

A Study of Mother's Knowledge about Childcare and Care Practices in Lahore, Pakistan

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Abstract

The objective of the present study was to investigate the mother's knowledge about childcare and care practices. Data was collected through survey technique from 50 mothers of the different areas of Lahore city including Township, Green Town, Nawab Town and WAPDA Town by convenient sampling strategy. A questionnaire was used as a data collection tool which had 24 close-ended questions. The data was analyzed by SPSS to make sure objectivity in the results. The study revealed that majority of mothers are well aware about child care and care practices. The results also explored that how mother's knowledge, education and child ratio affect the quality of child care. The study found that effective mother's knowledge regarding child care had a profound impact on the delivery of quality care practices. The study suggested that the mothers should consult with childcare specialists regularly to take guidance about the proper diet and proper care for their children and should read the magazines and articles related to the childcare practices regularly.

Key words: Childcare, care practices, first food, feeding tactic, knowledge, education

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Introduction

Childcare means caring for and supervision of child or children, usually from the birth to thirteen years of age. Childcare may be defined as the care of those children who do not have parents but the care is provided by the adults. Informally, this facility is mostly provided by their relatives, grandmothers, or other relatives, whereas, formal care facilities include government care institutions, schools teachers or private care centers.

In United Kingdom, the term childcare is used, but in America, the term day care is used. Sometimes, the childcare is used interchangeably with other terms, such as, family day care, baby-sitting and early child hood education. The term childcare is referred as day care because children are the central focus of any program provided for them. The concept of childcare includes facilities for the children and families that they receive from different sources (Wyse & Styles 2007).

Care is comprehensive in that, although, it includes custodial care, such as, supervision, food, shelter and other physical necessities, it goes beyond these to include activities that encourage and aid learning responsible for children's health, social and psychological needs (Morrison, 1988). Childcare supports a child's emotional, social, intellectual and physical wellbeing. Childcare has become an essential component of life in our society. Childcare can make a significance difference in children's development. For many years, researchers have been examining the childcare as it has positive influence on children's development (Doppera, 1993).

Childcare is mostly the responsibility of mothers, therefore, the mother's knowledge of childcare influences the nature and quality of care that is given to the child. The mother's level of education has a positive impact on her knowledge and how she deals with child care issues, our experience in pediatric practice has revealed significant gap pertaining to child care issues in mother's knowledge (Ibrahim, 2010).

Few important aspects of Child Care and Care Practices are as:

1. Food/Diet
2. Sleep
3. Toilet/stool and urine
4. Cleaning/bathing
5. Dressing

Food for child

Adequate food is basic to life, growth and learning. Mother has the primary responsibility for making the kind and quantity of food available to their children. Children at pre-primary age are not responsible for their food supply and are not responsible for the quality of their food. Food is not only necessary for physical health and growth, but intellectual development and social well being also. How children feel, behave, look and learn is affected by what they eat (SeeFeldt & Barbour, 1986).

Mothers must pay careful attention during the feeding that, what is the appropriate feed according to the age of children, physical conditions and cultural or religious traditions. The children develop tastes and habits in the first three years of age which continue throughout their life. The eating environment and interaction with mother can create a warm and comfortable feeling about eating that encourages good eating habits and positive attitude toward food (Gonzalez-Mena & Eyer, 2000).

Sleeping

Sleep is an inborn habit that can never be completely disregarded (Lavie, 2001). In fact sleeping ~~is~~ remains growing according to the people's age. While the old age people hardly ever get the nap they need. Over the age of 50, the sleep time reduces to only 6 hours in night, whereas, the babies usually sleep for 20 hours out of 24 hours, with the 2 to 4 hours cycles (Coon,2003).

Toilet/Stool and Urine

At the first month of the birth, usually the babies may pass normal stool, after every feed, in 24 hours in routine of 2 to 4 times. The stool color is dark green at the first time, followed by yellow and then greenish color. This stool color change process completes in a day from green to yellow. After 3 or 4 days, the stool changes the color to golden yellow. The babies may have yellow to green stool who are bottle-fed (Liamputtong, 2007).

Cleaning/Bathing

For the first birth mothers, the cleaning and bathing of the baby is another extensive learning experience. This experience not only gives confidence to the first-birth mothers but also helps them to bond with infants and with the passage of time, they become familiar to this activity (Lindon, 2003).

Dressing

Parents will choose how they dress their babies, toddlers and children. It is preferable that clothing for babies is easy for carries to undo and do up again in order to change a child (Lindon, 2003). Infant clothing usually comes with adequate zippers to aid the mothers. It is commonly known that babies dislike things pulled over their heads. Dressing babies is one of the common tasks of mothers; babies are quiet easily distracted and if you talk to them while dressing then they will react less (Gonzalez-Mena & Eyer, 2007).

The review of literature revealed that the mothers have to knowledge and education about childcare and care practices regarding, food, sleeping, cleaning and dressing of the children. It is assumed that citizens of Lahore, Pakistan have very low knowledge, education and information about childcare. This study was conducted to find out the awareness of mothers and solutions for the issues in the care practices were presented.

Objectives of the Study

- To find information regarding the knowledge of the mothers about childcare.
- To know about the feed given to the children by the mothers.
- To search out the tactic of first food to the day-birth children in care centers.
- To know about the breast feeding initiation to the children in the childcare centers.
- To determine the type of food given to the children in the age of three months.
- To find out the initiation of kind of solid food to the children in the centers.

Methodology

As a quantitative research, the researcher used survey technique for the data collection and a structured questionnaire was used for this purpose. Data was collected from 50 mothers through convenient sampling method from five areas of Lahore city including Township, Nawab Town, Shahdra, Green Town and Johar Town. Data was processed and analysed by SPSS (Version 15) to find out impartial results of the study.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variables		f	%
Age of the mothers (in years)	21-30	28	56
	31-40	22	44
	Total	50	100
Occupation of the mothers	House wife	18	36
	Teaching	20	40
	Dress designer	5	10
	Scientific Officer	7	14
	Total	50	100
Qualification of the mothers	Matric	6	12
	F.A	11	22
	B.A	18	36
	M.A	15	30
	Total	50	100
Gender of the child	Male	13	26
	Female	37	74
	Total	50	100
Age of the children (in months)	1 to 12	21	42
	13-24	2	4
	25-36	9	18
	37-48	8	16
	49-60	10	20
	Total	50	100

Table 1 shows that the age of the majority of the mothers (56%) was between 21 to 30 years, while, 44% mothers were between the age of 31 to 40 years. It was also found that the mothers (40%) were teachers, housewives (36%), scientific officers (14%), and dress designers (10%). The qualification of the mothers was graduation (36%), masters (30%) and intermediate (22%) while only 12% mothers have matriculation level education. The results also show that 76% of the mothers were having female children and 26% of the mothers have male children. Most of the children (40%) were one year old, 20% children were 49 to 60 months old (4-5 years), 18% children were between 2-3 years and 16% were 3-4 years old.

Table 2
Distribution of Respondents according to the use of First Food to a new born child

Variables	f	%
Breast feeding	23	46
Bottle milk	5	10
<i>Ghutti</i>	19	38
Both a & b	3	6
Total	50	100

Table 2 shows the distribution of the respondents according to the use of first food to a new baby. Most of the mothers (46%) did the breast feeding, while 38% mothers used “*Ghutti*” at first to their new born baby.

Table 3

Distribution of the Respondents regarding Time Frame of Breast Feeding

Variables	f	%
One hour	26	52
Three hour	11	22
Four hour	7	14
Six hour	6	12
Total	50	100

The table demonstrates that most of the mothers (52%) said that breast feeding should be started one hour after normal delivery, whereas, 22% mothers replied that the child should be fed after 3 hours of normal delivery.

Table 4

Distribution of the respondents according to preference of food given to a baby of 3 months of age

Variables	f	%
Breast feeding	30	60
Juice	2	4
Solid diet	5	10
Bottle milk	13	26
Total	50	100

Table 4 expounds that 60% of mothers preferred breast feeding for a baby of 3 months of age, while, 26% favored bottle milk. 10% of them selected solid diet and only 4% suggested juice for the baby feeding.

Table 5

Response about Solid Food Initiation to the Baby

Variables	f	%
4 months	28	56
6 months	16	32
8 months	1	2
10 months	5	10
Total	50	100

Table 5 demonstrates that 56% mothers responded that solid diet is started at the age of 4 months to infant, whereas, 32% mothers suggested starting solid diet at the age of 6 months.

Discussion

The findings of the study showed that majority of the mothers were twenty to thirty years and majority of them were educated. It is also explored that most of the mothers were female children and most of the children were one year old. It is also revealed that most of the mothers know about necessity of breast feeding. The findings also explored that majority of the mothers preferred breast feeding than bottle milk, solid diet and juice for the baby feeding. The results also show that mothers have the knowledge and awareness of the food to be given to the children by the passage of time as the children grow.

Conclusion

Care is not only important for child's survival but also for optimal physical and mental development. Care also contributes to the child's general well being and happiness. Care is vital for nutritional well being of the young child. Care-giving behavior includes breast feeding, diagnosing illness and to determine that when a child will harmonize for the feeding stimulating language.

In this study, the results explored the child care practices and factor for the infant feeding, maternal health and diet, psycho-social and health care as well as hygiene practices were also identified. Child care is a composite set of behaviors that starts from the child feeding practices. It also promotes healthy and safe surroundings for the child and provides sufficient health care for the psycho-social care and emotional support of the child.

Recommendations

- Mothers should consult with childcare specialists regularly to take guidance about the proper diet and proper care for their children.
- Mothers should read the magazines and articles related to the childcare practices regularly.
- Media should play its role in increasing the awareness about childcare practices of the children.
- Different programs should be organized on electronic media to increase awareness and to motivate the parents about the caring of their children.
- Print media should also contribute in raising awareness about childcare practices by publishing brochures, articles and different handouts about the care practices of children.

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