

## CLOTHING PROBLEMS AND PREFERENCES OF NURSING MOTHERS

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### ABSTRACT

Today's woman faces various psychosocial barriers to breastfeeding, in addition to this emotional and physical challenges as well. Therefore, there is great potential for the development and improvement of apparel for nursing mothers. The aim of this study was to assess their problems with the regular dresses and the preferences they want to incorporate in their clothing during lactation.

**KEYWORDS:** Nursing Mother, Lactation, Breastfeeding, General Attributes, Clothing Problems

Every change in life situation, i.e.; birth, entering school and college, marriage and motherhood requires special changes in wardrobe. Hence, clothes worn by an individual should be according to his or her body needs. Like the varying needs of clothes according to the development stages of life, the choice of colors, materials and designs also differ from person to person. These variations are due to the stages an individual has to be through and differences in personality, fashion, places. The needs of lactating women for clothing are quite different from usual normal women.

Lactation period leads a woman to another level of maturity i.e.; her motherhood. During this period a nursing mother experiences physical as well as psychological changes. She has her own demands and needs during this period. So her demand during lactation for clothing will be different from normal condition. In planning the wardrobe for lactating mother prime importance is always given for comfort property. Moreover, it is equally important to provide garments that do not muss or soil easily. Styles may be simple but there must be ample room for stretching, bending, picking up, reaching and other similar physical activities.

### METHODOLOGY

The present research work was undertaken to assess the clothing problems faced by the nursing mothers with their regular dresses and their preferences for the clothing for nursing. The methodology adopted to carry out the present study was descriptive research design with suitable survey method. The demographic information, clothing problems and preferences for general attributes of clothing were elicited in survey.

### Selection of the Locale and Hospitals and Localities

Kanpur city in Uttar Pradesh state was selected purposively. Three hospitals viz; Madhuraj Nursing Home, Regency Pvt. Ltd. and Kanpur Medical Center

were selected purposively because of availability of middle and higher-income group respondents.

### Selection of the Tool and Respondents

Principal tool used to collect information was an interview- schedule. One fifty nursing mothers were randomly selected, personally contacted and were requested to provide their independent opinion about clothing problems faced with their regular clothes and preferences for general attributes of apparels.

### Analysis of Data

The collected data were coded, tabulated and analysed by the application of suitable statistical tool and technique to draw the meaningful inferences. Simple percentages were calculated to assess the personal profile of nursing mothers. Weighted mean scores, mean scores and ranks were calculated to assess the clothing problems faced by nursing mothers with their regular clothes and preference regarding general attributes of garments.

### DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF NURSING MOTHERS

Findings pertinent to demographic characteristic of nursing mothers were collected through personally administered interview-cum-observation schedule. The findings related to personal characteristics of nursing mothers are presented in the ensuing paragraphs along with tables.

### Personal Profile of Nursing Mothers

#### Age of the Nursing Mothers

Data related to age of nursing mothers were scrutinized to find out their distribution in various age groups (Table 1). Highest per cent (63.3 per cent) of nursing mothers belonged to the age groups of 30-35 years, 22.0 per cent were 25 to 30 years and 10.0 per cent were between 20 to 25 years and only 4.7 per cent belonged to the age group of 35 to 40 years. Highest per

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cent of nursing mothers belonging to age group of 30-35 years might be attributed to the fact that there has been a remarkable shift in the marriage age.

**Occupation of the Nursing Mothers**

Perusal of the Table 1 reveals that 54.7 per cent nursing mothers were engaged in service while 24.7 per cent were homemakers and remaining 20.7 per cent were professionals. Finding is supported by Ishtiaque, 2007 that the population of working women has increased to 26 per cent in year 2001 from 22 per cent in 1991.

**Age of Child**

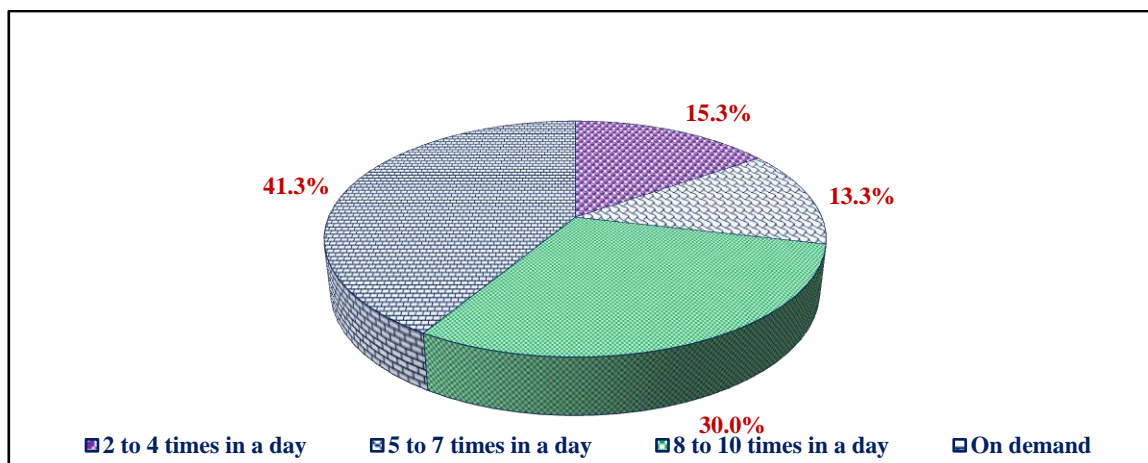
Table 1 describes that maximum nursing mothers (45.3 per cent) were having children of 6 to 12 months. Thirty four per cent having 0 to 6 months infants followed by 16.7 per cent nursing mothers, having 12 to 18 months old child while only 4.0 per cent had children in the age group between 18 to 24 months.

**Feeding Frequency of the Nursing Mothers**

Figure 1 portrays that maximum nursing mothers (41.3 per cent) used to nurse the baby on their demands while 30.0 per cent and 15.3 per cent feed 8 to 10 times and 2 to 4 times in a day respectively and only 13.3 per cent nurse for 5 to 7 times in a day.

**Table 1: Distribution of nursing mothers according to their personal profile N = 150**

S. No.	Personal Profile	Frequency (f)	Percentage
<b>1.</b>	<b>Age</b>		
i.	Below 20 years	-	-
ii.	20 - 25 years	15	10.0
iii.	25 - 30 years	33	22.0
iv.	30 - 35 years	95	63.3
v.	35 - 40 years	7	4.7
vi.	40 - 45 years	-	-
vii.	45 years and above	-	-
<b>3.</b>	<b>Occupation</b>		
i.	House wife	37	24.7
ii.	Service	82	54.7
iii.	Business	-	-
iv.	Professionals	31	20.7
<b>4.</b>	<b>Age of Child</b>		
i.	Below 0 to 6 months	51	34.0
ii.	6 to 12 months	68	45.3
iii.	12 to 18 months	25	16.7
iv.	18 to 24 months	6	4.0
v.	Above 24 months	-	-



**Figure 1: Distribution of nursing mothers on the basis of feeding frequency**

Dutta (2004) suggested that the mother should feed the baby at an interval of 2-3 hours, during the first 24 hours. Gradually, the regularity becomes established at 3-4 hours pattern by the end of first week. Baby should be fed more on demand. For demand feeding, there is no restriction of the number of feeds and duration of sucking time.

### CLOTHING PROBLEMS AND PREFERENCES OF NURSING MOTHERS

This section dealt with the findings and discussion related to problems faced with the existing clothing, their preference for factors considered for selection of clothing, the needs and preference for addition of new clothes in the wardrobe to fulfil the requirement of nursing mothers.

### Problems Faced by Nursing Mothers with their Existing Clothing

Problems faced by nursing mothers with their existing clothing practices were analysed and results are registered in Table 2 which reveals that maximum of them always faced all assumed problems, therefore multiple response were received. Data depicts that majority of nursing mothers i.e., 84.7 per cent reported that their existing clothing always create problem in nursing and 74.7 per cent said that dresses were not comfortable while 64.0 per cent felt embarrassed to feed in front of others as their existing dresses were not having any opening for nursing, therefore they might expose more body than required. Only 9.3 per cent nursing mothers always felt the problem of feeding during journey. This problem was also felt sometimes by 68.7 per cent nursing mothers, occasionally by 15.3 per cent and rarely by 2.0 per cent. On the contrary 4.7 per cent nursing mothers never felt this problem (Table 2).

**Table 2: Distribution of nursing mothers on the basis of problems faced with their existing clothing N = 150**

S. No.	Statements	A f (%)	S f (%)	O f (%)	R f (%)	N f (%)	Mean Scores	Ranks
1.	Fitting problems	87 (58.0)	61 (40.7)	2 (1.3)	-	-	4.6	III
2.	Not comfortable	112 (74.7)	30 (20.0)	8 (5.3)	-	-	4.7	II
3.	Embarrassment to feed in front of others	96 (64.0)	51 (34.0)	3 (2.0)	-	-	4.6	III
4.	Problem of nursing during journey	14 (9.3)	103 (68.7)	23 (15.3)	3 (2.0)	7 (4.7)	3.8	IV
5.	Create problem in nursing	127 (84.7)	23 (15.3)	-	-	-	4.8	I

#### Multiple responses

On analyzing the mean scores (Table 2) of the problems faced by nursing mothers with their existing dresses, it was clear that their clothing create problem in nursing as there is no opening for the same purpose and this problem scored highest mean i.e. 4.8. Problem related to comfort scored 2<sup>nd</sup> highest mean score of 4.7 while problem regarding fitting and embarrassment to feed in front of others, both scored the mean score of 4.6 followed by the problem of nursing during journey (m.s.=3.8).

Bala (1995) stated that most of the lactating mothers just wear ordinary suits in which it looks very awkward while feeding the child and they feel out of place. Vanishree (1999) reported that lactating mothers compulsorily wore sari because of embarrassment to feed

the baby outside. They did face the problem of feeding while at journey. Due to these problems majority of respondents reduced the frequency of outings and whenever they went out many of the lactating mothers avoided breast feeding the baby.

Singhal (2007) in a study observed that majority of lactating mothers (56.6 per cent) were not comfortable with existing clothing practices whereas 43.34 per cent women felt embarrassed while feeding their baby in front of others.

### Dresses Preferred for Casual Wear

Data pertinent to dresses preferred for casual wear (Table 3) explains that maxie/gown was frequently preferred by maximum nursing mothers (40.0 per cent)

followed by kameez-salwar and saree-blouse which were liked by 26.7 per cent and 16.7 per cent respectively. A large proportion of nursing mothers (62.0 per cent) sometimes also liked kameez-salwar as their casual wear while 81.3 per cent never preferred skirt-top.

Findings spelled that maxie gown was on the first rank (m.s.=2.4) followed by kameez-salwar, saree-blouse, kameez-patiala and kameez-churidar which were gained 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> ranks respectively, whereas night suit and skirt-top were least preferred dresses for

casual wears with the rank of 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> respectively (Table 3).

Nursing mothers preferred maxie gown the most followed by kameez-salwar while saree blouse was selected afterwards. They viewed that although nursing is easy in saree blouse but kameez-salwar is a comfortable dress and easy to manage when compared with saree-blouse. Nursing mothers also opined that kameez with placket opening would be very helpful for nursing their child discreetly.

**Table 3: Distribution of nursing mothers on the basis of dresses preferred for casual wear N = 150**

S. No.	Types of Dress	Frequently	Sometimes	Never	Mean Scores	Ranks
		f (%)	f (%)	f (%)		
1.	Kameez- salwar	40 (26.7)	93 (62.0)	17 (11.3)	2.2	II
2.	Kameez- churidar	8 (5.3)	65 (43.3)	77 (51.3)	1.5	V
3.	Kameez- patiala	12 (8.0)	89 (59.3)	49 (32.7)	1.8	IV
4.	Saree-blouse	25 (16.7)	80 (53.3)	45 (30.0)	1.9	III
5.	Maxie/Gown	60 (40.0)	85 (56.7)	5 (3.3)	2.4	I
6.	Night suit	3 (2.0)	49 (32.7)	98 (65.3)	1.4	VI
7.	Skirt-top	2 (1.3)	26 (17.3)	122 (81.3)	1.2	VII

*Multiple response for preference of sometimes and never frequency*

Vanishree (1999) stated that night gown was found to be the most comfortable dress followed by saree blouse during feeding the baby. The lactating mothers expressed that night gown is more comfortable to feed the baby because of the front placket opening, easy to work with, ample room for bodily changes and physical movement.

#### Dresses Preferred for Formal Wear

Perusal of the Table 4 depicts that kameez-salwar was frequently preferred dress for formal wear by 37.3 per cent nursing mothers followed by kameez patiala by 32.7 per cent. On the other hand 66.0 per cent and 62.0 per cent nursing mothers sometimes also preferred kameez patiala and saree-blouse respectively while 36.7

per cent never liked kameez-churidar as their formal wear.

Observation of mean scores (Table 4) of the preferences of nursing mothers, explains that kameez-salwar was at 1<sup>st</sup> place whereas kameez-patiala, saree-blouse and kameez-churidar were scored 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> ranks respectively.

Vanishree (1991) conducted a study on 'special clothes for lactating mothers' and stated that the respondents opined that salwar kameez is comfortable as casual and outer wear. Special features can be incorporated in salwar kameez since lactating gowns are already in the market. The specially designed lactating kameez helps to feed the baby as and when they have outings.

**Table 4: Distribution of nursing mothers on the basis of dresses preferred for formal wear N = 150**

S.No.	Types of Dress	Frequently	Sometimes	Never	Mean Scores	Ranks
		f (%)	f (%)	f (%)		
1.	Kameez -salwar	56 (37.3)	91 (60.7)	3 (2.0)	2.4	I
2.	Kameez -churidar	20 (13.3)	75 (50.0)	55 (36.7)	1.8	IV
3.	Kameez -patiala	49 (32.7)	99 (66.0)	2 (1.3)	2.3	II
4.	Saree -blouse	26 (17.3)	93 (62.0)	31 (20.7)	2.0	III

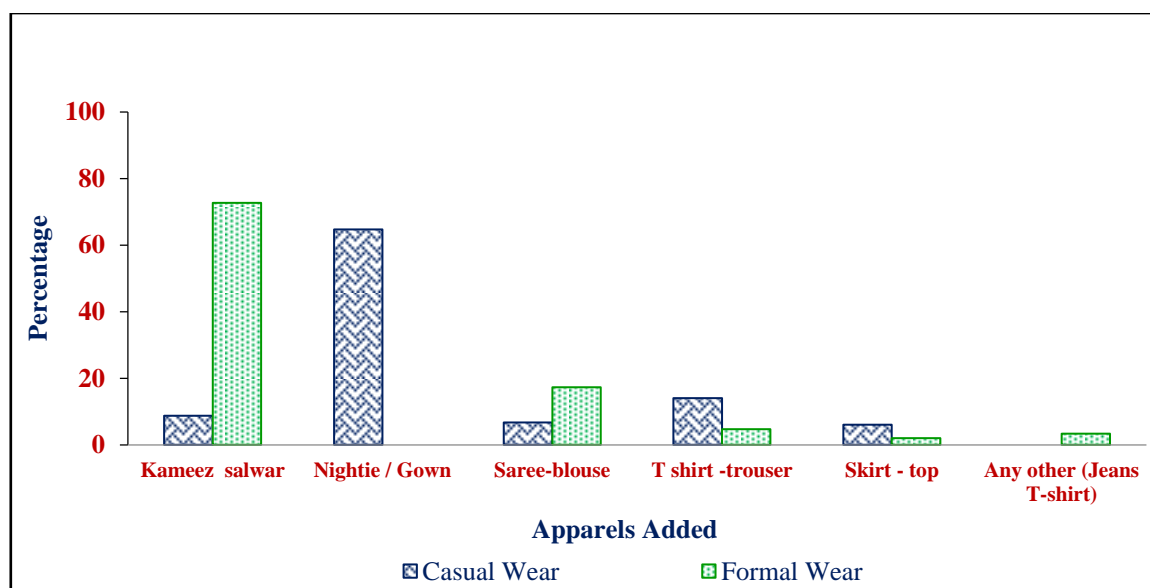
*Multiple response for preference of sometimes and never frequency*

### Apparels Added in the Wardrobe during Nursing

On scanning the data of the Figure 2, it is observed that 64.7 per cent nursing mothers added maxie/gown with front opening for their casual wear because this is a very comfortable dress and also provide ease in nursing whereas 14.0 per cent added T-shirt and trousers. On the other hand kameez salwar, saree blouse and skirt-top were preferred by 8.7, 6.7 and 6.0 per cent nursing mothers respectively (Figure 2).

For formal wear maximum nursing mothers (72.7 per cent) added kameez- salwar whereas 17.3, 4.7, 3.3 and 2.0 per cent nursing mothers added saree-blouse, T-shirt and trouser, T shirt and jeans and skirt-top respectively (Figure 2).

Nursing mothers specially added nighties in their casual wear as front open nighties are very convenient for feeding. They also included new kameez of loose fitting in their wardrobe as formal wear because it could be easily lifted for nursing.



**Figure 2: Distribution of nursing mothers on the basis of extra apparels added in casual and formal wear during nursing**

### Factors Considered for Clothing Selection

It can be envisaged from data given in Table 5 that comfort (rank 1<sup>st</sup>, m.s.=4.8), serviceability (rank 2<sup>nd</sup>, m.s.=4.2), price (rank 3<sup>rd</sup>, m.s.=2.6) and status (rank 4<sup>th</sup>, m.s. =2.5) were the factors in order of preference, considered by nursing mothers for the selection of their

casual wear. However, least consideration was given to the fashion (rank 5<sup>th</sup>, m.s.=1.9).

For the selection of formal wear, nursing mothers were given rank 1<sup>st</sup> to the comfort while rank 2<sup>nd</sup> to the status whereas, serviceability and fashion scored 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> ranks respectively. On the contrary, price was the least considered factor (Table 5).

**Table 5: Distribution of nursing mothers on the basis of their preferences for clothing selection factors N = 150**

S. No.	Factors Considered for Clothing Selection	Casual Wear					Mean Scores	Ranks	Formal Wear					Mean Scores	Ranks
		1 f	2 f	3 f	4 f	5 f			1 f	2 f	3 f	4 f	5 f		
1.	Comfort	121	27	2	-	-	4.8	I	98	21	16	13	2	4.3	I
2.	Serviceability	31	116	2	1	1	4.2	II	18	32	21	78	1	2.9	III
3.	According to Status	2	1	94	32	4	2.5	IV	9	78	25	31	7	3.3	II
4.	Price	8	25	45	42	30	2.6	III	4	6	12	52	76	1.7	V
5.	According to Fashion	3	6	27	48	66	1.9	V	12	34	30	20	54	2.5	IV

Aesthetic value in clothing is extremely significant among adults especially with women. The studies on clothing preferences revealed that greater importance is given for appearance than that of price. In planning the wardrobe for lactating mother prime importance is always given for comfort property. Moreover, it is equally important to provide garments that do not muss or soil easily.

Chadha (1980) stated the reasons for preference of tailor made garments were better fitting as compared to readymade clothes, and get satisfaction about design, colour, comfort and better quality of garments.

Sethi (1989) in a study on 'designing of kameez according to preferences of college students' reported that maximum number of respondents preferred tailor-made kameez followed by readymade and homemade.

#### **Preference for Features to be Added in Nursing Apparels**

Maximum nursing mothers (68 per cent) want to have all features viz; good fit and comfortability, ease of care, functionality, fashionable except padding to be incorporated in their nursing apparels. On the other hand 20.7 per cent nursing mothers have chosen all features including padding (Table 6).

Nursing mothers who opted padding as a necessary feature for their nursing dress viewed that this feature would be helpful to protect the dress from soiling with excess milk. On the contrary, nursing mothers who did not prefer to have padding in their dress, argued that this feature add extra bulk to the upper body part, seeks attention and also the appearance of dress become awkward.

Puri and Joseph (1992) conducted a study on clothing needs of lactating mothers for constructing appealing clothing designs. The investigators reported that the most preferred feature in garments were appropriate opening, attractiveness and comfort to meet their needs.

Bala (1995) stated that nursing mothers demand during lactation for dressing will be different from normal condition like absorbent type texture, looseness (comfort) at bust level and the most important is specially designed kameez so that she has no need to lift the clothes while feeding her child and has extra space for free movement

If the baby is breast fed, clothing must incorporate special features for nursing. Bodice must have front opening. The points related to easy care must be considered in choosing fabrics for nursing clothes (Maternity and nursing clothes, 2009).

**Table 6: Distribution of nursing mothers on the basis of preferred features for nursing apparels N = 150**

S.No.	Preferred Combination of Features	f	%
1.	Good fit and comfortable + Easy care	4	(2.7)
2.	Good fit and comfortable + Easy care + Functionality	8	(5.3)
3.	Good fit and comfortable + Easy care + Functionality + Padding	3	(2.0)
4.	Good fit and comfortable + Easy care + Functionality + Fashionable	102	(68.0)
5.	Good fit and comfortable + Easy care + Fashionable	2	(1.3)
6.	All features	31	(20.7)

## CONCLUSION

Nursing mothers required clothing that has good fit, comfortable, easy care with functional features for easy and discrete breast feeding. They also prefer trendy and fashionable dresses. Therefore, the present study is imperative for ready to wear industries, costume designers and boutique owners, to develop special nursing outwearsto cater the needs of nursing mothers of new era.

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