

A Study of the Understanding amongst Academia towards the Islamic Concept of Breastfeeding

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Abstract

Understanding the importance of breastfeeding from the Islamic perspective is important in ensuring the success of breastfeeding particularly amongst working mothers. The focus of this research is the understanding of the Islamic perspective on breastfeeding amongst university intellectuals who are considered to be highly educated and a role model for other women. This is a field study that employed the quantitative method where data were obtained through questionnaires and an interview with a specialist in the Islamic Family Jurisprudence (Fiqh). A total of 140 respondents were selected from the Malaysian higher education institutes such as UiTM Kuala Terengganu, University Malaysia Terengganu and Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, Kuala Terengganu. The results showed that the respondents have a sound understanding with regards to breastfeeding from the Islamic perspective, scoring an average mean value of 2.67-3.92. This finding indicates that knowledge about breastfeeding according to Islam is an important foundation to the successful practice of breastfeeding.

Keywords: understanding, academia, breastfeeding

1. Introduction

The implementation of breastfeeding is considered to be an important branch in the Islamic Family Jurisprudence (fiqh); it is a command of Allah and the Prophet as ordained in both the Qur'an and Hadith. Furthermore, a mother's milk carries an important status in the Islamic law due to its effect on forging milk kinship amongst unrelated individuals. For example, a woman who is a wet nurse to a child is forbidden from entering into marriage with the said child indefinitely. Due to its esteemed position, a mother needs to understand the major Islamic principles associated with breastfeeding. Understanding this would ensure the success of breastfeeding that conform to the Islamic rules. Among the issues dealt in this study is the Islamic perspective on nursing that is in accordance with Islamic law, the rules of milk kinship, the need for expressing milk, and forms of payment for breastfeeding.

The scope of this study is the female university academia's understanding of breastfeeding from the Islamic perspective. The respondents are selected from Malaysian universities of diverse academic backgrounds: the Islamic education, science, economics and social sciences. The focus of this study is their understanding of breastfeeding from the following aspects: as a commandment of Allah the Almighty, the Islamic laws of breastfeeding, the duration of breastfeeding, the breastfeeding system that builds kinship, expressing milk, and the hiring of wet nurses.

Although prior field research in Malaysia on breastfeeding have been conducted among nurses (Nik Normanieza Nik Wan, 2009), housewives and mothers in general (Shaaban, 2000), a study on the understanding of breastfeeding according to the Islamic perspective is insufficient. Outside of the Malaysian context, Ihsan Dogramasi (Dogramasi, 2013) conducted a study on breastfeeding practices amongst Muslims in the United States. However the study did not address their understanding according to the Islamic perspective. Işām's study at the Islamic University of Gaza, on the other hand, focused on the general publics' understanding towards the

family bond developed through breastfeeding ('Iṣām 'Abd. Zuhd, & et. al, 2006), rather than on the academics' understanding which is the focus of this present study.

The reason that this present study chose university academics as respondents is because no other study have explored this issue, even though the academics are considered as being amongst the highly educated. Their understanding is thus relevant because of the assumption that they may have a better understanding of breastfeeding from the Islamic perspective compared to others from different employment sectors. To verify this, the researcher has selected respondents from three public universities in Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia: Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA), Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT) and Universiti Teknologi Mara, Kuala Terengganu branch (UiTM).

2. Literature Review

Studies related to breastfeeding from the Islamic perspective have long been dominated by scholars such as Abdul Karim Zaydan (2003) who described, in-depth, the complex debate amongst jurists (*fuqaha*) and mufasssireen on matters pertaining to individuals involved in breastfeeding such as the mother, father and child. An explication of the milk kinship (*nasab*) forged via breastfeeding is found in Al Mawardi (1996). With regards to the jurists' debate on the rules, conditions, duration and breastfeeding entitlement, these are elaborated at length in the book of fiqh of various Schools of Thought. Among the books are al Mudawwanah by al Aṣḥabī (n. d.) and Hāshiah al-Dusūqī written by al-Dardīr (n.d) of the Maliki School, the book al-Mughni al-Sharbini Muhtaj al (1978) of the Shafi'i School, the book al-Mughni by Ibn Qudamah (1983) of the Hanbali School and al-Mabsūṭ by al-Sarkhasī (n. d.) from the Hanafi School. Apart from the books of fiqh, the mufasssireen also discussed the issue of breastfeeding based on the command of Allah in Surah Al Baqarah, verse 233. Among the mufasssireen who made interpretations are al-Alūsi (1987) in Ruh al-Ma'ānī, Rashid Rida (2005) in his Tafsir al-Manar, al-Qurtubi (1988) in tafsir al-Jami ' li Ahkam al-Qur'an and Sayyid Qutb (1992) in Fi Zilāl Qur'an.

A study on breast milk from the Islamic perspective by modern writers is Ayu Aima (2002) in her book written in Malay 'Penyusuan Susu Ibu Menurut Perspektif Islam' (Breastfeeding According to the Islamic Perspective). This book provided an overview of the benefits of breast milk from various angles. Normadiah and Siti Fatimah (2009), on the other hand, provided a detailed explanation of breastfeeding practices amongst career women. They also described the various initiatives taken to facilitate breastfeeding. Danial Zainal Abidin (2010) also wrote about the advantages of breastfeeding according to the Qur'an where he compared modern scientists' view on breast milk with the verses of the Qur'an. However, his explanations are insufficient for discussion. It seems, thus far, that a majority of the writings and researches in Malaysia focused only on the theoretical implementation of breastfeeding in Islam. This makes this particular study different from previous studies that are also based on the Islamic perspective as it aims to uncover the understanding of mothers towards breastfeeding according to the Islamic perspective.

Apart from breastfeeding from the Islamic perspective, another research entitled Breastfeeding Knowledge, Confidence, Beliefs, and Attitudes of Canadian Physicians conducted in Canada in 2014, prove that knowledge, confidence, belief and positive attitude from the medical experts can increase the practice of exclusive breastfeeding and increase children's health (Pound et. al., 2014). Other health journals also prove that understanding and implementing breastfeeding have many advantages for the babies that include decreasing the risk of contracting various diseases. Studies in America prove that through exclusive breastfeeding, the risk of infections such as otitis media have been reduced (The American Academy of Pediatrics, 2012). Studies also prove that breastfeeding helps prevent babies from the sudden infant death syndrome by 50% (Vennemann, et al., 2009). Even the practice of breastfeeding for two years, as recommended in Islam, can save the mother from contracting various diseases that include breast cancer (J Key, et al., 2001) and ovarian cancer (Chung, Raman, et al., 2007). While these studies are based on scientific research, they differ from the focus of this study that explores the understanding of academics on breastfeeding from the perspective of Islam and the extent to which this understanding can further motivate the mothers to continue breastfeeding.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Data Collection

This study involves an analysis of data obtained from 140 questionnaires. Although the researchers initially distributed 180 questionnaires, only 140 questionnaires were returned. The data from the questionnaires were analysed using SPSS version 14.00 through the statistic descriptive means. The findings only involve frequency, percentage and mean. The results are shown in tables followed by a discussion. In addition to the questionnaires, an interview with an expert in the field of Islamic Family Jurisprudence, Sya Norul Madihah Syed Hussin, were included. The data obtained from the interview is intended to strengthen the interpretation of the data.

2.2 Selection of the Sample

The respondents from Terengganu are selected for this study because records show that for the years 2011 and 2012, the Terengganu population have the highest rate of exclusive breastfeeding of infants aged four months until age two. Terengganu is also number 1 compared to the other states of Malaysia with a population that have successfully implemented exclusive breastfeeding for children ages four months, with 69.1% (in 2011) and 67.6% (in 2012), and for ages six months at 45.9% (in 2011) and 47% (in 2012) from the breastfeeding statistics (Nutrition Division, Ministry of Health Malaysia, 2012). The sample of this study is further narrowed to the Kuala Terengganu district based on the success of maintaining its top position with the highest rate of exclusive breastfeeding for infants aged four months to six months in 2012 (Nutrition Division, Ministry of Health Malaysia, 2012).

3. Empirical Findings

3.1 Demographic and Socio-Economic Characteristics

Table 1. Socio-economic demographic profile of the subjects

| Demographic and socio-economic characteristics | Frequency | Percentage | Total (N=140) 100% |
|--|-----------|------------|--------------------|
| Age | | | |
| 25-30 years | 27 | 19.3% | 140 (100%) |
| 31-40 years | 78 | 55.7% | |
| 41-50 years | 27 | 19.3% | |
| Number of children | | | |
| 1-2 respondents | 69 | 49.2% | 140(100%) |
| 3-4 respondents | 53 | 37.9% | |
| 5 and above | 18 | 12.9% | |
| Level of education | | | |
| Bachelor | 8 | 5.7% | 140(100%) |
| Masters | 99 | 70.7% | |
| PhD | 33 | 23.6% | |
| Participating universities | | | |
| UniSZA | 60 | 42.9% | 140 (100%) |
| UMT | 55 | 39.3% | |
| UiTM Kuala Terengganu | 25 | 17.8% | |
| Designation | | | |
| Lecturer | 108 | 77.1% | 140 (100%) |
| Senior Lecturer | 22 | 15.7% | |
| Head of Department | 4 | 2.9% | |
| Dean of the Faculty | 1 | 0.7% | |
| Associate Professor | 4 | 2.9% | |
| Professor | 1 | 0.7% | |
| Specialisation | | | |
| Islamic Studies | 14 | 10% | 140 (100%) |
| Social Sciences | 17 | 12.3% | |
| Health Sciences | 17 | 12.3% | |
| Information Technology | 11 | 7.7% | |
| Accounting and Business | 31 | 22.1% | |
| Engineering | 3 | 2.1% | |
| Food Sciences | 7 | 5.0% | |
| Language | 15 | 10.7% | |
| Law | 6 | 4.3% | |
| Biotechnology | 7 | 5.0% | |
| Mathematics | 7 | 5.0% | |
| Visual Drawing | 3 | 2.1% | |
| Manufacturing Technology | 2 | 1.4% | |

Source: Survey in 2012

To conduct a review of the implementation of breastfeeding practices amongst the academics of Kuala Terengganu, a demographic analysis were conducted to obtain a general profile of the respondents. The demographic information is divided into two main parts; namely their personal information and employment background.

Table 1 show that a majority of the respondents are aged between 31-40 with 55.7% (78 respondents) from the sample. This is followed by respondents aged between 25-30, and 40 years and above; each respectively at 19.3% (27 respondents). The number of respondents aged 50 years and above is only 5.7% (8 respondents) from the samples. The respondents' number of children is fairly small. Table 1 also shows that almost half of the respondents have between 1-2 children (at 49.3% which is 69 respondents). Having examined the factor, it is found that most of the respondents got married at the age of 30. On the other hand, the number of respondents with 3-4 children is quite small (at 39.9% which is 53 respondents). Only 12.9% (18 respondents) of the 140 respondents have over 5 children.

With regards to the level of education, the respondents are mostly Masters and PhD graduates. Table 1 shows that a majority of the respondents had graduated with Masters at 70.7% (99 respondents), followed by PhD at 23.6% (33 respondents) and a Bachelor's degree at 5.7% (8 respondents). Most of respondents with a Bachelor's degree are from UiTM and UniSZA. The UMT lecturers, on the other hand, are all Master and PhD graduates.

Table 1 reveals that most of the respondents are from UniSZA with 42.9% (60 respondents), followed by UMT with 39.3% (55 respondents), and UiTM—as a branch operating on a small campus in Kuala Terengganu—having a relatively small number of lecturers with 17.9% (25 respondents). From this table it also shows that 77.1% (108 respondents) are academic lecturers, followed by 15.7% (22 respondents) who are senior lecturers, and 2.9% (4 respondents) who are Associate Professors. Only one (0.7% respondent) is a Professor.

About the specialisation, most of the respondents are in the field of accounting and business which is fitting because all three participating universities have these faculties (www.unisza.edu.my; www.umt.edu.my; www.uitm.edu.my, June 1, 2012). Table 1 shows that 22.1% (31 respondents) from these fields participated as respondents, followed by the Social Sciences and Health Sciences respectively at 12.3% (17 respondents). This is followed by respondents from the Language area with 10.7% (15 respondents), and respondents from the field of Manufacturing Technology at 1.4% (2 respondents) only.

3.2 Understanding that Breastfeeding Is a Commandment of Allah the Almighty

Table 2. Understanding that Breastfeeding is a Commandment from God

| No | Understanding breastfeeding is a commandment from God | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree | Mean |
|----|---|-------------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|------|
| 1 | Breastfeeding is one of the responsibilities of a mother to a child. | - | 1 0.7% | 15 10.7% | 124 88.6% | 3.88 |
| 2 | Breast feeding is commanded by Allah and the Prophet as evidenced in the Qur'an and the Hadith. | - | - | 16 11.4% | 124 88.6% | 3.89 |
| 3 | Breast milk is the first food for the past prophets and the Messenger. | - | 1 0.7% | 20 14.3% | 119 85.0% | 3.84 |
| 4 | Children are entitled to a mother's milk from the first day of birth until the age of two. | - | - | 14 10.0% | 126 90.0% | 3.90 |
| 5 | Babies should be breastfed by the mother for as long as the mother does not have any illness that prevents the feeding process. | - | 2 1.4% | 15 10.7% | 123 87.9% | 3.86 |
| 6 | If the mother is unable to breastfeed due to certain reasons, the mother can allow the child to be breastfed by another woman with the consent of the husband or father of the child. | 1 0.7% | 15 10.7% | 39 27.9% | 85 60.7% | 3.49 |
| 7 | Breast milk is obligatory to a child if the child is allergic to all food and drink except breast milk. | 1 0.7% | 11 7.9% | 36 25.7% | 92 65.7% | 3.56 |

Source: Survey in 2012

The results for the analysis, as presented in percentages and frequencies, of academics towards their understanding that breastfeeding is Allah's commandment, are very satisfying. Table 2 displays the frequency,

percentage and mean for each statement. The statement "Children are entitled to a mother's milk from the first day of birth until the age of two" received the highest percentage which is 100% (140 respondents, who agree and strongly agree).

The least understood statement is "If the mother is unable to breastfeed due to certain reasons, the mother can allow her child to be breastfed by another woman with the consent of the husband or father of the child" which only reached 88.6% (124 respondents, including those who agree and strongly agree). Although this statement has a relatively low percentage compared to the other statements, the results are still within the higher range. In reality, although the respondents have a good understanding on the issue, in practise, they lack the confidence to implement it because of the impact of kinship that is formed through breastfeeding.

The next analysis is based on the mean value. It also shows that the respondents' understanding of their responsibilities is positive. The mean value for this is between 3.49-3.90. However, the highest mean value is the statement "Children are entitled to a mother's milk from the first day of birth until the age of two" (mean = 3.90). This is followed by the statement "Breastfeeding is commanded by Allah and the Prophet as evidenced in the Qur'an and the Hadith" (mean = 3.89), and the statement "Breastfeeding is one of the responsibilities of a mother to a child" (mean = 3.88).

3.3 Understanding the Entitlement of Breastfeeding Allowance

Table 3 shows the results of the respondents' understanding towards the entitlement of payment for breastfeeding as described in the Islamic jurisprudence. The statement "Under certain conditions, the breastfeeding wife is entitled to claim for payment from the husband" showed that 45.0% respondents did not agree with the statement (63 respondents including those who disagree and strongly disagree), while 55.0% respondents agreed (77 respondents including those who agree and strongly agree).

Table 3. Understanding the Entitlement of Breastfeeding Allowance

| No. | Understanding About Breastfeeding Wages | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree | Mean |
|-----|---|-------------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|------|
| 1 | Under certain conditions, the breastfeeding wife is entitled to claim for payment from the husband. | 6 11.4% | 47 33.6% | 44 31.4% | 33 23.6% | 2.67 |

Source: Survey in 2012

Although the number of respondents who agree are still higher than those who disagree, the total mean = 2.67 on this statement clearly shows that there are still many respondents who do not fully understand the concept of payment for breastfeeding mothers.

3.4 An Understanding of the Kinship Formed through Breastfeeding

The analysis of the percentage and frequency of respondents' understanding related to milk kinship shows positive results. The statement that most respondents understood is "It is prohibited for the child and the wet nurse to marry one another" which is at 99.3% (139 respondents, including those who agree and strongly agree). This is followed by the statement "'milk siblings' are prohibited to marry one another" that also reached 99.3% (139 respondents including those who agree and disagree). Although the percentage and frequency on both these statements are high, the value for 'strongly agree' differ. The second statement received 90% (126 respondents) for strongly agree compared to the first statement that had 92.9% (130 respondents). The statement "The wet nurse's husband is prohibited from marrying the milk child" also reached 98.6% (138 respondents, including those who agree and strongly agree).

Table 4 shows the analysis based on the mean value associated with feeding that involves kinship formed through suckling. "It is prohibited for the child and the wet nurse to enter into marriage" recorded the highest mean with 3.92. This is followed by the statement "'milk siblings' are prohibited to marry one another indefinitely" with a mean value of 3.89, whilst the statement "The wet nurse's husband is prohibited from marrying the milk child indefinitely" has a mean value of 3.87. On an average, the statement with the lowest number is "The law states that milk kinship is formed after suckling the baby five times" with a mean value of 3.35. Overall, the respondents have a clear understanding of kinship that is formed through breastfeeding even though not all of the respondents come from the Islamic Studies background. This is based on the demographic analysis where only 10% (14 respondents) of the respondents are from the Faculty of Islamic Studies. In

conclusion, almost all of the statements that involve an understanding of kinship formed through breastfeeding yielded positive results with means ranging from 3.35-3.92.

Table 4. An Understanding of Milk Kinship

| No. | Understanding about breastfeeding and kinship | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree | Mean |
|-----|---|-------------------|------------|-------------|----------------|------|
| 1 | The law states that milk kinship is formed after suckling the baby five times | 6 4.3% | 12 8.6% | 49 35.0% | 73 52.1% | 3:35 |
| 2 | It is prohibited for the child and the wet nurse to marry one another indefinitely. | - | 1 0.7% | 9 6.4% | 130 92.9% | 3.92 |
| 3 | The wet nurse's husband is prohibited from marrying the milk child indefinitely. | - | 2 1.4% | 14 10.0% | 124 88.6% | 3.87 |
| 4 | 'Milk siblings' are prohibited to marry one another. | - | 1 0.7% | 13 9.3% | 126 90.0% | 3.89 |
| 5 | The milk child is prohibited from marriage to the milk parents' siblings (the uncles and aunties). | 6 4.3% | 3 2.1% | 23 16.4% | 108 77.1% | 3.66 |
| 6 | The milk child is prohibited from marriage to the mother and the father of the milk parents (the grandparents). | 5 3.6% | 4 2.9% | 26 18.6% | 105 75.0% | 3.65 |

Source: Survey in 2012

3.5 Understanding the Permissibility of Expressing Milk

For the statement "Islam allows suckling through the breast as well as through expressed breast milk", a majority of the respondents (77.1%) strongly agreed (88 respondents) and 22.1% (31 respondents) agreed. The mean value of the statement is also very high (a mean of 3.76). This shows that almost all the respondents understood that other than through breast feeding, Islam allows expressing milk.

Table 5. Respondents Understanding of the Permissibility of Expressed Breast milk

| No. | Understanding of permissibility of expressing milk | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree | Mean |
|-----|--|-------------------|-----------|-------------|----------------|------|
| 1 | Islam allows suckling through the breast as well as through expressed breast milk. | - | 1 0.7% | 31 22.1% | 108 77.1% | 3.76 |

Source: Survey in 2012

4. Discussion

The analysis of the percentages and frequencies shows that the respondents have a very good understanding that breastfeeding is a command of Allah the Almighty. The statement "Children are entitled to a mother's milk from the first day of birth until the age of two" reached the highest score of 100% (140 respondents, including those who agree and strongly agree) which are positive. This understanding is consistent with the requirements of the Islamic law and the jurists' opinion. Among those who agree on this issue are the Shafi'i (al-Shafi'i, n.d.), Hanafi (al-Kasani, 2000), Maliki (al-Dusūqī, n.d.) and Hanbali Schools. Overall, they mutually agreed that two years is the best duration for a mother to breastfeed a child, as ordained by Allah in the Qur'an:

وَالْوَالِدَاتُ يُرْضِعْنَ أَوْلَادَهُنَّ حَوْلَيْنِ كَامِلَيْنِ لِمَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يُتِمَّ الرَّضَاعَةَ

Meaning: Mothers shall suckle their children for two whole years, which is for those who wish to complete the suckling.

(Al-Qur'an, Al-Baqarah 2:233)

However, the Hanafi School also allows the breast feeding to go beyond two years (al-Kasani, 2000), that is up to the age of two and a half years or thirty months (Ibn 'Abidin, 1992). The jurists also allow mothers to wean the child even at less than the two year period. However the Shafi'i School (al-Shafi'i, n.d.) and Hanafi School (al-Kasani, 2000) impose certain conditions. First, that the weaning process must have the consensus of both the husband and wife. Secondly, that the weaning process must not cause harm to the baby. If it causes harm to the

baby who are born prematurely, or have constipation, diarrhoea, allergies, or other ailments, the mother is not allowed to wean the child from breast milk before the two years period.

The following statement also reached 100% agreement: "Breast feeding is commanded by Allah and the Prophet as evidenced in the Qur'an and the Hadith" (with 140 respondents, including those who agree and strongly agree). However, the number of respondents who strongly agree is less than the first statements which is at 88.6% (124 respondents) compared with 90% (126 respondents in the first statement). This result is reasonable and is reflective of the many verses in the Qur'an and the Hadith that conform to the statement. Among them is verse 233 from Surah al Baqarah in the Qur'an. In addition, there are a number of hadith that discusses the benefits of breastfeeding such as:

انما الرضاعة من المجاعة

Meaning: Indeed, breastfeeding is due to hunger (Muslim)

The Prophet said:

لا رضاع إلا ما أنشز العظم و أنبت اللحم

Meaning: There is no feeding unless it strengthen the bones and grows the flesh (Abu Daud)

The next statement, "Breastfeeding is the responsibility of a parent to a child" reached 99.3% (139 respondents who agree and strongly agree). This shows that almost all of the respondents understood that breastfeeding is their responsibility and the child's right. However, a majority of the jurists stated that breastfeeding is encouraged rather than mandatory (Yusri, 2006). It is encouraged because children deserve the best sustenance that only breast milk could provide. However, the Shafi'i (al-Shafi'i, n.d.) and Hanbali (Ibn Qudamah, 2004) Schools made it mandatory that colostrum are given to new-borns for its survival (al-Sharbini, 1978; Abū al-'Abbas, 1984; Baḥūṭī al, 2003).

While the responsibility of suckling the child is not made mandatory, it only becomes mandatory under the following three conditions: first, if the baby is not able to digest milk other than breast milk due to illness or certain allergies; second, if there are no other women who are willing to breastfeed the child at the time; and third, if the parents cannot afford to hire a wet nurse, then breastfeeding is required from the mother. It is therefore sinful if she refuses to do it as this can be regarded as similar to exposing the child to danger and harm (Al-Sharbajī, 1987).

The least understood statement is "If the mother is unable to breastfeed due to certain reasons, the mother can allow the child to be breastfed by another woman with the consent of the husband or father of the child". The statement only reached 88.6% (124 respondents, including those who agree and strongly agree). Although this statement reached a relatively low percentage compared to the other statements, the results are still within the higher range. In reality though, although they may understand the rights of the child to be breastfed, the parents lack the confidence to use the service of a wet nurse especially because it affects kinship.

As for the mean analysis, it shows that the respondents understand their responsibilities of breastfeeding (the mean value is between 3.49-3.90). However, the highest mean value is for the statement "Children are entitled to a mother's milk from the first day of birth until the age of two" (mean = 3.90). This is followed by the statement "Breast feeding is commanded by Allah and the Prophet as evidenced in the Qur'an and the Hadith" (mean = 3.89) and the statement "Breastfeeding is one of the responsibilities of a mother to a child" (mean = 3.88).

With regards to the understanding of the respondents on allowances or payment for breastfeeding according to the Islamic legal system, the statement "Under certain conditions, the breastfeeding wife are entitled to claim for payment from the husband" showed that the respondents did not agree with the statement (45.0% or 63 respondents including those who disagree and strongly disagree), whilst 55.0% of respondents agreed with this statement (77 respondents including agree and strongly agree). Although the numbers of respondents who agree are higher than those who disagree, the total mean is 2.67 which is relatively low. This means that many have insufficient understanding of payment for breastfeeding mothers. One of the reasons that contribute to this lack of awareness is the lack of contemporary studies that deal with the issue. Although this matter is explained in the *turath* scriptures like *al-Rada* ' written by al-Mawardi (Al-Mawardi, 1996) and *al-Mufaṣṣal* written by 'Abd al-Karim Zaydan (Zaydan, 2003), the books are in Arabic and only those from the Islamic Studies background may have a better understanding.

According to the interview with Sya Noorul Madihah Syed Hussin from UniSZA, the lack of awareness on the issue of payment is because many wives regard breastfeeding as their responsibility thus they feel that they do

not need to be paid. In reality, the wife is entitled to wages under certain conditions as evidenced in the verses of the Qur'an in Surah Al-Talaq. Allah the Almighty says:

فَإِنْ أَرْضَعْنَ لَكُمْ فَآتُوهُنَّ أُجُورَهُنَّ

Meaning: And if they breastfeed (your children) for you, then give them their payment.

(Qur'an, al-Talaq 65:6)

There are, however, differing scholarly views regarding payment of a husband or father to a wife who breastfeeds. According to the Hanafi, Shafi'i and Hanbali Schools, a wife is not entitled to payment from her husband while still in the marriage contract or during the *'iddah talaq raji'i*. This is because the husband is obliged to provide all the necessities to the wife which includes all the requirements such as food, medicine, milk pumping device and others that would aid in breastfeeding. As such, the mother does not need to use her own money. However if the wife is willing to help the husband, then this is encouraged. Oftentimes though, the wife's support is overlooked by the husband who feels relieved of their duty under the assumption that they do not have to spend money to buy milk. This view needs correction because a husband's responsibility is never diminished. However, in terms of payment, scholars agree that all women who had completed the *'iddah talaq raji'i* or are divorced with *talaq ba'in* are entitled to ask for compensation from the husband wherein he must give her the payment equal to the alimony he had to give while in marriage (Sya Noorol Madihah, 2012)

Sya Noorol Madihah's view is further supported by jurists from various Schools like the Hanafi scholars (al-Sarkhasi, 1986) and Zahiri (Ibn Hazm, n.d.) who stated that a mother is not entitled to breastfeeding payment while in the marriage contract or during the period of *'iddah talaq raji'i*. This is because the husband is already responsible for the provision of the wife. This is to avoid a double burden upon the husband of providing both maintenance and payment. However, the wife is entitled to alimony in the marriage. If the wife wishes to increase the alimony for herself due to the breastfeeding burdens upon her, such as a need for more nutritious food, that is the wife's right to seek from her husband (Al-Zaydan, 1994). This view is based on Allah the Almighty in the Qur'an.

Furthermore, results that show an understanding of the respondents towards milk kinship is high. The statement that most respondents understood is "It is prohibited for the child and the wet nurse to marry one another indefinitely" reached 99.3% (139 respondents, including those who agree and strongly agree). This is followed by the statement "milk siblings' are prohibited to marry one another" also reached 99.3% (139 respondents, including those who agree and disagree). Although the percentage and frequency on these statements are similar, the results for strongly agree are different. For the second statement, those who strongly agree are 90% (126 respondents) whereas for the first statement, it is at 92.9% (130 respondents). As for the statement "The wet nurse's husband is prohibited from marrying the milk child indefinitely", the results revealed that 98.6% agree (138 respondents, including those who agree and strongly agree).

When it comes to the analysis based on the mean value related to kinship, it shows that the statement "It is prohibited for the child and the wet nurse to marry one another" has the highest mean of 3.92. This is followed by the statement "milk siblings are prohibited to marry one another" with a mean value of 3.89, and the statement "The wet nurse's husband is prohibited from marrying the milk child indefinitely" with a mean value of 3.87. On an average score, the statements with the lowest number is the statement "The law states that milk kinship is formed after suckling the baby five times" with a value of 3.35 mean. Overall, the respondents have a very good understanding of milk kinship despite not having an Islamic Studies background. This conclusion is based on the demographic analysis where only 10% (14 respondents) of the respondents are from the Faculty of Islamic Studies.

As a conclusion, most of the statements that involve an understanding of kinship through breastfeeding recorded a high percentage and means with a range of 3.35-3.92. This understanding affects the practice of using the service of a wet nurse. The higher the understanding of the impact of kinship through breastfeeding, the higher their anxiety to avoid utilising the service of a wet nurse. The concern may be a result of the effects of the marriage prohibition amongst related "milk siblings" and the wet nurse. The effects of marriage prohibition as agreed by jurists from the Shafi'i (al-Shafi'i, n.d.), Hanafi (al-Sarkhasi, 1986), Maliki (al-Dusūqi, n.d.) and Hanbali (Ibn Qudamah, n.d.) Schools involve the mahram relationship that is formed with the wet nurse and her lineage. In addition, family members involved in the milk kinship are considered as blood relations which also means they are allowed to be in close proximity and are allowed to travel together.

5. Conclusion

As a conclusion, the findings show that the understanding of breastfeeding practices according to the Islamic perspective is very high. The results correlate with the respondents' high level of education. In addition, the respondents' understanding towards the necessity of expressed milk showed that a majority of the respondents have a very good understanding with 77.1% (88 respondents) who strongly agreed, and 22.1% (31 respondents) who agreed. The mean value of the statement is at 3.76 which is also very high. This clearly shows that almost all of the respondents understood that feeding a child expressed breast milk is permissible in Islam. This practice is appropriate as it is promoted on a wide scale in Malaysia especially by the Ministry of Health Malaysia for the working mothers. In fact, this practice is in line with the requirements of Islamic law which were elaborated by past jurists. Imam Shafi'i asserted that milk kinship can still be forged even through expressed breast milk under the condition that the child consumes it until the tummy is filled. This is based on the discussion of a hadith that state that the reason for breastfeeding is due to hunger (Al-Shafi'i, n. d.).

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