



INFANT FEEDING PRACTICES AMONG GRADUATE WORKING MOTHERS IN KOLAR TOWN

Pediatrics

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ABSTRACT

Present study was conducted to assess the infant feeding practices among the graduated working mothers. **Materials and methods:** The mothers of infants, coming to a tertiary care centre, Kolar, on outpatient basis were interviewed using a pre-designed questionnaire. Total 200 mothers were interviewed. **Results:** All mothers have breastfed their baby (100%). 48% of mothers have breastfed their baby within one hour and 16.5% of mothers had delayed initiation of breastfeeding (reason being NICU admission of the newborn baby- 60%). 15% of newborn babies were given prelacteal feeds, most common prelacteal feed given to the newborn baby was cow's milk (56.6 %). Majority of the mothers (85.5%) think that colostrums is good for the newborn baby. 70% of mothers have exclusively breastfed their baby till 6 months of age. Among 30% of mothers, 46.6% quoted that doing job was the common reason to stop breastfeeding. 81.5% of mothers started complementary feeds at the age of 6 months. 91.5% of mothers had the maternity leave facility at their working place. 76.5% of the working places were not provided with the facility for storage of breast milk. **Conclusion:** Graduate working mothers have good knowledge about infant feeding practices. There is a need to create baby friendly environment at the working place to continue breast feeding along with the complementary feeds. Emphasis on to create awareness among mothers on storing breast milk.

KEYWORDS

Infant feeding, breastfeeding, attitude and practice

Introduction:

Historically, breastfeeding has generally considered by health professionals as the ideal feeding practice for infants. It is the first communication pathway between the mother and her infant. Previous studies confirm that breastfeeding has advantages for both babies and mothers. World Health Organization (WHO) recommends breastfeeding as a main source of food for babies for the first six months, and encourages mothers to consider breastfeeding as the only feeding source^{1,2}. Between six months and two years old, it is recommended that mothers could use other supplemental sources (such as water, other liquids, or solid baby food) to feed their babies along with breastfeeding (WHO, 2013)^{1,2}.

By assessing the knowledge, attitude and practices of graduate working mothers regarding their child's feeding, an overview can be obtained about the areas which need modifications and hence specific intervention strategies can be made to correct the same.

Need for the study:

Child is the chief victim of interplay of nutrition, socioeconomic and health factors that cause malnutrition. The rise of malnutrition in children during the first two years of life is indicative of poor infant feeding practices³. Adequate nutrition is essential for children's health and development. Good nutrition during this period of rapid growth is vital to ensure that the infant develops both physically and mentally to the fullest potential. Poor feeding practices are a major threat to social and economic development. Nutritional counselling is required to improve the infant feeding practices⁴.

This study was conducted to assess mother's knowledge regarding infant feeding and to assess the attitude and practices towards the recommended feeding practices. India is a kaleidoscope of various cultures and traditions. A lot of the customs and practices have their effect over health including infant feeding practices⁵. Hence specific modifications and intervention strategies to improve infant feeding practices can be made.

OBJECTIVE: This study aimed to describe the infant feeding practices, knowledge and attitudes among graduate working mothers in Kolar.

METHODOLOGY:

- 1] **Study Subject:** Graduate working mothers of children less than one year of age attending outpatient department of RL Jalappa hospital, Kolar.
- 2] **Study duration:** 6 months [July 2017 –December 2017]
- 3] **Study design:** Cross sectional questionnaire based study.
- 4] **Sample size:** A total of 200 mothers were interviewed from the

outpatient department over a period of 6 months.

Ethical committee clearance was taken. Consent was taken from the every mother who took part in this study.

Instrumentation:

A structured questionnaire was prepared for the study based on the national guidelines for infant and young child feeding issued by the government of India.

Data processing and statistical analysis :

Data collected was entered in MS excel sheet and statistical analysis was done using appropriate descriptive statistics.

No investigations was done.

Research questions:

1. What are the sampled infants' demographic characteristics?
2. What is the sampled mothers' knowledge and attitude about infant feeding practices?
3. What are the sampled mothers' demographic characteristics (mothers' age, mothers' level of education, and family income)

Results:

Table 1: Age and sex of infants whose mothers were interviewed.

Age	<6 months(%)	>6 months(%)
Males	60(30)	41(20.5)
Females	45(22.5)	54(27)

Table 1 shows that the number of interviewed mothers of children aged less than 6 months were slightly more (52.5%) compared with the mothers of children age more than 6 months attending the outpatient department were.

Sex distribution of infants was equal among both the age groups.

Table 2: Social demographic characteristics of mothers

Maternal age in years	Number of mothers(n=200)	Percentage(%)
<24 years	52	26
24-29 years	103	51.5
30-34 years	35	17.5
35 years and more	10	5
Total	200	100

51.5% of mothers belong to the age group of 24-29 years.

Maternal graduation	Number of mothers(n=200)	Percentage (%)
Graduate	166	83
Post graduate	39	17
Total	200	100

83% of mothers were graduate and 17% mothers had done post graduation.

Maternal employment	Number of mothers(n=200)	Percentage (%)
Full time employed	99	49.5
Part time employed	87	43.5
Self employed	14	7
Total	200	100

Table 3: Infant feeding practices among graduate mothers.

Questions	Grading	Number	Percentage
1. Antenatal counselling done regarding the breastfeeding practice.	Yes No	90 110	45 55
2. Did you feed your child with breast milk?	Yes No	200 0	100 00
a) If yes, within how many hours baby was breastfed after birth	Immediately <1 hour 1-6 hours 7-24 hours	20 96 51 33	10 48 25.5 16.5
b) Reason for delayed initiation of breastmilk(>6 hours).	Caesarean section NICU admission	13 20	39.4 60.6
3. Prolactal feed given?	Yes No	30 170	15 85
If yes, what was the prolactal feed given?	Glucose water Honey Cow's milk Others	7 5 17 1	23.3 16.6 56.6 3
4. Opinion about colostrums	Good Bad	171 29	85.5 14.5
5. Exclusively breastfed for 6 months.	Yes No	140 60	70 30
a) Reason for stopping breastfeeding	Insufficient milk Problem during breast feeding Working mother others	21 09 28 02	35 15 46.6 3.3
6. Initiation of complementary feeding.	6 months 7 months -1 year Others	163 37 00	81.5 18.5 00
a) What feeds started?	Homemade Commercially available	99 101	49.5 50.5
7. Until what age did you continue breastfeeding along with complementary feeds?	<6 months 7 -12 months 13-24 months	110 71 19	55 35.5 9.5
a) Support in feeding	Father Grand parents No help	70 111 19	35 55.5 9.5
8. Maternity leave available?	Yes No	183 17	91.5 8.5
Storage facilities for breast milk ?	Present Absent	47 153	23.5 76.5

Table 3 shows that 55% of mothers were not antenatally counselled regarding the benefits of breastfeeding. All mothers have breastfed their baby(100%). 48% of mothers have breastfed their baby within one hour and 16.5% of mothers had delayed initiation of breastfeeding(reason being NICU admission of the newborn baby- 60%).

15% of newborn babies were given prolactal feeds, most common prolactal feed given to the newborn baby was cow's milk (56.6 %). Majority of the mothers(85.5%) think that colostrums is good for the newborn baby. 70% of mothers have exclusively breastfed their baby till 6 months of age. Among 30% of mothers, 46.6% quoted that working was the common reason to stop breastfeeding.

81.5% of mothers started complementary feeds at the age of 6 months, there was equity in usage of both homemade and commercially available foods for the babies. 55% of mothers were not able to continue breastfeeding after 6 months and major support for the mothers in feeding the babies were grandparents.

91.5% of mothers had the maternity leave facility at their working place. 76.5% of the working places were not provided with the facility

Only 7% of mothers were self employed.

Socioeconomic strata of their family(as per modified BG Prasad class 2016)	Number of mothers(n=200)	Percentage (%)
Class III	112	56
Class IV	68	34
Class V	20	1
Total	200	100

56% of mothers belong to the BG Prasad class III.

for storage of breast milk.

Discussion:

In the present study, highest percentages of mothers were literate (graduate working mothers). 55% of mothers were not antenatally counselled regarding the benefits of breastfeeding. It emphasis on the need to create awareness among breastfeeding to mothers antenatally and health care facilities to formulate programmes to reduce the morbidity and mortality due to malnutrition⁶. All mothers have breastfed their baby(100%), which shows graduate mothers know the importance of breastmilk and have the good knowledge about breastfeeding practices. 48% of mothers have breastfed their baby within one hour and 16.5% of mothers had delayed initiation of breastfeeding(reason being NICU admission of the newborn baby- 60%). Though there is good knowledge about initiation of breast feeding, its implication in terms of practicing it are not satisfactory.

15% of newborn babies were given prolactal feeds, most common prolactal feed given to the newborn baby was cow's milk (56.6 %). Prolactal feed is a popular custom in the society of giving honey, sugar water and water to the newborn. Which pose a problem to newborn in

terms of neonatal infections⁷. Majority of the mothers (85.5%) think that colostrums is good for the newborn baby. Which shows the knowledge about colostrums among graduate mothers, implies that literacy helps in implementing the good practices of infant feeding. 70% of mothers have exclusively breastfed their baby till 6 months of age. Among 30% of mothers, 46.6% quoted that working was the common reason to stop breastfeeding. This implies working mothers had a disadvantage of stopping breastfeeding at the earlier age due to their busy working environment. This can be tackled by making working environment friendly for the mothers to breastfeed the babies during their working hours⁸.

81.5% of mothers started complementary feeds at the age of 6 months, there was equity in usage of both homemade and commercially available foods for the babies. This shows that education plays an important role to have a right start for the baby in its feeding practices. It is essential to educate the mother regarding exclusive breast feeding, timely and appropriate initiation of complementary feeding for adequate growth of the infant^{2,6}. 55% of mothers were not able to continue breastfeeding after 6 months and major support for the mothers in feeding the babies were grandparents.

91.5% of mothers had the maternity leave facility at their working place. 76.5% of the working places were not provided with the facility for storage of breast milk. Which calls for creating awareness on storage of breast milk and its advantages, need for support from the working place is emphasised. Nutrition interventions have been acknowledged as being among the most effective preventive actions for reducing mortality among children under the age of five years^{3,4}. Of these actions, exclusive breastfeeding ranks first; being estimated as having the potential to prevent 13% of all deaths in this age group while complementary feeding, water sanitation and hygiene would reduce 6% and 3% respectively^{8,9}. 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^{7,9}.

Conclusion:

Graduate working mothers have good knowledge about infant feeding practices. There is a need to create baby friendly environment at the working place to continue breast feeding along with the complementary feeds. Emphasis to create awareness among mothers on storing breast milk.

Conflicts of interest: none

Funding : none

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