

**ORIGINAL RESEARCH**

# A Study on Knowledge, Attitude, Awareness and Practice of Exclusive Breast Feeding Among Postnatal Mother at A Tertiary Care Hospital

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**ABSTRACT**

**Background:** Breast feeding is known for its several benefits for both the infants and mothers. Despite strong evidences in support of breast feeding its practices has remained low among lactating mothers. The objective of the present study was to examine the knowledge, attitude, awareness and practice of exclusive breast feeding among post natal mothers at a tertiary hospital. **Methods:** A cross sectional study was conducted among randomly selected 105 postnatal mothers at postnatal and postoperative ward on day 2 at a tertiary care center. Face-to-face interview using a structured questionnaire was used to collect the data. **Results:** Among 105 study participants, majority 45 women (42.86%) were between 26-30 years, 44 women (41.91%) had secondary education, 54 women (51.43%) were multiparous, 81 women (77.14%) had vaginal delivery. Knowledge regarding breast feeding among study participants were poor, as majority of women 58 (55.24%) did not give breast milk immediately within one hour, 83 women (79.05%) thought that Pre-lacteal feed is not harmful, 71 women (67.62%) thought that discarding first milk or colostrum is important and 58 women (55.24%) thought that starting complementary foods before 6 months is important. Attitude regarding breastfeeding among study participants was quite good, as majority 83 women (79.05%) thought that breastfed babies were healthier than non breastfed babies, 96 women (91.43%) thought that breastfeeding was more convenient than formula feeding, 85 women (80.95%) thought that breast feeding increases mother-infant bonding, 79 women ( 75.24%) and 87 women (82.6%) thought that both women and infants will not have any problems when exclusive breast feeding is done and 86 women ( 81.90%) thought that exclusive breast feeding is better than artificial feeding. Awareness and practice regarding breastfeeding among study participants was quite good, as majority of women 53 (50.47%) initiated breast feeding within 1hour, 59 women (56.19%) did not discard the first milk or colostrum, 62 women (59.05%) did not give any pre- lacteal feed, 89 women (84.76%) did night feeding as a part of routine. **Conclusion:** Even though our findings show that attitude, awareness and practice was quite good among the study participants, knowledge regarding breastfeeding was poor and overall knowledge, attitude, awareness and practice need to be enlightened among mothers who are prenatal, antenatal and postnatal by educating them.

**Key Words:** Exclusive breast feeding, Postnatal mothers, Knowledge, Practices

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**INTRODUCTION**

Breast feeding is beneficial and very essential for both mother and the baby. The WHO recommends initiation of breast feeding within 1<sup>st</sup> hour of birth and exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months to achieve optimal growth, development, and health of the baby. And breastfeeding should be continued up to two years or more with complementary food.<sup>1</sup> Exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) is defined as giving breast milk only to the infant, without any additional food or drink, not even water in the first six months of life,

with the exception of mineral supplements, vitamins, or medicines <sup>2,3</sup>. EBF is an effective intervention for preventing early childhood deaths. Every year, optimal breastfeeding practices can prevent about 1.4 million deaths worldwide among children under five.<sup>4</sup> Despite strong evidences in support of EBF for the first six months of life, its prevalence has remained low worldwide and it is estimated that only about one-third of infants were exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life.<sup>5</sup>

In India, breastfeeding appears to be influenced by social, cultural, and economic factors. Breastfeeding has declined worldwide in recent years, as a result of urbanization and maternal employment outside the home. Studies in India have also shown a decline in breastfeeding trends, especially in urban areas<sup>6</sup>. Early initiation of breastfeeding is not seen in over 75% of the nation's children and over 50% of children are not exclusively breastfed<sup>7</sup>. So we intend to do study the knowledge, attitude, awareness and practice of exclusive breast feeding among postnatal mothers.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Source of Data

Postnatal mothers on day 2 following vaginal or cesarean delivery in Chamarajanagar institute of medical science are taken in this study.

### Methods of Collection of Data

**A. Study Design:** A cross sectional study.

**B. Study Period:** From April 2023 till the recruitment of patients completed as needed by the study sample number

**C. Place of Study:** Chamarajanagar institute of medical sciences, Postnatal or post-operative ward

### D. Inclusion Criteria

All postpartum mothers willing to participate in the study

### E. Exclusion Criteria

1. Postpartum mothers not giving informed consent
2. Post partum mothers who are critically ill or have psychiatric illness

### G. Methodology

Women who underwent normal vaginal deliveries and caesarean delivery who were breastfeeding after fulfilling the inclusion and exclusion criteria were included in this study during the period in CIMS teaching hospital which has about 500 deliveries in a month. A face to face interview was conducted after delivery during second post-natal or post operative day using pretested questionnaire.

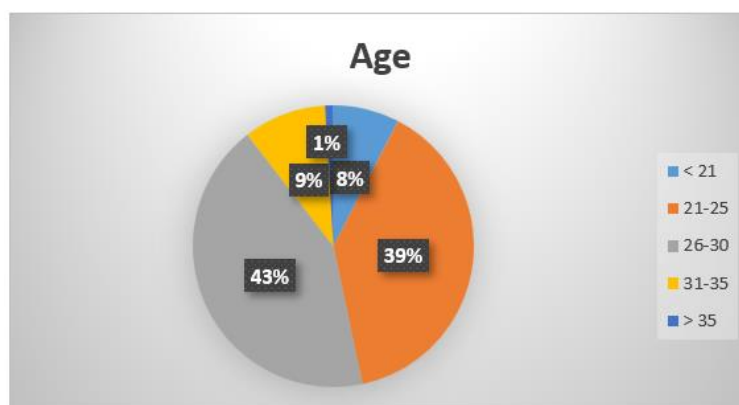
## RESULTS

A total of 105 postnatal mothers who were willing to participate were taken into study at CIMS hospital Chamarajanagar, during the study period.

**Table 1: Demographic characteristics among study participants**

Demographic variables	Group	Frequency (n=105)	Percentage (%)
Age in years	< 21	8	7.62%
	21-25	41	39.05%
	26-30	45	42.86%
	31-35	10	9.52%
	>35	1	0.95%
Education	Illiterate	2	1.90%
	Primary	2	1.90%
	Secondary	44	41.91%
	Higher Secondary	36	34.29%
	Graduate and above	21	20.00%
Parity	Primiparous	51	48.57%
	Multiparous	54	51.43%
Mode of delivery	Vaginal delivery	81	77.14%
	Caesarean section	24	22.86%

In the present study, majority 45 women (42.86%) were between 26-30 years, 44 women (41.91%) had secondary education, 54 women (51.43%) were multiparous, 81 women (77.14%) had vaginal delivery. (Table 1)



**Figure 1: Age distribution among study participants**

**Table 2: Knowledge regarding breastfeeding among study participants**

Questions	Response	
	Frequency (n=105)	Percentage (%)
Giving breast milk for a newborn immediately within one hour (early initiation) is important?		
Yes	47	44.76%
No	58	55.24%
Is Pre-lacteal feed harmful for the infant?		
Yes	22	20.95%
No	83	79.05%
Discarding the first milk or colostrum is important?		
Yes	71	67.62%
No	34	32.38%
Do you think starting complementary foods before 6months is important?		
Yes	58	55.24%
No	47	44.76%

In the present study, Knowledge regarding breastfeeding among study participants were poor, as majority of women 58 (55.24%) did not give breast milk immediately within one hour, 83 women (79.05%) thought that Pre-lacteal feed is not harmful, 71 women (67.62%) thought that discarding first milk or colostrum is important and 58 women (55.24%) thought that starting complementary foods before 6 months is important. (Table 2)

**Table 3: Attitude regarding breastfeeding among study participants**

Questions	Response	
	Frequency (n=105)	Percentage (%)
What do you prefer to feed your baby for the first 6months?		
Breast milk alone	30	28.57%
Breast milk with formula	40	38.10%
Breast milk with cow milk	35	33.33%
Others	0	0
Breastfed babies are healthier than non breastfed babies?		
Yes	83	79.05%
No	22	20.95%
Formula feeding is more convenient than breastfeeding?		
Yes	09	8.57%
No	96	91.43%
Does breastfeeding increases mother-infant bonding?		
Yes	85	80.95%
No	20	19.05%
Women who EBF for 6months will have problems?		
Yes	26	24.76%
No	79	75.24%
Infants, that EBF for 6months will have problems?		
Yes	18	17.14%
No	87	82.86%
Do you think that EBF is better than artificial feeding?		
Yes	86	81.90%
No	19	18.10%

In the present study, attitude regarding breastfeeding among study participants was quite good, as majority 83 women (79.05%) thought that breastfed babies were healthier than non breastfed babies, 96 women (91.43%) thought that breastfeeding was more convenient than formula feeding, 85 women (80.95%) thought that breast feeding increases mother-infant bonding, 79 women ( 75.24%) and 87 women (82.6%) thought that both women and infants will not have any problems when exclusive breast feeding is done and 86 women ( 81.90%) thought that exclusive breast feeding is better than artificial feeding. (Table 3)

**Table 4: Awareness regarding breastfeeding among study participants**

Questions	Response	
	Frequency (n=105)	Percentage (%)
Did you initiate breastfeeding within 1 hour?		
Yes	53	50.47%
No	52	49.53%
Did you Discard the first milk or colostrum?		
Yes	46	43.81%
No	59	56.19%
Did you give any pre lacteal feed?		
Yes	43	40.95%
No	62	59.05%
Is night feeding a part of your routine?		
Yes	89	84.76%
No	16	15.24%

**Table 5: Practice regarding breastfeeding among study participants**

Questions	Response	
	Frequency (n=105)	Percentage (%)
Did you initiate breastfeeding within 1 hour?		
Yes	53	50.47%
No	52	49.53%
Did you Discard the first milk or colostrum?		
Yes	46	43.81%
No	59	56.19%
Did you give any pre lacteal feed?		
Yes	43	40.95%
No	62	59.05%
Is night feeding a part of your routine?		
Yes	89	84.76%
No	16	15.24%

In the present study, awareness and practice regarding breastfeeding among study participants was quite good, as majority of women 53 (50.47%) initiated breast feeding within 1hour, 59 women (56.19%) did not discard the first milk or colostrums, 62 women (59.05%) did not give any prelacteal feed, 89 women (84.76%) did night feeding as a part of routine.(Table 4 & 5)

## DISCUSSION

Breast feeding is beneficial and very essential for both mother and the baby. The WHO recommends initiation of breast feeding within 1<sup>st</sup> hour of birth and exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months to achieve optimal growth, development, and health of the baby. And breastfeeding should be continued up to two years or more with complementary food<sup>1</sup>. Beyond the benefits that breastfeeding confers to the mother-child relationship, breastfeeding lowers the incidence of many childhood illnesses, such as middle ear infections, pneumonia, sudden infant death syndrome, diabetes mellitus, mal occlusion, and diarrhea.<sup>8,9</sup> Breastfeeding supports healthy brain development and is associated with higher performance on intelligence tests among children and adolescents.<sup>10,11</sup> In mothers, breastfeeding has been shown to decrease the frequency of hemorrhage, postpartum depression, breast cancer, ovarian and endometrial cancer, as well as facilitating weight loss.<sup>8</sup> The lactation amenorrhea

method is an important choice for postpartum family planning.

In Rajendra singh *et al.*, among 430 females enrolled in study, majority (98.65%) of the mothers believed breast milk is best nutrition for infant, 211(95%) multipara were breastfeeders, 64 among them had breastfed for more than 2 years. However, only 301(78%) had initiated breast feeding within one hour of birth. Early initiation was higher among vaginal (50.34%) compared to Caesarean (25.7%) births. They concluded that increase knowledge and positive attitude for BF among post natal mothers delivering in hospitals and emphasized on the importance of prenatal education to mothers and fathers on breastfeeding and recommended strengthening the public health education campaigns to promote breast-feeding.<sup>12</sup>

In Kiran Bala *et al.*, Majority (89.9%) of the mothers were breast feeding, however, only 42.7% of the mothers exclusively breast fed their kids. 82.5% of the mothers believe that cow's milk can be substituted for

breast milk, while 80.3% had the misconception that they should stop breast feeding once when weaning was started. And they concluded that mothers should be counselled during antenatal period and all the misconceptions regarding breast feeding should be appropriately addressed.<sup>13</sup>

In Jayant V. Upadhye *et al.*, out of 208 postnatal women, majority 148 women (71.15%) had delivery by caesarean section, 118 women (56.73%) started breast feeding the baby within 2 hours of delivery, 174 women (83.65%) were giving exclusive breast feeding to their babies, 180 (86.53%) intend or started weaning after 6 months. And they concluded that awareness of breast feeding was good. Majority preferred exclusive breast feeding. Still, antenatal counseling about breast feeding can be further of advantage.<sup>14</sup>

In Haricharan K R *et al.*, Majority (n=201, %=87.5) of mothers belong to age group of 18 to 26 with mean of 23.4 and standard deviation of 3.1, majority were primi – para (54.1%). Pre-lacteal feeds were given by 16% and colostrum was discarded by 8% of mothers. About 80% of mothers were knowledgeable and likely to exclusive breast fed their babies. Antenatal counseling was received by 93.3% of mothers and majority of them by doctor 45.91%. Significant association is seen with antenatal counseling (p value<0.03) and good breast feeding practices in post-natal mothers. And they concluded that antenatal counseling promotes good breast feeding practices hence existing antenatal counseling on breastfeeding needs to be strengthened by informing all pregnant women about the benefits of breastfeeding and motivating them by curtailing their ill beliefs regarding breastfeeding and educating them that breast feeding is the healthiest and safest way to feed babies.<sup>15</sup>

In Poreddi Vijayalakshmi *et al.*, majority (88.5%) of the mothers were breast feeders. However, merely 27% of the mothers were exclusive breast feeders and only 36.9% initiated breast feeding within an hour. While mothers have good knowledge on breast feeding ( $12.05 \pm 1.74$ ,  $M \pm SD$ ), the average score of the Iowa Infant Feeding Scale (IIFAS) ( $58.77 \pm 4.74$ ,  $M \pm SD$ ) indicate neutral attitudes toward breast feeding. Mothers those who were currently breast feeding ( $58.83 \pm 4.74$ ) had more positive attitudes than non-breastfeed mothers ( $45.21 \pm 5.22$ ). And they concluded that the level of exclusive breast-feeding was low. Thus, it is important to provide prenatal education to mothers and fathers on breast-feeding.<sup>16</sup>

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## CONCLUSION

Even though our findings show that attitude, awareness and practice was quite good among the study participants, knowledge regarding breastfeeding was poor and overall knowledge, attitude, awareness and practice need to be enlightened among mothers who are prenatal, antenatal and postnatal by educating them.

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