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# **Original Research Article**

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# Knowledge and attitude regarding breast feeding among lactating mothers in a rural area, Bellur

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#### **ABSTRACT**

**Background:** Breastfeeding has a wide range of health benefits for mothers and children. The main obstacle in raising the exclusive breastfeeding rate is lack of awareness, false belief and customs. The current study was designed to assess knowledge and attitude to breastfeeding among rural lactating mother.

**Methods:** A descriptive study was conducted in community health centre, Bellur during July 2017 to December 2017. Lactating mother were included in the study after meeting inclusion and exclusion criteria. Data was collected using semi structured proforma by interview method.

**Results:** Around 80% of the mothers were aware about the time of initiation of breast feeding, 56% knew about advantage of breast feeding and 70% of the mothers were aware of exclusive breast feeding. Attitude of the mothers towards breast feeding is favourable. Only 34% of the mother knew that breast feeding should be continued till 2 years. Majority i.e. 95% of the mothers were not aware regarding the breast feeding advantage to the mother.

**Conclusions:** The study revealed that there is a lack of knowledge in continuation of breast feeding upto two years and breast feeding benefits to the mother among lactating mothers.

Keywords: Attitude, Breast feeding, Knowledge, Lactating mothers

## INTRODUCTION

Early initiation and exclusive breast feeding help ensure young children the best start of life. Exclusive breastfeeding means that the infant receives only breast milk. No other liquids or solids are given - not even water – with the exception of oral rehydration solution, or drops/syrups of vitamins, minerals or medicines. Infants should be exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life to achieve optimal growth, development and health. their evolving Thereafter, to meet nutritional requirements, infants should receive nutritionally adequate and safe complementary foods, while continuing to breastfeed for up to two years or beyond.

Modern science and technology has not been able to produce a better food for young infants than mother's milk. Breastfeeding is the best way to satisfy the nutritional and psychological needs of the baby. Mother's milk is designed for easy digestion and assimilation. Same is the case with regard to fat and calcium in human milk which are also easily absorbable. The milk sugar – lactose in mother's milk provides ready energy. In addition, a part of it is converted into lactic acid in the intestines which destroys harmful bacteria present there and helps in absorption of calcium and other minerals. The amount of vitamins such as thiamine, vitamin A and vitamin C found in mother's milk depends on the diet of the mother. The human milk has inherent anti-infective

properties which no other milk has. This protective function of human milk is particularly important in developing countries where there is much exposure to infection.<sup>2</sup>

Recent scientific evidence reveals that malnutrition has been responsible, directly or indirectly, for 60% of all deaths among children under five years annually. Over 2/3 of these deaths are often associated with inappropriate feeding practices and occur during the first year of life. Only 35% of infants world-wide are exclusively breastfed during the first four months of life and complementary feeding begins either too early or too late with foods which are often nutritionally inadequate and unsafe. Optimal breastfeeding (early and exclusive breastfeeding) has the potential to prevent over 800,000 deaths (13% of all deaths) in children under five in the developing world. Whereas, complementary feeding interventions alone were estimated to prevent almost one fifth of deaths in children aged years. Poor feeding practices in infancy and early childhood, resulting in malnutrition, contribute to impaired cognitive and social development, poor school performance and reduced productivity in later life. Poor feeding practices are, therefore, a major threat to social and economic development as they are among the most serious obstacles to attaining and maintaining health of this important age group.<sup>2</sup>

The main obstacle in raising the exclusive breast feeding rate is lack of awareness, false belief and customs. Hence this study was conducted with the following objective to assess the knowledge and attitude regarding breast feeding among lactating mothers.

#### **METHODS**

A descriptive study was conducted in community health centre, Bellur during July 2017 to December 2017. Community health center, Bellur is a rural health training centre attached to Adichunchangiri Medical College. Lactating women who has a child of more than 6 months were recruited for the study in the two months period. So around 100 lactating women were interviewed. Detailed information was collected using pre-tested semistructured proforma by interview method. education. Sociodemographic profile like age, occupation, type of family etc was taken. To asses knowledge initiation of breast feeding, advantage of colostrum, frequency of feeding, type and time of complementary food was assessed. The 5 point Likert scale was used to assess the attitude. The obtained data was entered in the MS Excel sheet and analyzed using descriptive statistics.

## RESULTS

A total of 100 lactating mothers were included in the study. The sociodemographic profile of study subjects shown in Table 1. The age range of study subjects varies between 19-35 years with mean of 24 years with SD of

±3.54. Majority of them (62) delivered in a private medical college and majority (54) by normal delivery.

Table 1: Distribution of study subjects based on sociodemographic profile.

Sl no	Variables		Frequency
1	Age	<20	22
		21-30	74
		>30	04
2	Education	Illiterate	12
		<high school<="" td=""><td>38</td></high>	38
		Pre-university	30
		Graduate	20
3	Employment	Employed	34
		Housewife	66
4	Religion	Hindu	80
		Muslim	20
5	Type of family	Nuclear	48
		Joint	22
		Three generation	30

Table 2: Knowledge of study subjects regarding breast feeding.

Sl. No	Questions		Percentage (%)
1	Time of initiation of feeding	Within 1 hr	80
		Between 1-24 hr	18
		Don't know	02
2	Colostrum advantage	Don't know	42
		Decreases diarrhoea	56
		Not digestible	02
	Duration of exclusive breast feeding	<6 months	19
3		6 months	70
		>6 months	11
	Type of weaning food to start	Semisolid	22
4		Liquid	54
		Semi liquid	24
	Breast feeding advantage to the mother	Don't know	95
5		Contraceptive	03
		Decreases weight	02
	Source of information	Health worker	66
6		Friends/relatives	31
		Mass media	03

Knowledge of study subjects regarding breast feeding is shown in Table 2. Most of the mothers knew that human milk is the best milk. Around 80% of the mothers were aware about the time of initiation of breast feeding, 56% knew about advantage of breast feeding and 70% of the mothers were aware of exclusive breast feeding. Majority i.e. 95% of the mother were not aware of the breast feeding advantage to the mother.

Table 3: Attitude of study subjects regarding breast feeding.

Sl. No.	Questions	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	Breast milk is healthier than cow's milk.	76	24	-	-	-
2	Three months of breast feeding is long enough.	02	06	-	18	74
3	Breast feeding is difficult than artificial feeding.	12	02	04	18	64
4	Prelacteal feed should be given before initiation of breast milk.	26	08	10	10	46
5	Breast feeding increases the intelligence of the baby.	74	20	04	-	02
6	Breast feeding should be continued with weaning foods.	64	46	-	-	-

Attitude is assessed using 5 point Likert scale. Table 3 shows attitude of lactating mothers towards breast feeding. Attitude of the mother regarding exclusive breast feeding is favorable.

## **DISCUSSION**

Breastfeeding is the normal way of providing young infants with the nutrients they need for healthy growth and development. Over the past decades, evidence for the health advantages of breastfeeding and recommendations for practice have continued to increase. WHO can now say with full confidence that breastfeeding reduces child mortality and has health benefits that extend into adulthood. On a population basis, exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life is the recommended way of feeding infants, followed by continued breastfeeding with appropriate complementary foods for up to two years or beyond.<sup>3</sup> Virtually all mothers can breastfeed, provided they have accurate information, and the support of their family.<sup>4</sup>

Majority of the mother (80%) knew about time of initiation of breast feeding. But in a study conducted by Chaudary only 10% of the mother knew about the initiation of breast feeding within one hour.<sup>5</sup>

Around 56% knew about the advantage of colostrums in comparison to study done by Pansari 88% were aware of the advantage of colostrums.<sup>6</sup>

Most of the mothers i.e. 70% knew about the duration of exclusive breast feeding is 6 months. According to study in Puducherry, Maheshwaran et al study, only 38% of post natal mother knew about exclusive breast feeding.<sup>2</sup> According to study in West Bengal, 70% of the mother exclusively breast fed their baby.<sup>7</sup>

54% aware about the type of weaning food. Most of them got all these information from the health worker and in a study done by Okolo 33% of the mother received information from the health worker. But majority not aware about the breast feeding benefits the mother.

Only 34% of the mother knew that breast feeding should be continued till 2 years but in a study done by Vijayalakshmi, 68% knew about the breast feeding should be continued till 2 years and in a rural study by Kishore 27% of the mother felt that breast feeding should be continued till 2 years. 9,10 Attitude of the mother towards breast feeding is favorable.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study reveals that there is lack of knowledge about breast feeding benefits to the mother and continuation of breast feeding till two years among lactating mothers. So training of health workers to promote breast feeding and Pre natal education to mothers on breast feeding should be strengthened.

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