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**Determinants of Exclusive Breast Feeding Practice
among Mothers in Gaza City**

Basel Emad ALkhlot

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Determinants of Exclusive Breast Feeding Practice among Mothers in Gaza City

Prepared By
Basel Emad ALkhlot

BSc. of Nursing-Islamic University, Gaza, Palestine

Supervisor: Dr. Mazen Abu Qamar

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Thesis Approval

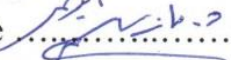


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Prepared By: Basel Emad Marzoq ALkhlot
Registration No.: 21611754

Supervisor: Dr. Mazen Abo Qamar

Master thesis submitted and accepted. Date: 23/12/2018

The names of signatures of the examining committee members are as follows:

- | | | |
|--|-----------|---|
| 1. Head of committee: Dr. Mazen Abo Qamar | Signature |  |
| 2. Internal examiner: Dr. Abdulrahman AlHams | Signature |  |
| 3. External examiner: Dr. Ali Alkhatib | Signature |  |

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Dedication

To my loving parents who taught us to give God bless them and supported me all the way; to my wife who supported me on the front line wholeheartedly and love enlightened me; to my daughter, LoLo whose innocent energy was and still is a source of inspiration; to my brothers who spared no effort to help; to all of my friends and colleagues who stood beside me with great commitment; To all of them I dedicate this work, hoping that I made all of them proud.

Basel Alkhlot

Declaration

I certify that this thesis submitted for the degree of Master, is the result of my own research, except where otherwise acknowledged, this study or any its parts has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.

Signed:

Basel Emad ALkhlot

Date:/..../....

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Author

Basel ALkhlot

Abstract

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) for the first six months of life. However, recent study showed the proportion of EBF in Gaza strip is 24%. EBF has important protective effects on the survival of infants and decreases risk for many early-life diseases. The aim of this study was to assess determinants of EBF practice among infants less than six months age in Gaza city, Palestine. A total of 276 mothers of infants were selected to participated in the study (138 mother of infants who received EBF as a case; and 138 mothers of infants who did not received EBF as a control). Descriptive, retrospective analytical case-control study with non-probability sampling method was used. Trained interviewers collected data from the mothers of the infants. Exclusive breastfeeding was assessed based on infant feeding practice for six months age. Descriptive and Binary logistic regression analysis was used. By bivariate analysis (Qui-square test), maternal characters (young age), socioeconomic status (low income and non-refugee citizenship), cultural and contextual factors (initiative time of BF after first hour, first baby) were risk factors for non-exclusive breastfeeding. Multivariate analysis showed that feed previous baby exclusively, mother citizenship, initiating time, mother age, offered free formula sample and birth weight were determinants of exclusive breastfeeding. This study showed several determinants of EBF. The promotion of EBF practices, and developing strategies with core messages to better support for whole women in reproductive age, particularly: non-refugee mothers, mother having abnormal birth weight infant and mother with low socioeconomic status. Improving breast feeding imitation within the first hour is a significant and global recommendation to improve EBF.

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List of abbreviations

Baby-Friendly Hospital The Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative BFHI

Exclusive Breast Feeding: EBF

GS: Gaza Strip

MOH: Ministry Of Health

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

PCBS: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics

Perception Insufficiency Milk PIM:

PHC: Primary Health Care

SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)

UNICEF: United Nations Children's Emergency Fund

UNRWA: United Nations Relief and Work Agency

WABA: World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action

WHO: World Health Organization

Chapter One

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Breastfeeding is an unequalled way of providing ideal food for the healthy growth and development of infants. World health organization (WHO) recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life to achieve optimal growth development and health (WHO, 2018). Exclusive breast feeding (EBF) means that the infant receives only breast milk, no other liquids or solids are given—not even water—with the exception of oral rehydration solution, or drops/syrups of vitamins, minerals or medicines (WHO, 2011).

Center of Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (2015) reported that the rate of exclusive breastfeeding for children under 6 months was 49% in USA. The prevalence of EBF in East Asia (Bangladesh) was 64% (Joshi et al., 2014). In the State of Palestine, 96 per cent of mothers practice exclusive breastfeeding their infants at birth. However over the six following months, the rate dwindles with only 40 percent (36 per cent in Gaza and 41 per cent in the West Bank) (UNCIF, 2015). In Gaza, almost all mothers practiced BF (97.8%), whereas the low proportion of mothers (24.4%) practiced EBF for 6 months (El-Kishawi et al., 2018).

EBF having benefit for babies and their mothers. Breastfeeding is one of the most preventive intervention in child health Breastfeeding may give some protection against Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and other diseases (Jara-Palacios et al., 2015). These advantages include a lower risk of gastrointestinal infection for the baby, more rapid maternal weight loss after birth, and delayed return of menstrual periods (WHO, 2011). Prolonged BF is essential for the health of mothers as this practice reduces the risk of developing breast and ovarian cancers (Yeneabat et al.,

2014; and Chung et al., 2007). Research consistently offers compelling evidence that exclusive breastfeeding provides health benefits to both infant and mother throughout their lifespans, thereby substantially reducing health care costs (WHO, 2011).

The supportive programs from UNICEF, and the Government, like Baby-Friendly Hospital, continue to improve the practice of EBF, also boost women's knowledge on breastfeeding in hospitals and skin-to-skin contact in the labor room where mothers are encouraged to breastfeed their babies immediately after the birth. Despite efforts to improve EBF practice in Gaza strip, the prevalence still lower than global recommendation. A recent study conducted in Gaza, revealed that the prevalence of EBF is low in Gaza strip (El Kishawi et al., 2018). A number of international studies have identified a number of determinants of EBF. Some of the most common factors found to be associated with EBF are: the economic status, education level, occupation of mother, professional and personal support and cultural factors (Agho et al., 2011; Senarath et al., 2010). Also associated factors of EBF among the mothers were an age of mother, child's birth weight, and the number of children. Health care workers should educate and emphasize mothers, grandmothers, and mothers-in-law on the importance of EBF (El-Kishawi et al., 2018). Updated knowledge about the determinants of EBF in Gaza city could aid in the better design of infant nutrition strategies. The objectives of the current study were to identify the associated factors of EBF practice of infants less than six months according to comprehensive designed model based on findings of different studies and countries.

1.2 Research problem

Globally, the rates of exclusive breast feeding for WHO recommended period of first six months of life is far from globally optimal. Mothers practice exclusive breastfeeding secure unique and critical health benefits for their baby and themselves. The American Academy of Pediatrics and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention both recommend six months of exclusive breastfeeding. It is more so in developing countries where it is mostly needed. In the developing world, only one out of three children is exclusively breast fed till six months of age (WHO, 2018). Internationally there are many factors associated with poor exclusive breastfeeding and must consider when investigating the reasons for lower than recommended rates and duration of breastfeeding. The associated factors of EBF were found to be socioeconomic factors, maternal factors, infants' factors, contextual and cultural factors (El-Kashiwa et al., 2017; Shifraw et al., 2015).

Despite the extensive available information on the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding both for the mother and the infant, and the continues efforts to improve breast feeding practice in Gaza, like baby friendly hospital and international Code of Marketing of Breast milk Substitutes, only 24.4% practiced EBF for 6 months (El-Kishawi et al., 2018). This fact complicated more with deterioration of socioeconomic and political factors in Gaza city. The low prevalence and short duration of exclusive breastfeeding in previous study have highlighted the need for more investigation into the problem.

1.3 Justification of the study

Breastfeeding is a well-established and recommended intervention for the improvement of child nutrition. Improving child health was result in healthy adults and break the poverty cycle (Joshi et al., 2014). High infant mortality rates associated