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A STUDY TO ASSESS THE FACTORS INFLUENCING THE CHOICE OF INFANT FEEDING PRACTICE AMONG MOTHERS AT SMVMCH, PUDUCHERRY

Nila. J ¹, L. Saraswathi ², Prof. Dr. G. Muthamilselvi ³

¹M.Sc. (Nursing), SMVMCH, Puducherry

²Professor, Child Health Nursing, SMVMCH, Puducherry

³ Principal, SMVMCH, Puducherry

ABSTRACT:

Introduction: Breastfeeding is a critical aspect of infant nutrition and maternal health, recognized globally for its numerous benefits. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life, followed by continued breastfeeding along with appropriate complementary foods up to two years or beyond. **Objective:** To assess the level of perceived social support on the factors influencing the choice of infant feeding practice among mothers. **Methodology:** The total number of 30 mothers were selected for this study. Multidimensional scale of perceived social support was used. This study used a quantitative methodology and a descriptive design to investigate the research question. The study was conducted at SMVMCH. **Result and Findings:** The finding revealed that majority, 21 (70%) of the mother had medium perceived support, 7 (23.3%) of the mother had high perceived support and 2 (6.7%) of the mother had low perceived support. **Conclusion-** The study findings concluded that there is significance association between the feeding method and nature of delivery among mothers where 'p' value is < 0.05.

Keywords: Breast feeding, mothers, infant feeding practice

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INTRODUCTION

Breastfeeding is a critical aspect of infant nutrition and maternal health, recognized globally for its numerous benefits. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life, followed by continued breastfeeding along with appropriate complementary foods up to two years or beyond. The choice of infant feeding practices among mothers is influenced by a multitude of factors that can be categorized into individual, social, community, and societal levels. This multi-faceted approach is well articulated in the socioecological model, which emphasizes that maternal decision-making regarding infant feeding is not made in isolation but is a product of complex interactions among various influences, including cultural beliefs, socioeconomic status, and social support systems (Cruz et al., 2023).

Cultural influences play a critical role in shaping maternal beliefs and practices regarding infant feeding. Ash et al. emphasize that interventions aimed at improving maternal feeding practices must consider the cultural context that informs these practices (Ash et al., 2022). Socioeconomic factors are another critical determinant of infant feeding practices. Research indicates that mothers from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to practice optimal feeding methods, including exclusive breastfeeding and timely introduction of complementary foods (Weldu et al., 2023).

The role of healthcare professionals in shaping infant feeding practices cannot be overstated. Studies have shown that healthcare providers' knowledge and attitudes towards breastfeeding significantly affect mothers' decisions to initiate and maintain breastfeeding (Baker et al., 2020).

AIM OF THE STUDY

The study aims to assess the factors influencing the choice of infant feeding practice among mothers.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a quantitative methodology and a descriptive design to investigate the research question. The study was conducted at SMVMCH. The target population consisted of all mothers, while the accessible population included mothers in SMVMCH, Puducherry, meeting specific inclusion criteria. A sample of 30 mothers was selected using a convenient sampling technique.

The inclusion criteria encompassed mothers admitted to or visiting the outpatient department (OPD) at SMVMCH who were willing to participate. Mothers who were ill during data collection were excluded. The data collection tool included two sections: demographic variables and the multidimensional scale of perceived social support (MSPSS). The MSPSS uses a 7-point Likert scale with scores categorized into low, medium, and high perceived support.

The tool passed validity testing through expert evaluations while its reliability was established by using a test-retest procedure, achieving a reliability coefficient of $r = 0.8$. Data collection involved informed consent, demographic data gathering, and MSPSS assessment to evaluate factors influencing infant feeding practices. Descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage distribution) were used for demographic analysis and perceived social support levels, while inferential statistics (Chi-square test) examined associations between perceived support and selected demographic variables. The researcher-maintained confidentiality throughout the process.

Data collection Procedure

After obtaining formal permission, the researcher proceeded with data collection. Informed consent was obtained from mothers who were included in the study. The researcher used a convenient sampling technique to select 30 mothers who are admitted and from OPD in SMVMCH, Puducherry, who fulfilled the criteria. Demographic data was collected. Assessment was done using (MSPSS) on mothers regarding the factors influencing the choice of infant feeding practice. The investigator assured the study participants that the study information will be kept confidential.

Plan of data analysis

The received data had coding processes that relied on descriptive and inferential statistics for data analysis. Descriptive analysis included the use of frequency and percentage distribution to examine the demographic variables of mothers and assess the levels of perceived social support influencing their choice of infant feeding practices. Inferential statistics, specifically the Chi-square test, were employed to determine the association between levels of perceived social support and selected demographic variables, providing insights into the factors impacting mothers' feeding choices.

RESULT AND FINDINGS:

The majority of mothers (63.3%) were aged 26-30 years, with 20% aged 31-35 years and 16.6% aged 21-25 years. All participants (100%) were married. Regarding education, 60% were graduates, and 40% had completed higher secondary education. Most mothers (70%) belonged to the middle class, 16.6% to the high class, and 13.3% to the low class. In feeding methods, 73.3% practiced exclusive breastfeeding, while 26.6% used mixed or formula feeding. Regarding family type, 44.2% were in joint families, and 55.8% were in nuclear families. Most mothers (93.3%) had no chronic illness, while 6.7% had one. Neonatal complications were present in 16.7% of cases, with 83.3% reporting none. Birth weights were predominantly 2-2.5 kg (53.3%), with 33.3% in the 2-2.5 kg range. [Tab-1]

Table 1: Distribution of Demographic Variable of mothers.

S. No	Demographic variables	Frequency	Percentage
1	Age		
	a) Under 21	0	0%
	b) 21-25	5	16.6%
	c) 26-30	19	63.3%
	d) 31-35	6	20%
2.	Marital status		
	a) Single	0	0%
	b) Married	30	100%
	c) Divorced	0	0%
3	Place of residence		
	a) Rural	12	40%
	b) Urban	18	60%
4	Education qualification		
	a) Primary education	0	0%
	b) Higher secondary	12	40%
	c) Graduate	18	60%
5	Financial status		
	a) High class	5	16.6%
	b) Middle class	21	70%
	c) Low class	4	13.3%

With regard to level of attitude the mean posttest level of attitude in the experimental group shows that in the experimental group all the women 10(100%) had positive attitude whereas in the control group only 1(10%) had positive attitude. This highlights attitude improved in the experimental group after the education programme more than control group. [Tab-2]

Table 2: Distribution of level of perceived social support among mothers

S.NO	LEVEL OF PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT	FREQUENCY (N)	PERCENTAGE %
1.	Low perceived support	2	6.7%
2.	Medium perceived support	21	70%
3.	High perceived support	7	23.30%

The above table reveals the frequency and percentage-wise distribution of level of perceived social support on the factors influencing the choice of infant feeding practice among mothers. The finding revealed that majority, 21 (70%) of the mother had medium perceived support, 7 (23.3%) of the mother had high perceived support and 2 (6.7%) of the mother had low perceived support. [Tab-2]

Table 3: Mean, SD and mean% of level of perceived social support.

	Level of awareness Score			
Overall	Max. score	Mean	SD	Mean%
	84	59.76	11.007	71.14

The above table reveals mean, SD and mean% of level of perceived social support. The finding revealed that mean score of 59.76 with the SD of 11.007. The overall mean percentage is 71.14

Table 4: Association of level of patient perception with their selected demographic variables

S.NO	Demographic variables	Level of stress						X ² value
		Low		Moderate		High		
1	Age	N	%	N	%	N	%	X ² = 2.041 p = 0.839 (NS)
	a) Under 21	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	b) 21-25	1	3.3	3	10	1	3.3	
	c) 26-30	1	3.3	15	50	3	10	
	d) 31-35	0	0	3	10	3	10	
2.	Place of residence							X ² = 1.041 p = 0.684 (NS)
	a) Rural	1	3.3	8	26.7	3	10	
	b) Urban	1	3.3	13	43.3	4	13.3	
3.	Marital status							K
	a) Single	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	b) Married	2	6.7	21	70	7	23.3	
	c) Divorced	0	0	0	0	0	0	
4.	Education qualification							X ² = 0.201 p = 0.825 (NS)
	a) Primary education	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	b) Higher secondary	2	6.7	4	13.3	6	20	
	c) Graduate	0	0	17	56.7	1	3.3	
5.	Financial status							X ² =1.472 p = 0.642 (NS)
	a) High class	0	0	2	6.7	3	10	
	b) Middle class	1	3.3	18	60	2	6.7	

****P<0.05 - SIGNIFICANT; K-CONSTANT**

The above table shows that there is significance association between the feeding method and nature of delivery among mothers where 'p' value is < 0.05 . There is no significance association among level of stress among mothers with between age, marital status, place of residence, education qualification, financial status, mother having chronic illness, neonatal complication and birth weight.

CONCLUSION

The present study assessed the factors influencing the choice of infant feeding practice among mothers at SMVMCH, Puducherry. The study findings concluded that there is significance association between the feeding method and nature of delivery among mothers where 'p' value is < 0.05 .

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