



**ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER**

**Dental Science**

**PERCEPTION AND OBSTACLES IN PRACTICING EXCLUSIVE BREAST FEEDING AMONG WORKING MOTHERS OF BHOPAL DIVISION OF MP**

**KEY WORDS:** Perception, barriers, EBF, Working mothers etc.

**Dr. Juhi Lohiya\*** Senior lecturer, Department of Public Health Dentistry, People's Dental Academy Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh India. \*Corresponding Author

**Dr. Swati Agrawal** Private Practitioner & Post Graduate in Department of Public Health Dentistry, Bilaspur Chhattisgarh India

**ABSTRACT**

**Objective:** To explore the Perception and barriers in Practicing of Exclusive Breastfeeding (EBF) among working mothers of Bhopal division of Madhya Pradesh. **Method:** A descriptive cross sectional study was conducted on working mothers using online survey. A questionnaire was designed on Google forms and link generated was shared through social media and an e-mail to the working mothers. A total of 280 working mothers from different areas of Bhopal division of Madhya Pradesh have participated in the study. **Result:** The result of this study showed that 97.1% know the importance of exclusive breastfeeding but only 39.6% mothers were able to practice Exclusive Breastfeeding and around more than half of mothers' (58.7%) reveal that resume back to work was the major barrier in practicing EBF. **Conclusion:** The study concluded that professional working mothers had high knowledge regarding EBF but they still find it difficult to exclusively breastfeed their babies due to their full time employment status.

**INTRODUCTION**

Breast milk is the wonderful gift from a mother to her newborn. Breastfeeding is associated with health benefits for both the newborn and the mother.<sup>1</sup> It is the finest source of nutrients, which includes a variety of nutrients necessary for an infant's growth and development, as well as substances that help to improve the immune system. So it is the best way of providing ideal food for healthy growth and development of infants, and its advantages range from physiological to psychological for both mother and infants.

The World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) suggest that all the newborns feed exclusively for the first six months of their lives and they continue to breastfeed until two years of age and beyond.<sup>1</sup>

Breastfeeding exclusively for the first six months of a newborn's life lowers the risk of infectious diseases in babies, defend them from chronic diseases in later life and improve intelligence scores. Therefore, breastfed new-born were found to result in a reduction in mortality and morbidity. The WHO has intended to raise the rate of exclusive breastfeeding in the first six months to at least 50% by the year of 2025; however, the percentage of infants under six months who are exclusively breastfed is only 40% globally.<sup>2</sup>

Mothers' work and good knowledge regarding breast feeding play an essential role in the practice of breastfeeding in order to promote child's health and shaping its future. Several researchers have found that work status is one of the obstacles in practicing breastfeeding. When a woman returns to work, her ability to breastfeed is significantly diminished if breastfeeding breaks are not available, if excellent infant care near her workplace is inaccessible or unaffordable, and if no facilities for pumping or storing milk are available.<sup>3</sup>

Keeping in mind women's empowerment, expanded women's workforce in India, this research was conducted with the objective of exploring perception and barriers towards breast feeding practices among working women. The findings of this study will help to better understand the breastfeeding scenario in Bhopal division of MP and describe the factors influencing breastfeeding practices. Furthermore this study might serve as a proposal for health care professional, health personnel and ANMs (auxillary nurse midwife) to prioritize their interventions.

**METHODOLOGY**

A descriptive cross sectional study was conducted at Bhopal division of Madhya Pradesh to assess the perception and barriers in practicing exclusive breast feeding (EBF) on working mothers. The study was conducted using an online survey questionnaire and all the working mothers of Bhopal division are considered.

Both convenience sampling (researchers themselves contacted working mothers to participate in the study) and snowball sampling (the participating mothers were asked to forward the questionnaire to their colleagues) were used so that maximal participation could be ensured.

**Eligibility Criteria:**

**Inclusion Criteria:** Only females of Bhopal division of Madhya Pradesh who are working and having equal to more than one child were included in the study.

**Age group:** Only above 20 years of age group females were participated in the study

**Exclusion Criteria:** Those mothers who are not residing in Bhopal division of MP and Non working were excluded from the study.

**Age group:** Below 20 years of age group female were expelled from the study.

Informed consent forms were attached with each questionnaire for the participants to read and sign if they were willing to participate in the study.

At the beginning of the questionnaire, the participants were briefly informed about the objective of the study and the different sections of the questionnaire. A well designed pretested and a pre-validated questionnaire was designed on Google forms and link generated was shared through social media and an e-mail to the working mothers and received all responses through an online survey submission.

Data cleaning and analysis were performed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) v. 25.0.

**RESULTS:**

**Table 1: Socio-demographic Details of working mothers**

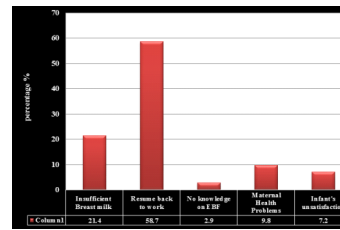
S. No.	Characteristics	Frequency (n)	Percentage %
--------	-----------------	---------------	--------------

1.	Age of respondents	20-30	48	17.1
1.		31-40	188	67.1
1.		>40	44	15.7
2.	Occupational status-	Government Employee	84	30
1.		Private Employee	196	70
3.	Marital status-	Married	264	94.3
1.		Single	00	00
1.		Divorced	08	2.9
1.		Widowed	08	2.9
4.	Residency	Urban	236	84.3
		Rural	44	15.7
6.	Number of childrens-	1	176	62.9
		2	104	37.1
		≥3	00	00

**Table 2: Knowledge of Exclusive breast feeding among Participants n(70)-**

S. No.	Variables		Frequency	Percentage
1.	Do you know about exclusive breastfeeding?	Yes	272	97.1
1.		No	08	2.9
2.	What do you prefer to feed your baby for the first 6 months?	Breast milk only	111	39.6
		Breast milk with infant formula	165	58.9
		Infant formula only	04	1.4
		Others	00	00
3.	For how long should infant EBF only?	< 4 months	00	00
1.		4-5 months	16	5.7
1.		6 months	204	72.9
1.		> 6 months	60	21.4
1.		Don't know	00	00
4.	Do you know the right time to start complementar	4 months	00	00
		5 months	8	2.9
		6 months	160	57.1
		7 months	112	40
5.	Do you know that Breast Milk alone is enough for infants < 6 months of life?	Yes	280	100
		No	00	00
		Don't know	00	00
6.	Do you know the right time to give Breast Milk to a child after birth (early initiation)?	After giving some butter	8	2.9
		Within an hour	180	64.3
		After one hour	72	25.7
		After 24	20	7.1
7.	What do you do with the first milk or colostrum?	Discard	16	5.7
		Feed immediately	264	94.3
8.	Do you know breast milk prevents diarrheal, respiratory (Breast milk protects baby from illness)?	Yes	272	97.1
		No	8	2.9
		I don't know		

**Graph 2- Barriers in practicing exclusive breast feeding-**



**DISCUSSION**

Breastfeeding has declined globally in recent years, mainly because of industrialization and maternal employment outside the home. Thus the present study was developed to examine the Perception and barriers towards exclusive breast feeding among Indian working mothers.

Present study revealed that majority (97.1%) of working women were aware about exclusive breast feeding but only 39.6 % were feed their child breast milk only for the first 6 months. This finding is analogous to study done by G.I.A. Okoroiwu et al <sup>4</sup> (2021) showed that only 70% had the awareness of exclusive breastfeeding and only 54.4% exclusively breastfed their infant during the first six months of life while M hasan et al <sup>5</sup> (2021) shows good knowledge score (58.6 %) on breastfeeding and has statistically significant with EBF practice among mothers. Present research shows highest percentage of awareness as compare to other research but illustrate very low proportion of practice since this research is done on educated working women hence they are more aware but due their hard schedule they are not able exclusively breast feed their child.

Existing research also revealed that only 57.1% mentioned the right time to start complementary foods though all the working women aware that Breast Milk alone is enough for infants < 6 months while 64.3% believed that within an hour after birth is the right time to give breast milk. This finding is close to study done by Krishnendu M et al <sup>6</sup> (2017) reported that 68.3% consider that breastfeeding should be started immediately after the birth while in 2020 Bala Kiran et al <sup>7</sup> exposed that all the mothers agreed that for the first 6 months the child should be given only breast milk and nothing else. Present research also illustrate that 94.3% of working women feed first milk or colostrums immediately to the new born and 97.1% knows that breast milk protects baby from illness. This is dissimilar with the findings of Bolanle<sup>8</sup> (2013) and Ekambaram et al<sup>9</sup>, (2009) where only 57% and 56% of the mothers respectively gave colostrum to their babies. Previous research shows dissimilar outcome as compare to present research as this investigation was done on Bhopal district where women literacy level is high so there the awareness level is high among these mothers.

Barriers to breastfeeding were described according to maternal perspective (e.g., forced to discontinue breastfeeding although mother was still willing to breastfeed). Among the mothers interviewed could indicate multiple reasons which prevent them to continue breast feeding, the most frequently reported reasons were resume back to work (58.7%). Finding is similar to research done by J Danso<sup>3</sup> in 2014 revealed that 90.5 % reported that the main challenge that obstructs exclusive breastfeeding practice is their working status while D Cascone et al<sup>10</sup> in 2019 revealed that majority (65.5%) of women reported insufficient breast milk production was the main cause which stop them to continue breast feeding. In view of the fact that current research was conducted on working women who have more work loads and less time and resume back to work hinders them to continue breast feeding.

**CONCLUSION:**

Conclusively, this research shows that professional working

mothers find it extremely difficult to exclusively breastfeed their babies according to the recommendation of World Health Organization. Despite of having juggle career they are well knowledgeable but due to their full time employment and busy schedule hinder the practice of exclusive breastfeeding. It is suggested that the government must guarantee that workplace is free of nuisance and bias against women who wish to breastfeed their babies through proper manner.

#### REFERENCES

1. Martinez-Vázquez S, et al. Determinants and Factors Associated with the Maintenance of Exclusive Breastfeeding after Hospital Discharge after Birth. *Healthcare (Basel)*. 2022;10(4).
2. Agrina A, Afandi D, Suyanto S, Erika E, Dewi YI, Helina S, Pramita D, Safira N. Analysis of Supporting Factors Associated with Exclusive Breastfeeding Practice in the Urban Setting during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Children (Basel)*. 2022;9(7):1074.
3. Janet Danso. Examining the Practice of Exclusive Breastfeeding among Professional Working Mothers in Kumasi Metropolis of Ghana. *International Journal of Nursing* 2014;1(1).
4. OKOROIWU, GIA; UBOSI, NI; ALIYU, SM; EYA, CP. Knowledge, Attitude and Practice of Exclusive Breastfeeding amongst Mothers of Infants in Gwagwalada Area Council, FCT, Abuja, Nigeria. *J. Appl. Sci. Environ. Manage.* January 2021;25 (1).
5. Hasan M, Hassan MN, Khan M SI, Tareq MA, Afroj MS. Prevalence, knowledge, attitudes and factors associated with exclusive breastfeeding among mothers in Dhaka, Bangladesh: A cross-sectional study. *Population Medicine*. 2021;3.
6. Krishnendu M, Devaki G. Knowledge, Attitude and Practice Towards Breastfeeding Among Lactating Mothers in Rural Areas of Thrissur District of Kerala, India: A Cross-Sectional Study. *Biomed Pharmacol J* 2017;10(2).
7. Bala, Kiran; Sahni, Bhavna; Bavoria, Shalli; Narangyal, Akash. Knowledge, attitude, and breast-feeding practices of postnatal mothers in Jammu, *Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care*: July 2020;9 (7).
8. Bolanle, AJ. Appraisal of Nursing Mothers' knowledge and practice of exclusive Breastfeeding in Yobe state Nigeria. *J. Bio. Agric. Healthcare*: 2013; 3(20).
9. Ekambaram, M., Bhat, V.B., Asif, M. & Ahmed P. (2010). Knowledge, attitude and practice of breastfeeding among postnatal mothers. *Curr Pediatr Res*, 14 (2).
10. Cascone D, Tomassoni D, Napolitano F, Di Giuseppe G. Evaluation of Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices about Exclusive Breastfeeding among Women in Italy. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2019 Jun 14;16(12).