

9th Edition of International Conference on **Environmental Science & Technology**
&
48th World Congress on **Microbiology**
&
50th International Congress on **Nursing Care**

June 24-25, 2019 Moscow, Russia

Effect of age, number of children and educational status of mothers on breastfeeding practices

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Objective: To determine the effect of age, number of children and educational status of mothers on breast feeding practices.

Materials and Methods: A cross sectional study was carried out in the Department of Pediatric Medicine, Fatima Hospital, Baqai Medical University Karachi from January 2012 to December 2012. After taking the informed consent, 1872 mothers were included in the study with convenience sampling technique. Only females who had at least one child less than 2 years of age been included in the study while those who refused to consent were excluded. Participants were interviewed and Performa was filled. Data analysis was done on SPSS version 21. Descriptive analysis was performed, and chi square test was used to find association between categorical variables. P value less than 0.05 was taken as significant.

Results: Majority participants belonged to the age group 20 - 30 years n=828 (44.2%). Mothers up to the age of 20 years were 387 (20.6%) and out of those only 6 (1.6%) and 59 (15.2%) initiated breast feeding within 30 minutes and 30 to 60 minutes respectively as compared to mothers above 40 years who were 242 (13%) and out of those 21 (8.7%) and 72 (29.7%) initiated breastfeeding within 30 minutes and 30 to 60 minutes respectively. Regarding the number of children majority had 2-3 children n = 798 (42.6%). Mothers having one child were 428 (22.9%) and out of those 64 (15%) initiated breast feeding within 30 - 60 minutes as compared to 182 (22.8%) mothers having 2- 3 children. Uneducated mothers were 888 (47.4%) and out of those 133 (15%) initiated breast feeding within 30- 60 minutes, 398 (44.8%) mothers continued exclusive breast feeding for 3 - 6 months and 170 (19.2%) mothers continued for more than 2 years as compared to graduate mothers 114 (27.7%) who initiated breastfeeding within 30- 60 minutes, 78 (18.9%) mothers continued exclusive breast feeding for 3 - 6 months and 42 (10.2%) mothers continued feeding for more than 2 years. Overall irrespective of age, number of children and educational status of mothers 617 (33%) mothers continued exclusive breast feeding for 3 - 6 months, 1174 (62.7%) mothers were on demand feeding and 1237 (66.1%) mothers continued breast feeding for 1 - 2 years.

Conclusion: The overall practices of the mothers regarding breastfeeding belonging to any group, number of children and educational status is low, especially among mothers less than 20 years, having a single child and uneducated.

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