

Impact of Nutrition on Working Expecting Women: Organizational Prospective and Measures

Pratibha Verma

Dietitian

Barod Hospital, Indore

pratibha22259@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Good nutrition is important for all, but it assumes an even greater importance for women when they are pregnant. Pregnancy is a time when nutritional needs are higher than usual and meeting those needs has a positive effect on the health of the mother as well as her child. Working women have many roles to play in which they usually give priority to their family and endure a lot of work stress while neglecting her own needs during pregnancy. This paper finds about how a variety of organizations have looked at the needs of expecting employees. The study also maps organizational measures to make women more aware about the importance of healthy diet during pregnancy. It is found that there is a lack of awareness and knowledge about nutritional needs during pregnancy in rural as well as urban working women. The organizations also take this issues with a varied level of acceptance. In the end, the paper advocates the need for a better awareness of legal compliance among managers and provide better nutritional care as well as rest/breaks to the expecting employees. The final outcome would be a healthy mother and child, along with a productive employee.

Keywords: Nutrition, Pregnancy, Working Women, Impact and Awareness

INTRODUCTION

In today's world, women are making their presence felt in all fields with better work result and efficiency. She has learnt to manage her responsibilities indoor as well as outside home or work area. Working women, who earns the salary wages or other income through regular employment outside the home. The term "women's work" may indicate a role with children as defined by nature in that only women are biologically capable of performing them, pregnancy, child birth and breast feeding. It may also refer to role related to house-keeping, teacher, governess, nanny, day care, some is outdoor like fetching water, grocery, shopping or food foraging extra". Pregnancy is time of many changes your body, your emotions and life of your family are changing. You may welcome these changes but they can add new stresses to your life. Adequate nutrition in women is one of the most crucial component of a healthy society. Many of the chronic ongoing problems that women experience in the area of health, employment and the productivity can be alleviated if they receive adequate nutrition during pregnancy. The risk like preterm birth, labor, low birth weight, pre-eclampsia can we increase by stressful work. During pregnancy time women experience many physical problems like nausea, leg cramps, mood swings, fatigue, edema, hypertension, polyurea and many other complications along with work stress she has to bear multiple load of work balancing between family, job and pregnancy complications. A working woman is always in a hurry to balance between her roles which has a direct impact on her nutritional care and intake.

Background of Working Expecting Women: With the increase in number of roles of women everywhere, work - life balance is making a big impact on nutrition of working women. When the ratio of working women increased, some organizations made policies for working expecting women to ensure that the productivity remained unaffected and to contribute for a better and a healthier society. Government also planned and implemented many laws and policies for the same, but the benefit of laws and policies are not getting to majority of working expecting women. The organizations are not following laws and policies properly and also most women are not aware about their rights. Adequate nutrition of working expecting women has greater potential for a long term health impact than it does at any other time. Maternal health is a complex thing, influenced by various factors such as genetics, social interaction, economic factors and environmental conditions which may also affect the growth of the fetus. A working expecting women who gets adequate nutrition during her pregnancy will have a superior chance of good physical and mental health in life which overall will increase the productiveness of the employee.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature extracted for the current research is just to comprehend the impact of nutrition on working expecting women along with organizational prospective and measures. Robinsons and Lisa (2006) stated that many women experience discrimination during pregnancy in the workplace. Research also suggests that there are organizational benefits in providing family – friendly practices and costs of replacing women who leave the organization are reduced. Employees can implement practical measures to show flexibility and understanding to women in the workplace. Advice and guidance are available for employers wishing to adopt a best practice policy for managing pregnant employees.

A report on leading practices and strategies in the workplace mention that some of the leading practices and strategies being developed and adopted by organizations, it has highlighted strategies for small, medium, and large sized organizations. The successful and productive workplaces are ones in which employee and employer are partners, in which every member is valued for their unique contribution, in which organization can develop a skilled workforce which they know will make a positive contribution to the organization for the longer term.

As discussed by Ainapur, Vidyavati, Kulkarni and Mamata (2016) – work life balance practices benefit everyone. According to Reifsnider (2006), a life cycle approach to women’s nutrition will acknowledge that adequate nutrition for women is not only important to their health but also to the health of their children and families.

Another view point of Chaterjee (1989) says that to go beyond viewing reproduction as the sole or primary role of women, it is necessary to examine other outcomes that are important to women themselves and to society and to ascertain whether or not they are influenced by nutritional status. A high priority area is the social role of women, this is important now and is likely to be more important with future socioeconomic development. Research says that employees believed that organization should provide more supportive maternity leave policies and should seek to minimize negative career impact on pregnant employee. However, subject also felt employers were too generous in making workload reduction for pregnant employees.

WHO defines Antenatal care is the routine health control of presumed healthy pregnant women without symptoms(screening) in order to diagnose disease or complicating obstetric condition without symptoms and to provide information about lifestyle, pregnancy and delivery.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the study is to understand organizational perspectives on expecting working women employees and the importance it lays on the organizational support to the employee.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Study: This study is descriptive in nature and based on real cases of working expecting women. With the help of nutrition issues of these working women’s analyzed in the light of their organizational situations. The data has been collected, analyzed and based on their real life situation, suggestion has been given to improve the nutrition impact.

Sampling and data collection tool: The research visited hospitals and interacted with doctors and visitors in the city of Indore, Madhya Pradesh only. The subjects or respondents were chosen on the following basis –

1. Expecting women who are working in any organizational setup.
2. Expecting women who agreed to share their experiences and the kind of support they received (or not received) from organization they were working with.

No other criteria was kept for the sample selection.

A structured interview schedule was prepared by the researcher and the responses were written down on the sheet.

FINDINGS

Three cases are dealt with details here. The actual names are disguised.

Case 1: Mrs. Rohini Kaldate is 33 years old and is an expecting woman. She works at a beauty salon as a beautician (hair & makeup artist) in Touch beauty salon at Vijaynagar, Indore. Mrs. Rohini is 19 weeks pregnant and this is her second pregnancy. Her son is 14 years old, her husband is a property broker and there are five members in family including her in laws, husband, son and herself. She belongs to middle income group. In salon she has to work for 10 hours a day and in season time much longer up to 14 hours. Even though she is an expecting woman, her organization does not reduce her working hours. She has to stand for hours and go work at outdoor locations at times. The organization doesn't provide her any meals or any meal break as such. She does not get leave for doctor's visit and so has to manage in between work hours. She is struggling to manage work, family and her health during pregnancy all together.

Her organization does not give her any privileges as being expecting woman. She asked her organization about decreasing work hours along with work sharing with her colleagues also she told about her rights during pregnancy which the Indian government has made laws and policies for expecting working women, but her managing director denied for all these policies and also said, if she have any problem she can leave the job. As she was economically not well she has to continue with all these circumstances. Due to long hours of standing for work she has developed edema in her legs with back pain. While managing her work with her family she went into depression in her early weeks of pregnancy, later she overcome with her depression and started to work hard for her child and family. In all this she just forgot about her health, which lead her to malnutrition and many other complications.

She is not even aware about nutritional importance and due to her negligence of nutrition during pregnancy time her biochemical reports were under the mark which means she is malnourished. This made her dull and caused drowsiness which ultimately made her lack confidence and other complications regarding nutritional deficiencies. Her expectations from her organization are to decrease work hours, distribution of some of her work amongst her colleagues, breaks for meals, assign her only sitting work instead of standing, Benefits such as paid leave should also be provided which her organization doesn't. The organization is profited by her artistic work and demand for her makeup and hairstyling ability, so the organization must take care of her during her pregnancy.

Case 2: Mrs. Monika More is a 32 years old working woman. Monika has experienced her pregnancy quite comfortably. Monika belongs to higher income group. She has done MBA and is working as the area manager at GRUH finance Ltd(bank). Monika's elder son is 6 years old. There are 6 members in her family with two earning members. This is her second pregnancy.

Monika was earlier posted at Annapurna road branch which would take more than an hour travel time to reach the place from home, but after getting pregnant the organization shifted her branch near to home that is in Vijaynagar. Monika got many advantages as being pregnant by her organization. The organization offered her to work from home, her work pressure was also reduced and also the work hours were reduced during pregnancy period. The organization also provided separate restroom for women at workplace, a proper sitting place with proper ventilation also shifted her desk from second floor to ground floor. Although the organization does not provide meals to employees but they are given fixed meal timings, which helped Monika to take meals at proper time to get ample nutrition required for her pregnancy period.

The organization provide doctors visit monthly for all staff in the work place and diet and fitness related activities and lectures. Her family support played major role during her pregnancy to keep balance with work and family including her health. Monika was facing pregnancy difficulties like mood swings, morning sickness which she able to manage due to both family and organizations cooperation and coordination. This lead Monika to carry her pregnancy with her work efficiently. Also, all these support and assistance made a big impact on her health and productive with better outcome. It's good to work in a big company such as GRUH as it follows all govt laid policies. Monika also got paid maternity leave for three months.

Case 3: Mrs Anita Lakhmara is 34 years old and work as an interior designer. Anita lives with her in-Laws. Her husband runs his own business. She has two daughters age 10 years and 6 years. She is expecting again, but she has been forced this time as her in-laws were very much possessive to have a boy, so Anita had to consider their wish and took a third chance. Anita is a graduate in commerce and has done post-graduation diploma course in interior designing after her marriage. She has been struggling with her work, family and life. As interior designing is a vast field to work and it takes a long time to work on any project. Anita works with Mr. Murtuza's company as an interior designer. During her pregnancy period she had to work on projects for long hours, visit sites and markets for the jobs demand. To complete projects on time is a big challenge which sometimes requires her to work at odd time with workers.

The organization never bothered about her being pregnant. The organization just wanted the projects to be completed on time. Anita was trying her level best to balance between her work and family but this impacted her health in a negative way. During her pregnancy her physical conditions were also not supportive as she was felt nauseous, had back pain, oedema in legs, morning sickness and anaemia. Anita also did not eat her meals at proper timings which made her malnourished with lots of different nutritional deficiencies. Her family support was negligible, so she is always running to compete with demanding family needs, work stress along with pregnancy challenges. There was no separate time for meals. All the day she had to run to her work as her job is very demanding and there was no help or cooperation from the organization.

An did not get leaves for doctors' visits, she had to manage in between her working hours. Work from home option was not there and also she could not even share her work with her colleagues. The laws and policies are still not compulsorily followed by many organizations, which made women struggling during pregnancy with work. Even nowadays in private sectors, organizations do not follow laws and policies made by govt of India for pregnant women. Also she was not aware about her rights.

SUGGESTIONS:

1. Awareness programs regarding rights of expecting working women should be organized. (which include laws and policies by Indian government) Indian government should make strict laws for every small or big, private or government organizations to follow compulsory all laws and policies for expecting working women.
2. Awareness programs regarding importance of nutrition throughout one's life should be mandatory for corporations and organizations.
3. Periodical health checkups should be compulsory in every organization to keep their employees fit and healthy for better productivity better outcomes.
4. Awareness programs related to nutrition during pregnancy and its effects on child and mother's health along with better outcome with efficient working.
5. Laws related to pregnancy should be strictly followed by all organization (whether big or small) to help in making a healthier society.
6. Provision of healthy meals at workplace would help in keeping employees fit and healthy.
7. Work options such as work from home should be provided to pregnant to ease them.
8. Counselling sessions can be conducted for dealing with the situations and releasing stress, so that the women feel more supported and loved when they need it. They would also feel more charged and be more productive at her work as well as focus on her health and family better.

CONCLUSION

Women constitute a substantial percentage of the workforce in developed countries. As a result, addressing health issues regarding pregnancy in the workplace is important in order to formulate appropriate strategies to promote and protect the mother's and child's health but pregnancy discrimination is still prevalent. To improve mother's and child's health and workplace conditions for women, organizations should support women in pregnancy, implement policies for expecting women (Maternity Benefit Act.), privileges should be given to employees' conditions including workplace environment and job duties.

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INTERNET RESOURCES:

1. <https://www.humanrights.gov.au>
2. <https://www.bls.gov/ore/abstract>
3. <https://www.equaltyhumanrights.com>
4. www.ihrec.ie
5. www.ijrcog.org
6. www.nfog.org
7. <https://www.measureevaluation.org>
8. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov>