

A study of Mothers practices about breast feeding ⁺

دراسة حول ممارسة الأمهات للرضاعة الطبيعية

**Dr. Sulaf A. Hussain*

Abstract:

A cross sectional study to identify the rate of mothers practicing breast feeding and causes to discontinue exclusive breast feeding was conducted in Al-A'adamyia primary health center in Baghdad. Sample size was 250 women between the ages of 18-45 and had at least one baby less than 18 months old. Data collected by questionnaire to obtain social and cultural information of mothers in the sample, and their practices of breast feeding and its duration. Results had revealed that 61.2% of mothers were of age group 21-30 years and 34% of them had finished at least 6 years of education. The most prevalent type of infant feeding was breast feeding in a rate of 60%, and 60.8% of mothers had started breast feeding their infants in less than 4 hours after delivery. Women who breast fed their babies believed that it is safer for their infant's health (32.1%) and it gives them psychological support (30.8%). The main causes for discontinuation of exclusive breast feeding were inadequate milk (77%) and sore nipple (23%). Mother's education, age and job had a relationship on type of infant feeding. Researcher recommends training and teaching pregnant women about the benefits and management of breastfeeding, and encourages breastfeeding on demand. Also help mothers initiate breastfeeding within one half-hour of birth.

Key words: breast milk, suckling, sore nipple

المستخلص :

دراسة مقطعية لغرض معرفة نسبة ممارسة الأمهات للرضاعة الطبيعية و أسباب العزوف عنها. أجريت هذه الدراسة في مركز الرعاية الصحية الأولية في قضاء الأعظمية بمدينة بغداد. بلغ حجم العينة ٢٥٠ امرأة ممن تراوحت أعمارهن بين ١٨-٤٥ سنة، و لديهن طفل واحدة على الأقل (عمره اقل من ١٨ شهرا). تم جمع المعلومات باستخدام استبيان أعد خصيصا للدراسة، و شمل على المعلومات الأجتناعية و الثقافية للأُم و ممارستها للرضاعة الطبيعية و مدتها. اتضح من خلال تحليل البيانات الأولية ان ٦١,٢% من الأمهات قيد الدراسة من الفئة العمرية ٢١-٣٠ سنة وان (٣٤%) أكملن ٦ سنوات تعليم. بلغت نسبة الأمهات اللاتي ارضعن أطفالهن من الثدي ٦٠% وقد بدأت الامهات ممارسة الرضاعة الطبيعية خلال اقل من ٤ ساعات بعد الولادة و بنسبة ٦٠,٨%. و اتضح ان الأمهات اللاتي اعتمدن الرضاعة من الثدي اخترن هذه الرضاعة كونها أكثر أماتا لصحة الرضيع (٣٢,١%) و ٣٠,٨% منهم يشعرون بالراحة النفسية. سبب التخلي عن الرضاعة من الثدي كانت في ٧٧% قلة الحليب في الثدي و تقرح الحلمة لدى ٢٣% منهن. كان عمر الام و ثقافتها اضافة الى كونها موظفة او لا عوامل مؤثرة على اختيار نوع رضاعة الطفل. اوصت الدراسة بضرورة تثقيف و تدريب الحوامل على فوائد و اسلوب الرضاعة الطبيعية و تشجيع الرضاعة حين الطلب. كذلك يجب مساعدة الأمهات على بدء الرضاعة خلال نصف ساعة بعد الولادة.

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*Assistant Lecturer / College of Medical Health and Technologies

Introduction:

Breastfeeding is the recommended method for feeding normal infants during the first 6 months of life [1]. Breast milk provides almost all the necessary nutrients, growth factors and immunological components a healthy term infant needs. Other advantages of breastfeeding include reduction of incidences and severity of infections; prevention of allergies; possible enhancement of cognitive development; and prevention of obesity, hypertension and insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus [2].

Recent guidelines recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months (26 weeks) of an infant's life with the late introduction of solids being cited as protective against the development of asthma, eczema and atopy [3]. Early weaning diet, early introduction of breast milk substitution and cow's milk have been shown to increase the risk of type 1 diabetes later in life [4], also it is believed that breastfeeding provides protection against ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease [5]. Individual data from 47 epidemiological studies in 30 countries had shown that the longer women breast feed, the more they are protected against breast cancer [6].

The aim of this study is to identify the rate of mothers practicing breast feeding and causes to discontinue exclusive breast feeding.

Subjects and Methods:

This study is a cross-sectional one conducted in the primary health center of A'adamaya, in Baghdad. The sample consisted of 250 women between the ages of 18-45 years who have a baby at least 18 months old. Information was collected by direct interview with the help of a questionnaire especially prepared for this study and included social and cultural data about the mothers and information about type and duration of infant feeding. Feeding methods studied were either the use of breast milk only as a method of feeding (exclusive breastfeeding) or mixed feeding (breast milk with bottle milk) or bottle milk alone. Also information about reasons for choosing breast or bottle feeding was taken. Responses were statistically analyzed by the aid of computer through the SPSS program version 11, to obtain simple frequency tables and rates and a relationship between certain variables. Results tested for significance by using binomial and χ^2 tests; P value of less than 0.01 was considered significant.

Results:

Demographic characteristics of the sample illustrated in table 1 show that most of women in the sample were of age group 21-30 in a rate of (60.2%), and that 34% of them had a 6 years education and 26% had 7-12 years education while 27.2% had college education. The table shows that 73.2% of the sample was housewives. The result was statistically highly significant as P value was less than 0.01.

Table 2 shows that 60% of women in the sample were breast feeding their babies and 14.8% were feeding their babies both breast and bottle milk, while the rest gave bottle milk only.

Table 3 shows that infants started suckling from the breast for the first time within one hour after birth in 60.8% of instances, and 26% of them started after 3-4 hours, and only 13.2% of women started within 24 hours. The result was statistically highly significant as P value was less than 0.01.

Reasons that women in the sample gave for feeding their babies from breast is shown in table 4, which were safer food for the health of the infant (32.1%), 30.8% felt psychological comfort, and 20.5% found it cheap food. The result statistically was highly significant as P value was less than 0.01.

The reasons to discontinue breast feeding early or add bottle milk was in their opinion inadequate breast milk in 77% of cases and pain or sore nipple in 23% of cases, as shown in table 5. The result statistically was highly significant as P value was less than 0.01.

Table 6 shows that mothers of age group 21-30 years and 31-40 years were practicing breast feeding in a higher rate while younger and older mothers had lower rate of breast feeding. The result statistically was not significant as P value was more than 0.01.

Table 7 shows that mothers with primary education (6 years) had higher rate of breast feeding as the rate was 78.8%, followed by mothers who had more than 12 years education (55.9%). The result statistically was highly significant as P value was less than 0.01.

Table 8 shows that house wives had breast fed their infants in a rate of 62.4% which is higher than working mothers whose rate was 53.6%. The result statistically was not significant as P value was more than 0.01.

Table 1: demographic characteristic of the sample

Item	Frequency (<i>n</i> ₂₅₀)	(%)	C. S P value
Age group			
< 21	27	10.8	$X^2=195.408$ P= 0.000 HS
21-30	153	61.2	
31-40	60	24	
41+	10	4	
Education			
0	32	12.8	$X^2= 23.568$ P=0.000 HS
6	85	34	
7-12	65	26	
>12	68	27.2	
Working			
Yes	67	26.8	Binomial P=0.000 HS
No	183	73.2	

HS: highly significant at $P < 0.01$

Table 2: distribution of sample according to type of feeding

Type of feeding	Frequency	(%)
Breast	150	60
Mixed	37	14.8
Bottle	63	25.2
Total	250	100

Table 3: Distribution of sample according to timing of first suckling from breast

Timing of first suck after delivery	Frequency	(%)	C. S P value
1-4 hrs	152	60.8	$X^2=81.176$ P=0.000 HS
5-23 hrs	65	26	
≥24 hrs	33	13.2	
Total	250	100	

Table 4: Distribution of sample according to causes for breast feeding

Cause	Frequency	(%)	C. S P value
Cheap	80	20.5	$X^2= 11.231$ P=0.004 HS
Safe	125	32.1	
Psychological comfort	120	30.8	
Total	325*	100	

*= mothers responded to more than one cause

Table 5: Distribution of sample according to reasons for giving bottle milk

Reasons	Frequency	(%)	C. S P value
Pain and sore nipple	23	23	Binomial P= 0.000 HS
Inadequate milk	77	77	
Total	100	100	

Table 6: Relationship of mothers' age with type of feeding

Age group	Type of feeding			Total
	Breast	Mixed	Bottle	
< 21	15 (55.5%)	7 (25.9%)	5 (18.6%)	27 (100%)
21-30	92 (60.2%)	23 (15%)	38 (24.8%)	153 (100%)
31-40	40 (66.7%)	4 (6.7%)	16 (26.6%)	60 (100%)
41+	3 (30%)	2 (20%)	5 (50%)	10 (100%)
Total	150 (60%)	37 (14.8%)	63 (25.2%)	250 (100)

C.C=0.196 at P=0.127 (NS)
(Confidence limit not less than 87.3%)

Table 7: Relationship of mothers' education with type of feeding

Mothers' education	Type of feeding	Total
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in years	Breast	Mixed	Bottle	
0	15 (46.8%)	10 (31.3%)	7 (21.9%)	32 (100%)
6	67 (78.8%)	3 (3.5%)	15 (17.7%)	85 (100%)
7-12	28 (43%)	22 (33.8%)	15 (23.2%)	65 (100%)
>12	38 (55.9%)	8 (11.8%)	22 (32.3%)	68 (100%)
Total	150 (60%)	37 (14.8%)	63 (25.2%)	250 (100)

C.C=0.413 at P=0.000 (HS)

Table 8: Relationship of mothers' job with type of feeding

Mothers' job	Type of feeding			Total
	Breast	Mixed	Bottle	
Worker	37 (53.6%)	14 (20.3%)	18 (26.1%)	69 (100%)
Not worker	113 (62.4%)	23 (12.7%)	45 (24.9%)	181 (100%)
Total	150 (60%)	37 (14.8%)	63 (25.2%)	250 (100)

C.C=0.114 at P=0.192 (NS)

(Confidence limit not less than 80.8%)

Discussion:

The superiority of breastfeeding is unchallenged. Its benefits to both child and mother have been widely documented and in 2001, the World Health Assembly passed a resolution recommending exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life as a global public health recommendation [7]. According to the WHO, between 1990 and 2000, exclusive breastfeeding levels in the developing world increased 15% overall among infants younger than 4 months (from 46% to 53%) and among infants older than 6 months (from 34% to 39%) [8].

The rate of breast feeding in the current sample of mothers (60%) was much higher than that of Saudi mothers which was 27% [9], in Italy the rate was 46.8% [10]. In New Zealand the rate of exclusive breast feeding was 34% [11] but in Tehran the rate was higher than that of the current study as it was 74.5% [12]. Results of five studies from the US (582 women) indicate that education during pregnancy can increase the numbers of women on low income to breast feed their infants[13], so implementing this program might help to increase the proportion of breast feeding.

There was a decline in rate of breast feeding from 100% after birth to 60% in the next 24 hours, due to either a sore nipple or inadequate milk; and both these reasons can be avoided or managed by proper consultations. Sore nipple indicates poor preparation of the breast for lactation or faulty technique during feeding and this reflects absence of prenatal guidance and training to the mothers. A trained person can observe feeds and provide skilled help and support to the new mothers and getting the first few feeds right can prevent these problems [14]. In Ghana two prenatal educational sessions in breast feeding had increased exclusive breast feeding to 100% [15]. The same two problems were found also in Taiwan [16].

Colostrums was given to all infants after birth as mothers had initiated their first breast feed within 24 hours postpartum, and actually 60.8% of them had started within the first four hours which is a positive sign according to the WHO [17]. This rate was 28.5% in Dakahlia

governorate in Egypt [18], in Taiwan (81.7%) [19], while in China the rate was 94% [20], and in Italy 91% [10].

Women breast fed their infants for reasons of ease and safety, and this was also the reason for preference of breast feeding among Australian mothers [21]. Mothers in this study found psychological comfort in breast feeding their infants, a fact agreed by researchers that breast feeding is associated with fewer depressive symptoms and decreased neuro-endocrine response to stressors and decreased negative mood [22].

The relationship of type of feeding with age of mothers although was statistically insignificant; it is important factor as the confidence interval was not less than 87.3% indicating a positive relationship. Education of mothers had strong effect on choice of feeding pattern which agrees with findings of researchers in Jordan that women with higher education tend to feed their infants with artificial formula [23]. Unemployed mothers breast feed their infants more frequently than working mothers and although the result is not significant the confidence interval was 80.8% and this result is similar to that found in Jordan as well [23].

Conclusion and recommendations:

Findings of this study reveal that exclusive breast feeding was practiced by 60% of women in the sample and that all infants had received colostrums within the first 24 hours. Mothers had chosen breast feeding for safety and psychological comfort, and stopped or added bottle milk due to insufficient breast milk or sore nipple.

Based on the above findings researcher recommends the followings:

- Train all health care staff in skills necessary to implement proper breast feeding.
- Inform all pregnant women about the benefits and management of breastfeeding, and encourage breastfeeding on demand
- Help mothers initiate breastfeeding within one half-hour of birth.
- Give newborn infants no food or drink other than breast milk, unless medically indicated

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