

# Knowledge, Attitude and Practice of Breastfeeding in Urban Community of Lahore: A Cross – Sectional Study

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**Background:** Breastfeeding is the foundation of good health. It promotes both the maternal and child health and thus an important strategy to reduce the infant mortality in Pakistan.

**Objective:** To study the knowledge, attitude and practice of breastfeeding in urban population of Lahore.

**Study Design:** Cross – sectional study.

**Place and Duration of Study:** Department of Paediatric Medicine Unit – I, King Edward Medical University / Mayo Hospital Lahore from February 15 to May 15, 2010.

**Material and Methods:** After consent, 380 women between the ages 15 – 45 with at least one child below two years of age were interviewed. Their knowledge, attitude and practices regarding breastfeeding were evaluated with the help of pretested questionnaire. Chi-square test was used to analyze the association of economic and educational status with the breastfeeding practices.

**Results:** Study population consisted of 380 women with mean age of  $26.3 \pm 6$  years. Out of total, 283 (74.5%) of women had less than four children. Most of the mothers (34.2%) were educated till high school, while 38% had monthly income of less than Rs.10, 000/-. Three hundred and nineteen (83.9%) women had knowledge that milk is the best diet for infants. One hundred and fifty nine (41.8%) mothers reported benefits of breast milk as adequate nutrition, and easy to digest while 119 (31.3%) reported it beneficial for themselves as well. Statistically significant association was found between educational status and knowledge about breast feeding ( $p$ -value = 0.000). Two hundred and thirty six (62.1%) had positive attitude towards breastfeeding. Results were statistically significant for positive attitude towards breastfeeding and educational status ( $p$  value 0.001). Regarding optimum breastfeeding practices, 291(76%) mothers breast feed their children among whom 237 (81%) mothers initiated breast milk during first an half hour of birth. Majority (24.5%) of mothers breast fed considering it good for health of their child. Eighty nine (23.4%) mothers did not breast feed and major reason (7.6%) being milk did not flow in. Results were statistically significant for reasons of not breast feeding and economic status ( $p$ -value = 0.012).

**Conclusion:** Urban women of Lahore have adequate knowledge and positive attitude but optimum breast feeding practices need to be strengthened.

**Key words:** Knowledge Attitude Practice Breastfeeding.

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## Introduction

Breast feeding is one of the most essential practices that has been prevalent for centuries. Human breast milk is safe, hygienic, inexpensive, and readily available to the infant at right temperature and with the ideal nutritional value.<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization (WHO) recommends exclusive breastfeeding in children for the first six months of life.<sup>2</sup> Exclusive breastfeeding plays a vital role in promoting child health, preventing infection and thus reducing the infant mortality.<sup>1</sup>

Pakistan is facing a high infant mortality rate (72 / 1000 live births) due to the preventable diseases like diarrhea and respiratory tract illnesses.<sup>3</sup> Lack of initiation of breastfeeding within half an hour after birth, avoiding colostrums and giving prelacteals and artificial feed are contributory factors for these preventable diseases which ultimately lead to high infant mortality.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the well known maternal and child benefits,

trend of optimum breastfeeding practices is on decline. Globally less than 40% of infants under six months of age are exclusively breastfed.<sup>2</sup> In our society, this trend has reduced probably due to western influence, urbanization and increased and easy availability of commercial substitutes.<sup>5</sup>

This study was conducted to assess the knowledge, attitude and practice of breastfeeding women in urban population.

## Subject and Methods

This cross – sectional observational study was conducted in the Department of Paediatric Medicine Unit – I, King Edward Medical University / Mayo Hospital, Lahore, from February 15 to May 15, 2010. The inclusion criteria were lactating women between ages of 15 – 45 years with at least one child below two years of age. After an informed consent, women fulfilling the inclusion criteria were interviewed by the authors themselves. The questionnaire consisted

of information regarding their age, educational status, parity, economic status and the number of other women of child bearing age in the family. Their knowledge, attitude and breastfeeding practices were evaluated with the help of pretested questionnaire. Data was entered in SPSS 13 for statistical analysis. Chi-square test was applied to find out the association between economic and educational status with breastfeeding practices.

**Results**

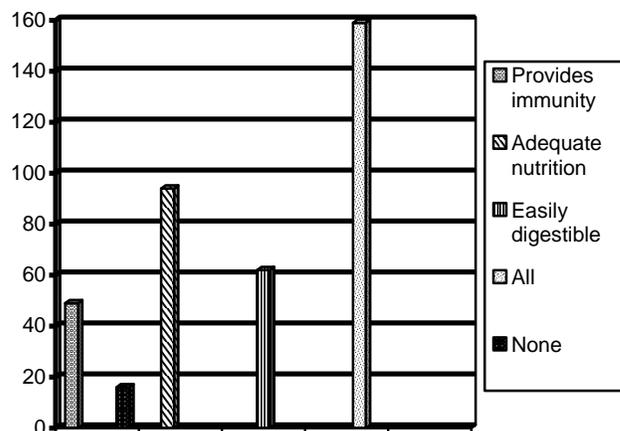
The study population consisted of 380 mothers with mean age of  $26.3 \pm 6$  years. Two hundred and eighty three (74.5%) mothers had less than four children. Thirty four percent of the mothers were educated till high school, and 38.4% had total monthly income of less than Rs.10, 000/- (Table 1).

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics (n = 380).**

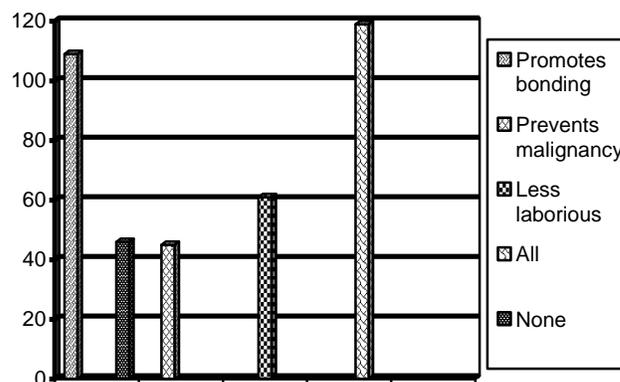
Variable	n (%)
<b>Parity</b>	
< 4 children	283 (74.5%)
4 – 7 children	88 (23.2%)
> 7 children	9 (2.4%)
<b>Number of Women in Family in Child Bearing Age</b>	
0 – 3	316 (83.2%)
4 – 6	59 (4.6%)
> 6	5 (1.3%)
<b>Educational Status of Mother</b>	
Uneducated	80 (21.1)
Under Primary	59 (15.5)
Primary	72 (18.9)
High School	130 (34.2)
Graduate	39 (10.3)
<b>Economic Status (Rs. Per Month) of Parents</b>	
< 10,000/-	146 (38.4)
10,000/- to 15,000/-	112 (29.5)
15,000-25,000 / month	85 (22.4)
> 25,000 / month	37 (9.7)

Regarding **knowledge** of the women about breast feeding, 319 (84%) mothers believed that breastfeeding is the best feed under 6 month of age. However, there was lack of knowledge about exclusive breastfeeding and 88% mothers had belief about use of other diet [Water (36%), cerelac

(34%), solids (13%), gripe water etc (5%)] in addition to breastfeed under 6month of age. One hundred and fifty nine (42%) women reported that benefits of breast feeding for child included increased immunity, adequate nutrition, and easy digestion while 119 women (31.3%) reported it beneficial for themselves in terms of increased bonding, prevention of malignancy and less labor. (Figure IA and B). Statistically significant association was found between educational status and knowledge about breast feeding (p-value = 0.000).



**Figure 1a: Benefits to the Child**

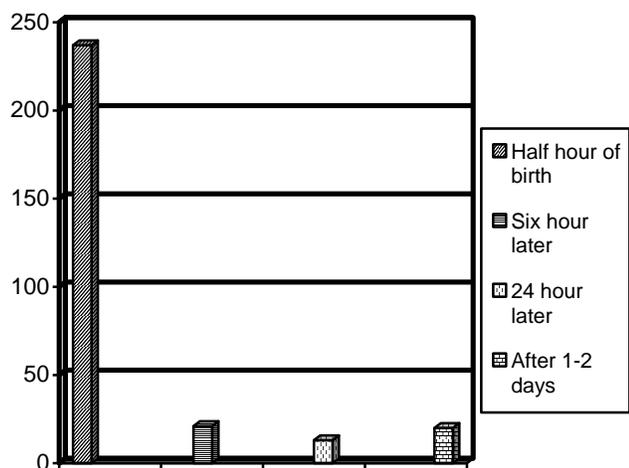


**Figure 1b: Benefits to the Mother.**

Regarding **attitude** of mothers about breastfeeding, 236 mothers (62.1%) had positive attitude towards breastfeeding their children for first six months of life. Association of positive attitude and educational status was statistically significant (p value 0.001).

Regarding **practice** of mothers about breast feeding, 291 (76%) mothers breast feed their children among whom 237 (81%) mothers initiated breast milk during first an half hour of birth (Figure 2).

Majority (24.5%) of mothers breast fed considering it



**Figure 2:** Breastfeeding Practice: Timing of Initiation of Breast feeding after birth.

**Table 2:** Practice of breast feeding (n = 380).

Variable	n (%)	p value
<b>Reason for Breast Feeding (n = 291)</b>		
Good for health	93 (24.5)	Not significant association between reasons of breastfeeding and educational and economic status (p value= 0.77 and 0.17 respectively)
Cost free	44 (11.6)	
Religious trends	35 (9.2)	
Follow customs	35 (9.2)	
Prevents infection	18 (4.7)	
Under family pressure	3 (0.8)	
All	61 (16.1)	
Any other reason	2 (0.5)	
<b>Reason for Not Breast Feeding (n = 89)</b>		
No let down of milk	29 (7.6)	Significant for reasons of not breast feeding and economic status (p value = 0.012) and Not significant for educational status (p value = 0.68)
Disliking	17 (4.5)	
Indecent exposure	2 (0.5)	
No time	5 (1.3)	
Outdated tradition	2 (0.5)	
Fashion	5 (1.3)	
Medical reason (mastitis etc)	16 (4.2)	
Easy availability of substitute	1 (0.3)	
Any other reason	12 (3.2)	

good for health. No significant association between reasons of breastfeeding and educational and economic status was found. Eighty nine (23.4%) did not breast feed and major reason was that milk did not flow in (7.6%). Results were statistically significant for reasons of not breast feeding and economic status (Table 2).

**Discussion**

Breast feeding is a universal phenomenon common to all cultures. In the last 2 decades, there is a program of global awareness of advantages of breast feeding and optimum feeding practices.<sup>6</sup> In present study, most (74.5%) of the mothers had less than four children and most (83.2%) of the families had three or less women in the childbearing age. This estimates that a large number of women who have poor knowledge themselves would impart it to their other family members. In this study, majority (34.2%) of mothers had high school education. Saudi study<sup>7</sup> supports our results showing that 49% mothers were having higher education. Similar trends were also observed by Rossem et al<sup>18</sup> and Heck et al.<sup>9</sup> However, Parveen et al<sup>10</sup> found that 75% of women had primary education. In this study, 38.4% had monthly income of less than Rs.10,000/-. Results were statistically significant for reasons of not breast feeding and economic status. International<sup>9</sup> and local<sup>11</sup> data does not support it where authors found that there was no significant association between economic strata and the pattern of breast feeding.

In this study, 84% mothers had knowledge that the breast milk was the best diet for their infant. However, there was lack of knowledge about the exclusive breastfeeding where 88% believed that they had to give additional diet before six months of age. These results are in accordance with similar study conducted in Mayo Hospital almost a decade ago.<sup>6</sup> It is also consistent with the results found by Uchendu et al<sup>12</sup> where knowledge about breastfeeding was 94%. However, Parveen et al<sup>10</sup> observed that only 44% mothers had knowledge about breastfeeding whereas 65% mothers had no knowledge about exclusive breastfeeding. In present study, significant association was found between educational status and knowledge on breast feeding. Roudbari et al<sup>13</sup> supported our results. However, Sabir et al<sup>11</sup> and Afzal M et al<sup>14</sup> observed that more mothers with lesser education exclusively breast fed their children. In present study, majority of the women (62%) had positive attitude towards exclusive breastfeeding. These results are in accordance other studies.<sup>12,15</sup>

In this study, we observed that a large number of women (76.6%) practiced breastfeeding while 81% mothers initiation of breast feeding within half hour of birth. Similar results have been found by Madhu K et al<sup>15</sup> and Parveen et al.<sup>10</sup> In our study, initiation of breast feeding was delayed for six hours in 7% of infants while it was beyond 24 hours in 6.7% of infants. Our results are in contrast with Saudi study<sup>7</sup> where breastfeeding was delayed for first six hours in about 28.1% infants while Koosha et al<sup>16</sup> observed that it

was delayed beyond 24 hours of life in 82% infants.

Uchendu et al<sup>12</sup> and Pager RS et al<sup>17</sup> also did not favor our results showing that only 21% and 56% respondents practiced breastfeeding respectively. In this study, majority (24.5%) of mothers breast fed considering it good for health of their child. However, Parveen et al<sup>10</sup> and Uchendu et al<sup>12</sup> showed that 67% and 85% mothers considered it healthy for their baby respectively. We observed that most of the mothers (7.6%) did not breastfeed their children because milk did not flow in. Khan et al<sup>18</sup> found that the major reason (63%) for not breast – feeding was insufficient milk. Present study also found statistically significant association between reasons of not breastfeeding and economic status.

### Conclusion

This study concludes that urban women of Lahore have adequate knowledge and positive attitude but optimum breast feeding practices need to be strengthened.

### Recommendation

We recommend that awareness programs should be arranged for guiding our women in child bearing age, family members and health providers to further enhance their knowledge, attitude and practice about optimum breastfeeding practices which in turn can lead to reduction in infant mortality in Pakistan.

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