



Social Rituals and Infant Feeding Practices in Dhanger Tribe of Maharashtra: An Exploratory Study

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ABSTRACT The social rituals and infant feeding practices offer both opportunities and barriers to infant's health. But infant feeding remains poor in a vulnerable population such as tribe because of their unique culture. The social rituals following the birth of an infant are explored in addition to practices of infant feeding in Dhanger tribe of Maharashtra in India. Seventeen mothers of 6-12 months old infant were interviewed in an in-depth interview, while 44 grandmothers were interviewed in seven focus group discussions. The thematic analysis of narratives emerged specific and distinct themes. The results revealed that the tribe follows prominent social rituals after the birth of an infant, the mother initiated late breastfeeding, fed prelacteals and neglected exclusive breastfeeding. However, they observed taboos on mother's diet, but they offered colostrum and breastfed the infant during her sickness. Thus, the tribe follows their unique social rituals on the birth of an infant and continues with the slow change in infant feeding practices.