

Knowledge, Attitude and Practices Related to Maternal, Infant, and Young Child Feeding (MIYCF) among Women in the Tea Gardens of Dibrugarh District, Assam

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Abstract

Introduction: Optimal nutrition within initial two years early and exclusive breastfeeding for first 6 months and continued breastfeeding for 2 years or beyond, combined with nutritious, safe, age-appropriate, and responsive complementary feeding beginning at 6 months is crucial to avert stunting during infancy and early childhood and to disrupt the intergenerational cycle of malnutrition. This study aims to assess the knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and practices related to MIYCF practices among women working in tea gardens of Dibrugarh.

Material and Methods: This cross-sectional study was conducted among 198 women working in 18 tea gardens in Dibrugarh, with children aged 0-23 months. Based on a prevalence of 51.7% for children aged 6-8 months receiving solid, semi-solid food, and breastmilk, a sample size of 198 was determined, considering 20% relative precision, 95% CI, design effect of 2 and 10% non-response rate. From 177 tea gardens across 6 blocks; 3 tea gardens per block and 11 women from each garden using AWC registers were randomly selected and interviewed with a semi-quantitative questionnaire, to assess their knowledge, attitude, beliefs and practices. Additionally, 1 FGD with mothers in each block and 3 IDIs with a doctor, ASHA, AWW and ANM in each tea estate were conducted.

Results: Understanding about importance of diet was present in 90.6% of mothers while 86.4% recognized implications of poor feeding in child's early years. Knowledge gaps existed, 9.4% and 16.7% lacking information on maternal nutrition and complementary feeding. Attitudes varied, 50.9% believes need for infant hydration from 4 months and 50.4% doubting malnourished mother's milk quality. Practices showed discrepancy from knowledge: 25.6% practiced pre lacteal feeding, 61% practiced EBF. Traditional customs influenced practices: 80% in pre lacteal, misconceptions like harmfulness of colostrum persisted. Service providers identified knowledge-practice gaps, emphasizing influence of economic conditions and cultural beliefs. They noted malnutrition risks (30% infants affected) and highlighted importance of schemes, counselling, and addressing cultural misconceptions.

Conclusion: The study reveals a gap between mothers' knowledge of maternal-infant nutrition and actual practices. Despite understanding the importance, traditional beliefs often override best practices. This calls for culturally sensitive education and multifaceted interventions to bridge knowledge-behaviour gaps and improve accessibility to nutrition services.