participate in the study out of which 39 women were belongs to age groups between 16 to 20 years and 41 women belongs to age groups 21to 25 years. It observed that (48.7 %) mothers marry before they attain 15 years of their life. As a result of early marriages there is experience more frequent reproductive health complications, have higher fertility and lower level of gender equality. It is really pathetic that in this small age physical and mental growth of girls is yet to achieve in such immaturity condition burden of marriage creates vulnerable condition for girl. Such adolescent girls become mother, most of them are not physically ready for motherhood and so newborn babies are undernourished. In tribal areas mothers marry between 15 and 17 years of their age. On the basic of data majority of women having education below 5th standard (38.7%) whereas only 7.5 % women have education above 12th standard and 35% are illiterate. The table reviles that tribal woman are economically independent to the great extend as we find only 53.7% as house wife, where as 33.7% are working on daily laborer and 12.5 % tribal mothers are selling of leaf, vegetable, mahuli/handia etc. Tribal community as a live-in forest area so they mainly depend on forest and forest food livelihood. For smooth work down they live in joint family. Here we found 80% women live in joint family where as 20 % women live in nuclear family. This table also shows 37.5% family mainly depends on agriculture as main source of income whereas only 13.7% having jobs.

Table No. 2 Food consumed during Prenatal and Postnatal Period by tribal mother

Table with 5 columns: Sl.No., Food items, Reason for Consumption, Frequency, %

The food consumed by the tribal mother of jajpur district includes various fruit and vegetable. Most of the tribal people was poor, so most of them consumed rice and dal as the regular.

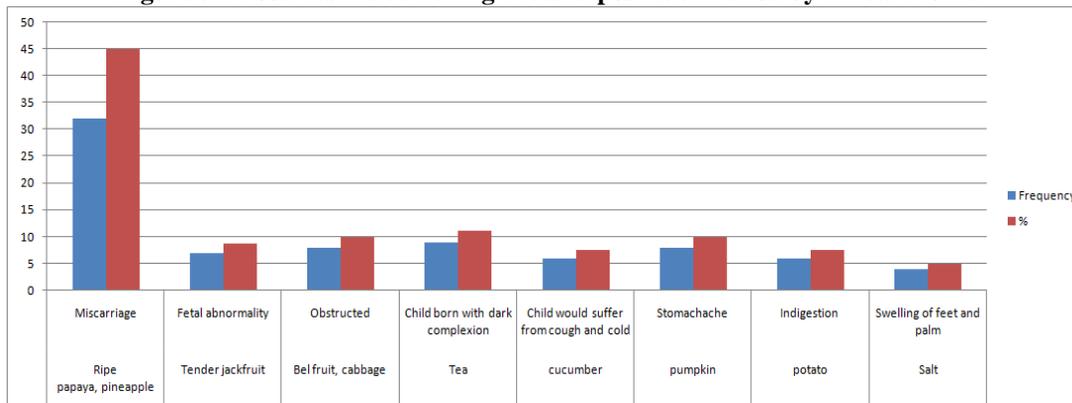
Food. Consumption followed by tribal women includes many foods including Drumstick leaves, Horse gram dal, Roasting Fish, brinjal and bittergourd, Carrot Chiken and motton etc. most of the mother preferred horse gramdal during the postnatal period and also taken red garlic for to increase immunity of the body. They also believe drumstick leaves are very good source for mother and child.

Table No. 3 Food restricted during Pre and postnatal Period by Tribal Mother

Table with 5 columns: Sl.No., Food items, Reason for Non-consumption, Frequency, %

Food restriction followed by tribal women includes many fruit and vegitables includes Ripe papaya, pineapple,Tender jackfruit, Bel fruit, cabbage, pumpkin, Tea and cold food like cucumber. The most common reason as stared by the women for the avoidance of such foods was abortion and indigestion. Figure3.1 shows that 45 % of tribal mother restrict themselves from consuming ripe papaya and pineapple due to fear of abortion.

Figure 3.1 Food restricted during Pre and postnatal Period by Tribal Mother



Conclusion

Food taboos and practices still contribute to unhealthy nutrition in prenatal and postnatal period. While traditional food taboos and practices can expose women to poor nutrition, some food taboos can also potentially. Thus, it is important to understand the impact of traditional food taboos to develop effective, culturally sensitive, community-based programs.

Thus, the nutritional education should also emphasize the daily requirement of potential harmful nutrients. The study revealed that some of the food taboos and practice align with modern health recommendation for a healthy pregnancy while others are contrary to the recommendations.

There is a need for nutrition education and awareness generation among tribal women.

The findings clearly represent that innocence traditional food practices are major reason for their food avoidance in the crucial period of a mother.

Those cultural beliefs and food restrictions of tribal society have much negative impact on the prenatal period of women belonging to that particular tribal community. It is obvious that some mother avoids the consumption of fruits and vegetables that are rich in nutrients, protein and vitamins as well due to lack of proper information regarding the nutritional benefit.

This may be attributing to the strong traditional cultural/ taboos beliefs and practices relating to prenatal and the postnatal period.

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