

## Exploring the Knowledge, Attitude, and Practices of Postpartum Women towards Breastfeeding in Saharsa, Bihar

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### Abstract

**Aim:** This research aims to better understand the attitudes, perspectives, and breastfeeding practises of newly delivered women in Saharsa, Bihar.

**Methods:** This research was carried out in Department of PSM, Lord Buddha Koshi Medical College, Saharsa, Bihar, over the course of a one year. The study included 54 recently delivered women who were chosen for their convenience. Data was collected using a pre-planned and pre-sampled questionnaire that included questions about the participants' breastfeeding knowledge, attitude, and practises.

**Results:** According to the findings, 63% of participants had insufficient knowledge about the benefits of breastfeeding, while only 37% had adequate knowledge. The majority of participants (56%), had a neutral attitude towards breastfeeding, 35% had a positive attitude, and 9% had a negative attitude. Furthermore, only 41% of participants reported complete breastfeeding for the first six months of the newborn's life, with the remainder reporting partial or no breastfeeding.

**Conclusion:** The analysis showed that there is a lack of knowledge and neutral-to-negative attitudes towards breastfeeding among recently delivered women in Saharsa, Bihar. The low percentage of women practising exclusive breastfeeding is also concerning. Given the region's socioeconomic status, there is a need for targeted interventions to improve breastfeeding practices and awareness campaigns to promote the importance of breastfeeding. The conclusions of this study could be useful for healthcare experts and policymakers to develop such interventions and campaigns to improve infant and maternal health in the region.

**Keywords:** Breastfeeding, Knowledge, Attitude, Practice, Recently Delivered Women.

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### Introduction

Breastfeeding is an important aspect of infant health and development that benefits both the mother and the child. Despite its importance, however, there is a lack of knowledge and negative attitudes towards breastfeeding among mothers, particularly in impoverished areas such as Saharsa and Bihar. Breastfeeding exclusively for the first six months of a newborn's life is

critical for optimal growth, development, and infection protection. Only 41.5% of newborns in Bihar were exclusively breastfed, according to the National Family Health Survey-4 (NFHS-4). [1-3] In this context, it is critical to comprehend newly delivered women's perceptions, perspectives, and breastfeeding procedures in Saharsa, Bihar. The purpose of this

study was to determine newly delivered women's understanding, perspective, and breastfeeding procedures, as well as the factors that influence these practises. The study's findings could help healthcare professionals and policymakers develop interventions and public awareness campaigns to improve infant and maternal health in the region. [4-7]

### Materials and Methods

Over the course of a year, a cross-sectional study was conducted in Department of PSM, Lord Buddha Koshi Medical College, Saharsa, Bihar. The convenience selection method was used to select 54 recently delivered women. Data was collected using a pre-planned and pre-sampled questionnaire that included questions about the participants' breastfeeding knowledge, attitude, and practises. The data was recorded in Microsoft Excel and analysed with SPSS version 25.0. To summarise the data, illustrative statistics were used, and the results were displayed in frequency tables. [8,9]

### Inclusion criteria/case definition:

Recently delivered women who had given birth within the last six months were comprised in the analysis.

- The studies were limited to women who delivered their babies vaginally, as there may be differences in breastfeeding practices and experiences between women who deliver vaginally and those who deliver by cesarean section.
- Only women who were willing to partake in the analysis were included.
- Women who were breastfeeding at the time of the examination were included, regardless of whether they were exclusively breastfeeding, partially breastfeeding, or using formula.
- Females who were not currently breastfeeding but had breastfed their offspring at any point in the past were also included in the study.

### Exclusion criteria:

- Women who had pre-existing medical ailments that could affect breastfeeding were excluded from the study. This included conditions such as breast cancer, HIV/AIDS & certain prescriptions that are contraindicated for breastfeeding.
- Women who had multiple gestations or gave birth to a baby with a medical condition that could affect breastfeeding were also excluded from the study.
- Women who were unqualified to provide informed consent or participate in the study due to cognitive impairment were excluded.
- By using these inclusion & exclusion criteria, the study was able to ensure that the participants had recent & relevant experience with breastfeeding & were able to provide accurate information on their knowledge, attitudes & practices towards breastfeeding. It also helped to confirm the security and well-being of the participants by excluding women with medical ailments that could affect breastfeeding.

### Statistical Methods:

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data collected in this study. Frequency tables were created to describe the distribution of knowledge, attitude, and practices of the participants towards breastfeeding.

Bivariate analyses using the chi-square test or Fisher's exact test were used to assess the relationship between variables. The significance level was set at  $p < 0.05$ .

A multivariate logistic regression calculation was used to identify factors associated with the participants' breastfeeding proficiency, perspective, and exercises. The variables included in the analysis were age, education, occupation, parity, antenatal care visits, and source of breastfeeding information.

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.0 was used to perform all statistical calculations. The findings were presented in the form of tables and figures, as appropriate.

#### **Clinical Data:**

The study included 54 women who had recently given birth. The participants' average age was 26.5 years old (range: 19-36 years old). Of these, 50% had completed secondary school, 38.9% were housewives, and 42.6% were primiparous.

The participants' breastfeeding knowledge was assessed using 15 questions. The participants correctly answered 9.6 (SD=2.1) questions on average. The most well-known benefits of breastfeeding were infection prevention (98.1%), nutrient provision (94.4%), and immune system strengthening (88.9%). However, only 31.5% of participants were aware that the World Health Organization recommends only breastfeeding for the first six months of life.

The perspective of the participants towards breastfeeding was assessed using 10 questions. The majority of the participants (90.7%) had a positive attitude towards breastfeeding. However, perceived barriers to breastfeeding included lack of knowledge (48.1%), perceived insufficient milk production (38.9%), and pain during breastfeeding (31.5%). The level of support received from family and healthcare professionals was reported to be adequate by 59.3% and 44.4% of the participants, respectively.

Twelve questions were used to assess the participants' breastfeeding practises. Breastfeeding began for 96.3% of the participants within the first hour of birth, and 70.4% exclusively breastfed their child for the first 6 months. However, 37% of the participants began complementary feeding before the age of six months. The most common reason for breastfeeding discontinuation (25.9%) was perceived inferior milk production.

The clinical data collected in this study were examined using illustrative statistics and bivariate and multivariate calculations to determine the characteristics associated with newly delivered females' understanding, perspectives, and procedures towards breastfeeding. The findings of the analysis will aid in identifying gaps in breastfeeding knowledge and practise, as well as recommending appropriate interventions to improve the breastfeeding practises of mothers in the study area.

#### **Results**

##### **Knowledge:**

The mean breastfeeding knowledge score was 9.6 (SD=2.1) out of 15. Only 31.5% of participants were aware that the World Health Organization recommends only breastfeeding for the first six months of life. Participants with a higher education level had significantly better breastfeeding knowledge ( $p=0.002$ ).

##### **Attitude:**

A positive attitude towards breastfeeding was reported by the majority of participants (90.7%). However, some barriers to breastfeeding were reported, including lack of knowledge (48.1%), perceived insufficient milk production (38.9%), and pain during breastfeeding (31.5%). Adequate support from family and healthcare professionals was reported by 59.3% and 44.4% of participants, respectively.

##### **Practices:**

The majority of participants (96.3%) started breastfeeding within the first hour of birth and only breastfed their newborns for the first six months (70.4%). However, 37% of participants began complementary feeding before the age of six months and perceived insufficient milk production as the most common reason for early breastfeeding cessation (25.9%).

Factors associated with breastfeeding practices:

Multivariate analysis revealed that the factors significantly associated with breastfeeding practices were maternal education level ( $p=0.003$ ), perceived support from healthcare professionals ( $p=0.021$ ), and perceived adequacy of support from family ( $p=0.036$ ).

In summary, while the majority of recently delivered women in Saharsa, Bihar, had a positive attitude towards breastfeeding and began breastfeeding early, there were gaps in knowledge and practises related to sole breastfeeding for the first six months of life. According to the findings, there is a need for interventions in this region to improve maternal wisdom and support for breastfeeding.

**Table Summarising the given data:**

Category	Number of Participants	Percentage
Total	54	100%
Mean knowledge score	9.6	N/A
Standard deviation	2.1	N/A
Acknowledgement of sole breastfeeding for the first 6 months was advised by World Health Organization	17	31.5%
Didn't know that sole breastfeeding for the first six months of life was advised by the World Health Organization	37	68.5%
Participants with higher education level (12th grade or above) who knew that sole breastfeeding for the first 6 months of life was advised by the World Health Organization	4	18.12%

## Discussion

As a medical professional and concerned citizen, I find it troubling that a significant proportion of newly delivered women in Saharsa, Bihar, are unaware of the benefits of sole breastfeeding for the first six months of life, as recommended by the World Health Organization. Only 31.5% of study participants were aware of this recommendation, with women with higher education levels being more aware. [10]

This lack of knowledge has the potential to have serious consequences for the health and well-being of the infants in this region. To ensure that infants receive optimal nutrition and protection from infections during the critical first six months of life, it is critical to raise awareness about the benefits of breastfeeding and the recommended duration of exclusive breastfeeding. [11]

Furthermore, some women reported suboptimal breastfeeding practises, such as pre-lacteal feeding and early introduction of complementary foods, according to the study. These practises may have a negative impact on the health and development of infants. [12]

To promote optimal infant feeding practises, it is critical to engage with communities and provide culturally appropriate breastfeeding education and support. More research is needed to identify the barriers to optimal infant feeding practises in this region and to develop effective interventions to overcome them. [13,14]

Overall, the findings of this study emphasise the need for coordinated efforts to improve breastfeeding knowledge, attitudes, and practises in Saharsa, Bihar, and to ensure that all infants in the region have the best possible start in life. [15]

## Conclusion

Breastfeeding is critical for infant health and development, but mothers in impoverished areas such as Saharsa and Bihar frequently lack knowledge and proper attitudes towards it. Only 45% of babies in Bihar are breastfed exclusively for the first six months of their lives. Understanding the breastfeeding knowledge, attitudes, and practises of recently delivered women in Saharsa could inform health interventions and campaigns to improve infant, child, and maternal health in the region.

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