

Knowledge, attitude and practice towards exclusive breastfeeding among rural mothers of central India.

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ABSTRACT:

OBJECTIVES- To assess the knowledge, attitude and practice among rural Indian mother of age 6 to 24 month child regarding exclusive breastfeeding practices.

METHODS- This is cross-sectional analysis study, was conducted at tertiary care teaching rural hospital in India between December 2020 to June 2021. A self-administrated questionnaire was distributed to mothers of children attending pediatrics outpatient department at hospital. The questionnaire consisted of 4 parts, first part consist of demographic variables, second, third and fourth part consist of questionnaires regarding knowledge, attitude and practice of mother towards exclusive breastfeeding practices.

Results: Out of the 200 participant, 185 (88%) completed questionnaire completely and validly. About 92% mothers know about importance of exclusive breast feeding (EBF), similarly majority of mothers knows importance of colostrum (88%),but on down side only 38% mother knows EBF causes improvement in immunity, only 37 % mother aware that EBF can prevent diarrheal episodes. Except for prelacteal feeds and rejection of colostrum , practice of EBF is satisfactory in this region, majority of mothers breastfeed their child (95%), gives feeding regularly, and continued till 6 month of age, also practice feeding during night(97%) and during illness (89%). While surprisingly still as much as (45%) mother still employ prelacteal feed practice before start of feeding, also terrible practice of discarding of colostrum are practice by (46%) mothers.

Conclusion: Though there is good knowledge among mothers regarding beneficial factors of exclusive breastfeeding also many mothers follows satisfactory breastfeeding practices, but still some bad practice are being used by many mothers in this region which can adversely health of children , hence need to improve those terrible practices. Therefore various strategies need to employ like health education, awareness programs, training programs for mothers to improve their practice and attitude towards exclusive breast feeding .

Keywords: exclusive breast feeding, awareness, knowledge, attitude, practice, health education, prelacteal feed, colostrum.

Introduction:

Since ancient time breastfeeding is consider to be a basic human activity vital for infant growth, already circumstantial evidences are present regarding advantages of breastfed babies over non breastfed

babies in terms of growth, nutrition, cognition, intelligence, immunity booster in not only early life but later life in term of prevention of diabetes, obesity, hypertension, cancers and many other diseases (1). Breastfeeding has been branded as an effective tool to achieve the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health (2016-2030), which was launched alongside the Sustainable Development Goals as a roadmap for ending preventable deaths in generation (2)

Breastfeeding is a natural act and also a learned behavior and sometimes need training to new mothers .breast feeding have immense economic value not only to family also to country, especially in developing world. (3) The WHO recommends exclusive breastfeeding to all infant till 2 year of age to achieve optimal physical and cognitive growth of child.(4) Exclusive Breast Feeding (EBF) is defined as no other milk or feed except human milk, not even water (5) Since long time benefits of breast-feeding, to both mother and baby, are known Despite strong evidences in support of EBF for the first six months of life, its prevalence has remained low worldwide and it is estimated that only about one-third of infants were exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life.(6)

Breastfeeding has declined worldwide in past few years due to urbanization and employment of mother. (7) including in India (8) In India, breastfeeding is influence by various factors like social, cultural, religious and economic factors.

Maternal infant feeding attitude is a single most important predictor to start breastfeeding.(9) very few studies are available in literature to evaluate knowledge, attitude and practice beliefs regarding exclusive breast feeding from rural central India, hence present study is plan.

Materials and Methods:

Study design and population: This is cross-sectional analysis study was conducted at tertiary care rural teaching hospital in India between December 2020 to April 2021 and consist of interviews mother, who were attending mostly pediatric OPD for various reasons. Well-structured English and local language (Marathi) questionnaires were made. The questionnaire was formed based on the questions taken from various previous studies and edited to suit the objectives. A literature review of past similar studies of exclusive breast feeding was done to identify potential domains for the study instrument and changes made to suit the local population. A pilot study was also conducted to test the validity of the questionnaire for content, readability, design and comprehension on 20 local peoples and necessary modifications were made so that the questionnaire was simple for understanding and answering, still give accurate data.

The final version of the questionnaire consists of 33 questions divided into four parts. The first part was about socio demographic variables of local populations. The second part consists of questions regarding knowledge and belief of participant regarding exclusive breast feeding with multiple options given. Third part consist of questions regarding attitude of respondent towards exclusive breast feeding with statements with yes – no options or suitable multiple choices answers while Fourth part consist of multiple choice questions with suitable options.

A written consent was taken from all respondent before participation in study, Participants' confidentiality was assured by assigning each respondent a unique a code number for the purpose of

analysis only. No any specific incentives or rewards were given to participants. Study was approved by the institutional review committee.

Data analysis was done using SPSS 21. Numerical variables were reported as percentage.

Results- Out of the 200 questionnaires distributed, 185 participant (92.5%) completed questionnaires and were included in study, while the remaining 15 (8.5%) were excluded due to incomplete, invalid filling or double answers.

Respondents' mothers were compared according to their demographic parameters: age, educational level, occupation, type of family, age and gender of children etc. Among all respondent 82 % are belong to age group 20 to 30 years , while only 10% belong less than 20 years group. Only 5% mothers were illiterate while 31% mothers having education graduation or more. More than 84 % mother are homemaker while rest are doing either service (11%) or business (5%) . Around 68% family are nuclear in nature, and 89% mothers have less than 2 children,90 % mothers live in rural area, 51% children s are male.

Table 1: Socio demographic variable of participant

sr no	characteristic	N	%
1	Age of mother		
	<20	23	10%
	20-25	74	34%
	25-30	106	48%
	>35	18	8%
2	Mother's educational status		
	Illiterate	12	5%
	Primary education	26	12%
	Secondary education	49	22%
	intermediate education	64	29%
	Graduation	46	21%
	Postgraduation	22	10%
3	Mother's occupational status		
	Housemaker	185	84%
	Service	25	11%
	Business	10	5%
4	Type of family		
	Nuclear	150	68%
	Joint	70	32%
5	number of children in family		0%
	01-2	195	89%
	>2-4	25	11%
6	Residence		

	Rural	199	90%
	Urban	12	5%
	Semi-urban	10	5%
	age of child		
7	6-8 month	50	23%
	8-12 month	26	12%
	12-18 month	96	44%
	18-24 month	46	21%
	sex of child		
8	Male	112	51%
	Female	108	49%

While analyzing knowledge domain, 92 % mothers consider EBF are vital and essential for their health, around 60% mother started feeding soon after birth while 26% mothers started within 24 hrs, only 20% mother failed to initiate breast feeding within first 24 hr. around 88% mother consider colostrum are beneficial to child, while only 38% mothers know EBF can improve immunity of child. Similarly only 37% mothers know that, EBF can prevent diarrhea in children. Nearly 82% mother consider EBF should be given for 6 month or more, while still 18% mother consider EBF should be given for less than 6 month. 30% mothers source of knowledge are health professional, while 48% mother get knowledge regarding EBF is family and relatives. 65% mother knows that BF prevent pregnancy.

While analyzing attitude domain, 66% women agree that BF should continue up to 2 years of age, 62% mothers agree that, breastfeeding should be on demand. Regarding Prelacteal feed, 30% agree and 42% mother are not agree to give prelacteal feed. 45% mothers are not agree with withholding BF during breastfeeding. Only 19% agree that formula feeding better than breastfeeding.48% agree that, BF can causes changes in body shape, 65% agree with BF increases mother child bonding. 95% mother breastfeed their child, and 86% mother started feeding within 1hour, 46% mother discarded their colostrum and 79% mother regularly breastfeed their child, while 21% practice on demand method. 45% mother given prelacteal to children, include formula feed (18%),plain water(19%), cow milk (7%) etc.46% mother agree to give 8 to 10 feeds per day, while 97% mother feed during night, 89% mother feed during illness and major reason to stopped feeding before 2 years are breast milk is not enough (48%), and workplace (42%) etc.

Table 2: Mother’s knowledge of exclusive breast feeding

Table 2. Mother’s knowledge items regarding breast feeding

sr no	Characteristics	Frequency	
		n	%
1	Does EBF important for child?		
	Yes	170	92%
	No	5	3%

	don't know	5	3%
	when to start exclusive breast feeding		0%
2	Soon after birth	111	60%
	1 day after birth	48	26%
	2-3 days after birth	19	10%
	No idea	7	4%
	colostrum beneficial to child		
3	Yes	162	88%
	No	20	11%
	don't know	3	2%
	Does EBF improve immunity of child?		
4	Yes	71	38%
	No	44	24%
	don't know	70	38%
	Does EBF prevent diarrhea in children?		
5	Yes	69	37%
	No	48	26%
	don't know	68	37%
	How long EBF should be continue?		
6	>6 month	41	22%
	6 month	110	59%
	<6 month	34	18%
	Source of knowledge about EBF		
7	Health professional	56	30%
	Family and relatives	88	48%
	Mass media	41	22%
	does BF prevent from pregnancy		
8	Yes	120	65%
	No	65	35%

Table 3 – Attitude domain questions towards exclusive breastfeeding

Table 3. Mother's attitude on exclusive breast feeding

sr no	Characteristics	Frequency	
		n	%
1	Breastfeeding should be continued up to 2 years of age		
	Agree	122	66%
	not agree	60	32%

	don't know	3	2%
2	breastfeeding should be on demand		
	Agree	114	62%
	not agree	61	33%
	don't know	10	5%
3	prelacteal feeds should be given to babies.		
	Agree	122	66%
	not agree	60	32%
	don't know	3	2%
4	breastfeeding should be stopped during diarrheal episodes		
	Agree	76	41%
	not agree	74	40%
	don't know	35	19%
5	formula feeding better than breastfeeding		
	Agree	30	16%
	not agree	75	41%
	don't know	75	41%
6	breastfeeding causes changes in body shape		
	Agree	89	48%
	not agree	21	11%
	don't know	75	41%
7	breastfeeding increases mother child bonding		
	Agree	120	65%
	not agree	35	19%
	don't know	30	16%

Table 4. Mother's practices questions on exclusive breast feeding

sr no	Characteristics	Frequency	
		N	%
1	Have you breastfed your last child?		
	yes	176	95%
	No	9	5%
2	Time of initiation of BF after delivery		
	within 1 hr	160	86%
	between 1 hr to 24 hr	12	6%
	after 24 hr	13	7%
3	Have you discarded colostrum?		

	yes	85	46%
	No	100	54%
4	How frequently you breastfed your last child?		
	on demand	39	21%
	Regularly	146	79%
	Randomly	35	19%
5	Whether prelacteal feed given ?		
	yes	84	45%
	No	101	55%
6	What was given as prelacteal feed ?		
	plain water	35	19%
	cow milk	13	7%
	Butter	6	3%
	Formula	33	18%
	Honey	14	8%
7	Number of feeds given to babies per day ?		
	< 4 times	24	13%
	4-8 times	75	41%
	8-12 times	86	46%
8	Do you feed your babies during night		
	yes	180	97%
	No	5	3%
9	Do you feed your babies during illness		0%
	yes	165	89%
	No	20	11%
10	Reason to stopped BF before 2 years		
	Breast milk not enough	88	48%
	Problem related to workplace	78	42%
	child refusal	10	5%
	other reasons	9	5%

Discussion:

Breast milk is the natural first food for all babies during first six months of life it fulfills all nutritional requirements of babies like vitamins and minerals etc. (3) Breast feeding is only fundamental influencing factor which determine longterm health of child. In developing word many factors like cultural, religious and economical affects practice, knowledge and attitude towards exclusive breast feeding.(9)

Our study was conducted at rural area of central India, here mothers knowledge towards exclusive breast feeding adequate. On positive side, Majority of mothers (92%) are aware of importance of exclusive breast feeding and they know when to initiate breast feeding, importance of colostrum, duration of EBF but only few mothers know additional important benefits of EBF like improvement of

immunity and prevent of diarrheal episodes. This improvement in knowledge can be due to improvement in digital and electronic media campaigning by government of India also improvement in educational status of mothers. Our results are corresponds with previous studies (9,10,11).

But on negative side, terrible practice of rejection of colostrum (46%) and practice of prelacteal feed (45%) are still been done by mothers in this location, which considerable high comparing with other similar studies (12,13).

Sociocultural differences, Family pressure and customs may be causative agents for prelacteal feed , in our study most common prelacteal feed was plain water which is term as holy water followed by formula feed, while in other studies it was honey was most common prelacteal feed (14).

Majority of mother fed during night (97%) and during illness(89%), which corresponds with similar studies.(15)

Conclusion:

From present study it was evident that mother from rural area are well verse with basic understanding about exclusive breastfeeding, and have basic knowledge and attitude towards breastfeeding, but while analyzing practice domain it was found that there is gap between knowledge and actual practice. This study again recapitulate importance of public health information system including health education and communication methods by government organisations.

Conflicts of interest-

There are no conflicts of interest.

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