



A STUDY OF BREAST FEEDING PRACTICES AMONG MOTHERS OF CHILDREN BELOW 2 YRS IN A TERTIARY CARE HOSPITAL AT NELLORE DISTRICT, ANDHRA PRADESH.

Obstetrics & Gynecology

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Malnutrition is a burning issue in most of the developing countries even in this advanced world of technology. The very first step is improving breast feeding practices in post natal period which is very much neglected and most of them end up depending on many harmful cultural practices thus affecting the nutritional status of the children. **Aims & objectives:** (1) To assess the breast feeding practices in children below 2 years of age (2) To identify association between breast feeding practices and nutritional status of children. **Materials & methods:** A hospital based cross sectional study has been conducted at a Tertiary Care Hospital, Nellore (A.P) with a convenient sample size of 100 using simple random sampling method; a pre-structured questionnaire has been used to collect data; statistical analysis has been done using proportions and chi-square test. **Results:** Pre-lacteal feeds were given in 23% of the subjects, colostrum was given in 89% of subjects; around 59% of them initiated breast feeding within 1 hour of delivery, 84% of them practiced demand feeding, 19% of them encouraged bottle feeding. There was no association identified between breast feeding practices and nutritional status of the children ($p > 0.05$, not significant); whereas for children below 6 months, exclusive breast feeding was associated with normal nutritional status ($p < 0.01$, highly significant). **Conclusion & Recommendations:** There is an urgent need to fill the gaps in KAP of breast feeding among post natal mothers. Breast feeding support groups can be formed for close monitoring and guiding the young mothers in the hospitals for a better outcome especially among infants.

KEYWORDS

INTRODUCTION:

Malnutrition is a burning issue in most of the developing countries even in this advanced world of technology. The very first step is improving breast feeding practices in post natal period which is very much neglected and most of them end up depending on many harmful cultural practices thus affecting the nutritional status of the children.

Lower level of education of the mother and low socio-economic status (unemployed mothers) were closely associated with unsatisfactory breast feeding practices like giving pre-lacteal feeds, not exclusively breast feeding the babies, delayed initiation of complementary feeding beyond 6 months of age etc. In a study conducted in Timor leste one of the world's poorest country, it was observed that more socioeconomically privileged groups demonstrated a poorer breastfeeding performance than disadvantaged groups. Around 47.2% of the mothers were not aware of the benefits of exclusive breast feeding in a study conducted in rural population of North India. The practice of exclusive breast feeding was low in rural region compared to urban region. Higher education of mother promoted exclusive breast feeding than illiterates^{1,2,3,4}

Around 52.8% of infants who were exclusively breast fed showed low prevalence of stunting and underweight at 6 months of age⁵. In few studies it was observed that the proportion of exclusive breast feeding gradually decreased every month till 6 months of age. Bottle feeding is quite prevalent and the infant feeding practices are far from satisfactory even in rural areas of Karnataka, India⁶.

Early nutritional status especially in infancy has a significant role on child's overall health and development. Feeding breast milk proved to be advantageous for weight gain of babies⁷.

Early initiation of breast feeding was practiced in majority of mothers (above 50%) especially in backward communities while it is also influenced by type of family and education of the mother. But delayed initiation (beyond 48 hrs of birth) of breastfeeding and discarding colostrum was not uncommon in 1/3rd of the babies in rural areas of India. In some parts of India, women exclusively breast fed their infants for upto 8 months and in some cases for 12 months also which is a major cause of infant malnutrition^{8,9}. There is a slight delay in initiation of breast feeding in Caesarean deliveries when compared to normal deliveries for around 2-3 hrs¹⁰.

Colostrum which is considered to boost the immune system of the baby and an essential first milk for normal functioning of the human systems is being discarded by majority of the mothers^{1,2,6,9,10}.

In few studies conducted in rural areas of India, the proportion of children fed with pre-lacteal feeds ranges from 19% to 44.7%; where as in rural Karnataka, almost all the infants received pre-lacteal feeds. The common pre-lacteals used were Ghutti (water mixed with honey and herbs), boiled water, tea, and animal milk, sugar, honey, jaggery (a course brown sugar made from palm sap) or glucose with plain water. When Indian children are very young (0-3 months) they are usually fed on demand but for children aged 3-6 months, frequency of suckling episodes goes down significantly among working mothers who do not take their children to work place. The median duration of exclusive breast feeding was 5.5 months and only 41% infants were exclusively breast fed for 6 months and 58% of infants (6-11 months) received complementary feeding at 6-9 months^{2,5,6,8,9,10}.

According to National Health & Family Survey data, early initiation of breast feeding and exclusive breast feeding practices has gradually improved from 2006 to 2016 in India¹¹. Though exclusive breast feeding was practiced below 6 months of age, there is a decline in continued breast feeding after 15 months of age¹².

The above factors need to be further studied to promote satisfactory breast feeding practices in India.

AIMS & OBJECTIVES:

Literacy Vs Breast Feeding	Satisfactory Breast Feeding practices	Unsatisfactory Breast Feeding practices	Total
Literate	36 (45.6%)	43 (54.4%)	79 (100%)
Illiterate	4 (19%)	17 (81%)	21 (100%)
Total	40 (40%)	60 (60%)	100 (100%)

Chi-square = 4.862, $p < 0.05$, significant

Around 23% of the subjects were given pre-lacteal feeds, 89% have fed their babies with colostrum. Only 59% of the subjects have initiated breast feeding within 1 hr of delivery. Almost 84% of the mothers practiced demand feeding for their babies.

Among the 40 (40%) subjects who had satisfactory breast feeding practices, 25 (62.5%) subjects had normal nutritional status. But the above finding was falling short of statistical significance may be due to small sample size (Table 2).

Table 2: Nutritional status versus breast feeding practices of mothers with children below 2 yrs of age.

Nutritional status Vs Breast Feeding	Normal nutritional status	Malnourished	Total
Satisfactory breast feeding	25(62.5%)	15(37.5%)	40 (100%)
Unsatisfactory breast feeding	42(70%)	18(30%)	60 (100%)
Total	67(67%)	33(33%)	100 (100%)

Chi-square = 0.61, p>0.05, Not significant

For around 44 children belonging to below 6 months of age, exclusive breast feeding was practiced among 37 children; among them, 34 (91.9%) subjects were of normal nutritional status. The above finding was statistically highly significant. Exclusive breast feeding influences the nutritional status of infants below 6 months of age (Table 3).

Table 3: Exclusive breast feeding versus nutritional status of children below 6 months of age.

Nutritional status Vs Exclusive Breast Feeding	Normal nutritional status	Malnourished	Total
Exclusive	34(91.9%)	3(8.1%)	37(100%)
Pre-dominant	1(33%)	2(67%)	3(100%)
Partial /Token	2(50%)	2(50%)	4(100%)
Total	37(84.1%)	7(15.9%)	44(100%)

Chi-square= 10.94, dF= 2, p<0.01, highly significant

Among the total study subjects, majority (64%) of them had normal vaginal delivery; among them 54.7% were having unsatisfactory breast feeding practices which was falling short of statistical significance and needs further research (Table 4).

Table 4: Type of delivery Versus Breast Feeding practices among mothers with children below 2 yrs of age.

Type of delivery Vs Breast Feeding	Satisfactory Breast Feeding practices	Unsatisfactory Breast Feeding practices	Total
Cesarean	11(30.6%)	25(69.4%)	36(100%)
Normal Vaginal	29(45.3%)	35(54.7%)	64(100%)
Total	40(40%)	60(60%)	100(100%)

Chi-square = 2.091, p>0.05 Not significant

Other findings in the study were, bottle feeding was done in 19% of the subjects, only 7% of the mothers were aware of expressed milk feeding. Around 19% of the infants had the habit of thumb sucking.

DISCUSSION:

In the present study, the total study subjects are 100. Among them 40 (40%) had satisfactory breast feeding practices while the remaining 60 (60%) had unsatisfactory breast feeding practices. Mothers belonging to Above Poverty Line families seem to be having good breast feeding practices in the current study which differs with U.Senarath et al study which says that socio-economically privileged group showed a poorer breastfeeding performance⁴. Educational level of the mother played a promotive role in breast feeding practices in the current study which concurs with Priya Sultania et al study¹. Around 23% of the subjects received pre-lacteals in the current study which concurs with K.Madhu et al study¹⁰ but differs with II Meshram et al study⁸ which says that pre-lacteal feeds were given in much higher proportion (44.7%) of infants. Almost 89% of mothers have fed their babies with colostrum in the present study; the above finding concurs with Syed E Mahmood et al, C R Banapurmath et al & Priya Sultania et al studies^{1,2,6}. Only 59% of the subjects have initiated breast feeding within 1 hr of delivery in the current study which differs with I I Meshram et al study⁸ where only 22% of the mothers initiated breast feeding within 1 hr of delivery and it is much higher at 97% in Madhu K et al study¹⁰. Almost 84% of the mothers practiced demand feeding for their babies in the present study; this finding concurs with M E Khan et al study⁹. Children who were exclusively breast fed till 6 months of age showed good nutritional status and weight gain in the present study which concurs with the

findings in Lahiri A et al study⁷. There was no significant association found between type of delivery and breast feeding practices in the current study which differs with Madhu K et al study which states that the early initiation of breast feeding gets delayed with caesarean delivery¹⁰.

Conclusion & Recommendations:

Socio-economic status of the families & educational status of the mother have promotive role in breast feeding practices of infants. Delayed initiation of breast feeding, pre-lacteal feeds, feeding with colostrum, feeding on demand, exclusive breast feeding till 6 months of age are the important factors to be dealt with in the post-natal period of women irrespective of type of delivery children who have good breast feeding practices by their mothers enjoyed a better nutritional status in the present study. Constitution of breast feeding support groups in tertiary care hospital for close monitoring and supportive supervision of post natal mothers to fill the gaps in knowledge, attitude & practices of breast feeding among young mothers is the need of the hour.

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