

# Knowledge on Breast Feeding and Its Advantages among Rural Women in Telangana

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Breastfeeding is one of the best approaches to ensure child health and survival. Breast milk is the ideal food for new-born children. It is safe, clean and contains antibodies which help protect against many common childhood illnesses.

**Methods:** A cross-sectional study was conducted among 100 women with a pre-tested, semi structured questionnaire in order to assess their knowledge and advantages regarding Breast feeding. Data collected was analysed using SPSS software.

**Results:** Participant knew that Breast feeding of child is safe & clean (100%), Breast feeding delays next pregnancy/ helps in Spacing (24%) and Exclusive breast-feeding duration (79%), Initiated within an hour of birth (83%).

**Conclusions:** The present study found that majority of the women have knowledge on exclusive breast feeding and most of the advantages of breast feeding to child but doesn't have clue regarding advantages of breast feeding to mother.

**Keywords:** Advantages, Breast Feeding, Initiation, Women,

## INTRODUCTION

Breastfeeding is one of the best approaches to ensure child health and survival. Breastmilk is the ideal food for new-born children. It is safe, clean and contains antibodies which help protect against many common childhood illnesses.<sup>1</sup> Breastmilk provides all the energy and nutrients that the infant needs for the first

months of life, and it continues to provide 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 life. Breastfed children perform better on intelligence tests, are less likely to be over-weight or obese and less prone to diabetes later in life. WHO and UNICEF recommend that breastfeeding should be initiated within the first hour of birth and be exclusively breastfed for the first 6 months of life – meaning no other foods or liquids are provided, including water.<sup>2</sup> Despite strong evidences in support of exclusive breast feeding for the first six months of life, its prevalence has remained low and it is estimated that globally only about one-third of infants were exclusively breastfed for the first six months and approximately 7.6 million babies each year aren't breastfed.<sup>3</sup> In India, breastfeeding appears to be influenced by social, cultural, and economic factors. Poor practices and attitude towards exclusive breastfeeding have been reported to be one of the major reasons for poor health outcome among children, particularly in developing countries. Therefore, promotion and acceptance of practices such as exclusive breastfeeding is important especially in developing countries with marked level of poverty, huge burden of diseases and less access to safe water and proper sanitation. Hence this study was taken up to assess the

knowledge about breast feeding and its advantages among women of a rural area.

## METHODS

**Study Design:** Cross Sectional Study.

**Study Period:** May 2019 to July, 2019.

**Study Setting:** 11 villages attached to rural health centre of a medical college in Telangana state.

**Sample size:** 100 by using formula  $4pq/l^2$ , where  $p=37.3\%$  based on previous study,<sup>4</sup>  $l = 10\%$ .

**Study Subjects:** Primi gravida women of aged 20 – 35 years registered in the anganwadi centres located in 11 villages attached to a rural health centre of a medical college in Telangana state from the period of May 2018 to April 2019.

**Sampling Method:** Simple random method. The primigravida registered at anganwadi centres were listed out and 100 subjects were selected by simple random method.

**Study Tool:** A semi-structured questionnaire was prepared and suitable modifications were made after administering in a pilot study.

**Method of Data Collection:** Data was collected by face to face interview method after obtaining consent. The importance of this study was explained and ensured the

confidentiality of the participant's responses.

**Statistical Analysis:** Data was analysed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS Statistical Package version 22. Data was expressed in proportions

## RESULTS

Majority (76%) of the women were of 20 – 25 years of age, having school level education (63%), home maker (86%) and belongs to below poverty line family (54%). (Table 1)

Participant knew that Breast feeding of child is safe & clean (100%), promote bonding between mother and infant (89%), fully meets the nutritional requirements in first few months of life (58%) (Table 2)

**Table 1: Demographic profile of study participants (n=100)**

Age	Frequency (%)
20 - 25	76 (76)
25 - 30	19 (19)
30 - 35	5 (5)
Education	Frequency (%)
Illiterate	6 (6)
School	63 (63)
College	31 (31)
Working status	Frequency (%)
Home maker	86 (86)
Working women	14 (14)
Socio economic status	Frequency (%)
Above poverty line	46 (46)
Below poverty line	54 (54)

**Table 2: Breast feeding advantages to child (n=100)**

Breast feeding advantages to child	Number (%)
Safe and clean	100 (100)
Fully meets the nutritional requirements in first few months of life	58 (58)
Contains antimicrobial factors	64 (64)
Easily digestible	73 (73)
Promotes bonding between mother and infant	89 (89)
Sucking helps in development of jaws & teeth	38 (38)
Protects babies from the tendency to obesity	6 (6)
Prevents Malnutrition	74 (74)
Helps in increased IQ	27 (27)
Better visual acuity	5 (5)

**Table 3: Breast feeding advantages to mother (n=100)**

Breast feeding advantages to mother	Number (%)
Lowers the risk of Post-Partum Haemorrhage	14 (14)
Lowers the risk of Anaemia	5 (5)
Boosts the Immune system	5 (5)
Delays next pregnancy/ helps in Spacing	24 (24)
Protect from Ovarian cancers	3 (3)
Protect from Breast cancers	18 (18)
Protect from Osteoporosis	2 (2)

**Table 4: Knowledge about Breast Feeding Practice (n=100)**

Knowledge about Breast Feeding Practice	Number (%)
Exclusive breast-feeding duration is 6 months	79 (79)
Initiated within an hour of birth	83 (83)
Colostrum should not be discarded	81 (81)
Pre-lacteal feeds not to be given	49 (49)

Breast feeding delays next pregnancy/ helps in spacing (24%) was known by only few participants followed by Protect from Breast cancers (18%), Lowers

the risk of Post-Partum Haemorrhage (14%), Lowers the risk of Anaemia (5%) (Table 3)

Most of the subjects knew about Exclusive breast-feeding duration (79%) and about initiating within an hour of birth (83%) (Table 4)

## DISCUSSION

In the present study, majority (76%) of the women were of 20-25 years of age, having school level education (63%), home maker (86%) and belongs to below poverty line family (54%). Participants in the present study have adequate knowledge that breast feeding of child is safe & clean (100%), promote bonding between mother and infant (89%), prevents Malnutrition (74%) and easily digestible (73%). According to Sultania P et al study, 71% knew that breast milk promotes bonding between mother and child, child remains healthy (64%), breast milk to be more nutritious (46%) and Improves growth & development (9%).<sup>5</sup> In Daly A et al study, a significantly higher proportion of women reported that breastfeeding provides immunity, is easy or convenient, and encourages emotional bonding.<sup>6</sup> Present study observed that majority (64%) of the subjects knew that breast milk contains antimicrobial factors, fully meets the nutritional requirements in first few months of life (58%), sucking helps in development of jaws & teeth (38%), helps in increased IQ (27%), protects babies from the tendency to obesity (6%) and better visual acuity (5%). In Gurung R et al study, 77.1% agreed that EBF is enough for child up to six months.<sup>7</sup> According to Krishnendu M et al., majority (85.8%) of the mothers stated that exclusive breastfeeding improves the immunity of the child, reduces jaundice (34%) and prevent child from diarrheal episodes (35%).<sup>8</sup> In a study conducted by Anatoulitou F et al., reduction in incidence of insulin – dependent (30%) and non-insulin dependent diabetes mellitus (40%) possibly reflecting the long-term positive effect of breastfeeding on weight control and feeding

self-regulation.<sup>9</sup> In present study, very poor knowledge was observed among the participants regarding benefits of breast feeding to mother. Breast feeding delays next pregnancy/ helps in spacing (24%) was known by only few participants followed by protect from breast cancers (18%), lowers the risk of post-partum haemorrhage (14%), lowers the risk of anaemia (5%), protect from ovarian cancers (3%) and osteoporosis (2%). Similar findings were supported by a study conducted by Ray D et al, where 94% of the subjects don't know the Benefits of breastfeeding to mothers and only 2.4% of them knew that it helps in spacing.<sup>4</sup> In Singh J et al study, most of the lactating mother didn't know (75.7%) that it can be used as a contraceptive.<sup>10</sup> According to a study by Dieterich CM et al., the risk of breast cancer decreased by 4.3% for each year of breastfeeding, indicating longer breastfeeding may increase protection against breast cancer and there was a 28% lower risk of developing ovarian cancer among women who breastfed for at least 12 months compared to women who never breastfed.<sup>11</sup> To improve the knowledge regarding breast feeding, awareness programmes can be implemented at the antenatal clinics and panchayath level in the form of lectures, seminars, discussions with the help of social and mass media. In present study, most (79%) of the subjects have good knowledge about Exclusive breast-feeding duration similar (74%) to Afrose L et al study.<sup>12</sup> In Raveendran A et al study, the prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding for six months was 21.9%.<sup>13</sup> About 83% of subjects in the current study knew that breast feeding should be Initiated within an hour of birth contrary to Vaidya AA et al and Shetty SB et al studies, where only 30.8% and 58% of them knew the time of initiation of exclusive breastfeeding.<sup>14,15</sup> In current study, about 81% thought that colostrum should not be discarded and pre-lacteal feeds not to be given (49%). According to Ali BCT et al study, all of them knew the importance of colostrum (100%) and pre-lacteal feed should never be

administered to new-born (100%).<sup>16</sup> In Alamirew MW et al study, only 54.7% of them knew that colostrum should not be discarded and 76% knew that pre-lactal feeding is not needed.<sup>17</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The present study found that majority of the women has knowledge on exclusive breast feeding and most of the advantages of breast feeding to child but doesn't have clue regarding advantages of breast feeding to mother. Current study emphasizes the need to conduct breast feeding awareness programmes mainly in rural communities.

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### Declarations

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**Conflict of interest:** None declared

**Ethical approval:** The study was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee

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