

## KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND PRACTICES REGARDING BREAST FEEDING, A PICTURE IN EAST KHASI HILLS DISTRICT OF MEGHALAYA.

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**ABSTRACT: INTRODUCTION:** Breast feeding is the normal way of providing young infants with the nutrients they need for healthy growth and development. A child who is breast fed has greater chances of survival than a child who is artificially fed. The low prevalence and duration of exclusive and partial breastfeeding increase the risk of infant and childhood morbidity and mortality in both developed and developing countries. Worldwide, suboptimal breastfeeding still accounts for deaths of 1.4 million children aged less than five years . **AIM OF THE STUDY:** 1. To assess the knowledge, attitude and practices regarding breast feeding among women 2. To study the factors influencing breast feeding practices among women residing in East Khasi Hills district of Meghalaya. **METHODOLOGY:** The present study is a cross sectional study conducted within the field practice area of NEIGRIHMS, two of which were urban- Nongmynsong and Pynthorbah and one rural area-Tynring. The study period was conducted from October 2012- December 2012 (three months duration). A total of 135 women were interviewed during the period. In the respective areas the households were selected using simple random sampling after obtaining a list of all the households in the respective area from the ANM. In the selected household all the females available who have a child between 1-2 year of age were interviewed. Data analysis was done by descriptive analysis and analytical statistics by using Chi Square test using SPSS version 17.0. **RESULTS & OBSERVATION:** Out of 135 families visited, 70 (51.9%) families were nuclear families. With respect to feeding practices; 80 (59%) mothers had given Exclusive Breast Feeding for a period of 6 months. 74 (55%) of mothers had knowledge on colostrums and 109 (80.75%) of mothers had given colostrum to their babies. 42 (31.1%) mothers had initiated BF within 1 hour .The variables which were found to be associated with breast feeding are the mother's age, type of family and the mother's education. **CONCLUSION:** Mothers education was found to be an important factor in influencing breast feeding practices. Therefore, Health education and counseling of mothers can go a long way in improving breast feeding practices in this area.

**KEY WORDS:** Breast feeding, Infant, Knowledge, Attitude, Practices.

**INTRODUCTION:** Breast feeding is the normal way of providing young infants with the nutrients they need for healthy growth and development. Breast milk has just the right amount

of fat, sugar, water, and protein that is needed for a baby's growth and development.<sup>1</sup> Childhood under-nutrition in our country mostly originates from inadequate and faulty practices of feeding newborns and children, coupled with exposure to contaminated environment. The low prevalence and duration of exclusive and partial breastfeeding increase the risk of infant and childhood morbidity and mortality in both developed and developing countries.<sup>2</sup> Worldwide, suboptimal breastfeeding still accounts for deaths of 1.4 million children aged less than five years. The timely introduction of complementary feeding can prevent almost 6% of under-five mortality.<sup>3</sup>

In India, Breastfeeding is almost universal, but the Exclusive Breast Feeding rate is quite low. Third National Family Health Survey (NFHS III) from India reports Exclusive Breast Feeding rates of 46.3% at 5 months<sup>4</sup>. Though various factors are there which can influence the practice of breast feeding, lack of adequate knowledge can be considered as one of the vital factors. With this background the present study was conducted to assess the knowledge, attitude and practices regarding breast feeding and factors influencing breast feeding practices among women residing in East Khasi Hills district of Meghalaya.

**MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY:** The present study is a cross sectional study conducted within the field practice area of NEIGRIHMS, two of which were urban- Nongmynsong and Pynthorbah and one rural area-Tynring. The study period was conducted from October 2012 to December 2012 (three months duration). Considering the prevalence of Exclusive Breast Feeding as 46.4% in India (as per NFHS III data)<sup>4</sup> and taking 20% as allowable error, the sample size was calculated to be 115. In our study period, however a total of 135 women were interviewed. In the respective areas, the household was selected as the sampling unit. The number of individuals selected from each area was determined by proportionate allocation depending on the total population of the area. In the respective areas the households were selected using simple random sampling after obtaining a list of all the households in the respective area from the ANM. In the selected household all the females available who have a child between 1-2 year of age were interviewed. Data was collected on socio demographic characteristics of the women, breast feeding practices and knowledge on breast feeding. The tool used to collect data was a pre tested questionnaire. The respondents were informed about the purpose of the study. They were assured about confidentiality. Questions were asked in local vernacular language. A p value of <.05 was considered as significant. Data analysis was done by descriptive analysis and analytical statistics by using Chi Square test using SPSS version 17.0.

**RESULTS AND OBSERVATIONS:** A total of 135 women were interviewed for the study. Out of 135 families visited, 70 (51.9%) families were nuclear families. With respect to fathers age 16 (11.9%) fathers belonged to <25 years of age; most of the fathers 109(80.7%) belonged to 25-45 years and 7 (5.2%) belonged to >45 years. Data for 3 fathers could not be taken as they had expired. Regarding father's education 21 (15.6%) were found to be illiterate and 111(82.2%) were literate. With respect to the father's income, 2(1.5%) had income < 1000, 60 (44.4%) had income between 1001-5000, 43 (31.9%) had income of Rs 5001-10000; 18 (13.3%) had income 10000-20000 and 5 (3.7%) had income >20000. Data for 7 fathers could not be collected as 3 had expired and 4 fathers were not working. With respect to mother's age 40 (28.1%) belonged to ≤25 years of age, 77 (57.03%) belonged to age group 26-35 years and 18 (13.33%) belonged to 36-45 years of age. Data gathered for mothers education revealed that 40(29.6%) were

illiterate and 95(70.4%) were literate. With respect to mothers occupation, 116 (85.9%) were housewives and the rest 19 (14.1%) were working women. 116 (85.9%) delivered in institutions and 19 (14.1%) delivered at home. 19 (14.1%) babies had birth weight <2.5 kg and 99 (73.3%) had birth weight  $\geq$ 2.5kg. For 17 babies birth weight could not be found out as they were delivered at home.

With respect to feeding practices; 80 (59%) mothers had given Exclusive Breast Feeding for a period of 6 months. It was found that 74 (55%) of mothers had knowledge on colostrum. 109 (80.75%) mothers were found to give colostrum to their babies. 42 (31.1%) mothers had initiated BF within 1 hour, 38 (28.14%) had initiated within 1-12 hours; 30 (22.22%) had initiated within 12-24 hours and 25 (18.51%) had initiated BF beyond 24 hours. 28 (21.75%) mothers had given pre lacteal feeds, 107(78.25%) had not given. With respect to artificial feeding, 55 (41%) had given artificial feeding to their babies. In our study only 35(25.9%) of babies were weaned correctly at 6 months. 86 (63.7%) mothers commented that BF helps in growth of baby and 49 (36.29%) gave other reasons like to fill the stomach, satisfy the hunger, protects from infections etc.

In our study, a significant relation was observed between the mother's age and Exclusive Breast feeding with the younger mothers more likely to breast feed than the elderly mothers.( Chi Sq=8.546, df=2, p=0.0139). In our study, we found a significant association between the type of family and Exclusive breast feeding with mothers belonging to non nuclear families more likely to breast feed ( Chi Sq=12.244, df=1, p=0.0005).No relation was observed between mother's occupation and Exclusive breast feeding. (Chi Sq=0.7852, df=1, p=0.3755). A significant relation was observed between mother's education and Exclusive Breast Feeding. (Chi Sq=9.903, df=1, p=0.0016). A significant relation was also observed between mother's education and knowledge on colostrum. (Chi Sq=25.855, df= 1, p<0.0001) and also giving of colostrums to their babies (Chi Sq=31.791, df=1, p<0.0001). No significant relation was observed between time of initiation of Breast feeding and place of delivery. (Chi Sq=1.662, df=1,p=0.197). We also found no significant relation between pre lacteal feeding and place of delivery (Chi Sq=.000, df=1, p=0.985). No significant relation was observed between mothers education and pre lacteal feeding ( Chi Sq=0.0189, df=1 ,p=0.8904). Also no significant relation was observed between fathers education and EBF (Chi Sq=2.373, df=2, p=0.305).

**DISCUSSION:** In our study around 80 (59.3%) were found to give Exclusive Breast feeding to their babies. In a study conducted in Bankura district of West Bengal, exclusive breastfeeding under six months was found to be 57.1% which is similar to the present study <sup>5</sup> but slightly higher than the NFHS III figure of 46.4% <sup>4</sup>. We observed that 109 (80.75%) of mothers had given colostrum to their babies. In a study conducted in Nepal on knowledge, attitude and practices regarding colostrums, 80% of mothers were found to give colostrums to their babies which is similar to the present study <sup>6</sup>. In our study, we found that 42 (31.11%) had initiated breast feeding within 1 hour. In a study conducted in Bankura district of West it was found that only 13.6% of the study children were put to the breast within one hour of birth <sup>5</sup>. In a study on breast feeding practices of rural and urban mothers conducted in New Delhi it was observed that only 21 % urban and 35% rural mothers initiated breastfeeding within one hour of birth which is somewhat similar to the present study<sup>7</sup>. It was found from our study that 28 (21.75%) mothers had given pre lacteal feeds. In a study on infant feeding practices in Nagpur, India it was found that 47(21.65%) mothers used pre lacteal feeds which are similar to the present study <sup>8</sup>. In another study conducted in Bankura, West Bengal the overall prevalence of prelacteal

feeding was 26.7%<sup>5</sup>. In the present study we observed that only 35(25.9%) of mothers had introduced complementary feeding at the correct time i.e by 6 months. Panwar et al in his study found that 19.3% of infants were weaned at the correct age of 6 months<sup>9</sup>. The figure reported by UNICEF is found to be 29.6% which is almost similar to the present study<sup>10</sup>.

The factors which were found to be significantly associated with Exclusive Breast feeding are the mother's age, type of family and mothers education. In a study on maternal knowledge and perception about the breast feeding and factors influencing it conducted in Pune it was found that factors like illiteracy and living in nuclear family were associated with higher risk of not giving EBF<sup>11</sup>. In another study conducted by Rajesk K Sudasama et al in South Gujrat region of India showed socio demographic variables like maternal education, type of family has significant \_association with the new borns\_exclusive breast feeding but no association was found with maternal age<sup>12</sup>. In our study we did not find any association between Exclusive breast feeding and mothers occupation. The reason may be that the number of working mothers in the study were too less in our study to find any significant association. Also, no significant association was observed between time of initiation of Breast feeding and place of delivery. This is because the numbers of home deliveries are less in the present study to find any significant association. Also the type of delivery and the condition of mother, attitude of health care provider and family members are more important factors in predicting early initiation of breast feeding rather than place of delivery alone. We had observed a significant association between mother's education level and knowledge on colostrums including giving of colostrums to their babies. In a study conducted by Sunil Kumar Joshi et al conducted in Nepal, educated women were found to have higher knowledge on colostrums and maternal education remained important with regard to awareness about the importance of colostrum feeding<sup>6</sup>. No significant association was however observed between mother's education level and pre lacteal feeding. This may be due to the reason that it is mainly the relatives like in laws who take care of the baby immediately after the delivery and mothers are usually confined to bed and have little say at that timed.

**CONCLUSION:** In our study the Exclusive Breast feeding up to 6 months was found to be higher than other areas which is encouraging. The problems that were found in our study were late initiation of breast feeding, introduction of pre lacteal feeding and faulty complementary feeding. Mother's education was found to be an important factor in influencing breast feeding practices. Therefore, Health education and counseling of mothers can go a long way in improving breast feeding practices in this area.

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**Table 1: Data on knowledge and feeding practices of the study population.**

Sl No.	Feeding practices	Yes	No
1.	Whether EBF given or not	80 (59%)	55 (41%)
2.	Knowledge on colostrum	74 (55%)	61 (45%)
3.	Whether colostrums given or not	109 (80.75%)	26 (19.25%)
4.	Any pre lacteals given	28 (21.75%)	107 (78.25%)
5.	Whether feeding initiated within 1 hour	42 (31.11%)	93 (68.89%)
6.	Weaning at 6 months	35 (25.9%)	100 (74.07%)

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**Table 2: Table showing association of feeding practices with demographic variables:**

SL No	Variable	Feeding practices		Total	Chi Sq P value
1.	Mothers age	EBF given	EBF not given		
	<25	26(19.26%)	14(10.37%)	40(29.63%)	Chi Sq=8.546, df=2, P=0.0139.
	26-35	49(36.29%)	28(20.74%)	77(57.04%)	
	36-45	5(3.72%)	13(9.62%)	18(13.33%)	
	Total	80(59.27%)	55(40.73%)	135(100%)	
2.	Family type	EBF -Yes	EBF-No	Total	Chi Sq=12.244, df=1, P=0.0005,OR=0.2595, 95% CI=0.1244-0.5416
	Nuclear	31(23%)	39(29%)	70(52%)	
	Joint	49(36%)	16(12%)	65(48%)	
	Total	80(59%)	55(41%)	135(100%)	
3.	Mothers occupation	EBF given	EBF not given	Total	Chi Sq=0.7852, df=1, p=0.3755 OR=1.753 95% CI=0.6612-4.648
	Not Working	71(53%)	45(33%)	116(86%)	
	Working	9(7%)	10(7%)	19(14%)	
	Total	80(60%)	55(40%)	135(100%)	
4.	Mothers education	EBF given	EBF not given	Total	Chi Sq= 9.903,df=1 p=0.0016, OR=3.611 95% CI=1.667-7.821
	Literate	65 (48%)	30(22%)	95(70%)	
	Illiterate	15(11%)	25(19%)	40 (30%)	
	Total	80(59%)	55(41%)	135(100%)	
5.	Mothers education	Knowledge on colostrums- Yes	Knowledge on colostrums-No	Total	Chi Sq=25.855, df=1, P<0.0001,OR=9.103 95% CI=3.740-22.158.
	Literate	66(49%)	29(21%)	95(70%)	
	Illiterate	8(6%)	32(24%)	40(30%)	
	Total	74(55%)	61(45%)	135(100%)	
6.	Mothers education	Colostrum given	Colostrum not given	Total	Chi Sq=31.791, df=1, p<0.0001, OR=14.833, 95% CI=5.277-41.684
	Literate	89(65.92%)	6(4.44%)	95(70.37%)	
	Illiterate	20(14.83%)	20(14.81%)	40(29.63%)	
	Total	109(80.75%)	26(19.25%)	135(100%)	
7.	Place of delivery	Initiated within 1 hour	Initiated after 1 hr	Total	Chi Sq=1.661, df=1, P=0.1974, OR=0.3702, 95% CI=0.1017-1.348
	Home	3(2.23%)	16(11.85%)	19(14.07%)	
	Institutional	39(28.88%)	77(57.03%)	116(85.93%)	
	Total	42(31.11%)	93(68.89%)	135(100%)	