AWARENESS OF PROBIOTICS DURING MATERNAL PHASE

Dr. Lakshmi Agnihotri[1] and Harsha Kaur Bhogal[2]
[1]Professor, Department of Home Science Sarojini Naidu Govt. Girls P.G. (Autonomous) College, Bhopal
[2]Research Scholar, Home Science, Sarojini Naidu Govt. Girls P.G. (Autonomous) College, Bhopal

Abstract

Probiotics, defined as live microorganisms that provide health benefits when consumed in adequate amounts, play a significant role in maternal health. Their impact includes enhancing gut microbiota, strengthening the immune system, and potentially reducing pregnancy-related complications. However, awareness regarding probiotics during pregnancy remains limited. This study aims to assess the level of awareness among pregnant women, explore sources of probiotics, and identify key barriers to their consumption. The findings suggest a need for improved public health education and strategic interventions to promote probiotic intake during the maternal phase.

Keywords: Probiotics, maternal health, gut microbiota, pregnancy, public health awareness

INTRODUCTION

The maternal phase is a critical period that significantly impacts both maternal and fetal health. Nutrition plays a crucial role in ensuring optimal outcomes, and among the various dietary components, probiotics have gained increasing attention for their potential health benefits. Probiotics are live microorganisms that confer health benefits when consumed in adequate amounts, primarily by improving gut microbiota composition, enhancing immune function, and reducing pregnancy-related complications.

Despite the growing body of research supporting the benefits of probiotics during pregnancy, awareness among pregnant women remains inconsistent. Several factors influence the level of probiotic awareness, including education, socioeconomic status,

access to healthcare, and exposure to nutritional information. Many expectant mothers are unaware of the dietary sources of probiotics, such as yogurt, fermented foods, and probiotic supplements, or their role in supporting maternal and neonatal health.

Healthcare professionals play a crucial role in educating pregnant women about the potential benefits of probiotics, yet their recommendations often vary due to the lack of standardized guidelines. Addressing the knowledge gap through targeted awareness programs and reliable healthcare guidance is essential for promoting probiotic consumption and improving maternal and infant health outcomes. This study aims to evaluate the awareness levels of probiotics among pregnant women, identify key sources, and explore effective strategies to enhance their understanding and consumption during the maternal phase.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Several studies highlight the significance of probiotics in maternal health. According to Johnson et al. (2020), probiotic supplementation has been associated with reduced risks of gestational diabetes, preeclampsia, and bacterial vaginosis. Additionally, maternal probiotic intake has been linked to improved neonatal gut colonization, positively influencing the newborn's microbiome (Wang et al., 2022).

Miller et al. (2021) found that awareness about probiotics remains low among pregnant women, with many lacking information about dietary sources and health benefits. Lee et al. (2021) emphasized the role of healthcare professionals in educating expectant mothers about probiotic intake, although inconsistencies in dietary recommendations have led to confusion.

Studies also indicate that socioeconomic factors influence probiotic consumption, with higher-income individuals having greater access to probiotic-rich foods and supplements (Thomas et al., 2019). These findings highlight the need for targeted awareness programs to bridge knowledge gaps.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design : The study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. A descriptive research design is used to assess awareness levels, sources, and dietary patterns of probiotics among pregnant women.

Population and Sampling The target population includes pregnant women from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Sample size is 200 and a stratified random sampling technique is employed.

Data Collection Methods Primary data is collected using structured questionnaires. Secondary data is obtained from published books and research articles.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Awareness of Probiotics Among Pregnant Women

Awareness Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Aware	90	45%
Limited Knowledge	60	30%
Unaware	50	25%
Total	**200**	**100%**

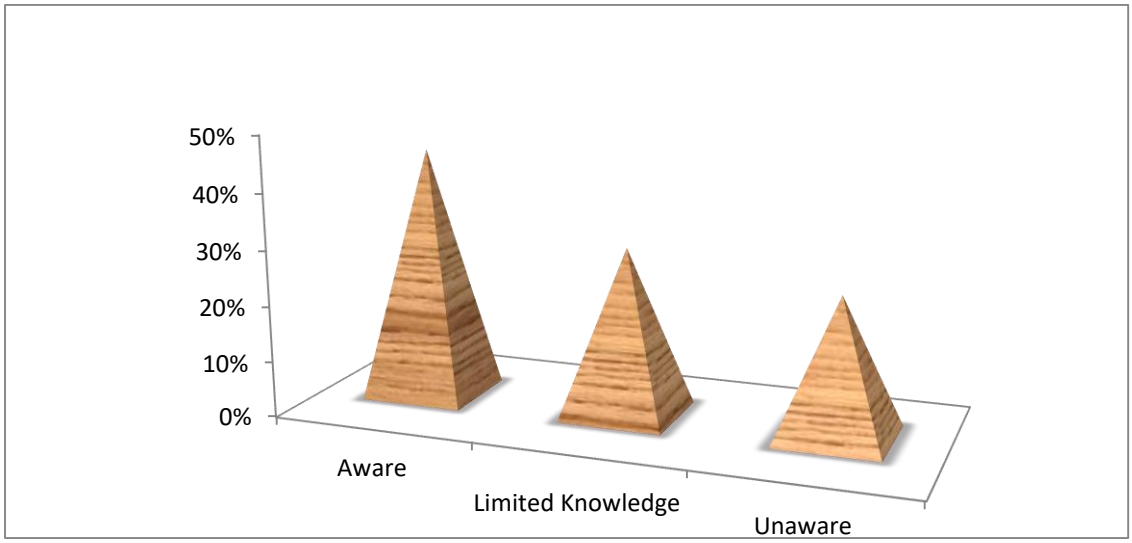

Fig. 1: Awareness of Probiotics Among Pregnant Women

Findings indicate that only 45% of the participants are aware of probiotics and their benefits, while 30% have limited knowledge, and 25% are completely unaware. Awareness levels are higher among women with higher education and those receiving regular prenatal care.

Table 2: Sources of Probiotics

Source	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yogurt	120	60%
Fermented Foods	40	20%
Probiotic Supplements	30	15%
Other	10	5%
Total	**200**	**100%**

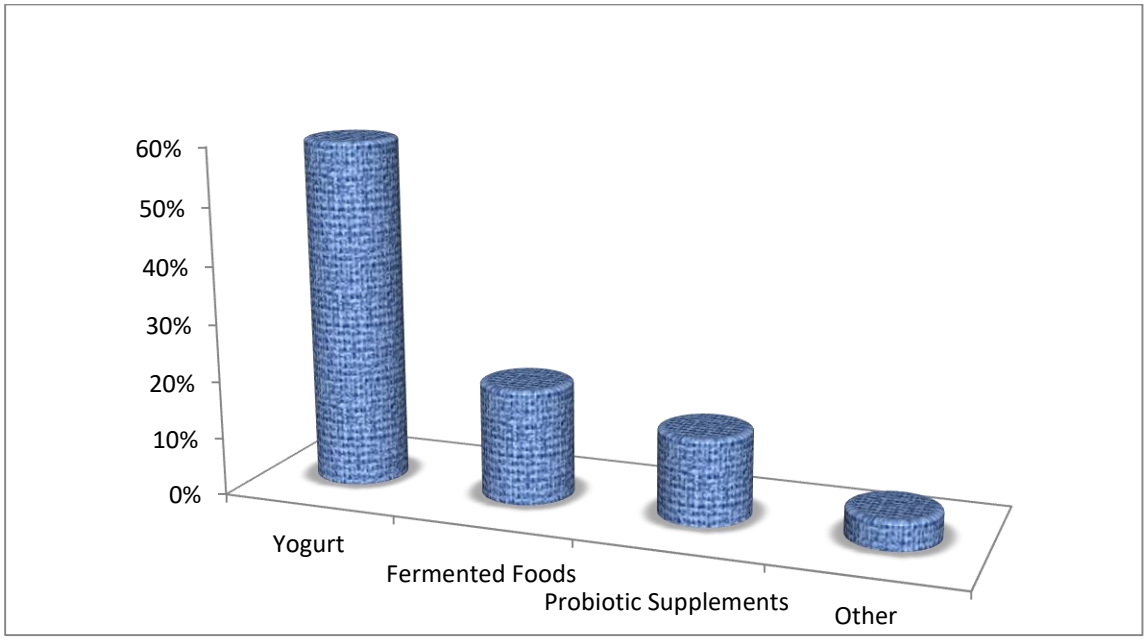

Fig. 2: Sources of Probiotics

The majority of respondents identify yogurt (60%) as a primary source of probiotics, while awareness of fermented foods such as kefir, kimchi, and miso remains low (20%). Probiotic supplements are consumed by only 15% of participants, primarily those under medical guidance.

Table 3: Barriers to Probiotic Consumption

Barrier	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lack of Awareness	80	40%
Safety Concerns	50	25%
Limited Access	40	20%
Financial Constraints	30	15%
Total	**200**	**100%**

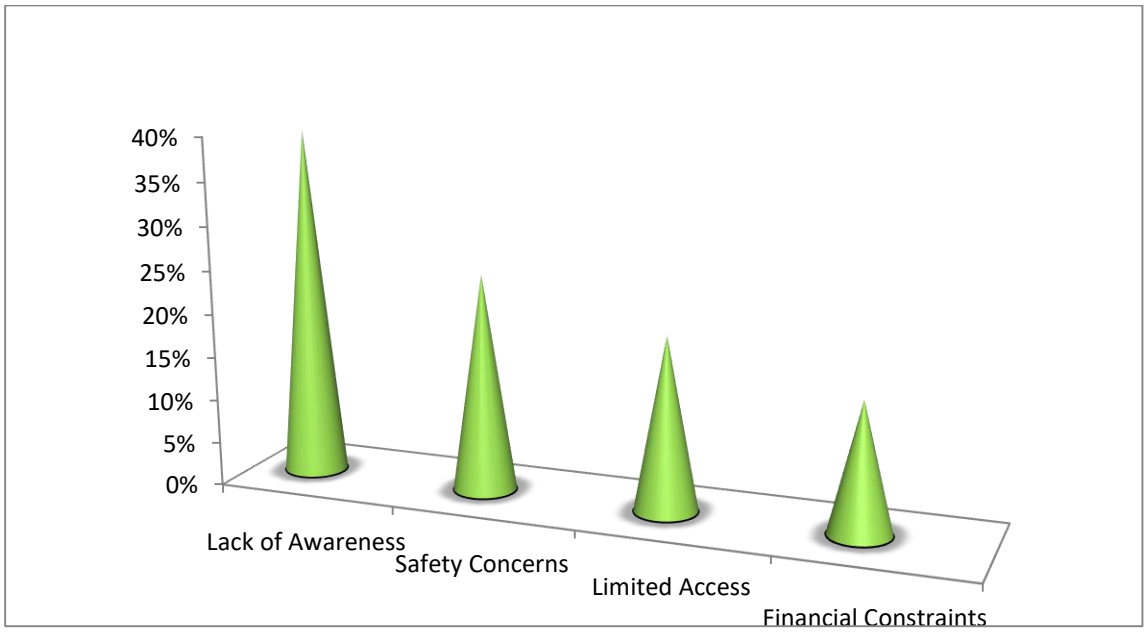

Fig. 3: Barriers to Probiotic Consumption

Key barriers identified include lack of awareness (40%), safety concerns (25%), limited access to probiotic-rich foods (20%), and financial constraints (15%). These findings underscore the need for targeted education and policy initiatives.

Table 4: Role of Healthcare Providers in Probiotic Awareness

Source of Information	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Healthcare Professionals	70	35%
Internet & Social Media	60	30%
Family & Friends	40	20%
No Information Received	30	15%
Total	**200**	**100%**

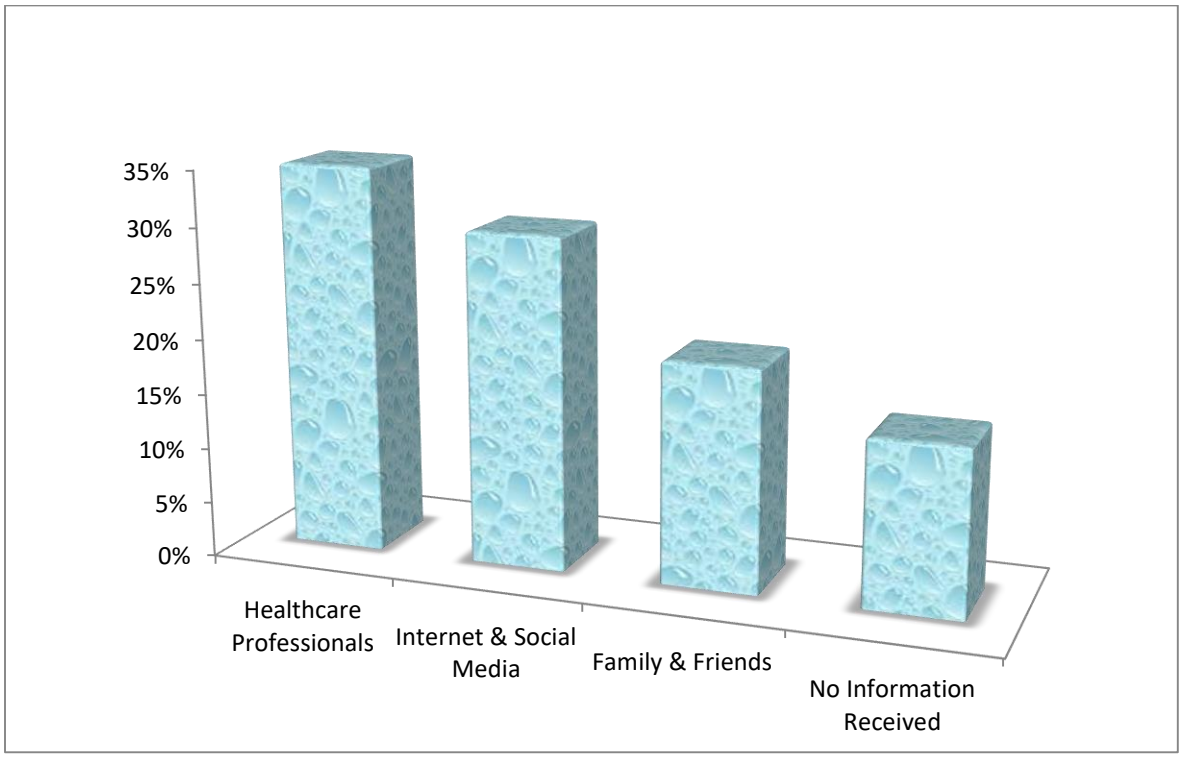

Fig. 4: Role of Healthcare Providers in Probiotic Awareness

Only 35% of participants report receiving information about probiotics from healthcare professionals. This highlights the necessity of integrating probiotic education into prenatal care services.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that awareness of probiotics among pregnant women is limited, with significant variations based on education level and socioeconomic status. Key barriers include misinformation, safety concerns, and access limitations. Healthcare professionals and policymakers must implement targeted awareness programs to enhance probiotic consumption during pregnancy. Future research should explore long-term health impacts of maternal probiotic intake on child development.

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