

**Original article**

**Breastfeeding Journeys: A Cross-Sectional Descriptive Study on the Knowledge, Attitude, and Practices Among Primiparas Versus Multiparas**

**<sup>1</sup>Dr.Simran Makhija\* , <sup>2</sup>Dr. Tanvi , <sup>3</sup>Dr. Raghavendra K , <sup>4</sup> Dr.Basavanthappa**

<sup>1</sup>Post-graduate , Department of pediatrics , Basaveshwara medical college, Chitradurga

<sup>2</sup>Intern , Basaveshwara medical college, Chitradurga

<sup>3</sup> Professor , Department of pediatrics Basaveshwara medical college Chitradurga

<sup>4</sup> Professor and HOD , Department of pediatric Basaveshwara medical college , Chitradurga

Corresponding author\*

**Abstract**

**Introduction:** Breastfeeding is essential for infant nutrition and maternal health, with exclusive breastfeeding recommended for the first six months. However, knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) regarding breastfeeding vary between primiparous and multiparous mothers. This study aims to compare the KAP of breastfeeding in primiparous and multiparous mothers.

**Methods:** This cross-sectional, descriptive study was conducted in the Departments of Paediatrics and Obstetrics and Gynaecology at a tertiary care center. A total of 280 lactating mothers (140 primiparous and 140 multiparous) with infants aged 1 month to 1 year were included. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using SPSS version 20. Categorical variables were analyzed using chi-square tests, and continuous variables with t-tests.

**Results:** Multiparous mothers had significantly better knowledge about exclusive breastfeeding ( $p = 0.015$ ) and its benefits ( $p = 0.000$ ). Positive attitudes toward breastfeeding were more common among multiparous mothers ( $p = 0.001$ ), and they were more likely to initiate breastfeeding within 1 hour of birth ( $p = 0.003$ ) and practice exclusive breastfeeding ( $p = 0.008$ ).

**Conclusion:** Multiparous mothers exhibit better breastfeeding KAP than primiparous mothers, highlighting the need for targeted education and support for first-time mothers to improve breastfeeding outcomes.

**Keywords:** Breastfeeding, Primiparous, Multiparous

**Introduction:**

Breastfeeding is universally acknowledged as the optimal source of nutrition for infants, playing a critical role in their growth, development, and immune protection. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life, followed by continued breastfeeding alongside complementary foods for up to two years or beyond. Despite its well-documented benefits, breastfeeding practices vary widely, influenced by factors such as maternal knowledge, attitudes, social support, and prior breastfeeding experiences. (1,2)

Primiparas, or first-time mothers, often face unique challenges due to a lack of experience, uncertainty, and a greater need for guidance in initiating and sustaining breastfeeding. In contrast, multiparas, having

previously breastfed, may exhibit different attitudes, knowledge levels, and practices based on their prior experiences. Understanding these differences is essential to tailor educational and support programs effectively. Our study aims to explore the knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) related to breastfeeding among primiparas and multiparas. By comparing these groups, we hope to unmask the distinct challenges and facilitators each faces during their breastfeeding journey. The findings will provide insights that can inform healthcare providers and policymakers to enhance breastfeeding support programs, ultimately promoting better health outcomes for both mothers and infants. (3)

**Methodology:**

The study was conducted in the Departments of Paediatrics and Obstetrics and Gynaecology at a tertiary care hospital in a tier two city. Participants were divided into two groups: primiparous lactating mothers and multiparous lactating mothers, each with infants aged between 1 month and 1 year, attending the outpatient clinics at the time of the study. Data collection was carried out over a period of nine months

The sample size was calculated using Cochran's formula, based on the UNICEF estimate of 76% exclusive breastfeeding prevalence in the target population. The required sample size was determined to be 280, with 140 participants in each group (primiparous and multiparous mothers). A pretested, structured, and validated questionnaire, adapted from relevant sources and modified for the study, was used for data collection. The questionnaire comprised two parts: sociodemographic and clinical data, including maternal age, socioeconomic status, mode of delivery, and parity, and an assessment of maternal knowledge, attitude, and practice regarding breastfeeding.

Data were collected after obtaining informed consent from the participants. The questionnaire was administered to the mothers, and their responses were recorded. The collected data were entered into Excel spreadsheets and subsequently analyzed using SPSS software version 20. Descriptive statistics were applied, and categorical variables were presented as proportions, analyzed using the chi-square test, while continuous variables were expressed as means and analyzed using the T-test. Other appropriate statistical measures were applied as needed.

Inclusion criteria for the study were lactating mothers with infants aged between 1 month and 1 year attending the outpatient clinics. Exclusion criteria included twin pregnancies, mothers on medications contraindicated for breastfeeding, preterm pregnancies, and women who had undergone any breast interventions. The study aimed to compare the breastfeeding knowledge, attitude, and practices between primiparous and multiparous mothers using a structured, pretested questionnaire.

**Results:**

**Table 1: Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Participants (N = 280)**

Characteristic	Primiparous (n = 140)	Multiparous (n = 140)	Total (N = 280)	p-value
<b>Age Group (years)</b>				
18-25	86 (63.1%)	60 (43%)	146 (52%)	0.001*
26-35	54 (36.9%)	80 (57%)	134 (48%)	
<b>Education Level</b>				
Illiterate	30 (21.4%)	35 (25%)	65 (23.2%)	0.201
Primary/Secondary School	60 (42.9%)	65 (46.4%)	125 (44.6%)	
Higher Education	50 (35.7%)	40 (28.6%)	90 (32.1%)	
<b>Socioeconomic Status</b>				
Low	70 (50%)	65 (46.4%)	135 (48.2%)	0.601
Middle	50 (35.7%)	55 (39.3%)	105 (37.5%)	
High	20 (14.3%)	20 (14.3%)	40 (14.3%)	

\*p < 0.05 indicates statistically significant difference.

**Table 2: Knowledge Regarding Breastfeeding (N = 280)**

Knowledge Domain	Primiparous (n = 140)	Multiparous (n = 140)	Total (N = 280)	p- value
<b>Aware of Exclusive Breastfeeding Definition</b>	90 (64.3%)	110 (78.6%)	200 (71.4%)	0.015*
<b>Duration of Exclusive Breastfeeding (6 months)</b>	85 (60.7%)	105 (75%)	190 (67.9%)	0.022*
<b>Colostrum is Beneficial</b>	100 (71.4%)	120 (85.7%)	220 (78.6%)	0.008*
<b>Breastfeeding Reduces Infant Illnesses</b>	95 (67.9%)	125 (89.3%)	220 (78.6%)	0.001*
<b>Breastfeeding Benefits Mothers</b>	75 (53.6%)	110 (78.6%)	185 (66.1%)	0.000*

\*p < 0.05 indicates statistically significant difference.

**Table 3: Attitudes Toward Breastfeeding (N = 280)**

Attitude Domain	Primiparous (n = 140)	Multiparous (n = 140)	Total (N = 280)	p-value
Positive Attitude Toward Exclusive Breastfeeding	85 (60.7%)	120 (85.7%)	205 (73.2%)	0.001*
Breastfeeding in Public is Acceptable	40 (28.6%)	60 (42.9%)	100 (35.7%)	0.011*
Breastfeeding is More Beneficial than Formula	100 (71.4%)	120 (85.7%)	220 (78.6%)	0.009*
Prepared to Breastfeed for at Least 6 Months	70 (50%)	105 (75%)	175 (62.5%)	0.000*
Breastfeeding Should Continue Beyond 1 Year	40 (28.6%)	70 (50%)	110 (39.3%)	0.002*

\*p < 0.05 indicates statistically significant difference.

**Table 4: Breastfeeding Practices (N = 280)**

Practice Domain	Primiparous (n = 140)	Multiparous (n = 140)	Total (N = 280)	p-value
Initiated Breastfeeding Within 1 Hour of Birth	80 (57.1%)	105 (75%)	185 (66.1%)	0.003*
Practiced Exclusive Breastfeeding for 6 Months	70 (50%)	95 (67.9%)	165 (58.9%)	0.008*
Used Prolactal Feeds	60 (42.9%)	45 (32.1%)	105 (37.5%)	0.041*
Breastfed on Demand	100 (71.4%)	115 (82.1%)	215 (76.8%)	0.034*
Nighttime Breastfeeding	65 (46.4%)	85 (60.7%)	150 (53.6%)	0.014*

\*p < 0.05 indicates statistically significant difference.

### Discussion

Breastfeeding is universally recognized as the best source of nutrition for infants, offering significant benefits for both mothers and babies. However, breastfeeding practices, attitudes, and knowledge vary between primiparous and multiparous mothers due to a range of factors, including experience, social support, and education. The present cross-sectional study aimed to compare the knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to breastfeeding between primiparous and multiparous mothers. The results provide valuable insights into the differences between these two groups and highlight areas where interventions can be targeted to improve breastfeeding outcomes.(4,5)

### Sociodemographic Characteristics

The sociodemographic data in Table 1 revealed a significant difference in the age distribution between primiparous and multiparous mothers. A greater proportion of primiparous mothers (63.1%) were in the younger age group (18-25 years), whereas a larger percentage of multiparous mothers (57%) fell within the 26-35 year

age range. This difference is expected, as primiparous mothers are typically younger due to the timing of their first pregnancy. Education levels and socioeconomic status did not differ significantly between the two groups, indicating that other factors may play a more substantial role in influencing breastfeeding knowledge, attitudes, and practices. Nevertheless, education plays a crucial role in shaping maternal attitudes and understanding of breastfeeding, as seen in previous studies. The relatively high percentage of mothers with at least a primary/secondary school education in both groups suggests that targeted educational interventions could be feasible and effective.

### **Knowledge of Breastfeeding**

In Table 2, the results show that multiparous mothers had significantly higher levels of knowledge regarding breastfeeding compared to primiparous mothers. Specifically, 78.6% of multiparous mothers were aware of the definition of exclusive breastfeeding, compared to 64.3% of primiparous mothers. This finding is in line with other studies that suggest mothers with previous breastfeeding experience are more likely to understand the nuances of breastfeeding, including its exclusive nature during the first six months of life. Multiparous mothers also demonstrated better knowledge of the duration of exclusive breastfeeding, with 75% correctly identifying the recommended six-month period, compared to 60.7% of primiparous mothers.

Similarly, knowledge about the benefits of colostrum and the protective effects of breastfeeding against infant illnesses was significantly higher among multiparous mothers. The fact that 85.7% of multiparous mothers recognized the benefits of colostrum, compared to 71.4% of primiparous mothers, underscores the importance of breastfeeding education during antenatal care, particularly for first-time mothers. Additionally, multiparous mothers were more likely to be aware of the benefits of breastfeeding for maternal health (78.6% vs. 53.6%), indicating that experience may lead to a more comprehensive understanding of breastfeeding's advantages. (6)

The significant differences in breastfeeding knowledge between the two groups suggest that primiparous mothers, in particular, would benefit from enhanced education and support during both the prenatal and postnatal periods. While multiparous mothers generally exhibited better knowledge, targeted reinforcement of key breastfeeding concepts may still be necessary to ensure optimal practices.

### **Attitudes Toward Breastfeeding**

The attitudes toward breastfeeding also differed significantly between the two groups (Table 3). Multiparous mothers showed more positive attitudes, with 85.7% expressing a positive attitude toward exclusive breastfeeding, compared to 60.7% of primiparous mothers. This is consistent with previous research, which suggests that mothers who have successfully breastfed in the past are more likely to have a favorable view of exclusive breastfeeding. Furthermore, 75% of multiparous mothers were prepared to breastfeed for at least six months, compared to only 50% of primiparous mothers. This difference may reflect the confidence and practical experience that comes with prior breastfeeding. (7)

Interestingly, attitudes toward breastfeeding in public also showed a significant difference, with 42.9% of multiparous mothers finding it acceptable, compared to 28.6% of primiparous mothers. This could be due to the increased comfort and familiarity with breastfeeding in various settings that multiparous mothers acquire over time. A positive attitude toward breastfeeding in public is crucial for sustaining breastfeeding, especially as many mothers may feel uncomfortable or unsupported when breastfeeding outside their homes. (8)

The study also found that more multiparous mothers believed breastfeeding should continue beyond one year, with 50% expressing this view, compared to 28.6% of primiparous mothers. This again highlights the role of experience in shaping maternal attitudes, as mothers who have successfully breastfed in the past may be more likely to appreciate the long-term benefits of breastfeeding for both themselves and their children. Public health programs should consider focusing on improving the attitudes of first-time mothers toward extended breastfeeding and breastfeeding in public, as this may help increase breastfeeding duration and success rates.

### **Breastfeeding Practices**

The breastfeeding practices reported in Table 4 indicate that multiparous mothers were more likely to engage in optimal breastfeeding behaviors compared to primiparous mothers. A significantly higher proportion of multiparous mothers initiated breastfeeding within the first hour of birth (75% vs. 57.1%). Early initiation of breastfeeding is critical for establishing successful breastfeeding and ensuring the infant receives colostrum, which is rich in antibodies and essential nutrients. The lower rates of early initiation among primiparous mothers suggest that this group may benefit from additional support in the immediate postpartum period to encourage timely breastfeeding initiation.

Multiparous mothers were also more likely to practice exclusive breastfeeding for six months, with 67.9% reporting this behavior compared to 50% of primiparous mothers. This difference may be attributed to the greater knowledge and confidence that multiparous mothers possess regarding the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding. Primiparous mothers may require more education and support to achieve similar levels of exclusive breastfeeding.

Notably, the use of prelacteal feeds was more common among primiparous mothers (42.9% vs. 32.1%), indicating a gap in understanding the importance of exclusive breastfeeding from birth. Prelacteal feeding practices, which involve giving infants food or liquids other than breast milk before breastfeeding is established, can interfere with successful breastfeeding and increase the risk of infections. Reducing the use of prelacteal feeds among primiparous mothers should be a priority in breastfeeding promotion efforts.

Breastfeeding on demand and nighttime breastfeeding were also more common among multiparous mothers, suggesting that these mothers are more likely to adopt flexible and responsive feeding practices. These practices are essential for maintaining milk supply and ensuring the infant's nutritional needs are met. Primiparous mothers, on the other hand, may benefit from guidance on the importance of on-demand and nighttime breastfeeding to optimize breastfeeding outcomes.

### **Conclusion**

The results of this study indicate that multiparous mothers generally exhibit better knowledge, more positive attitudes, and superior breastfeeding practices compared to primiparous mothers. These differences highlight the importance of targeted breastfeeding education and support, particularly for first-time mothers, to bridge the knowledge and practice gap. Healthcare providers should focus on promoting early initiation of breastfeeding, exclusive breastfeeding, and responsive feeding practices among primiparous mothers. Additionally, public health programs should aim to foster positive attitudes toward breastfeeding in various settings, including breastfeeding in public and extended breastfeeding. By addressing these gaps, breastfeeding rates and duration can be improved, leading to better health outcomes for both mothers and infants.

**References:**

- 1) Mohamed MJ, Ochola S, Owino VO. Comparison of knowledge, attitudes and practices on exclusive breastfeeding between primiparous and multiparous mothers attending Wajir District hospital, Wajir County, Kenya: a cross-sectional analytical study. *International breastfeeding journal*. 2018 Dec;13:1-0.
- 2) Patel M, Prajapati S. A comparative analytical study of knowledge, attitude and practice of breastfeeding in primi and multipara women at a tertiary care centre in Gujarat, India. *Int J Res Med Sci*. 2016 Oct;4(10):4403-7.
- 3) Mog C. Knowledge, attitude and practices regarding breast feeding among primiparous and multiparous mothers in an urban slum, West Tripura: a comparative cross sectional study. *Biomedical and Pharmacology Journal*. 2021 Mar 30;14(1):403-9.
- 4) Krishnendu M, Devaki G. Knowledge, attitude and practice towards breastfeeding among lactating mothers in rural areas of Thrissur District of Kerala, India: a cross-sectional study. *Biomedical and Pharmacology Journal*. 2017 Jun 20;10(2):683-90.
- 5) Breastfeeding: The Best Possible Start in Life. [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org). Available from: <https://www.unicef.org/india/stories/breastfeeding-best-possible-start-life>.
- 6) Breastfeeding 2021. Available from: <https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/breastfeeding>
- 7) Hackett KM, Mukta US, Jalal CS, Sellen DW. Knowledge, attitudes and perceptions on infant and young child nutrition and feeding among adolescent girls and young mothers in rural Bangladesh. *Maternal & child nutrition* 2015 Apr;11(2):173-89.2015;11:173–89.
- 8) Dukuzumuremyi, J.P.C., Acheampong, K., Abesig, J. *et al*. Knowledge, attitude, and practice of exclusive breastfeeding among mothers in East Africa: a systematic review. *Int Breastfeed J* 15, 70 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13006-020-00313-9>.