

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Breastfeeding Knowledge among a Sample of Women attending Maternal and Pediatric Hospital of Soran City

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ABSTRACT

Background and objectives: Breastfeeding is the ideal method suited for the physiological and psychological needs of an infant and the most vital intervention for reducing infant mortality and ensuring optimal growth and development of a child. Human breast milk is considered the healthiest form of milk for children and contains essential nutrients, vitamins, and minerals during the first six months. The purpose of this study was to find out about breastfeeding knowledge and its relationship with women's socio-demographic characteristics.

Methods: A descriptive study was carried out from December 2020 through February 2021, involving a simple random sample of 100 women who visited the Maternal and Pediatric Hospital in Soran city.

Results: This study revealed that the mean age ($M \pm SD$) was 32.15 ± 7.373 and nearly one-third of women were illiterate and in the age group 26-30 years. 76% were housewives and 85% indicated that had a normal delivery type. A good knowledge level is shown about different aspects of breastfeeding such as the effect of breastfeeding on a baby's intelligence, the definition of Colostrum, and the effect of breast milk on producing natural immunity. Concerning breastfeeding practice, the majority correctly indicated breastfeeding initiation within one hour after birth and continuity on demand for up to 2 years. Overall knowledge about breastfeeding was good and no statistically significant association was found between breastfeeding knowledge levels with socio-demographic characteristics of age, education level, occupation, parity, and type of delivery.

Conclusions: According to study findings overall knowledge about breastfeeding was good and no statistically significant association was found between breastfeeding knowledge levels and socio-demographic characteristics of participants.

Keywords: Breastfeeding, Knowledge, milk, study, level

INTRODUCTION

Breastfeeding is a method used for feeding an infant with natural breast milk directly from female mammary glands rather than using manufactured infant formula from a bottle or other containers (Awatef et al., 2010). Breastfeeding is the best approach to provide for the needs of an infant's physiological and psychological requirements (Subbiah, 2003). World Health Organization's definition of breastfeeding pointed out that breastfeeding is the normal method to provide all of the nutrients that infants need for healthy growth and development rather than maintaining all biological activities (WHO, 2013). Human breast milk is exhibited as the healthiest source of milk for babies under modern healthcare goals (Picciano, 2001). Human breast milk is the most specific reliable for human babies and it is ideal for infant feeding it contains all necessary nutrients, antibodies, minerals, vitamins, and other factors important for growth and development which mark it as a distinguished and perfect food for babies beginning life as it is sustainable safe and available in every time and situation (Riordan, 2005). However,

it does not provide suitable vitamin D amount which is required to build healthy bones and teeth in children. The amount of vitamin D in breast milk is determined by the vitamin D level of the mother, therefore, maintaining vitamin D status is very exclusive in the case of breastfed babies as it depends on whether their mothers' vitamin D level is normal as synthesized through sunlight as well as from food that mom can get (Butte et al, 2002). Breastfeeding has been to be the most critical interference for reducing infant mortality and certifying optimal growth and development of children (Adams, 2017). Strategies that are used to improve infant health and successful young child feeding are the key piece of the child survival and development regimes as seen in many nations and countries. This important cornerstone of breastfeeding to be successful should include the following criteria; Breastfeeding start within one hour of birth; Breastfeeding should be on-demand as often as the child need; Breastfeeding exclusively used for the first six months of life; Addition of other food sources is essential for complementary

feeding after six months along with continued breastfeeding (WHO/UNICEF, 2003). Pediatrics American Academy recommendation comments clarified that breastfeeding provides extreme benefits for allover health, growth, and development. Many documents in various diversities ruled or compelled the use of breastfeeding for the advantages for infants, mother's health, families, and society when the use of human milk for infant feeding applied. These advantages include many categories like general health, nutritional values, immunologic aspects, developmental behaviors, mental and psychological conditions, social situations, economic benefits, and environmental enhancement (Aliyu and Shehue, 2016). Breastfeeding is a very central and focus point topic in the health education sector because of the many good results that can be gained for all family members like babies, mothers, and fathers, and communities in general. For example, the contents of breast milk provide the needed of all nutrition for babies, especially in the first six months, and boost the baby's immune system for a good level. Also, practicing the process of breastfeeding helps mothers to lose weight safely after pregnancy and stimulates the uterus to shrink and return to its previous condition before pregnancy. For these huge amounts of reasons assessing awareness and interest of knowledge for all mothers or girls seek to be so to regard breastfeeding will and clarify its needs and for the health planning process in our area and community. The general aims of this study are to assess breastfeeding knowledge among youth and probable future women that are attending Maternal and Pediatric Hospital in Soran city of Erbil/ Kurdistan region as well as assess the relationship between socio-demographic characteristics and breastfeeding knowledge. The information will be used to improve health education in the community and focused on raising the woman awareness.

SUBJECTS AND METHODS

For the present study, descriptive design was used through the periods of December 2020 to February 2021 on a sample of 100 females who visited the maternal and pediatric hospital of Soran city to assess their level of knowledge and practice of breastfeeding. For selecting one hundred females simple random sampling technique was used (Each individual was chosen randomly and entirely by chance, such that each individual had the same probability of being chosen during the sampling process). Verbal consent was taken from participants and all participants were informed about the purpose of the study. Severe sick, mentally handicapped, and those with difficulty in communication were excluded. Data collection was done by a specially designed questionnaire which was constructed based on modifications to questionnaires used in similar studies and an extensive review of relevant pieces of literature. The questionnaire contains two parts including Socio-demographic data (age, education level, occupation, parity, and types of delivery), and the second part included Participants breastfeeding knowledge questions about the benefits of breastfeeding for babies and benefits for mothers, colostrum,

and duration of breastfeeding. Knowledge-related questions were scored and rated on three options (Yes, No, and don't know). One point was given for each correct answer and zero for incorrect or don't know. Total knowledge scores for each participant were calculated by summation of correct responses in a range of 0 to 19 which were divided into three categories poor (score ≤ 6), average (7-12), and good knowledge (score ≥ 13). A statistical package for the social science (SPSS, version 15), was used to compute frequencies and association of different variables. The Chi-square test was used to find association between knowledge level and different participants' characteristics. ($P \leq 0.05$ was considered statistically significant).

RESULTS

Socio-demographic characteristics of participants

In the present study, the mean age ($M \pm SD$) was 32.15 ± 7.373 and nearly one-third of women were illiterate and in the age group 26-30 years. 76% were housewives and 85% indicated to normal delivery type, Table 1.

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the sample

<i>Socio-demographic characteristics</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
Age		
≤ 25	22	22
26 – 30	31	31
31 –40	24	24
>40	23	23
Total	100	100
Education Level		
Illiterate	31	31
Primary	22	22
Secondary	23	23
University/Institute	23	23
Postgraduate	1	1
Total	100	100
Occupation		
Student	5	5
Government Employee	11	11
Private sector worker	7	7
Retired	1	1
Housewife	76	76
Total	100	100

Parity		
Primipara	48	48
Multipara	52	52
Total	100	100
Type of Delivery		
Cesarean	15	15
Normal	85	85
Total	100	100

Knowledge of women regarding breastfeeding

Most of the study sample were well-informed about different aspects of breastfeeding and the effect of breastfeeding on a baby's intelligence, the definition of colostrum, and the effect of breast milk on producing natural immunity and recovery of uterus size (uterine contractions) indicated by (88%), (86%), and (84%) of women respectively. Most of the study sample (76%) correctly indicated breastfeeding initiation within one hour after birth, and 65% of them answered breastfeeding time on demand and about the duration of breastfeeding (70%) correctly indicated that should be continued up to 2 years, Table 2.

Table 2. Participant's knowledge of breastfeeding

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Yes</i>		<i>No - Don't Know</i>	
	<i>No.</i>	<i>(%)</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>(%)</i>
Breast milk contains all nutrients a baby needs	72	(72)	28	(28)
Breastfeeding reduces risk of respiratory infection	76	(76)	24	(24)
Breastfeeding reduces risk of diarrhea	82	(82)	18	(18)
Breastfeeding increases the baby's intelligence	88	(88)	12	(12)
Breast milk prevents baby from allergy	79	(79)	21	(21)
Breast milk gives natural immunity	84	(84)	16	(16)
Reduce risk of post-partum bleeding	78	(78)	22	(22)
Promote uterine contraction and recovery of uterus size	84	(84)	16	(16)
Helps delay new pregnancy (helps birth spacing)	73	(73)	27	(27)
Helps to return pre-pregnancy weight (increase energy use)	83	(83)	17	(17)
Reduce risk of (breast, ovarian, uterine) cancer	75	(75)	25	(25)
Colostrum is mother's early yellow thick and sticky milk	86	(86)	14	(14)
Colostrum is easy to digest and needs to be used	81	(81)	19	(19)
Colostrum don't causes constipation among babies	78	(78)	22	(22)
Colostrum is essential for baby's health	83	(83)	17	(17)
Breastfeeding Initiation	No		(%)	
Within one hour after birth	76	(76)		
After 3 hours	10	(10)		
In 5 to 6 hours	11	(11)		
After 12 hours	3	(3)		
Breastfeeding Times	No		(%)	
On demand	65	(65)		
Every 2 hours	25	(25)		
Every 3 hours	10	(10)		

Duration of Exclusive Breastfeeding	No	(%)
0-1 months	4	(4)
2-3 months	17	(17)
4-6 months	79	(79)
Duration of Breastfeeding	No	(%)
12 months	10	(10)
18 months	20	(20)
Continued up to 2 years	70	(70)

As presented in table 3 most of the sample (85%) had a good knowledge level about breastfeeding while only (2%) showed a poor knowledge level.

Table 3. Breastfeeding knowledge level

Knowledge Level	Category Score	No.	(%)
Poor Knowledge	≤ 6	2	(2)
Average Knowledge	7-12	13	(13)
Good Knowledge	≥ 13	85	(85)
Total		100	(100)

Results of the present study revealed no statistically significant association between breastfeeding knowledge levels of the study sample with socio-demographic characteristics of age, education level, occupation, parity, and type of delivery, Table 4

Table 4. Socio-demographic characteristics of women and breastfeeding knowledge

Variable	Knowledge Level						p
	Poor Knowledge		Average Knowledge		Good Knowledge		
	No.	(%)	No.	(%)	No.	(%)	
Age							
≤ 25	0	(0)	3	(3)	19	(19)	* 0.880
26 – 30	0	(0)	5	(5)	26	(26)	
31 –40	1	(1)	2	(2)	21	(21)	
>40	1	(1)	3	(3)	19	(19)	
Education Level							
Illiterate	0	(0)	6	(6)	25	(25)	* 0.763
Primary	0	(0)	2	(2)	20	(20)	
Secondary	1	(1)	2	(2)	20	(20)	
University/Institute	1	(1)	3	(3)	19	(19)	
Postgraduate	0	(0)	0	(0)	1	(1)	

Occupation						
Student	0	(0)	0	(0)	5	(5)
Government Employee	1	(1)	0	(0)	10	(10)
Private Sector worker	1	(1)	0	(0)	6	(6) * 0.093
Retired	0	(0)	0	(0)	1	(1)
Housewife	0	(0)	13	(13)	63	(63)
Parity						
Primipara	2	(2)	5	(5)	41	(41) * 0.301
Multipara	0	(0)	8	(8)	44	(44)
Type of Delivery						
Cesarean	0	(0)	1	(1)	14	(14) * 0.773
Normal	2	(2)	12	(12)	71	(71)

*Fisher's exact tests

DISCUSSION

This descriptive study aimed to assess knowledge and practices about breastfeeding among a sample of mothers who attended the Maternal and Pediatric hospital of Soran city. In the present study breastfeeding knowledge among the majority of women was good and most of them correctly indicated to benefits of breastfeeding for infants and mothers, These findings are supported by those of a study done by (Aliyu and Shehue, 2016) which showed that 68.4% knew the correct definition and duration of exclusive breastfeeding, 47.2% exclusively breastfeeds for the first six (6) months of life, 92% gives colostrum to their babies because they believed it provides nutrition and protection to their babies. Our results are in contrast to the results of a study done by Neupane et al, 2014 which revealed that primipara women had inadequate breastfeeding knowledge. In contrast with the study of AL-Azzawi et al, 2018 in Erbil, no statistically significant association was founded between breastfeeding knowledge levels with socio-demographic characteristics.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that the mean age of the sample ($M \pm SD$) was 32.15 ± 7.373 . The highest rate of knowledge about breastfeeding was for the effect of breastfeeding on a baby's intelligence, the definition of colostrum, and the effect of breast milk on producing natural immunity and recovery of uterus size. Overall knowledge about breastfeeding was good and most women showed good knowledge about breastfeeding, no statistically significant association was found between breastfeeding knowledge levels and socio-demographic characteristics.

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