

Attitudinal Dimensions and Nutritional Knowledge During Pregnancy Among Rural Women: A Study in Chamarajanagara District

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the attitudinal dimensions associated with nutritional knowledge during pregnancy among rural women in the Chamarajanagara district of Karnataka, India. Adequate maternal nutrition is vital for both the health of the mother and optimal fetal development, yet rural women often face challenges stemming from limited awareness, socio-economic constraints, and cultural beliefs. The present research, based on a sample of 400 pregnant women from five taluks within the district, adopts a mixed-methods approach comprising structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews. The study aims to assess the prevailing attitudes toward nutrition during pregnancy, examine how these attitudes are influenced by social, cultural, and economic factors, and analyze their impact on dietary practices. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to explore correlations between demographic variables and nutritional attitudes.

INTRODUCTION

Pregnancy is a critical and transformative phase in a woman's life, characterized by profound physiological, psychological, and emotional changes. It demands heightened nutritional care to support both maternal well-being and fetal development. The importance of proper nutrition during pregnancy is well-established, as it significantly reduces the risk of complications such as anemia, low birth weight, and developmental delays in infants. However, achieving optimal maternal nutrition is particularly challenging in rural regions, where social and cultural dynamics intersect with limited resources and healthcare access.

In the Chamarajanagara district of Karnataka, rural women often encounter unique challenges related to nutritional awareness and attitudes. Cultural beliefs, such as food taboos and traditional dietary restrictions, influence the acceptance and implementation of nutritional guidelines. Moreover, limited education, poverty, and emotional stress further impact women's perceptions and attitudes toward nutrition during pregnancy. These attitudinal factors play a pivotal role in shaping dietary behaviors, which in turn affect pregnancy outcomes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding the attitudes of rural pregnant women toward nutrition is essential for designing effective interventions. This study aims to explore these attitudinal dimensions, assess their relationship with socio-demographic factors, and propose targeted social work strategies to foster positive change in maternal nutrition practices in the region.

Objectives

- To assess the attitudes of rural pregnant women toward nutrition.
- To examine how socio-demographic variables influence nutritional attitudes.
- To identify emotional and psychological barriers impacting nutritional behavior.
- To propose social work strategies for improving attitudinal change.

METHODOLOGY

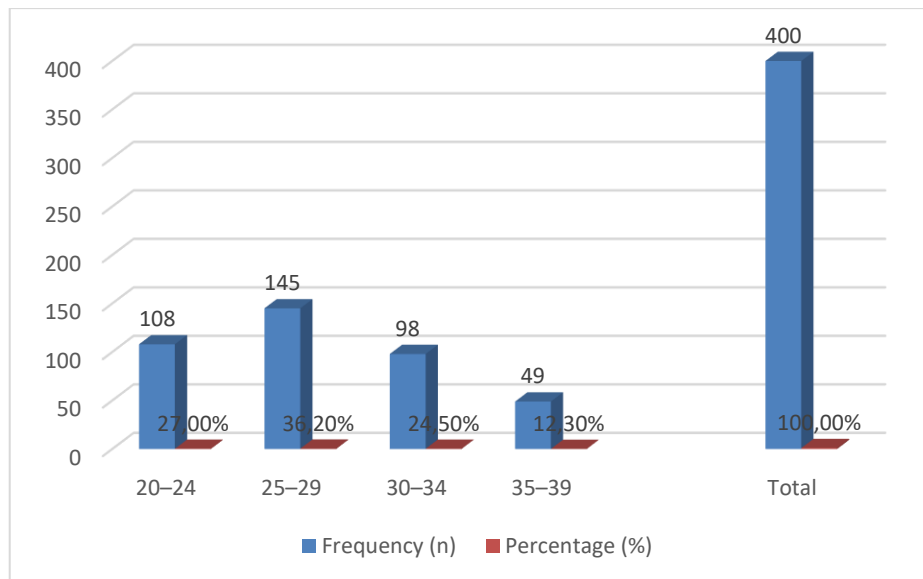
This descriptive, cross-sectional study explores attitudinal dimensions related to nutritional knowledge among rural pregnant women in Chamarajanagara district, Karnataka. Conducted from March 2024 to February 2025, the study targeted 400 women aged 20 to 39, selected using stratified random sampling across five major taluks Chamarajanagara, Gundlupete, Kollegala, Hanur, and Yelandur to ensure geographic and socio-demographic representation.

Data collection involved a structured questionnaire featuring a validated 20-item attitude subscale (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.713$), designed to assess beliefs, perceptions, and emotional responses toward pregnancy nutrition. Items were rated on a 3 point Likert scale: "Agree" (3), "Neutral" (2), and "Disagree" (1). Semi-structured interviews complemented the quantitative data, providing deeper insights.

Data analysis utilized descriptive and inferential statistics, including correlation and regression. Findings revealed predominantly neutral attitudes, shaped by education, income, and cultural taboos. Emotional stress and social influences also emerged as significant barriers. Ethical clearance was secured, and all participation was voluntary and confidential. The study underscores the importance of empathetic, culturally sensitive social work interventions such as family engagement, group education, and home visits to foster positive behavioral change and enhance maternal nutrition outcomes.

Table 1. Behavioral Change and Enhance Maternal Nutrition Outcomes

Age Group (Years)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
20–24	108	27.0%
25–29	145	36.2%
30–34	98	24.5%
35–39	49	12.3%
Total	400	100.0%



Picture1. Attitudinal Trends and The Influence

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

- Neutral Attitudes Dominant: Majority of participants exhibited neutral or inconsistent attitudes toward nutrition, indicating knowledge gaps and ambivalence.
- Cultural and Emotional Influences: Many women reported food taboos (e.g., avoiding papaya, pineapple, eggs), often enforced by family elders. Emotional exhaustion due to workload and lack of social support correlated with poor attitudes toward nutrition.
- Socio-Demographic Impact: Education and family income levels had a significant influence on attitude scores ($p < 0.05$).
- Need for Person-Centered Approaches: Attitudinal shifts require not only information but also empathy, counseling, and support networks.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Attitude plays a pivotal but often underestimated role in maternal nutrition research. While many interventions focus on providing information or addressing access issues, they frequently overlook how beliefs, emotions, and cultural norms shape maternal decisions. This study emphasizes the importance of designing emotionally intelligent, culturally respectful interventions that not only educate but also motivate. Misconceptions about food, health, and pregnancy are often deeply rooted in tradition and family influence. Social work can bridge the gap between clinical advice and lived experience. By leveraging methods such as home visits, group education, and family-centered approaches, social workers can foster trust, correct misinformation, and empower women within their social environments. These personalized, context-sensitive strategies recognize the mother not just as an individual, but as part of a larger system that affects her nutritional choices. Elevating attitude within the research and intervention framework is essential to achieving sustainable improvements in maternal and child health outcomes.

Recommendations

- Introduce culturally adapted nutrition counseling at PHCs and Anganwadi centers.
- Train community health workers in motivational interviewing to address ambivalence.
- Include attitude modules in prenatal classes and mobile health platforms.
- Promote family-inclusive interventions to modify household-level beliefs

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