

Table 3 The attitudes and practices about breastfeeding in public

Attitudes and practices	Mother N (%)	Relative N (%)
Feeding of previous child during the first 6 months	n=115 ^a	n=180 ^b
Only breastmilk	68 (59.1)	109 (60.5)
Breastmilk+formula/additional nutrition	47 (40.9)	71 (39.5)
Would breastfeeding in public draw attention?	N=200	N =200
Yes	142 (71.0)	142 (71.0)
Not sure	23 (11.5)	21 (10.5)
No	35 (17.5)	37 (18.5)
What kind of attention would breastfeeding in public draw?	N=200	N=200
Positive	39 (19.5)	48 (24.0)
Neutral	61 (30.5)	55 (27.5)
Negative	100 (50.0)	97 (48.5)
Do you think women have the right to breastfeed in public?	N=200	N=200
Yes	142 (72.0)	127 (63.5)
Not sure	31 (15.5)	37 (18.5)
No	27 (13.5)	36 (18.0)
Is breastfeeding in public acceptable?	N=200	N =200
Yes	124 (62.0)	113 (56.5)
Not sure	39 (19.5)	39 (19.5)
No	37 (18.5)	48 (24.0)
In which situations is breastfeeding in public acceptable? (More than one option)	N=200	N=200
If the mothers turns away	76 (38.0)	77 (38.5)
If the mothers covers her breast	139 (69.5)	141 (70.5)
If a special environment/room is provided	150 (75.0)	166 (83.0)
Is it appropriate to show a breastfeeding woman on TV shows?	N=200	N=200
Yes	95 (47.5)	71 (35.5)
Not sure	39 (19.5)	44 (22.0)
No	65 (32.5)	84 (42.0)
Have you encountered a breastfeeding mother in public?	N=200	N=200
Yes	149 (74.5)	138 (69.0)
No	51 (25.5)	62 (31.0)
How did you feel while encountering a breastfeeding mother in public?	N=149	N=138
Comfortable	101 (67.7)	80 (57.9)
Worried/anxious	20 (13.4)	22 (15.9)
Uncomfortable	15 (10.0)	25 (18.1)
Ashamed	13 (8.9)	13 (8.1)
Have you breastfed at home in the presence of another woman? (only those with a previous child)	N=115 ^a	N=180 ^b
Yes	66 (57.4)	127 (70.6)
No	49 (42.6)	53 (29.4)
If yes, how did you feel?	N=66	N=127
Comfortable	42 (63.5)	76 (59.8)
Worried/anxious	9 (13.9)	15 (11.5)
Uncomfortable	8 (11.9)	16 (12.9)
Ashamed	7 (10.7)	20 (15.8)
Have you breastfed at home in the presence of a man? (only those with a previous child)	N=115 ^a	N=180 ^b
Yes	42 (36.5)	55 (30.5)
No	73 (63.5)	125 (69.5)
If yes, how did you feel?	N=42	N=55
Comfortable	38 (90.4)	26 (47.2)
Worried/anxious	17 (40.4)	17 (30.9)
Uncomfortable	10 (23.8)	8 (14.5)
Ashamed	8 (19.0)	10 (18.1)
Have you breastfed in public? (only those with a previous child)	N=115 ^a	N=180 ^b
Yes	65 (56.5)	67 (37.2)
No	50 (43.5)	113 (62.8)
Have you breastfed the current newborn in public? (in hospital in the presence of others/ visitors, etc)? (only for mothers having their first child)	N=85	Non Applicable
Yes	28 (32.9)	
No	57 (67.1)	

Table 3 The attitudes and practices about breastfeeding in public (concluded)

Attitudes and practices	Mother N (%)	Relative N (%)
How did you feel when breastfeeding in public?	N=93	N=67
Comfortable	35 (37.6)	31 (46.2)
I felt like I was drawing attention	38 (40.8)	22 (32.8)
I thought I would draw negative responses	3 (3.2)	7 (10.5)
Ashamed	17 (18.4)	7 (10.5)
Where would you breastfeed?	N=200	N=200
In a nursing room within a shopping mall	163 (81.5)	154 (77.0)
Anywhere in a shopping mall	49 (24.5)	37 (18.5)
Restaurant/Cafe	50 (25.0)	26 (13.0)
Public transportation	32 (16.0)	29 (14.5)
Park	48 (24.0)	31 (15.5)
At another person's house, in the presence of other people	69 (34.5)	42 (21.0)
None	24 (12.0)	36 (18.0)

^a85 mothers had the first child. ^b20 relatives did not have a child.

Anatolia ($P = 0.046$) and had ≥ 2 children ($P = 0.008$). Mothers and relatives who thought it was their right to breastfeed in public ($P = 0.001$) and found the practice acceptable ($P < 0.000$) had higher total IIFAS scores than women who were undecided or had negative perceptions regarding the issue.

Discussion

In the current study, new mothers and their accompanying relatives mostly believed that it was their right to breastfeed in public; however, their breastfeeding experiences in public were limited because of cultural concerns and lack of suitable environments. Positive infant feeding attitudes were related to sociodemographic characteristics and breastfeeding experiences in public.

The attitudes and practices of female relatives about breastfeeding influence mothers' decisions to initiate and continue breastfeeding (16). In Turkish culture, maternal grandmothers/mothers-in-law are prominent during breastfeeding as well as in raising children, and share many experiences with mothers. One study showed that mothers, regardless of their age and education level, were affected by the experiences of the older generation and felt pressure during breastfeeding (18). It is considered important to examine the opinions of women who are family members and have the potential to influence and support maternal decisions about breastfeeding in public.

One of the factors that determine the continuation of breastfeeding is the necessity of breastfeeding in public spaces. A study in Ghana reported that while 77.0% of women thought that mothers have the right to breastfeed in public, only 62.7% stated that it is acceptable (8). In a study in China, 65.0% of the participants stated that breastfeeding in public is acceptable (5). In a global survey conducted by a leading manufacturer of breastfeeding accessories that included 13 000 mothers from Brazil, China, France, Germany, Hungary, Mexico, Turkey, UK and USA in 2014, breastfeeding in public was viewed as wrong by 20.0% of Turkish mothers, which was the highest rate among the countries (20). In this study,

although 72.0% of mothers and 63.5% of relatives believed in the right to breastfeed in public, only 62.0% and 56.5%, respectively, found it acceptable. The closeness of the acceptance rates in the different studies indicates that many women in different cultures have similar cultural, religious and environmental concerns that affect their attitudes towards breastfeeding in public.

Seeing a woman breastfeed in public often raises complex and negative emotions. A recent review of women's experiences with breastfeeding in public across diverse international contexts revealed the challenges to include drawing attention, sexualization of breasts, awareness of others' discomfort, and efforts not to be seen, while women's perceptions of what enhanced their experience were confidence and a supportive audience (13). In another recent online survey on women in Australia, Ireland and Sweden, challenges to breastfeeding in public included unwanted attention, no comfortable place to sit, unsuitable environment, awkward audience, and not wearing appropriate clothing, while supportive network, quiet private environment, comfortable seating, understanding and acceptance of others, and seeing other mothers breastfeeding were helpful (26). A study conducted in the USA found that 33.2% of participants felt uncomfortable when they saw a woman breastfeeding in public (5). In another study in China, 47.0% said that seeing a woman breastfeeding in public was embarrassing (5). In a study conducted in the UK, participants did not know where to look when they saw a breastfeeding mother and they felt shame (10). Attitudes towards breastfeeding in public are mostly related to perceived cultural norms (27). In a meta-synthesis, grandmothers thought that breastfeeding in public causes embarrassment or disapproval of mothers because the breast represents sexuality (17). In this study, feeling anxious (mothers 13.4%, relatives 15.9%), uncomfortable (mothers 10.0%, relatives 18.1%) and ashamed (mothers 8.9%, relatives 8.1%) were reported. However, these negative attitudes may be evaluated as low because mothers use breastfeeding covers and prefer breastfeeding cabins/rooms when in public.