

Knowledge Level of Rural Women Regarding Food Beliefs and Cooking Practices

Family is the primary unit of a society which is expected to meet the physical requirements of all the members. In India, this is the responsibility of the mother. But in farming society, as she has to participate in various economic activities such as agriculture, dairy, poultry etc., the availability of time is limited for the preparation of food. Poverty and illiteracy along with tradition and limited mass media participation limit her nutritional knowledge about various foods. Khanum and Umapathy (1976) explained that food beliefs were found to be influenced by family income and educational level. Devdas *et al.* (1978) observed that food beliefs were found to be same in both high and low income groups. Hence, the study was conducted to understand the nutritional knowledge of rural women regarding food beliefs.

The data were collected from 60 randomly selected rural housewives of Tumarikopp (V₁), Begur (V₂) and Bisnalli (V₃) villages of Kalaghatagi taluk, where rice is the staple food, through structured schedule by personal interview. For the Knowledge statements, five point scale was used and accordingly scores were obtained for each respondent and converted into percentages.

From Table it is clear that the knowledge regarding food beliefs is medium (58.90). Village wise comparison depicted same knowledge percentage for the women of Tumarikopp and Begur. The awareness in Bisnalli was comparatively low.

Statement wise combined knowledge scores showed highest awareness about the statement, balanced diet develops resistance against diseases, followed by inadequate diet affect and the quality and quantity of breast milk. They had minimum awareness about colostrum feeding and its usefulness.

The Table also depicted the knowledge of rural women about cooking habits. The rural women of the three villages were practicing the better cooking methods viz., use of steam cooked foods, reuse of rice ganjee, use of soaked and sprouted grains and use of fermented foods to a greater extent. They had minimum knowledge about cutting size of vegetables. They preferred small vegetable pieces in which loss of vitamins and minerals is more because of higher surface exposure. Hence, there is a need to educate rural women to cut the vegetables into bigger pieces. Begur and Tumarikopp villages had the highest knowledge about food beliefs and cooking habits. The possible reasons for this might be that these villages are nearer to the urban area. Frequent urban contacts might have influenced their knowledge level. Another reason is Tumarikopp has a voluntary organization of Christian Mission for rural development. In this organization, many community nutritionists are working for the welfare of rural women. Farm women of these two villages are frequently exposed to the extension programmes which influenced their knowledge regarding nutrition. Hence, community workers and extension workers have to give more stress to the importance of colostrum feeding to the new born, balanced diet to the pregnant and lactating

Table Overall knowledge level of rural women regarding food beliefs and cooking habits

Knowledge items		percentage			Combined
		V ₁	V ₂	V ₃	
I.	Food beliefs				
1.	The type of food that a pregnant woman eats will influence the birth weight of her baby	77.3	76.7	61.3	72.6
2.	Inadequate diet affect the quantity and quality of breast milk	31.3	77.3	76.0	78.0
3.	Colostrum is good for baby	39.7	44.0	5.3	28.6
4.	Best weaning period is attainment of four months	44.0	54.0	38.7	44.6
5.	Balanced diet develops resistance against diseases	78.7	79.3	76.0	78.4
6.	Obesity is not a sign of good health	53.3	51.3	45.3	50.0
7.	Consumption of rice causes obesity	53.3	56.7	50.7	57.4
8.	Omitting meals helps to reduce body weight	54.7	63.3	60.0	61.6
Total		60.29	62.83	51.66	58.90
II.	Cooking habits				
1.	Soaked and sprouting improves nutritional quality	73.3	72.0	66.7	71.6
2.	Fermented foods are more nutritious than unfermented foods	66.7	74.0	62.7	69.4
3.	Ganjee from cooked rice should not be discarded	77.3	78.0	77.3	77.6
4.	It is good to cut vegetables into larger pieces for cooking	44.0	56.7	44.0	49.6
5.	Steam cooked foods are more digestible than fried foods	81.3	81.3	80.0	81.0
Total		68.52	72.4	66.14	69.84

mothers, introduction of weaning foods at appropriate time, maintenance of good health and woman better cooking methods and nutrition education while conducting training for farm women.

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(Received March, 1990)

Karnataka J. Agric. Sci., 4 (1&2) : (62- 63) 1991

Association of Socio-Personal Characteristics with Knowledge and Participation of Rural Women in Paddy Cultivation

Farm women play a vital role in agriculture, spend more time than men and perform more tasks related to agriculture and animal husbandry. Tasks like sowing, transplanting, weeding, irrigation, harvesting, threshing, storage and processing are mostly done by them. But their contributions are not usually recognised and counted in formal statistics and are not seen important even when they produce food crops for family consumption and add to the family income. As paddy is one of the important food crops of malnad tract in Dharwad district, the study was designed to understand the association of socio-personal characteristics of farm women with their knowledge and participation with respect to paddy cultivation.

The data were collected from 155 randomly selected rural women of Mansoor, Managundi, Baad and Solokinokopp villages of Dharwad Taluk. The independent variables studied were education, education profile, family size, family type and extension contact and the dependent variables were participation and knowledge. Data were collected with the help of structured schedule by personal interview.

References

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It may be seen from Table that illiterate group had high participation and knowledge scores compared to other group. Because of the lack of education, the illiterate women were unable to get any occupation other than agriculture, wherein they find the jobs easily on their farms even at the young age. Thus, their participation was directly related to their knowledge. This supports the results of Sharma and Tej Ratan Singh (1970) and Ganesh (1975).

Respondents in low family education profile group had high participation scores. Those in high family education profile group attended to other occupations than agriculture for their livelihood. Hence, their participation and knowledge in agricultural operations were relatively low.

From the Table it is clear that small families had high participation and high knowledge scores compared to big families. Nuclear families had high participation score range with high knowledge score as most of the nuclear families were small families. The reason could be that in the case of small families, the earning members