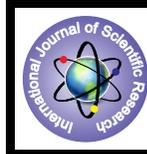


Breast Feeding Practices and Newborn Care in Rural Areas of Lucknow District : A Community Based Cross Sectional Study



Medical Science

KEYWORDS : Breastfeeding, rural areas, initiation, duration of feeding

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ABSTRACT

Background: Breastfeeding practices play an important role in reducing child mortality and morbidity. This study was aimed to describe the breastfeeding practices prevalent in rural areas. **Objectives:** The objectives of this study was to describe the breastfeeding and newborn care practices in rural areas of Lucknow district also to describe the factors affecting the initiation and duration of breastfeeding. **Material and Methods:** This was a cross sectional study conducted between July 2015 to December 2015 (6months). The study was conducted in Rural health care center that is attached to Career Institute of Medical Sciences, Lucknow. Mothers with children who were 9 months old who came to the Rural health centre for measles vaccination were included in the study and data was collected using the pre-tested questionnaire on breastfeeding and newborn practices. **Results:** Our study shows 100% of the mothers initiated breastfeeding, 20% used pre lacteal feeds, 90% had hospital deliveries and 10% had home deliveries. In our study, the majority of the mothers were between the ages of 21 and 25 years old (50%) and 15 and 20 years old (32%). A majority of the mothers were primigavidae (52%) and the age at marriage was between 15 and 20 years old (65%). **Conclusion:** This study emphasizes the need for breastfeeding intervention programs especially for the mother during antenatal and postnatal check-ups and practices like discarding the colostrum and early/late weaning are still widely prevalent and need to be addressed.

Introduction:

Breastfeeding is one of the most important determinants of child survival, birth spacing, and prevention of childhood infections. The importance of breastfeeding has been emphasized in various studies.(1,2) The importance of exclusive breastfeeding and the immunological and nutritional values of breast milk has been demonstrated.(3,4) The beneficial effects of breastfeeding depend on breastfeeding initiation, its duration, and the age at which the breast-fed child is weaned.(5)

Breastfeeding practices vary among different regions and communities. In India, breastfeeding in rural areas appears to be shaped by the beliefs of a community,(1) which are further influenced by social, cultural, and economic factors. Hence, the study with these relationships helps in orienting the breastfeeding promotional activities and for preventing a decline in initiation and duration of breastfeeding practices.

Aim and Objectives:

The objectives of this study was to describe the breastfeeding and newborn care practices in rural areas of Lucknow district also to describe the factors affecting the initiation and duration of breastfeeding.

Material and Methods:

This was a cross-sectional study which was conducted at rural health care center that is attached to Career Institute of Medical Sciences, Lucknow from July 2015 to December 2015 for the period of 6 months. Mothers with infants aged 9 months who came to the PHC for measles vaccination were included in the study. Verbal consent was obtained. Those who were not willing to participate were excluded. All the mothers agreed to participate in the study.

A pre-tested questionnaire was used.(2) Over a period of 6 months, all consecutive mothers coming to the rural health care center were interviewed until the sample size of 100 was reached. The pre-tested questionnaire included various factors that had a potential effect on the initiation and duration of breastfeeding practices [Table 1]. The questionnaire included socio-economic and demographic data, details on the initiation and duration of breastfeeding, de-

tails on artificial feeding and weaning practices, and newborn care practices. A pre-test run was done to validate the questionnaire. For socio-economic status, a standard of living index(6) was used that can be used for both urban and rural backgrounds. There were a total of 33 questions on breastfeeding practices and 8 on newborn care practices. Statistical analysis used: Data analysis was done according to descriptive statistics. Results are given in percentages.

Socio demographic profile
Mothers age in years at the time of child birth
Mothers formal education
Mothers number of deliveries
Mothers employment status
Variables relating to medical care during pregnancy and delivery
Number of prenatal checkups
Health personal conducting the prenatal checkups
Health personal responsible for care during child birth
Place of delivery (home, govt. hospital, private facility)
Variables related to pregnancy and the child
Illness during pregnancy reported by the mother
Type of delivery
Child sex
Child's birth weight

Table 1: Factors that influence initiation and duration of breast feeding

Results:

In our study, the majority of the mothers were between the ages of 21 and 25 years old (50%) and 15 and 20 years old (32%). About 30% of the mothers were illiterate and belonged to a low to medium socio-economic class (45%). A majority of the mothers were primigavidae (52%) and the age at marriage was between 15 and 20 years old (65%). Approximately 10% of the mothers were less than 15 years old at the time of marriage. The majority of the mothers were housewives (75%) and mothers who were employed were 25% [Table 2].

Socio demographic profile	No. of women in percentage
Mothers age (in years)	
≤19	32
20-25	50
26-30	15
>30	03
Age at marriage	
≤19	65
20-25	30
26-30	04
>30	01
Formal education	
None	30
Primary	50
Secondary / University	20
Mothers employment	
Working	25
Nonworking	75
Socio economic status	
Low	45
Medium	50
High	05
Parity	
1	52
2	44
3	03
4	01

Table 2 : Socio demographic characteristics of study population

A total of 50% of the mothers initiated breastfeeding within 30 minutes with home delivery and 35% with Caesarean section. There was a delay of 2 to 3 hrs in feeding. A total of 15% of the mothers in our study didn't breastfeed even after 24 hours after the delivery. Only 40% of the mothers did the exclusive breastfeeding until 6 months and started weaning after 6 months [Table 3]. A total of 55% of the mothers in our study prematurely started weaning the child. The most common reason given for the start of supplementary feeding was insufficient milk.

Duration of breast feeding	No. of mothers	%
Less than 6 months	55	55.0%
Greater than 6 months and started weaning	40	40.0%
Greater than 6 months and not yet started weaning	05	5.0%

Table 3: Duration of breast feeding

Cow's milk (26%) was the most common food used for the infants who were breastfed less than 6 months followed by 'Daliya'. Daliya is crushed millet and is given mixed with milk and water. [Table 4]

Type of weaning food used	No. (%) (n=40)
Cow's milk	15 (37.5%)
Soft cooked rice	10 (25%)
Daliya	08 (20%)
Cow's milk + soft cooked rice	05 (12.5%)
Cow's milk + Daliya	01 (2.5%)
Cow's milk + soft cooked rice + Daliya	01(2.5%)

Table 4 : Types of weaning food used by mothers after exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months

Discussion:

Women in rural areas have a very positive attitude towards initiation of breastfeeding.(7) In this study, almost all the women had initiated breastfeeding and continued to breastfeed beyond 9 months. Other studies conducted in rural areas show that almost all the mothers initiate breastfeeding.(8) Urban areas in the other studies also show a similar pattern.(9)

In our study, almost all the mothers initiated breastfeeding within 1-2 hour of childbirth, which is a good practice. Studies comparing the early onset of breastfeeding on the development of newborns and on their mothers and those studies in which breastfeeding had begun on the 6th hour after birth show that the earlier breastfeeding begins, the earlier and more effective the consolidation of the process and therefore a better impact on the after-birth period, which helps in the earlier initiation of the secretion of breast milk.(10)

Exclusive breastfeeding should be continued for 6 months. (11) It protects the child from malnutrition, infections, and helps the overall development of the child.(3,4) Only 40% of the mothers were doing exclusive breastfeeding, the remaining 60% of the mothers were not. They prematurely start weaning the child, which may lead to the development of infections and may have a long-term effect on the physical growth of the child.(12) Most of the mothers received information regarding breastfeeding practices from their doctors. The mothers who went to government doctors exclusively breastfed their babies.

Limitations of study:

As it was a single centre study the results cannot be generalized to entire population. Furthermore comprehensive and multicentric studies including meta analysis of various earlier studies should be done, to have a more meaningful and high impact results.

Conclusion:

This study emphasizes the need for breastfeeding intervention programs especially for the mother during antenatal and postnatal check-ups and practices like discarding the colostrum and early/late weaning are still widely prevalent and need to be addressed.

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