

Knowledge, Attitude and Practice towards Exclusive Breastfeeding among Mothers in Pokhara-Lekhnath

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ABSTRACT

Background: Exclusive breastfeeding means that the infant receives only breast milk. Infants should be exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life to achieve optimal growth, development and health. Thereafter, to meet their evolving nutritional requirements, infants should receive nutritionally adequate and safe complementary foods, while continuing to breastfeed for up to two years or beyond. Breastfeeding is an unequalled way of providing ideal food for the healthy growth and development of infants; it is also an integral part of the reproductive process with important implications for the health of mothers.

Objective: To assess the knowledge, attitude and practice of pregnant women on exclusive breastfeeding.

Methods: The quantitative descriptive research design was used for this study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the subjects in community setting. Total 140 subjects were taken as a sample and self-administered structured questionnaire on knowledge, attitude and practice of exclusive breast feeding among reproductive age group women was used to collect data.

Results: The study shows that out of 140 women, 48 (34.3%) belonged to 26 - 30 age group, 136 (97.14%) were married, 109 (77.9%) women followed Hindu caste, 67 (47.9%) women belonged to Dalit group, 129 (92.1%) women were housewife, 73 (52.1%) women had taken primary education, 68 (48.6%) had monthly income >20000, 116 (82.9 %) had ≤3 children. Among 140 women, 69 (49.3%) had good knowledge and fair knowledge whereas only 2 (1.4%) had poor knowledge. Regarding attitude 122 (87.1%) thought that EBF was better than other artificial feeding, 75 (53.6%) believed that first milk should be discarded, 108 (77.1%) agreed that EBF is enough for child up to 6 months, 77 (55%) didn't feel comfortable with extra feeding other than breast milk, 51 (36.4) stated that they were not comfortable because of insufficient amount to meet child's demand, 100 (71.4%) agreed that child less than six months who is exclusively breastfed were healthier than child who took additional foods. Out of 140 women, 139 (99.3%) breastfed her last child, 83 (59.3%) started breastfeeding within 1 hr after delivery, 77 (55%) breastfed on demand of baby, 91 (65%) had not given anything before initiating breastfeeding, 25 (17.9%) had given plain water before breast milk after delivery, 107 (76.4%) had given breast milk only starting from birth to six months of age.

Keywords

Attitude, Exclusive breast feeding, Knowledge, Practice, Reproductive age group mother.

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Conclusions: The study revealed that there was good level of knowledge and practice among women in the reproductive age group in Pokhara-Lekhnath. Hence the study strongly suggests that there was appropriate level of knowledge about exclusive breast feeding among mother of reproductive age group in Pokhara - Lekhnath which will help in enhancing the growth and development of child.

INTRODUCTION

Breastfeeding is a natural act, it is also a learned behaviour¹. Exclusive breastfeeding is defined as giving no other food or drink not even water except breast milk. Infants should be exclusively breastfed which means receiving only breast milk for the first six months of life to achieve optimal growth, development and health. It is an unequalled way of providing ideal food². Breast milk is the ideal food for the healthy growth and development of infants; breastfeeding is also an integral part of the reproductive process with important implications for the health of mothers².

Breast milk is the natural first food for the babies¹. For the first six months of life, breast milk alone is the ideal nourishment, providing all the nutrients, including vitamins and minerals, an infant needs, meaning no other liquid or food is needed³. It continues to provide energy and nutrient up to half or more of a child's nutritional needs during the second half of the first year, and up to one-third during the second year of life¹.

Breastfeeding helps strengthening the mother-child bond. It not only helps in making the mother-child relation more intimate, but also helps infant to fight diseases⁴. Breast milk carries antibodies from the mother that help combat the disease⁵. It protects infant against infectious and chronic diseases. Exclusive breastfeeding reduces infant mortality rate due to common childhood illness such diarrhea or pneumonia, and helps for a quicker recovery during illness¹. It also stimulates an infant's immune system and response to vaccination⁶.

Breastfeeding is one of the most effective ways to ensure child health and survival. If breastfeeding were scaled up to nearly universal levels, about 820,000 children would be saved every year. Globally, only 40% of infants under six months of age are exclusively breastfed⁷. It has been estimated that optimal breastfeeding of children under two years of age has the potential to prevent 1.4 million deaths in children under five in the developing world annually⁸.

As a global goal for optimal maternal and child health and nutrition, all women should be enabled to practice exclusive breastfeeding, and all infants should be fed exclusively on breast milk, from birth to six months of age (March 2001)⁹. Breastfeeding is nearly universal in Nepal and the median duration of breast-feeding is long (33 months). But on the contrary to the recommendations of WHO only two-third of children less than six months of age are exclusively breast fed¹⁰. Hence, this study is planned to get the base line data on knowledge, attitude and practice of exclusive breastfeeding among lactating women. Study explored the relationship among knowledge and practice, knowledge and attitude of exclusive breastfeeding.

METHODS

This is a quantitative descriptive study done among the reproductive age group mothers in Pokhara-Lekhnath. Purposive sampling technique was used for data collection and data were collected in the community setting with the help of self-administered structured questionnaire on knowledge, attitude and practice of exclusive breast feeding among reproductive age group women. Four part structured questionnaire were developed to cover the entire aspects of study.

Part I: This part included demographic characteristics of the participants: Age, marital status, religion, ethnicity, occupation, education, monthly income and number of children.

Part II: This part included the questionnaire on knowledge of study participants towards exclusive breast feeding.

Part III: This part included the questionnaire on attitude of study participants towards exclusive breast feeding.

Part IV: This part included the questionnaire on practice of study participants towards exclusive breast feeding.

The data collection was started on June 15, 2017 (2074/03/01 B.S.) and the data collection was completed on July 14, 2017 (2074/03/30 B.S.). Consent was taken voluntarily from the participants before the data

collection procedure with assured confidentiality. Ethical clearance is obtained from institutional review board of GMC. Purposive sampling technique was used for data collection and data were collected in the community setting with the help of self-administered structured questionnaire on knowledge, attitude and practice of exclusive breast feeding among reproductive age group women. SPSS Program version 16.0 was used for entering and tabulating data. Frequency and Percentage was used to analyze socio-demographic characteristics.

Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution of demographic characteristics (N = 140)

Demographic characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Age (in years)		
• ≤20	19	13.6%
• 21 - 25	42	30%
• 26 - 30	48	34.3%
• ≥31	31	22.1%
Marital status		
• Married	136	97.14%
• Widow	4	2.9%
Religion		
• Hindu	109	77.9%
• Christian	8	5.7%
• Buddhist	21	15%
• Others	2	1.4%
Ethnicity		
• Brahmin	5	3.6%
• Chhetri	14	10%
• Janajati	54	38.6%
• Dalit	67	47.9%
Occupation		
• Housewife	129	92.1%
• Service	3	2.1%
• Business	5	3.6%
• Labour	3	2.1%
Education		
• Illiterate	45	32.1%
• Primary	73	52.1%
• Secondary	19	13.6%
• Bachelor and above	3	2.1%
Monthly income		
• ≤10000	22	15.7%
• 10001 - 20000	50	35.7%
• >20000	68	48.6%
Number of children		
• ≤3	116	82.9%
• >3	24	17.1%

The above Table shows that out of 140 women, 48 (34.3%) belonged to 26 - 30 age group, 136 (97.14%) were married, 109 (77.9%) women followed Hindu caste, 67 (47.9%) women belonged to Dalit group, 129 (92.1%) women were housewife, 73 (52.1%) women had taken primary education, 68 (48.6%) had monthly income >20000, 116(82.9 %) had ≤3 children.

Fig 1: Knowledge of exclusive breastfeeding N = 140

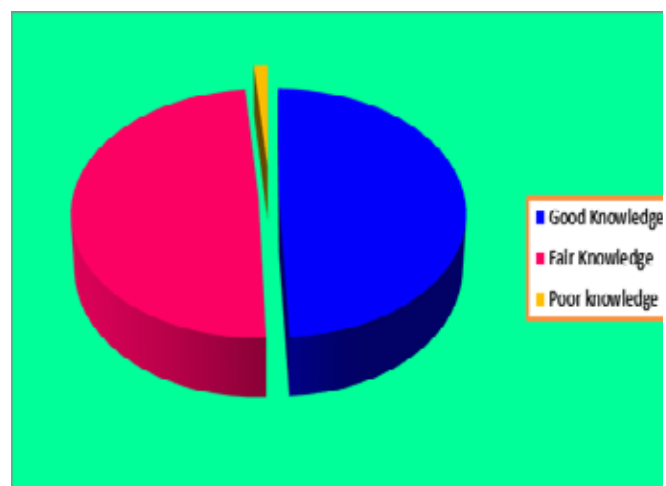
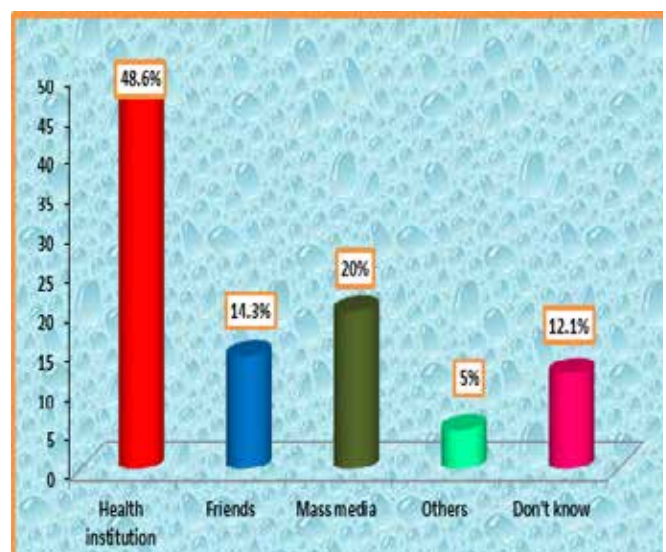


Fig 2: Source of information on exclusive breastfeeding (N = 140)



The above figure showed that out of 140 women, 123 (87.9%) heard about exclusive breastfeeding and obtained their information 68 (48.6%) from health institution, 20 (14.3%) from friends, 28 (20%) from mass media, seven (5%) from others and 17 (12.1%) women don't know about exclusive breastfeeding.

The result shows that among 140 women, 69 (49.3%) had good knowledge and fair knowledge whereas only

two (1.4%) had poor knowledge with mean and standard deviation (2.47 ±0.53).

Table 2: Attitude of study participants towards exclusive breastfeeding (N = 140)

Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Do you think that EBF is better than other artificial feeding?		
• Yes	122	87.1%
• No	7	5%
• Don't know	11	7.9%
Do you believe that the first milk (Colostrums) should be discarded?		
• Yes	65	46.4%
• No	75	53.6%
Do you agree that only EBF is enough for child up to 6 months?		
• Agree	108	77.1%
• Disagree	32	22.9%
How did you feel when you give extra food other than breast milk to your child <6 months?		
• Didn't feel comfort	77	55%
• Comfortable with it	63	45%
Why you are not comfortable with extra feeding other than breast milk?		
• Not sufficient to meet child's demand	51	36.4%
• It's not necessary for child	28	20%
• Complain of feeling pain	3	2.1%
Do you agree that child less than 6 month who is exclusively breastfed is healthier than child who takes additional food?		
• Yes	100	71.4%
• No	8	5.7%
• Don't know	32	22.9%

EBF – Exclusive Breast Feeding

The result shows that out of 140 women, 122 (87.1%) thought that EBF was better than other artificial feeding, 75 (53.6%) believed that first milk should be discarded,

108 (77.1%) agreed that EBF is enough for child up to 6 months, 77 (55%) didn't feel comfortable with extra feeding other than breast milk, 51 (36.4) stated that they were not comfortable because of insufficient amount to meet child's demand, 100 (71.4%) agreed that child less than six months who is exclusively breastfed were healthier than child who took additional foods.

Table 3: Practice of study participants towards exclusive breast feeding (N = 140)

Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Have you breastfed your last child?		
• Yes	139	99.3%
• No	1	0.7%
When did you start breast-feeding after delivering your last child?		
• Within 1 hr	83	59.3%
• Between 1 and 24 hrs	46	32.9%
• After 24 hrs	11	7.9%
How frequently did you breastfed your last child?		
• On demand	77	55%
• Regularly	30	21.4%
• Randomly	33	23.6%
Have you given your last baby anything before initiating breastfeeding?		
• Yes	49	35%
• No	91	65%
What was given to your last baby before breast milk after delivery?		
• Plain water	25	17.9%
• Cow milk	5	3.6%
• Butter	4	2.9%
• Formula	7	5%
• Honey	18	12.9%
What was given to your last child starting from birth to 6 months?		
• Cow and breast milk	28	20%
• Breast milk only	107	76.4%
• Formula	3	2.1%
• Others	2	1.4%

The result shows that out of 140 women, 139 (99.3%) breastfed her last child, 83 (59.3%) started breastfeeding

within one hour after delivery, 77 (55%) breastfed on demand of baby, 91 (65%) had not given anything before initiating breastfeeding, 25 (17.9%) had given plain water before breast milk after delivery, 107 (76.4%) had given breast milk only starting from birth to six months of age.

DISCUSSION

The study shows that out of 140 women, 48 (34.3%) belonged to 26 - 30 age group, 136 (97.14%) were married, 109 (77.9%) women followed Hindu caste, 67 (47.9%) women belonged to Dalit group, 129 (92.1%) women were housewife, 73 (52.1%) women had taken primary education, 68 (48.6%) had monthly income >20000, 116 (82.9 %) had ≤3 children. 123 (87.9%) women heard about exclusive breastfeeding and obtained their information 68 (48.6%) from health institution, 20 (14.3%) from friends, 28 (20 %) from mass media, seven (5%) from others and 17 (12.1 %) women don't know about exclusive breastfeeding.

Similar study was conducted in Mizan Aman town, South West Ethiopia to assess knowledge, attitude and practice towards breastfeeding mothers which showed that majority of (68.5%) were between 20 - 30 years, were married (80.6%)¹¹. Another study done in Aminu Kano Teaching Hospital, Nigeria to assess the knowledge, attitude and practice of exclusive breastfeeding among multigravid women attending antenatal clinic which showed that most of the respondents (57.6%) were in the age group of 21 - 30 years, 97.2% were married and 95.2% knew about exclusive breastfeeding and obtained their information 74.4% from health care workers, 3.6% from media and 17.2% from family/friends¹².

Among 140 women, 69 (49.3%) had good knowledge and fair knowledge whereas only two (1.4%) had poor knowledge (2.47 ±0.53, M±SD).

Similar study was done on India to assess knowledge, attitudes and breastfeeding practices of postnatal mothers which showed that mothers had good knowledge on breast feeding (12.05 ±1.74, M±SD)¹³.

Regarding attitude 122 (87.1%) thought that EBF was better than other artificial feeding, 75 (53.6%) believed that first milk should be discarded, 108 (77.1%) agreed that EBF is enough for child up to six months, 77 (55%) didn't feel comfortable with extra feeding other than breast milk, 51 (36.4%) stated that they were not comfortable because of insufficient amount to meet child's demand,

100 (71.4%) agreed that child less than six months who is exclusively breastfed were healthier than child who took additional foods.

Similar study was conducted in Mizan Aman town, South West Ethiopia to assess knowledge, attitude and practice towards breastfeeding mothers which showed that out of mothers, 205 (73%) stated that EBF was better than artificial feeds, most mothers 281 (89.5%) preferred to feed their children only breast milk, 59.3% agreed that EBF is enough up to six months of age, 59.6% (187) did not feel comfortable when they gave extra foods other than the breast, and (182; 58.0%) agreed that exclusively breastfed children are healthier than non-exclusively breastfed children¹¹.

Another study done in Aminu Kano Teaching Hospital, Nigeria to assess the knowledge, attitude and practice of exclusive breastfeeding among multigravid women attending antenatal clinic which showed that majority (69.6%) of the respondents agreed that breast milk alone is sufficient to the baby during the first six months of life and almost all (94.4%) the respondents agreed that exclusive breastfeeding has benefits to the baby¹².

The result shows that out of 140 women, 139 (99.3%) breastfed her last child, 83 (59.3%) started breastfeeding within one hour after delivery, 77 (55%) breastfed on demand of baby, 91 (65%) had not given anything before initiating breastfeeding, 25 (17.9%) had given plain water before breast milk after delivery, 107 (76.4%) had given breast milk only starting from birth to six months of age.

Similar study was done in BPKIHS, Dharan to assess the knowledge and actual practices of mothers regarding breastfeeding. The study showed that 41.5% had started breastfeeding less than one hour. Another study done in Aminu Kano Teaching Hospital, Nigeria to assess the knowledge, attitude and practice of exclusive breastfeeding among multigravid women attending antenatal clinic which showed that 47.2% exclusively breastfeeds for first six months of life¹⁴.

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