

Assess the Attitude on Breastfeeding among Fathers of Infants at Selected Hospital, Salem

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Abstract

United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) states that "every year, over one million infants die and millions of others are impaired, because they are not adequately/exclusively breastfed. A women's decision to initiate and continue breastfeeding is influenced by her attitude towards breastfeeding as well as the breastfeeding attitudes of significant referent people. The aim of this study was to assess the attitude of fathers on breast feeding which plays a significant role in its practice by the mothers. Quantitative approach with a descriptive research design was used. Sixty fathers of infants who were accompanying their wives/ children in the pediatric OPD of a tertiary hospital in Salem were selected through purposive sampling technique. Structured Interview schedule was used to collect the demographic variables & Five point likert scale was used to collect attitude of fathers. Data was calculated using descriptive & inferential statistics. Findings revealed that majority of fathers had positive attitude (98.4%) and only 1.6% had neutral attitude towards breast feeding.

Key words- Attitude, Breast feeding, Likert scale

Introduction

Breastfeeding provides a wide array of physical and psychological short-term and long-term health benefits for mothers, infants, and young children. There is strong evidence that infants receiving only breast milk with no other liquids or solids known as exclusive breastfeeding, have many health benefits to mothers, babies, the environment, and society¹. United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) states that "every year, over one million infants die and millions of others are impaired, because they are not adequately/exclusively breastfed.

A women's decision to initiate and continue breastfeeding is influenced by her attitude towards breastfeeding as well as the breastfeeding attitudes of significant referent people (e.g. partner, family and friends), and society in general. If she perceives that her breast milk will adequately nourish her infant and that breastfeeding is convenient and better for the health of her infant, then she will have positive attitudes towards breastfeeding. However, her efforts to breastfeed may be undermined by the attitudes of those around her, particularly by the attitude of her partner. Fathers have been shown to participate in and influence the choice

of infant feeding method by acting as key supports or deterrents to breastfeeding by the mother². Fathers' positive attitude, involvement and support greatly influenced breastfeeding decision and commitment among mothers and was associated with increased breastfeeding rates and duration³. The views of fathers have been shown to be important determinants of infant feeding decisions. A growing body of literature suggests "Fathers play a vital role in their partners" breastfeeding decisions and behaviour through their involvement process. Thus the interventions targeting fathers' involvement in breastfeeding process may provide a tangible and effective conduit through which breastfeeding initiation and duration may be impacted.

Statement of the Problem:

A Study to Assess the Attitude on Breastfeeding among Fathers of Infants at Selected Hospital, Salem.

Objectives

1. To assess the attitude of fathers of infants regarding breastfeeding.
2. To associate the level of attitude of fathers of infants with their demographic variables.

Hypothesis

H_1 : There is a significant association between the attitude of fathers on breast feeding and their demographic variables at $P \leq 0.05$ level.

Methodology

Quantitative research approach and Descriptive research design was adopted for this study. A total of 60 fathers of infants who were accompanying their wives/children in the pediatric OPD of Sri Gokulam Hospital, Salem and who fulfilled the sample selection criteria were selected by using purposive sampling technique. Data was collected during a period of one month. Structured Interview schedule was used to collect the

demographic variables & Five point likert scale was used to collect attitude of fathers. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics like percentage & mean, and inferential statistics like chisquare.

Results and Discussion

Percentage wise distribution of fathers of infant shows that most of the fathers (86.7%) were in the age group 25-30 years, highest percentage of the fathers of infant were graduates (56.7%), most of the fathers were Hindus (91.7%), majority were private employees(60%), most of their monthly family income was above Rs.10000(63.3%), 66.6% were from joint family, highest percentage (61.7%) had only one child,

Table No 1- Mean, standard deviation, mean score percentage of attitude of Fathers on breastfeeding.

N=60

S.No	Total Attitude	Mean	SD	Mean score percentage
1.	Over all attitude	79.5	5.14	79.5%

The above table on the mean and standard deviation of the fathers' attitude on breast feeding reveals that the mean score is 79.5+5.14 which is 79.5%. of the mean percentage. This depicts that the fathers had an overall favourable attitude on breast feeding.

Table No 2- Distribution of Fathers according to their attitude regarding breastfeeding.

N=60

S.No	Level of attitude	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Unfavourable(1-40)	-	-
2.	Neutral (40-60)	1	1.6%
3.	Favourable (60-100)	59	98.4%

The above table depicts that almost all fathers (98.4%) have a favourable attitude towards breast feeding and only 1 father (1.6%) has a neutral attitude towards breast feeding.

Table No.3 - Percentage distribution of Fathers according to their Item wise response on Breast feeding

S.No	Items	Disagree		Neutral		Agree	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	Breast feeding promotes mother & baby bonding	-	-	1	1.66	59	98.33
2	Breast feeding should be initiated immediately after birth	-	-	10	16.66	50	83.4
3	First feed of the Newborn should be colostrum	5	8.33	7	11.66	48	80
4	Duration of exclusive breast feeding is 6 months	20	33.33	7	11.66	33	55
5	*Formula fed babies are healthier than breast fed babies	48	80	6	10	6	10
6	Breast milk is the ideal food for the infant	5	8.33	-	-	55	91.66
7	Breast milk is most easily digested than bottle feeding	3	5	4	6.66	52	86.66
8	Breast milk is less expensive than formula feed	10	16.66	3	5	47	78.33
9	*Breast fed child is less immune	46	76.66	1	1.66	13	21.66
10	Breast feeding decreases diarrhoea episodes in infants	5	8.33	11	18.33	44	73.33
11	Inadequate breast feeding affects the child's IQ	19	31.66	25	41.66	16	26.66
12	Breast milk is rich in iron content	2	3.33	8	13.33	50	83.4
13	Breast feeding should not be done public places	22	36.66	15	25	23	38.33
14	Mother should not breast feed the baby if she has flu	22	36.66	13	21.66	25	41.66
15	Nutritional benefits of breast milk last only until the baby is weaned from breast milk	12	20	13	21.66	35	58.33
16	Mother must be relaxed during breast feeding	8	13.33	8	13.33	44	73.33
17	Breast feeding is a good contraceptive method	15	25	27	45	18	30
18	*Breast feeding increases the risk of ovarian & breast cancer	48	80	7	11.66	5	8.33
19	Breast feeding is more convenient than formula feeding	15	25	18	30	27	45
20	Fathers support is essential for the mother during breast feeding	10	16.66	18	30	32	53.33

*Negative statements which are reverse scored.

The above table depicts that for majority of the items related to breast feeding highest percentage (>70%) of fathers have agreed to the positive items and disagreed to the negative items.

Table No-4 – Association of attitude of Fathers on Breast feeding with their Socio demographic variables

S.No	Demographic variables	df	χ^2	Table value
1.	Age of the father	6	9.18	12.59
2.	Educational status	6	8.35	12.59
3.	Religion	6	50.68*	12.59
4.	Occupation	8	38.26*	15.51
5.	Family income per month	6	8.86	12.59
6.	Types of family	4	0.13	9.49
7.	Number of children	4	4.91	9.49
8.	Mode of delivery	2	0.02	5.99
9.	Previous source of information regarding breast feeding	6	20.04*	12.59

*Significance at 0.05 level

There is no significant association between level of attitude of fathers of infant on breast feeding with their selected demographic variables such as age of fathers, educational status, family income per month, types of family, number of children and mode of delivery ($p > 0.05$)

There is significant association found between the attitude of fathers of infant on breastfeeding with their selected demographic variables such as religion, occupation and previous source of information regarding breastfeeding at ($p < 0.05$)

Discussion

The present study depicts that almost all fathers (98.4%) have a favourable attitude towards breast feeding and only 1 father (1.6%) has a neutral attitude towards breast feeding. A study conducted by Llamas J & Regal A (2014) on breastfeeding knowledge and attitudes of fathers seen at the University of Santo Tomas Hospital reveal that 85% agreed that breast milk is the ideal food for babies, 79% believed that breastfed babies are healthier than formula fed and 55% of them do not believe that breast milk lacks iron. About 80% agreed that it is easily digested, 87% are aware of the economical value and 57% agreed of its convenience. Overall majority of the fathers appreciate breastfeeding and its benefits⁴. A study by García-Fragoso L, Jiménez D, Ortiz N, Quintero M (2013) on fathers attitudes and knowledge about breastfeeding also revealed that most fathers have positive attitudes towards breastfeeding⁵.

In the present study 32(53.33%) fathers agree that their support is essential for breast feeding. These findings are consistent with a cross-sectional questionnaire-based study in Mumbai, India conducted by Karande S, Perkar S. on Fathers' attitudes to support breastfeeding which reveals that fathers attitude were favourable toward breastfeeding on 13 individual items which were related to its optimal nutritional value, convenience of administration, ease of digestibility, unique role in mother-infant bonding, acceptability of breastfeeding in public places, and long-term health benefits to babies.

Conclusion

A descriptive study was conducted to assess the attitude of breastfeeding among fathers of infant. It reveals that almost all the fathers had a favourable attitude to breast feeding. Breast feeding is a natural and God's gift for the child. Breastfeeding provides a wide array of physical and psychological short-term and long-term health benefits for mothers, infants, and young children and attitude of fathers plays a vital role in breast feeding.

Conflict of Interest : Nil

Source of Funding: Self funded

Ethical Clearance : Obtained from Institutional Ethical board

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