

Puerperal Period: A Challenge for Physical Fitness

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ABSTRACT:

Background: The puerperium or postpartum period is a difficult period for women to restart or maintain physical activity. The postpartum exercise changes the quality of life, physical activity, health, functional capacity, and physical fitness of postpartum women. This study is aimed at analyzing the adherence and practice of PNE.

Objective: To evaluate the adherence & practice of Post Natal Exercise (PNE). To analyze the effect of postpartum exercise on maternal health.

Methods: A hospital based physical interventional study conducted on 44 postnatal women who admitted for delivery. Data were obtained by interviews with patients and from hospital records.

Results: A total of 44 postnatal women were enrolled in the study. Regarding the attitude of PNE, 98.2% of the study population felt that it is essential, regular adherence is needed and they will emphasize others. On analysis of practice of PNE 68.18% responded. Among them 47.73% did exercise and 20.45% did not perform. Within the practiced group 70% performed daily and 30% performed occasionally, 93.3% experienced benefits regarding physical activity.

Conclusion: Education and motivation are important for practice of PNE. Also, obstetricians or health workers may influence continuously for adherence & practice.

Key Words:

Puerperal period, Post Natal Exercises (PNE)

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Introduction

The puerperium or postpartum period is a difficult period for women to restart or maintain physical activity. Fatigue from poor sleep and the demands of infant feeding can also contribute to lower physical activity level^{1,2}. The benefits of exercise for the general population are well known³. However, especially for this period, the benefits include recovery from childbirth,

promotion of return to pre pregnancy weight, reduced risk of future chronic conditions of health, improvement of fitness parameters, interactions between mother and baby, and social interactions⁴. PNE can be started soon after birth with simple exercises and gradually progress to advance depending on level of comfort^{5,6}. Though many studies have indicated that PNE plays the major role in preventing complications like bladder inconti-

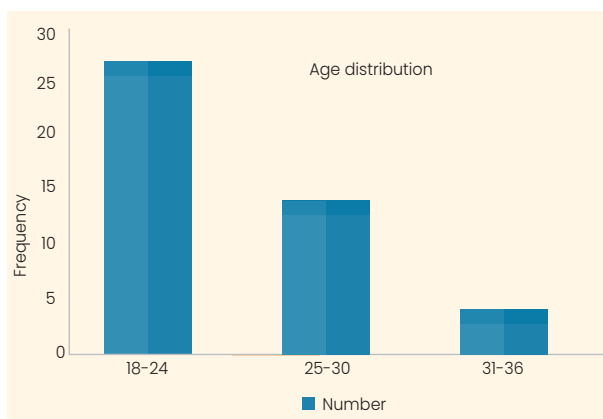
nence, many women are unaware of full benefits of postnatal exercise and some of the customs and superstitions existing in the community will be prohibiting the postnatal women from performing exercises^{7,8,9}. Considering the importance of exercise in postpartum period, the characteristics of women in this period, and the recommendations of the main international organizations, a specific exercise program was developed and validated¹⁰. This study is planned to evaluate the attitude and practice of PNE of post-natal mothers.

Methods

This study was done in the department of obstetrics and gynecology, Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital, Dhaka, Bangladesh, over a period of 6 months (August 2023 to January 2024). Informed consent was taken who were enrolled in the study with convenient sampling. Inclusion criteria were postpartum women between 18 to 40 years old with no medical contraindications for the practice of postnatal exercise. Exclusion criteria were any medical contraindications for postnatal exercise. This prospective physical interventional study was conducted with convenient sampling. Postpartum exercises were instructed in small groups or individually. For data collection a structured questionnaire was used. Data was collected by interview method and from hospital records. A short-term follow-up after one month onwards was taken over phone about practice of PNE. Statistical analysis was done using SPSS version 22.

Results

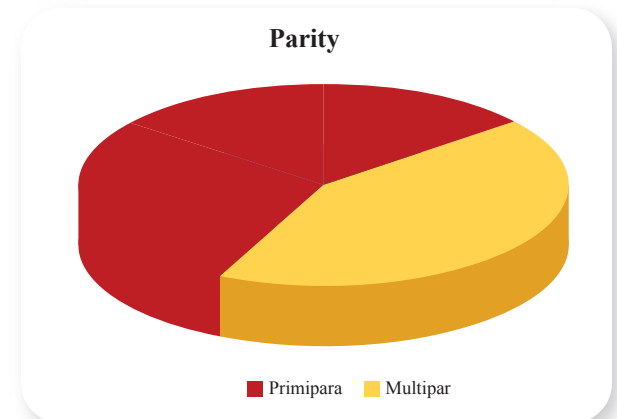
A total of 44 postnatal women who had admitted for delivery were enrolled in the study. Sociodemographic characteristics of the study population revealed 61.36% cases <24 years of age and educated below SSC.



Educational qualification

Education	Number	Percent
<SSC	27	61.36
>SSC- HSC	8	18.18
>HSC	9	20.45
Total	44	100

Parity status



Mode of Delivery

Mode of Delivery	Number	Percent
VD	25	56.82
CS	19	43.18
Total	44	100

Practice of PNE

Performance	Number	Percent
Performed	21	47.73
Not Performed	09	20.45
Not responded	14	31.28
Total	44	100

Regarding the attitude of PNE, 98% of the study population felt that it is essential, regular adherence needed and they will emphasize others.

On analysis of practice of PNE 68.18% responded. Among them 47.73% did exercise and 20.45% did not perform. Follow up not possible 31.82% cases. Within the practiced group 70% performed daily and 30% performed occasionally. Regarding the barriers of performance, baby care and household work were in

20.45% and 15.9% cases. Benefits of PNE experienced in 93.3% % cases among the practiced group.

Discussion

Total of 44 women with 61.36% cases <24 years of age were enrolled in the study. Of them 56.82% delivered vaginally and 43.18% delivered by the caesarean section. 52.27% were primigravida and 47.73% were multipara. This study group was similar with Jawaher et al, Mbada et al^{8,9}.

On analysis of the attitude of the study population revealed that 98.2% of the women felt PNE is essential. This is similar with the study of Sundaramurthy R et al¹¹. This positive attitude may be constantly encouraged by subsequent postnatal visit or over phone consultation.

Regarding the barriers which prevent postnatal exercise, it is revealed that household work and baby care were 20.45% and 15.9% cases. This is also similar with the study of Sundaramurthy R et al¹¹.

On analyzing the practice of PNE showed that 70% practicing PNE daily, 30% practicing once or twice a week. Benefits of PNE regarding physical activity were experienced by 93.3% of cases among the practiced group. Sundaramurthy R et al found that 56% practice daily and 36.3% practice once a week and 88.8% experienced benefits¹¹.

There was no significant correlation between any socio-demographic characteristics with attitude and practice of PNE. In comparison to studies by Jawaher et al, Aiharqi et al, there is a positive association between women's education and knowledge with PNE^{8,12}.

Conclusion

Education and motivation are important for practice of PNE. Also, obstetricians or health workers may influence continuously for adherence & practice.

Recommendations: Awareness of people about the postnatal exercise is needed for the improvement of women health. Also, postnatal visits or consultation may influence the adherence of PNE.

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