

FT07

## An Investigation of Breastfeeding Practices of Mothers With Babies of 0-24 Months: The Sample of Tokat

*İlknur GÜREL<sup>1</sup>, Assoc. Prof.Dr. Didem ÖNAY DERİN<sup>2</sup>, Büşra Zeynep ÖĞÜTLÜ<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>*Teacher, Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey Secondary School,  
Konya.*

<sup>2</sup>*Instructor, Selcuk University, Faculty of Health Sciences, Nutrition and Dietetics  
Department, Konya, Turkey*

<sup>3</sup>*Postgraduate Student, Selcuk University, Institute of Social Sciences, Department of  
Nutrition Education, Konya, Turkey*

### Abstract

Feeding with breast milk is extremely necessary and important for sustain and protection of health, development of the newborn's. This descriptive study was planned and conducted to determine the practices of mothers with babies between 0-24 months in the field of application of breast milk, breastfeeding, and infant nutrition. The universe of the study consisted of mothers with babies between 0-24 months registered in Bağlar No. 1, Erenler No. 2, 75th year Education and No. 4-5-6 Central Health Centers located in Tokat city center. The sample of the study included 370 mothers who agreed to participate in the study. The research data was collected by face to face interview method with the questionnaire, developed by the researchers, between February 2014 and July 2014. The questionnaire consists of a “personal information form” covering the socio-demographic characteristics of mothers and their families, and a variety of questions prepared to determine the mothers' practices on breastfeeding and infant nutrition. In the evaluation of the data, the SPSS package program was used, and the necessary statistical analyses were performed. The average age of the mothers was 29.21±5.0 years, and 35.9% were in the 24-28 age group. The majority of mothers (94.1%) had a primary education degree, while close to half of their spouses (46.2%) had a bachelor's degree or higher. 73.8% of mothers are housewives. It is seen that 78.1% of the participants had a nuclear family and 21.9% had an extended family. The Breastfeeding rate of babies in the first half hour after birth was determined as 60.8%. In the study, it was found that the big majority of mothers (92.7%) gave their babies breast milk as the first food after birth. 87.3% of mothers stated that they started to complementary foods. It was determined that more than half (56.0%) of mothers (n = 323) who started complementary foods, started complementary foods after 6th months. Breast milk; although it is the essential nutrient for the growth and development of infants, it is seen that there are deficiencies of breast milk and complementary foods in our country. Although the rates of breastfeeding in our study were better than the general data of our country, mothers need information and support on, in the field such as starting and maintaining breastfeeding successfully, the time of first breastfeeding, feed with breast milk only, and timely start-up of complementary foods. For this purpose, support provided by educated persons increases the feeding time of the mother's baby with “breast milk only” and may be one of the most important practices in the proper feeding of babies.

**Keywords:** *Breastfeeding, breast milk, complementary food, infant nutrition, newborn.*

## Introduction

A common problem of developing countries, inadequate and unbalanced nutrition, on the one hand, affects the physical, social and mental development of individuals, on the other hand, the economic and cultural development of society in a negative way. These negative effects are most commonly seen in infants and children. The characteristic of the first two years of life is rapid growth and development; during this period there are many changes that affect the intake of nutrients and the baby's adequate intake of nutrients affects its interaction with its environment (Onay Derin and Erdoğan, 2018). Adequate nutrition during infancy and early childhood is essential to ensure the growth, health, and development of children to their full potential (Motee, Ramasawmy, Pugo-Gunsam, and Jeewon., 2013). Mother milk, which alone, perfectly meets the physiological and psychosocial needs of the baby during the first six months after birth, plays an important role in establishing mother and baby bonding. (Karaçam and Kitiş, 2015). It has been recognized worldwide that breastfeeding is beneficial for both the mother and child, as breast milk is considered the best source of nutrition for an infant (Ku and Chow, 2010). The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that infants be exclusively breastfed for the first six months, followed by breastfeeding along with complementary foods for up to two years of age or beyond (Hanif, 2011).

Recent studies have shown that breast-feeding on its own in the first six months after birth is much more useful than previously thought. The nutritional value and the anti-infective peculiarity of breast-feeding along with its effect on delaying pregnancy not only increase the survival chance of the infants but also protects mothers from breast and uterus cancer types, providing contraception (Baumslag, 1991). In addition to the nutritional benefits of breastfeeding there are other non-nutritional benefits to both the baby and mother. These include protection from gastrointestinal infections and enhanced immunity through transfer of antibodies in the breast milk (Kramer, Chalmers, Hodnett et al., 2001), increased bonding between mother and child, reduced incidence of chronic diseases such as diabetes mellitus, obesity, heart diseases and cancers, and enhanced cognitive and intelligence quotient in comparison with formula-fed infants (Black, Allen, Bhutta et al., 2008). Predictors of breastfeeding and weaning practices vary between and within countries. Urban or rural difference, age, breast problems, societal barriers, insufficient support from family, knowledge about good breastfeeding practices, mode of delivery, health system practices, and community beliefs have all been found to influence breastfeeding in different areas of developing countries (Motee, Ramasawmy, Pugo-Gunsam, and Jeewon., 2013). This study was planned and conducted to determine the practices of mothers with babies between 0-24 months in the field of application of breast milk, breastfeeding, and infant nutrition.

## Method

The universe of this descriptive study consisted of mothers with babies between 0-24 months registered in Bağlar No. 1, Erenler No. 2, 75th year Education, and No: 4-5-6 Central Health Centers located in Tokat city center. Indiscriminate sampling method was used to determine the women included in the research and the sample consisted of 370 women who volunteered for the study. The research data was collected by face to face interview method with the questionnaire developed by the researchers between February 2014 and July 2014. Before starting the study, a extensive literature review was performed, the literature on the subject (thesis, articles, papers, books, scientific research and so on) was examined and afterward a questionnaire was prepared by making use of various researches (Dalgiç, Hızıl, Köse., 1998; Şanlıer and AYTEKİN, 2004; Eker and Yurdakul, 2006; Kaya, Piriñçi., 2009; Onay, Akman, Akdeniz, Kacaroglu., 2009; Uslu, Can, Özdemir, Bülbül., 2010, Battaloğlu, 2013) on this subject. The questionnaire consists of a “personal information form” covering the socio-

demographic characteristics of mothers and their families, and a variety of questions prepared to determine the mothers' practices on breastfeeding and infant nutrition. In the implementation of the questionnaire, official approvals were obtained from the health centers and the appropriate time was determined to apply the questionnaire by interviewing the nurses working in the relevant institutions. After the necessary explanations and warnings about the questionnaire were made by the researcher, an appropriate environment was attempted to be created for providing reliable information and the data was collected through face-to-face interviews with the women. In the evaluation of the data, the SPSS package program was used and mean ( $\bar{X}$ ), standard deviation (S), frequency distributions were calculated.

## Results

The average age of the mothers was  $29.21 \pm 5.0$  years, and 35.9% were in the 24-28 age group. The majority of mothers (94.1%) had a primary education degree, while close to half of their spouses (46.2%) had a bachelor's degree or higher. 73.8% of mothers are housewives. It is seen that 78.1% of the participants had a nuclear family and 21.9% had an extended family. The Breastfeeding rate of babies in the first half hour after birth was determined as 60.8%.

In some other studies, Cetinkaya, Senol, Celer, Bebek, and Ozturk. (1999) that ratio as 59.0 % and Onay (2005) found that 68.11% of the participants breastfed their babies just after the birth. In a similar study, while the mothers were supposed to breastfeed their babies as soon as they gave birth, the ratio of the mothers who did that was found to be 50.1%. The ratio of the mothers who breastfed in the first 1 or 2 h was 35.9% while the ratio of the mothers who did that later than 2 h was 14.0% (Onay, Akman, Akdeniz, Kacaroglu., 2009).

Breast milk, contains vitamins, minerals, proteins, carbohydrates and lipids, and especially with the superiority of bioavailability, is a great food that can meet all the needs of babies alone for the first six months (Çınar, Köse, Doğu., 2012). In this study, 92.7% of the mothers breastfed their babies, while 2.2% of them gave water with sugar, 5.1% gave baby food as the first food. Similarly, in a study done in Kemalpaşa, İzmir, Gunay, Mermer G, Mermer N. (2003) found that 81.6% of the participants with 6-12 month-old babies had firstly breastfed their babies and Onay (2005) also pointed out that 94.1% of the participants had given their babies breastmilk as the first food. In a similar study, Onay et al. (2009) found 79.7% of the mothers breastfed their babies, while 8.1% of them gave water with sugar, 6.7% gave baby food, 4.3% gave water and the other 1.2% gave cow milk as the first food. Onay Derin and Erdoğan (2018), in their study, showed that more than half (66.3%) of mothers gave breast milk to their babies as the first food after birth. Another study, it was found that the majority of working and non-working mothers the first food given to their baby after birth was breast milk, but 5.7% of non-working mothers gave water or sugary water to their baby. (Aytekin, Sarıkaya, Küçüköğlü., 2015). 87.3% of mothers stated that they started to complementary foods. The results of the study support this finding. The transition to other complementary foods such as baby food, sugared water, yogurt, cheese, milk, water, and herbal teas is increasing when infant feeding is not performed exclusively with breast milk during the first six months. This case is one of the main reasons for premature termination of breastfeeding. Although breastfeeding rates are high in our country, the problem of early initiation of complementary nutrition is quite common. It has been shown that early initiation of complementary foods has a negative effect on the frequency and duration of breast milk delivery (Onay Derin and Erdoğan, 2018). In this study, it was determined that more than half (56.0%) of mothers (n = 323) who started complementary foods, started complementary foods after 6th months. In another study by Onay (2005), a finding related with the babies who started to get additional food at the end of the sixth month was 95.4%. In a similar study found that more than a half of the participants (69.1%) had breastfed their infants between 4-6 months, 27.0% of them did that less than 4 months and 4.1% of them

for 7-12 months. The same study, the average of breast-feeding time without any additional food was found to be  $4.5 \pm 0.8$  months (Onay, Akman, Akdeniz, Kacaroglu., 2009).

Yıldız, Baran, Akdur, Ocaktan, Kanyılmaz. (2008), in their study, the mothers' complementary nutrition at the appropriate time of the baby's month (6. in the month) examined whether it had started, it was determined that 26.4% of mothers started to eat additional food before their babies were 6 months old (average  $3.1 \pm 1.9$ ). A similar study found that 29.8% of babies were given ready-made food as temporary complementary nutrients in the first three days. (Çatak, Sütü, Kılınç, Bağ., 2015).

## Conclusion

Breast milk; although it is the essential nutrient for the growth and development of infants, it is seen that there are deficiencies of breast milk and complementary foods in our country. Although the rates of breastfeeding in our study were better than the general data of our country, mothers need information and support on, in the field such as starting and maintaining breastfeeding successfully, the time of first breastfeeding, feed with breast milk only, and timely start-up of complementary foods. For this purpose, support provided by educated persons increases the feeding time of the mother's baby with "breast milk only" and may be one of the most important practices in the proper feeding of babies.

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