

## A study on breast feeding practices among reproductive age group women

Mallikarjun Biradar<sup>1</sup>, Smita M Nimbannavar<sup>2,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Associate Professor, <sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Dept. of Community Medicine, Koppal Institute of Medical Sciences, Karnataka, India

\*Corresponding Author: Smita M Nimbannavar

Email: tosmitu.n@gmail.com

### Abstract

**Introduction:** The best food for the infant is breastmilk as it provides the nourishment in the first year of life. Greater chances of survival are seen more in breastfed children as compared to artificially fed child. But today in many affluent societies, breast feeding appears to have become a lost art.

**Objectives:** To assess the breast feeding practices and to educate the mothers about the importance of breast feeding and its advantages.

**Materials and Methods:** A cross sectional study was conducted in a District Hospital, Koppal. A total of 110 women were included in the study and data was collected using a structured questionnaire for a period of three months from January 2018 to March 2018. Data was entered in Microsoft excel and descriptive proportions were used to analyze the data.

**Results:** Among 110 women who participated in the study 63.7% belonged to 17-21 years age; about 60.9% belonged to lower middle and lower class (60.9%). Graduates were 6.4% and more than half of them are living as nuclear family. Majority were from rural background (79%) and 88% had delivered at an institution. 56% women delivered normally and birth spacing of more than 2 years was seen in 77% women. Babies who were fed within 30 minutes after birth were 25% and 65% exclusively breastfed their infants upto 6 months. Colostrum feeding was observed in 83% women while pre-lacteal feed was seen in 17% women.

**Conclusions:** We can conclude from this study that mothers had an average knowledge about breast feeding but had poor feeding practices. It is necessary to educate all the mothers about breastfeeding and its importance.

**Keywords:** Awareness, Breastfeeding, Practices, Reproductive age, Women.

### Introduction

The health of the newborn is intimately linked to its mother during and after delivery. The growth and development of the infant is strongly influenced by the health of the newborn. The most natural way of nourishment is by breastfeeding. All the nutritional requirements of the baby are met by breastmilk alone during the first six months of life and helps to create a bond between the mother and baby. In some societies, lactation continues to make an important contribution to the child's nutrition for 18 months or longer. WHO recommends breastfeeding to be initiated within an hour of birth and continued exclusively for 6 months without supplemental bottle feeding. Across the globe around 50% are breastfed within first hour of life, and exclusively breastfed infants contribute to 60%.<sup>1</sup> Early initiation of breast feeding is associated with reduced neonatal mortality.<sup>2,3</sup> Greater chances of survival are more in breast fed infant as compared to artificially fed<sup>4</sup>. Inappropriate feeding practices causes about 2.4 million children deaths each year.<sup>5</sup> Today in our modern affluent societies, breast-feeding appears to have become a lost art. Breastfeeding is endangered by modernization and urbanization. Added to these are the practices of faulty infant feeding practices prevailing in the country, a declining trend in breastfeeding and an undesirable hold of infant food manufactures on health workers.

According to NFHS-4 (2015-16), approximately 95% had ever breastfed their infants. Initiation of breast feed within one hour of birth was seen in 42% and it rose to 81% within one day of birth. 21% of the newborns had received some form of prelacteal feeds. In Karnataka state the overall percent of ever breastfed was 89%, 58% initiated breast

feeding within 1 hour and 82% in within one day. Exclusive feeding was high in first 2 months (72.5%) after birth and decreased thereafter (at 5<sup>th</sup> month-41.5%).<sup>6</sup> Though the above figures have increased from previous NFHS data, there is still a need to promote and support first six months with breastfeeding alone and to continue breastfeeding up to 2 years.

### Objective of the Study

1. To assess the breastfeeding practices among women of reproductive age group.
2. To educate the mothers about the importance of breast feeding and its advantages.

### Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in a District Government Hospital of Koppal for a period of three months from January 2018 to March 2018. It was a cross-sectional study conducted on 110 women who were selected randomly attending an antenatal clinic and who belonged to reproductive age group. Informed consent from women was taken. All the women were administered a structured questionnaire which included different domains like detailed obstetric history, birth interval, place and type of delivery. Detailed questions about breastfeeding like time of initiation, duration, exclusive breastfeeding and prelacteal feeds were asked to the women. The age of introduction of complementary food was collected to facilitate the better understanding on different infant feeding practices. The data collected was entered Microsoft excel and analysed using proportions.

### Statistical Analysis

The data was entered in Microsoft excel 2010 and analyzed using Epi-info 3.5.2. Descriptive statistics for proportions were used.

### Results

Women participants in this study were 110, out of which 63.7% belonged to the age group of 17-21 years; 60.9% of the families were from lower middle and lower class. Only 6.4% were graduate and more than half of them are living as nuclear family (Table 1).

Out of 110 children enrolled in the study, 87 (79%) were from rural, 21(19%) from urban and 2(2%) from urban slum. A total of 97(88%) deliveries were conducted in institutions and 13(12%) were non-institutional deliveries (Table 2).

A total of 56% women had undergone normal delivery and 44% had caesarean sections. The birth interval between 2 pregnancies was seen highest in the 1-3 years gap (77%) followed by 3-5 years gap (15.5%) and 5-9 years gap (6.4%) (Table 3).

From the table, we can find that initiation of breastfeeding within 30 minutes was seen in 25% of the respondents whereas majority started feeding after 30 minutes of delivery. Only 11% of children were exclusively breastfed in 3-5 months. Duration of exclusive breastfeeding was seen highest in 6 -8 months (76%) and decreased as the age of child increased. 87% of the respondents gave colostrums and prelacteal feeds to the newborn. (Table 4)

**Table 1: Sociodemographic profile of the subjects**

Indicator	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Age</b>		
17-21	70	63.7
22-27	38	34.5
28-32	1	0.9
>32	1	0.9
<b>Socioeconomic Status</b>		
Upper Class	6	5.4
Upper middle class	13	11.8
Middle Class	24	21.9
Lower Middle Class	52	47.2
Lower Class	15	13.7
<b>Education status</b>		
Illiterate	18	16.3
Primary	38	34.5
High school	32	29.1
PUC	15	13.7
Graduate/post graduate	07	6.4
<b>Type of family</b>		
Nuclear	63	57.3
Joint	25	22.7
Three generation	22	20.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 2: Details of the respondents according place of delivery**

Place of delivery	No of people	Percentage (%)
Institutional	97	88
Non-institutional	13	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 3: Details of the respondents according to type of delivery and birth interval**

Indicator	No of people	Percentage (%)
<b>Type of delivery</b>		
Normal	62	56.4
Caesarean	48	43.6
<b>Birth interval between 2 pregnancies</b>		
1-3 years	85	77.3
3-5 years	17	15.5
5-9 years	7	6.4
>9years	1	0.02
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 4: Details of the respondents according feeding practices**

Indicator	No of people	Percentage (%)
<b>Time of initiation of breast feeding</b>		
< 30 minutes	27	25
>30 minutes	83	75
<b>Duration of exclusive breast feeding</b>		
3-5 months	12	11
6-8 months	84	76
9-12 months	11	10
13-18 months	2	1.8
No response	1	0.9
<b>Colostrum feed</b>		
Given	92	87
Not given	18	13
<b>Prelacteal feeds</b>		
Given	92	87
Not given	18	13

### Discussion

Breastfeeding is an art which is losing its trend due to changing lifestyles and introduction of bottle feed and artificially available foods. The most frequent reason for not initiating breastfeeding were the household responsibilities such as having other children to take care off and joining back to work. From the study conducted among 110 mothers it is seen that 88% had institutional deliveries and 11.8% women still are having non-institutional deliveries. Other studies conducted across different regions showed similar findings.<sup>7-9</sup> Majority of these non-institutional deliveries were conducted by trained dais. This is similar to other study findings.<sup>8</sup> Among these 56% of women had normal delivery. This finding matched with other studies.<sup>10-12</sup> Birth interval between two pregnancies was between 1-3 years in 77% of the respondents. This indicates poor

knowledge about the family planning. The reduced birth interval affects the health of the mother and child. The second baby born with fewer intervals will be poorly nourished and the first baby may not get enough attention.

Initiation of breast feeding was not done within half an hour of delivery in 75.45% deliveries and the most common reasons cited for this were

1. Less production of milk in mothers who underwent caesarean section and preterm delivered babies.
2. Poor knowledge about breast feeding techniques.
3. Admission of baby to NICU for various reasons.

Other studies had similar percentage of initiation of breast feeding as compared to our study.<sup>9-12</sup> A KAP study conducted on postnatal mothers by P Vijaylakshmi showed that around 88.5% of the mothers were breast feeders. However, exclusive breastfeeding was seen in 27% of the mothers and only 36.9% initiated breastfeeding within an hour. A study cross sectional study by K Madhu et al showed that 97% of the mothers initiated breastfeeding, 90% had home deliveries and 19% used prelacteal feeds. Women in rural areas have a positive attitude towards initiation of breastfeeding. Delay in initiation will lead to a delay in the development of oxytocin reflexes, which are very important for the contraction of the uterus and breast milk reflex. Studies comparing the early onset of breastfeeding on the development of newborns and on their mothers and on those studies in which breastfeeding had begun on the 6<sup>th</sup> hour after delivery shows that the earlier breastfeeding begins the earlier and more effective the consolidation process and therefore a better impact on the after-birth period, which helps in the earlier initiation of the secretion of breast milk.

Duration of exclusive breastfeeding in our study was highest among 76% of the respondents in 6-8 months. After 6 months the frequency decreased gradually. Similar findings were noted in other studies.<sup>9,10,14</sup> In the present study colostrum feed was given in 97% of newborns. A study conducted by Gajre RR, Naseem A, Sindhu et al had similar findings were the colostrums was fed to 88% of newborns.<sup>8,9,15</sup> But some studies reported lower incidence of administration of colostrums to the newborns.<sup>10,13</sup> It was seen that about 13% of newborns received different prelacteal feeds due to various religious practice. The figure matches with other study results.<sup>9,10,15</sup> Prelacteal feeds should not be given but still majority of mothers give either sugar water or honey.

## Conclusion

The study conducted concludes that there is still lack of knowledge about breastfeeding in women which is more common in rural areas than urban locality. Educating women about importance of breast feeding and their practices, merits of exclusive breast feeding for both mother and child should be emphasized from antenatal period.

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