# **Original Research Article**

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A cross-sectional study on knowledge, attitude and practice of infant feeding practices among reproductive age women attending outpatient department of obstetrics and gynecology in Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Medical College and Hospital, Bengaluru-45

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# **ABSTRACT**

**Background:** Adequate nutrition during infancy and early childhood is essential to ensure the growth, health, and development of children to their full potential. Lack of knowledge, wrong attitude and faulty practices among mothers in some aspects of infant feeding can lead to infant mortality. Thus, appropriate infant feeding practices and following recommended practice of exclusive breastfeeding could help in improvement of health of child and mother and also improve IMR. The objective of the study was assessment of knowledge, attitude and practice of infant feeding practices among reproductive age women.

**Methods:** An institutional based, descriptive cross sectional study was conducted among reproductive age group (15 to 49 years) women attending OPD of OBGY department for various reasons. A semi structured questionnaire along with software tools like EpiInfo7, MS Excel and SPSS version 23 are used for data analysis.

**Results:** A total of 98.5% of women consider breast milk as best nutrition and 77% were aware regarding exclusive breastfeeding. Weaning was most commonly started with mashed cereals (68.5%) with other food items at lower percentage. Participants are aware that breastfeeding is beneficial to both mother and child, and should not be avoided in any condition unless advised by treating doctor.

**Conclusions:** Through the mothers under study had adequate knowledge regarding feeding practice but in this study it was observed that the appropriate practice worsens with increasing parity of mother.

Keywords: Infant feeding, Breastfeeding, Weaning, Reproductive age women

# **INTRODUCTION**

Adequate nutrition during infancy and early childhood is essential to ensure the growth, health, and development of children to their full potential. Proper breastfeeding practices are effective ways for reducing childhood morbidity and mortality. IMR is regarded as a sensitive indicator of health status of community. IMR of India is 34/1000 live births, of Karnataka is 24/1000 live births as per sample registration system (SRS 2016). 2.3

Many mothers understand the importance of breastfeeding, others are less knowledgeable on the benefits of breastfeeding and weaning.

WHO recommends mothers worldwide to exclusively breastfeed infants for the child's first six months to achieve optimal growth, development and health. Thereafter, they should be given nutritious complementary foods and continue breastfeeding up to the age of two years or beyond.<sup>4</sup>

Studies have shown that lack of knowledge, wrong attitude and faulty practices among mothers in some aspects of infant feeding are the most evitable cause of infant mortality. Thus, appropriate infant feeding practices and following recommended practice of exclusive breastfeeding could help in improvement of health of child and mother and also improve IMR.

# **Objective**

Assessment of knowledge, attitude and practice of infant feeding practices among reproductive age women.

#### **METHODS**

An institutional based, descriptive cross sectional study was conducted among reproductive age group (15 to 49 years) women attending OPD of OBGY department. Verbal consent was obtained after the participants had been informed about the study objectives. Duration of study was 2 months from 5<sup>th</sup> December 2017 to 10<sup>th</sup> February 2018.

Sample size was determined by purposive sampling depending on average number of women visiting Obstetrics and Gynecology Outpatient Department. Thus, 200 women falling into inclusion criteria were involved in the study.

Women in their reproductive age group, willing to participate in the study were included in the study whereas women consulting the OPD for severe illness and unmarried women were not included in the study.

A semi structured questionnaire was used to interview the participants, and Face to face interview was conducted. The responses were entered in EpiInfo7 software and further analysis was conducted using MS Excel, EpiInfo7 and SPSS software.

# **RESULTS**

A total of 200 respondents were interviewed for the study of which 64% mothers had at least completed high school level education. The age of participants ranged from 19 to 42 years, wherein majority belonged to age group 25 to 34 years (53.5%) and most of them living in nuclear type of family (50.5%). A total of 98.5% of women consider breast milk as best nutrition and 77% of women were aware regarding Exclusive breastfeeding, most of them acquired knowledge about it from health institute (66.5%). Among the participants 79.5% were housewives. Weaning was rightly understood by 60.5% of mothers and most common food item used initially to start weaning was mashed cereals (68.5%).

Most of the participants are aware that breastfeeding increases immunity of child (89%) and intelligence (22%), for mothers it strengthens their bond with child (89%) and protects from cancer (26%). And according to

59.5% of the participants breastfeeding should not be avoided in any condition.

**Table 1: Participants description.** 

Parameter	N	Percentage (%)
<b>Educational status</b>		
Illiterate	26	13
Primary school	16	8
Middle school	30	15
High school	81	40.5
Intermediate	26	13
Graduate	18	9
Honorium	3	1.5
Age at marriage (in years	)	
15-20	155	77.5
21-25	39	19.5
26-30	6	3
Pregnancy status		
Present	154	77
Absent	46	23
Primigravida	29	18.8
Multigravida	123	79.9
Type of family		
Nuclear	101	50.5
Three generation	19	9.5
Joint	80	40

Majority of the Muslim participants (67.8%) denied following exclusive breastfeeding as there was introduction of honey water (68%) soon after birth of baby. Table 2 Shows the various parameters used to assess knowledge of the participants.

Table 2: Knowledge assessment details.

Variable	No.	Percentage (%)		
When should breastfeeding afte	r deliver	ry be		
started?				
Immediately within 1 hour	167	83.5		
2–24 hours	18	9		
After 24 hours	5	2.5		
For how long is exclusive breastfeeding needed?				
About 6 months	125	62.5		
Beyond 6 months	40	20		
Suitable age of baby to start weaning-				
4-6 months	36	18		
More than 6 months	127	63.5		
Age for complete weaning from breast milk-				
At 1 year	47	23.5		
1.5 years	55	27.5		
2 years	62	31		
More than 2 years	13	6.5		
•				

Participants have positive attitude towards EBF as they consider it better (92%) than artificial feeding. And 75.5% of participants prefer feeding breast milk for first 6 months.

Table 3: Attitude assessment details.

Variable	No.	Percentage (%)		
Do you agree that only EBF is enough for child up				
to 6 months?				
Agree	164	82		
Disagree	30	15		
Don't know	6	3		
Do you agree that child less than 6 month who is				
exclusively breastfed is healthier than child who takes additional food?				
		77. 7		
Yes	155	77.5		
No	18	9		
I don't know	27	13.5		

All the participants have exclusively breastfed their children for at least 3 to 4 months (73.5%) whereas 58.3% of participants have continued breastfeeding beyond 6 months.

Table 3 Shows the various parameters used to assess attitude of the participants. Table 4 Shows the various parameters used to assess practice of the participants.

Table 4: Practice assessment details.

Variable	No.	Percentage (%)		
When did you start breastfeeding after delivering your last child?				
Immediately	130	77.4		
2 to 24 hours	27	16.1		
After 24 hour	11	6.5		
How frequently did you breastfed your last child?				
On demand	137	81.5		
Regularly	26	15.5		
Randomly	5	3.0		
Feeding pattern/at a time				
One side	46	27.4		
Both side	122	72.6		

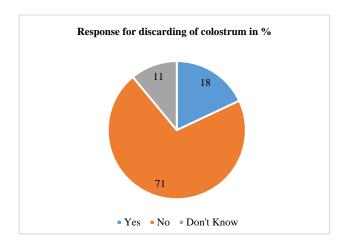


Figure 1: Response towards discarding of colostrum.

Figure 1, 2 shows the pie chart for colostrum feeding: attitude and practice respectively.

Just 28% of the participants did not follow exclusive breastfeeding practice due to various reasons mentioned below.

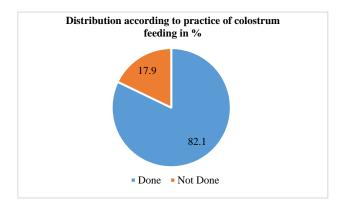


Figure 2: Practice of colostrum feeding.

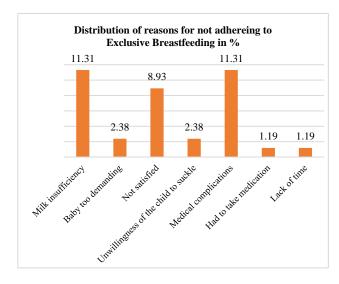


Figure 3: Bar graph representing various reasons for not being adhered to exclusive breastfeeding.

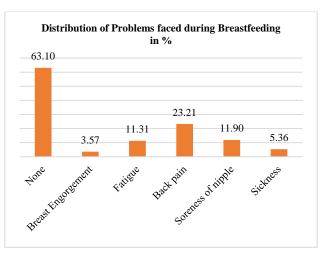


Figure 4: Bar graph representing various problems faced during breastfeeding.

# **DISCUSSION**

A study conducted by Motee et al, the prevalence of breastfeeding practice in Mauritius has risen from 72% in 1991 to 93.4%, while only 17.9% breastfed their children exclusively for the first 6 months, and the mean duration of EBF (exclusive breastfeeding) is 2.10 months. Complementary feeding was more commonly initiated around 4–6 months (75.2%).1

In a KAP study conducted in Egypt rural area also showed that the majority of the mothers had good knowledge about the advantages of breastfeeding for child. As regards weaning, majority (92.5%) of the mothers defined weaning as breastfeeding cessation. Most of the mothers (94.8%) agreed that breastfeeding protect child from infection, 96.1% agreed that it is the healthiest for infant, and 83.4% agreed that breastfeeding should be avoided during mother's illness. About 84% initiated breastfeeding immediately after delivery, and 42.7% of the studied mothers offered pre-lacteal feeds to baby before lactation. About thirty quarters (74.2%) of mothers fed colostrum.<sup>5</sup>

And a similar study from Ajmer district has shown the average knowledge score of urban mother in breast feeding and weaning to be 61.6% and 64.0% respectively. Attitude scores on breastfeeding among the groups were 81.8% which was better in rural mothers whereas attitude scores about weaning among the groups was average 50%. The average score 83.3% of breast feeding practices among urban mother, similar observation was made for weaning practices in which average score of urban mother (86.8%).

A descriptive cross-sectional study conducted in Ethiopia also concluded that majority of mothers knew about EBF and had a positive attitude towards EBF but did not know the recommended duration or that EBF is sufficient for six months.<sup>7</sup>

In this study also similar findings were observed, total of 98.5% of women consider breast milk as best nutrition and 77% of women were aware regarding exclusive breastfeeding. Weaning was rightly understood by 60.5% of mothers and most common food item used initially to start weaning was mashed cereals (68.5%).

Most of the participants are aware that breastfeeding increases immunity of child (89%) and intelligence (22%), and among mothers it strengthens their bond with child (89%) and also protects from cancer (26%).

Attitude towards EBF was good (92%). And 75.5% of participants prefer feeding breast milk for first 6 months. And some of the reasons for not following recommended duration of exclusive breastfeeding were: medical complications due to which child was being treated in NICU and milk insufficiency.

A study conducted in Mexico also showed findings where in participants, including fathers, believed that breast milk was the best and healthiest for the baby (60%), and that breast milk had nutritional properties that help the infant's immune system (17%). Participants also mentioned benefits for the mother, such as prevention of breast cancer. However, participants also mentioned the fear that the infant would not be full with breast milk alone (40%), and that water was necessary in addition to breast milk for thirst (17%).

# **CONCLUSION**

Adequate knowledge was assessed from mothers regarding breastfeeding and weaning practice. In this study it was also observed that parity was indirectly proportional to breastfeeding practice and the initiation of weaning was early. And colostrum feeding was regarded as good practice which can improve health of child. It is recommended to encourage mothers to follow correct feeding practice of infants despite of parity, by strengthening health education and community participation.

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