

## Original Article

# Breast feeding pattern among the employed mothers

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### Abstract

**Objectives :** To assess the pattern of breast feeding among the employed mothers.

**Materials & Methods :** This cross-sectional study was carried out in Government and Non-Government organizations of Dhaka Metropolitan City. One hundred and ten employed mothers having one infant were selected and with minimum education graduation using pre-tested questionnaire.

**Place & Period of study :** The study was carried out from April to June 2009 in some Government and private organizations in Dhaka City.

**Results :** Mean age of the mother and infant were 30.22 years & 9-12 months. Majority 22 (57.8%) used artificial milk as pre-lacteal feeding just after birth. Only 4 (3.6%) never breast fed their infants. Mean duration of breast feeding was 6.4 months, majority 60 (54.54%) started complementary feeding at the age of six months. Among them 51 (46.36%) gave breast feed exclusively. During working hours a significant number of mothers (61.11%) gave breast milk in the form of Expressed Breast Milk (EBM). Maximum respondent 95 (86.4%) did not get any support for breast feed their infant in the work place. They faced problem for breast feeding due to inadequate maternity leave 50 (47.2%) and 29 (26.35%) due to lack of child care facilities.

**Conclusion :** This study concluded that an intensive program to be launched for the protection of breast feeding of the infants among the employed mothers.

**Key words :** working mother, infant feeding, prelacteal feeding, exclusive breast feeding

### Introduction

Breast feeding is the best and most natural ways of feeding an infant. It is sufficient to provide all the necessary nutrients until about the first four to six months of life and supplies a major part of energy, protein and vitamin A during the weaning period.<sup>1</sup>

Exclusive breast feeding up to 6 months of age and weaning practices thereafter with appropriate energy dense food can ensure satisfactory growth and development of the children.<sup>2</sup> It was obvious that breast feeding pattern greatly varies between rural and urban mothers of both developed and developing countries.<sup>3</sup> Exclusive breast feeding is declining in developing countries like Bangladesh is found not only among urban women but also in rural mothers where the change in practice will affect many infants and young children.

A high percentage of mothers return to work during their infants first year of life. Work environments are little considerate for women's particular needs both as workers and parents.<sup>4</sup> Many obstacles such as inflexible work schedules, no empathetic supervisions and absence of privacy often keep mothers from effectively draining breast milk while at work. In the face of hardship it has to be taken full advantage of one important resource, human milk.<sup>5</sup> However, although Bangladesh is a country with a high prevalence of Breast feeding, this recommendation is not widely followed. In a study done in rural area of Bangladesh, 85% of the children at one month of age and 30% at 6 months were breast fed predominantly.<sup>6</sup> Infant health and outcome of childhood can determine a countries potential for socioeconomic development. Ill health in childhood is a drain in the national economy.

Finally, taking into consideration the mentioned facts the ultimate goal of this research work is to determine the breast feeding pattern of employed women with a view to provide information for researchers and policy makers regarding infant breast feeding practices in Bangladesh, particularly among the employed women in details.

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## Methods And Materials

It was a descriptive cross-sectional study. Study sites were Government and private organizations in Dhaka City. Study populations were the employed women with minimum qualification of graduation having at least one living child of one year of age or below. Total 110 respondents were interviewed purposively using a semi-structure questionnaire.

## Result :

**Table 1 : Distribution of the respondents by socio-demographic characteristics**

Characteristics	Group	No.	Percentage
<b>Mean age</b>	30.22 years $\pm$ S.D		
	3.05		
<b>Education</b>	Graduation	63	57.3
	Above graduation	47	42.7
<b>Occupation</b>	Government	36	32.7
	Non government	74	67.3
<b>Income family</b>	< 15,000 taka	7	15.5
	15,000-30000	49	44.59
	> 30,000	44	40
<b>Mean taka</b>	29440.91 + SD 11912047		
<b>Type of family</b>	Nuclear	77	70
	Joint	33	30
<b>Number of children</b>	One child	64	58.2
	Two child	36	32.7
	Three child	10	9.1
(Age of the last child) Mean age 9.12 months + SD 2.09			

Table-1 shows, majority of the respondents were 63 (57.3%) graduates & 74 (67.3%) were in Non-government services and 49 (44.59%) were in the income group between 15000/-30000/- Taka per month. Nuclear families were 77 (70%). Most of the respondents had one child (58.2%)

**Table 2 : Type of pre-lacteal feeding after birth**

Type of feeding	Frequency	Percentage
Colostrum	72	65.5
Water	10	26.3
Glucose	3	7.8
Sugar water	2	5.2
Artificial milk	22	57.8
Honey	1	2.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	

Table-2 shows, 72 (65.5%) did not give anything other than breast milk just after the birth.

**Figure 1 : Distribution of the respondents by breast feeding**

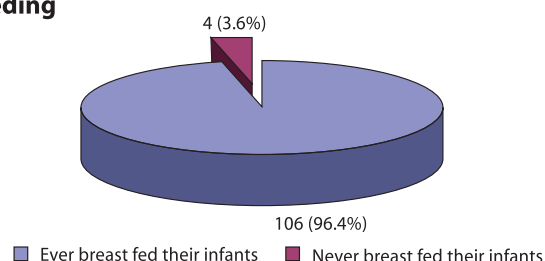


Fig-1 Among all respondent 106 (96.4%) ever breast fed their infants 4 (3.6%) never breast fed their infants.

**Table 3 : Distribution of respondents by Exclusive breast feeding by duration**

Duration in month	Frequency	Percentage
4 months	29	56.86
5 to 6 months	19	37.25
>6 months	3	5.88
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	

Table - 3 shows only 19 (37.25%) mother gave exclusive breast feeding for 5 to 6 months. The mean duration of exclusive breast feeding was 3.8 months.

**Figure 2 : Duration of breast feeding**

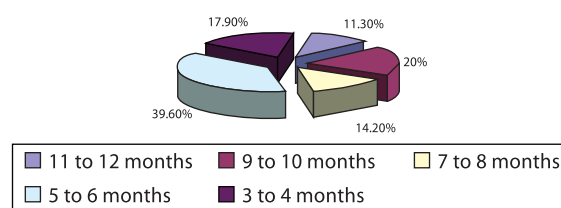


Fig - 2 showed that 39.60% respondents breast fed their infants in the duration of 5 to 6 months and 11.3% continued up to eleven to twelve months age of the infants. Mean duration of total breast fed was 6.4 months.



**Table 4 : Reason for not breast fed exclusively n=55**

Reason	Frequency	Percentage
Work out side	40	72.72
Insufficient milk	10	18.18
Sucking difficulties	5	9.09
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	

Table - 4 shows reasons for not giving exclusive breast feeding.

**Table 5 : Distribution by time of supplementary feeding**

Time in month	Frequency	Percentage
5 months	42	38.18
6 months	60	54.54
>6 months	8	7.27
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>	

Table - 5 shows that 60 (54.54%) respondents initiated supplementary feeding at 5 -6 months of age and 8 (7.27%) initiated more than 6 months of age.

**Table 6 : Pattern of breast feeding during working hours n=36**

Pattern of breast feeding	Frequency	Percentage
Gave expressed breast milk	22	61.11
Went home to breast fed	08	22.22
Carried their babies to the working place	06	16.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	

**Table 7 : Problem faced by respondents for breast feeding**

Type of problem	Frequency	Percentage
Inadequate maternal leave	50	47.2
Lack of child care facility	29	26.35
Lack of nursing break at work place	14	13.20
Lack of privacy at work place	13	12.26
<b>Total</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table -7 shows that the majority 50 (47.2%) faced problem to breast fed their infants due to inadequate maternal leave.

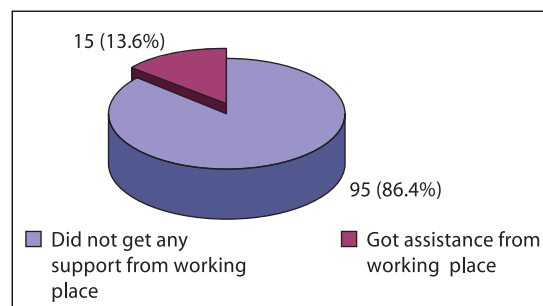
**Figure 3 : Distribution of respondents by getting support from working place for breast feeding.**

Fig - 3 shows only 15 (13.6%) got assistance from their work place for caring their infants.

### Discussion

Majority of the respondents had initiated breastfeeding their infants after birth but unfortunately the number of incidence decreased as the age of the infants increased. In this study, regarding breastfeeding, only few mother continued up to 5 to 6 months. The study finding had similarity to the survey report done in Dhaka City<sup>7</sup> where 100% of the mothers had breastfed their babies at birth but the incidence significantly declined at 6 months in all socio economic status and further declined to 14% and 45% at ten months in urban affluent and urban middle class respectively.

Regarding exclusive breastfeeding only small number of respondents practices exclusive breastfeeding up to 5 to 6 months. These findings are also similarity with other studies conducted in Bangladesh.<sup>8</sup> The National nutritional survey in Mexico in 1999 found that only 25.4% mother has exclusive breastfed their infants <4 months and 20.3% of mothers fed their infants >6 months of age.<sup>9</sup> It was observed that more than fifty percent of the respondents gave breast milk to their infants during working hours in the form of (EBM) Expressed Breast Milk, one fifth mothers went home to fed and only a few carried their babies to the working place. A large number of respondents did not provide breast milk during working hours.<sup>10</sup>

Among the respondents those who were not giving exclusive breast milk or discontinued earlier were due to working outside and very few due to sucking difficulties, insufficient breast milk, and similar findings were also found in a study,<sup>11</sup> where exclusive breast feeding irrespective of the baby's age was practiced by only 19.5% of women. The reasons for introducing artificial feeding were maternal cause in 49%, child cause in 36.5% and social cause in 13.8%.

Regarding pre-lacteal feeding water, glucose or sugar water, honey and artificial milk were used. In a study done by UNICEF among 760 Bangladeshi mothers in 1989, revealed that 100% mothers gave pre-lacteal food to their newborn consisted of honey, sugar water, formula milk etc.<sup>9</sup>

The present study had shown that majority of the respondents initiated complementary feeding at the age of 6 months of the infants, a study done in South Africa, found that solid food was introduced early at two to three months and mixed family diet at 7 to 9 months. The conclusion of that study was inadequate nutrition knowledge and adherence to cultural practices led to poor quality feeding practices.<sup>11</sup> Another study had found that educational level had a direct relationship with the introduction of semi-solid before 6 months of age.<sup>12</sup> The mean duration of exclusive breast feeding was 3.8 months. It was observed that (86.4%) of the mothers did not get any support or assistance from their work place and only (13.6%) of the respondents got support for infant feeding from their work place.

The percentage of exclusive breast feeding irrespective of months was high among those who got assistance from their offices and it was also found statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Majority of the respondents did not feed exclusive breast feeding to their infants due to inadequate maternal leave and inadequate child care facility in the work places.

Data from FDA's infant feeding practice study showed that among 712 surveyed women, 54% of the women who returned to full time work within 3 months after giving birth had stopped breast feeding.<sup>13</sup>

In a study done among the employed women at Dhaka it was found that 20% of the women were aware of the benefits of exclusive breast feeding and continues exclusive breastfeeding till the 1st month of the employment but gradually the percentage decreases in the 2nd month and so on.<sup>10</sup>

### Conclusion

The employed mothers did not feed breast milk during working hours. Only a few got supports for breast feeding in their working place. Children are valuable asset and future nation. For successful breast feeding among employed mothers, adequate maternal leave, set-up day care centre in work place, are immediate need to follow the WHO recommendation about successful breast feeding and building a healthy nation in Bangladesh.

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