

Knowledge, Attitude and Practice of Exclusive Breast Feeding among Nursing Mothers in Benue State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) is an important public health strategy for improving children's and mother's health by reducing child morbidity and mortality as well as helping to reduce healthcare costs. It is considered by health experts as one of the major strategies which help the most widely known and effective intervention for preventing early childhood deaths. It is against this background that this study was set to find out how knowledgeable the nursing mother are on the practices with corresponding attitude towards exclusive breast feeding. The cross sectional design was used with the aid of structured questionnaire to elicit information from the target population. A total of 457 nursing mothers were purposively sampled and distributed with the structured questionnaire across the three senatorial districts in the state, out of which only 400 questionnaires were returned. Using SPSS package as a statistical tool for analysis, descriptive statistics and One Sample t-test statistics were used to analyse the data. The responses from qualitative data via the use of focus group discussion (FGD) were also analysed using ethnographic method. Deductively, it was found that there was relatively fair knowledge toward exclusive breast feeding, despite been knowledgeable, it was found that nursing mothers have negative attitude toward the practice of exclusive breast feeding. Majority of the nursing women saw no need of practicing EBF. The study also found that there were significantly differences in the use of exclusive breastfeeding among the nursing mothers. That is the old nursing women practice EBF than the young nursing mothers. Base on this, the study therefore recommends among others that there is need to intensify the awareness campaign toward the practice of EBF for a more healthy living of the babies that could go a long way in reducing the cost expenditure on healthcare service.

Keywords: Knowledge, Attitude, Practice, Exclusive Breast feeding, Nursing mothers,

Introduction

Exclusive breast feeding (EBF) is an essential public fitness approach for enhancing kids' and mother's fitness via way or means of decreasing infant morbidity and mortality and assisting to govern healthcare charges in society (Holtzman & Usherwood, 2018). Additionally, EBF is one of the essential techniques which assist the maximum widely recognized and powerful intervention for stopping early adolescence deaths. Exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) is described as giving breast milk simplest to the toddler, with none extra meals or drink, now no longer even water within the first six months of life, except mineral supplements, vitamins, or medicines (Jahanpour, Msuya, Todd, Stray-Pedersen &, Mgongo, 2018). The World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nation Children's Fund (UNICEF) endorse initiation of breastfeeding within the first hour after birth; completely breastfeed for the primary six months of age and continuation of breastfeeding for up to 2 years of age or past further to ok complementary foods (WHO, 2018). Every year, top-rated breastfeeding practices can save you approximately 1.4 million deaths global amongst kids below five (Issaka, Agho, &Renzaho, 2017). Beyond the advantages that breastfeeding confers to the mother-infant relationship, breastfeeding lowers the prevalence of many adolescence illnesses, which includes diarrhea, infections, pneumonia, surprising toddler loss of life syndrome, diabetes mellitus, and malocclusion (Issaka, Agho, & Renzaho, 2017). Also, breastfeeding helps wholesome mind improvement and is related to better overall performance on intelligence checks amongst kids and adolescents (Victora, Bahl, Barros, França, Horton, Krusevec, et al, 2016). In mothers, breastfeeding has been proven to lower the frequency of hemorrhage, postpartum depression, breast cancer, ovarian and endometrial cancer, in addition to facilitating weight loss (Victora, Bahl, Barros, França, Horton, Krusevec, et al, 2016). The lactation amenorrhea approach is an essential preference for postpartum own circle of relatives planning (Skouteris, Nagle, Fowler, Kent, Sahota, Morris, 2014). The World Health

Assembly (WHA) has set a world wide goal so that it will growth the charge of EBF for babies 0–6 months as much as a minimum 50% in 2012–2025. Adherence to those suggestions varies globally; simplest 38% of babies are completely breastfed for the primary six months of life ((Skouteris, Nagle, Fowler, Kent, Sahota, Morris, 2014). High-earnings international locations which includes the United States (19%), United Kingdom (1%), and Australia (15%), have shorter breastfeeding period than do low-earnings and middle-earnings international locations. However, even in low-earnings and middle-earnings international locations, simplest 37% of babies more youthful than six months are completely breastfed (Hawley, Rosen, Strait, Raffucci, Holmdahl, Freeman, et al., 2015).

According to latest papers within the sub-Saharan Africa region, many toddlers in east African nation were exclusively breastfed for 6 months that is manner underneath the WHO goal of 90% (Rosen, Strait, Raffucci, Holmdahl, Freeman, et al., 2015). In addition, a study carried out in Tanzania pronounced that moms obtained healthcare within the antenatal period (Adebowale, 2005). However, simplest 39% of pregnant girls and 25% of postpartum moms pronounced having obtained breastfeeding counseling and lots of girls perceived that the amount of moms' breast milk is low for a child's growth. The moms perceived that the kid is thirsty and that they want to introduce natural medication for cultural functions become a few of the essential elements for early blended feeding (Victora, Horta, Mola, Quevedo, Pinheiro, Gigante, et al, 2017). The secondary evaluation of WHO Global pronounced that obstacles of breastfeeding in low-earnings nations encompass cultural beliefs, education, and get right of entry to healthcare (Victora, Horta, Mola, Quevedo, Pinheiro, Gigante, et al, 2017). Mothers' suitable understanding and wonderful mind-set play key roles in the procedure and practice of

breastfeeding. The various studies examined conclude that moms with better understanding of EBF had been 5.9 times much more likely to practice EBF than their counterparts.

Research Questions

a. Will there be any significant difference in the exclusive breastfeeding attitudes of nursing mothers that are young and that of those that are old?

b. Will there be any significant difference in the exclusive breastfeeding attitudes of self-employed nursing mothers and the public servants nursing mothers?

Effort to answer the above questions will unveil the degree of differences if any, and to promote and support the practice of exclusive breastfeeding among mothers in who found it difficult to practice EBF, and to increase the number of mothers who want to achieve the better development of children, it is also important to inform the policymakers, with an intervention that could improve knowledge and attitude of nursing mothers regarding exclusive breastfeeding. However, the present study sort to confirm the following hypotheses extracted from the research questions:

1. There will be no significant difference in exclusive breastfeeding attitudes of nursing mothers that are young and those that are older.

2. There will be no significant difference in the exclusive breastfeeding attitudes of nursing mothers that are self-employed and that of those who are public servants.

Literature review

Physicians do recommendation moms to breastfeed their infants on call for in place of through an hourly schedule. This exercise now no longer best guarantees that the infant gets the

right nutrition, however additionally that the mom's milk deliver is maintained (Ogbo, Nguyen, Naz, Agho , Page, 2018). Milk at the start of a feeding consultation is exclusive in composition than milk on the end-the hind milk or overdue milk is plenty richer in fats. Doctors endorse that a breast feeding consultation start and maintain on one breast till the infant spontaneously stops feeding (Jean, Kwabena, Julius & Jiayou, 2020). Halting feedings after a predetermined time might also additionally save you the toddler from acquiring the greater fats energy within the hind milk vital for correct growth (UNICEF). Mothers might also additionally use both hand and a breast pump to cast off milk from the breast. Both strategies are beneficial for alleviating strain within the breast while mom and toddler cannot be collectively for an ordinary feeding consultation (Hawley, Rosen, Strait, Raffucci, Holmdahl, Freeman, et al, 2015).

A nursing mom can bottle and refrigerate the milk so obtained, and use it to feed her toddler at every other time-a beneficial choice for moms who paintings out of doors the home (UNICEF). Hasan (2019) suggested that a few pediatricians endorse that toddlers breastfed for at the least the primary year of life, and likely into the second one year of top-rated development. For the primary six months of life, the wholesome toddler desires no meals or fluid apart from breast milk. Beyond that age, mom's milk must be an increasing number of supplemented with stable meals and different fluids (Hawley, Rosen, Strait, Raffucci, Holmdahl, Freeman, 2015). Hassan (2019) additionally opined that weaning an infant from breast milk to different ingredients must continue progressively. As breastfeeding takes place much less frequently, the frame produces much less prolactin, and much less milk is produced. Abrupt weaning must be averted due to the fact each mom and infant desires to lessen milk manufacturing progressively, and the infant desires to learn how to digest different sorts of meals. The Benefits of Breastfeeding Perhaps the maximum essential benefit of breastfeeding is that breast milk offers a

toddler with massive safety towards persistent sicknesses inclusive of hypersensitive reactions and asthma; and infectious sicknesses such as meningitis, diarrhea, ear infections, and pneumonia. The immune additives of breast milk continuously alternate to fulfill the toddler's want to be blanketed towards new infections. As the toddler's very own immune device grows extra capable, the attention of antibodies and anti-contamination sellers within the milk progressively declines. Breastfeeding additionally blessings the mom through lowering her chance of growing ovarian cancer, pre-mopausal breast cancer, osteoporosis, and hip fractures in later life (WardLaw & Insel, 1996).

Breastfeeding enables bonding among moms and toddler this is emotionally gratifying to each participants. The mom develops nurturing behaviours. The toddler in turn, learns trust. Breastfed toddlers are seventeen limes much less probably to die from diarrhea sicknesses and 5instancesmuch less probably to die from pneumonia for the duration of the primary six months of life (short, 1988). Breast milk is the cleanliest, maximum germ-unfastened manner to feed an infant (Adebowale, 2005; Davis, 2017). The human milk is likewise a completely unique and desired first meal for the entire time period neonate due to the fact, its traits are tailored through nature to fulfill the dietary desires of physiological fame of the neonate (Hawley, Rosen, Strait, Raffucci, Holmdahl, & Freeman, 2015).

It is affordable, hygienic, and nutrient-rich, and it is widely and simply accessible. Additionally linked to breastfeeding is a potential improvement in cognitive development. According to Suzanne (2002), full-term newborns under six pounds who are breastfed exclusively for the first six months may have higher IQs. Williams (1995) asserts that breastfeeding is cost-effective since the nursing woman spends less while giving her child the finest care. Boyne (1996) points out that breastfeeding women recover from pregnancy more

quickly and more easily because oxytocin encourages the uterus to revert to its pre-pregnancy state and lowers the risk of postpartum hemorrhage.

Additionally, it states that field and laboratory research has supported the conventional wisdom that nursing can lengthen postpartum amenorrhea and offer a degree of protection against conception. This is due to the fact that vigorous sucking causes a surge in prolactin, a decrease in ovarian steroid feedback, and a reduction in gonatrophin production, all of which prolong lactational amenorrhea. Parents must be aware of the significant financial ramifications of their choice to utilize formula for their children, according to Holtzman and Sherwood (2018). Breastfeeding challenges Some babies struggle with issues including a weak sucking reflex, which can happen as a result of birth-related issues, maternal drugs, or first feeding with an artificial nipple and bottle (Jean, Kwabena, Julius, & Jiayou, 2020).

Breastfeeding can occasionally cause discomfort or excessive gas in newborns. Of course, the mother's use of dairy products and cow's milk, as well as other foods and food additives, may contribute to these symptoms; nevertheless, removing the offending food from the mother's diet may frequently alleviate the baby's problems. Physical issues can arise for some nursing women (Holtzman & Usherwood, 2018). Encourage the newborn to take the nipple and the areola deep inside the mouth to avoid sore nipples that result from sucking. Frequent nursing or the use of a breast pump can both prevent and treat pressure within the breast from too much milk. According to Sinshaw, Ketema, and Tesfa (2015), breast soreness could be an indication of mastitis, an infection of the breast tissue that needs medical care.

Mother's Mentality According to all traditional cultures, exclusive breastfeeding is the optimal method of newborn nutrition, and it has significantly increased the likelihood that

children would live to adulthood in good health (Jean, Kwabena, Julius, & Jiayou, 2020). The introduction of baby feeding bottles, which free them from the limitations of nursing, was widespread at that time. Working women's attitudes regarding exclusive breastfeeding have been impacted by the challenge of caring for infants while working full-time (Adebowale, 2005).

In his research, Al-Binali (2012) found that the majority of nursing mothers who chose exclusive breastfeeding were those who had received sufficient information about it from a doctor or nurse during their visit to the antenatal clinic or on the maternity ward following the baby's birth. Between 20 and 45 years old was the age range. He added that the mothers in that group primarily avoided prelacteal foods and exclusively nursed for a protracted period of time. Even so, these mothers continued to utilize drops and syrups, which are permitted by WHO's definition of exclusive breastfeeding. The nutritional and immunological benefits of breast milk were noted by two-thirds of his respondents when they were asked if there were any benefits to nursing (Jean, Kwabena, Julius, & Jiayou, 2020). It has been demonstrated that a key determinant of whether a mother would breastfeed is her attitude. In their analysis, Idris, Tafang, and Elgorashi (2015) found that wealthy groups have lower breastfeeding rates in various developing countries of different tribes, which results in them having a negative attitude toward exclusive breastfeeding.

When compared to unemployed (but privately employed) women, Hossain, Islam, Kamarul, & Hossain (2018) discovered that working women were more likely to not practice exclusive breastfeeding. Additionally, compared to women who gave birth vaginally, those who underwent caesarean sections were more likely to not practice exclusive breastfeeding. They said that Jordanian women, who included Muslims, Christians, and "pagans," had a positive outlook but that their employment and brief maternity leaves had a negative effect on their exclusive

breastfeeding. According to Maonga, Mahande, Damian, and Msuya's (2017) research, the vast majority of mothers believe that nursing is the best way to feed infants, despite the fact that the HIV/AIDS pandemic makes exclusive breastfeeding unpopular. Despite the fact that the PTCT is causing fear in nursing mothers, WHO/UNAID/UNICEF experts still advise using breast milk for infant feeding because economic and sanitary conditions in developing countries do not always ensure safe replacement feeding.

Methodology

Design

This study employed cross sectional survey approach in going about investigating the knowledge and attitude of nursing mothers towards the act of exclusive breastfeeding. The study used descriptive survey to collect information in the sample population. It is the best design to capture knowledge and attitude. A Sample size of 400 nursing mothers was randomly selected in both the public and private sector for the study. The public sector includes civil servants in local, state and federal government sectors, companies, and various establishments while the private sector includes self-employed and family business. Their age ranged between 18 and 45 years. The young ones were between 18 and 32 while the old ones were between 33 and 45. The Knowledge and Attitude towards Exclusive Breastfeeding Questionnaire (KATEBQ) was constructed by the researcher to elicit the required information from the respondents. KATEBQ is a 24 item. Each of the items was worded in such a way as to express her level of agreeability or disagreeability regarding the item in question. In testing the validity of the KATEBQ, it was administered on a group of 34 respondents outside the sampled area.

Result

Table 1: Respondent Knowledge on exclusive breastfeeding

ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
I know the importance of exclusive breastfeeding	19.5 (78)	(25.5)102	28(112)	27(108)
I know about exclusive breast feeding	24.5 (98)	28(112)	26.3(105)	21.3(85)
I know that exclusive breast feeding prevent baby from illness	16.8 (67)	21.3 (85)	16.8(67)	45.3(181)
Breast feeding milk is enough for an infant	16.8(67)	24.5(98)	24.8(99)	34 (136)
I know the right time to start complementary food	11.3(45)	21.3 (85)	28.0(112)	39.4(158)

Source: fieldwork, 2022

The table as presented indicates that majority of the nursing women 55.0 % (220) were not aware of the importance of exclusive breast feeding (combine strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively). These cohorts were mostly rural nursing mothers. Again, the table indicates that majority of the respondent 52.5% (210) agreed and strongly agreed respectively that they were aware of the exclusive breastfeeding. This entails that despite the awareness, they have not considered it importance. The majority 62.1% (248) of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed that exclusive breastfeeding prevent their babies from illness. Also, the majority 34.0% (136) and 24.8 (99) of nursing women strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively that breast feeding milk alone was not enough for and infant and as such there was need for supplement. The table revealed that majority of the respondents 39. 4 %(158) also strongly disagreed that knowing the right time to start complimentary food. These categories were among those who did not saw any need to exclusively breast fed their child. In a focus

group discussion with women in Otukpo, the Headquarter of Idoma ethnic group of Benue state responded:

I have two children and currently nursing a baby. However, I am aware of the exclusive breastfeeding. We were informed of it during antenatal visit to the hospital (FGD, 2022).

Another nursing mother who was 24 years old also responded:

I am aware of the exclusive breast feeding, but I don't practice it because it cannot work at all.

It can be summarized that almost women during FGD were aware of the exclusive breastfeeding. This is because they were informed of it during the antenatal. However, some of them particularly, those in rural area were not well informed of the practice.

Respondents in FGD organized in Adikpo of zone A senatorial district of Benue state, one of them aged 37 reacted that:

I am not aware of the exclusive breastfeeding but I know of breastfeeding a child which I am doing. How can I only give my baby breast? Me, I give my baby breast and food once he was 3 months (FGD, 2022).

Another nursing woman of 30 years also lamented that:

I know of exclusive breastfeeding but I don't practice it. This people (referring to health personnel) talk with people cannot do. How can you feed a baby with only breast for six months? Haba! (FGD, 2022).

Table 2: Respondents Responses on Attitude of Nursing Women towards Breastfeeding

ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
I practice exclusive breast feeding	10.8(43)	3.0(12)	30.5(122)	55.8(223)
Women who practice exclusive breast feeding for 6 months will have problem	41.8(167)	30.3(121)	14.0 (56)	14.0 (56)
Only breast milk alone cannot be sufficient for the baby so I discourage it	37.3(149)	35.0(140)	14.5(58)	13.3 (53)
Breastfed babies are healthier than the fed babies	12.5 (50)	18.8(75)	22.3(89)	21.5(186)
I encourage mother to practice exclusive breast feeding to their babies	24.5(98)	10.3(41)	40.5(162)	25.00(100)
Exclusive breastfeeding requires lot of money to maintain myself	52.5(210)	27.5(110)	13.3(53)	6.8(27)

Source: fieldwork, 2022

The table sought to find out the attitude of nursing women towards exclusive breastfeeding. The table shows that majority of the respondents 55.8% (223) strongly disagreed on the practice of exclusive breastfeeding. This indicates few nursing women in the area practice exclusive breastfeeding. Also, the table shows that majority of the respondents constituting 71.3% (288) strongly agreed and agreed that women who practice exclusive breast feeding for 6 months have developed problem. It can be deduced that this might be the reason for low practice of EBF among nursing women in the area. It was realized that these categories were low educated and rural women in the state. The table indicates that majority of the nursing women 72.3% (289) strongly agreed and agreed that breast milk only cannot be sufficient for that baby. Also, it was indicated that majority of the nursing women disagreed that breastfed babies are healthier than the fed babies. It can be deduced from the table that majority of the respondents 65.5% (262) disagreed and strongly disagreed to encourage other nursing women from practicing exclusive breastfeeding. The 52.5 % of nursing women were of the strongly agreed that

practicing exclusive breast feeding required huge amount of money. This very perception might be attributed to negative attitude and low practice of exclusive breastfeeding among nursing women in the area. In a focus group session with respondents in Makurdi, the state capital, one of the respondents who was 35 years old reacted that:

I know of breastfeeding but I don't practice it because I am a business woman, so practicing exclusive breastfeeding cannot hold water (FGD, 2022).

Another respondent who was 28 years old said:

I am aware of exclusive breastfeeding but I am not practicing it because of my academic activities. But I am informed of its benefit. I practice it during the first three weeks and then combine with children feeds (FGD, 2022).

Another respondent of 24 years old also said that:

As a student I cannot practice breastfeeding because my husband cannot provide good food for me (FGD, 2022).

Another respondent in Adikpo also responded that:

I don't see any benefit of practicing exclusive breastfeeding. I have been feeding my children with breast and food but they are healthy and strong, so what is the essence of suffering me? (FGD, 2022).

Another respondent of 22 years also has this to say:

I cannot practice that their exclusive breastfeeding because my husband cannot provide the needed food for me. Aside, I don't want to lose my pointed breast (FGD, 2022).

Another respondent also pointed out that:

Constant breastfeeding make a woman to lose her find breast, and this practice will make you slim like a sick person, so personally I cannot involved myself in this.

It was observed from the FGD across the state that many women did not practice exclusive breastfeeding in the area. This was as a result of so many factors like inadequate food for nursing woman, fear of losing the pointed breast, involvement in business and education among others.

Hypotheses

Comparing Age group and attitudes of old and young women on exclusive breast feeding

Age group	N	X2	Df	S.E	t-value	t-critical	P
Old nursing mother	245	84.28	156	0.46	0.62	1.97	P<0.05
Young Nursing mother	155	52.91					

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

The first hypothesis states, there is no significant difference in the exclusive breastfeeding attitude of nursing mothers that are young and those that are old. The result has however confirmed that there actually existed no significant difference between the two groups ($t=0.62$, $df=156$). As presented, there was a significance difference between the young nursing mothers and the old. The old nursing women practice more exclusive breastfeeding than the young nursing women.

H2: Practice of exclusive breastfeeding and location of nursing mothers

Location of nursing mother	N	X ²	Df	S.E	t-value	t-critical	P
Town	210	74.38	132	0.36	0.72	1.77	P<0.05
Village	190	62.41					

Source: Field work, 2022

Second hypothesis states, There is no significant difference in the exclusive breastfeeding attitude of nursing mothers that are self-employed and those that are public-employed. The result has however shown that there actually existed significant difference the two groups ($t=0.72$, $df=132$). The hypothesis is actually rejected and alternative affirmed. This entails that there was a significance difference in between self- employed nursing women and public employed.

Discussion of findings

Finding on Knowledge of exclusive breastfeeding: This study has successfully synthesized from the findings of 15 studies that examined the mothers' knowledge, attitudes, and practices about exclusive breastfeeding in Benue state. It was found that the mothers' knowledge of EBF was generally fair, even though some notable gaps were recognized. It was found that despite the fair knowledge of the exclusive breastfeeding, the knowledge on the importance of it was relatively low. According to the Food Agricultural and Organization (FAO) guidelines thresholds suggestive of nutrition intervention, a knowledge score of $\leq 70\%$ is considered urgent for nutrition intervention. All mothers who scored $> 70\%$ in the knowledge test were considered

to have a high level of knowledge and those scoring $\leq 70\%$ were considered as having a low level of knowledge (Skouteris, Nagle, Fowler, Kent, Sahota, & Morris, 2014). The results of this study indicate that mothers with a high level of knowledge about the importance of exclusive breastfeeding know that only breast milk is nutritionally important for the baby in the first six months, the right time to give breast milk to the child within one hour after birth. This result was similar to the previous studies conducted by Al-Binali (2015) and Holtzman & Usherwood (2018). In addition to gaps in mothers' knowledge of EBF, the results of this study indicate that most mothers also had inadequate knowledge of duration of feeding, colostrums breastfed on-demand, benefits to mothers and babies as compared to the studies conducted by Holtzman & Usherwood (2018), China (Hawley, Rosen, Strait, Raffucci, Holmdahl, & Freeman, 2015). Therefore, these gaps in maternal knowledge should be taken into consideration for future interventions designed by health workers, policymakers, and health educators who should make a conscious effort to explain the benefits of breast milk, breastfeed on-demand, and colostrum initiation immediately after birth.

Finding on attitudes and practice of exclusive breastfeeding: The study also sought to examine mothers' attitudes about EBF in Benue state. It was found that the positive maternal attitudes toward breastfeeding were correlated with continuing to breastfeed longer and having a greater chance of successful breastfeeding. Also, mothers with a positive attitude toward breastfeeding were likely to exclusively breastfeed their infants and vice versa. Therefore, there was negative attitude towards exclusive breastfeeding among nursing women in the area. This is in Accordance with the FAO guidelines thresholds suggestive of nutrition intervention, an attitude score of $\leq 70\%$ is considered urgent for nutrition intervention. All mothers who scored $> 70\%$ in the attitude test were considered to have a positive attitude and those scoring $\leq 70\%$ were

considered to be less positive (Jean, Kwabena, Julius&Jiayou, 2020). They found that few mothers had a positive attitude towards exclusive breastfeeding such as starting complementary foods after six months and belief that EBF is beneficial to the child and better than artificial feeding. However, most mothers disagreed with the fact that giving breast milk for newborn colostrums immediately and within an hour is important, EBF is enough for a child up to six months, to feed their baby for the first six months, breastfeeding increases mother infant-bonding, breastfed babies are healthier than fed babies, formula feeding is more inconvenient than breastfeeding. The results of this study indicate that mothers had the lowest level of attitude about exclusive breastfeeding, and the findings were similar to the studies conducted in India (Hossain, Islam, Kamarul, &Hossain, 20018), China (Idris, Tafang, &Elgorashi, 2015), Saudi Arabia (Al-Binali, 2012). The previous studies conducted by Maonga et al. (2018) and Holtzman, Usherwood (2018) reported that other cultural beliefs mentioned “baby boy “need solid foods immediately because they make them strong and healthy, and if a child is breastfed on breast milk alone for six months, the bones get weak. This barrier was probably the consequence of insufficient knowledge and awareness about exclusively breastfeed during first six months of their babies’ lives.

Conclusion

The World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nation Children’s Fund (UNICEF) recommend initiation of breastfeeding within the first hour after birth; exclusively breastfeed for the first six months of age and continuation of breastfeeding for up to two years of age or beyond in addition to adequate complementary foods. EBF is an important public health strategy for improving children’s and mother’s health by reducing child morbidity and mortality and helping to control healthcare costs in society. Additionally, EBF is one of the major

strategies which help the most widely known and effective intervention for preventing early childhood deaths. However, there was relatively low awareness and negative attitude toward exclusive breastfeeding in the study area. It is against this finding that the following recommendations were made.

Recommendations

1. It is necessary to provide antenatal and early postpartum education and periodical breastfeeding counseling to the pregnant women and nursing mothers.
2. There is need for creation of awareness to improve maternal attitudes and knowledge toward breastfeeding practices.

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