

Knowledge, Attitude and Practices of Breast Feeding and Weaning among Mothers of Children up to 2 Years Old in a Rural Area

Rehana Z,¹ Samad MS,² *Farha A,³ Sen SK⁴

Abstract

Introduction: Breast feeding and weaning practice is an important aspect in modern era. To evaluate the knowledge of mothers a study was conducted among 316 mothers in Parbatipur Upazilla, Dinajpur. Concerning national benefit, we have to grow awareness about the issue among the mothers as well as all the people.

Objective: To evaluate the mother's knowledge on Breast feeding and Weaning practice of Parbatipur Upazilla, Dinajpur.

Methods: This is a cross sectional type of descriptive study conducted in Parbatipur Upazilla, Dinajpur among 316 mothers by the purposive sampling method.

Result: This study showed that among 316 mothers 201(63.6%) are less than 25 years, 111(35.1%) are 25-35 years and rest 4(1.3%) mothers are more than 35 years. About 197(62.34%) mothers have undergone normal delivery and 119(37.66%) mothers have undergone cesarean- section. Among 316 mothers, 35(11.1%) mother don't have adequate knowledge about breast feeding and 281(88.9%) mothers have adequate knowledge about breast feeding. About 301(95.3%) mothers believe that best nutrition for the baby is Breast milk and rest 15(4.7%) believe that other artificial foods are the best nutrition for the baby. About 255(80.7%) mothers are aware of the advantages of breast milk for the baby and other 61(19.3%) mothers are unaware of the advantages of breast milk. 255(80.7%) mothers know about initiation of breast feeding and 61(19.3%) mothers don't know about initiation of breastfeeding. 271(85.8%) mothers know about the duration of exclusive breastfeeding, 45(14.2%) mothers don't know about the duration of exclusive breast feeding, 239(75.6%) mothers know about the importance of Colostrum and 77(24.4%) mothers don't know about the importance of Colostrum.

Conclusion: Majority of the respondents are familiar with breast feeding and weaning practice. It seems that mothers are quite progressive about the issue.

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1. Dr. Zeenat Rehana, Assistant Professor & Head, Department of Community Medicine, M Abdur Rahim Medical College, Dinajpur. Zeenatrehana1967@gmail.com
2. Dr. Mohammad Sohel Samad, Associate Professor (CC), Department of Community Medicine, M Abdur Rahim Medical College, Dinajpur
3. *Dr. Anika Farha, Assistant Professor (CC), Department of Community Medicine, M Abdur Rahim Medical College, Dinajpur.
4. Dr. Subrata Kumer Sen. Lecturer, Department of Community Medicine, M Abdur Rahim Medical College, Dinajpur.

*For correspondence

Introduction

Breastfeeding 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.¹ It is well-known that breastfeeding influences a child's health positively and improves nutritional status.² A meta-analysis from three developing countries showed that infants who were not breastfed had a 6-fold greater risk of dying from infectious diseases within the first 2 months of life than those who were breastfed.³ Six months of exclusive breastfeeding and continued breastfeeding in first year of life could also prevent 1.3 million child deaths worldwide according to systematic reviews from the Bellagio Child Survival Study Group.⁴ In addition, incorrect infant feeding practices pose significant risk for malnutrition among children under the age of five.⁵ The American Academy of Pediatrics recognizes breastfeeding and human milk as the "normative standards for infant feeding." Given the documented health benefits, the Academy recommends exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months, followed by continued breastfeeding for at least 12 months as complementary foods are introduced.⁶

Weaning is the term usually used to describe the process of cessation of breastfeeding after a period of successful breastfeeding. This usually involves addition of food to infant's diet and/or replacement of breast milk in infant's diet with another type of milk (formula or whole milk). Maternal physiology, infant nutritional needs, infant development, especially the development of biting and chewing, and cultural issues all play a role in the timing of weaning.⁷

Breast milk offers multiple benefits to the health of mother as well as to the health of newborns and infants. It is found to have numerous properties, including nutritional, anti-infective, immunological and anti-inflammatory properties.⁸ A newborn infant is not able to combat himself from the pathogenic attack of infectious microorganisms because he starts making protective antibodies several weeks and several months after his birth.⁹ It is breast milk that provides protection to children against the attack of various infectious agents.¹⁰

Objective

To evaluate the mother's knowledge on Breast feeding and Weaning practice of Parbatipur Upazilla, Dinajpur.

Method

This study is a Cross sectional type of descriptive study conducted in Parbatipur Upazilla of Dinajpur district from 24th November to 28th November 2022. The study population includes mothers of children up to 2 years of age. Sample size was 316 and sampling technique was Purposive sampling. Structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Data were collected from respondents by face-to-face interview. All data were checked, verified thoroughly to reduce any inconsistency. Inconsistencies were again verified with data collectors for revision. Checked data were entered in computer. Then coding, recoding was done where applicable. Entered data were analyzed accordingly to objectives of the study by using Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS) software. Those data were summarized using frequency tables.

Results

This cross-sectional type of observational study was conducted among 316 mothers. Findings of the study were as follows:

Table I: Knowledge of the studied mothers about breastfeeding

Demographic factors	Frequency	%
Best nutrition for baby		
Breast milk	301	95.3
Others artificial foods	15	4.7
Advantages of breast milk		
Aware	212	
Not aware	104	
Initiation of breast feeding		
Know	255	67.1
Don't know	61	32.9
Duration of Exclusive breast feeding		
Know	271	85.8
Don't know	45	14.2
Importance of Colostrum		
Know	239	75.6
Don't know	77	24.4

Table I described that about 301(95.3%) mothers believe that best nutrition for the baby is Breast milk and rest 15(4.7%) believe that other artificial foods are the best nutrition for the baby. 255 (80.7%) mothers are aware of the advantages of breast milk for the baby and other 61(19.3%)mothers are unaware of the advantages of breast milk. 255(80.7%) mothers know about initiation of breastfeeding and 61(19.3%) mothers don't know about initiation of breastfeeding. Here, 271(85.8%) mothers know about the duration of Exclusive breast feeding 45(14.2%) mothers don't know about the duration of Exclusive breast feeding. 239(75.6%) mothers know about the importance of Colostrum and 77(24.4%) don't know about the importance of Colostrum.

Table II: Knowledge of the studied mothers about weaning

Demographic factors	Frequency	%
Weaning means		
Add other types of food	280	88.6
Breast feeding cessation/ Don't know	36	11.4
Suitable age of baby to start weaning		
After 6 months	263	83.2
Less than 4 months/ 4-6 months/ Don't know	53	16.8
Types of food used for starting weaning		
Homemade food	281	88.9
Cereal/ Cereal and Homemade food	35	11.1
Baby feeding type during weaning		
Only breast feeding	121	38.3
Only bottle feeding	25	7.9
Both breastfeeding and bottle feeding	142	44.9
Non-milk food	28	8.9
Complete weaning from breast feeding		
2 years	250	79.1
At 1 year/ 1.5 years/ Don't know	65	20.6

Table II revealed that 280(88.6%) mothers believe that weaning means addition of other types of food and others 36(11.4%) believe that weaning means breast feeding cessation or they are not familiar with this fact. 263(83.2%) mothers believe that suitable age of baby to start weaning is after 6 months and 53(16.8%) mothers believe that that suitable age of baby to start weaning is less than 4months or 4-6 months or they are not familiar with this fact. About 281(88.95%) mothers believe that home -made is the best food for starting weaning and 35(11.1%) mothers believe that cereal or cereal with home-made food is the best food for starting weaning. Here, 121(38.3%) mothers believe that baby feeding type during weaning is only breast feeding, 25(7.9%), 142(44.9%)and 28(8.9%) mothers respectively believe that the baby feeding type during weaning is only bottle feeding, both breast feeding and bottle feeding and non -milk. Here, 250(79.1%) believe that the period from when complete weaning to be started is at 2 years and 65(20.6%) mothers believe that the appropriate period is at 1 year or 1.5 years or they are not familiar with this fact.

Table III: Attitude of mother about breastfeeding

Demographic factors	Frequency	%
Breastfeeding protects child from infection, death and malnutrition		
Agree	300	94.9
Disagree	16	5.1
Breastfeeding healthiest for infant		
Agree	315	99.7
Disagree	1	.3
Breastfeeding fosters close bond between mother and child		
Agree	310	98.1
Disagree	6	1.9
Breast milk is best milk		
Agree	315	99.7
Disagree	1	.3
Breastfeeding should avoid during mother's sickness		
Agree	89	28.2
Disagree	227	71.8

Table III described that about 300(94.9%) mothers are agreed to the fact that Breast feeding protects child from infection, death and malnutrition and 16(5.1%) mother disagree to the fact about 315(99.7%) mothers are agreed to the fact that Breastfeeding is the healthiest for infant and 1(.3%) mothers disagree to the fact. About 310(98.1%) mothers are agreed to the fact that Breastfeeding fosters close bond between mother and child and 6(1.9%) mothers disagree to the fact. About 315(99.7%) mothers are agreed to the fact that breast milk is best milk and 16(5.1%) mothers disagree to the fact. About 89(28.2%) mothers are agreed to the fact that Breast feeding should be avoided during mother's sickness and 227(71.8%) mothers disagree to the fact.

Table IV: Practice of the studied mothers about breastfeeding

Demographic factors	Frequency	%
Time of initiation of breastfeeding		
As soon as possible after birth	279	88.3
Within 24 hours/ After 24 hours of birth	37	11.7
Pre- lacteal feed		
Yes	76	24.1
No	240	75.9
Colostrum feeding		
Yes	298	94.3
No	18	5.7
Frequency of breastfeeding		
Scheduled	122	38.6
On demand	194	61.4
EBF for 6 months		
Yes	222	70.3
No	92	29.1
3	1	.3
4	1	.3

Table -IV showed that 279(88.3%) mothers have agreed that time of initiation of breast feeding should be as soon as possible of birth and 37(11.7%) mothers think that time of initiation of breast feeding should be within/after 24 hours of birth. The table showed 75.9% mothers have agreed that pre-lacteal feed should not be introduced to the child and 24.1% mothers think pre -lacteal feed is necessary for the child. From the table we got to know that 94.3% mothers have fed their children colostrum and 5.7% haven't. We see from the table, 61.4% mothers breast fed their child on demand and 38.6% mothers breast fed their child on schedule time. The table shows 70.3% mothers have agreed that exclusive breast feeding for 6 months is necessary for their child and 29.1% don't agree to the fact.

Table V: Relationship between Knowledge and practice regarding breast feeding. Knowledge breast feeding score * Practice score Cross tabulation

Knowledge breast feeding score	Practice score		Total
	Poor practice	Good practice	
Inadequate knowledge	12	23	35
Adequate knowledge	21	260	281
Total	33	283	316

χ^2 Test, $p < 0.05$

Table V represented the relationship between knowledge and practice of mothers regarding breast feeding. Among the total 316 respondents who had adequate knowledge, about three-fourth (260) had good practice and one-fourth (21) had poor practice. Out of 316 respondents who had inadequate knowledge, about 35% had poor practice. So, the relationship between knowledge and practice of the respondents regarding breastfeeding was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

Discussion

The study was conducted among the mothers who have children at an age not exceeding 2 years in Parbatipur and it is proved that they have almost adequate knowledge about breastfeeding to their children. As this study was involved with a large number of sample of women, the results reflect current social and cultural norms regarding breast feeding in Parbatipur. Our study shows that about 301(95.3%) mother believes that best nutrition for the baby is Breast milk and rest 15(4.7%) believe that other artificial foods are the best nutrition for the baby.

In our study, 255(80.7%) mothers are aware the advantages of breast milk for the baby and other 61(19.3%) mothers are the unaware of the advantages of breast milk. 255(80.7%) mothers know about initiation of breastfeeding and 61(19.3%) mothers don't know about initiation of breastfeeding. Here, 271(85.8%) mothers know about the duration of Exclusive breastfeeding 45(14.2%) mothers don't know about the duration of Exclusive breastfeeding. In this study, 239(75.6%) mothers know about Importance of Colostrum and 77(24.4%) don't know about Importance of Colostrum. So, we can say that many women are slightly unfamiliar with the benefits of breast feeding and many believe that best nutrition for baby breast milk and in some important concepts of breast feeding, such as the early initiation of breast feeding, giving colostrum to their babies, and practicing breast feeding on demand, breast feeding, its duration. About 158(50%) mothers are educated in institution but not SSC passed, 67(21.2%) mothers are SSC passed, 41(13.0%) mothers are HSC Passed, 32(10.1%) mothers are Graduate, 13(4.1%) mothers can read and write without any institutional education and 5(1.6%) mothers are illiterates. The results show that education has a large impact on breast feeding as educated mothers are more familiar with practicing

breast feeding. They are not liable to any customs or superstitions and so they are not driven by any social phenomenon. They have proper knowledge what is good for the baby. As per statistics, we can see that 294(93.04%) mothers are housewife and 22(6.96%) mothers are working mothers. We can say that both housewife and working mothers are keen to feed children breast milk. Here, 280(88.6%) mothers believe that weaning means add other types of food and others 36(11.4%) believe that weaning means breast feeding cessation or they are not familiar with this fact. 263(83.2%) mothers believe that suitable age of baby to start weaning is after 6 months and 53(16.8%) mothers believe that that suitable age of baby to start weaning is less than 4 months or 4-6 months or they are not familiar with this fact. About 281(88.95%) mothers believe that homemade is the best food for starting weaning and 35(11.1%) mothers believe that cereal or cereal with homemade food is the best food for starting weaning.¹¹⁻¹⁴ In this study, 121(38.3%) mothers believe that baby feeding type during weaning is only breast feeding, 25(7.9%), 142(44.9%) and 28(8.9%) mothers respectively believe that the baby feeding type during weaning is only bottle feeding, breast and bottle feeding and non -milk. 250(79.1%). The results indicate that many mothers are more aware of breast feeding than before and have positive approach towards breast feeding but still there are many working areas present to solve the issue. As it is a national issue for the child nutrition. The results are generally consistent with the literature and other studies.¹⁵ The results of this study expanded the few previous reports conducted in developed countries relating to mothers' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors concerning breastfeeding. One of the study's main results is that most women have adequate knowledge on exclusive breastfeeding and its relative benefits for the child and the mothers. Indeed, nearly all of the participants knew that breast milk reduces the baby's risk of infectious diseases,

and approximately two thirds knew that breastfeeding reduces the risk of some non-communicable diseases (Asthma, Obesity and Diabetes).¹⁶⁻²⁰

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the present study, it was concluded that: Rural women had satisfactory knowledge about the advantages of breastfeeding for child and mother. However, some attitudes and practices of the mothers were suboptimal. This might be due to a low level of education. The results of this study highlight the need for policy makers and healthcare providers to direct their efforts to providing evidence-based information and recommendations to mothers on the benefits of breastfeeding.

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