

## KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE, AND PRACTICES ABOUT EXCLUSIVE BREASTFEEDING AMONG MOTHERS AGED 18-49 YEARS ATTENDING SEKANYONYI HEALTH CENTRE IV IN MITYANA DISTRICT. ACROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY.

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Page | 1

### ABSTRACT

#### Background

Exclusive breastfeeding is the situation in which an infant receives only breast milk from his/her mother or a wet nurse for the first six months and no other solids or liquids except drops or syrups consisting of vitamins, minerals, supplements, or medicines.

#### Purpose

To determine the knowledge attitude and practices about exclusive breastfeeding among mothers aged 18-49 years attending Sekanyonyi Health Center IV in Mityana District.

#### Method

A descriptive cross-sectional study with quantitative approaches was used, 96 respondents were selected using a simple random sampling technique, data was collected using a questionnaire and was analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequencies and percentages.

#### Results

Study findings indicated that the respondents had good knowledge about exclusive breastfeeding since the majority 90 (94%) had ever had about exclusive breastfeeding, the majority 80 (83%) were aware of the duration of exclusive breastfeeding, and 50 (52%) knew that breast milk reduces the risk of some non-communicable diseases. A generally fair attitude towards EBF among mothers was achieved as 94 (97.9%) agreed that giving breast milk to a new borne within an hour of birth is important 95 (98.9%) agreed that breastfed babies are healthier than non-breastfed babies and only 16 (16.7%) agreed that EBF reduces the weight gained during pregnancy. Regarding the practice of exclusive breastfeeding, it was fairly good with the majority 90 (93.8%) giving their babies the colostrum, 84 (87.5%) initiating breastfeeding within an hour of birth and 48 (50%) still breastfeeding at the time of the study.

#### Conclusion

There was a high level of knowledge, a fair attitude, and a fairly good practice of EBF.

#### Recommendation

The Ministry of Health should also advocate for all workplaces to have breastfeeding breaks and rooms for working mothers to ensure that they breastfeed their babies.

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**Keywords:** Knowledge, Attitude, Breastfeeding, Mothers, Sekanyonyi, Health Centre Mityana

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#### Background of the Study

Exclusive breastfeeding is the situation in which an infant receives only breast milk from his/her mother or a wet nurse for the first six months and no other solids or liquids except drops or syrups consisting of vitamins, minerals, supplements, or medicines. (Jama et al., 2020).

Globally, exclusive breastfeeding remains a challenge with only 38% of infants being exclusively breastfed in the first six months (Nayak, 2022). Another study carried out about exclusive breastfeeding globally revealed that of 56 million infants, approximately 22 million were

exclusively breastfed, while over 34 million children were not. (Jama et al., 2020).

In Africa, studies reveal that exclusive breastfeeding has been consistently low, especially in sub-Saharan Africa with South Africa being the worst at it. Vitalis et al., 2022. A study carried out in Zimbabwe about the determinants of exclusive breastfeeding revealed that only 40% of babies under six months of age were exclusively breastfed with the low rates being attributed to being a young mother under 25 years of age, living in less than two rooms, traditional family practices against EBF and mother's poor economic status. (Mundagowa et al., 2019).

A study carried out in Kampala, Uganda about the prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding among mothers in the informal sector revealed that only 42.8% of mothers were able to carry out exclusive breastfeeding and this low prevalence was linked to poor attendance of antenatal care services, mother's poor perception about EBF, as well as a poor economic status. (Nabunya et al., 2020).

Several studies have been carried out in the country but there has been no study on exclusive breastfeeding in Mityana District hence my study is meant to explore the factors influencing exclusive breastfeeding among mothers aged 18-49 years attending to Sekanyonyi Health Centre IV in Mityana District. To determine the knowledge, attitude, and practices about exclusive breastfeeding among mothers aged 18-49 years attending Sekanyonyi Health Centre IV in Mityana district.

## METHODOLOGY

### Study design

A descriptive cross-sectional study was done which employs a quantitative method where data was collected once and there was no follow-up of respondents.

### Study area

The study was conducted at Sekanyonyi Health Centre IV in the central region of Uganda, Buganda sub-region in Mityana District. The health center was chosen because of the large number of mothers who turn up for immunization and postnatal services. According to the district health records the facility has an average patient turn-up of about 800 monthly. The study focused on knowledge, attitudes, and practices about exclusive breastfeeding among mothers aged 18-49 years attending Sekanyonyi Health Centre IV in the central part of Uganda. This study was done in June 2023.

### Study population

The study population involved mothers of ages 18-49 with children 0-6 months attending SHC. These mothers voluntarily consented and satisfied the selection criteria below.

### Sample size determination

The calculation of the sample size using Kish Leslie's formula (1965)

$$n = Z^2 PQ/d^2$$

Where; n = the desired sample size

Z = the standard normal deviation usually set at 1.96

P = prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding in the population of Sekanyonyi Health Centre IV is 50%.

Therefore P= 0.50

$$Q = (1-P)$$

d = absolute error allowed (10%) = 0.1

Substitution into the above equation

$$Q = (1-p) = (1-0.50) = 0.50$$

$$\text{Thus, } n = \frac{(1.96)^2 (0.50 \times 0.50)}{(0.1)^2}$$

$$n = 96.04$$

Therefore: n = 96 Respondents.

### Sampling Technique

A simple random sampling technique was employed to save time and it was cost effective and also minimized bias.

### Sampling procedure.

The sampling method was simple random sampling which involved selecting respondents from the study population by chance, and a lottery technique was used where yes and no were written on small papers, folded, and mixed through a small box. Then the mothers picked one at a time and those who picked were selected to participate in the study.

### Data collection method.

The researcher used a self-administered questionnaire for respondents who were able to read and write. This method was chosen because it allowed the researcher to participate in data collection and clarify where needed. The questionnaire was designed in a way that allowed the researcher to obtain information to answer the research questions objectively.

### Data collection tool.

The researcher adopted and used a semi-structured researcher-administered questionnaire, which consisted of closed-ended questions. These enabled the researcher to get specific answers. The questionnaires were set in English.

### Data collection procedure.

The researcher asked all the respondents for their willingness to participate in the study and for those who agreed and were literate a questionnaire was administered to them and no personal information was asked from the respondents as this was to maintain confidentiality and maintain trust with the participants.

### Study variables

#### Independent variables include.

These consisted of the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of breastfeeding mothers.

#### Dependent variables include.

Exclusive breastfeeding among mothers aged 18-49 years:

### Quality control

The researcher ensured the quality of the research and results by pretesting the data collection tool at the post-natal clinic. The answers were then analyzed to check their viability and in any case of errors or omissions they were corrected. A research assistant was trained to assist in data collection and was under the guidance of the researcher which helped to save time and reduce the high possibility of error during data collection, ample time to the respondents was allowed for accurate data collection during the study. The study targeted all breastfeeding and

biological mothers attending Sekanyonyi Health Centre IV and voluntarily consented to participate in the study. However, it excluded breastfeeding mothers below 18 years and those above 49 years of age. It also excluded mothers with breastfeeding problems such as mastitis as well as babies with major birth defects that didn't allow exclusive breastfeeding.

The researcher ensured that the standard operating procedures were followed during data collection from the respondents.

### Data analysis and presentation

Data was analyzed manually and entered electronically using the computer application Microsoft Excel to give

meaning and was presented in frequency tables and figures.

### Ethical considerations

An introductory letter was drafted from the research committee of Medicare Health Professionals College and presented to the in charge of Sekanyonyi Health Centre Four.

Relevant permission and approval were also sought from the Mityana District Health Officer as well as other concerned authorities before the study. The participants were briefed about the study to gain informed consent from them. This provided authorized permission and security to the researcher during the study.

## RESULTS

### Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondent

**Table 1: Shows the respondents by their socio-demographic characteristics (n=96)**

Variable	Category	Frequency(n)	Percentage (%)
Age	15- 20years	76	79.1
	21-30years	10	10.4
	31-40years	09	9.4
	41-50years	01	1.0
Marital Status	Married	80	83.3
	Single	16	16.6
Tribe	Muganda	56	58.3
	Mutooro	02	2.1
	Musoga	02	2.1
	Munyakole	30	31.2
	Others	06	6.1
Occupation	Housewife	10	10.4
	Teacher	11	11.5
	Farmer	50	52.1
	Others	25	26.0

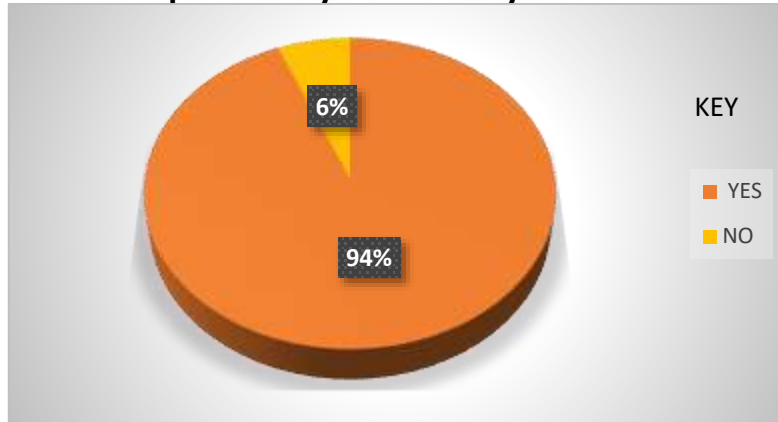
Source: Primary data (2023)

Table 1 shows that the majority, 76 (79.1%) of the respondents were between the ages 15-20 years, and the minority, 01 (1.0%) were between the ages 41-50 years. Regarding marital status, the majority, 80 (83.3%) were

married and the minority, 16 (16.6%) were single. Tribe-wise, the majority, 56 (58.3%) were Baganda and the minority 02, 02 (2.1%, 2.1%) were Batooro and Basoga respectively.

### Knowledge of mothers about exclusive breastfeeding

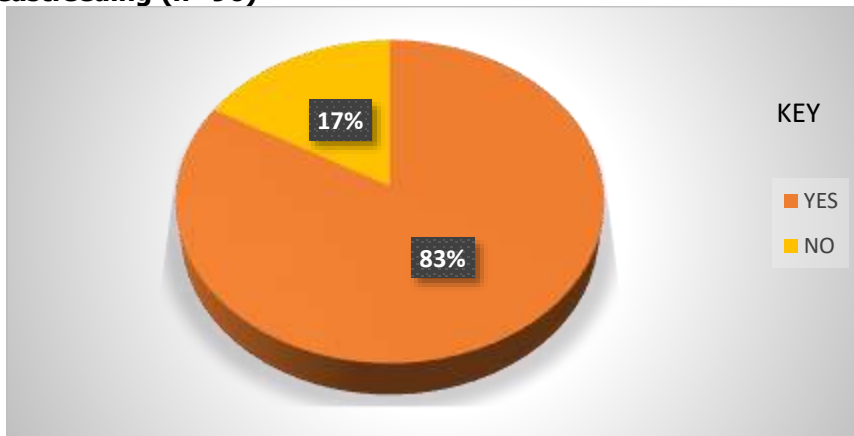
**Figure 1: Distribution of respondents by whether they had heard about EBF (n=96)**



*Source Primary data (2023)*

Figure 1 shows that the majority, 90 (94%) had ever heard about exclusive breastfeeding while the minority that is 6 (6%) had not heard about it.

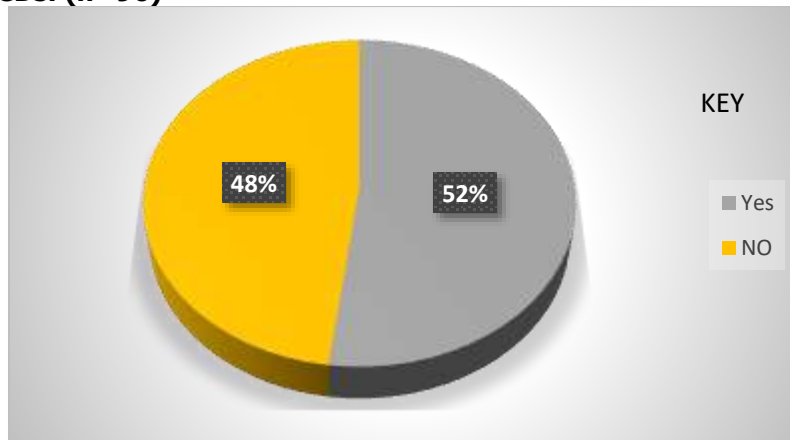
**Figure 2: Distribution of respondents by whether they were aware of the duration of exclusive breastfeeding (n=96)**



*Source: Primary data 2023.*

Figure 2 shows that the majority of the mothers, 80 (83%) were aware of the duration of exclusive breastfeeding while the minority, 16 (17%) were ignorant about the duration of exclusive breastfeeding.

**Figure 3: Distribution of respondents by whether they knew that breast milk reduces the risk of some NCDs. (n=96)**



Source: Primary data 2023.

Figure 3 shows that 50 (52%) of the mothers were aware that breast milk reduces the risk of some non-communicable diseases while 46 (48%) of them were unaware about.

### Attitude of mothers towards exclusive breastfeeding

**Table 2: Distribution of respondents by their attitude towards EBF (n=96)**

Variable	Response	Frequency(n)	Percentage (%)
Breastfeeding within an hour of birth is important	Yes	94	97.9
	No	02	2.1
Breastfed babies are healthier than non-breastfed babies	Yes	95	98.9
	No	01	1.0
EBF reduces weight gained during pregnancy	Yes	16	16.7
	No	80	83.3

Source: Primary data 2023

Results from Table 2 show that 94 (97.9%) of the mothers agreed that breastfeeding within an hour of birth was important while only 02 (2.1%) disagreed with it. Furthermore, 95 (98.9%) agreed that breastfed babies are

healthier than non-breastfed whereas 01 (1.0%) disagreed. On exclusive breastfeeding reducing weight gained during pregnancy, 16 (16.7%) agreed to it while 80 (83.3%) disagreed with it.

### Mothers' breastfeeding practices

**Table 3: Distribution of respondents by breastfeeding practices.**

Variable	Answer	Frequency(n=96)	Percentage (%)
Expressed and discarded colostrum	Yes	06	6.3
	No	90	93.8
Total		96	100
Exclusively breastfed at the time of the study	Yes	48	50
	No	48	50
Total		96	100
Initiated breastfeeding within an hour of birth	Yes	84	87.5
	No	12	12.5
Total		96	100
Giving breast milk in addition to formula milk	Yes	41	85.4
	No	07	14.6
Total		48	100

Source: Primary data 2023

From Table 3, 06 (6.3%) of the mothers expressed and discarded colostrum while 90 (93.8%) did not. Half of the mothers, 48 (50%) were exclusively breastfeeding and 48 (50%) were not exclusively breastfeeding at the time of the study. About 84 (87.5%) of the mothers had initiated breastfeeding within an hour of birth while 12 (12.5%) had not. Furthermore, 41 (85.4%) of the mothers were giving breast milk in addition to formula milk while 07 (14.6%) were not.

## Discussion

### Knowledge of mothers on exclusive breastfeeding

The study revealed that almost all the respondents, 90 (94%) said that they had ever heard about exclusive breastfeeding while a very small number, 6 (6%) said that they had never heard about it. The findings of this study imply that exclusive breastfeeding was popular among the respondents. This was probably because of the health education offered at the health facilities during times of antenatal and postnatal visits coupled with media talk shows regarding exclusive breastfeeding which therefore provided sufficient information to the mothers thereby increasing their knowledge and awareness regarding exclusive breastfeeding. These study findings correlate with a study done in East Africa by Dukuzumuremyi *et al.*, (2020) which reported that 96.2% of mothers had ever heard about exclusive breastfeeding.

More than three-quarters of the respondents, 80 (83%) could clearly state the duration of exclusive breastfeeding which is six months while less than half, 16 (17%) were not sure about its duration. The findings of this study imply that most respondents were aware of the duration of exclusive breastfeeding and it indicates a likelihood of most mothers picking up the practice of exclusive breastfeeding. This was probably because of sufficient information regarding exclusive breastfeeding from the health workers at the facility which therefore increased the mothers' knowledge regarding the practice. The findings of this study disagree with a study in East Africa by Dukuzumuremyi *et al.*, (2020) which reported that only 49.2% of the mothers knew the duration of exclusive breastfeeding.

The study also pointed out that an average number of mothers, 50 (52%) knew that exclusive breastfeeding reduces the risk of some non-communicable diseases such as breast cancer while 46 (48%) were not aware of it. This could be attributed to the health education talks at the facility by the health workers who gave the mothers this information and the fact that most mothers were multigravidas hence they already had experience regarding this information. The findings of this study correlate with those of a study done in Italy by Cascone *et al.*, (2019) which stated that 45.5% and 31% correctly indicated that exclusive breastfeeding reduces the risk of breast cancer and some non-communicable diseases respectively.

### Mothers' attitude towards exclusive breastfeeding

The findings of the study showed that the majority of the respondents, 94 (97.9%) believed that giving breast milk to a newborn within one hour of birth is important compared to the minority, 02 (2.1%) who disagreed. This could be attributed to the fact that breast milk is cheap readily available and accessible for both the mother and the infant. Furthermore, considering that most of the respondents were multigravidas, they had already received information from the health workers at the facility and even gained experience concerning exclusive breastfeeding. The findings of this study correlate with those of a study done in East Africa by Dukuzumuremyi *et al.*, (2020) which found that 42.1% of the mothers strongly agreed that giving breast milk in the first is important versus the 24.0% who strongly disagreed.

The study results on the mothers' responses on whether breastfed babies are healthier than non-breastfed babies showed that the majority, 95 (98.9%) agreed and only 01 (1.0%) disagreed. This is because most of the mothers had already had more than one child and had gained experience about the fact that exclusive breastfeeding keeps the baby healthy as well as EBF being convenient and beneficial to the baby as compared to mixed feeding. The results are of a positive attitude of the respondents towards exclusive breastfeeding. This is in line with the study results in Gwanda District Zimbabwe by Mundagowa *et al.*, (2019) which showed that 95% of the mothers strongly agreed that breastfed babies are healthier than non-breastfed babies.

Regarding whether EBF reduces the weight gained during pregnancy there were mixed opinions with the majority of the mothers, 80 (83.3%) strongly disagreeing and only 16 (16.7%). Most of the mothers attributed the weight loss to how the mother feeds after the delivery of the child rather than exclusive breastfeeding. This could be probably because most mothers were multigravidas and had not lost the weight gained during pregnancy after the birth of their children. These findings are in line with those done in Italy by Cascone *et al.*, (2019) which showed that only 28.8% of the mothers agreed that EBF reduces the weight gained during pregnancy and 39.2% disagreed.

### Mothers' Breastfeeding Practices

The study revealed that the majority of the respondents 84 (87.5%) had initiated breastfeeding within an hour of birth while the minority 12 (12.5%) did not. These study findings imply that the level of breastfeeding was high among the respondents. This was probably because of the desire of the mothers for healthy babies. It could also be due to the health education sessions by the health workers to the mothers towards the importance of initiating breastfeeding within an hour of giving birth. The findings of this study agree with a study done in East Africa by Dukuzumuremyi *et al.*, (2020) which found that 72.9% of the mothers had initiated breastfeeding within an hour after delivery and only 55.9% had exclusively breastfed within the first six months.

Very few of the respondents 06 (6.3%) reported having expressed and discarded colostrum while the majority 90 (93.8%) reported that they had given their babies the

colostrum. This study finding showed that the majority of the mothers were giving their babies the colostrum and the minority who did not attributed it to the belief that colostrum causes abdominal pain. This shows that most mothers were aware that colostrum was important for the growth and well-being of their babies. We can attribute this to the health education done at the facility in addition to the fact that some mothers were multiparas so they had already gone through the practice of breastfeeding. The findings of this study are in agreement with those done in Burao district, Somaliland which showed that only 7.8% of the mothers had expressed and discarded colostrum (Jama, *et al.*, 2020).

An equal number of respondents 48 (50%) was obtained for both the mothers who were still exclusively breastfeeding at the time of the study and those who were not. This could have been because either the six months had not yet elapsed or the mothers had started to wean their babies. This finding disagrees with that of a study done in Somalia which found that 90.3% of the respondents were still breastfeeding at the time of the study Jama *et al.*, (2020).

The study also found out that the majority of the respondents 41 (85.4%) were giving breast milk in addition to formula milk while the minority 07 (14.6%) were giving only formula milk.

This finding shows a poor practice of exclusive breastfeeding among mothers. They attributed the poor practice to mothers having insufficient breast milk for the baby, some claimed to be working mothers and had no time to exclusively breastfeed their babies as they were needed at their workplaces and others just stopped exclusively breastfeeding because it was stressful to them and it led to unnecessary weight gain of the mothers. The findings are in agreement with those of a study done in Italy which found that 6.2% of the babies received only formula milk and 17.6% received breast milk in addition to formula milk (Cascone, *et al.*, 2019).

## Conclusions

The study revealed that the knowledge of mothers towards exclusive breastfeeding was very good. However, there was reduced knowledge about the fact that EBF reduces the risks of some non-communicable diseases.

The study also revealed that mothers' attitude towards exclusive breastfeeding was fairly good with a few of the mothers having a bad attitude and attributing it to the fact that breastfeeding leads to unnecessary weight gain and it was time-consuming as they were needed at their workplaces.

Generally, the practice of exclusive breastfeeding was good with most of the mothers initiating it within the first hour of delivery. However, some mothers noted having stopped the practice because they were working mothers and had no time and a few others found the practice stressful.

## Recommendations

The Ministry of Health together with the staff of Sekanyonyi Health Center IV should ensure continuous

health education and sensitization of the mothers about the importance of exclusive breastfeeding as well as its frequency in a day and the dangers of not breastfeeding. Within the community, awareness can be achieved by the use of peer mothers in the form of groups to educate first-time mothers about EBF.

The Ministry of Health should also advocate for breastfeeding rooms as well as breaks at all workplaces to enable breastfeeding mothers who are working there to exclusively breastfeed their babies.

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## List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

<b>DHO:</b>	District Health Officer
<b>UNICEF:</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>EBF:</b>	Exclusive Breastfeeding
<b>SHC:</b>	Sekanyonyi Health Centre
<b>UHS:</b>	Uganda Health Survey
<b>WHO:</b>	World Health Organization

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## Conflict of interest

The author's conflict of interest.

## Author Biography


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