Breastfeeding then and now: how times have changed

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Abstract. Breastfeeding is as old as humanity itself, but views on it have evolved a lot. In the early 1900s, breastfeeding was the norm but formula was seen as a sign of status and modernity. By the mid-century, formula reigned supreme and breastfeeding was actively discouraged by hospitals and pediatricians. This study aims to determine contextual factors and underlying mechanisms influencing the implementation of workplace policies in Mexico.[1]

Keywords: Breastfeeding, Infections, Allergies, Obesity, SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome), Starving
**The Rise of Formula**

In the early-mid 20th century, formula companies launched aggressive marketing campaigns portraying formula as the scientifically superior choice. Hospitals gave new mothers 'care s

Breastfeeding rates plummeted. Many women today still cite the 'breast is best' mantra, showing how deeply this message penetrated culture.

**The Counterrevolution**

By the 1970s, as research mounted on the health benefits of breastfeeding, attitudes began to shift. Studies showed breastfed babies had lower risks of infections, allergies, obesity and SIDS. The WHO and UNICEF launched a global pro-breastfeeding campaign. Aims of this realist review were three-fold: to uncover underlying mechanisms, determine who benefits the most from such interventions and important contextual factors influencing uptake.[2]

In the INDIA, laws were passed protecting women's right to breastfeed in public and at work.

**A Balancing Act**

In India where Southern India had the highest EBF prevalence (79.2%) and the North-East reported the lowest (68.0%). EBF prevalence decreased with infant age, dropping faster in the South (43.7% at 5 months) compared to the North-East region (54.0% at 5 months) [3]. While public opinion strongly favors breastfeeding, many women struggle to balance it with work or personal challenges. But one thing is clear - breastfeeding has made a comeback as the gold standard for infant nutrition, even as we've gained more compassion for the complex realities of women's lives.

Overall, views on breastfeeding have swung dramatically over the last century. But amid these shifts, one truth remains: feeding our babies is about doing what's right for our own situations and values. And that's something for which there's no 'one size fits all' approach.

**Introduction**

Breastfeeding has been around since the dawn of humankind, but how it's practiced has evolved a lot over the years. These days, new moms have access to options that women in past generations could only dream of. Intention to breastfeed is
strong and many women want to receive information regarding breastfeeding.[4]

**Formula as a replacement**

In the early-mid 20th century, formula became widely available as an alternative to breast milk. While formula gave mothers more freedom and flexibility, it also led to a major drop in breastfeeding rates that lasted for decades. Many women at the time believed formula was more nutritious and convenient. We now know breast milk provides unmatched health benefits for both mom and baby.

**More support and education**

Today, expectant mothers have access to lactation consultants and support groups that provide guidance on breastfeeding. They also have accurate information from reputable sources about its benefits. As a result, breastfeeding rates have risen substantially since the 1970s.

**Nursing in public**

Public breastfeeding was once taboo and even illegal in some places. Now, most states have laws protecting a woman's right to nurse in public. Nursing covers and designated nursing areas provide more privacy and comfort for those who want it. In fact many research studies have focused upon the 'audience' or 'public' rather than the mother as participant. Opinions and attitudes around breastfeeding in public have been explored internationally, predominantly using surveys that have included the perspective of the general public and targeted community groups such as university students.[5]

While breastfeeding's timeless benefits endure, societal attitudes and available resources continue advancing. New mothers today can feel empowered to give their babies the best start in life with nature's perfect food. By understanding how far we've come, we can appreciate the opportunities and support new mothers now have to achieve their breastfeeding goals.

**Methods**

When it comes to breastfeeding, a lot has changed over the generations. Many of our grandmothers relied on strict schedules and certain positions thought to be the "right" way to nurse. Today, most experts recognize that breastfeeding is a personal experience and encourage finding what works for
Feeding on Demand

In decades past, new mothers were instructed to nurse their babies on a strict schedule, like every 3 to 4 hours. Now, most doctors recommend feeding your baby whenever they show signs of hunger, like stirring, sucking on their hands, or crying. This "on demand" feeding helps establish your milk supply and allows your baby to feed as often as they need. Don't worry that feeding too often will spoil your baby or make them overweight.

Breastfed babies can't be overfed, so nurse whenever your baby seems hungry.

New Positions

Gone are the days of believing the "football hold" was the only proper way to breastfeed.

While that position still works for many mothers and babies, there are several other holds you can try. The cross cradle hold, where you support your baby's head with the arm opposite the breast they're feeding from, and the side lying position, where you lie on your side facing your baby, can be more comfortable for some.

Supplements Only When Needed

Formula supplements or water were once commonly given to breastfed babies, but now doctors recommend breastfeeding exclusively if possible. Supplements are usually only needed if there are concerns about your baby's growth or hydration. Exclusive breastfeeding helps establish your milk supply and provides your baby with the nutrients they need. Only introduce supplements or solid foods after discussing it with your baby's doctor. The prevalence of EBF and other breastfeeding patterns were estimated by region, and multivariable logistic regression that adjusted for clustering and sampling weights was used to investigate the association between the study factors (child, maternal, household, health service and community factors) and EBF by regional areas in India.[6]

Breastfeeding has come a long way. Following your baby's cues and finding what works for you will help get your breastfeeding relationship off to the best start. Don't hesitate to ask your doctor or a lactation consultant for
help—they want you and your baby to succeed. With support and patience, you'll develop a breastfeeding rhythm in no time.

**Results**

Summary of breastfeeding information seeking categories including, cultural or societal norm, personal comfort and convenience, concerns about breastfeeding in public, health benefits for the baby, health benefits for the mother. On basis of results its shown that breastfeeding is helpful for the baby and as well as for mother and even some reasons of cultural, personal and convenience. 63.7% of the people are agreeing for the health benefits of the baby, 10.2% of the people are voting for the health benefits of the mother, 10.2% for personal comfort, 8.2% for concerns about breastfeeding in public, 4.1% for cultural or societal norm.

**Discussion**

All women must breastfeed their babies it is good for the baby immunity and growth have a lower risk of asthma, obesity, type 1 diabetes, and sudden infant death syndrome. Breastfeeding promotes bonding and emotional connection between the mother and baby so feeding can be a safe and appropriate alternative. In public breastfeeding, my opinion is that it should be normalized breastfeeding and we should have breastfeeding rooms in places where women can breastfeed conveniently and much awareness should be spread about it.
through camps. Let’s support breastfeeding as a right for women and increase the awareness of the social barriers that are created at home, in the workplace, and in public spaces. Women interrupt but then resume it after a period of supplementation [9]

Breast feeding in older days in early 90's
Breastfeeding in the early 90's and before was a different experience than today. Many new mothers didn't receive the same education and support for nursing that's common now. The benefits of breast milk and bonding weren't as well understood, and formula feeding was heavily marketed as a convenient alternative.

Lack of Knowledge.
Many women in the 80's and 90's didn't fully grasp how breastfeeding works or how to establish a good milk supply and latch. Without access to online resources and communities, new moms had to rely on their doctors and nurses for guidance.

Unfortunately, some medical professionals at the time were also misinformed about breastfeeding and did not provide evidence-based recommendations.

Formula Marketing.
Formula companies aggressively marketed their product, claiming formula was a modern, scientific alternative that was equivalent or even superior to breast milk.

Hospitals gave out free samples and many mothers were told formula was needed to supplement breastfeeding. This undermined their confidence in their ability to exclusively breastfeed.

Lack of Support.
New mothers today have access to lactation consultants, support groups, and online forums to help address any challenges. But in decades past, many women struggled through problems like poor latch, low supply, and soreness without professional support.

They often gave up quickly due to lack of knowledge of solutions or fear of "starving" their baby.

Less Acceptance.
Breastfeeding in public has become more accepted and protected today, but it used to be taboo. Many women felt uncomfortable nursing outside the home due to stigma. They were told it was shameful or not appropriate for children to
see. This made breastfeeding on-the-go or in social situations very difficult and led some mothers to switch to formula out of convenience.

While breastfeeding has been practiced for all of human history, the experience of new mothers in the 80's and 90's highlights how knowledge, support, and societal attitudes can impact health practices. With more education and advocacy, breastfeeding has become better understood and accepted—leading to improved outcomes and experiences for both mothers and babies.

**Later Obesity**

Evidence of the effects of breastfeeding on the risk of overweight and obesity is equivocal, though the latest meta-analysis of observational studies suggests a 13% reduction [7]

**Breast feeding in early 20's**

Back in the early 1900s, breastfeeding was the norm but it came with its own set of challenges.Formula and bottle feeding were gaining popularity, seen as a modern and scientific way to feed babies. However, breastfeeding rates began declining in the Western world.

Many women were uninformed about proper breastfeeding techniques. They received little guidance on how to overcome difficulties, and some were even told that their milk was inadequate. As a result, many gave up quickly. Hospital stays were also much longer back then, up to 10 days, and babies were separated from their mothers much of the time. By the time mothers and babies reunited, establishing breastfeeding could prove difficult.

**Formula was heavily marketed**

Formula companies aggressively marketed their products to hospitals and doctors. They claimed formula was superior and more scientific than breast milk. Sadly, this led to the widespread use of formula for newborns, even when breastfeeding was possible. Many women were told they didn't have enough milk and to supplement with formula. This often sabotaged the breastfeeding relationship before it even started.

**Little support for working mothers**

At the time, very few workplaces offered accommodations for breastfeeding mothers like private areas to pump and
longer maternity leaves. Most women stayed home, but for those who did work, breastfeeding often wasn't compatible with their jobs. There were no laws protecting a woman's right to breastfeed in public either.

Thankfully, times have changed. We now know breast milk provides the best nutrition for babies. Support for breastfeeding mothers has also improved. However, some of the same challenges still persist today, highlighting the need for further progress. With the right support and education, more women can feel empowered to start and continue breastfeeding.

**Breastfeeding nowadays**

These days, breastfeeding is strongly encouraged and supported. New mothers today have access to lactation consultants, support groups, and high-quality breast pumps that make the experience much easier.

Now, you have options like pumping and bottle feeding for when you need to be away from the baby or want someone else to feed them. You can pump and store milk for up to 6 months in the freezer. This flexibility allows mothers to continue breastfeeding for longer. Greater acceptance and accommodation

Attitudes toward breastfeeding have come a long way. It is now widely accepted and even protected by law. Most public places will accommodate a mother's need to breastfeed or pump. Your employer is also required to provide adequate break time and a private space for pumping. More education and resources

New mothers today have a wealth of resources to help them succeed at breastfeeding.

From prenatal classes to support groups, lactation consultants and online resources, mothers have help at their fingertips. They understand the benefits of breastfeeding and how to work through challenges. Longer duration

With greater support and acceptance, mothers today breastfeed their babies longer. The recommendation is to breastfeed exclusively for 6 months, and to continue breastfeeding for at least a year. Many mothers end up breastfeeding well into their baby's second year of life.

While breastfeeding has been the norm for centuries, modern mothers undoubtedly have it easier in many ways. With more options, support, and education, breastfeeding today is
more flexible, accepted and sustainable. Mothers can feel empowered to give their babies the best start in life through the gift of breast milk.

**Breastfeeding in urban and rural areas in India**

Breastfeeding practices in India vary greatly between urban and rural areas. In rural India, breastfeeding has been an integral part of the culture for centuries. Most rural women exclusively breastfeed their babies for the first six months and continue breastfeeding for up to two years. They believe breast milk is the most nutritious food for infants.

In cities, however, breastfeeding rates have declined over the years due to various factors. Many urban women have careers and prefer formula feeding as they have to resume work soon after childbirth. Also, aggressive marketing by formula companies has influenced many city mothers to use formula milk. Some think formula is more nutritious or fashionable.

**Challenges in urban areas**

Urban mothers face more challenges in breastfeeding. They often lack family support and many live in nuclear families with no other women to help or guide them. Many also struggle to find private places to nurse in public areas. All these difficulties discourage them from breastfeeding.

To promote breastfeeding in cities, the government has launched various initiatives.

- Hospitals and workplaces are encouraged to provide lactation rooms and breaks for nursing mothers.
- Public education campaigns highlight the benefits of breastfeeding.
- Community support groups offer help to new mothers.

While breastfeeding rates have risen in cities, more needs to be done to make it as widely accepted and supported as in rural India. With better policies, education and support systems in place, urban Indian women can also experience the joys of breastfeeding their babies.

**Conclusion**

And there you have it! Breastfeeding sure has changed a lot since your grandma's day.

While it used to be pretty much the only option, now there are so many choices for feeding babies. No matter which way you choose to nourish your little one, what's most important is that they are getting the nutrients they need to grow up...
healthy and strong. The reasons may be biological or they may be psychological, behavioral and/or cultural.[8]

The key is to do your research and figure out what will work best for you and your family.

Don't stress about living up to some unrealistic standard - fed is absolutely best. Trust your instincts, get support from loved ones, and try to enjoy this special time with your baby. They grow up so incredibly fast.

References:


