

BREAST MILK PERCEPTIONS OF DIFFERENT GENERATIONS OF ADULTS AND FACTORS AFFECTING THESE PERCEPTIONS

Farklı Kuşak Erişkinlerin Anne Sütü Algıları ve Bu Algıları Etkileyen Faktörler

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the research was to examine the breast milk perceptions of adult individuals in generations X, Y, and Z and the factors affecting them. This descriptive research was conducted between May-June 2021. The sample group of the research consisted of 341 adult individuals over the age of 18 living in Turkey. "Information Form" and "Breast Milk Perception Scale for Adults" were used to collect data. The total average score adults received from the "Breast Milk Perception Scale for Adults" was determined as 115.17±22.59. A significant difference was found between the individuals in terms of sex, marital status, income status, presence of children, number of children, breast milk intake of children, being informed about breast milk and their breast milk perception levels ($p<0.05$). No statistically significant difference was found between the individuals who participated in the research in terms of their X, Y, and Z generation status and breast milk perception scale scores ($p>0.05$). Consequently, it was determined that the breast milk perceptions of the individuals participating in the research were above the average. It was found that individuals' sex, marital status, income status, presence of children, number of children that they feed their children with breast milk, that they are lectured about breast milk affected their perception of breast milk.

Keywords: Breast milk, Generation XYZ, Perception.

ÖZ

Araştırmanın amacı X, Y ve Z kuşaklarındaki erişkin bireylerin anne sütü ile ilgili algılarını ve etkileyen faktörleri incelemektir. Tanımlayıcı türde olan araştırma Mayıs-Haziran 2021 tarihleri arasında yapıldı. Araştırmanın örneklemini, Türkiye’de yaşayan 18 yaş üzeri 341 yetişkin birey oluşturdu. Verilerin toplanmasında “Bilgi Formu” ve “Erişkinlerin Anne Sütü ile İlgili Algı Ölçeği” kullanıldı. ‘Erişkinlerin Anne Sütü ile İlgili Algı Ölçeği’nden aldıkları toplam puan ortalaması 115.17±22.59 olarak belirlendi. Bireylerin; cinsiyet, medeni durum, gelir durumu, çocuk varlığı, çocuk sayısı, çocuklarının anne sütü alması ve anne sütü ile ilgili bilgi almaları ile anne sütü algı düzeyleri arasında anlamlı fark bulundu ($p<0.05$). Araştırmaya katılan bireylerin X, Y ve Z kuşağı durumları ile anne sütü algı ölçeği puanları arasında istatistiksel olarak anlamlı fark bulunmadı ($p>0.05$). Sonuç olarak, araştırmaya katılan bireylerin anne sütü algılarının ortalamasının üzerinde olduğu saptandı. Bireylerin cinsiyetinin, medeni durumunun, gelir durumunun, çocuk varlığının, çocuk sayısının, çocuğunun anne sütü almasının, anne sütü ile ilgili eğitim alınmasının anne sütüne yönelik algıyı etkilediği görüldü.

Anahtar kelimeler: Algı, Anne sütü, XYZ kuşağı.

INTRODUCTION

Breast milk is a digestible, economical and natural food that contains all the nutrients necessary for a newborn baby's optimum growth and development (Tunçkılıç, Aydın, & Küğcömen, 2019). Breastfeeding is the most fundamental right of the newborn baby and provides numerous benefits not only for the baby but also for the mother (Bafalı, Zengin, & Çınar, 2019). Breastfeeding facilitates establishing a close, loving relationship and bond between mother and infant (Akkoyun & Taş Arslan, 2016). In breastfed infants, cognitive development increases with breastfeeding, and breastfeeding mothers have lower rates of obesity. Also, it is indicated that certain chronic diseases like diabetes, obesity, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, hyperlipidemia, and some types of cancer decrease in breastfed infants (Binns, Lee, & Low, 2016). Breast milk is an important factor in increasing the life expectancy and life quality of infants (Tunçkılıç et al., 2019).

According to the 2018 Turkey Demographic and Health Survey report, while the rate of infants fed exclusively with breast milk is 41% in the first 6 months, it decreases to 14% gradually among infants aged 4-5 months (Yoldaş, Dinçer, & Garipağođlu, 2021). Even though breastfeeding tendency is common in our country, the habit of feeding infants exclusively with breastfeed is not up to the mark. Breastfeeding sometimes can not be maintained due to the different problems related to the mother and infant in breastfeeding process (Akkoyun & Taş Arslan, 2016). It is determined that various factors affect the breastfeeding of the mother. Among these, it is known that factors such as the mother's age, socioeconomic level, ethnic profile, breastfeeding self-efficacy, knowledge on breastfeeding, attitude towards breastfeeding, use of supplementary food a few days after birth, insufficient family support, and breastfeeding experiences play a role in the breastfeeding process (Küçükođlu, Aytekin, & Ateşyan, 2015). In a different research, it was reported that the reasons for mothers to wean their babies include the mother's age, employment status, breastfeeding problems, health problems, place of residence, socioeconomic status, use of supplementary foods prematurely, and pregnancy (Güraslan Baş, Karatay, & Arıkan, 2018). The willingness of the mother to breastfeed is another major factor in increasing breastfeeding success (Aliođulları, Yılmaz Esencan, Ünal, & Şimşek, 2016).

People born in approximate years have similar characteristics in terms of perception, expectation, and view on life. This situation leads to intergenerational differences (Christensen, Wilson, & Edelman, 2018). Generation is a term that is used to describe a human population born in the same period, possess differences arising from the social,

cultural, economic, and political situation of the society they live in, and similar values and priorities (Güdücü & Balcı, 2021). People's beliefs and practices concerning health are part of the society's culture and conditions related to the period they live (Pekyiğit et al., 2020). It was indicated that people from the same generation generally exhibit similar behaviors and differ from the next generations in terms of lifestyle and view on life, and generational differences lead to the formation of perception changes (Hacıvelioğlu & Bolsoy, 2020). A generation's perceptions, knowledge, and experiences can affect the perceptions on breast milk and thus, the breastfeeding behaviors. These perceptions, knowledge, and experiences can also appear as an obstacle in many practices suggested by medical personnel.

Therefore, revealing the perception of adult individuals on breast milk regarding the demographic changes and generations in initiating and maintaining a healthy breastfeeding process is significant in raising awareness about the merits and advantages of breast milk and providing the necessary support regarding this issue. For a successful breastfeeding process, mothers must be supported actively before, during, and after the birth by their family members, society, and the entire health system (Küçükoğlu et al., 2015). To achieve this, factors negatively affecting the perception of breast milk must be eliminated and the existing problems related to the perception of breast milk must be resolved (Güner & Koruk, 2019). This research aims to determine and reveal adult individuals' perceptions on breast milk and the factors affecting these perceptions.

Research Questions

Q1: Is there a difference in the perceptions of adults from different generations about breast milk?

Q2: What are the factors affecting adult individuals' perceptions of breast milk?

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Aim and Design

The aim of this research is to examine the perceptions of adult individuals in different generations about breast milk and factors affecting them. This research is a descriptive research.

Sample

The population of the research consists of adult individuals between ages 18-65 living in Turkey, and the sample of the research consists of 341 individuals who met the sample criteria and volunteered to participate in the research between 02.05.2021 and 02.06.2021.

Inclusion criteria required participants; to be literate, to be between the ages 18-65, and to voluntarily participate in the research.

According to Turkish Statistical Institute's 2021 data, the population between the ages of 18-65 is approximately 52.000.000. The G*Power 3.1.9.4 program was used to determine the required number of participants for the research. Accordingly, the research group was determined as a total of 323 individuals at $d=.50$ effect size at 80.0% statistical power and .05 significance level. In the research, 341 individuals were achieved and the representative power of the sample to represent the population was found to be 85% with an effect size of 0.5 and a margin of error of 0.05.

Data Collection Tools

"Information Form" and "Breast Milk Perception Scale for Adults" were used to collect data.

Information Form

The information form was prepared by the researchers in line with the literature (Alioğulları et al., 2016; Güner & Koruk, 2019; Pekyigit et al., 2020). The information form consists a total of 11 questions about socio-demographic characteristics (age, gender, educational status, family type, marital status, employment status, economic status, presence of children, number of children, etc.) and breast milk (breast milk intake status of the children, being informed about breastfeeding status, etc.) In the research, individuals were grouped as X (1965-1980), Y (1981-2000), and Z (2000-2021) generations according to their age in line with the literature (Adıgüzel, Batur, & Ekşili, 2014; Sarioglu & Ozmen, 2017).

Breast Milk Perception Scale for Adults

This scale was developed by Eren (2016) to determine adults' perceptions about breast milk. On a 5-point Likert scale consisting of 30 positive items, each item is scored from 1 to 5 and the scores vary according to the answers of the participants. The minimum score that can be obtained from the scale is 30, and the maximum score is 150. A high score indicates that participants have a good perception of breast milk. The scale can be filled easily by the literate individuals. In the original study of the scale, the Cronbach Alpha value is 0.93. In this study, on the other hand, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient was found to be 0.95.

Data Collection

The forms used in the research were submitted to participants online between May-June 2021 and they were filled in by the participants themselves. Before filling in the research

forms, participants were informed regarding the aim of the research and how it would be conducted, and their consent was obtained. Within the content of the research, the survey method was used to collect the necessary data while Easy Sampling and Snowball Sampling methods were used in sample selection. Google Forms application was used to create the survey form on the online platform, and the link of the survey form was made available to the participants via the internet. In the context of the research, data were collected from a total of 343 people, and the responses of 341 people who met necessary prerequisites were evaluated.

Evaluation of Data

The data collected via the administrator system created by Google Surveys application for the researcher was downloaded and entered into SPSS. The data obtained in the research were analyzed via the SPSS 25.0 program. Descriptive statistical methods (number, percentage, minimum-maximum values, mean, and standard deviation) were used in data evaluation.

“Reliability Analysis” was conducted to test the reliability of the scale used. The normal distribution of the data used depends on the skewness and kurtosis values being between ± 3 (Shao, 2002). Independent sample t-test was applied to measure the difference between two independent groups in the comparison of normally distributed data and quantitative data, one-way analysis of variance was applied in the comparison of more than two independent groups, and Bonferroni multiple comparison test was applied for groups with a difference. The significance level was accepted as 0.05.

Ethical Aspect of the Research

In order to conduct this research, ethics committee approval (decision dated 02.05.2021 and numbered 2021/57) from Yalova University Ethics Committee was obtained. Consent of the participants was obtained. Scale owner's written permission was obtained with regard to the use of the scale in the research. Principles of the Helsinki Declaration were followed properly in all stages of the research.

RESULT

The mean age of the individuals participating in the research was 28.51 ± 9.68 years and 26.4% of them were in the Z generation, 60.4% were in the Y generation, and 13.2% were in the X generation. The majority of the individuals were observed to be female (82.7%) and single (48.7%). When participants' family types were examined, it was observed that 74.2% of them had nuclear families and 25.8% had extended families. When participants'

educational status was examined, it was indicated that 58.9% of them were university graduates. The vast majority of individuals stated that they were not working and they had a medium level income (71.3%) (Table 1).

46.6% of the individuals participating in the research was determined to have children and 53.4% had no children. The majority of individuals with children were determined to (16.7%) have 2 children and 91.8% fed their children with breast milk. It was found that 49% of the participants were informed about breast milk, and 51% had not received any information (Table 1).

Table 1. Distribution of Individuals' Descriptive Characteristics

	Variables	n	%
Age	18.00-62.00	28.51±9.68	
Generation	Generation Z	90	26.4
	Generation Y	206	60.4
	Generation X	45	13.2
Sex	Female	282	82.7
	Male	59	17.3
Marital Status	Married	156	45.7
	Single	166	48.7
	Divorced	19	5.6
Educational Status	Literate	8	2.3
	Elementary School	44	12.9
	High School	88	25.8
	University	201	58.9
Employment Status	Employed	141	41.3
	Unemployed	200	58.7
Income Status	Low	34	10.0
	Medium	243	71.3
	High	64	18.8
Family Type	Nuclear Family	253	74.2
	Extended Family	88	25.8
Presence of Children	Yes	159	46.6
	No	182	53.4
Number of Children	0	182	53.4
	1	54	15.8
	2	57	16.7
	3	25	7.3
	4 and above	23	6.7
Breastfeeding Status of Children*	Yes	146	91.8
	No	13	8.2
Status of Receiving Information about Breast Milk	Yes	167	49.0
	No	174	51.0

*Participants with Children

Descriptive statistics of the scale used in the research are given in Table 2. The breast milk perception scale scores of the participants were calculated as 30.00-150.00, with an average of 115.17±22.59.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the Scale Used

Scale	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Breast Milk Perception Scale	30.00	150.00	115.17	22.59

The results of the independent sample t-test, F (ANOVA) test, and Bonferroni test, which were conducted to determine whether the total mean scores in the breast milk perception scale of the individuals participating in the research differ according to the descriptive characteristics of the individuals, are given in Table 3.

No statistically significant difference was found between the individuals who participate in the research in terms of their X, Y and Z generation status, education level, work and family types, and breast milk perception scale scores ($p>0.05$).

A significant difference was found statistically between the breast milk perception scale scores and the individuals' sex ($p<0.05$). The breast milk perception scale scores of female participants were determined to be higher than male participants.

When the marital status of the individuals was examined, it was seen that the average breast milk perception scale of married individuals was higher than that of single/divorced individuals, and that statistically, there was a significant difference in this regard ($p<0.05$).

A significant difference was found statistically between the breast milk perception scale scores according to the income levels of the individuals ($p<0.05$). Breast milk perceptions of the participants with low income status were found to be lower than the participants with medium and high income status.

When individuals' status of having children was examined, it was seen that the perception of breast milk of the participants with children was higher than those who did not and, there was a statistically significant difference in this regard ($p<0.05$).

A significant difference was found statistically between the breast milk perception scale scores of the participants and the number of children ($p<0.05$). As the result of the Bonferroni test, which was conducted to determine which groups cause the difference, it was stated that the breast milk perceptions of the participants with 2 and 3 children were higher than the participants with no children.

When the breastfeeding status of the children of participants was examined, it was determined that the breast milk perceptions of the participants whose children were breastfed were higher than those who did not, and there was a statistically significant difference in this regard ($p<0.05$).

A significant difference was found statistically between the breast milk perception scale scores and participants' knowledge about breast milk ($p<0.05$). The participants who received

information about breast milk were observed to have higher breast milk perceptions than the participants who did not.

Table 3. Comparison of Breast Milk Perceptions According to Participants' Descriptive Characteristics

Variables	Avg±SD	Test Statistics	p	
Generation	Generation Z	112.47±21.29	1.569	0.210
	Generation Y	115.34±23.88		
	Generation X	119.73±18.21		
Sex	Female	116.68±19.887	2.738	0.007
	Male	107.91±31.82		
Marital Status	Married	119.33±19.22	9.518	0.000
	Single	113.04±21.32		
	Divorced	97.73±41.77		
Educational Status	Literate	119.25±18.66	0.503	0.681
	Elementary School	113.72±34.06		
	High School	117.35±18.88		
	University	114.36±21.14		
Employment Status	Employed	115.82±24.13	0.452	0.651
	Unemployed	114.70±21.48		
Income Status	Low	102.52±38.52	8.515	0.000
	Medium	115.16±18.72		
	High	121.89±22.30		
Family Type	Nuclear Family	116.58±19.22	1.964	0.050
	Extended Family	111.11±30.03		
Presence of Children	Yes	119.06±19.82	2.956	0.003
	No	111.88±24.25		
Number of Children	0	111.48±24.50	2.748	0.028
	1	117.27±20.76		
	2	120.29±19.04		
	3	121.32±18.42		
	4 and above	118.96±19.90		
Breastfeeding Status of Children	Yes	120.44±18.25	5.240	0.002
	No	112.33±26.73		
Status of Receiving Information About Breast Milk	Yes	120.61±18.53	4.477	0.000
	No	109.94±24.84		

DISCUSSION

In the research, the obtained total average score of the participating individuals from the Breast Milk Perception Scale for Adults was determined as 115.17±22.59. Similar to the results obtained from the research, the breast milk perceptions of the participants were determined to be above the average in Bafalı et al. (2019)'s (125.5±15.7) and Eren (2016)'s (120.9±16.7) researches. According to the research, the breast milk perception scores of individuals are thought to be above the average, however, they must be improved.

In the research, the breast milk perception scale scores of the individuals were observed to change significantly according to the gender and the breast milk perception scale scores of the female participants were higher than the male participants. Some research in the literature indicate that the individuals' gender does not affect their perceptions of breast milk (Bafalı et

al., 2019; Bosi, Çoban, & Cebeci, 2020; Eren, 2016). Similar to the results of the present research, average score of mothers' level of breast milk perception scale were significantly higher than that of fathers in Dönmez & Korğalı (2021)'s research. The results obtained from our research are expected considering the physiological phenomena (mothers' carrying the baby in their womb, giving birth) that cause women to embrace the motherhood role more.

When the marital status of the individuals was examined, it was seen that the married individuals' average scores of the breast milk perception scale were higher than the single or divorced individuals, and the difference was statistically significant. Bosi et al. (2020) found that the marital status of the participants did not have a significant effect on the breast milk-breastfeeding knowledge scores, yet the average knowledge scores of married people were higher than single ones. It was determined that married individuals have a more positive attitude towards breastfeeding than single individuals (Amin, Abdulrahman, Al Muhaidib, & Al, 2014). The result obtained from research suggests that the presence of their spouses positively affects the perception of breast milk in married couples.

In the research, individuals' income status was observed to affect breast milk perceptions. Breast milk perceptions of the participants with low income status were found to be lower than the participants with medium and high income status. In some researches regarding breastfeeding, breastfeeding self-efficacy scores of mothers whose economic status were considered to be good were better than other mothers (Aluş Tokat & Okumuş, 2013; Baysal Yalçınöz, Türkoğlu, & Küçükoğlu, 2014). Similarly, Konukoğlu & Pasinlioğlu (2021) found in their research that mothers whose monthly income was less than their expenses had low breastfeeding self-efficacy levels. Individuals' income levels are closely related to their employment status and education level. Also, since a good income will affect the living conditions of individuals, these conditions also affect the perceptions of individuals. This is supported by the relationship between poor income and negative breast milk perceptions found in the research. Therefore, it is considered that necessary support mechanisms and educational programs should be planned in order to change the negative perceptions about the breast milk perception of low-income individuals.

When individuals' status of having children was examined in the research, it was seen that the perception of breast milk of the participants with children was higher than those who did not have children, and the difference was statistically significant. In addition, it was determined that the breast milk perception changed significantly with the number of children. In the research, breast milk perception which was lower in the first child was observed to have increased in second and third children, but decreased again in fourth child and above.

Unlike the research results, Dönmez & Korğalı (2021) found that there was no relationship between the breast milk perception and the number of births. In the research conducted by Gerçek, Sarıkaya Karabudak, Ardiç Çelik, & Saruhan (2017), the perceived breastfeeding self-efficacy level was determined to have increased as the number of children increased. Similar to the research results, Konukoğlu & Pasinlioğlu (2021) found that the average breast milk perception score of those who had a second pregnancy was higher than the average of those in their first and a third pregnancy. It was stated that in the first pregnancy, mothers were expected not to have enough awareness about breastfeeding since they did not have previous breastfeeding experience, and that in the second pregnancy, mothers became more conscious about breastfeeding when compared to the first pregnancy. The same research indicates that breastfeeding becomes ordinary after having 3 or more pregnancies, and therefore breastfeeding sensitivity decreases. Presence of children indicates that individuals have an experience in breastfeeding processes and breast milk before. The research results show that the presence of children positively affects the breast milk perception. The change in the perception of breast milk with the number of children supports the results obtained from the research of Konukoğlu & Pasinlioğlu (2021). Since mothers experienced breastfeeding in their first pregnancies, they became more sensitive about breastfeeding in their second and third pregnancies. It was speculated that as the number of children increased, breast milk perception of individuals may have decreased due to the reasons caused by habituation.

When the breastfeeding status of the children of the individuals participating in the research was examined, breast milk perception of the individuals whose children were breastfed was observed to be higher than those who did not, and the difference was statistically significant. Researches that determine whether breastfeeding experience in mothers affect breastfeeding self-efficacy can be abundantly found in the literature. Aydın & Pasinlioğlu (2018) emphasized in their research that those who did not have breastfeeding experience had higher breastfeeding self-efficacy levels. In different researches, however, breastfeeding experience was determined not to affect breastfeeding self-efficacy (Baysal et al., 2014; Konukoğlu & Pasinlioğlu, 2021). Researches in which breastfeeding experience is associated with breastfeeding self-efficacy can also be found in literature (Brandão et al., 2018; Yang, Gao, Ip, & Sally Chan, 2016). The obtained results are considered to be important in terms of showing that women and men whose children are breastfed have positive breast milk perceptions.

In the research, individuals who received information about breast milk were observed to have better perceptions of breast milk than participants who did not. Similarly, Bafalı et al.

(2019) found in their research that those who were informed about breast milk and breastfeeding had better perceptions of breast milk than those who did not. In the research of Dönmez & Korğalı (2021), the scale scores of mothers and fathers who received lectures on breast milk were found to be higher than those who did not receive lectures, but statistically, this difference was significant only for mothers. In Eren (2016)'s research, however, no significant difference was found between the participants' status of getting information about breast milk in terms of their scores. The obtained results suggest that being informed about breast milk is significant as they show that it positively affects the perceptions of breast milk.

There was no statistically significant difference that can be found between the participating individuals' generation status whether it's X, Y or Z and the breast milk perception scale scores. There was no significant difference between the generations, but when the generations were examined in the research, breast milk perception scores were observed to be the highest in the X generation and the lowest in the Z generation. Similarly, Konukoğlu & Pasinlioğlu (2021) found in their research that breastfeeding self-efficacy increases with age. In the research of Aydın & Pasinlioğlu (2018), no statistical difference was found between the average breastfeeding self-efficacy scores and age groups. The fact that the majority of the participants (60.4%) were generation Y, which is the adulthood, made us think that it may have positive effects on breast milk perception scores. The obtained results are important as they show that the breast milk perception is positively affected as age increases and the breast milk perception is low in younger individuals. Planning according to the life periods of the individuals will be more effective in reinforcing the positive perception in educations aimed at creating breast milk perception in individuals.

No statistically significant difference was found between the education levels, employment status and family types of the individuals participating in the research and the breast milk perception scale scores. Similar to the research results, Dönmez & Korğalı (2021) also found that there was no relationship between the scale score and the age, education level, employment status and family types of the parents. Bafalı et al. (2019) found that there was no statistically significant difference between adults' breast milk perceptions and education level and employment status. Unlike the results obtained from the research, there are also researches where it was determined that breastfeeding self-efficacy changed according to the family type and education level of individuals (Aydın & Pasinlioğlu, 2018; Konukoğlu & Pasinlioğlu, 2021). Different results obtained from the researchers conducted in literature may be related to issues such as the structure of the sample in which the research was conducted, the time of the research, and cultural differences. In the research, the fact that the majority of

the participants (58.9%) were university graduates suggests that it may have positive effects on breast milk perception scores.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this research was to examine the perceptions of adult individuals in different generations about breast milk and factors affecting them. In the research, the breast milk perception scores of individuals are determined to be above the average. The results showed that factors such as gender, marital status, income status, presence of children, number of children, breastfeeding, and being informed about breast milk affected individuals' breast milk perception. No statistically significant difference was found between the participants' generation status whether it's X, Y or Z, their education levels, job, and family types and their scale scores of breast milk perception ($p>0.05$).

The research results show that educational programs and awareness programs must be planned and created to develop a positive breast milk perception by taking into account individual, social, and economic factors. Developing a positive breast milk perception is critical in terms of initiating and maintaining a healthy breastfeeding process. Therefore, society's awareness about the merits and advantages of breast milk must be raised. Research results are considered to guide the programs aimed at developing a positive perception of breast milk in society.

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