

ABSTRACT

Infant Rearing Practices and Health Problems

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A Correlational Study of Infant Rearing Practices and Common Health Problems in Infants with Selected Mother-Related Variables in an Urban Slum

THIS is the Abstract of a study conducted by Sr. Edith in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the Degree of Master of Science (Nursing) at the LT College of Nursing, SNDT Women's University, Mumbai.

The objectives of the study:

1. To find out the existing infant rearing practices.
2. To identify the common health problems in infants and their relation to selected practices.
3. To correlate the health problems with selected mother-related variables, viz.: (a) education of the mother; (b) family income; and (c) type of family.

Need for the Study

In every society, there exist varying practices, customs, beliefs, and values which may be healthy or unhealthy. Though science and technology have brought about advancement in life situations, still a good number of our Indian families are unaware of it. They hold on to the traditions and practices even though it has no scientific footing.

Family rituals and symbols come from various sources; firstly, some are adorned from the culture; secondly, they may develop from human transactional process which have occurred within the family. These rituals and symbols are extremely significant and are usually valued very

highly and are continued even when members do not see them as important.

Mother is an important primary care provider and, therefore, it is her education and access to information that will help her, about care of her infant and to develop a positive attitude towards child rearing practices.

The study was conducted in an urban slum in Mumbai, by using a systematic random sampling technique - an exploratory descriptive approach. The sample included mother and infant (birth to 12 months). Various infant rearing practices assessed are:

1. Practices in Regard to Personal Hygiene: (a) Bath; (b) Care of umbilical cord; (c) Care of eyes; (d) Care of nails; (e) Care of clothing.

2. Practices of Feeding: (a) Breast feed; (b) Top feed; (c) Weaning.

3. Practices on Primary Immunization.

4. Common health problems in infants.

The data, collected with an interview schedule, observation and measurements, were analysed and interpreted.

Findings of the Study

Mothers' profile showed that 97 out of 100 in the sample belonged to the age group of 18-34 years, literate were 57%, majority were Muslims (67%), and all mothers were housewives. Seventy-seven per cent of the infants were born in hospitals and

others at home got delivered by 'Dai'. The findings of the study reveal various practices.

In regard to bath, the various practices are: daily bath 78%, alternate days bath 21% and one per cent give only twice a week bath to the infant. The practice of massage to the neonate before bath is followed by 93%. For bath, mustard oil and palm oil are used commonly according to the availability and cost. Body cleansing agents used are: any soap 90% and channa, atta by the rest. The practice of exposing the newborns to fume immediately after bath is observed among 48%. Care of the umbilical cord varies: majority (55%) of them clean and apply medicine; others clean and apply oil, talcum powder or haldi powder. Few problems (8%) observed and reported are: discharge, foul smell, and redness around the umbilical cord. All these reported problems are found among the infants born in institutions.

In the practice of breast feed, 55% initiated immediately after the birth, 11 per cent on the second day and 35% on the third day. Their reason for the delayed initiation is: colostrum is not good for the baby. The common breast milk substitutes were honey, jaggery, grapewater and tea. The period of exclusive breast feed prevailed among 15%. Demand feed was the common practice of feeding.

Breast milk supplementation was a common practice among majority (53%). Two commonly used items

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are: dairy milk 33% and Lactogen 20%. Between 3-6 months of age, 89% of them started weaning.

Primary Immunization: The age specific primary immunization was not completely covered by the majority (71%). Mother gave their reasons for this as : medical advice (30%), no one to take the child to the centre (15%), did not know (8%) and others said that the timings of the Health Centre and long-waiting period to see the Doctor were inconvenient to the housewives.

The common health problems among infants found are: respiratory (77%), gastrointestinal (58%), and skin problems (16%). The relationship of this to the infant rearing practices showed non-significant on Chi-square test.

The mother-related variables like education, family income, and type of family were analysed with common health problems and it was found non-significant on Chi-square (χ^2) test

at 0.05 level.

The findings of the study reveal that socio-cultural and traditional beliefs are the influencing factors among the mothers in regard to infant rearing practices. It was observed and learned that definite as well as well-established healthy and unhealthy practices existed among them. In short, one cannot condemn all traditional practices as harmful and meaningless. Practices are followed because for those who practise them, there is some significance. The study shows that some practices are harmless and need not be disturbed. Since the practices are age-old and have deep-rooted sentiments associated with it, the harmfulness needs to be modified carefully. Exposure to new knowledge will melt away barriers of ignorance, prejudice and misconception.

Nursing Implications

Implications which have been

made in this study are important for Nursing service, Nursing education and research.

Nursing Service: The implications to both hospital and community settings reveal that the Nurse plays an important role in imparting knowledge and helping the mothers to continue with healthy and harmless practices. The Nurse needs to know that culture, traditions and customs are fundamentals of family ways.

Nursing Education: The outcome of this study explains various practices that are prevalent in society. This helps in planning the curricula and effective health education programme and points out the Community Health Worker to identify herself as an educator.

Nursing Research: Further research regarding problems faced by mothers in relation to infant rearing practices and its remedial measures could be studied.



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