

Research Article

A Study to Assess the Traditional Practice and Beliefs on Postnatal Care among Tribal Habitat Residing in Selected Urban Community of North Bengal

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Tribal society has distinct traditional and cultural pattern during antenatal, childbirth, and postpartum period. The Hilly urban area of North Bengal is a home to various tribal women who have their own traditional beliefs and practices on postnatal care. **Aim:** This study was aim to assess the traditional beliefs and practices of tribal postnatal mothers residing at selected hilly urban area of North Bengal. **Materials and Methods:** The study was descriptive with non-purposive sampling technique. Sample taken for this study was 148 tribal postnatal mothers from Hilly area of North Bengal. Tribal postnatal mothers of these area beliefs and practices their traditional postnatal care, practiced from generation to generation by mother-in-law to daughter-in-laws during postnatal period. **Findings:** The findings of the study are divided into beneficial, harmless, and harmful belief and practices, 95.6% exist beneficial beliefs related to food, rest and activity, separation, purification, and baby care and they practices the same. About 79.2% harmless beliefs and practices regarding food avoidance, separation of mother and baby from others visitors, wound care, and baby care. Harmful traditional beliefs and practices seen among tribal postnatal mother were avoidance of green vegetables and juicy fruits (91.1%), administration of prelacteal food like honey at birth was 77% and few (0.6%) still discard colostrum. There was significant association seen between belief and practice with religion ($\chi^2=8.12$ at $df(2)$, $P \leq 0.05$), with occupation ($\chi^2=12.28$ at $df(1)$, $P < 0.05$), and with no. of children ($\chi^2=4.99$ at $df(1)$, $P < 0.05$). The study and its finding have immense implication in to create awareness in the community. **Conclusion:** The study concludes that matter of issue can be raised to prevent harmful practices by counseling and evaluation of views of the mothers during reproductive life.

Keywords: Hilly tribal area, Traditional beliefs and practice, Tribal postnatal mother

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Introduction

Maternal mortality, deaths during pregnancy, birth or the postpartum period, is a key indicator of women's health and status (the World Health Organization [WHO], 2015a).^[1] The top three direct causes of maternal mortality worldwide are hemorrhage, postpartum infections, and pre-eclampsia (Say *et al.*, 2014; WHO, 2015a). India has committed itself to the UN target for the sustainable development goals (SDGs) for MMR at 70 per 100,000 live birth by 2030 and as per National Health Policy 2017, the target for MMR is 100 per 100,000 live births by

2020.^[2] Asia suffers the largest proportion of the world's maternal deaths. Of the 302,000 global maternal deaths that occurred in 2015, more than one-third took place in the Asian region (WHO, 2015a).

The postpartum period, or the puerperium (from Latin Puer "Child" and Parere) "To bring forth" refer the of 6 weeks period after childbirth. This is a time of maternal changes that retrogressive (the involution of the uterus and vagina) and progressive (the production of milk for lactation). This is the time for healthy recuperation from the pregnancy and subsequent delivery as well as time to bond with her newborn infants. Although in this period is normal physiological and psychological changes occurs, periods itself is culture specific and diverse belief practices influence the periods. However, these periods itself is culture specific, and diverse belief practices influence periods across cultures. Most maternal and infants death occurs during these days and seems to be the period of most neglected for provision of quality of care. In spite of advancement in healthcare, the women's behavior during postpartum period is strongly influenced by her cultural background. Beliefs and practices are sociocultural determined or specified and it takes place within the culture, shaped by perception of the people living within the society practicing the particular culture.

Worldwide postnatal period is bound with traditional and cultural beliefs and practices among the postnatal women. Most traditional Indians follow the 40-day confinement and recuperation period also known as the *jaappa* (in Hindi). A special diet to facilitate milk production and increase hemoglobin levels is followed. Sex is not allowed during this time. In Hindu culture, this time after childbirth was traditionally considered a period of relative impurity (*asaucham*), and a period of confinement of 10–40 days (known as *purudu*) was recommended for the mother and the baby. During this period, she was exempted from usual household chores and religious rites, mother and infants are purified by a ritual bath as for their cultural.

Postpartum confinement is well-documented in China,^[3] where the custom is known as *peiyue* "sitting the month" and in Persian culture it is called *chilla*, that is, "40 days. Korean women^[4] spend *samchil-il* (3–7 days, 21 days) in confinement, receiving *sanhujori* (postpartum care). Thailand has various customs. New mothers used to be encouraged to lie in a warm bed near the fire for 30 days, a practice known as *yufai*. In Europe, a mother in Florence lying-in, from a painted *desco da parto* or birth tray whereas In Latin American countries and in Mexico it is called *la cuarentena*, that is, "40 days." Japanese mothers move back home for *satogaeribunben*. Neighbor countries like in Pakistan it is called *sewamahima*.^[5]

Purpose of the study

Approximate 8.6%^[6] of the Indian population comprises tribal population and majority of them habitat in central

India. Tribal are there relating to group or community with similar ancestors, customs and tradition. Darjeeling is one of the hill towns of west Bengal having urban population 132016 (2011 census) with 32 wards headed by Councilors. The urban community is under the administrative control of Chairman of municipality. The place is situated at altitude 6700 ft. having minimum temperature 6°C to maximum 18°C. Tribal mostly belonging to this area are Bhutia, Lepcha, Sherpa, Tamang, Subba, and Yolmo which provides the good source for data collection. A traditional practices and beliefs their impact during postnatal period, that could be either beneficial or harmless, and help to develop better understanding on postnatal care.

Objectives

The objective of the study was to assess the traditional practices and beliefs on postnatal care and to identify the beneficial and harmful practices and beliefs on postnatal care among mothers.

Materials and Methods

The present study was a descriptive survey on urban community of hilly tribal area of North Bengal, a purposive sample of 148 was interviewed. The study was conducted from Monday to Saturday for the period of 6 week (Oct-Nov 2019). Data were collected from tribal postnatal mother who have delivered within 6 months as all traditional beliefs and practices were carried out up to 6 month by the tribal postnatal mothers residing at hilly area of North Bengal.

Ethical clearance obtained from Ethical Committee of Medical College and Hospital, Kolkata. Interviewed started after explaining the purpose of study and their consent for participation. Information regarding socio-demographic profile of the family was obtained from postnatal mother by structured schedule interviewed technique. Moreover, traditional beliefs and stated practices were obtained through interviewed schedule. Data were analyses in descriptive and inferential method. Chi-square was applied to know the association between various traditional practice and beliefs with demographic variables.

Results

In the present study, the majority of tribal postnatal mothers were in age group between 19 and 24 year (41%), 49% educated up to secondary level, 64% are Hindu in religion, and 69% are home maker having 66% only one child. Their family income was >Rs 10001 (66%), 51% has delivered their babies through LUCS. About 55% postnatal mothers gain knowledge about traditional beliefs and practices on postnatal care were mainly through their mother in laws [Table 1].

[Figure 1] Traditional beliefs on postnatal care were divided on beneficial, harmless, and harmful on the basis of different literature reviews, field work, persons experiences, and data collected from tribal community on hilly area of North Bengal. About 95.65% tribal postnatal mothers beliefs certain food consumption such as spices (Ajwain, Fenugreek, nutmeg seeds) in their soups, daily ghee consumption, hot sweet drinks, and plenty of hot soups beliefs to help in breast milk secretion. Beliefs like binding abdomen after delivery with cotton saree, daily oil massage to mother is believed to restore their health. About 79.20% postnatal mothers beliefs on avoidance of cold water drinking, consumption of chili during postnatal period separation of postnatal mother and baby for prevention of evil influence, touching fire before entering mother room, and purification ceremony seems to be harmless to them. Whereas 63.80% mothers believed on

harmful beliefs like colostrum is witch's milk, prelactal food (honey), avoidance of green leafy vegetables and fruits during postnatal period for maintenance of ritual in their community. Although traditional beliefs exist for time of delivery to maximum 6 month, Table 2 shown differences in their practices in terms of months. Consumption of Ajwain seeds (46%), ghee (74%), and hot water or hot soups (76%) were practiced till 6 month after delivery whereas 50% and 46% postnatal avoid green leafy vegetables and fruits for 1 month, respectively. It was also found that 82% practiced presence of fire source at their room and 91% visitors touch fire before entering postnatal mother room till 6 months to prevent them from evil influence.

On the newborn care, (88%) mother breast feed their babies exclusively, (59%) bathed newborn daily, and (81%) massaged with oil till 6 month, respectively.

The present study observed significant association between traditional beliefs with educational status ($\chi^2=12.57$ at df (3), $P \leq 0.05$), and type of delivery ($\chi^2=7.23$ at df (1), $P \leq 0.05$). Traditional practices on postnatal care was scored below and above median and found to be significantly associated with religion ($\chi^2=8.12$ at df (2), occupation status ($\chi^2=12.28$ at df (1), number of children ($\chi^2=4.99$ at df (1), and type of delivery ($\chi^2=11.12$ at df (1) at $P \leq 0.05$ level of significance.

Discussion

In the present study, 100% tribal postnatal mothers belief that consumption of certain spices such as ajwain, ginger, fenugreek seed in soups, and desi ghee in every meal help to breast milk production and regain strength during postnatal period. Finding supported by study conducted on Medicinal plants by Udagir^[7] and Sundaram^[8] and Paul at Karnataka, Mangalore and by Dudi at Rajasthan^[9] shows the effect of ginger on breast milk volume increases, galactagogue and use of dried ginger, carom (ajwain), fenugreek, cumin seeds are help to prevent indigestion, constipation. Avoidance of consumptions of vegetables, fruits, spicy, and chill were

Table 1: Socio-demographic variable of the tribal postnatal mothers (n=148)

Variables	n (%)
Age	
<18 years	3 (2)
19–24 years	61 (41)
25–30 years	44 (30)
>30 years	40 (27)
Educational status	
Illiterate	1 (1)
Up to Primary	21 (14)
Up to Secondary	73 (49)
Up to Higher Secondary	37 (25)
Graduate and above	16 (11)
Religion	
Hindu	95 (64)
Buddhist	36 (24)
Christian	16 (11)
Others	1 (1)
Occupation	
Employed	46 (31)
Home Maker	102 (69)
Type of Family	
Nuclear	84 (57)
Joint	64 (43)
No. of the children	
One child	97 (66)
Two children	38 (26)
More than 2 children	13 (8)
Family income	
Rs 5001–1000	50 (34)
>1000	98 (66)
Knowledge acquired	
From mother	58 (39)
From mother-in law	81 (55)
From mass media/social media	9 (6)
Type of delivery	
Normal delivery	73 (49)
LUCS	75 (51)

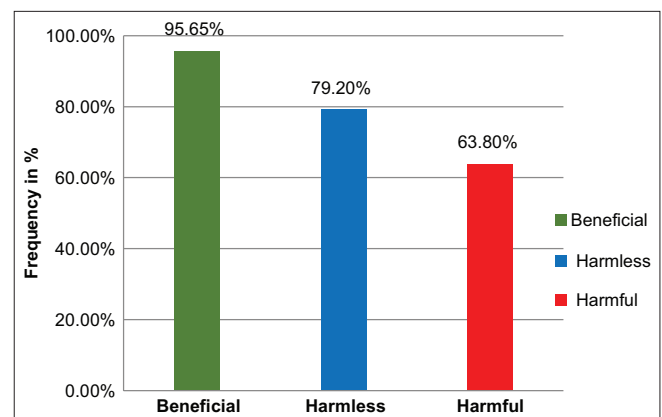


Figure 1: Bar diagram showing distribution of traditional beliefs on postnatal care among tribal postnatal mothers (n = 148)

Table 2: Responses related to traditional practice on postnatal care among tribal postnatal mothers (n=148)

Variables	1 month (%)	3 month (%)	6 month (%)	Do not practice (%)
Food practices:				
• Consumption of Ajwain, carrom seed with soup	21	33	46	
• Consumption of hot jillabi or sweet drink	32	5	3	60
• Consumption of plenty of hot water/soups	1	23	76	
• Consumption of plenty of purified butter (ghee) with soup of meal	3	19	74	4
• Avoidance of green leafy vegetables	50	33	7	9
• Avoidance of raw juicy fruits	46	28	20	6
• Avoidance of chili	13	33	54	
• Avoidance of cold water drinking	97	3		
Maternal care:				
• Separate warm room for mother with baby	5	69	26	
• 24 h presence of fire source		18	82	
• Visitors touch fire before entering the postnatal mother room		9	91	
• Binding abdomen with cotton saree	65	17	16	2
Wound healing practice:				
• Avoidance consumption of onion	41			59
• Avoidance of Musur dal and potato consumption	18			81
Newborn care practice:				
• Exclusive breast feeding	6	6	88	
• Daily warm water bath	13	28	59	
• Daily oil massage		19	81	

also stated in the study conducted by Dehury *et al.*^[10] among tribal postnatal mothers in Maharashtra.

In the present study, 90% postpartum mothers believed that consumption of green leafy and raw juicy fruits cause cold cough and pain in abdomen to the mother and baby. Whereas in the study conducted by Probandari *et al.*,^[11] at Central Java Province Indonesia stated that in their sociocultural belief and practice during postnatal period mothers should only eat green vegetables, without chili, no fried, and no meat.

In the present study, 74% tribal postnatal mothers consumed Ghee purified butter up to 6 months for regain of strength and breast milk production, this practice was also seen among the Pakistani postnatal period (Sewa Mahima) in the study conducted by Qamar.^[5]

In the present study, 97.9% tribal postnatal mothers believed to bind their abdomen with cotton sari to prevent pendulous abdomen and early involution almost 65% mothers practiced it up to 1 month. This practice was revealed on study conducted Udgiri^[7] where 47% postnatal mothers tied their abdomen with warm clothes for early involution of uterus and prevent abdominal pendulous.

In the present study, 77% tribal postnatal mothers practice prelacteal food as honey at newborn mouth at birth and this practice was supported by the study conducted by Bandyopadhyay^[12] in selected rural area of West Bengal and study conducted at selected rural area of Tirupati. However, in the study conducted by Dehury among tribal postnatal mothers of Maharashtra^[10] revealed that they do not practiced any prelacteal food and feeds colostrum to newborn babies.

Conclusion

Based on the present study, the postpartum period locally called “*sutkari*” as impure state and has follow certain belief and practices. Most of the belief and practices are beneficial and harmless and few harmful beliefs still exist among the mothers.

Acknowledgment

The investigator expresses her gratitude and thanks to god and great support of my family.

Findings

The findings of the study are divided into beneficial, harmless and harmful belief and practices, 95.6% exist beneficial beliefs related to food, rest and activity, separation, purification, and baby care and they practices the same. About 79.2% harmless beliefs and practices regarding food avoidance, separation of mother and baby from others visitors, wound care, and baby care. Harmful traditional beliefs and practices seen among tribal postnatal mother were avoidance of green vegetables and juicy fruits (91.1%), administration of prelacteal food like honey at birth was 77% and few (0.6%) still discard colostrum.

Conflict of Interest

No financial, communication, and language conflicts but the study was only confined to tribal postnatal mothers of

particular area, might not be representative of all the tribes of the community.

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