

# Health & Social Barriers Affecting Exclusive Breastfeeding Practices in Infants Less than Six Months: Case of Afgoi District-Somalia

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**Abstract:** **Background:** exclusive breastfeeding means feeding the baby with breast milk soon after birth and continuing it until 6 month of age without giving baby any other food. The Objective the study is to identify the Health and Social Barriers Affecting Exclusive Breastfeeding Practice in Infants less than Six Months in Afgoi Distract, Lower Shebelle region-Somalia. **Methodology:** adopted in this research is composed at various quantitative and qualitative methods including, questionnaire and the research make interview with medical director of Afgoi Hospital, and the aim of interview was to assess the National Strategy for Exclusive Breastfeeding exist in Afgoi Hospital. The sample was 80 of Women Child bearing Age (15-49) have infant less than six months and attended to Afgoi Hospital during study period. The data analyzed was performed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 16. **Result:** according to responder's age the majority of them (43.75%) their age between 26-35 year while 18.75% of responders their age Accor between 36-45 years. according to responder's education background, 53% of mother's responders were studied Hally Qur'an, while 12.5% were studied primary school, likewise in cross-tabulate between responder's education level and their feeding practice was showed significant ( $p$  value = 0.01). the study Proven that the 60% of the mother's responders used breastfeeding and artificial feeding practice to their infant and reasons related to mother that caused to use both is most of them worked and they don't get enough meal. also a view of responders their social belief prevents them to practice breastfeeding only. also the study clarified the reasons related to infant that caused to used mother's responders both breastfeeding and artificial feeding practice, 21.2% said our social encourage us to make both while 17.5% said the child refused breast milk totally and 10% of responders their child is sick. **Conclusion:** The study demonstrated that the majority of mother's 60% of were using artificial feeding practice which is formula milk. **Recommendation:** FMOH should train and encourage frontline health care workers, including midwives and nurses and CHWs to deliver skilled breastfeeding counseling to mothers and families. The study recommended that the ministry of health especially health promotion unit to prepare health promotion program on breastfeeding to promote the awareness of mothers towards breastfeeding.

**Keywords:** Exclusive Breastfeeding Practices, Barriers, Women Child Bearing Age 15-49

## 1. Background

Breastfeeding is an unequalled way of providing ideal nutrition for the healthy growth and development of infants. The global public health recommendation is that infants should be exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life to achieve optimal growth, development and health. Exclusive breastfeeding in the first six months of life stimulates babies' immune systems and protects them from diarrhea and acute respiratory infections (UNICEF, 2006). Breastfeeding reduces the mother's risk of fatal postpartum hemorrhage, the risk of breast and ovarian cancer, and of anemia, and by spacing births, breastfeeding allows the mother to recuperate before she conceives again (Leon-Cava et al., 2002).

In Somalia, where one child in every ten dies before its first birthday, exclusive breastfeeding in the first six months would be one of the most effective life-saving interventions for thousands of children. National surveys in Somalia show that less than ten per cent of infants under six months of age are exclusively breastfed. The near-universal Somali practice of discarding 'colostrums' (the first milk, full of essential nutrients and immunity), delaying the initiation of breastfeeding and using unhygienic ally prepared formula and powdered milk, are contributing factors towards Somalia's global acute malnutrition levels of 18.6 per cent. Reasons for low levels of breastfeeding in Somalia include lack of knowledge of the importance of the practice, vigorous advertising of infant formulas and the persistence

of inaccurate information including the myths that malnourished mothers are unable to breastfeed, that stress dries up breast milk, or that children under six months old need to be given water (UNICEF, 2009).

Unfortunately, even if Somali mothers have a good understanding of Healthy infant feeding practices, they might not be able to implement them because of other constraints, namely poverty which sometimes forces mothers because to seek additional income away from home and availability of foods in the community as Somalia's agriculture is mainly centered on corn and whole grain cereal farming. Considering these different barriers (i.e. not only knowledge of good feeding practice, but also poverty and availability of food) is therefore essential to any intervention project aimed at increasing healthy infant feeding practice in rural Somalia. Finally, Somalia has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the world with one in seven Somali children dying before their fifth birthday. Rates of infant and child deaths and child malnutrition are closely linked to whether babies are breastfed and what young children are given to eat. The survey of feeding practices for children under two was carried out in over 2,700 households around the country and asked about breastfeeding practices, what and when they fed their young children. Only 3 out of 10 mothers' breastfed exclusively during the first six months.

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## 2. Methodology

### Study Area and Study Design:

**Afgooye** (Somali: *Afgooye*, Arabic: أفجويي, Italian: *Afgoi*) is a town in Lower Shebelle (Shabellaha Hoose) region of Somalia. It is situated about 30 kilometres west of Mogadishu and the Shabelle River passes through the middle of the town. It famous place with agriculture and many industries are located in Afgoi including E-TOP and Laban industry. The study was institution base and carry out at the Afgoi hospital and it was founded 1940 at the colonial area and borders the Shebelle River in the north, Afgoi police station in the east, Kuwait mosque in the west and Afgoi market in the south. It has different departments, including: Outpatient department, Inpatient department, delivery department, pediatric department, Operation theatre, EPI department, and pharmacy and lab department. The researcher used a cross sectional descriptive type of study design and aimed to determine Health & Social barriers affecting exclusive breastfeeding practice in infant and started from January-June, 2021. This study include both quantitative and qualitative. Also the researcher made cross-tabulation in quantitative variable to determine the significance between health & social barriers and exclusive breastfeeding.

### Accessible population and Sample Size:

The target population of the study was mothers under reproductive age (15-49 ages) with infants less than six months in Afgoi District because they responsible to infant breastfeeding. According to their knowledge, believe and culture will influence the exclusive breastfeeding. The non-probability-convenient-sampling method was used for the selection of the study sample from the sampling population and the sample size was 80 respondents.

### Data Collection Techniques and Instruments:

During the Data collection, the researcher was used a structured questionnaire (for quantitative data) with closed ended questions to assess the barriers affecting exclusive breastfeeding practice among infants below six months. In the first part, participants will ask socio-demographic, it's consists age, Marital Status, education level and occupation. In the second part, participants were asked questions consider to Health & Social barriers of Exclusive breastfeeding practice related to mother. In third part in questionnaire was a developed some questions that related to infants. Also the researcher was used interview techniques with medical director of Afgoi hospital and in-charge person in maternal department to collected further information related to National strategy plan of exclusive breastfeeding. In addition to that, the research was review all document and survey related to exclusive breastfeeding which carried out in Somalia, to assess the general situation related to breastfeeding practice either good or poor practice.

### Data Analysis techniques and presentation:

For the purposes of this study the data was coded, processed and transferred to computer coding, the descriptive analysis was adapt which includes percentage, frequency distribution, table, software program statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 16 was apply to determine the exclusive breastfeeding barriers in infants bellow 6 months.

## 3. Results

This study carries out at Afgoi hospital and the purpose of the study is to identify the Health and Social Barriers Affecting Exclusive Breastfeeding Practice in Infants less than Six Months. The accessible people were Women Child bearing Age have infant less than six months and attended to Afgoi Hospital during study period. The study was included qualitative and quantitative study.

**Qualitative findings:** The research made interview with medical director of Afgoi Hospital, and the aim of interview was to assess the National Strategy for Exclusive Breastfeeding exists in Afgoi Hospital, the director said: There is national strategy plan for exclusive breastfeeding at the hospital but not full function. The strategy plan contains: Maternal care practice, Professional education, Access professional support and Support breastfeeding in the work place. Also the director indicates in strategy there is no breastfeeding education, information and social marketing while the funds activities spend out in national strategy plan provide QRC. Also he indicated, the health care provider at the hospital not trained to the strategy plan of exclusive breastfeeding.

### Quantitative findings:

The table 1 described the general information about the participates who under take this study, therefore the majority of responder's age between 26-35 years, followed by those between 15-25 years and followed by those between 36-45 by respectively. So the study clarify all the mothers who participated this study are in child bearing age because the study found, their age between 15 up to forty-five years old. According to their marital status, observed 66 (82.5%) of them Married, followed by Divorced and widowed respectively. In addition to that, the results showed the majority of responders 43 (82.5%) studied only Qur'an, they don't attending formula education and they are illiterates. The second group of responders attended Secondary School there were 18 (22.5%), so this explained more than eighty percentage of the participated was illustrated. also the researcher proofs the majority of mother's responders 56 (70%) was unemployed, followed by employee, so those who employed not make exclusive breastfeeding because they don't stay with their infant during day.

**Table 1:** Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents who carry out the study

		Frequency	Percent
Age	15-25	30	37.50%
	26-35	35	43.80%
	36-45	15	18.80%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100%</b>
Marital Status	Married	66	82.50%
	Divorced	12	15%
	Widowed	2	2.50%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100%</b>
Education Level	Studied Hally Qur'an	43	53.80%
	Primary School	10	12.50%
	Secondary School	18	22.50%
	Bachelor	8	10%
	Postgraduate	1	1.20%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>
Employee Status	Employed	24	30%
	Housewife	56	70%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 2 explained the exclusive breastfeeding barriers related to the mother who participated the study, according to the when they give first milk comes to their infant only 32.5% of responders immediately after delivery while others didn't made skin contact with their infant immediately after deliver. In addition to that, the mothers should make breastfeeding practice during 24 hours minimum 8 times, so the study founded the majority of respondents have poor practice of breastfeeding to their infant per day, 40% of them make breastfeeding practice more than 5 times during 24 hours where others make less than 5 times per day. Likewise, the study indicated 41.2% of mother under take

this research don't understood the period of exclusive breastfeeding so there is poor understood.

Faduma is one of research participated said: *I and most of mothers in village don't know the period exclusive breastfeeding because they not went to school and not get health promotion towards this issue.*

In conclusion, the researcher indicates the majority of responders under take this research would like to stop after 1 years and this proof the most of them not complete breastfeeding period.

**Table 2:** Health & Social Barriers affecting exclusive practice related to mother at Afgoi Hospital.

		Frequency	Percent
When respondent give first milk comes to her breast to their infant	Immediately after delivery	26	32.50%
	after 1 hr	19	23.80%
	after 6 hrs	14	17.50%
	after 1 day	2	2.50%
	after 2+ days	1	1.20%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>77.50%</b>
Breastfeeding practice per day	3 times in 24 hrs	18	22.50%
	4 times in 24 hrs	21	26.20%
	more than 5 times in 24 hrs	32	40%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>80.80%</b>
Respondent's exclusive breastfeeding period	0-2months	8	10%
	2-4months	12	15%
	4-6months	27	33.80%
	I don't know	33	41.20%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>

According cross-tabulate between mother's responders age with their feeding options to their infant the data showed 31 (out of 80) of them their feeding option is exclusive breastfeeding only and majority of them their age between 15-25 years old while 48 (out of 80) used breastfeeding and artificial feeding. In addition that, Significant different was observed ( $P = .05$ ) and this indicate there is relation between responder's age and their feeding practice.

In addition to that, when considering mother's level of education to their Feeding option with infant, the study founded 27(33.75%) in who studied Hally Qur'an were used breastfeeding and artificial feed while 14(17.5%) in secondary school also used both breastfeeding and artificial feeding. In overall, the data showed **48(60%)** of mother's responders used breastfeeding and artificial feeding with their infant. Significant different was observed ( $P = .01$ )

**Table 3:** Cross-tabulate between mother's responders age, education level with feeding options to their infant

		Feeding Options with Infant			Total
		Exclusive breastfeeding (only)	Artificial (bottle) feeding	Breast feeding and artificial feeding	
Age	15-25 year	17	1	12	30
	26-35 year	11	0	24	35
	36-45 year	3	0	12	15
<b>Total</b> <b>(P = .05)</b>		31	1	48	80
Level of Education	Studied Hally Qur'an	16 (20%)	0	<b>27(33.75%)</b>	43
	Primary School	3 (3.75%)	1(1.25%)	6(7.5%)	10
	Secondary School	4 (5%)	0	<b>14(17.5%)</b>	18
	Bachelor	7 (8.75%)	0	1(1.25%)	8
	Postgraduate	1(1.25%)	0	0	1(1.25%)
<b>Total</b> <b>(P = .01)</b>		31 (38.75%)	1(1.25%)	<b>48(60%)</b>	80(100%)

When mother's feeding options with their infant were cross-tabulate reasons caused to used mother's responders breastfeeding and artificial feeding with their infant, 15 (out of 49) worked and that's way used both breastfeeding and

artificial (bottle) while 10 (out of 49) were not get enough meal, so the data indicate, social economic is main reason caused to use mother's responders breastfeeding and artificial. Strong significance was observed ( $P = .001$ ).

**Table 4:** Cross-tabulate between feeding option with infant and reason caused to use responder’s breastfeeding and artificial feeding practice

		Feeding Options with Infant		Total
		Artificial feeding (bottle)	Breast feeding and artificial feed	
reasons caused to used mother's responders breastfeeding and artificial feeding with their infant	Breast feeding lose-breast shape	1	1	2
	I worked	0	15	15
	I'm not get enough meal	0	10	10
	Breastfeeding (only) is not enough	0	11	11
	I would like to get pregnancy	0	4	4
	For Social belief	0	5	5
	I'm sick	0	2	2
<i>(P = .001)</i> Total		1	48	49

The table above clarified the reasons related to infant that caused to used mother’s responders both breastfeeding and artificial feeding practice, 15(30.6%) of them their child refused breast milk totally, 1 (2%) of responders their child had cleft palate, 7 (14.3%) were their child sick, 14 (28.6%) were their social prevent to practice breastfeeding only, 2 (4.1%) said breastfeeding only is not enough to infant, 5 (10.2%) were worked, 1 of responder had inflammation and 4 (8.2%) their breast has not enough milk.

This meaning, the majority of mother’s responders showed the main reasons related to infant that caused use mother breastfeeding and artificial feeding is the child refused breastfeeding totally and followed by those their social or relative encourage them mixed breastfeeding and artificial feeding practice and followed those were their child is sick, and followed those went to work. In conclusion, Findings from interview one of responders (Halima) who used breastfeeding and artificial practice said: *Yes, I used both because my mother don't allowed me to make breastfeeding practice only, she believed if the child get breastfeeding only without artificial feeding he will died. Also she doesn't have enough time to make exclusive breastfeeding because she went to work every day.*

**Table 5:** Distribution of mother’s responders according to if there are reasons related to infant that caused to use mother both breastfeeding and artificial feeding

		Frequency	Percent
reasons related to infant that caused to use mother both breastfeeding and artificial feeding	The child refused breast milk totally	15	30.6%
	Baby has cleft palate	1	2%
	Child is sick	7	14.3%
	Our social encourage me to make both	14	28.6%
	Breastfeeding is not enough to infant	2	4.1%
	I worked	5	10.2%
	I have breast inflammation	1	2%
	my breast has not enough milk	4	8.2%
Total		49	65%

**4. Discussion**

The research carry out district Afgoi lower Shebelle, Somalia and its hospital based. The aim of this study is to identify the Health and Social Barriers Affecting Exclusive Breastfeeding Practice in Infants less than Six Months in Afgoi hospital. The study design of the study was cross-sectional and the sample size was 80 responders and non-random sampling method was used. The study was include qualitative and quantitative data.

The overall of demographic data about mother’s responders, in their age the majority of responders (43.75%) their age between 26-35 year while 18.75% of responders their age Accor between 36-45 years. also in cross-tabulate between responder’s age and their feeding options was observed significant different and it was (P = 0.05). according to responder’s education background, 53% of mother’s responders were studied Hally Qur’an, while 12.5% were studied primary school, also in cross-tabulate between responder’s education level and their feeding practice was showed significant (P = 0.01 ). In addition that 70% of them were housewife while other responders employed.

Compared this research to other study conducted in Indonesia on Exclusive breastfeeding practice, showed (36.1%)of Mothers aged 30-39 years old were more likely to exclusively breastfeed compare to mothers under 20 years old. Mothers with high education level had higher odds to exclusively breastfeed compare to low education mothers. Unemployed mother were more likely to exclusively breastfeed than working mothers. (Putri Lenggogeni, 2016).

According to timely initiation of breastfeeding to infant after delivery, more than 77% of mother’s responders were given the first milk comes to her breast to their infant while 32.5% of them were gives immediately after delivery, also the study showed a view of responders under take this study were started breastfeeding practice with their infant after 2 days.

Comparing the result of initiated breastfeeding infant in this study with the results of a study conducted in EL SABBAAH HOSPITAL JUBA-SOUTH SUDAN was founded The majority of mothers initiated breastfeeding in the first hour of delivery (76.8%). Mother’s skin to skin contact with their



babies immediately after birth was reported in 70%, while 76.8% initiated breastfeeding in the first hour, and 98.1% roomed in with their babies. 59.4% of mothers did not offer prelacteal feed to their babies.

When considering mother's level of education to their Feeding options with her infant, data showed 27(33.75%) in who studied Hally Qur'an were used breastfeeding and artificial feed while 14(17.5%) in secondary school also used both breastfeeding and artificial feeding. Also Significant different was observed ( $P = .01$ ). according to reasons caused to used mother's responders both breastfeeding and artificial feeding with their infant, the study showed 15 (out of 49) worked and that's way they used both breastfeeding and artificial (bottle) practice while 10 (out of 49) were not get enough meal, so the study indicate, social economic is main reason caused to use mother's responders breastfeeding and artificial. Strong significance was observed ( $P = .001$ ) also the study clarified the reasons related to infant that caused to used mother's responders both breastfeeding and artificial feeding practice, 21.2% said our social encourage us to make both while 17.5% said the child refused breast milk totally. In 10% of responders their child is sick. So the three points that mentioned above are main reasons related to infant caused to use mother both breastfeeding and artificial feeding practice to their infant.

When the study compared mother's age with when they like to stop breastfeeding practice to their infant, the data observed 28 (out of 80) would like to stop after one year while 12 (out of 80) like to stop after 6 months. According to significant different was not observed ( $P = .06$ ).

Compare to the results of a study conducted in Sudan result, (55.2%) mothers stopped breastfeeding when the child was 24 months old. The age of termination of breast feeding was significantly influenced by the education of the mothers. (p value=0.01). It was observed that only 6.8% of the mothers in the present study practiced exclusive breastfeeding. The majority of the mothers (91.6%) introduced complementary foods before six months of age while only 8.4 % started given foods at six month and over. (Dr. Somiya, 2014).

## 5. Conclusion

The study explained the majority of responder's age distribute occur between 26-35 years, and the majority of respondents were studied Hally Qur'an and studied primary school.

According to initiate breastfeeding practice the study founded, the majority of responders were given the first milk comes to her breast to their infant and more than thirty percent started immediately after delivery but a view of mothers under take this study started after 2 days. Also the study Proven that the majority of the respondents made breastfeeding practice more than more than 5 times per day, but twenty percent of them breasted their infant 3 times per day. In addition to that, the study Demonstrated that the sixty percent of the mother's respondents used breastfeeding and artificial feeding practice to their infant and the main reasons that caused to use both into include,

most of them worked and they don't get enough meal, also a view of responders their social belief prevent them to practice breastfeeding only.

The study revealed that the majority of mother's responders which carry out this study would like to stop breastfeeding practice after 1 year while fifteen percent of liked to stop after 6 months. Consistent with responder's understand towards the period time of exclusive breastfeeding the study indicated poor understand, more than forty percent of them don't know the period time of exclusive breastfeeding.

According to reasons related to infant that caused to used mother's responders both breastfeeding and artificial practice, the study consisted in three points, there are their social not encourage, child refused totally and sick are main reasons caused to used mother breastfeeding and artificial feeding practice.

The research recommends: FMOH should train and encourage frontline health care workers, including midwives and nurses and CHWs to deliver skilled breastfeeding counseling to mothers and families Across the country to ensure Breastfeeding counseling services is made available as part of routine health and nutrition services that are easily accessible. The study recommended that the ministry of health especially health promotion unit to prepare health promotion program on breastfeeding to promote the awareness of mothers towards breastfeeding.

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