



## FACTORS INFLUENCING MOTHERS PURCHASE DECISION TOWARDS FORMULAE FEED PRODUCTS IN COIMBATORE

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### Article History

Volume 6, Issue 13, 2024

Received: 15 June 2024

Accepted: 20 July 2024

doi:

10.48047/AFJBS.6.13.2024.4822-4832

### ABSTRACT

The role of mothers in child upbringing, particularly in the context of infant nutrition, is crucial. With the growing number of working mothers in Coimbatore, the dynamics of child care and feeding practices have evolved significantly. Traditional breastfeeding, while highly recommended for its health benefits, often becomes challenging for mothers balancing professional and personal responsibilities. This study investigates the factors influencing mothers' purchase decisions towards formula feed products in Coimbatore. The research adopts a descriptive methodology using primary and secondary data from the district, focusing on locations frequented by feeding mothers. Convenient sampling yielded 210 samples, analyzed through methods including Percentage Analysis, Descriptive Statistics, and Correlation and Regression Analysis. Reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha. Findings reveal that working mothers face significant pressures balancing work and childcare, influencing their reliance on formula feeds due to time constraints. Despite the irreplaceability of breastfeeding, international brands of formula feed are preferred for their perceived benefits in child growth. Key influencing factors identified include knowledge, perception, and purchase decisions. The study suggests supportive measures from families and employers to aid working mothers in managing their dual responsibilities effectively. Enhancing bonding through quality time and health-focused activities is crucial for nurturing healthy child development.

**Keywords:** Formula Feed Products, Mothers' Purchase Decisions and Working Mothers

### INTRODUCTION

The Indian economy continues to experience growth, one thing is certain as the population continues to grow, so does baby care market. Babies are not only cute &

cuddly but also bring in cash. Baby care products are one of the attractive businesses blooming high in India among the other Asiatic countries, as India is experiencing highest birth rates in Asia competing with China.

### **WOMEN: AN OVERVIEW**

Women are a symbol of love and affection; they are the epitome of courage and boldness; they also sacrifice for their near and dear ones. Women are the first mentors of their life partner and children. The responsibility of guiding them in the righteous path of progress rests mainly on the shoulders of the mother in a family. Women play a pivotal role in the welfare of the family. She is the crux on which the wheels of the family revolve. She is stereotypically the responsible person for everyone's wellbeing. She cares for the children and the elderly, balances the challenges and evens out the ups and downs a family faces. Motherhood in itself is a great challenge that rests upon the shoulders of every woman. It demands hard work, diligence and virtuousness and abundance of patience to bring up children. When something is amiss, it is the lady of the house who gets criticized more often than the man. The working young woman of the present day on entering the institution after marriage has challenges like pregnancy leading to maternity and the ever demanding role of being a mother to her children.

### **WOMEN AS MOTHER**

Mothers have been subjected to the "intensive mothering ideology" since the economic transition from family farm work to factory work Johnston & Swanson (2006). Before mothers were employed outside the home, mothering was not particularly scrutinized. Children's psychological well-being is most likely developed through interaction with their parents. Interaction in general and role playing in particular are the basis of an individual's psychological well-being (Rosenberg, 1979).

### **PARENTING & CHILD GROWTH**

Specifically, when parents had both high expectation and high involvement in their child's life, children have fewer behavior problems and better grades Amato & Fowler, (2002). When mothers are supportive of their spouse's parenting (view them as competent parents, provide encouragement, expect and believe parenting is a joint venture), men are more likely to be involved with, and responsible for their children. Doherty et al., (1998), Pasley, Futris & Skinner, (2002)

### **Consumer Goods Market**

India has emerged as the fastest-growing major economy in the world and is expected to be one of the top three economic powers in the world over the next 10-15 years, backed by its robust democracy and strong partnerships. Fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector is India's fourth-largest sector and has been expanding at a healthy rate over the years because of rising disposable income, a rising youth population, and rising brand awareness among consumers. With household and personal care accounting for 50% of FMCG sales in India, the industry is an important contributor to India's GDP.

Baby care market is flooded with Organised and Unorganized players. In coming years, product innovation and development will be the key focus area for most of the companies ^ operating in the Indian baby care products market. Apart from penetrating deep into urban market, rural market also provides growth opportunities to companies.

### **Consumer Buying Behaviour**

Consumer behavior is the study of how individuals, groups, and organizations select, buy, use and dispose goods, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy their needs

and wants. As human being, consumers have needs and desires which must be fulfilled and often they must purchase in order to fulfill them. Needs are the basic things that must be met while desires are the needs which are formed based on the perception.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

**Myers et al., (2021)** opined that the social support is a known determinant of breastfeeding behaviour and is generally considered beneficial. However, social support encompasses a myriad of different supportive acts, providing scope for diverse infant feeding outcomes. Given the vulnerability of postpartum mental health, this paper aims to explore both how support prolongs breastfeeding and which forms of support promote the positive experience of all infant feeding. Using survey data collected online from 515 UK mothers with infants aged 0–108 weeks, Cox regression models assessed the relationship between receiving different types of support, support need and breastfeeding duration. Quasi-binomial logistic regression models assessed the relationship between receiving support, infant feeding mode and maternal experience of infant feeding. Rates of negative infant feeding experience indicate the widespread need for support: e.g. 38% of currently, 47% of no longer and 31% of never breastfeeding women found infant feeding stressful. Overall, practical support via infant feeding broadly predicted shorter breastfeeding durations and poorer feeding experience; results in relation to other forms of support were more complex. Our findings indicate different forms of support have different associations with infant feeding experience. They also highlight the wide range of individuals beyond the nuclear family on which postpartum mothers in the UK rely.

**Lakshman et al., (2009)**, stated that most babies receive atleast some formula milk. Variations in formula-feeding practices can have both short- and long-term health consequences. The literature on parents' experiences of bottle-feeding was systematically reviewed to understand how formula-feeding decisions are made. Relevant English-language papers, identified by searching 12 electronic databases, reference lists and related articles and by contacting first authors of included papers, were systematically searched for and appraised. The included studies were analysed and synthesised using a combination of narrative and thematic approaches. Consensus on the final inclusion, interpretation and synthesis of studies was reached across the research team. Six qualitative studies and 17 quantitative studies (involving 13 263 participants) were included. Despite wide differences in study design, context, focus and quality, several consistent themes emerged. Mothers who bottle-fed their babies experienced negative emotions such as guilt, anger, worry, uncertainty and a sense of failure. Mothers reported receiving little information on bottle-feeding and did not feel empowered to make decisions. Mistakes in preparation of bottle-feeds were common. No studies examined how mothers made decisions about the frequency or quantity of bottle-feeds. Inadequate information and support for mothers who decide to bottle-feed may put the health of their babies at risk. While it is important to promote breastfeeding, it is also necessary to ensure that the needs of bottle-feeding mothers are met.

**Lee (2007)** describes this intention–behavior incongruence as one of “moral collapse” (p. 1087), which refers to women who have strong intentions to breastfeed in pregnancy and experience negative emotions as a result of being unable to in the postnatal period. However, in other studies, an allegedly unreasonable pressure to breastfeed from external sources, namely, health professionals, emerged as the emotional catalyst.

Currently, advertisement of infant foods and drinks is ineffectively regulated in the UK, allowing for aggressive formula milk marketing strategies to remain widespread in the UK (WHO, 2022) which has a unilateral effect on infant feeding decision-making postpartum.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The choice of mothers was due to various reasons that includes medical condition, lack of feed, work pressure, post natal depression and birth conditions. To fulfill the infants primary staple needs and also to overcome the feeding anxiety among mothers, researcher concentrates to evaluate the alternate option i.e. formulae feed influenced the mothers choice to fulfil their infant needs. In this regard, the study concentrates to evaluate predicting purchase intention of mothers buying top international formulae products in the study area.

### OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. To study the factors influencing mothers purchase decision towards formulae feed products in Coimbatore.

### METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is a way to systematically solve the research problem. It may be understood as a science of studying how research is done scientifically. The research is descriptive in nature. Primary and secondary data are used for data collection. The area covered is the District of Coimbatore and the areas mainly concentrated for the study are the places where consumers (feeding mothers) regularly visiting the prominent places like, Retail outlets, Open Market, Shopping Complex, Departmental Stores, Medical Shops, etc. Two hundred and ten samples (210) were taken using convenient sampling method. The collected data have been analyzed with the help of tools like Percentage Method, Descriptive Statistics, Correlation and Regression Analysis. For testing the reliability Cronbach's Alpha was used.

### LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is restricted only to the geographical limits of Coimbatore District and the findings may not be applicable to other similar areas and situations and Accuracy of the primary data collected depends up on the authenticity of the information given by the respondent, and this might have led to personal bias.

### DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

**Table 1: Demography and Preference**

Sl.	Demography and Preference	Frequency	Percent
<b>1</b>	<b>Age</b>		
	Upto 25 years	40	19.0
	26 to 30 years	103	49.0
	Above 30 years	67	31.9
<b>2.</b>	<b>Educational Qualification</b>		
	Under Graduate	63	30.0
	Post Graduate	80	38.1
	Others (Schooling, Technical, Professional, etc.)	67	31.9
<b>3.</b>	<b>Whether Occupied</b>		
	Yes	162	77.1
	No	48	22.9
<b>4.</b>	<b>Occupation</b>		

	Government Organisation	18	11.1
	Private Organisation	118	72.8
	Self Employment	26	16.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Brand Preferred</b>		
	Similac	67	31.9
	Enfamil	71	33.8
	Nan Pro	72	34.3
<b>6.</b>	<b>Place of purchase</b>		
	Retail Stores	83	39.5
	Medical Shops	106	50.5
	Through Online	21	10.0

Table 1 reveals

- Age of the mothers, nearly half (49%) of the mothers fall in the age between 26 and 30 years, 31.9% mothers were in the age above 30 years, 19% were in the age below 25 years.
- With regard to educational qualification, more than one third (38.1%) of the mothers were post graduates, 31.9% of the mothers have other qualifications from schooling to professional education and the rest 30% of the mothers were under graduates.
- Opinion on mothers regarding monetary based occupation shows majority (77.1%) of the mothers were occupied while forty eight (22.9%) of the mothers were not engaged in any income generating jobs.
- Out of one hundred and sixty two respondents, majority (72.8%) of the mothers were occupied in private organisations, 16% of the mothers were self employed, 11.1% were working in Government organisations.
- Considering the preference of mothers towards formula feed brands, seventy two (34.3%) of the mothers preferred Nan Pro brand formula feed for their children, while, 33.8% of the mothers preferred Enfamil brand formula feed for their children, and the remaining 31.9% mothers preferred Similac formula feed for their children.
- When it comes to place of buying the formula feed for their children, more than half (50.5%) of the mothers preferred Medical shops to buy the product, while, 39.5% of the mothers preferred retail outlets and the rest 10% mothers preferred ordering their child's formula feed through online.

### **Descriptive Statistics**

Four constructs were considered for analysis, out of which the first construct represent the knowledge of mothers towards formula feed products, followed by perception of mothers towards growth and nutritional benefits of the formula feeds, third is the purchase decision of mothers and finally purchase intention acts as dependent variable considering all three factors (knowledge, perception and preference) influencing the respondents purchase intention. Initially, description of items along with reliability of the constructs validated using Cronbach's alpha and the results are presented below:

**Table 2: Knowledge of mothers towards Formula Feeds**

Items	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha
I have knowledge on quality, labelling and brand of baby feed products	2.54	1.119	0.727
I know my baby care feeds are available on call in retail or online market	3.37	1.038	
I comprehend the baby feed are healthier and possess taste and nutritional value	3.28	1.199	

Table 2 shows highest rank (M=3.37, SD=1.038) towards mothers knowledge about the availability of feeds on call either online or retail market, second rank (M=3.28, SD=1.199) towards understanding about baby feed possess health, taste and nutritional values and the least (M=2.54, SD=1.119) awareness was towards, quality, labeling and brand of baby feed products. Reliability of knowledge (Cronbach's alpha=0.727) observed to be good recording more than the specified threshold (0.7).

**Table 3: Perception on Growth and Nutritional Benefits of Formula Feeds**

Items	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha
Baby formula that give health claim in their packing considered as safer	2.77	1.261	0.914
I prefer only international brands to feed my baby ensuring growth and development	2.78	1.285	
I prefer the specific brands that offers actual nutritional benefits	2.75	1.328	

Table 3 shows highest rank (M=2.78, SD=1.285) towards mothers preference only for international brands to feed their child ensuring growth and development, second rank (M=2.77, SD=1.261) was towards perception on packing and information on baby formula feed about health claim indicating as safe and the least (M=2.75, SD=1.328) towards specific brand preference that offers actual nutritional benefits for their children. Reliability of Perception (Cronbach's alpha=0.914) observed to be excellent recording more than the specified threshold (0.7).

**Table 4: Mothers Purchase Decisions towards Formula Feeds**

Items	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha
I trust specific brands	3.01	1.102	0.866
I consider established in the market	3.09	1.038	
Label influence my buying decisions	3.48	1.202	
Consider packaging as a sign of quality facilitating my decision making	3.49	1.094	

Table 4 highlights the highest rank (M=3.49, SD=1.094) towards mothers considering packing as a sign of quality product facilitating their purchase decision, second rank (M=3.48, SD=1.202) was towards label influencing their purchase decisions, third rank (M=3.09, SD=1.038) was towards making decisions based on established products prior to purchase, finally, least (M=3.01, SD=1.102) was towards considering the trust on brands. Reliability of Purchase Decision (Cronbach's alpha=0.866) observed to be excellent recording more than the specified threshold (0.7).

**Table 5: Purchase Intention of mothers towards Formula Feeds**

Items	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha
I think I am rightly using the brand of baby care feeds	3.40	1.095	0.844
My decision to opt the baby care feed always made me feel wise and satisfying	3.23	1.149	
My usual brand of baby care feeds would be my first choice.	3.34	1.065	

Table 5 shows highest rank (M=3.40, SD=1.095) towards mothers opinion on rightly choosing the brand of baby care feeds, second rank (M=3.34, SD=1.065) towards mothers considering usual brand as their first choice and the least (M=3.23, SD=1.149) was towards, making decision makes the mothers feel wise and satisfying. Reliability of purchase intention (Cronbach's alpha=0.844) observed to be good recording more than the specified threshold (0.7).

### CORRELATION AND REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Inferential statistics based on Pearson's product momentum correlation conducted to evaluate the linear relationship between influencing factors like knowledge, perception and purchase decision on outcome (purchase intention) among mothers adopting formula feed to their children. Table 6 indicates that the influencing factors were found to have significant positive impact on Purchase Intention achieving significant correlation.

**Table 6: Descriptive Statistics and Correlation between influencing factors and purchase intention**

Constructs	Mean	SD	'r'	Sig.
Purchase Intention	3.33	.963	1.000	.
Knowledge	3.06	.901	.828	.000
Perception	3.07	1.06	.677	.000
Purchase Decision	3.35	.990	.860	.000

Table 6 shows very strong positive correlation observed between Knowledge and Purchase Intention ( $r=0.828$ , Sig.0.000) as well as Purchase Decision and Purchase Intention ( $r=0.677$ , Sig.0.000) while strong positive correlation observed between Perception and Purchase Intention ( $r=0.677$ , Sig.0.000). Further, the study determines the power of predictors (knowledge, perception and preference) on outcome (purchase intention) using Regression analysis.

### Multiple Regression

Multiple regression analysis is performed using enter method to test whether the Purchase Intention (Dependent) of Mothers were influenced by the factors such as knowledge, perception and purchase decision (independent) towards adopting formula feed for their children.

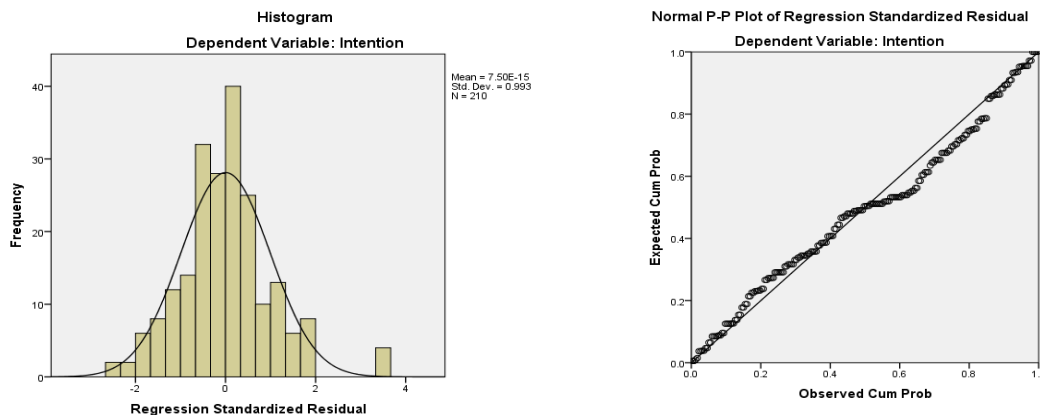
**Table 7: Model showing relationship between influencing factors and purchase intention**

R Value	R Square Value	Adjusted R Square Value	Degree of Freedom (V <sub>1</sub> , V <sub>2</sub> )	F-Value	Significance
.888 <sup>a</sup>	.788	.785	(3,206)	255.421	0.000

Predictors: (Constant), Purch.Dec, Perception, Knowledge  
 Dependent Variable: Intention

Anova is performed to evaluate the model and to predict the influence of three independent constructs that includes knowledge, perception and purchase decision had significant impact on Purchase Intention towards buying formula feed products. The result proves the P-value (0.000) is less than the alpha (0.05) indicating significance and fitness of the model. Statistically,  $F(3,206)=255.42$ ,  $p=0.000$  is observed significant (@ 1% level) rejecting  $H_0$ .

Model summary reveals the percentage of variance on Purchase intention (outcome) explained by the predictors (knowledge, perception and purchase decision) recorded 0.778. In other words, the influencing factors (knowledge, perception and purchase decision) had explained with 77.8% of variance when predicting the purchase intention of mothers adopting formula feed for their children in the study area. The equation is  $= 0.264 + 0.223$  (Knowledge)  $+ 0.199$  (Perception)  $+ 0.527$  (Purchase Decision)



**Table 8: Relationship between influencing factors and purchase intention (Coefficients)**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.264	.116		2.285	.023
Knowledge	.223	.077	.208	2.890	.004
Perception	.199	.037	.220	5.312	.000
Purchase Decision	.527	.068	.542	7.708	.000

Dependent Variable: Intention



Table 8 shows the relationship between influencing factors (knowledge, perception and purchase decision) of mothers towards buying formula feed products predicting the outcome (purchase intention) shows the first construct Knowledge recorded  $B=0.223$ ,  $SE=0.077$ ,  $t=2.890$ ,  $P=0.000$ , followed by Perception  $B=0.199$ ,  $SE=0.037$ ,  $t=5.312$ ,  $P=0.000$  and finally the Purchase Decision  $B=0.527$ ,  $SE=0.068$ ,  $t=7.708$ ,  $P=0.000$  were observed statistically significant indicating the relationships between independent (knowledge, perception and purchase decision) and dependent (purchase intention) were positively related therefore, rejecting the null hypothesis. To sum-up, increase in knowledge of mothers towards buying formula feed products by one unit increases their purchase intention by 0.223 units. Likewise, increase in mothers' perception towards buying formula feed products by one unit increases their purchase intention by 0.199 units. Finally, increase in mothers' purchase decision towards buying formula feed products by one unit increases their purchase intention by 0.527 units.

## **SUMMARY OF RESULTS**

### **Demography and Preference**

- Considering the age of the mothers 49% fall in the age between 26 and 30 years, 31.9% in the age above 30 years, 19% in the age below 25 years. 38.1% of the mothers were post graduates, 31.9% have other qualifications from schooling to professional education and 30% were under graduates. Majority (77.1%) were occupied while 22.9% of them were not engaged in any income generating jobs. Majority (72.8%) were occupied in private organisations, 16% were self-employed, and 11.1% were working in Government organisations. Considering the preference of mothers towards formula feed brands, 34.3% preferred Nan Pro brand formula feed, 33.8% preferred Enfamil and 31.9% preferred Similac formula feed. When it comes to place of buying the formula feed, more than half (50.5%) preferred Medical shops to buy the product, 39.5% preferred retail outlets and 10% preferred ordering their child's formula feed through online.

### **Descriptive Statistics**

- Item statistics shows two items (Kn2 and Kn3) are above the mid point range 3.37 and 3.28 respectively while the mean of Kn1 (2.54) is well below the mid point range indicating moderate level of agreement towards the statement. Knowledge based reliability of the construct recorded  $\alpha=0.727$  observed good.
- Item statistics shows all three items (Prc1, Prc2 and Prc3) were below the mid point range at 2.77, 2.78 and 2.75 respectively indicating moderate level of agreement towards all three statements. Perception based reliability of the construct recorded  $\alpha=0.914$  observed excellent.
- Item statistics shows all four items (Pd1, Pd2, Pd3 and Pd4) were well above the mid point range, mean recording 3.01, 3.09, 3.48 and 3.49 respectively indicating high acceptance level towards all three statements. Purchase Decision based reliability of the construct recorded  $\alpha=0.866$  observed excellent.
- Item statistics shows all three items (Pi1, Pi2 and Pi3) were well above the mid point range, mean recording 3.40, 3.23 and 3.34 respectively indicating high acceptance level towards all three statements. Purchase Intention based reliability of the construct recorded  $\alpha=0.844$  observed excellent.

### **Correlation and Regression Analysis**

- Correlation shows strong positive relationship significantly observed between Knowledge and Purchase Intention, Perception and Purchase Intention as well as Purchase Decision and Purchase Intention to reject the null hypothesis. Further, to determine the power of predictors (knowledge, perception and preference) on outcome (purchase intention) Regression analysis was used.
- ANOVA used to observe the fitness and predictable capability of the model thus statistically proving significant between influencing factors and dependent variable (Purchase Intention). Independent factors explained 78.8% variance while predicting purchase intention. Model further proves, positive significant relationship between Knowledge and Purchase Intention, Perception and Purchase Intention as well as Purchase Decision and Purchase Intention to reject the null hypothesis. Considering the influence among mothers towards buying formula feed products standardized beta coefficient indicates that Purchase Decision recorded the highest ( $\beta=0.443$ ), followed by Perception ( $\beta=0.220$ ) finally, the Knowledge ( $\beta=0.208$ ) when predicting purchase decision respectively.

### **SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION**

Parenting practices of every women (especially working category) possess more pressure and tension was obviously transparent at work and also at home. Mother of new born have additional responsibility not only to take care of individual, spouse, family but also the child in this regard, mother feed becomes more essential for child growth. Due to the current pace of the world, women find sparse time to feed their children in regular intervals thus, pushing them to adopt formula feed products. Though there is no equivalent for mother feed, considering their situation formula feed companies / products are gaining greater momentum among mother in this regard, their choice of intention to buy formula feed products considerably depend upon many influencing factors, however, three important factors are considered for the study such as their knowledge, perception and purchase decision. The surveyed respondents are feeding their children with international brand products which becomes vital staple for their growth. It is recommended that for working women both family and the institution shall extend their support to manage their motherhood situation especially, the women with very young children needs time to pay more attention as a responsible parent thus, supporting them to develop a healthy bonding between themselves and their children.

It is concluded that the women shall be supported to allot their time generously at home and help the children to perform their tasks and activities with the help of their support, spend quality time to play, check their progress, take them for outing, have fun and care on their health aspects which are few things that are very need of the hour.

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