

## Awareness and perception regarding breastfeeding and kangaroo mother care among mothers of an urban slum in Karachi



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### Introduction:

Breastfeeding has long been recognized by healthcare professionals as the most beneficial feeding practice for infants, providing essential nutrients and fostering a strong mother-infant bond. This practice enhances infant growth, boosts immunity, and reduces disease risk, while also aiding mothers in postpartum recovery. The World Health Organization advocates exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months and continued breastfeeding up to 2 years alongside other foods. Kangaroo mother care (KMC), a method involving skin-to-skin contact between mother and low birth weight or preterm infants, is another vital practice. KMC promotes infant health and development by stabilizing heart rate, maintaining body temperature, and improving oxygenation. Additionally, KMC supports increased breast milk production, crucial in areas with high infant mortality due to malnutrition and gastrointestinal diseases.

### Background:

Despite the recognized benefits of breastfeeding and KMC, there remains a gap in implementation and awareness among mothers, particularly in specific regions. This study focuses on evaluating the knowledge and awareness regarding breastfeeding and KMC among mothers of children under 5 years in Khuda Ki Basti, an urban slum in Karachi, Pakistan.

### Study design:

The study employs a cross-sectional design with purposive sampling to interview 200 mothers of reproductive age in Khuda Ki Basti. Data collection involves a questionnaire addressing knowledge, awareness, and practices related to breastfeeding and KMC. Analysis is performed using SPSS version 22.

### Results:

Results indicate a high level of knowledge and practice regarding breastfeeding among the respondents. The majority recognize the health benefits of breastfeeding for both mother and child and support the practices mandatory implementation. Most mothers begin breastfeeding immediately after birth and continue until the child is 2 years old. However, knowledge about colostrum and its benefits varies, with 54% understanding its importance for newborns. Information about breastfeeding is primarily acquired from family members and healthcare professionals, and most respondents report supportive family environments. Conversely, knowledge and perception of KMC are significantly lower. Only a small fraction of respondents are aware of KMC's benefits for low birth weight infants and its role in enhancing breastfeeding. Most respondents lack knowledge about KMC's positive impact on infant growth, development, and overall health. This lack of awareness extends to their families, with many respondents uncertain about family support for KMC practices.

### Conclusion:

In conclusion, while mothers in Khuda Ki Basti demonstrate good knowledge and practices regarding breastfeeding, their awareness and perception of KMC are inadequate. The study highlights the need for educational initiatives to promote KMC alongside breastfeeding to improve infant health outcomes. Enhanced knowledge and adoption of KMC can significantly contribute to reducing infant mortality and morbidity, promoting healthier development, and easing the healthcare burden. Consequently, the study advocates for comprehensive informational campaigns to educate mothers and families about the benefits of both breastfeeding and KMC, ensuring better health and development for infants in the community.

### Keywords:

Kangaroo mother care, infant mortality, malnutrition, post-partum recovery.