

Breast Feeding Pattern and Practices among the Urban Affluent Families

Khaleda Edib and Parveen Banu

Institute of Nutrition and Food Science, University of Dhaka, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Introduction

Unsupplemented human milk from a well-nourished, well motivated mother is all that a baby in optimal nutritional condition may require to sustain growth and good nutrition during the first 4 to 6 months of life^(1,2). It has long been recognized that the breast milk is a complete food and provides all the nutrients needed by the infant on the first few months⁽³⁾. Moreover, it has better anti-infective properties that protect the infant from infection in the early months.

During the last 20 years there has been increasing concern about the decline in breast feeding particularly in societies in rapid transition. A downward trend has been noted in many countries, especially in the urban areas where well-to-do mothers resort to bottle feeding early in the post-natal period⁽⁴⁾. In the developing countries, there is a trend towards shortening the duration of lactation

and making more extensive use of breast milk substitutes.

Breast feeding practices are mainly influenced by customs, superstitions, beliefs, religion, cultural pattern, mother's education and socio-economic status of families⁽⁵⁾.

Child rearing practices differ not only in different districts of Bangladesh, but also among people living in different socio-economic group. Since independence, with the advancement of industrialisation, Bangladesh has experienced a rapid shift in social values. Mothers from the affluent families in the urban centres are affected more. In view of the changes in social norms and values, this study was designed to delineate the feeding practices performed by the mothers of the affluent urban families in early infancy.

Materials and Methods

A total of one hundred ten mothers were interviewed. The subjects were

selected purposively from among the mothers attending a city paediatric clinic. The clinic was purposively selected in view of the fact that it was one of the clinics usually visited by the mothers of the upper socio-economic group. The criteria for inclusion in the study were - (i) mothers having at least one child below 12 months of age and (ii) family income more than Taka 5000 per month. Data were collected using a pretested questionnaire informations relating mothers

education, occupation, family income etc., were inquired. Feeding history was taken by interviewing. Appropriate statistical test were done where necessary.

Results

The socio-economic characteristics of the mothers interviewed are shown in the Tables 1 through 5. Eightyseven percent of the mothers age was between 20-30 years (Table 1). Ninetythree percent of them were housewives (Table 2). Sixty

Table 1. Distribution of mothers by age.

Age in year	No.	%
16-20	8	7
21-25	48	44
26-30	47	43
31-35	5	5
36-40	2	2

percent of the mothers were graduates and/or post-graduates (Table 3). Most of the families (71%) had monthly income between

Taka 5,000 - 15,000 (Table 4). Fifty three percent mothers had only one child followed by 37% with two children.

Table 2. Distribution of mothers by occupation.

Occupation	No.	%
House wife	102	93
Service	8	7
Full time	7	
Part time	1	

Table 3. Distribution of mothers by educational level.

Level of education	No.	%
SSC	11	10
HSC	33	30
Graduate	52	47
Post-Graduate	14	13

Table 4. Distribution of monthly family income.

Income	No.	%
Below - 5000	15	14
5000 - 10000	54	49
10000 - 15000	24	22
15000 - 20000	10	9
20000 +		

The age distribution of the study infants under study are shown in Fig. 1. Sixty-nine percent of the

babies were between 6-9 months. Breast-feeding practices performed by the mothers are shown in Fig. 2.

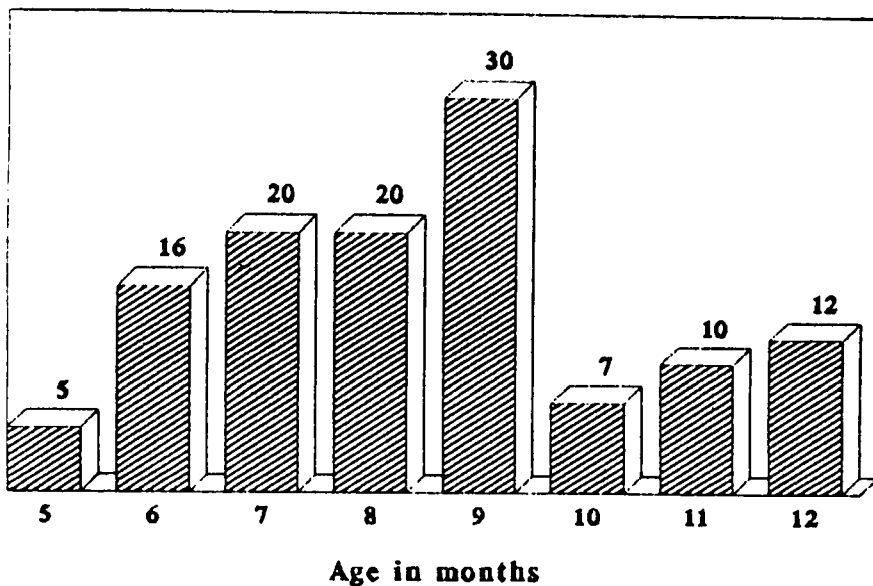


Figure 1. Frequency distribution of children by their age

Table 5. Distribution of mothers by the number of children.

Number of children	Number of mothers	%
1	54	53
2	41	37
3	11	10

Table 6. Pattern of Infant feeding.

Type of feeding	No of mother	%
Exclusive breast feeding	20	18
Minture feeding (Bottle fed along with breast feeding)	90	82

Table 7. Distribution of mothers by onset of breast feeding

Day	No.	%
1st	74	67
2nd	19	17
3rd	14	13
4th	3	3

Ninetytwo percent of the mothers were seen continuing breast feeding during the study period while only eight percent of the mothers discontinued. Exclusive breast feeding practices were noticed among the 18% of the mothers studied (Table 6), while the remainder 82% mothers were seen feeding their infants with mixture milk preparation i.e. either cow's or powdered milk along with breast milk. Table 7 shows the pattern of onset of breast feeding. Ninetyseven percent

of the mothers reported to put their babies on breast within 72 hours after delivery. Sixty percent of mothers do start within the first 24 hours. This suggests that most of the babies did have colostrum during their early life.

The bottle feeding practices are shown in Table 8. Most of the mothers (86%) started feeding their babies with bottles between 2-4 months of age along with the breast milk. Only ten mothers were found to start on the 1st month. Those who

started bottle feeding, 35% of them had given cow's milk in form of 1:2 dilution and the remaining 67% mothers practiced feeding babies with powdered milk in 1:1 dilution (Table 9).

Discussion

Feeding pattern during the first year of life influences subsequent growth, development and morbidity⁽⁶⁾. Breast-fed babies exhibit a velocity of growth substantially faster during the first 3 months⁽⁷⁾. In recent years global awareness on breast-feeding is increasing with the change of women's perception and attitude towards infant feeding.

100% of the mothers practiced breast feeding which is almost universal^(8,9). Reports on breast-feeding practices among the urban families, particularly by the upper social groups is scarce. The present study has drawn attention on the breast-feeding practices by the rich. Positive attitudes toward natural infant feeding was observed among the study population probably because of their sound economic background and higher educational level. Cent percent study mothers were seen practiced breast feeding during the early months. Colostrum rejection rate was very in significant. As age advanced the mothers were seen started feeding their babies either powdered milk or

Table 8. Distribution of infant feeding type and duration by their age.

Month	Breast milk + Bottle milk (n)	%
1	10	11
2	22	24
3	28	32
4	27	30
5	3	3
6	0	

Table 9. Type of Mixture milk

Milk group	Dilution strength	
	1:1	1:1
Cow's milk (n – 30)	47	30
Powdered milk (n – 60)	47	13

cow's milk at varied strength. Exclusive breast feeding was not observed though we preferred to term exclusive breast-fed babies' to those whose mother did not practice bottle feeding, but gave plain water or sugar sweetened water to them in addition to breast-milk. Actually all the mothers practiced partial breast feeding which was predominantly supplementary and not complementary to breast milk.

Because of the economic advantage, social security, higher educational background and time convenience (these groups of mothers are usually not engaged to outside job), the mothers from higher social strata should change their attitude towards infant feeding and should practice exclusive breast feeding for the first 4-6 months. This not only will help their infants health, but also set a good example for the socially disadvantaged people to follow and practice.

Summary

A micro study on the breast feeding pattern and practices among 190 mothers of the urban affluent families of Dhaka metropolis was done. Subjects were selected from among the mothers attending a paediatric Clinic for consultation. Cent percent mothers were seen practicing breast feeding and most of them gave colostrum to their

babies. Only twenty mothers practiced exclusive breast feeding, the rest of mothers started bottle feeding either with powdered milk or cow's milk. Seventy seven mothers started bottle feeding by the time the babies were between 2-4 months of age. Thirty mothers preferred cow's milk. They gave cow's milk in the form of dilution 1 : 2, while the others gave powdered milk at 1 : 1 dilution. Most of the mothers breast fed their infants till they were 5 months of age.

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