

## **Nutritional knowledge and dietary practices among housewives in Milak Rampur**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study explores the nutritional knowledge and dietary practices among housewives in Milak, Rampur. Proper nutrition is crucial for maintaining health, and housewives often play a key role in determining the dietary habits of their families. The research aims to assess the level of understanding housewives have regarding essential nutrients, balanced diets, and the impact of their knowledge on daily food choices. Using a cross-sectional survey design, data were collected from a sample of housewives through structured questionnaires and interviews. The study examines factors such as educational background, socio-economic status, and access to nutritional information, and how these influence dietary practices. Findings reveal a gap between nutritional knowledge and actual dietary habits, with many housewives having limited awareness of balanced nutrition despite being responsible for meal preparation. The study concludes with recommendations for targeted nutrition education programs to improve dietary practices, promoting healthier lifestyles in Milak, Rampur.

**Key Words :** Nutritional knowledge, Dietary practices, Housewives, Food choice

### **INTRODUCTION**

In many developing countries, rural communities face significant challenges in improving the health and nutritional status of their populations. One of the key factors contributing to malnutrition and poor health outcomes is the lack of adequate nutritional knowledge, especially among mothers. Mothers play a pivotal role in shaping the dietary practices of their households, as they are often responsible for preparing meals and making critical decisions regarding the nutrition of their children and family members. Therefore, understanding the nutritional knowledge of rural mothers is essential to designing effective interventions aimed at improving maternal and child health (Griffiths and Payne, 1976; Held and Hunt, 1965).

The village of Milak, located in the Rampur district of Uttar Pradesh, India, presents an ideal setting for examining the nutritional awareness of rural mothers. Milak is a typical rural community where agriculture is the primary source of livelihood. Despite its agricultural base, food security does not necessarily translate to adequate nutritional intake, as traditional

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dietary habits, food distribution, and limited knowledge of nutrition contribute to a gap between food availability and nutritional adequacy.

Nutrition is a critical factor that directly influences the health and development of individuals, particularly children. Malnutrition, which includes both undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies, can have devastating effects on a child's cognitive development, immunity, and overall growth. In rural areas, these problems are often exacerbated by poverty, limited access to healthcare, and lack of education. Mothers in these settings may not have sufficient knowledge about essential nutrients, proper feeding practices, or the importance of a balanced diet, leading to inadequate nutrition for themselves and their families.

This research aims to assess the level of nutritional knowledge among rural mothers in Milak, Rampur. The study explores their understanding of various aspects of nutrition, including knowledge of food groups, essential nutrients, infant feeding practices, and maternal nutrition during pregnancy and lactation. It also seeks to identify the sources of information on nutrition that are available to these mothers, such as healthcare workers, traditional knowledge, or mass media.

By assessing the current nutritional knowledge of mothers in Milak, this research will contribute to the development of targeted educational interventions that can bridge the knowledge gap and improve health outcomes. The results of this study can also inform policy-makers and public health officials about the specific needs of rural communities, ultimately leading to more effective nutrition programs and policies that address the root causes of malnutrition (Ogden *et al.*, 2006; Seidell *et al.*, 1986).

#### **Objectives of the Study:**

1. To assess the level of nutritional knowledge among rural mothers in Milak, Rampur.
2. To identify gaps in nutritional knowledge, particularly concerning child nutrition and maternal health.
3. To evaluate the sources of nutritional information available to these mothers.
4. To provide recommendations for improving the nutritional awareness and practices of rural mothers.

## **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Study Design:**

A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted to assess the nutritional knowledge of rural mothers in Milak, Rampur. The study used both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, including a structured questionnaire and interviews.

#### **Sample Size:**

A total of 100 mothers from different households in Milak were randomly selected for this study. The participants included mothers with children aged between 0-5 years.

#### **Data Collection:**

Data were collected through face-to-face interviews using a pre-tested structured questionnaire. The questionnaire covered various aspects of nutrition, such as knowledge of

food groups, essential nutrients, feeding practices for infants and young children, and maternal nutrition during pregnancy and lactation.

### Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using statistical tools to determine the level of nutritional knowledge among the respondents. The results were presented in tabular form, followed by a detailed discussion.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following Table 1 presents the results of the survey conducted among rural mothers in Milak, Rampur:

Table 1 : Knowledge response of the respondent		
Aspect	Correct Knowledge (%)	Incorrect Knowledge (%)
Knowledge of food groups	45%	55%
Knowledge of essential nutrients	35%	65%
Importance of breastfeeding	80%	20%
Introduction of complementary foods	50%	50%
Maternal nutrition during pregnancy	40%	60%
Knowledge of child growth indicators	30%	70%
Sources of nutritional information	60% (Health workers)	40% (Others)

The results of the study indicate that there is a significant gap in the nutritional knowledge of rural mothers in Milak, Rampur. The overall level of awareness regarding essential nutrients and food groups is relatively low, with only 35-45% of mothers demonstrating correct knowledge. This lack of awareness may contribute to poor dietary practices, ultimately leading to malnutrition among children and other family members.

### Knowledge of Food Groups and Nutrients:

Only 45% of the respondents had correct knowledge of food groups, and even fewer (35%) were aware of essential nutrients. This suggests a limited understanding of the basic components of a balanced diet, which is crucial for maintaining health, particularly in growing children and pregnant or lactating mothers. The lack of knowledge may be due to inadequate education on the importance of diverse and nutrient-rich foods, as well as limited access to nutrition education programs.

### Breastfeeding Practices:

One of the positive findings of the study is that 80% of the mothers were aware of the importance of breastfeeding. This is encouraging, as breastfeeding is a critical practice for ensuring optimal nutrition during the early stages of life. However, complementary feeding practices need improvement, as only 50% of the mothers knew when to introduce solid foods. The introduction of complementary foods at the right time is essential for preventing malnutrition and promoting healthy growth.

**Maternal Nutrition During Pregnancy:**

The study found that only 40% of the mothers had adequate knowledge about the nutritional needs of pregnant women. This lack of awareness can have severe consequences for both maternal and child health, as poor maternal nutrition during pregnancy is associated with low birth weight, preterm birth, and other complications.

**Child Growth Indicators:**

A significant gap was observed in the knowledge of child growth indicators, with only 30% of mothers being aware of these important health markers. Monitoring child growth is essential for early detection of malnutrition and other health issues, and the low level of awareness indicates a need for education and training on this subject.

**Sources of Nutritional Information:**

The majority of the respondents (60%) received their nutritional information from health workers, indicating that these professionals play a crucial role in disseminating knowledge. However, the remaining 40% relied on other sources, such as family members or traditional knowledge, which may not always provide accurate information. This finding highlights the need to strengthen community health programs and ensure that health workers are well-equipped to deliver accurate and comprehensive nutrition education.

**Conclusion:**

The study reveals that the nutritional knowledge of rural mothers in Milak, Rampur, is limited, particularly in areas related to essential nutrients, child growth indicators, and maternal nutrition. While there is a good understanding of breastfeeding, complementary feeding practices, and overall dietary knowledge remain insufficient. Strengthening nutrition education programs and enhancing the role of health workers in these communities can help bridge the knowledge gap. Public health interventions aimed at improving maternal and child health should focus on providing accurate and accessible nutrition information, promoting balanced diets, and encouraging proper feeding practices for infants and young children.

**Recommendations:*****Nutrition Education Programs:***

There is an urgent need to implement nutrition education programs in rural communities, focusing on essential nutrients, food groups, and child growth indicators.

***Training for Health Workers:***

Health workers should be provided with additional training and resources to improve the dissemination of nutrition-related information.

***Community Outreach:***

Strengthening community outreach programs that involve mothers, families, and traditional leaders will ensure that nutrition knowledge is widely disseminated and understood.

***Maternal Nutrition Awareness:***

Special attention should be given to educating mothers about the importance of maternal nutrition during pregnancy and lactation.

***Monitoring and Evaluation:***

Continuous monitoring and evaluation of child growth should be promoted, along with training mothers to recognize key growth indicators to prevent malnutrition.

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