



THUMB SUCKING AND PACIFIER USE: IT'S RELATIONSHIP WITH BREASTFEEDING PATTERNS

¹Gaurav Solanki*, ¹Bharat Kachhawaha, ²Renu Solanki

¹Jodhpur National University, Jodhpur, Rajasthan, India.

²Lachoo Memorial College of Science and Technology, Autonomous, Jodhpur, India.

ABSTRACT

Sucking can be nutritive or non nutritive type. The current research focus was more on the non nutritive sucking habits of the children who were breast feed from birth. The current study was carried out to analyze the influence of thumb sucking and pacifier use on breastfeeding patterns in breast feed children. The result concluded that there was a relationship between the breastfeeding pattern and pacifier use where as it was not there in case of thumb sucking.

Key words: Breast Feeding, Thumb Sucking, Pacifier Use etc.

INTRODUCTION

The sucking habits of infants can be either nutritive or non nutritive in nature [1]. The present study focuses on non nutritive sucking like thumb sucking and sucking on a pacifier. Literatures have shown that the sucking reflex is present from an early age and thumb sucking has been observed in the foetus from as early as 18 weeks of gestational age. Pacifier devices are given to infants to comfort and calm them. Great variations in non nutritive sucking habits are seen in different cultures. Thumb sucking and pacifier use are related to dental malocclusion if they continue beyond a normal age limit for their use [2]. A study has reported an increased prevalence of oral candidacies in infants using a pacifier. It has been shown that the use of a pacifier in the early postpartum period, when the infant is learning to suck from the breast, may interfere with proper sucking and can contribute to so-called nipple confusion. Different studies have shown an association between pacifier use and shorter breastfeeding duration. The focus of the study was to analyze the influence of thumb sucking and pacifier use on the breastfeeding [3, 4].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

For the current research, the mother-infant pairs were followed up from the first week after delivery until

the child stopped the breast feeding. Written concern was taken from all mother infant pairs included in the study. The inclusion criteria resulted in a study population with the mothers having a mean age of 30 years. Three percent of the mothers were smokers. The mean duration of participation in the study was 7 months.

Data were obtained from daily visiting and interviews with the mother and the researcher.

Data Analysis was conducted for further analysis of the data.

RESULTS

Thumb sucking started early in the neonatal period. At 2 weeks, the prevalence of thumb sucking was 57%. It increased further to 86% at 16 weeks and then decreased to 69% at 26 weeks. During the first 2 months, occasional thumb sucking was more common than was frequent thumb sucking. During the first 6 months of life, 4% of the infants never sucked their thumb. Thumb sucking increased during the first 3 months. Of all of the infants, 65% were given a pacifier during the first week of life, 15% were given during the second to third week of life, 10% were given during the fourth to fifth week of life, and remaining were introduced to pacifiers later. The prevalence of pacifier use remained constant during the

Corresponding Author :- **Gaurav Solanki**, Email:- drgauravsolanki@yahoo.com

first 2 months of life. It then decreased slightly in 2-3 weeks. During the first 2 months, there was an increase in the proportion of infants using a pacifier frequently. Up to 9 weeks of age, frequent pacifier use alone was more common than frequent thumb sucking. Thereafter, frequent thumb sucking was more common.

The breastfeeding pattern was analyzed at 2, 4, 8, and 10 weeks of age by forming 2 groups. Both groups had a particular scheduled feeding pattern. Both group's children were conducting thumb sucking as per their age and habit. Significant differences in the breastfeeding pattern were found in both the group comparisons indicating that thumb sucking did not seem to be associated with the breastfeeding pattern. It was found that infants using a pacifier frequently had approximately one breastfeed less than the infants not using a pacifier. Both the level of education and the age of the mother were associated with breastfeeding duration, as well as with the use of a pacifier during the first 6 months. It was found that mother with higher levels of education breastfed for a longer period. There were no statistically significant infant gender differences in respect to thumb sucking and pacifier use.

DISCUSSION

A continuation of the increase in the total breastfeeding duration that has been observed previously over several decades was noted during this study period [5]. This increasing trend is probably a consequence of the debate on the benefits of breastfeeding that has been going on over a number of years and that now has been [6]. Compared with a Swedish study by Klackenbergl in the 1950s, the prevalences of both pacifier use and the combination of thumb sucking and pacifier use were higher in the present study. A possible explanation for this is the lower availability of pacifiers in the 1950s; now there is an

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enormous selection of pacifiers, which are marketed widely and accessible everywhere. The use of a pacifier also may interfere with proper sucking. A Brazilian study showed that at 4 months of age, 17% frequent pacifier users were there and 45% non user respectively [7]. The findings showed that even in a selected group of mothers who were motivated to breastfeed and who had previous breastfeeding experience, the use of a pacifier was associated with shorter breastfeeding duration. This is in contrast to the conclusion drawn by Victora that pacifier use did not contribute to shorter breastfeeding duration among mothers comfortable with breastfeeding [8]. He showed how different breast feeding behavioral styles and different ways of responding to the infant's behaviour and needs were associated with the pattern of pacifier use. The use of a pacifier is determined by a decision and action by the caregiver. There are large cultural differences in pacifier use. A very low prevalence of pacifier use and thumb sucking was found in Zimbabwe.

Smoking by the mother can shorten the breastfeeding duration [9]. The most common reasons for inaccuracy in the research may be due to the sleepiness of the mother and estimation of data. This usually meant that some night feeding could have occurred while the mother was sleeping or that the mother had given an estimate instead of the exact frequency of a feed [10].

CONCLUSION

The study shows an association between breastfeeding pattern and pacifier use. No such association was found between breastfeeding pattern and thumb sucking. Thumb sucking was not related duration of breastfeeding. The negative effects of pacifier use were mainly related to the frequency of its use. Further research is necessary to find an exact relation between them.