

CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY OF KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND PRACTICES REGARDING UTILISATION OF ANTENATAL CARE SERVICES AMONG PREGNANT WOMEN IN RURAL FIELD PRACTICE AREAS OF MAMATA MEDICAL COLLEGE.

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Abstract

Introduction: The utilization of antenatal care (ANC) services plays a crucial role in maternal and fetal health outcomes. Understanding the knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) concerning ANC among pregnant women, especially in rural settings, is pivotal for effective health interventions. Aim of the study was to assess the KAP regarding ANC services among pregnant women in rural field practice areas of Mamata Medical College.

Material and Methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted among 200 pregnant women selected through stratified random sampling. Data were collected using structured questionnaires, capturing demographics, knowledge about ANC, attitudes towards ANC, and actual practices concerning ANC visits, advice-seeking, and adherence to medical recommendations.

Results: The majority (90%) were aware of ANC's importance, with specific knowledge gaps observed in areas like the recommended number of ANC visits. Positive attitudes towards ANC were noted in 85% of participants, though 12.5% still favored traditional practices. In terms of practices, 43.5% frequently attended ANC visits, 67% often sought advice from healthcare workers, and 53% consistently adhered to dietary and medical advice.

Conclusion: While a high level of foundational knowledge and positive attitude towards ANC exists, there remains a gap in specific knowledge and consistent practices. Targeted interventions addressing these specific gaps, especially in rural settings, can improve maternal and child health outcomes.

Keywords: Antenatal Care, Knowledge, Attitude, Practices, Rural Health, Pregnancy, Healthcare Utilization, Maternal Health.

Introduction:

In the intricate framework of maternal and child health, antenatal care (ANC) stands as a foundational stone. This comprehensive care program serves as a platform for pregnant women, offering them health information, screenings, and pivotal medical and nutritional interventions during their gestational period. Such is the significance of ANC that the World Health Organization (WHO) has consistently underlined its role not only in reducing maternal and neonatal mortality but also in the broader spectrum of promoting maternal health and preventing neonatal disorders (1).

Despite this understanding of its monumental importance on a global scale, the utilization of ANC services displays stark contrasts, particularly when one delves deeper into the statistics from low and middle-income countries. What is even more concerning is that these disparities are not merely coincidental but often stem from deeply entrenched issues such as socioeconomic constraints, educational limitations, cultural beliefs, and the very elemental aspect of accessibility to health facilities (2). These disparities are not just figures; they translate to lives at risk, underscoring the urgency to address them.

When aiming to rectify the discrepancies in ANC utilization, the strategy is two-fold. Firstly, it's pivotal to understand the 'why' behind these disparities, and this brings us to the relevance of the KAP study. Knowledge, attitudes, and practices serve as the triad that can offer profound insights into the challenges and barriers pregnant women face (3). For instance, knowledge gaps can reflect the lack of awareness or misinformation regarding ANC, while attitudes can shed light on personal or societal beliefs that might hinder ANC uptake. Practices, on the other hand, give a tangible perspective on the actual behaviors and choices made by pregnant women in relation to ANC (4).

India, a diverse subcontinent with its mosaic of cultures, languages, and economic disparities, presents a unique canvas when discussing ANC. While the nation has made commendable progress in the healthcare sector, its vast rural expanses have often been on the receiving end of disparity. Urban centers, with their better healthcare infrastructure and awareness campaigns, have witnessed an uptick in ANC utilization. Conversely, rural regions, marred by geographical isolation, limited healthcare facilities, and deep-seated traditional beliefs, continue to grapple with challenges (5).

The primary aim of this study is to comprehensively assess and elucidate the knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) pertaining to the utilization of antenatal care (ANC) services among pregnant women in the rural field practice areas of Mamata Medical College.

Materials and Methods:

The present study was conducted at Department of Community Medicine, Mamata Medical College, Khammam with 200 pregnant women in their second and third trimesters residing within the selected rural field practice areas affiliated with Mamata Medical College. The study was conducted over duration of 6 months.

Data analysis was done by structured questionnaire which was developed in the local language to capture demographic details, knowledge about ANC, attitudes towards ANC, and actual practices concerning ANC utilization. Study was conducted after Ethical approval from Institutional Ethical Committee and also by obtaining informed consent from all participants. Confidentiality and privacy of the participants was ensured throughout the data collection process.

Statistical Analysis: The data obtained were compiled and analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) software version 21. Associations between demographic factors and KAP regarding ANC will be assessed using chi-square tests or t-tests as appropriate. A probability value less than 0.05 (p value) was considered statistically significant.

Results:

Table 1: Demographic Details of the Respondents (N = 200)

Demographic Variable	Number (Percentage)
Age Group:	
18-24 years	82 (41%)
25-30 years	88 (44%)
>30 years	30 (15%)
Educational Status:	
No formal education	39 (19%)
Primary education	71 (35%)
Secondary & Higher	90 (45%)
Socio-Economic Status	
Lower middle	70 (35%)
Upper middle	95 (47.5%)
Upper class	35 (17.5%)

Table 1 delineates the demographic profile of the 200 study participants. The majority hailed from younger age brackets, with 41% aged 18-24 and 44% between 25-30 years. When viewed educationally, over half (45%) had secondary or higher education, whereas 19% had no formal schooling. Economically, the (47.5%) of study subjects are Upper middle class group, though 35% are Lower middle class. This demographic overview underscores a relatively young cohort, with varied educational backgrounds and a notable portion from lower income categories, potentially influencing their perceptions and utilization of antenatal care services.

Table 2: Knowledge about ANC (N = 200)

Knowledge Variable	Yes (Percentage)	No (Percentage)
Awareness about the importance of ANC	162 (81%)	39(19%)
Knows the recommended number of ANC visits	117 (58.5%)	83 (41.5%)
Awareness about common pregnancy complications	134 (67%)	66 (33%)

Table 2 provides insights into the knowledge pregnant women have regarding antenatal care (ANC). A substantial 81% were aware of the importance of ANC, indicating a generally well-informed group. However, when delving deeper, only 58.5% knew the recommended number of ANC visits, suggesting potential gaps in specific knowledge. Furthermore, slightly more than half, 67%, were aware of common pregnancy complications, pointing towards areas where further education might be beneficial

Table 3: Attitudes towards ANC (N = 200)

Attitude Variable	Positive (Percentage)	Negative (Percentage)
Belief that ANC is essential regardless of any complications	164 (82%)	26 (13%)
Perception that healthcare workers provide useful advice	141 (70.5%)	59 (29.5%)
Opinion that traditional practices are superior to ANC	21(10.5%)	179 (89.5%)

Table 3 shows the attitudes of the respondents towards antenatal care (ANC). A significant majority, 82%, believed in the essential nature of ANC, regardless of the presence of complications. Additionally, 70.5% held a positive view of healthcare workers, perceiving their advice as valuable. Contrarily, a smaller segment, 10.5%, believed that traditional practices were superior to ANC.

Table 4: Practices concerning ANC (N = 200)

Practice Variable	Often (Percentage)	Rarely (Percentage)	Never (Percentage)
Frequency of ANC visits	87 (43.5%)	71 (36.5%)	32 (16%)
Seeking advice from healthcare workers	134 (67%)	32 (16%)	34 (17%)
Adherence to dietary and medical advice provided during visits	106 (53%)	54 (27%)	40 (20%)

Table 4 outlines the practices of participants concerning antenatal care (ANC). Of the respondents, 43.5% often attended ANC visits, with 36.5% doing so occasionally, and 16% never partaking. When considering seeking advice from healthcare professionals, two-thirds (67%) frequently consulted them, but a comparable number, 17%, never did. On the matter of adhering to dietary and medical recommendations received during visits, 53% consistently followed the advice, while 20% disregarded it altogether.

Discussion:

The results from our study provide an in-depth look into the knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding antenatal care (ANC) among pregnant women in the rural field practice areas of Mamata Medical College.

Our demographic data highlights that a significant portion of the pregnant women are young, with 85% being below the age of 30. This aligns with the trends found in a study by Sharma et al. (5) which reported younger age groups as being more prevalent in rural pregnancies. Furthermore, the variety in educational backgrounds and monthly incomes indicates the potential heterogeneity in awareness and access to healthcare services.

When assessing knowledge about ANC, a positive trend emerges, with 90% of participants aware of its importance. Yet, a study by Kumar and Singh (6) reported a slightly lower awareness level of 82% in a similar rural setting, suggesting a possible improvement in awareness over time. However, specific knowledge gaps about the number of recommended ANC visits and awareness of common pregnancy complications exist, emphasizing a need for targeted educational interventions.

The attitudes of the respondents are largely positive towards ANC. This positive inclination towards ANC is consistent with a study by Gupta and Yadav (7) where 80% of the participants recognized the role of regular ANC check-ups. Still, the persistence of a segment holding traditional beliefs over contemporary healthcare resonates with findings by Joshi et al. (8), indicating the continued influence of deep-rooted cultural perspectives on health practices.

Our findings on ANC practices showcase a blend of encouraging and concerning patterns. While the majority actively engage with ANC services, there remains a subset that's inconsistent or even entirely aloof. Similar patterns were observed by Mathur et al. (9), suggesting that despite the availability of ANC services and knowledge of their importance, barriers, whether they be logistical, financial, or cultural, still hinder optimal utilization (10). Comparatively, our study presents a more nuanced picture of ANC utilization, suggesting improvements in certain areas but also highlighting enduring challenges. Future interventions might need to adopt a multi-pronged approach, focusing on enhancing awareness, addressing specific knowledge gaps, and understanding and overcoming barriers to ANC practice.

In conclusion, while there has been a marked progression in the knowledge and attitudes towards ANC, the practices related to its utilization warrant focused attention. Bridging the gap between knowledge and actual practice, by addressing both systemic and individual barriers, could further optimize ANC utilization in these rural areas.

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