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Research Article

KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDE AMONG PREGNANT WOMEN TOWARDS ANTENATAL EXERCISES AT LAHORE GENERAL HOSPITAL, LAHORE. PAKISTAN

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Abstract:

Objective: The aim of the study is to examine and assess the knowledge, attitude, and practices regarding the role of antenatal exercises among pregnant women of Pakistan. **Materials and Methods:** A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted in over 6 months in January 2020 to June 2020 of pregnant women visiting antenatal clinics of Lahore General Hospital Lahore, Pakistan. A total of 200 pregnant women in any trimester were included with a self-drafted questionnaire. They were asked regarding their knowledge, attitude, and perception of antenatal exercises. A descriptive analysis of data obtained was done by Microsoft Excel. **Results:** Knowledge regarding antenatal exercises was satisfactory, 70% of the participants were aware of physical exercises and 40% of the participants had sufficient knowledge of the beneficial role of these exercises. The attitude of the pregnant women toward antenatal physiotherapy was poor, 45% of participants had a positive attitude toward physiotherapy during antenatal visits and 62% of participants perceived those antenatal exercises reduce pregnancy related complications and ensure a safe delivery. The perception of physiotherapy was also poor and only 47% of the participants were exercising their present pregnancy. **Conclusion:** Knowledge regarding antenatal physiotherapy was satisfactory, but the attitude and perception of the patients were fairly low.

KEY WORDS: Antenatal Exercises Physiotherapy, Attitude, Knowledge, Perception, Pregnancy

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INTRODUCTION:

Pregnancy, delivery, and postpartum are significant events in any woman's life. Pregnant women undergo dynamic changes in their body, mind and lifestyle such as depression, complications, and reduced physical activity. Hence, women ought to have a strong will power to overcome these discomforts by engaging themselves in physical exercises. Physical activity is vital for both mother and child, and it may reduce the risk of adverse maternal and fetal outcomes and help to overcome pregnancy-related complications and maintain optimum fitness.[1,2]

Therefore, physiotherapy plays a supportive part during pregnancy. Some studies have documented that performing antenatal physical exercises help pregnant women in reducing complications of pregnancy, reduce the time required in labor, and help quickly recover after delivery.[3,4]

Despite these positive impacts, pregnant women are reluctant to exercise, especially in developing countries. Nonetheless, their level of qualification, unfavorable socioeconomic conditions, remote tertiary health care facilities and exercise phobias during delivery frequently encouraged a sedentary lifestyle of pregnancy.[5,6]

Antenatal attitudes toward physical exercises have dramatically changed over the past 20 years. Recent studies suggest that exercise is healthy for both mother and fetus and advocate the need of routine sessions. To evaluate the risk and benefits of these exercise sessions on the fetus, all pregnant women must be examined periodically and necessary counseling and modifications should be offered. Women with history of medical or obstetric complications should be carefully evaluated before recommending any physical task. Despite the fact that pregnancy gives rise to noticeable anatomical and physiological changes, exercise has minimal risks and proven benefits for both mother and fetus.[7,8]

Previously, the authors had investigated the beliefs and attitudes of women regarding physical therapy in pregnancy and the factors that affect their behavior in relation to exercise.[9,10]

Therefore, this study was designed to assess the knowledge, attitude, and practice of antenatal exercises among pregnant women in a developing country.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:**Study Design**

This study is an observational cross-sectional study. A total of 200 participants were engaged.

Participants

This study was conducted at the antenatal follow up clinics of Gyna/Obs Lahore General Hospital, Lahore, Pakistan. 200 volunteers participated in this study. The inclusion criteria were as follows: (1) The ages between 18 and 40 years old; (2) any trimester pregnant woman; and Exclusion criteria were as follows: (1) Highrisk pregnancy and (2) Not willing to participate. Informed written consent was obtained from all the pregnant women. Privacy and confidentiality was ensured at every step.

Data Collection Tool

Modified self-administered questionnaire was adapted from the previous study by Safaraz *et al*.^[11]

The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions about sociodemographic data, knowledge and practice towards the antenatal exercises. The questionnaire was drafted into local language for comfort of interpretation

Formal permission was sought from the administration of Lahore General Hospital Lahore Pakistan to fill out the questionnaire among pregnant women presenting themselves for routine antenatal follow up in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel for data entry and calculating frequencies and percentage.

RESULTS:

A total of 200 respondents participated in this study. About 58% of the respondents were above 25 years of age and 76% uneducated. Their socioeconomic status was found that 12% of our respondents belonged to upper and 24% to middle and 64% to lower middle class responses of the participants on parity revealed that the majority of them (68%) were multiparous, Table 1.

The sociodemographic characteristics of respondents are presented in Table 1.

The set of questions was designed to check the respondent's knowledge and perception of and attitude toward the role of physiotherapy in antenatal care. About 70% of our study participants

were aware of physiotherapy and 25% of the respondents knew that physiotherapy is mainly concerned with exercises. When the respondents were asked about antenatal exercises, only 42% of them knew about antenatal exercises. Media (32%) were the main source for their information about antenatal exercises. It was also found that 42% of them were of the opinion that gynecologist was best fit to prescribe exercises. The respondents had a knowledge of back care exercises (14%), abdominal exercises (6%), pelvic floor exercises (24%), and relaxation and breathing exercise (56%), respectively, as types of antenatal exercise, Table 2.

When respondents were asked questions to check their knowledge of the benefits of antenatal exercises, most of them agreed that it could help to reduce back pain (47%), prevent excessive weight gain (55%), and help with labor and delivery (70%). About 17% of antenatal exercises cause high blood pressure and 35% believed that antenatal exercises may reduce the risk of urinary incontinence. The finding is given in Table 3.

In our study, only 12% of participants reported that they were referred for physiotherapy by their healthcare professionals. Regarding their present exercise routine, 52% of the respondents stated that they continued to perform exercises during pregnancy, walking being the main type of exercise. Respondents also admitted that a tiredness was the main reason for the cessation of their current practice of performing exercises, Table 4.

About 46% of participants perceived that physiotherapy had a positive role in antenatal care. About 80% of them also agreed that it helped the new mother to get back into shape. About 56% knew that physiotherapy reduced pregnancy-related complications while 76% believed that it aided postnatal recovery. The findings This study assessed the knowledge, practice, and are given in Table 4. attitude of pregnant women in Pakistan with respect to the role of physiotherapy in antenatal care. A total of 200 respondents participated in any trimester that 12% of subjects fell into the upper class, 24% middle class and 64% lower middle class.

Table 1: Sociodemographic data of pregnant women

| Characteristics | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Age | | |
| <25 | 84 | 42 |
| 25 and above | 116 | 58 |
| Qualification Uneducated | | |
| | 152 | 76 |
| Intermediate | 40 | 20 |
| High education | 8 | 4 |
| Occupation Professional | | |
| | 42 | 21 |
| Self Employed | 64 | 32 |
| Unemployed | 94 | 47 |
| Socioeconomic status | | |
| Upper Class | 24 | 12 |
| Middle | 48 | 24 |
| Lower | | |
| Middle Class | 128 | 64 |
| Parity | | |
| Primiparous | 64 | 32 |
| Multiparous | 136 | 68 |

Table 2: Awareness of pregnant women regarding and antenatal exercises

| Variables | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|-----------|------------|
| Do you know what physiotherapy is? | | |
| Yes | 140 | 70 |
| No | 60 | 30 |
| What do know what physiotherapy is?Exercises | 50 | 25 |
| Massage | 70 | 35 |
| Electrical stimulation | 0 | 0 |
| All | 80 | 40 |
| Do you know the meaning ofantenatal exercises? | | |
| Yes | 84 | 42 |
| No | 76 | 38 |
| Not sure | 40 | 20 |
| If yes, how did you get to know about it? | | |
| Family/friend | 104 | 52 |
| Media | 64 | 32 |
| At antenatal class | 28 | 14 |
| Other | 4 | 2 |
| Who do you know can be a better guide for antenatal exercises? | | |
| Physiotherapist | 64 | 32 |
| Gynecologist | 84 | 42 |
| Self | 32 | 16 |
| Other | 20 | 10 |
| Are you aware of following types of antenatal exercises? | Yes | Percentage |
| Back care exercises | 28 | 14 |
| Abdominal exercises | 12 | 6 |
| Pelvic floor exercises | 48 | 24 |
| Relaxation/breathing exercises | 112 | 56 |

Table 3: Knowledge and attitude of participants about the role of antenatal exercises in pregnancy

| Variables | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|------------------|-------------------|
| Performing Antenatal Exercises reduces risk of back pain? | | |
| Yes | 62 | 47 |
| No | 34 | 25 |
| Not sure | 38 | 28 |
| Do Antenatal Exercises prevents weight gain? | 75 | 55 |
| Yes | | |
| No | 29 | 21 |
| Not sure | 30 | 22 |
| Do Antenatal Exercises help cope up with stress of labor and delivery? Yes | 94 | 70 |
| No | 19 | 14 |
| Not sure | 21 | 15 |
| Do Antenatal Exercises reduces risk of gestational diabetes? | | |
| Yes | 64 | 47 |
| No | 38 | 28 |
| Not sure | 32 | 23 |
| Do Antenatal Exercises during pregnancy increases energy and endurance? | | |
| Yes | 86 | 64 |
| No | 14 | 10 |
| Not sure | 34 | 25 |
| Do you think Antenatal Exercises have a role in reducing risk of urinary incontinence? | | |
| Yes | 48 | 35 |
| No | 58 | 43 |
| Not sure | 28 | 20 |
| Can Antenatal Exercises cause high blood pressure? | | |
| Yes | 23 | 17 |
| No | 87 | 64 |
| Not sure | 24 | 17 |
| Do Antenatal Exercises promote health and development of the baby? | | |
| Yes | 76 | 56 |
| No | 16 | 11 |
| Not sure | 42 | 31 |

Table 4: Knowledge and attitude of pregnant women regarding the role antenatalexercises

| Variables | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|------------------|-------------------|
| Does Antenatal Exercises have a positive role in antenatal care? | | |
| Yes | 104 | 52 |
| No | 16 | 8 |
| Not sure | 80 | 40 |
| Is it important to perform Antenatal Exercises under the supervision of healthcare professional? | | |
| Yes | 116 | 58 |
| No | 34 | 17 |
| Not sure | 50 | 25 |
| Do you think Antenatal Exercises can minimize pregnancyrelated complications? | | |
| Yes | 124 | 62 |
| No | 26 | 13 |
| Not sure | 50 | 25 |
| Do you think exercise helps in postpartum recovery? Yes | 152 | 76 |
| No | 8 | 4 |
| Not sure | 40 | 20 |
| Do you think the Antenatal Exercises helps regain your shape? | | |
| Yes | 166 | 83 |
| No | 4 | 2 |
| Not sure | 30 | 15 |
| Do you think Antenatal Exercises regime should vary from onepregnant woman to another? | | |
| Yes | 164 | 82 |
| No | 20 | 10 |
| Not sure | 16 | 8 |
| Do you recommend Antenatal Exercises?Yes | 124 | 62 |
| No | 16 | 8 |
| Not sure | 60 | 30 |

The women in our study sample were found that 80% of the respondents were aware of physiotherapy and 24% were believed that physiotherapy is mainly concerned with exercise as intervention.

Our study also revealed that 52% of participants had a positive attitude toward physiotherapy during antenatal care and 62% of participants perceived those antenatal exercises reduce pregnancy-related complications and ensure a safe delivery. These findings suggest that despite being aware of the benefits of physical exercise, many women do not feel motivated or actively engage in exercises. This highlights the fact that healthcare professionals in our country are unsure of the role of physiotherapy in antenatal care which may further contribute to the ignorance of pregnant women regarding antenatal exercises. The results of this study also revealed that only 52% of the participants had adequate knowledge of the benefits of antenatal exercise. However, they were not influenced by maternal sociodemographic characteristics. We state that there is an urgent need for the management of hospitals and physiotherapists themselves to put in more effort to create an awareness of the need for antenatal exercises in developing countries.

The finding of this study is contrary to the previous studies of Chidozie *et al.*^[12] reported that a majority of Nigerian pregnant women demonstrated inadequate knowledge but had a positive attitude toward antenatal exercises. Knowledge of benefits and contraindications to antenatal exercises significantly influenced the attitude toward exercise in pregnancy.

Nayak *et al.*^[13] who suggested that a majority of Indian pregnant women demonstrate inadequate knowledge but have a positive attitude toward the role of physiotherapy in antenatal care.

Shifna *et al.*^[14] concluded that awareness in physiotherapy in antenatal care among pregnant women attending antenatal care in Gangawatakoralle is poor. There is a positive effect of physiotherapy interventions in quality of life of pregnant women during pregnancy.

CONCLUSION:

Our results hint that the pregnant women of Pakistan had satisfactory knowledge regarding the role of Antenatal Exercises; however, their attitude towards the healthy benefits of the different antenatal exercises is inadequate.

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