

EFFECT OF LITERACY STATUS ON MOTHERS KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE OF BREAST-FEEDING

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ABSTRACT:

Objective:

1. To find out the Knowledge and Practices of mothers about breast feeding in Rural and Tribal villages of Madhya Pradesh.
2. To study the extent of Exclusive Breast Feeding practices.
3. To study the relationship between literacy status and breast feeding practices.

Method: A Cross sectional study was conducted among mothers with one or more children under 2 years of age in Rural and Tribal areas of Madhya Pradesh covered by NGOs from the same state. Data was collected by the health supervisor on pretested proforma.

Statistical method: Percentage, proportions and chi-square test.

Key Words: Exclusive Breast Feeding, Literacy status, Knowledge, practice.

Conclusion: The above study shows that knowledge attitude and practices of mothers of tribal and rural areas in comparatively better than our expectation.

Introduction:

We have entered a new era of information, technologies and new advances in various other fields but still 70% population of the rural areas are looking for information regarding their basic health needs especially of mothers and children can be effectively improved if knowledge regarding health of their children and family. It is well known that breast feeding improves child survival by providing protection against infectious diseases and malnutrition for the baby. Exclusive breast feeding can save many lives by preventing malnutrition and reducing the risk of infections and hypothermia. Exclusive breast feeding should be practiced for at least four months and preferably six months in poor countries since they have a high risk of infections through

contaminated water and food and to continue breast - feeding supplemented by other appropriate foods up to 2 years of life.² Breast milk has been considered as the most suited food for the child world over.^{3,4} In rural communities, the child is often breast fed till mother's milk is exhausted. The duration of breast feeding varies with rural/ urban residence, literacy, socio economic status and other factors.^{4,5} The present study was carried out in few villages covered by NGOs in rural and tribal areas of Madhya Pradesh. The study was focused on mother's knowledge, attitude and various practices regarding breast feeding in order to develop an effective IEC strategy.

Material and Methods:

This cross sectional study was

conducted in rural and tribal areas of Madhya Pradesh by six NGOs from M.P. Study population included all the mothers with one or more children less than 2 year of age, 5% of the above population was considered from each NGO area covering rural well as tribal population. Data was collected by the health supervisor and was collected on a pretested structured proforma by interview method and was analysed on computer using Epi-Info programme.

Results :

Table 1 shows literacy status of mothers and knowledge of breast feeding initiation. Which shows that 67.63% of illiterate mothers had knowledge of initiation of breast feeding within half an hour as compared to 63.41% mothers having primary education. This difference was found to be statistically significant. ($p < 0.01$).

Table - 1
Knowledge of Breast Feeding Initiation among Mothers

Time of Breast feeding Initiation	Literacy level of mothers			Total
	ILLITERATE	LITERATE		
		Primary Education	Above Primary	
With in 1/2 hr.	510 (67.63)	26 (63.41)	52 (49.52)	588 (65.33)
After 1/2 hr.	192 (25.56)	06 (14.63)	39 (37.14)	237 (26.33)
No response	52 (6.89)	09 (21.95)	14 (13.33)	75 (8.33)
TOTAL	754 (83.77)	41 (4.55)	105 (11.66)	900 (100.0)

$X^2=16.65$
 $p < .001$

Table - 2
Practice of Breast feeding Initiation and Mother's Literacy Status

Time of Breast feeding Initiation	Literacy level of mothers			Total
	ILLITERATE	LITERATE		
		Primary Education	Above Primary	
With in 1/2 hr.	355 (70.1)	20 (80.00)	50 (72.50)	425 (70.71)
After 1/2 hr.	152 (29.98)	05 (20.00)	19 (27.50)	176 (29.28)
TOTAL	506 (84.1)	25 (4.10)	69 (11.0)	600 (100.0)

$X^2=0.73$
 $p < 0.05$

Table - 3
Knowledge about Exclusive Breast feeding and Mother's Literacy Status

Duration of Exclusive Breast feeding in months	Literacy level of mothers			Total
	ILLITERATE	LITERATE		
		Primary Education	Above Primary	
4-6 months	315 (41.8)	09 (29.9)	66 (62.8)	390 (43.3)
>6 months	439 (58.2)	32 (78.1)	39 (37.1)	510 (56.7)
TOTAL	754 (83.8)	41 (4.5)	105 (11.7)	900 (100.0)

$X^2=4.57$
 $p<.05$

Table - 4
Practice of Exclusive Breast feeding and Mother's Literacy Status

Duration of Exclusive Breast feeding in months	Literacy level of mothers			Total
	ILLITERATE	LITERATE		
		Primary Education	Above Primary	
4-6 months	483 (95.2)	24 (96.00)	64 (94.1)	571 (95.1)
>6 months	16 (3.1)	01 (4.0)	3 (4.4)	20 (3.3)
No Response	8 (1.6)	00 (0.0)	1 (1.5)	9 (1.5)
TOTAL	507 (84.5)	25 (4.2)	68 (11.3)	600 (100.0)

$X^2=9.12$
 $p<.01$

Table - 5
Knowledge about Duration of Breast feeding and Mother's Literacy

Duration in years	Literacy level of mothers			Total
	ILLITERATE	LITERATE		
		Primary Education	Above Primary	
< 1 year	61 (8.1)	7 (17.1)	16 (15.2)	84 (9.3)
> 1 year	587 (77.8)	28 (68.3)	74 (70.5)	689 (76.6)
No Response	106 (14.0)	6 (14.6)	15 (14.3)	127 (14.1)
TOTAL	754 (83.8)	41 (4.6)	105 (11.6)	900 (100.0)

$X^2=8.7$
 $p<.01$

Table 2 shows literacy status of mothers and practices of breast feeding initiation. This shows that 70% of illiterate mothers had initiated breast feeding within half an hour as compared to 72.5% literate mothers having education above primary, however this difference in initiation of breast feeding was not found to be statistically significant.

Table 3 shows the knowledge about exclusive breast feeding in mothers. It was observed that 41.8% of illiterate mothers had correct knowledge of exclusive breast feeding for 4-6 months whereas 62.8% mothers educated beyond primary had correct knowledge of EBF and the difference was found to be significant.

As far as practice of exclusive breast feeding was concerned it was almost the same in educated and uneducated mothers i.e. 95.2% and 94.1%. In total 95.1% mothers were practicing EBF for 4 to 6 months (Table 4) and this difference was found to be statistically significant.

Considering the knowledge regarding duration of breast feeding it was heartening to note that 76.6% of the mothers approved of breast feeding the babies beyond 1 year of age whereas 14.1% did not give any response (Table 5).

Discussion :

The knowledge attitudes and practices of correct breast feeding and weaning is directly related to the baby's health. The present study was conducted in rural and tribal areas of madhya Pradesh. In the present study it was observed that 70% of illiterate and 72.5% of literate mothers initiated breast feeding within half an hour of delivery. Similar findings have been also reported by Ram et al⁶ i.e. 85.5% where as Dutta Banik⁷ have reported that 42% of

infants were put to breast milk within 24 hours after birth. In another study⁸ it was reported that 28.3% mothers started breast feeding within 24 hours. In our study it was very heartening to note that around 95% mothers had exclusively breast fed their babies for 4-6 months. Another study⁴ reports that infants in Davangere were breast fed till the age of 18 months. In comparison 5 to 74% of rural mothers in Agra who breast fed till 12 months only. Where as in another study⁸ it was reported that 70.1% rural mothers of Bihar breast fed the child for more than a year.

The above study shows that knowledge attitude and practices of mothers of tribal and rural areas is comparatively better than our expectation. Though the dissemination of information and knowledge regarding correct infant feeding practices should be emphasized upon in order to strengthen the correct and prevailing good practices.

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