A participatory approach to improved infant nutrition and complimentary feeding practices in British Bangladeshi families: Lorna Benton

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Background

The UK Bangladeshi population is one of the fastest growing, yet socio-economically disadvantaged ethnic groups in the UK. Nutrition in infancy determines child development and adult health. Complimentary Feeding (CF) establishes early nutritional intake and self-regulatory behaviours. However, practices are complex and influenced by culture, environment and acculturation following migration. 12.5% of British-Bangladeshi children aged 4-5 years are obese, increasing to 23.7% by 10-11 years. In adulthood, South Asians are 2-4 more likely to develop type II diabetes in the UK.

Methods

We are working in partnership with the Bangladeshi community in Tower Hamlets to identify CF practices that affect the healthy nutrition of infant’s aged 6 to 24 months. We conducted 5 systematic literature reviews of CF practices in South Asian communities. We are now conducting 10 Focus Group Discussions and 82 interviews with community members and professionals in Tower Hamlets under a socio-ecological framework. Results will inform the adaptation and acceptability of female facilitator-led women’s groups with Participatory Learning and Action cycle (PLA), successful in Bangladeshi, Nepal and India.

Results

A systematic review noted different CF practices between South Asian groups. Greater acculturation encouraged formula feeding in the UK; formula milk was seen as better for the child and sweetened food were preferred as the ‘first food’. Energy dense rice-based dishes and hand feeding were common. Preliminary qualitative findings confirm these practices in the UK.

Conclusions
We identified a need for more studies exploring CF practices in Bangladeshi communities and tailored advice for Bangladeshi families around diet and responsive feeding.

**Key messages:**

- Cultural practices influence infant nutrition, child development and long-term health
- Community mobilisation approaches help to inform culturally adapted support for healthy nutrition in minority populations