

Table 4 IIFAS scores of the participants and related factors

IIFAS	Mother (N=200)		Relative (N=200)	
IIFAS total score (min–max)	42–75		36–77	
Mean (SD)	61.53 (6.19)		60.65 (6.69)	
Median (Q1–Q3) ^a	62.0 (57–67)		61.0 (57–65)	
Mean rank	208.47		192.53	
Test and P value	z = -1.380 P=0.167			
IIFAS groups	n (%)		n (%)	
Tendency to breastfeed	6 (3.0)		8 (4.0)	
Undecided	184 (92.0)		179 (89.5)	
Tendency to formula feeding	10 (5.0)		13 (6.5)	
Test and P value	$\chi^2=0.746$ P=0.689			
Sociodemographic variables	Mother (N=200) IIFAS score Med (Q1–Q3)* mean rank		Relative (N=200) IIFAS score Med (Q1–Q3)* mean rank	
Age				
18–24 years	59 (55–66)	83.52	60 (56–63)	88.11 ^a
25–34 years	62 (58–66)	101.83	63 (58–68)	119.58 ^b
35–44 years	63 (57–67)	106.41	62 (56–66)	99.32 ^c
45 and older	64 (58–67)	113.83	60 (54–63)	85.15 ^d
Test and P value	KW $\chi^2=2.873/0.412$		KW $\chi^2 = 11.867/0.008$ b>c	
Longest place of residence				
Western Anatolian Region	62 (57–67)	100.36	60 (56–65)	97.02 ^a
Central Anatolian Region	62 (58–68)	107.75	62 (59–67)	111.82 ^b
Eastern Anatolian Region	61 (57–64)	90.00	59 (53–60)	71.17 ^c
Test and P value	KW $\chi^2=1.878/0.391$		KW $\chi^2=6.140/0.046$ b>c	
Educational status				
Primary school	61 (57–66)	93.23 ^a	60 (55–63)	88.05 ^a
Secondary school	59 (54–64)	76.55 ^b	59 (54–63)	80.69 ^b
High school	61 (57–63)	85.41 ^c	61 (58–63)	98.29 ^c
University and above	64 (61–68)	126.01 ^d	64 (60–68)	130.27 ^d
Test and P value	KW $\chi^2= 2.965/<0.000$ d> a, b and c		KW $\chi^2=20.582/<0.000$ d> a, b and c	
Working status				
Employed	63 (59–67)	115.94	62 (57–67)	107.41
Unemployed	61 (57–65)	90.83	60 (56–64)	97.02
Test and P value	z = -2.990/0.003		z = -1.20/0.230	
Perceived income status				
Bad	59 (57–62)	70.43 ^a	62 (58–66)	109.42
Medium	62 (57–67)	100.96 ^b	60 (56–65)	98.15
Good	64 (61–67)	115.80 ^c	61 (53–67)	101.37
Test and P value	KW $\chi^2=8.290/ 0.016$ c>a		KW $\chi^2=0.992/0.609$	
Family type				
Nuclear family	62 (57–67)	101.95	61 (57–66)	103.68
Extended family	61 (58–66)	93.67	59 (53–63)	86.50
Test and P value	z = -0.770/0.441		z = -1.633/0.103	
Number of living children				
0	—		61 (57–66)	94.45 ^a
1	62 (58–66)	102.39	63 (58–67)	104.49 ^b
2 and more	63 (58–67)	99.10	61 (58–64)	82.94 ^c
Test and p value	z = -399/0.690		KW $\chi^2 = 6.348/0.042$ b>c	
Variables about attitudes/practices towards breastfeeding in public	Mother (N=200) IIFAS score (mean, SD)		Relative (N=200) IIFAS score (mean, SD)	
What kind of attention would breastfeeding in public draw?				
Positive	63 (59–67) 98.04		61 (59–66) 93.39	
Neutral	62 (58–67) 90.57		63 (58–67) 113.98	
Negative	61 (57–66) 117.03		60 (55–64) 120.12	
Test and P value	KW $\chi^2=3.056/0.217$		KW $\chi^2=5.294/0.071$	

Table 4 IIFAS scores of the participants and related factors (concluded)

Variables about attitudes/practices towards breastfeeding in public	Mother (N=200) IIFAS score (mean, SD)		Relative (N=200) IIFAS score (mean, SD)	
Do you think women have the right to breastfeed in public?				
Yes				
I am not sure	63 (59–67)	110.00 ^a	62 (58–67)	112.01 ^a
No	58 (55–63)	75.94 ^b	59 (53–63)	83.82 ^b
Test and P value	59 (54–65)	78.72 ^c	58 (54–62)	77.03 ^c
	KW $\chi^2=13.280/0.001$ a > b and c		KW $\chi^2=14.063/0.001$ a > b and c	
Is breastfeeding in public acceptable?				
Yes	63 (59–67)	114.00 ^a	63 (58–67)	115.23 ^a
I am not sure	58 (54–63)	71.05 ^b	59 (55–63)	83.03 ^b
No	61 (56–64)	86.31 ^c	59 (55–63)	80.01 ^c
Test and P value	KW $\chi^2=19.126/<0.000$ a > b and c		KW $\chi^2=16.950/<0.000$ a > b and c	
Have you breastfed at home in the presence of another woman? (only those with a previous child)				
Yes	62 (57–67)	100.84	62 (58–66)	101.99
No	60 (56–66)	90.63	58 (54–63)	73.30
Test and P value	z = -1.062/0.288		z = -3.014/0.003	
Have you breastfed at home in the presence of a man? (only those with a previous child)				
Yes	63 (58–67)	109.17	63 (59–67)	119.66
No	61 (57–65)	91.32	60 (55–63)	83.25
Test and P value	z = -2.142/0.032		z = -4.286/<0.000	
Have you breastfed in public before?				
Yes	63 (57–67)	104.00	64 (59–67)	114.35
No	61 (57–66)	90.49	60 (55–63)	81.76
Test and P value	z = -1.682/0.093		z = -3.970/<0.000	

Mann-Whitney U test – z value; Kruskal Wallis variance analysis – KW χ^2 value, P < 0.05. a,b,c,d are subgroup names in the question and used to indicate which group the difference originated from when comparing IIFAS score (for example a>b)

*Q1-Q3 are quartiles for 25th and 75th percentile. IIFAS = Iowa Infant Feeding Attitude Scale; KW = Kruskal Wallis; SD = standard deviation.

Women who breastfeed in public can be accused of having bad ethical values and of being bad parents (28). It is expected that women would take necessary precautions due to reactions from other people when breastfeeding in public places, to minimize the problems that may occur, and keep themselves safe (12). Mothers are expected to work, do the shopping, and take their babies to hospital. In such situations, mothers prefer to prepare breastmilk beforehand or use formulae, use unsuitable environments such as bathrooms or toilets, and/or cover their breast while breastfeeding in public places to avoid embarrassment (27,28). In Ghana, 81.0% of participants said that women should cover their breast and 70.3% that mothers should breastfeed in specially designated places and rooms (8). A study in Romania showed that mothers need a secluded and safe environment when breastfeeding outside their homes, and not being able to find such a place can create tension for mothers who want to breastfeed in public (29). In this study, the acceptability of breastfeeding in public increased when the breast was covered (mothers 69.5%, relatives 70.5%) and when a private area was provided (mothers 75.0%, relatives 83.0%). Breastfeeding is restricted to the home environment or expected to be performed in environments such as public toilets due to lack of suitable conditions. It should be a mother’s choice whether to use a cover or private room, and depends on their own values and perception of privacy.

Beyond covering the breast, mothers’ attitudes before and during breastfeeding are important for the acceptability of breastfeeding in public (10). A study determined that mothers felt pried upon while breastfeeding and that this made them feel anxious. Many mothers feel comfortable when breastfeeding in the presence of other women but uncomfortable when breastfeeding next to their fathers, friends of their husband, or strangers (30). Hauck et al reported that, women who had to breastfeed in front of someone they felt uncomfortable, most often tried not to be seen, moved to a private place, turned away and just got on with breastfeeding (13). Similarly, in this study, more mothers felt uncomfortable breastfeeding in the presence of a man. This can be explained by the fact that the breast is associated with sexuality, and the mothers’ perception of privacy.

Mothers’ infant feeding attitudes may affect their views on breastfeeding in public (27). A study conducted in Korea found a positive relationship between breastfeeding in public and breastfeeding continuation (31). Another study reported that people with knowledge about breastfeeding or who have seen people breastfeed in public had greater positive attitudes towards breastfeeding in public (5). Similarly, our study found that mothers and relatives with positive attitudes towards breastfeeding in public and mothers who breastfed in public were more positive. In addition, higher