International Journal of Nursing and Health Research
www.nursingjournal.in
Online ISSN: 2664-6420, Print ISSN: 2664-6412
Received: 24-02-2025, Accepted: 25-03-2025, Published: 09-04-2025
Volume 7, Issue 2, 2025, Page No. 7-12

Effectiveness of culturally tailored interventions for diabetes management

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Abstract
This study investigates the effectiveness of culturally tailored interventions for managing diabetes among patients in selected community areas of Patna, India. Diabetes has emerged as a significant public health concern in India, with the prevalence rising alarmingly due to various factors, including limited awareness, lifestyle changes, and inadequate adherence to treatment regimens. The research aims to address these challenges by developing culturally relevant strategies that resonate with local beliefs, practices, and dietary habits. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, this study involved both qualitative and quantitative data collection. Focus group discussions and interviews were conducted to gather insights into community members' cultural perspectives on diabetes management. Based on this understanding, culturally tailored educational sessions and community engagement activities were designed and implemented. The effectiveness of these interventions was measured through changes in patients' glycemic control, knowledge of diabetes management, and self-reported adherence to treatment. Results revealed significant improvements in glycemic levels among participants in the culturally tailored intervention group compared to the control group. Additionally, there was a marked increase in participants' knowledge and understanding of diabetes management principles. The findings underscore the importance of integrating cultural context into health interventions, demonstrating that culturally tailored approaches can enhance patient engagement, motivation, and adherence to diabetes management strategies. This research highlights the critical role of cultural considerations in designing effective public health interventions. By aligning health education efforts with local values and practices, healthcare providers can improve health outcomes and empower patients in managing chronic conditions like diabetes. These findings contribute valuable insights for developing future health programs in similarly diverse populations.

Keywords: Culturally tailored interventions, diabetes management, Patna, India, public health, community engagement, glycemic control, cultural beliefs, treatment adherence, chronic disease management.

Introduction

Diabetes has become a significant global health challenge, with increasing prevalence rates across both developed and developing countries. In India, the impact of diabetes is especially concerning, driven by changes in lifestyle, including poor dietary habits and insufficient physical activity. The number of people affected by diabetes in India has grown alarmingly, with an estimated 77 million people currently living with the disease (Gupta & Sharma, 2020) [3]. This is compounded by inadequate awareness regarding diabetes management and treatment adherence. In Patna, the capital city of Bihar, diabetes prevalence is particularly high, contributing to a rising burden on the healthcare system and a decreased quality of life for those affected. Despite the availability of modern medical interventions, managing diabetes in Patna and other parts of India is not always successful due to several socio-cultural and structural factors. One of the critical reasons for this is the mismatch between the traditional medical model and the cultural context of Indian communities. The medical model often fails to incorporate local beliefs, practices, and values into healthcare strategies. This lack of cultural adaptation has led to difficulties in achieving long-term adherence to treatment plans, especially when it comes to lifestyle changes such as diet and exercise (Patel & Sharma, 2018) [8]. Culturally tailored interventions are designed to address these challenges by aligning healthcare practices with the specific cultural beliefs, norms, and values of a community. These interventions are intended to improve patient engagement, enhance treatment adherence, and ultimately improve health outcomes. Given the increasing prevalence of diabetes in India and its devastating consequences, it is imperative to explore how culturally relevant interventions could improve diabetes management, particularly in Patna.

1. The Diabetes Epidemic in India and Patna and Culturally Tailored Interventions for Diabetes Management

India has been labelled the "diabetes capital of the world" due to its alarming diabetes prevalence rate. An estimated 77 million people in India are living with diabetes, and this number is projected to rise in the coming years (Kumar & Choudhury, 2021) [5]. In Patna, the capital city of Bihar, diabetes prevalence is particularly high due to several risk factors, including urbanization, dietary shifts, and changes in physical activity patterns (Gupta & Sharma, 2020) [3]. With growing urbanization, sedentary lifestyles and unhealthy eating habits, such as high consumption of processed foods and sugary drinks, have become the norm in many urban areas like Patna. Moreover, the healthcare system in Patna faces significant challenges, such as limited healthcare infrastructure, lack of awareness about diabetes, and inadequate access to specialized care. According to recent reports, about 60% of people in Bihar, including Patna, are unaware of their diabetes status (Singh & Kapoor, 2019) [11]. This unawareness leads to delayed diagnosis, poor disease management, and higher mortality rates due to complications like heart disease, kidney failure, and amputations. With diabetes becoming a public health crisis, finding effective and sustainable management strategies is essential. Culturally tailored interventions are healthcare strategies specifically designed to incorporate cultural

beliefs, practices, and values into disease prevention and management. These interventions differ from traditional medical models by considering the unique needs, perspectives, and challenges of different cultural groups (Patel & Sharma, 2018) [8]. In the context of diabetes management, culturally tailored interventions focus on factors such as dietary habits, physical activity, religious beliefs, and social dynamics that can influence patients' willingness and ability to adhere to recommended treatment plans. One of the key components of culturally tailored interventions is the inclusion of local foods and dietary practices in health recommendations. In India, diet plays a significant role in managing diabetes, yet many diabetic patients struggle to adhere to prescribed diets due to cultural preferences for certain foods (Kumar & Choudhury, 2021) [5]. For example, traditional Indian diets, often rich in carbohydrates, are not always conducive to maintaining optimal blood glucose levels. However, culturally tailored interventions can adapt dietary recommendations to align with local preferences by focusing on modifying traditional foods and meals to make them more suitable for diabetic patients. In addition to diet, culturally tailored interventions also consider the role of community and family in healthcare decision-making. In Indian culture, family plays an essential role in healthcare decisions and daily life. By engaging the family in diabetes management, these interventions can create a support system that encourages adherence to treatment and lifestyle changes. Furthermore, culturally relevant interventions address the spiritual and emotional needs of patients by incorporating religious and cultural rituals that support the healing process (Singh & Kapoor, 2019) [11].

Community engagement is another vital aspect of culturally tailored interventions. In India, community-based health programs have shown promising results in improving health outcomes, particularly for chronic diseases like diabetes. Community health workers (CHWs), often drawn from the local population, are trained to deliver health education and facilitate lifestyle modifications in culturally appropriate ways. In many rural and semi-urban parts of India, CHWs have proven to be instrumental in raising awareness, providing health information, and guiding patients through the process of managing chronic diseases like diabetes (Patel & Sharma, 2018) [8]. In Patna, community-based diabetes management programs have demonstrated the effectiveness of incorporating local knowledge and resources into health interventions. CHWs work with local health authorities to identify patients, offer diabetes education, and monitor progress over time. These programs often focus on group education sessions, where patients and their families are educated about diabetes management strategies, including the importance of blood sugar monitoring, diet, physical activity, and medication adherence. Engaging the local community also allows for the integration of indigenous knowledge and practices into diabetes management programs. In some areas of Patna, local health practices, such as the use of herbal remedies and traditional treatments, are commonly employed. By working with local healers and incorporating these traditional practices into the diabetes management program, health interventions can be more easily accepted and adopted by the local population (Singh & Kapoor, 2019) [11].

2. Global Evidence of Culturally Tailored Interventions

Research on culturally tailored interventions has shown promising results worldwide. Studies have found that these interventions can lead to better diabetes control, improved self-management behaviors, and enhanced patient satisfaction. A study in the United States, for example, found that culturally adapted diabetes education programs for African American and Latino populations led to significant improvements in blood glucose levels and increased adherence to diabetes management protocols (Hernandez *et al*., 2018) [4]. Similarly, research in Latin America demonstrated that culturally appropriate health interventions improved patient engagement and outcomes in managing chronic diseases, including diabetes (Chavez *et al*., 2017) [1]. The application of culturally tailored interventions in India is less well-documented but increasingly recognized as an essential strategy for improving health outcomes. Studies in rural areas of India have highlighted the importance of tailoring health messages to local languages, traditions, and dietary habits. For instance, a study conducted in rural Tamil Nadu found that incorporating local food preferences and traditional knowledge into diabetes care led to increased patient engagement and better management of blood glucose levels (Kumar & Choudhury, 2021) [5]. However, while these global studies suggest the effectiveness of culturally tailored interventions, the specific impact on diabetes management in Patna requires further research. This gap in the literature underscores the need for more localized studies to explore how culturally relevant strategies can be implemented effectively in urban Indian settings, where lifestyle factors may differ from rural areas. The rising prevalence of diabetes in India, especially in urban centers like Patna, poses a significant public health challenge. While conventional medical interventions play a crucial role in managing diabetes, the cultural and socio-economic context of Indian communities requires more personalized, culturally sensitive healthcare strategies. Culturally tailored interventions have the potential to bridge this gap by addressing local beliefs, values, and practices in diabetes management. These interventions can enhance patient engagement, improve treatment adherence, and ultimately result in better health outcomes. Community engagement, dietary modifications, and the inclusion of local traditions in healthcare practices are essential components of culturally tailored interventions. The success of such interventions in improving diabetes management has been demonstrated in various global contexts, and there is a growing recognition of their relevance in India. Given the high prevalence of diabetes in Patna, culturally adapted interventions offer a promising approach to addressing the unique challenges of managing diabetes in this region. Moving forward, it is essential for healthcare policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to collaborate in designing and implementing culturally tailored diabetes management programs in Patna. Further research is needed to assess the effectiveness of these interventions in Indian urban settings and to develop guidelines for scaling such programs to other regions of the country.

Material and Methods

1. Research Design: Quasi-Experimental, Non-Equivalent Control Group Design

The research design chosen for this study is a quasi-experimental, non-equivalent control group design, which is often used in situations where random assignment of participants to intervention and control groups is not feasible. In this study, participants were selected from two distinct community groups in Patna, with one group receiving a culturally tailored intervention and the other acting as a control group. Below is a detailed elaboration of this design:

1.1. Quasi-Experimental Design

A quasi-experimental design is a type of research design that seeks to evaluate the effect of an intervention without using random assignment. This design is particularly useful in real-world settings where randomization may not be possible due to ethical or logistical reasons. The purpose of using a quasi-experimental design in this study was to examine the effectiveness of culturally tailored interventions in managing diabetes without the constraints of a fully randomized controlled trial. In this study, the intervention and control groups were not randomly assigned. Instead, participants were chosen based on pre-existing conditions or community groupings. This non-random selection is common in studies where researchers must work within pre-existing groups, such as community health interventions, and is therefore a feature of quasi-experimental research.

1.2. Non-Equivalent Control Group Design

In a non-equivalent control group design, there are two groups: an intervention group (the group receiving the culturally tailored intervention) and a control group (the group not receiving the intervention). The main characteristic of this design is that the groups are not randomly assigned, which means they may differ in some important characteristics at the outset of the study. Despite these potential pre-existing differences, the goal is to compare the outcomes between the two groups to assess the effectiveness of the intervention.

1.2.1 Control Group

The control group in this study consisted of diabetes patients from a community in Patna that did not receive the culturally tailored intervention. This group was used as a baseline to compare how the intervention affected diabetes management in the experimental group. The control group was not given any additional intervention beyond standard care, which typically includes general medical advice and treatment for diabetes.

1.2.2 Intervention Group

The intervention group received the culturally tailored intervention. This group was exposed to interventions designed specifically to address the local cultural context of diabetes care in Patna. The culturally tailored intervention included incorporation of local dietary preferences in the diabetes management plan, health education sessions addressing cultural perceptions of diabetes and its management and use of local community health workers trained to engage with participants in a culturally sensitive manner.

2. Selection of Participants

The participants in this study were selected from two community groups in Patna. These groups were chosen based on their willingness to participate in the study and their demographic characteristics. However, because random assignment was not used, there may have been differences between the groups at the start of the study. For instance, one group may have had higher literacy levels or better access to healthcare resources. While these differences can introduce biases, researchers use statistical methods to control for such variables and ensure the findings are as reliable as possible.

2.1 Inclusion Criteria:

Adult patients diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, residents of Patna and willingness to participate in the study and provide informed consent.

2.2 Exclusion Criteria:

Patients with conditions that would significantly affect the outcomes of the study, such as severe cognitive impairment or terminal illnesses.

2.3 Implementation of the Intervention

The intervention group received a culturally tailored diabetes management program. This program was designed specifically to resonate with the participants local dietary habits, cultural beliefs, and daily practices. Some key components of the intervention included:

Dietary Modifications: In collaboration with nutritionists familiar with local cuisine, a diabetes-friendly eating plan was developed, which incorporated traditional foods but ensured a healthy balance suitable for blood sugar control.

Health Education: Culturally appropriate health education materials were created, which emphasized understanding diabetes, the importance of medication adherence, physical activity, and local solutions to managing diabetes.

Community Involvement: Local health workers, trained to understand the cultural dynamics of the community, led sessions to educate participants and encourage behavior change. Family members were also encouraged to attend these sessions to foster support at home.

3. Data Collection

Data was collected at multiple time points: pre-intervention, immediate post-intervention, and follow-up (to assess sustainability). The following methods were used for data collection:

Blood Glucose Monitoring: Blood glucose levels were measured at baseline and at follow-up points to assess the effectiveness of the intervention in managing diabetes.

Diabetes Clinical Evaluation Checklist: This tool was used to assess participants' knowledge about diabetes management and their adherence to recommended lifestyle changes. It included questions on medication adherence, diet, physical activity, and other key aspects of diabetes management.

Socio-Demographic Data: Data on age, gender, income level, education, and other socio-demographic factors were also collected to control for potential confounding variables.

4. Statistical Analysis

The data were analyzed using statistical tests such as the paired t-test and analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) to

compare the pre- and post-intervention blood glucose levels and knowledge scores within each group and between the two groups. These statistical tools help determine whether the observed differences are statistically significant and not due to random chance. Paired t-tests were used to compare within-group changes in blood glucose levels and knowledge scores from baseline to post-intervention in both the intervention and control groups. Between-group comparisons were performed using independent t-tests or ANCOVA to control for potential confounders. This allowed the researchers to examine the differences between the intervention and control groups after adjusting for factors like age, gender, or baseline health status.

5. Ethical Considerations

Since the study involves human participants, ethical guidelines were followed to ensure that participants' rights were protected. These considerations included all participants were provided with information about the study and gave written consent to participate. Participants personal information and health data were kept confidential and anonymized. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

6. Limitations of the Research Design

While the quasi-experimental, non-equivalent control group design allows for valuable insights, it also has limitations:

Selection Bias: Because participants were not randomly assigned, the two groups may differ in important ways that could influence the outcomes, such as baseline health status or socio-economic factors.

Generalizability: The findings of this study may be specific to the communities of Patna and may not be applicable to other regions in India or globally.

Lack of Randomization: The absence of random assignment means that the study cannot completely rule out the possibility of confounding variables affecting the results.

Despite these limitations, the quasi-experimental design provides a feasible and effective way to evaluate the impact of culturally tailored interventions in a real-world community setting.

Results and Discussion

The results of this study were analyzed to assess the effectiveness of the culturally tailored intervention in managing diabetes, focusing on two primary outcomes: blood glucose levels and knowledge scores related to diabetes management. The data were analyzed using paired t-tests to compare pre- and post-intervention outcomes within each group (intervention and control). Below is an in-depth interpretation of the findings based on the provided data:

1. Blood Glucose Levels

Table 1 shows a comparison of pre- and post-intervention blood glucose levels for both the intervention and control groups. The primary objective here was to examine whether the culturally tailored intervention led to a significant reduction in blood glucose levels, which is a key indicator of diabetes management.

Group	Pre-Intervention Mean Blood Glucose Level (mg/dL)	Post-Intervention Mean Blood Glucose Level (mg/dL)	Mean Change (mg/dL)	p-value
Intervention Group	180.2	130.5	-49.7	< 0.05
Control Group	182.0	179.5	-2.5	> 0.05

For the intervention group, the mean blood glucose level decreased significantly from 180.2 mg/dL at baseline to 130.5 mg/dL post-intervention. This represents a mean reduction of 49.7 mg/dL. The p-value of < 0.05 indicates that this difference is statistically significant, suggesting that the culturally tailored intervention had a positive impact on blood glucose control. The intervention's focus on culturally relevant dietary adjustments, lifestyle education, and community engagement likely contributed to this improvement. In contrast, the control group, which did not receive the culturally tailored intervention, showed a minimal reduction in blood glucose levels (from 182.0 mg/dL to 179.5 mg/dL), with a mean change of only -2.5 mg/dL. The p-value of > 0.05 indicates that this change was not statistically significant, suggesting that the control group did not experience a notable improvement in blood glucose levels during the study period. This lack of significant change may reflect the absence of specialized intervention or the continued influence of habitual lifestyle and dietary practices. The data collected were analyzed using paired t-tests to assess the differences between pre- and post-intervention blood glucose levels and knowledge scores. The intervention group showed a significant reduction in blood glucose levels ($p < 0.05$), whereas the control group did not experience notable changes.

Table 2: Comparison of pre- and post-intervention knowledge scores.

Group	Pre-Intervention Mean Blood Glucose Level (mg/dL)	Post-Intervention Mean Blood Glucose Level (mg/dL)	Mean Change (mg/dL)	p-value
Intervention Group	58.0	82.0	24.0	< 0.05
Control Group	59.5	61.0	1.5	> 0.05

The table provides a detailed comparison of the impact of a specific intervention on blood glucose levels, highlighting the differences between the Intervention Group and the Control Group. Prior to the intervention, the Intervention Group had a mean blood glucose level of 58.0 mg/dL, which is indicative of relatively low blood sugar. Conversely, the Control Group started with a slightly higher average level of 59.5 mg/dL, suggesting that both groups were in somewhat comparable but distinct physiological states at baseline. Following the implementation of the intervention, a remarkable transformation occurred within the Intervention Group: their mean blood glucose level surged to 82.0 mg/dL. This represents a significant increase of 24.0 mg/dL, suggesting that the intervention had a substantial effect on elevating blood glucose levels, possibly reflecting an increase in glucose availability or a

physiological response to the intervention. The statistical analysis corroborates this finding, as evidenced by the p-value of < 0.05, which indicates that the observed change is highly unlikely to be due to random chance, thereby affirming the efficacy of the intervention. In contrast, the Control Group demonstrated only a negligible rise in blood glucose levels, with a post-intervention mean of 61.0 mg/dL and a mean change of just 1.5 mg/dL. The p-value of > 0.05 for the Control Group suggests that this minor change is not statistically significant, implying that the control condition had little to no effect on blood glucose levels and further emphasizing the effectiveness of the intervention in the other group. These results underscore the potential of the intervention in positively influencing blood glucose regulation, showcasing a clear distinction between the two groups' responses. The significant increase in the Intervention Group's blood glucose levels points toward the intervention being a viable method for managing glucose levels, particularly for individuals who may be experiencing hypoglycemia or low blood sugar. In a broader context, these findings could have vital implications for clinical practices and interventions aimed at improving metabolic health, emphasizing the need for targeted approaches in managing blood glucose levels effectively.

The findings from this study further illuminate the substantial impact that culturally tailored interventions can have on improving health outcomes, especially in chronic disease management such as diabetes. This approach recognizes that health behaviors are not merely individual choices but are deeply influenced by cultural context, which encompasses the values, beliefs, and practices of specific communities. Research suggests that when health interventions are adapted to align with the cultural practices of the target population, they are more likely to be effective (Kumar *et al*., 2017) [6]. In the intervention group, not only did participants exhibit improved blood glucose levels, but they also demonstrated enhanced knowledge about diabetes management, which is critical for long-term adherence to treatment regimens. This relationship highlights a key principle of health education; improving knowledge can lead to informed decision-making and better health behaviors (McGowan *et al*., 2019) [7]. Moreover, the study's success reinforces the need for healthcare systems to move beyond a one-size-fits-all approach to patient education. Instead, integrating culturally relevant components—such as involving community leaders in the education process or utilizing locally preferred languages and symbols—can make health messages more relatable and impactful (Sharma *et al*., 2016). Such tailored strategies utilize familiar cultural frameworks, which can enhance patient understanding and motivate individuals to enact lifestyle changes. Additionally, community engagement serves a dual purpose. It not only fosters a sense of ownership among participants, making them feel that their input and experiences are valued, but it also helps to dismantle barriers to effective treatment adherence, such as skepticism towards medical interventions or lack of access to resources (Davis *et al*., 2020) [2]. Community-led initiatives can create safe spaces where individuals can share their struggles and successes, thereby promoting study resilience and motivation. The implications of these findings extend to health policy and planning, emphasizing the necessity for health professionals and organizations to invest in culturally adapted programs. As healthcare professionals work in increasingly diverse populations, understanding the cultural determinants of health becomes paramount (Pérez-Escamilla *et al*., 2019). Health policies should therefore prioritize funding for culturally relevant interventions and training for healthcare providers, enabling them to interact effectively with diverse patient populations. This study contributes to a growing body of evidence supporting the integration of cultural considerations into public health initiatives. By recognizing and incorporating the unique cultural contexts of the communities they serve, healthcare providers can create more meaningful and effective interventions that not only improve clinical outcomes but also enhance the overall quality of life for individuals managing chronic diseases like diabetes.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that culturally tailored interventions significantly enhance diabetes management and control glycemic levels among patients. By integrating local practices, values, and beliefs into health education and treatment strategies, the intervention successfully increased patient engagement and autonomy in managing their health. This cultural resonance fosters a collaborative relationship between healthcare providers and patients, transforming clinical interactions into partnerships that respect individual experiences and preferences. The marked improvements in both glycemic control and diabetes management knowledge reflect the potential for this approach to facilitate sustainable lifestyle changes. Moreover, the insights from this study are valuable for developing similar interventions in diverse regions facing cultural challenges in healthcare. It underscores the critical importance of cultural competence in public health initiatives, emphasizing that programs must prioritize community involvement and culturally relevant education. As healthcare providers seek to address the rising incidence of diabetes, adopting culturally sensitive strategies can lead to more equitable health outcomes, ultimately reducing disparities in chronic disease management. Overall, this study advocates for a shift toward culturally informed practices in healthcare, reinforcing the necessity of understanding and addressing the unique cultural contexts of patients to achieve meaningful health outcomes and enhance the effectiveness of diabetes management programs.

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