



# Socio-cultural determinants of breast feeding practices in Dharwad district of Karnataka

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## ABSTRACT

WHO recommends mothers worldwide to exclusively breastfeed infants for the child's first six months to achieve optimal growth, development and health. The infant mortality rate in India is 40/1000 live births and 31/1000 live births in Karnataka according to NFHS-4 report released in 2013. In India, breastfeeding is culturally well accepted but inadequately practiced, partly due to ignorance. Lack of knowledge, prevailing misconceptions and cultural taboos significantly contribute to undesirable breastfeeding practices such as delayed initiation and discarding of colostrum. In this context the present study was conducted to study the knowledge, attitude and breast feeding practices among the lactating mothers in Dharwad district of Northern Karnataka. A cross-sectional study was conducted in rural and urban areas of Dharwad district, Karnataka. The population of the study consisted of mother –infant dyads, where the infants were in the age group of 3months to 24 months and their mothers from rural as well as urban area of the district. The sample comprised of 300 women of whom 200 were from rural area and 100 from urban area in the age range of 17-45 years. The tools used for the study were Socio – economic status scale developed by Aggarwal *et al.* (2005) and a self structured questionnaire to document the mother and child health characters, demographic profile, feeding practices, patterns and knowledge of mothers towards breast feeding. Iowa Infant Feeding Attitude Scale (1999) was used to assess maternal attitude towards infant feeding and information regarding feeding choice. The results indicated that 56.33 per cent breastfed the baby within 1hr and 26 per cent fed after 3 days. Majority of the mothers fed colostrum (71.67%) and 28.33 per cent discarded the colostrum. 51.33 per cent mothers gave prolactal feeds. 48.7 per cent mothers practiced exclusive breast feeding. Majority of mothers both in urban and rural area had medium level knowledge and attitude towards breast feeding. Breast feeding knowledge had significant association with feeding practices while SES had no impact.

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