

## Assess the Knowledge and Beliefs about Breastfeeding among Adolescents

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### Abstract

Breastfeeding is the best food for the newborn. Though breastfeeding is a traditional practice still than the data for exclusive breastfeeding shows only 56%. This data dishearten the health personnel. Knowledge of breastfeeding is very much essential to every adolescents. The infant mortality ratio is going up mainly due to various health problems such as diarrhea, nutrition deficiency and unaware activities, which could be prevented through breastfeeding. In the recent years the incidence of breastfeeding is ranging from 56% - 45% only. Considering adolescents to be the future parents, this study aimed to assess their knowledge and beliefs towards breastfeeding. Study was conducted in a selected Institution among 50 graduate students selected by simple random sampling technique. Data was collected by structured questionnaire for knowledge and checklist was used to assess the belief of adolescents regarding breastfeeding. The result showed that regarding knowledge both male and female has almost similar knowledge i.e. Moderate level of knowledge but with regards to belief it showed that 72% of male and 68% of female had high belief whereas 8% male had low belief towards breast feeding and none of the female had low belief towards breastfeeding. This study concluded that students had moderate knowledge so education programme need to be conducted to create awareness on various aspects of breastfeeding so that their belief towards breastfeeding will improve. It is essential that male students should have high belief towards breastfeeding which will improve the exclusive breastfeeding rate in Society.

**Keywords:** *Breastfeeding; Adolescents; Awareness; Knowledge*

### Introduction

Today's world is highly advanced by means of technology. People wanted to live a sophisticated life. This is seen as a global phenomena. Now-a-days, women also become aware of their part in the developing world. They are starting to work in the various levels, which also extends upto the participation of national and international level programme [1,2].

In India, people has more value for customs, beliefs, which are traditional. As century progress there is a decline in the traditional aspects, which is noticed in the practice of breast feeding. Many working women are feeding their babies as per their will and wish. Then, they started giving tinned milk products for their babies. Significant changes are noticed in the aspects of breast feeding. Moreover, breast milk appears to be a baby's first brain food [3,4].

Various studies have indicated that the positive and negative adolescent perceptions of breastfeeding were reflected in local breastfeeding initiation rates [5]. For example, communities in which adolescents regard breastfeeding positively were associated with higher breastfeeding initiation rates than communities where adolescents lack exposure to breastfeeding role models and were not aware of the benefits of breastfeeding [6].

Both adolescent males and females have been reported to hold common misconceptions of breastfeeding. These include misunderstandings concerning what constitutes an adequate milk supply or knowledge of the lactation process; a belief that breastfeeding encourages an over dependency of the baby on the mother; the notion that breastfeeding is a time consuming activity; and the myth that breast size influences the ability of an infant to feed successfully [7,8].

The importance of positive breastfeeding support from family and partner, and early breastfeeding education has demonstrated increases in breastfeeding initiation and duration rates. Increased adolescent breastfeeding knowledge in association with exposure to breastfeeding role models has shown to impact on adolescent attitudes towards breastfeeding in the future. With increased breastfeeding rates may come the significant physical, emotional and economic benefits that breastfeeding affords and trend towards meeting the World Health Organization's recommendations on exclusive breastfeeding.

Adolescents struggle with their own psychosocial development in areas such as identity versus role confusion and peer group influence. It has been suggested that the adolescent's own emotional and social development also influences their attitude to breastfeed or formula feed infants. Where positive breastfeeding influences are not present, the exposure to breastfeeding role models is deemed important for emotional and social orientation and for enhancement of the adolescent's efficacy belief or confidence in ability to breastfeed. Efficacy belief or self-efficacy is a cognitive process that contributes to how individuals perceive their ability to perform specific behaviours and influence choice of and persistence with the behaviour. Hence this study was conducted among the adolescents to prepare their mind to support, promote and protect breastfeeding.

### Objectives of the Study

To assess the knowledge and belief of the adolescences towards breast feeding.

### Methodology

Research approach is quantitative and research design was descriptive design. The study was conducted in a selected Institution of Pudukcherry among the adolescents. There are 50 adolescents participated in this study and they were selected by simple random sampling technique. Inclusion criteria's were those students willing to participate for this study and students were from arts and science college, present during the period of data collection. The tool for data collection was divided into 3 sections. Section A questions related to demographic variables. Section B consists of structured questionnaire on knowledge about breastfeeding and section C consists of checklist to assess the beliefs of adolescents about breastfeeding. Data was collected after getting permission from the concerned Authority. Ethical permission was obtained from the institutional ethical committee. Written consent was obtained from each student. Data was collected personally by the researcher. It took around 15mins to complete the data collection from students. All students cooperated well. Teaching programme on breastfeeding was given to all students after data collection.

### Result and Findings

Description of demographic variables shows that majority (80%) of the adolescents were in the age group of 18 - 19 years, all the students (100%) had education upto graduation level, majority of adolescents (90%) were belonged to Hindu religion, most of adolescents (60%) from nuclear family type, most of the adolescents (84%) are non-vegetarian.

With respect to knowledge on breastfeeding the result highlights that both male and female students had almost similar knowledge regarding breastfeeding like 3 (12%) male and female students had poor knowledge, 20 (80%) male and female students had Moderate knowledge and 2 (8%) male and female students has adequate knowledge on breast feeding (Figure 1).

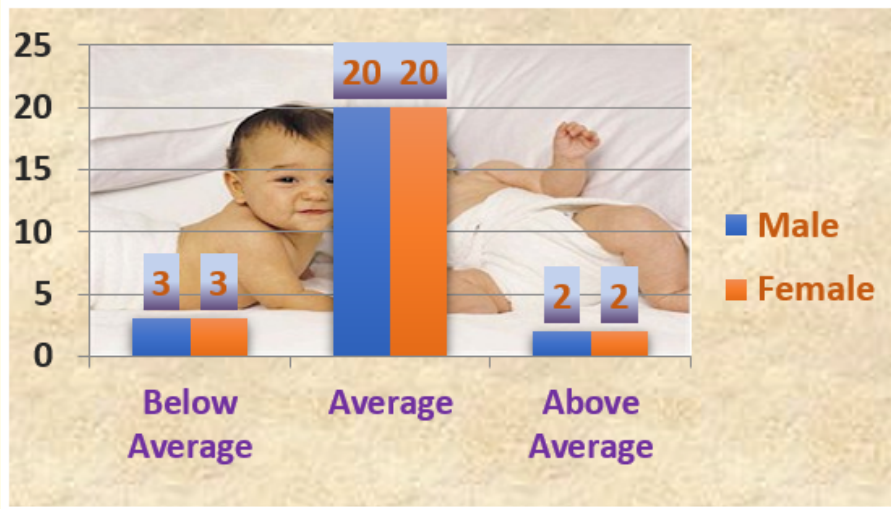


Figure 1: Knowledge among male and female students on breastfeeding.

Regarding beliefs towards breastfeeding among students represents that among the male students 2 (8%) students had low belief level, 4 (20%) students had moderate belief level and 18 (72%) students had high belief level about breastfeeding. Further among female students the result shows that 17 (68%) female students had high belief level, 8 (32%) of them have moderate belief level and none of the female students had low belief level regarding breastfeeding (Figure 2).

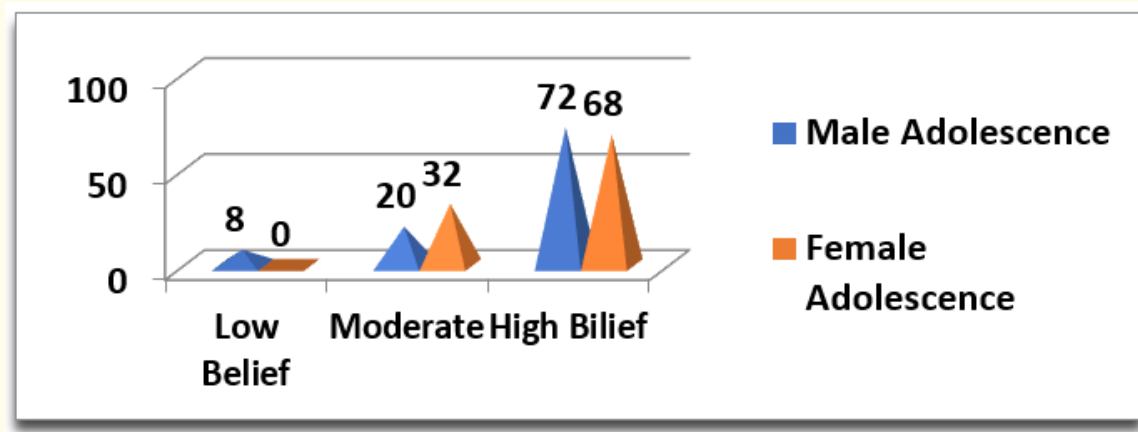


Figure 2: Percentage distribution of belief of the adolescence on breastfeeding.

### Discussion

The present study result highlights that, 20 (80%) male and female students had moderate knowledge and only 2 (8%) male and female students has adequate knowledge on breast feeding. Study result was supported by Marija Čatipović, et al. [10] conducted a study on

“adolescents’ knowledge of breastfeeding and their intention to breastfeed in the future” presented the result that only 13.64% of the respondents know that breastfeeding is to be done only on demand. Exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months, as recommended by the medical profession, is recognized by 70.13% of the students. The question on how justified is the initiation of formula together with the mother’s milk was answered correctly by 29.22% of the students. They concluded that secondary school students’ knowledge of breastfeeding is insufficient, and schools, families, social communities and other sources of information should share the responsibility for improving this. Further recommended that it is necessary to pay more attention to improving students’ knowledge of breastfeeding through school curricula.

Further the result also supported by the Author Geeta Devi [11] conducted a study on “knowledge regarding breast feeding among adolescent girls” presented the result that the overall breastfeeding knowledge score of all the students was 48.75% which is average among secondary school students. The result also supported by the author Haya Hamade 2014, conducted a study on “breastfeeding knowledge, attitude, perceived behavior, and intention among female undergraduate university students in the middle east: the case of Lebanon and Syria” presented the result that the participants had an average breastfeeding knowledge level (mean score,  $10.39 \pm 2.09$ ).

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### Implications

Adult education is important aspect of nursing. Though the students are educated, their attitude towards certain aspects of health is not appropriate to the education. The health of the baby lies in the hands of the mother who is caring for the baby. So, the young and upcoming generations should be very aware about breastfeeding which is the opt nutrient for the well baby. The implication drawn from the present study is vital to the health team including nursing practitioners, nurse administrators and nurse educators.

#### Implication for nursing practice:

- The nurses working in the community and clinical setting should practice health education as an integrated part of nursing profession.
- The Obst. & Gye. nurse should educate the health workers in importing knowledge to the public.
- Planned health teaching programmes are to be scheduled in the clinical set up on fixed days with time for the patients as well as the family members especially for the adolescents.
- Small booklets and pamphlets are to be provided to the young mothers/family members/adolescents in understandable language with appropriate pictures and explanations to improve their knowledge.
- Breastfeeding is promoted by creating community awareness, which implies the need for change that has to be introduced by the nursing professionals. The change includes creating awareness programmes of breastfeeding among the public, and so that it may help to reduce the rate of infant mortality and morbidity.

### Implications for nursing education

The nursing curriculum needs to be strengthened to enable nursing students to assess the breastfeeding practices thereby identify the problems of the feeding mother and to provide supportive educative care for promoting breastfeeding. When nurse educators plan to instruct students, should provide adequate opportunity for them to educate the adolescents about breastfeeding in both community and clinical setting. The study stresses the significance of short term courses, education in maternal and child health to acquire additional knowledge of health science to be provided to the adolescents.

### Implication on nursing administration

Leaders in nursing are confronted to undertake the health needs of the most vulnerable by effective organization and management. The nurse administrator should take active part in the health policy making, developing protocol. Procedures and standing orders related to the adult education. The nurse administrator should also give special attention on the proper selection, placement and effective utilization of the nurses in all areas, within the available resources, giving importance for their creativity, interest and ability in education adolescents. An education programme on educative role of the nurses along with adequate supervision of nursing services will motivate nurses to carry out educative role.

### Implication for the nursing research

The findings of the study help the professional nurses and students to develop inquiry by providing baseline. This study helps the nurse researchers to set information for the adolescents towards to the promotion of the healthy child by giving health education such as breastfeeding.

### Conclusion

From this study it was concluded that students had moderate knowledge and misconception and ignorance about breastfeeding, so empowerment with sufficient knowledge and emphasis on health education should be included as a part of a curriculum. Nurses and midwives are in a prime position to make use of many opportunities that present themselves in their everyday work encourage and influence women to be more breast feeding aware. The similar study should be conducted with large sample.

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