

# Traditions and perceptions regarding traditional foods and their consumption during postpartum period by women visiting Tertiary Care Hospital, Lahore

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## Abstract:

Traditional foods are often used as family customs linked with particular festivals and seasons passing down from generations to generations. Traditional foods are prepared using definite procedures following the cookery legacy, less refined and identified on the basis of their unique taste linked to particular nation, place or state.

## Objective:

To find traditions and perceptions regarding traditional foods and their consumption during postpartum period by women visiting Tertiary Care Hospital, Lahore

## Methods:

A cross-sectional study was carried out at Gynae Department of Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, Lahore. Study was completed in 4 months, using non-probability convenient sampling technique. The data of 100 patients collected through pre-tested questionnaire were analyzed statistically using SPSS version 21.0. Frequencies were calculated and Pearson's chi-square test was applied to find associations between various parameters.

## Results:

Among mothers, 97% had knowledge regarding traditional foods, 3% didn't know about traditional foods, 32% were consuming traditional foods once a day, 27% were consuming traditional foods twice a day, 9% were consuming traditional foods more than two times a day, where as 32% were not consuming traditional foods. Among the traditional foods, 25% of mothers were consuming Gond panjiri (Sweets), 25% were consuming Halwa (Sweets), 18% were consuming Alsi, while 32% were not consuming any traditional foods.

## Conclusions:

There was a fairly increased knowledge about

traditional foods among postpartum women; and different perceptions regarding the consumption of traditional foods were seen. Family traditions came out as the fundamental cause of large consumption of traditional foods following the belief that traditional foods maintain weight and are consider appropriate for optimal health status during postpartum period.

## Key Words:

Traditions, perceptions, traditional foods, postpartum period, women

## Introduction:

Beliefs, relationship, financial system and the increasing civilization of broadcasting and therapeutic skills are the factors affecting the advancement of a woman from parturition to parenting. Small population segments follow the traditional care, some other groups of people adopt modern ways of care while a predominant majority in the community prefer both ways.<sup>1</sup> Mother milk is recommended by World Health Organization as a complete food for neonate during 6 months after birth. Postpartum practices are influenced by traditional norms and values.<sup>2</sup> Some societies follow the custom of using herbal drugs to stimulate milk production, however little information is available regarding the effectiveness of these herbs.<sup>3</sup> Restricting certain foods during postpartum period is customary in Asia, which may decline the nourishing substances of mother milk resulting in adverse health outcomes.<sup>4</sup> Caloric requirements during lactation period is increased by 25-30%, women's dietary behaviors during postpartum period indicate how a mother fulfills her energy needs.<sup>5</sup> Awareness regarding the importance of healthy diet should be promoted, highlighting the beneficial effects

of adequate nutrition on mother health and conserving body's energy.<sup>6</sup> Postpartum duration starts after birth and lasts up to 1 year as an outcome of pregnancy-related body changes that take place in this period. Excessive weight gain during postpartum period leads to chronic obesity coupled with adverse physical conditions and monetary burden.<sup>7</sup> Traditional foods are often used as family customs linked with particular festivals and seasons passing down from generations to generations. These traditional foods are prepared following the cookery legacy, less refined and identified on the basis of their unique taste linked to particular nation, place or state.<sup>8</sup> In Pakistan, most of the lactating women who belong to Punjab eat traditional foods based on family traditions. "Panjiri" is often consumed by mothers, made specifically for attaining instant energy, reducing weakness and enhancing milk production for lactation.<sup>9</sup> Food practices in some traditions are established to label the 'cold' state in confinement period. Chinese women consume hot foods and avoid fruits and cold beverages following their dietary customs during the postpartum period.<sup>10</sup> Majority (80%) of mothers in Pakistan restrict certain foods during postpartum period and 73% avoid cold foods. Panjiri consumption is encouraged to about 84% mothers during postpartum.<sup>11</sup> Exclusive breastfeeding after birth to six months is essential for mothers as well because it decreases the chances of obesity.<sup>12</sup> Measures should be taken to assess the nutritional quality of the food supplements and analyze the consequences of consuming dietary supplements on the health of mothers.<sup>13</sup> A study was organized by Hishamshah M *et al.*, in 2010 which mentioned that above 60% maternal deaths happen in postpartum period in developing nations. In underdeveloped nations, more than 70% females do not get any kind of postpartum care.<sup>14</sup> A study was conducted to discover the traditions during postpartum period in distinct religions and cultures. Study found that specific prescriptions were linked with breastfeeding.

For example, Muslim mothers are supported to take foods which are "hot". Chinese mothers use many foods such as black root pickle and fish soup during postpartum. These types of traditions prevail to increase breast milk production.<sup>15</sup> Another research was conducted in 2013. The study found higher frequency of herbs and traditional foods usage in pregnancy period and after pregnancy.<sup>16</sup> Report from a study conducted during 2011 mentioned that some specific diets and activities during postpartum were culturally dominated in different Southeast Asian traditions, and a period of internment was observed. 49 types were observed in this study.<sup>17</sup> In another study on the application of traditional beliefs in women during postpartum period, it was found that some women started to consume herbs and other traditional foods. Study concluded that traditional beliefs should be regarded as interventions to enhance dietary intakes during this postpartum period.<sup>18</sup> A study conducted in India in year 2009 found that the mothers who were the participants of the study told specific foods as taboo only in postpartum period. They used to take special food items to get good nutrition during lactation and to regain their energy.<sup>19</sup>

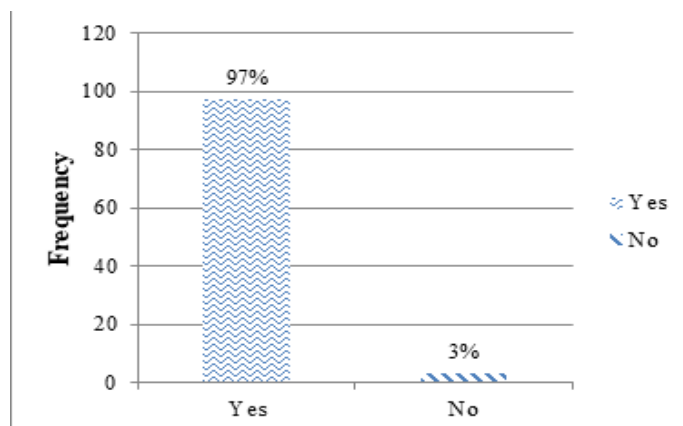
The current study was undertaken to assess the traditions and perceptions regarding traditional foods and their consumption by women during postpartum period so that awareness could be created regarding perceptions and consumption of traditional foods through exclusive health education in order to improve the nutritional status of postpartum women.

### Methods:

A cross-sectional study was conducted at Gynae Department of Tertiary care hospital in Lahore city among 100 postpartum females over a period of 4 months. A pre-tested questionnaire was used to collect data using convenient sampling technique. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 21.0. Frequencies were calculated and Pearson's chi-square test was applied to find associations. p-value less than 0.05 was considered as significant.

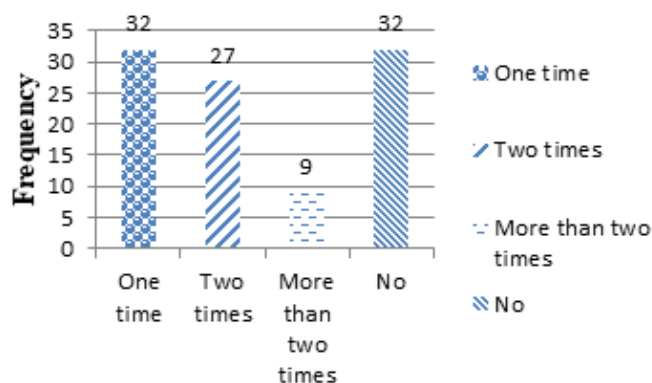
## Results:

The analysis showed that 97% of mothers had a knowledge regarding traditional foods, 3% of mothers didn't know about traditional foods, as shown in Figure 1.



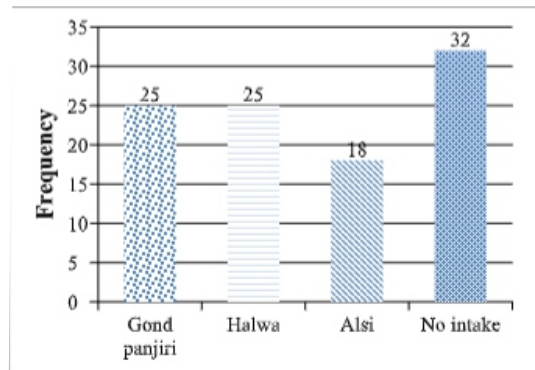
**Figure 1:** Frequency distribution of knowledge regarding traditional foods

According to the results, 32 % of mothers were consuming traditional foods once a day, 27% twice a day, 9% more than two times a day, while 32 % of mothers were not consuming traditional foods, as shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2:** Daily intake of traditional foods among postpartum women

As can be noted from Figure 3, 25% of mothers were consuming Gond panjiri, 25% of mothers were consuming Halwa, 18% of mothers were consuming Alsi, 32% of mothers were not consuming any traditional food.



**Figure 3:** Frequency distribution of different traditional foods consumption among postpartum women

Table 1 shows significant association between traditional foods providing additional energy during postpartum and assuming traditional foods good for health status.

Traditional foods providing additional energy during postpartum	Assuming traditional foods good for health status		P-value
	Yes	No	
Yes	10	7	.012
No	72	11	
Total	82	18	

**Table 1:** Association between traditional foods consumption and health benefit.

Table 2 shows significant association between daily intake of traditional foods and perception regarding traditional foods maintain body weight.

Daily intake of traditional foods	Perception regarding traditional foods maintain bodyweight		Total	P - value
	Yes	No		
No	20	12	32	.007
1 time	26	6	32	
2 times	23	4	27	
More than 2 times	9	0	9	
Total	78	22	100	

**Table 2:** Association between traditional foods consumption and bodyweight.



Table 3 shows highly significant association between daily intake of traditional foods and family tradition of using traditional foods.

Daily intake of traditional foods	Family tradition of using traditional foods		Total	P - value
	Yes	No		
No intake	27	5	32	.008
1 time	32	0	32	
2 times	37	0	27	
More than 2 times	9	0	9	
Total	95	5	100	

**Table 3:** Association between daily traditional foods and family tradition

### Discussion:

According to results of the present study, 97% of mothers knew about traditional foods. 32 % of mothers were consuming traditional foods once a day, 27% twice a day, 9% more than two times a day, while 32 % of mothers were not consuming traditional foods. Similarly, Barennes *et al.*, in 2009 reported from a study on postpartum traditions and nutrition practices among urban women and their infants in Vientiane. They high prevalence of practices of traditional foods among postpartum mothers 97% .<sup>4</sup> Panjiri and Halwa are considered good traditional foods by women to get energy during postpartum period. In present study, the results regarding the consumption of two traditional foods “Halwa” and “Panjiri” during postpartum period showed that 25% of mothers took “halwa”. In current study for consumption of Panjiri, results showed that 25% of mothers consumed Panjiri. To observe the consumption of traditional foods including Halwa and Panjiri, A study was conducted by Kumari S *et al.*, and results revealed that 23.16% of mothers consumed Halwa and 33.33% of mothers consumed Panjiri during postpartum period.<sup>20</sup> The rate of consumption of traditional foods by women during postpartum as a family tradition is increasing worldwide but is prevailing more

among Asian families. According to the current study, the results regarding the consumption of traditional foods as a family tradition showed that 95% of mothers had a family tradition of consuming traditional foods and significant association was found between family traditions of consuming traditional foods and intake of traditional foods ( $P < 0.05$ ). Similar results were reported from a previous study conducted by Raven JH *et al.*. It was found in the study that mothers during postpartum period were consuming traditional foods because old family members and friends told them to have traditional food during this period and that they followed their advice because they did not know what to do in this period.<sup>1</sup>

### Conclusions:

There was a fairly increased knowledge of traditional foods among postpartum women and different perceptions regarding the consumption of traditional foods were seen. Family tradition came out as the fundamental cause of large consumption of traditional foods following the belief that traditional foods maintain weight and are good for optimal health status during postpartum period.

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