



Original Article

Assessment of Knowledge Regarding Weaning Practices among Mothers of Gulab Devi Educational Complex

Yusra Rasheed¹, Bahisht Rizwan¹, Noor Fatima¹, Farah Khanum¹, Minahil Shahid¹ and Sheeza Munawar¹¹University Institute of Diet and Nutritional Sciences, Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, The University of Lahore, Lahore, Pakistan

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*Corresponding Author:

Yusra Rasheed
 University Institute of Diet and Nutritional Sciences,
 Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, The University of
 Lahore, Lahore, Pakistan
yusrarasheed12@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Breastfeeding is the process of feeding human milk to a newborn as well as some other type of formula milk or liquid or nonhuman milk. After 6 months, solid foods are introduced to the baby, known as weaning. **Objective:** To assess the knowledge of the mothers towards weaning practices of children up to 2 years of age. **Methods:** A cross-sectional study was carried out at the Gulab Devi educational complex in Lahore. A sample of 100 respondents was taken from February 2022 to March 2022. Research questionnaires were used as a tool for data collection. **Results:** The mean age of weaning mothers ranges from 30-45, having 2-3 children. Most mothers from middle-class families living in the joint family system are postgraduate with no medical history. According to the results, 90% of mothers already had the knowledge. 56% of mothers introduce solid foods after the age of 6 months. 72% of mothers introduced rice and cereals as the first solid food to their babies. 74% of mothers think cow milk is not good for an infant at 1st milk. 72% of mothers had knowledge about weaning start time. 54% of the knowledge about weaning mothers learns from their grandparents. **Conclusions:** Weaning is the fundamental element of the child and is important for health and development. So it is important that the mother should have knowledge about weaning, its start time and solid foods for weaning. The main outcome of the study was that most of the mothers of infants had knowledge regarding weaning diets.

INTRODUCTION

Cessation of breastfeeding is generally called weaning in the general population [1]. It is the time when mothers stop lactating their infants and replace breastfeeding with alternatives. Usually, weaning can be started after the age of six months has been crossed. In contrast, alternative foods include whole milk, formula milk and the introduction of soft or liquid food in the infant's diet. Such foods are juices, and yoghurt [2]. Cow milk is another popular option among many. The traditional societies are mainly reluctant to buy or prepare exclusive soft foods for the infant. Instead, they prefer to provide the same food prepared for adults; it is based on the soft carbohydrate part of their plate [3]. The initiation of weaning time varies on various factors like the health of mother and infant, the growth of the infant and the development of mastication ability of the

young ones [4]. It also depends on the present cultural norms of the community. Also, socio-economic and educational backgrounds play a significant title role in the practice of weaning. Lower education of mothers and families tends them to wean later than the prescribed time [5]. Whereas, the misconceptions are still prevailing around the best timing to initiate weaning as few mothers are mal-informed and consider the best timing around one and a half year of age of the infant [6]. Another dilemma is the lack of knowledge in a few sections of the population who consider breast feed the only weaning option [2]. The gap of knowledge can be filled if mothers are provided with antenatal and postnatal information-based practical sessions in rural as well as urban localities [7]. The birth attendants can also be included in these welfare outreach

programs [8]. Moreover, delayed weaning may prove detrimental to the health of the baby as feeding on breast milk become insufficient for a four to a six-month-old child. It can also cause malnourishment [9]. Weaning is a challenging and potentially dangerous time for an infant's development, and the mother's education is a proven predictor of success [10]. Weaning starts when any solid food is introduced to the baby other than breast milk and ends when the last time baby is fed with the milk [11]. Weaning from nursing is considered a normal and necessary stage in a child's development. Weaning is a difficult procedure that requires adjusting to a variety of dietary, immunological, physiological, and psychological changes. Weaning can refer to the abrupt or final end of breastfeeding or the start of a slow process of introducing supplementary foods to the infant's diet [12]. The beginning of supplementary feeding is seen as a window of opportunity for developing good eating habits in children and adults [13]. Complementary feeding begins with the introduction of meals with the consistency of porridge or soft puree, without fibrous parts to prevent activating the extrusion reflex, using a small smooth spoon delivered by a caregiver to the newborn. Baby-led weaning (BLW) is a method of introducing solid food to babies that allows them to self-feed at their own speed and choose how much and how quickly they eat from the food that is offered to them [14]. Complementary foods are commonly introduced between 4 and 6 months in pre-industrial populations, and breastfeeding is totally discontinued by 30 months; however, solid foods are introduced much earlier in some cultures [15].

METHODS

The study aimed to assess the weaning practices among mothers of children up to 2 years of age visiting the Pediatric Department of Gulab Devi educational complex in Lahore. For this purpose, a sample comprises 100 females. The exclusion criteria study included children, teenage girls and older women. The inclusionary criteria include all women of reproductive age. Data were analyzed with the help of Microsoft office word and SPSS version 21.0. The questionnaire included questions related to weaning practices among females and their knowledge regarding weaning practices. The questionnaire was filled by the females responsibly. The questionnaires were sectioned into two subheadings, personal information and knowledge of weaning among young mothers. The first section of the questionnaire measured the demographic properties of the respondent, while the second section of the questionnaire included 9 questions that covered the mother's knowledge.

RESULTS

The statistical studies showed that the research objectives answered were stated earlier. The tool for data collection was a questionnaire. A sample of 100 respondents was taken to assess the weaning practices among mothers. The questionnaire had sixteen questions, and it was divided into two sections personal information and knowledge. The results, in the form of tabulations, and their interpretations, for each individual question under the illustration of its section, are mentioned in this. The result of our data showed that most weaning women range from age 30-45 years. Most weaning mothers have children from 2-3 years. The result showed that most women from which we took data belong to middle-class status, almost 78 %. 60% of the mothers are living in joint families. 42% of mothers were postgraduates, 50% of the mothers were doing their job, and 96% of mothers had no medical history.

Parameter	Variables	Percentages
Age	18-25	16
	26-30	36
	30-45	48
Number of children of mother	1	40
	2-3	40
	>3	20
Socio economic status	Lower class	4
	Middle class	78
	Upper class	18
Family type	Joint family	60
	Nuclear family	40
Education of mother	Illiterate	6
	Matric	22
	Graduate	30
	Postgraduate	40
	Housewife	46
Occupation of mother	Job	50
	Business	4
Medical history	Hypertension	4
	None	96

Table 1: Demographic data of mothers (n=100)

Results showed that 48% of mothers breastfeed their babies from birth until weaning. Most mothers already had information about weaning and its start time; they learn about weaning from their grandparents and get help from studying related books about weaning. 88% of mothers think that weaning time starts from 6 months. 74% of mothers think that cow milk is not good for an infant at 1st month. 56% of mothers introduce solid foods to their babies after 6 months and first introduce rice and cereals to their babies.

Parameter	Variables	Percentages
What kind of milk did you give your baby from birth until weaning	Breast milk	48
	Formula milk	20
	Both	32
Do you know or have information about weaning	Yes	90
	No	10
Where did you learn about weaning	Midwife	4
	Doctor	18
	Grandparent	54
	Internet	24
Do you have knowledge about weaning start time	Yes	72
	No	28
Is weaning time starts from around six months of age	Yes	88
	No	12
What do you think cow milk is good for an infant in 1st month	Yes	26
	No	74
Studying related books can help mothers find the right weaning methods	Yes	84
	No	16
At what age did you introduce solid food to your baby	<4 month	2
	4-6months	42
	>6 months	56
What type of food did you first introduce into your baby's diet	Rice and cereal	72
	Pureed vegetables	2
	Pureed fruit	26

Table 2: Statistical analysis of mother's knowledge regarding weaning

DISCUSSION

Breastfeeding and weaning are crucial substances for the development of children, and their importance was emphasized by yearly World Breastfeeding Week [16]. It is supposed that breastfeeding needs determination and commitment. This concept brings an excellent idea to know the knowledge of mothers regarding breastfeeding and to know the further idea regarding weaning [17]. A recent study revealed that 90% of the mothers had knowledge related to weaning [18]. In our study, 54% of mothers learn about weaning from their grandparents, 4% of mothers learn about weaning from midwives while 18% of women learn from the doctor, and 24% learn from internet sources. In answer to another question, 84% of mothers get help from studying related books about weaning, and 16% of mothers think they can seek help from other sources. The study concluded that 72% of mothers have knowledge about weaning start time. Another survey found that nearly half of parents (46%) were confused about when to introduce solids. Almost half of the moms (49.2%) stated they totally weaned their babies from breast milk at age 2, while another 37.1% said at age 1.5 [18]. According to Kishore, only 44.6% of parents are aware that the optimal time to introduce solids is after six months, while 33.6% of parents in our study were aware of this (2008)[19]. Our study shows that 74% of mothers think that

cow milk is not good for an infant in 1st month, and 26% of mothers think that cow milk is good for an infant in 1st month. Breastfeeding has been shown to be the safest and healthiest option for infants, and the vast majority of women think that doing so helps prevent their babies from sickness. However, 83.4% of mothers say they stop breastfeeding when they are sick. In 2018, researchers showed that virtually all moms thought human milk was superior to cow's milk and/or formula milk for healthy infant development. Many moms believe that breast milk is all their baby needs for the first six months. When the mother is ill, three-quarters of moms would rather not breastfeed for fear of weight gain for their child. These are damaging ideas that may inspire the risky behavior of quitting cold turkey. Consistent health education is needed to combat and reduce the prevalence of such harmful beliefs [20]. According to the results of our study, almost 90% of mothers have information about weaning. The study of 2019 revealed that knowledge of weaning initiation time was relatively higher among mothers, just as represented by the stats of the questionnaire, where seventy-two percent of women are aware of the weaning practice. Whereas the Indian research about the subject matter depicted the overall mother's mean knowledge score as 18.11 ± 3.37 [14]. Majority of women also have knowledge about women. The affirmative results prove it, while the survey conducted in Tor Sinai city has a nominal range of fifty to seventy percent. It is noticeable the knowledge and practice of weaning are significantly co-related. Moderately aware mothers tend to practice weaning even if they have basic knowledge [21]. In study, it was concluded that 56% of mothers introduce solid food after 6 months. Approximately more than half of the mothers introduced solid foods to infants at the age of <6 months. The study by the American Journal of Maternal Child Nursing explained that it is sometimes due to early breastfeeding cessation. Most mothers cease baby feeding due to insufficient supply or nipple pain [17]. The popular weaning foods among mothers are rice and cereals. The cross-sectional studies have shown that mothers usually choose weaning foods according to the knowledge they have or what their elders tell them. Few mothers allow babies to pick according to their natural instincts without forcing them [22]. According to our questionnaire results, 48 percent of mothers breastfeed infants from birth until weaning. At the same time, 20 percent used formula milk. Comparatively, National Immunization Survey from 2019 to 2020 revealed higher rates of breastfed infants and currently, 83 percent are breastfed [23].

CONCLUSIONS

The rates of mortality and morbidity will rise due to the high

incidence of nutritional disease in babies and malnutrition brought on by poor weaning. Therefore, it is crucial to carry out appropriate interventions to support the appropriate weaning behaviors. The study found that there are still mothers who are unaware about the knowledge of weaning or techniques which are good for child health and better development. Improving maternal care strategies throughout the prenatal and postnatal periods is necessary.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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