

Breastfeeding and the mother–child relationship

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Abstract

Background: The relationship between a mother and child is extremely important, especially with regard to breastfeeding habits. These affect the lives of children and mothers at an early stage and have become a source of concern for health workers and non-professionals alike.

Objectives: This study was aimed at determining the relationships that exist between a mother and child and various breastfeeding habits.

Method: The primary method of data collection was the design and use of a comprehensive questionnaire, which was distributed to women at the post-natal unit of the Gynecology Department. These women were civil servants, traders, students and housewives. A simple random sampling procedure of data collection was adopted in selecting the sample of 250 women. A chi-square method of analysis was used to test for independence of association. A 5% level of significance was considered.

Results: At a 5% level of significance, a significant relationship existed between the category/occupation of mothers and the time intervals at which mothers breastfed their children ($\chi^2_{cal} = 20.53$). Given the same level, exclusive breastfeeding was found to be dependent on a woman's occupation ($\chi^2_{cal} = 8.49$); however, at the same significance level, analysis showed that there was a significant relationship between a mother's decision to feed her child breast milk as well as semi-solid food and those who chose to breastfeed exclusively ($\chi^2_{cal} = 12.168$). No significant relationship ($\chi^2_{cal} = 3.14$) was found in determining whether children who are fed breast milk only are more intelligent than children who are fed semi-solid food as well.

Conclusion: Mothers were expected to breastfeed their children at will because the time intervals at which they should breastfeed were not fixed. It seems that breastfeeding does not determine the intelligence of a child. Although it is generally recommended that mothers should practice exclusive breastfeeding, the findings of this study suggested that mothers should be equally recommended to alternate between feeding their children both semi-solid food and breast milk and breast milk exclusively, because a significant relationship exists between a mother's decision to feed breast milk and semi-solid food as well as breastfeeding exclusively.

Photograph



Biography

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