

Knowledge, attitude, and practices of postnatal mothers regarding breastfeeding: A cross-sectional study

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ABSTRACT


Background: Worldwide, Breastfeeding is essential in an infant's nutrition and growth. There are various misconceptions and cultural beliefs regarding breastfeeding, and it can lead to undesirable consequences. Breastfeeding got hampered in Jammu and Kashmir due to introduction of top milk. Further, no study regarding KAP and breastfeeding has been done from Shopian. Thus, we conducted the current study of KAP toward breastfeeding in Community Health Centre, Zainapora, Shopian. **Objective:** The objective of the study was to assess knowledge and attitude toward breastfeeding and infant feeding practices among postnatal mothers. **Materials and Methods:** A cross-sectional descriptive study was carried out among randomly selected postnatal mothers at well baby clinics in Community Health Centre, Zainapora District, Shopian. Data were collected through interview using a semi-structured questionnaire. Data were entered into Microsoft excel and descriptive analysis was done. **Results:** Regarding knowledge of breastfeeding, there is very less percentage of postnatal mothers having knowledge about early breastfeeding, exclusive breastfeeding, burping, breastfeeding on demand, and not to give prelacteal feeding. More than 50% of postnatal mothers having knowledge about colostrums being essential for health, breastfeeding creating bonding, and <20% had knowledge of breastfeeding prevent diseases affecting breast. <50% know breastfeeding should be continued up to 2 years. Regarding attitude of breastfeeding, more than 50% of postnatal mothers thought breastfeeding in night and breastfed babies healthier than formula-fed babies. <50% thought not to breastfeed while sick and to sit comfortably while breastfeeding. Regarding practice of breastfeeding, more than 50% of postnatal mothers had given colostrum and prelacteal feeding and feeding bottles still practiced. <10% postnatal mothers started early breastfeeding within 1 h. <40% still started late supplementary feeding and only <20% started breastfeeding on demand. **Conclusion:** There is poor knowledge, attitude, and faulty practices regarding all attributes of breastfeeding among postnatal mothers.

KEY WORDS: Breast Feeding; Knowledge; Attitude; Practice; Postnatal Mothers

INTRODUCTION

Breastfeeding is beneficial to the child as it is natural with optimal nutrients and protective factors against

infections.^[1] As recommended by the WHO and American Academy of Pediatrics, exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months has many benefits to the growing infant such as calories, proteins, and bioactive factors such as IgA, lactoferrin, K-casein, cytokines, growth factors, glutathione and peroxides, which have anti-infective, antioxidant, and growth-promoting properties.^[2] Human milk avoids hospitalizations and reducing infant mortality. Breast milk also improves intelligence quotient and brain size significantly compared to artificial feeds.^[3,4] Globally, <40% of infants under the age of 6 months are exclusively breastfed.^[5]

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In India about 2.4 million children die each year, of which two-thirds are associated with infant feeding practices which are inappropriate.^[6] 13% reduction in infant mortality rate has been estimated with the promotion of exclusive breastfeeding.^[7] According to the WHO recommendations, three factors are needed to reduce infant mortality rates, namely initiation of breastfeeding within 1 h of birth, practicing exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months, and proper supplementation at 6 months. However, misconceptions among mothers have made it difficult to execute the same at the community level.^[8] Issues such as career, easily available and aggressively promoted formula-based feeds, social pressures, and illness among the lactating mothers have further lowered breastfeeding rates.^[9]

The knowledge attitude and practice of exclusive breastfeeding has been prejudiced by cultural, demographic, social, biophysical, and psychosocial factors.^[8,10] In India, the rates of early initiation, exclusive breastfeeding are far from desirable and further KAP studies about breastfeeding are limited among Indian mothers.^[11] Further, there is a paucity of literature on KAP studies regarding breastfeeding from Kashmir and till no such study has been done from Shopian. Thus, we conducted a study to assess knowledge, attitude, and practices of postnatal mothers toward breastfeeding in Community Health Center, Zainapora, Shopian.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This was a cross-sectional study carried out among postnatal mothers who attended immunization clinics with their children for vaccination at Community Health Centre, Zainapora of District Shopian for 4 months (1st June to 30 September, 2017). Mothers who were having children <1 year of age were randomly included in the study. Those who refuse to give informed consent, mothers not available during the study period, and all lactating mothers having children >1 year of age were excluded from the study. Informed written consent was taken from each of the participants. A total of 108 postnatal mothers were included in the study. Ethical approval was obtained before the commencement of the study.

A pre-tested semi-structured questionnaire with a total of 35 questions, which was prepared for assessing knowledge, attitude, and practice of mothers on breastfeeding. Most of the questions were prepared on the questionnaire used in the World Health Organization KAP survey^[12,13] and in a study by Thomas *et al.*^[14] The first set of questions asked about demographics such as age, employment, education, type of delivery, and number of deliveries followed by a set of questions about the knowledge, attitude, and practices of breastfeeding. All the mothers who were interviewed were given health education regarding the advantages of breastfeeding. The data collection and educational counseling were done by a single observer.

Statistical Analysis

Data entered into Microsoft Excel and analyzed using descriptive statistics like percentages.

RESULTS

Table 1 depicts that majority (76.5%) of postnatal mothers belongs to 21–30 years age group. All were Muslims and belonging to rural region. Maximum (62%) were illiterate and majority (77%) delivered by normal vaginal delivery. Maximum (60.2%) were primigravida.

Table 2 depicts about knowledge of postnatal mothers about breastfeeding. Nearly 20.4% postnatal mothers reported that pre-lacteal feeds are not good for their babies

Table 1: Demographics details

Demographics	n (%)
Age in years	
<20	5 (5)
21–25	32 (29.3)
26–30	51 (47.2)
30–35	20 (18.5)
Background	
Rural	108 (100)
Religion	
Muslim	108 (100)
Education	
Illiterate	67 (62)
School education	38 (35)
Graduation	3 (3)
Type of delivery	
Normal	84 (77)
Cesarean	24 (23)
Gravida	
Primi	65 (60.2)
Multigravida	43 (39.8)

Table 2: Mothers' knowledge regarding breastfeeding

Characteristic	n (%)
Pre-lacteal feeds are not good	22 (20.4)
Colostrum is essential for babies health	87 (80.6)
Start breastfeeding within 1 h after delivery	23 (21.3)
Give only breast milk for first 6 months	30 (27.7)
Burping should be done after each feed	49 (45.4)
Breast feed on demand	12 (11.1)
Child needs vitamin syrup during first 6 months	11 (10.1)
Child <6 months require water during summer season	35 (32.4)
Breast feeding helps in mother and child bonding	95 (87.9)
Breast feeding can prevent diseases affecting breast	19 (17.6)
Breast feeding should be continued up to 2 years	90 (83.3)

and Majority (80.6%) said that colostrums are essential for babies' health. Very low percentage (21.3%) of postnatal mothers started breastfeeding within 1 h of birth and only 35.2% knew that to give only breast milk for 1st 6 months. <50% (45.4%) mothers knew about burping after each feed. Only 11.1% had knowledge about breastfeeding on demand and only 10.1% mother knew vitamin to be needed in 1st 6 months. Almost 32.4% mothers had false knowledge of giving water in summer season in <6-month babies. Majority (87.9%) had knowledge about breastfeeding creating good mother–child bonding. 17.6% of mothers were aware of that breastfeeding prevents diseases affecting breast. Majority (83.3%) of mothers knew breastfeeding to be continued for 2 years.

Table 3 depicts that, regarding attitude of breastfeeding, 86.1% mothers thinking of breastfeeding their child in night. 66.7% mothers had good attitude of breastfeeding healthier than formula-feeding. Only 32.4% of them were thinking of comfortable sitting position while breastfeeding. 38.9% mothers had false thinking of not breastfeeding their children during illness. Only 12% were thinking of breastfeeding affecting beauty. Only 18.5% think to stop breastfeeding during weaning. Moreover, 11% felt formula-feeding more convenient than breastfeeding.

Table 4 depicts that 25% mothers had given prelacteal feeds. Majority (83.3%) had given colostrum. very less about 7% of mothers had given breastfeeding within 1 h of birth. Maximum (61%) had given breastfeeding within 1 h–24 h of birth. 23.1% were still giving feeding bottles to feed their children. Majority (83.3%) were breastfeeding at regular intervals. Almost 37.9% started supplementary feeding after 7 months.

DISCUSSION

Regarding knowledge and practice of prelacteal feeds and colostrums, in our study, 20.4% had knowledge of prelacteal feeds being not good. This percentage is less as compared to other studies by Thomas *et al.*^[14] where 30.2% mothers had awareness of prelacteal foods being not good. Further, in our study, 25% were practicing prelacteal feeds. Our percentage is high as compared to study by Chinnasami *et al.*^[15] (10.5%) and Tiwari and Singh^[16] but less as compared to study by Banapurmath *et al.*^[17] (100%) in central Karnataka and Naseem and Mazher^[18] (27%), Srivastava and Sethi^[19] (38%), Hiregoudar *et al.*^[20] (51%), and Singh *et al.*^[21] (53%). Hence, in our study, there is a good amount of prelacteal feed practice and thus need to educate about prelacteal feeds. In our study, 80.6% mothers were aware of that colostrum is essential for health. This is low as compared in a study by Vijayalakshmi *et al.*^[11] (99%), Thomas *et al.*^[14] (91%), and Kumar *et al.*^[1] (94%) but contrary to study by Ben Slama *et al.*^[22] (43% mothers

Table 3: Attitude of Mothers towards breastfeeding

Characteristic	n (%)
I think I should breastfeed my child in the night	93 (86.1)
According to me breastfed babies are healthier than formula-fed babies	72 (66.7)
I think during breastfeeding the mother should sit comfortably	35 (32.4)
I think I should not feed if my child is sick	42 (38.9)
I think breastfeeding affect my beauty	13 (12)
I think it is better to stop breastfeeding when I start weaning	20 (18.5)
According to me, formula feeding is more convenient than breastfeeding	12 (11.1)

Table 4: Distribution of mothers regarding breastfeeding practices

Pre-lacteal feeds	n (%)
Given	27 (25)
Colostrum	
Given	90 (83.3)
Practice of time of starting breastfeeding	
Not remembering	3 (2.8)
<1 h	7 (6.5)
1 h–24 h	61 (56.5)
1 day–5 days	28 (25.9)
>5 days	9 (8.3)
Used feeding bottles to feed the child	
Yes	25 (23.1)
Not answered	2 (1.9)
Frequency of breastfeeding	
On demand	18 (16.7)
At regular intervals	90 (83.3)
Supplementary feeding started	
Before completing 6 months of age	6 (5.6)
After 7 months	41 (37.9)

had no knowledge about colostrums). Further, in our study, 83.3% mothers had given colostrum to their babies. This is similar to study by Kamath *et al.*^[23] but low as compared in a study by Naseem and Mazher^[18] (88%), Thomas *et al.*^[14] (91%), and Tiwari and Singh.^[16] Hence, in our study, colostrum awareness and practice is low as compared to the above-mentioned studies, so we need to educate and create awareness about colostrum. Regarding knowledge of other attributes of breastfeeding, only 21.3% were aware of starting breastfeeding within 1 h of birth which is low as compared to 80% in a study by Chinnasami *et al.*^[15] and 39% in a study by Thomas *et al.*^[14] Awareness of breastfeeding initiated within hour ranging from 6.3% to 31% as per studies by Dongra *et al.*,^[24] Oche *et al.*,^[25] Oche and Umar,^[26] and Choudhary *et al.*^[27] Few studies,

on the contrary, demonstrated higher rate of breastfeeding initiation such as 38%,^[28] 53%,^[29] and 72.2%.^[25] Further, in our study, only 27.7% were aware of giving only breast milk during 1st 6 months. This is somewhat similar to the study by Thomas *et al.*^[14] and Maheswari *et al.*^[30] where 31% mothers were aware of exclusive breastfeeding in the 1st 6 months but low as compared to 85.2%, 72%, and 85.2%, respectively, in studies by Vijayalakshmi *et al.*,^[11] Kumar *et al.*,^[1] and Ekanem *et al.*^[31] Hence, in our setup, there is a need to educate about exclusive breastfeeding in 1st 6 months and to create awareness about early initiation of breastfeeding within 1 h of birth. In our study, 45.4% knew about burping which is low as compared to 91%, 79%, and 89%, respectively, in studies by Vijayalakshmi *et al.*,^[11] Kumar *et al.*,^[1] and Thomas *et al.*^[14] In our study, 11.1% knew about breastfeeding on demand which is low as compared to 13% and 39.4%, respectively, in studies by Thomas *et al.*^[14] and Kumar *et al.*^[1] Hence, less knowledge about burping in our setup. In our study, 87.9% were aware of that breastfeeding increases mother–child bonding which is high as compared to 49% in a study by Kamath SP *et al.*⁴ but low as compared to 96% in a study by Thomas *et al.*^[14] Studies such as Mbade *et al.*,^[32] Hale *et al.*,^[33] and James and Lessen^[34] nurture mother–child bonding. In our study, 17.6% mothers knew that breastfeeding prevents diseases affecting breast which is comparable to study by Kamath *et al.*^[23] but very low as compared to Thomas *et al.*^[14] (87%). In our study, Majority (83.3%) knew about breastfeeding to be continued up to 2 years which is high as compared to 41% in a study by Thomas *et al.*^[14] Regarding attitude of breastfeeding, in our study, maximum (86.1%) mothers thought of breastfeeding in night which is low compared to 91% in a study by Thomas *et al.*^[14] In our study, 66.7% thought of breastfed babies are healthier than formula-fed babies which is low as compared to Thomas *et al.*^[14] (73.1%) and Vijayalakshmi *et al.*^[11] (75%). In our study, 32.4% mothers thought to sit comfortably which is comparable to study by Thomas *et al.*^[14] Almost 38.9% thought not to feed while sick which is high as compared to 28% in a study by Thomas *et al.*^[14] Nearly 18.5% thought to stop breastfeeding while weaning as compared to 20% by Thomas *et al.*^[14] In our study, only 11.1% mothers thought formula feed is more convenient than breastfeeding which is high as compared to 7% in a study by Thomas *et al.*^[14] but low as compared to study by Kumar *et al.*^[1] and Vijayalakshmi *et al.*^[11] Nearly 12% mothers thought that breastfeeding affects beauty which is low as compared to 23% in a study by Thomas *et al.*^[14] Regarding practice of breastfeeding, prelacteal feeds and colostrums already discussed. Only 6.5% had given breastfeeding within 1 h. 56.5% had given within 1 h–24 h. This depicts less percentage of early breastfeeding within 1st h. This is comparable to study by Thomas *et al.*^[14] but low percentage as compared to study by Naseem and Mazher,^[18] Chinnasami,^[15] and Kamath *et al.*^[23] In our study, 23.1% had given feeding bottles. Our percentage is

high as compared to Thomas *et al.*^[14] but low as compared to Naseem and Mazher.^[18] On the contrary, Oomen *et al.*^[35] found 55% use of formula feeds. Only 16.7% had given breastfeeding on demand in our study almost comparable to study by Thomas *et al.*^[14] but contrary to studies by Sunil *et al.*^[36] and Madu *et al.*^[37] where 84% mothers practiced demand feeding. 37.9% started supplementary feeding after 7 months in our study and this percentage is high as compared to study by Thomas *et al.*^[14] and Chinnasami *et al.*^[15]

Strengths and Limitations

Being cross-sectional and small sample size are certain limitations. The findings of the current study may be helpful to clinicians and nurses to create interventions to promote breastfeeding.

Recommendations

There should be counseling centers for breastfeeding mothers to create awareness, change attitude, and adopt good practices regarding breastfeeding. There should also be training of health-care workers (ASHA and ANMS) and nurses to create awareness about breastfeeding in mothers. There should be demonstrations regarding breastfeeding practices. We also recommend to strengthen public health education campaigns to promote breastfeeding.

CONCLUSION

Our results depict that there is a lack of knowledge, false attitude, and faulty practices regarding all attributes of breastfeeding among postnatal mothers in infant feeding. Regarding knowledge of breastfeeding, there is very less percentage of postnatal mothers having knowledge about early breastfeeding, exclusive breastfeeding, burping, breastfeeding on demand, and not to give prelacteal feeding. More than 50% of postnatal mothers having knowledge about breastfeeding create bonding and <20% had knowledge of breastfeeding prevent diseases affecting breast. <50% know breastfeeding should be continued up to 2 years. Regarding attitude of breastfeeding, there is very low percentage of postnatal mothers who thought breastfeeding affect beauty, stop breastfeeding while weaning, formula-feeding convenient than breastfeeding. More than 50% postnatal mothers thought breastfeeding in night and breastfed babies healthier than formula-fed babies. <50% thought not to breastfeed while sick and to sit comfortably while breastfeeding. Regarding practice of breastfeeding, more than 50% postnatal mothers had given colostrum and prelacteal feeding and feeding bottles still practiced. <10% postnatal mothers started early breastfeeding within 1 h. <40% still started late supplementary feeding and only <20% started breastfeeding on demand. There is a gap

between attitude of breastfed babies healthier than formula-fed babies and practice of feeding bottles.

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