Breastfeeding Practices and Nutritional Assessment of Under - two Year Children: A Cross-cultural and Cross-national Comparative Study of Bangladesh and Germany

Supervised by:

1st Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Barbara Freytag-Leyer
Department of Nutritional, Food and Consumer Sciences
Fulda University of Applied Sciences

2nd Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Angelika Ploeger
Department of Organic Food Quality and Food Culture
University of Kassel

Submitted to -
University of Kassel and Fulda University of Applied Sciences
International Center for Development and Decent Work (ICDD)

Field research in Bangladesh
November 2016 – February 2017
Submitted by Kaniz Fatima
Student Number 33253264
5th March 2017
Acknowledgement

The field research work of study on health in Bangladesh was financially supported by

International Center for Development and Decent Work (ICDD)
Abstract

Now a day empirical scientific knowledge of breastfeeding is very essential for every mother. Breastfeeding faces a big challenge in this global and rapidly changing competitive lifestyle. I was interested about the current situation and practice of breastfeeding in different culture. One part of my field research work for my Master Thesis was conducted in Bangladesh from November, 2016 to February, 2017. The aim of my current study is to identify the breastfeeding practices and observe the nutritional status of under two year babies and their mothers in two different nations. For evaluating the situation of breastfeeding all over Bangladesh; four divisions were selected for field research work. A structure coded questionnaire was conducted for data collection. Though it was a very big challenge for me to collect data from Bangladeshi mothers who are very sensitive to consult regarding breastfeeding issues; but at the end of my work my mind was fulfilled by satisfaction. The obstacles and barriers help me to learn how to work in the practical field. My overall field research work was very successful. I would like to extend my deepest thanks to the International Center for Development and Decent Work (ICDD) for making possible the field research work in different areas of Bangladesh.

Introduction

Breastfeeding is the basic right for every newborn baby. But day by day, the practice of breastfeeding decreases. The breastfeeding initiation rate of Germany is very high than Bangladesh but it decreases onwards. On the other hand, Bangladeshi mothers breastfed their babies longer period but the initiation breastfeeding rate is low and they use other commercial baby food in a very high rate at exclusive breastfeeding period. Though most of the mothers have known that breast milk is the best intake for infants, but the present global situation is only 38% of the infants are exclusively breastfed (Martin et al. 2016, p. 2; UNICEF 2013, p. 20). Aggressive marketing of breastmilk substitutes (WHO 2016, p. 7) and lack of facilities for lactating mothers in workplace (Shealy et al. 2005, p. 7; Bono and Pronzato 2012, p. 7) continues to undermine the improvement of the breastfeeding ratio in global. Besides this, the practice of the same breastfeeding related knowledge is different between the two cultures, also person to person. New mothers are highly influenced and sometimes imposed by the traditional practice and knowledge of breastfeeding. It has interrupted to practice the scientific knowledge of breastfeeding.

Bangladesh is a developing country where Germany is highly developed. The economical, educational and lifestyle of German mothers is better between these two different cultural nations. According to German Health Interview and Examination Survey for Children and Adolescents or “Studie zur Gesundheit von Kindern und Jugendlichen in Deutschland (KiGGS)”, the initiation of breastfeeding is around 90% but the breastfeeding duration decreasing significantly from 2001 onwards (Foterrek et al. 2014, p. 361; Rouw et al. 2015, p. 2; Walburg et al. 2010, p. 110). At the period of exclusive breastfeeding after three months it sharply drops around 40% and at six months it drops around 22% (Rouw et al. 2014, p. 2). In Germany, the upper-class society is less interested to breastfeed her infants (Vögele et al. 2013, p. 3). On the other hand, in Bangladesh the early initiation of breastfeeding rate is 57% (Akter et al. 2015, p. 5); 87% of infants who are less than 2
months of age exclusively breastfed while 55% under 6 months of age infants exclusively breastfed (Bangladesh Demographic and Health Service 2015, p. 44f).

**Research objective**

The aim of this study is to reveal influencing factors, mother’s perception, attitudes regarding breastfeeding, and nutritional assessment of mothers and under-two year children in comparison of two different cultures and nations in Bangladesh and Germany.

Specifically, there are four objectives of the current study: (1) to identify the differentiation of colostrum giving practices, exclusive breastfeeding practices, complementary feeding practices, mother's knowledge about breastfeeding in the study area of Bangladesh and Germany; (2) to observe the nutritional assessment of lactating mothers and under-two year children through Anthropometric indices (Height, weight, BMI, Head circumference; (3) to identify the available resources for mother’s good child care practices at the workplace in Germany and Bangladesh; (4) to identify the situation of formula feeding practices of under-two year children and the consequences in Germany and Bangladesh. It has also aimed to explore and exchange probable supportive information for the promotion of breastfeeding practices in Bangladesh and Germany.

**Activity schedule**

Collected data from field research work helps me to explore the similarities/ differentiation of breastfeeding knowledge and practice of two different countries. A structure coded quantitative questionnaire has conducted to analysis the scientific research results. 100 interviews were successfully completed from the state of Hesse, Germany. After that, in Bangladesh 100 interviews were also successfully completed by mothers from four areas (Dhaka Division, Mymensingh Division, Comilla Division, Rajshahi Division) at November 2016 to February 2017. The following chart has shown the activity schedule of data collection from Bangladesh.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17th November</td>
<td>Arrival in Dhaka, Bangladesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18th November</td>
<td>Manage all necessary tools for data collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19th November – 27th November</td>
<td>Apply hospitals to get permission for data collection in Bangladesh.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Met doctors and authority to convince them that how this research work will be beneficial for our mothers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28th November – 14th December</td>
<td>Data collection from Comilla, Bangladesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Comilla Medical College and Hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Perul Community Clinic, Comilla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Permanent residents of Sherpur, Comilla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15th December</td>
<td>Coming back to Dhaka, Bangladesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16th December – 29th December</td>
<td>Data collection from Mymensingh, Bangladesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Mymensingh Medical College and Hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Charpara Community Clinic, Mymensingh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30th December</td>
<td>- Coming back to Dhaka, Bangladesh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2nd January – 21st January | Data collection from Dhaka, Bangladesh  
- Dhaka Medical College and Hospital  
- Dhaka Shishu Hospital  
- Sir Salimullah Medical College and Hospital  
- Faridpur Medical College and Hospital  
- National Institute of Diseases of the Chest and Hospital  
- Permanent residents of Dhaka |
| 22nd January – 7th February | Data Collection from Rangpur, Rajshahi, Bangladesh  
- Permanent residents of Rangpur  
- Rangpur Medical College and Hospital |
| 8th February  | - Coming back to Dhaka                                                      |
| 9th February – 19th February | - Check and correction of primary data  
- Started to data coding  
- Preparing for departure from Bangladesh |
| 23rd February | - Return to Germany                                                        |

**Field Research Experience and Success**

During my three months stay in Bangladesh, I used my time very planned which has given a successful result at the end of my field research work. It was a big challenge for me to visit different areas; Specially, rural areas of Bangladesh. The issue of Breastfeeding is very sensitive for Bangladeshi people. Most of the mothers feeling shy and not willing to discuss about breastfeeding with a less known face. For this reason, it was very difficult to convince rural mothers that the open conversation about breastfeeding is very necessary for mothers and babies health. Sometimes, it took a longer period to get permission from other family members to talk with the mother regarding this issue. Also, it consumed too much time to get permission from hospitals. So, at the beginning of my field research work my bag was full of negative experiences.

At the end of my field research work; I feel, all my negative experiences turned into positive experiences. Because the negative experiences gave me a lot of practical knowledge. It is a great learning for my future career. Personally, I am very grateful to the International Center for Development and Decent Work (ICDD) for giving me an opportunity to do my thesis work comfortably. I am also thankful to my friends; specially Dr. Abdur Rahim (Assistant Professor at National Institute of Diseases of the Chest and Hospital) and Dr. Md. Monsurul Haque (Associate Professor of Cardiology at National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases) for their remarkable help to access hospitals and valuable guidelines. I would also like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my journalist friend Mr. Zahirul Alam (Chief News Editor at ntv - international television channel ltd. Dhaka) for his tremendous helps to make safety in new areas and encourage.

Finally, I am very hopeful about my Master Thesis Research work because I have done my field research work in Bangladesh and Germany very successfully. I am satisfied to me after completion the field research work.
References


