

Knowledge And Practices Regarding Complementary Feeding Among Mothers of Infants Aged 6 – 12 Months

Nijisha T K¹, Nisha Jacob²

¹(MSc Nursing, Govt. College of Nursing Alappuzha, KUHS University, Kerala, India)

²(Associate professor, Govt. College of Nursing Alappuzha, KUHS University, Kerala, India)

Abstract: The present study was intended to assess the knowledge and practices regarding complementary feeding among mothers of infants aged 6 – 12 months. The objectives of the study were to assess knowledge and practices regarding complementary feeding among mothers of infants aged 6 -12 months, to determine the correlation between knowledge and practices regarding complementary feeding among mothers of infants aged 6 -12 months and to find out the association of knowledge and practice regarding complementary feeding with selected socio personal variables. The conceptual framework was based on Nola J Pender's Health promotion model. The study was conducted in Mararikulam South and Aryad panchayats. Socio-personal and infant-related data sheet, checklist to assess the reported practices and questionnaire to assess knowledge regarding complementary feeding were completed as self-reports by mothers of infants aged 6 – 12 months. It was found that 7 % of mothers had poor knowledge, 92 % had average knowledge and 1 % had good knowledge regarding complementary feeding. The mean knowledge score was 19.43 with a standard deviation of 2.99. Regarding practice, none of the mothers had poor practices, 75 % had average practices and 25 % had good practices regarding complementary feeding. The mean practice score was 22.67 with a standard deviation of 2.67. There was a significant association of knowledge of mothers with educational status and type of family. There was no significant association between the practices of mothers with selected socio-personal variables. The study concluded that the mothers of infants aged 6 – 12 months had average knowledge and practice

Background: Nutrition during the early years of life is crucial for children to survive, grow, and develop into healthy adults who can lead rewarding lives and productively contribute to their communities. The first two years of life provide a critical window of opportunity for ensuring children's appropriate growth and development through optimal feeding. Thus, adequate nutrition through this period has been recognized as a national and international priority.¹

Materials and Methods: In this descriptive cross-sectional study, 200 mothers of infants aged 6 – 12 months were selected by multi-stage cluster sampling.

Results: It was found that 92 % of mothers had average knowledge regarding complementary feeding and 7 % of mothers had poor knowledge regarding complementary feeding. The study revealed that 75% of mothers had average practice regarding complementary feeding and none of the mothers had poor practice.

Conclusion: Good nutrition is vital to ensure that the infant develops both physically and mentally to the fullest potential. Poor feeding practices are a major threat to social and economic development.²

Key Word: Complementary feeding, knowledge and practice, infants

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I. Introduction

Optimal breastfeeding and complementary feeding practices could reduce childhood morbidity and mortality dramatically in the most cost-effective and efficacious way. Proper assessment of the mother's knowledge regarding feeding practice and identifying the influencing factors that lead to faulty feeding practices is the need of the hour. Breastfeeding is of extreme importance for safeguarding the health and welfare of growing infants and this practice must be preserved and promoted by all means.³ Poor infant feeding practices and their consequences are one of the world's major problems and a serious obstacle to social and economic development. Breastfeeding is one the most important determinants of child survival, birth spacing, and prevention of childhood infection. The beneficial effects of breastfeeding depend on its initiation, duration, and the age at which the breastfed child is weaned.⁴ Undernutrition is estimated to be associated with 2.7 million child deaths annually or 45% of all child deaths. Infant and young child feeding is a key area to improve child survival and promote healthy growth and development. The first year of a child's life is particularly important, as optimal nutrition during this period lowers morbidity and mortality, reduces the risk of chronic disease, and fosters better overall development.⁵

II. Material And Methods

In this descriptive cross-sectional study, 200 mothers of infants aged 6 – 12 months were selected by multi-stage cluster sampling. The study was conducted in Alappuzha which consist of total of 12 block panchayats from that, Aryad block panchayat was selected through simple random sampling. There were 5 Grama panchayat under Aryad block. Two Grama Panchayats (Mararikulam South, Aryad) are selected by using simple random sampling.

Study Design: Descriptive cross-sectional study

Study Location: Mararikulam South (Ward 1, ward 8, ward 20) and Aryad (Ward 3, ward 10, ward 12) Grama panchayats

Study Duration: July 2023 to September 2023.

Sample size: 200 mothers of infants aged 6 -12 months

Sample size calculation: A study was conducted in Kerala, to assess complementary feeding practices among 1150 mothers of infants and young children which revealed that 48.4% of children received harmful complementary feeding.²⁰ Based on that, the sample size is calculated by the formula $n = 4pq/d^2$ where; p = expected prevalence ($p = 48.4\%$) $n = 106.61$, Cluster effect = $106.61 \times 1.5 = 160$ So, the estimated sample size is 200 mothers of infants aged 6-12 months.

Subjects & selection method: The subjects were mothers of infants aged 6 – 12 months in selected Grama panchayats of Aryad Block, Alappuzha. Multi-stage cluster sampling was used. The study was conducted in two Grama Panchayats (Mararikulam South, Aryad) are selected by using simple random sampling. Ward 1, ward 8, ward 20 of Mararikulam South and Ward 3, ward 10, ward 12 of Aryad Panchayat were selected to collect data of mothers of infants aged 6 – 12 months. The list of infants in the age group of 6 – 12 months was obtained from the respective Anganwadi. A total of 102 mothers from Mararikulam South panchayat and 98 Mothers from Aryad panchayat were recruited as study subjects

Inclusion criteria:

Mothers of infants aged 6-12 months

- who were able to comprehend and read Malayalam

Exclusion criteria:

Mothers of infants aged 6-12 months

- who were not willing to participate

- who had infants diagnosed with cleft lip, cleft palate, esophageal atresia, inborn errors of metabolism and who have undergone major GI surgeries

Procedure methodology

After obtaining formal permission from the Scientific Review Committee Institutional Human Ethics Committee of Govt. College of Nursing, Alappuzha, Kerala University of Health Sciences; Thrissur, Panchayat secretary of Mararikkulam south and Aryad grama panchayat. The study was conducted from 24/07/2023 to 09/09/2023. The participants of the study were 200 mothers of infants aged 6 – 12 months from Mararikulam South and Aryad panchayats, Alappuzha. By conducting house-to-house visits the investigator selected mothers of infants aged 6 – 12 months based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, and introduced herself to the mothers. Thereafter the investigator explained the purpose of the study with the participant information sheet and obtained informed consent. The mothers were seated comfortably. Socio-personal data were obtained from the mothers using the questionnaire. The weight, length and head circumference of the 50 infants were assessed. A checklist to assess the reported practice of mothers regarding complementary feeding was given to mothers and a questionnaire to assess the knowledge of mothers regarding complementary feeding was administered thereafter. The mothers took a total of 40 minutes to complete the socio-personal data, checklist, and questionnaire. The collected data were entered into Excel for analysis. An appropriate statistical package was used for the analysis.

Statistical analysis

Data was analyzed using SPSS version 26 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL). Socio-personal and infant-related data were presented by frequencies and percentages, Anthropometric measurements were presented by frequency and percentage, and knowledge of mothers regarding complementary feeding was assessed by frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Complementary feeding practices were analyzed by frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Spearman rank correlation coefficient was used to determine the relationship between knowledge of mothers and practices regarding complementary feeding. The chi-square test was used to determine the association between the knowledge of mothers regarding complementary feeding and

selected socio-personal variables. To determine the association between the practices of mothers regarding complementary feeding and selected socio-personal variables, the Chi-square test was used.

III. Results

In the present study, 44% of mothers belonged to the age group of 23 – 27 years. The mean age was 29.02 with a standard deviation of 4.614. It showed that 39% of mothers were educated up to graduate level and 80% of mothers were unemployed. It was seen that 32% of spouses were unskilled workers. Results revealed that 56 % of mothers belonged to the nuclear family. It was evident that 28.5% of mothers belonged to families with a monthly income of $\leq$ Rs 6174. In the study 52% of mothers were Christians. About 57.5% of mothers had normal delivery. It showed that 59 % of infants belonged to the age of 10 – 12 months. The mean age was 9.94 with a standard deviation of 2.138. Among the infants 52 % were male. Regarding birth weight of infants, 77.5% of infants had birthweight between 2.6 kg – 3.5 kg. It showed that 95 % of infants were born term. It was evident that 49 % of infants had a birth order of one. Result revealed that 11.9 % of infants had a birth spacing of 1 – 2 years. It was evident that 90 % of infants received breastfeeding within 1 hour and 93.5 % of infants were exclusively breastfed. Regarding complementary feeding, 4.5 % of infants were introduced to complementary feeding before 6 months whereas 26% of infants were introduced to complementary feeding after 6 months. The study showed that 92% of infants were having normal weight for age whereas 8% were underweight. It was clear that 9.5 % of infants had wasting. Result revealed that 6.5% of infants had microcephaly. It was found that 92 % of mothers had average knowledge regarding complementary feeding and 7 % of mothers had poor knowledge regarding complementary feeding. The mean score of knowledge of mothers was 19.43 with a standard deviation of 2.99. The study revealed that 75% of mothers had average practice regarding complementary feeding and none of the mothers had poor practice. The mean score of the practice of complementary feeding was 22.67 with a standard deviation of 2.67. The study found that there was no significant correlation between knowledge and practices regarding complementary feeding among mothers of infants. There was a significant association between the knowledge of mothers regarding complementary feeding, educational status, and type of family. However, there was no significant association between the knowledge of mothers regarding complementary feeding and other selected socio-personal variables. There was no significant association between the practices of mothers regarding complementary feeding and selected socio-personal variables

Table no 1
Frequency distribution and percentage of mothers based on age (n = 200)

Age in years	f	%
23 - 27	88	44
28 - 32	74	37
33 - 37	27	13.5
>37	11	5.5

Table 1 shows that 44 % of mothers belonged to the age group of 23 – 27 years. The mean age was 29.02 with standard deviation of 4.614

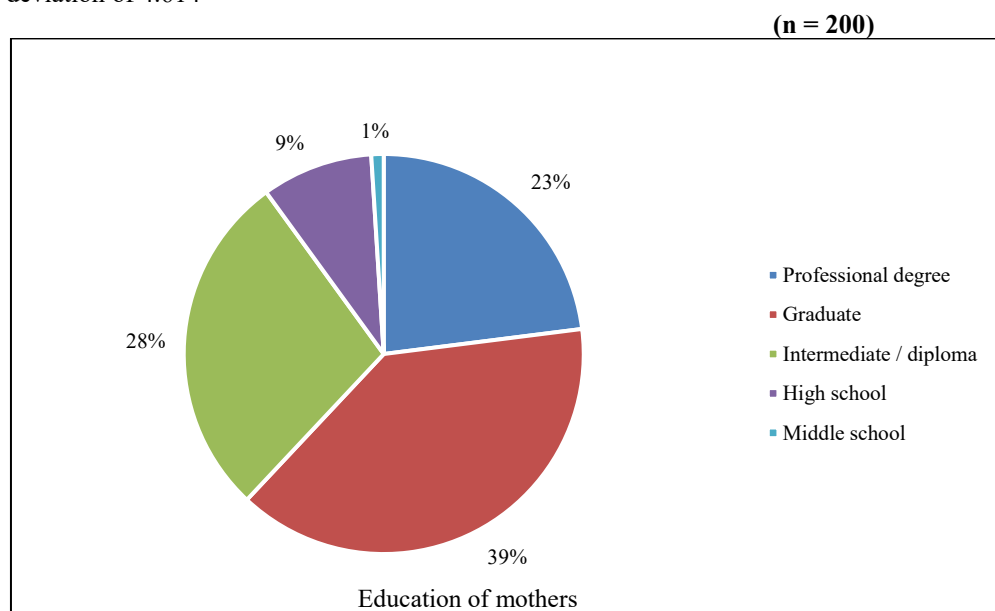


Figure 1 Percentage distribution of mothers based on education

Figure 1 illustrates that 39 % of mothers were educated up to graduate level.

Table no 2
Frequency distribution and percentage of mothers based on type of family and monthly family income
(n = 200)

Variables	f	%
Type of family		
Nuclear family	112	56
Extended family	88	44
Monthly family income (in Rs)		
>123322	3	1.5
61663 - 123321	6	3
46129 - 61662	20	10
30831 - 46128	22	11
18497 - 30830	50	25
6175 - 18496	42	21
≤ 6174	57	28.5

Table 2 depicts that 56 % of mothers belonged to nuclear family and 28.5 % of mothers belonged to monthly family income category of ≤ Rs 6174.

Table no 3
Frequency distribution and percentage of infants based on age and gender
(n = 200)

Variables	f	%
Age of infant		
6 – 9 months	82	41
10 – 12 months	118	59
Gender		
Male	104	52
Female	96	48

Table 3 reveals that 59 % of infants belonged to the age of 10 – 12 months and 52 % of the infants were male. The mean age was 9.94 with standard deviation of 2.138

Table no 4
Frequency distribution and percentage of infant based on gestational age at the time of delivery, birth order and number of siblings
(n = 200)

Variables	f	%
Gestational age		
Preterm	9	4.5
Term	190	95
Post term	1	0.5
Birth order		
1	98	49
2	76	38
≥ 3	26	13
Number of siblings		
1	74	37
2	21	10.5
≥ 3	6	3
No siblings	99	49.5

Table 4 shows that 95 % of infants were born term and 49 % infants were in the birth order of one. It is also seen that 49.5% of infants had no siblings.

Table no 5
Frequency distribution and percentage of infant based on initiation of breastfeeding, exclusive breastfeeding and introduction of complementary feeding
(n = 200)

Variables	f	%
Initiation of breast feeding within 1 hour		
Yes	180	90
No	20	10
Exclusive breastfeeding		

Yes	187	93.5
No	13	6.5
Introduction of complementary feeding		
5 months	9	4.5
6 months	139	69.5
7 months	49	24.5
8 months	3	1.5

Table 5 depicts that 90 % of infants received breast feeding within 1 hour and 93.5 % of infants were exclusively breastfed. Regarding complementary feeding, 4.5 % of infants were introduced to complementary feeding before 6 months whereas 26% of infants were introduced to complementary feeding after 6 months.

Table no 6

Frequency distribution and percentage of infants based on Weight for age, Length for age, Weight for length and Head circumference for age. (n = 200)

Anthropometric parameters	f	%
Weight for age		
Normal	184	92
Underweight (< -2SD)	16	8
Length for age		
Normal	189	94.5
Stunting (<- 2 SD)	11	5.5
Weight for length		
Normal	181	90.5
Wasting (< -2SD)	19	9.5
Head circumference for age		
Normal	185	92.5
Microcephaly (> 2SD)	13	6.5
Macrocephaly (<-2 SD)	2	1

Table 6 shows that 92 % of infants were having normal weight for age whereas 8 % were underweight. Stunting was present among 5.5 % of infants and 9.5 % of infants were having wasting. 6.5% of infants were having microcephaly.

(n = 200)

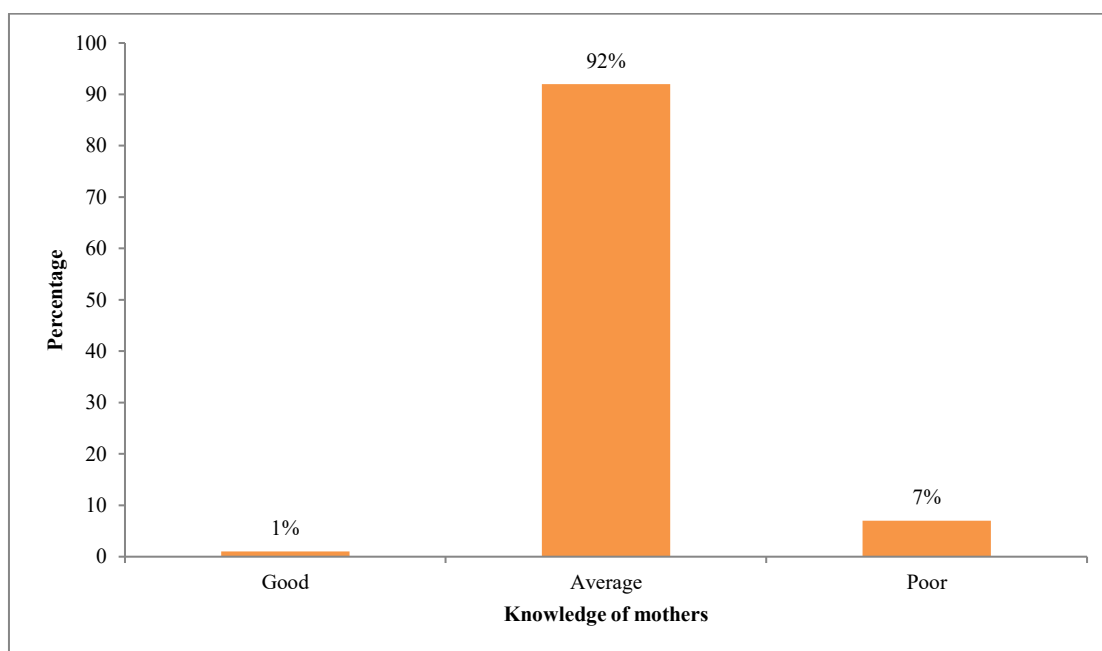


Figure 2 Percentage of mothers based on knowledge regarding complementary feeding

Figure 2 illustrates that 92 % of mothers had average knowledge regarding complementary feeding and 7 % of mothers had poor knowledge regarding complementary feeding.

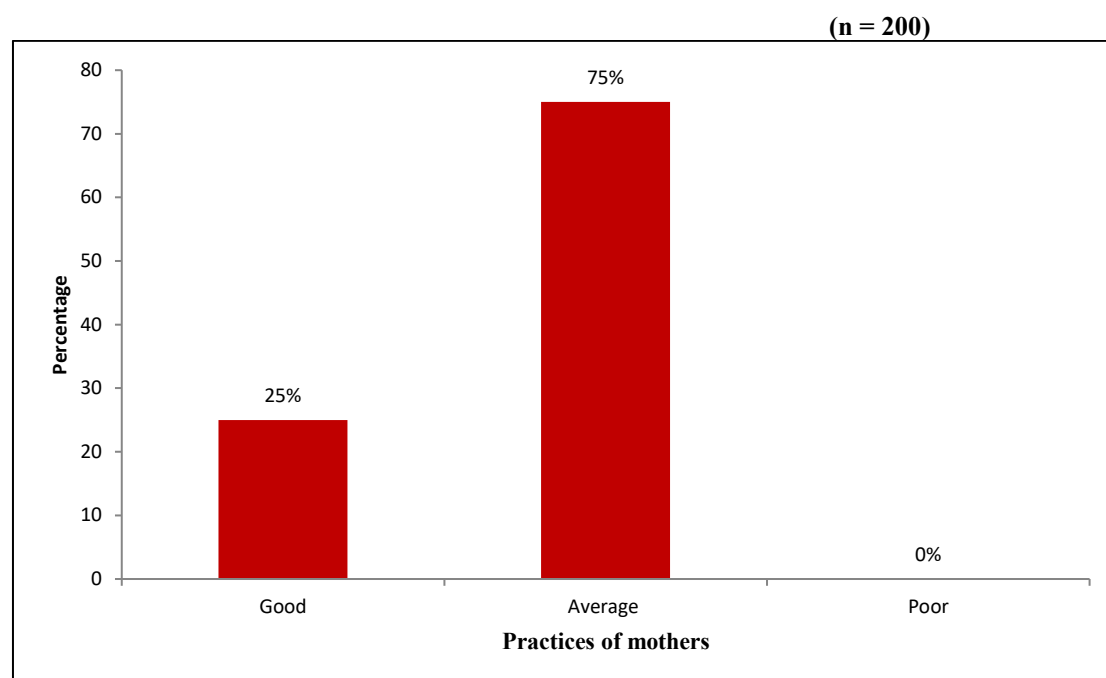


Figure 3 Percentage distribution of mothers based on practices regarding complementary feeding

Figure 3 reveals that 75 % of mothers had average practice regarding complementary feeding and none of the mothers had poor practice.

Table no 7

Correlation between knowledge and practices of mothers regarding complementary feeding

(n = 200)

Variable	ρ	p
Knowledge	+.08	0.24
Practice		

From Table 7, it is clear that there was no significant correlation between knowledge and practices regarding complementary feeding among mothers of infants. Therefore, H_{01} was accepted. Hence, it can be interpreted that there was no significant relationship between knowledge and practices regarding complementary feeding among mothers of infants aged 6 – 12 months.

Table no 8

Association between knowledge of mothers regarding complementary feeding and selected socio-personal variable

(n = 200)

Variables	χ^2/FE	df	p value
Age	2.55	6	0.91
Education	14.54*	8	0.04
Occupation	14.29	8	0.13
Occupation of spouse	12.23	10	0.16
Monthly family income	17.48	12	0.07
Type of family	7.48*	2	0.01
Religion	6.76	4	0.14
Age of infant	0.50	2	0.89
Gender of infant	2.62	2	0.21
Birth spacing	4.25	6	0.64
Birth order of infant	1.93	4	0.79

Table 8 shows that the calculated Fisher exact value was significant at 0.05 level in education and type of family. Hence, there was a significant association between the knowledge of mothers regarding complementary feeding and education of mothers and the type of family

From Table 8, it is clear that there was a significant association between the knowledge of mothers regarding complementary feeding, education of mothers and type of family. However, there was no significant association between the knowledge of mothers regarding complementary feeding and other selected socio-personal variables. Hence, H_{02} was accepted and it can be interpreted that there was no significant association between the knowledge of mothers regarding complementary feeding and selected socio-personal variables.

Table no 9
Association between practices of mothers regarding complementary feeding and selected socio-personal variable

(n = 200)

Variables	χ^2/FE	df	p value
Age	2.43	3	0.48
Education	7.02	4	0.11
Occupation	2.20	4	0.70
Occupation of spouse	7.40	5	0.17
Monthly family income	4.79	6	0.55
Type of family	0.10	1	0.86
Religion	2.69	2	0.22
Age of infant	1.35	1	0.31
Gender of infant	0.42	1	0.62
Birth spacing	5.51	2	0.06
Birth order of infant	1.93	2	0.79

Table 9 shows that the calculated Fisher exact value was not significant at 0.05 level. Hence, there was no significant association between the practices of mothers regarding complementary feeding and selected socio-personal variables.

From Table 8, it is clear that there was no significant association between the practices of mothers regarding complementary feeding and selected socio-personal variables. Hence, H_{02} was accepted and it can be interpreted that there was no significant association between the practices of mothers regarding complementary feeding and selected socio-personal variables.

IV. Discussion

Complementary feeding is one of the vital indicators to improve the nutritional status of the children, which aims for proper growth and development of the child. In the present study, 7% of mothers had poor knowledge regarding complementary feeding. A descriptive study was conducted in Uttarakhand to assess the knowledge and pattern of complementary feeding in mothers of infants aged 6 to 12 months. The results revealed that 20% of mothers had poor knowledge regarding complementary feeding.⁶ An exploratory study was conducted in Punjab to assess knowledge and practice among 120 mothers of children from 6 months to 2 years of age regarding complementary feeding. The results revealed that 2.5% of mothers had poor knowledge.⁷ The study findings were incongruent with the present study findings. The finding is inconsistent with a descriptive study conducted among mothers of children up to 2 years in Jodhpur to assess knowledge and expressed practices which revealed that 33% had inadequate knowledge regarding complementary feeding.⁸ An observational cross-sectional study was conducted among 400 mothers having children less than 24 months in Saudi Arabia. The results revealed that 9.75 % of mothers had poor knowledge which is congruent with the present study finding.⁹

In the present study, 75% of mothers had average practice. The study finding is compatible with a cross-sectional study conducted in Vantamuri Primary Health Centre Karnataka, to assess knowledge, attitude and practices of infant feeding among 401 mothers of infants. Regarding practice, the majority 78.3% of mothers were on an average practice.¹⁰ In the present study, none of the mothers had poor practice. The finding is not similar to a study conducted in Punjab to assess knowledge and practices of complementary feeding among primary caregivers of children aged 6 to 24 months. The results revealed that 21% had poor practice.¹¹ A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 158 mothers of children aged 6 to 24 months in Nepal. The results revealed that 48.1% of mothers were involved in the wrong practice of complementary feeding.¹² A descriptive study was

conducted among mothers of children up to 2 years in Jodhpur to assess knowledge and expressed practices which revealed that 45% had inadequate expressed practice regarding complementary feeding.¹³ The finding is inconsistent with the present study findings.

In the present study, there was no relationship between knowledge and practices of complementary feeding ($p = +.08$). Similarly, a cross-sectional study was conducted in Ethiopia to assess maternal knowledge of complementary feeding practice and the nutritional status of children 6 -23 months which revealed that there was no significant relationship between knowledge and practice.¹⁴ The finding is inconsistent with an explorative study conducted in 120 mothers of children from 6 months to 2 years to assess knowledge and practices of complementary feeding. The results revealed that there was a moderate correlation between. knowledge and practice ($r = 0.4$).⁷

In the present study, there was a significant association between the knowledge of mothers regarding complementary feeding and the educational status of mothers. The finding is similar to a study conducted in Tanzania to assess the knowledge and practices of mothers. The results revealed that there was a significant association between the knowledge of mothers regarding complementary feeding and the educational status of mothers.¹⁵ The finding is also similar to a study conducted in Nigeria to assess complementary feeding knowledge, practices, and dietary diversity among mothers of under five children. The results revealed that there was a significant association between the knowledge of mothers regarding complementary feeding and education.¹⁶ An exploratory study was conducted among 100 mothers and children between 6-24 months of age to assess the knowledge regarding complementary feeding among mothers in Pune. The results revealed that the knowledge of the mothers was associated with their education.¹⁷ The study finding is congruent with the present study finding. Another study was conducted in Ethiopia among 410 mothers who had children aged 6-23 months. The results revealed that the education of mothers had a significant effect on mothers' knowledge of complementary foods. The findings are congruent with the present study findings.¹⁸ An observational cross-sectional study was conducted among 400 mothers having children less than 24 months in Saudi Arabia. The results showed that there was a significant association between knowledge of complementary feeding and mothers' educational level.¹⁹ The study finding is similar to the present study finding.

In the present study, there was no significant association between the knowledge of mothers regarding complementary feeding and monthly family income. The study finding is contradictory to an observational cross-sectional study conducted among 400 mothers having children less than 24 months in Saudi Arabia. The results showed that there was a significant association between knowledge of complementary feeding and family income.¹⁹ In the present study, there was a significant association between the knowledge of mothers regarding complementary feeding and the type of family. The finding is inconsistent with a descriptive study conducted among mothers of children up to 2 years in Jodhpur to assess knowledge and expressed practices which revealed that knowledge has no significant association with the type of family.⁸

In the present study, there was no significant association between the practices of mothers. regarding complementary feeding and selected socio-personal variables. Similarly, an explorative study was conducted among 120 mothers of children from 6 months to 2 years to assess the knowledge and practices of complementary feeding. The results revealed that there was no significant relationship between practices and socio-demographic variables.⁷ A cross-sectional study was conducted in Rural Lucknow, North India. to assess complementary feeding practices among children aged 6-23-months which revealed that maternal education, religion, family type, child's gender, birth weight, and birth order were not significantly associated with untimely complementary feeding practices.²¹ Another study was conducted in Ethiopia among 410 mothers who had children aged 6-23 months. The study revealed that the age of the mothers, the mother's occupation, and the wealth index of the family had significant effects on the mother's complementary feeding practices.¹⁸ The findings are incongruent with the present study findings. The finding is incongruent with a descriptive study conducted among mothers of children up to 2 years in Jodhpur to assess knowledge and expressed practices which revealed that practice has a significant association regarding complementary feeding and education of mothers.⁸ A cross-sectional study was conducted in Bhopal to assess complementary feeding practices and their determinants among children 6 – 23 months of age which revealed that there was a significant association between practice, maternal education and income.²² The findings were also different from the present study findings

V. Conclusion

Complementary feeding is the process, starting when breast milk alone is no longer sufficient to meet the nutritional requirements of infants, and therefore other foods and liquids are needed, along with breast milk. In the present study, it was found that mothers had average knowledge and practices regarding complementary feeding. The improved knowledge and practices help prevent the incidence of malnutrition, which contributes to the health and quality of life of their children. Complementary feed was started early and was defective in terms of frequency, quality, and quantity due to lack of proper guidance. Mother's education plays a vital role in successful complementary feeding. Educated mothers are often more informed about nutritional requirements,

hygiene practices, and appropriate food choices for their infants. This knowledge can positively influence the introduction of complementary foods, ensuring that infants receive a balanced and nutritious diet. Additionally, educated mothers may be more likely to seek guidance from healthcare professionals, contributing to better overall child health.

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