

Social Movements And Advocacy Of Breastfeeding In Public

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"Feminism is a belief that although women and men are inherent of equal worth, most societies privilege men as a group. As a result, social movements are necessary to achieve political equality between women and men, with the understanding that gender always intersects with other social hierarchies."

-Estelle Freedman

Social movements can be defined as focused and determined groups organized to thrive toward a mutual goal. Such groups are developed to attempt a modification, resist a change, or infuse an audible voice into a political perspective. Evidently, social movements are substantial drivers of change in societal practices. (Kolers, 2016) The commencement of social movements is strongly interwoven with vast political and economic reforms that explicitly took place in England throughout the middle of the eighteenth century. Social movements in their earlier years of inception pivoted on issues like political representation, proletarianization, and capitalization of the market. (Ness, 2003) Breastfeeding in public refers to the practice of nursing babies on the premises of public or semi-public settings within the general public's open view. Such action is a subject of considerable controversy based on the social and cultural preferences of different countries. (Eidelman, 2012) The following paper addresses a few underlying issues regarding the significance, implications, impacts, and social as well as health perspectives of breastfeeding in public and discusses the role of social movements in normalizing the practice.

Breastfeeding is an essential duty for all mothers, and therefore, they have been the main subject of fulfilling this duty for centuries. Several people, including Cotton Mather, resist the social narrow-mindedness of this responsibility and say "I am not a dame that should scorn to nourish in the world, the babies who I have already nourished in my womb." (Mather, 1741) In due course, Jean Jacques Rousseau grieved over the mothers who showed their "consents to not nurse their babies." (Rousseau, 1762) Evidently, breastfeeding comes with the overall package of the paternalistic system and, therefore, is an integral fragment of motherhood.

History explains that unfair social and cultural implications of breastfeeding in public caused several problems, even fatal ones. Before the invention of formula milk, there was no alternative to mother milk. It was before the end of the nineteenth century, but regardless of the absence of any option, mothers were compelled to wean their infants within three months of their birth. Consequently, statistics have demonstrated that about thirteen per cent of them have never survived for more than twelve months. (Wolf, 2007) Many babies encountered diarrhoea because they could not get

accustomed to cow milk at an earlier age, and in such situations, mothers were motivated to breastfeed their children to mitigate the death rate in infants. However, breastfeeding practice needs a particular routine that affirms a feeding schedule within 1 to 4 hours. However, the jobs and other responsibilities of ladies made it impossible to feed their babies without being exposed in public places. However, the restrictions on public breastfeeding impacted the milk productivity in mothers. For this reason, myriad mothers complained about the inadequate production of milk. The worst factor was the negligent attitude of doctors, who accused education of being the reason behind insufficient milk production and blamed the stunning reproduction system for the phenomenon.

To change the patterns of living standards and social implications regarding breastfeeding in public, many research studies and media awareness programs have been conducted. For this purpose, the media elaborates hype about the subject of mom wars, which are widely known as milk wars as well. Time Magazine underlines the issue by depicting a picture of a mom and child who stand on a chair to get nursed by his mother; the magazine title says, "Are you mom enough?" The magazine elucidates the perils of using formula milk, and doctors address it as evil. (Newman, 2018) Social and cultural values put pressure on mothers and prevent them from breastfeeding their kids in public. However, this hype is causing shame for all the mothers. Mothers who are compelled to feed in public places are ashamed because breastfeeding is widely sexualized in a societal context. On the other hand, some mothers cannot medically feed their kids; they feel ashamed because of social and media hype and feel unable to comply with the standards of motherhood. Such factors augment social pressure on all moms. Experts advise boosting cultural awareness as well as additional awareness to accept breastfeeding as a diverse experience.

Breastfeeding features tons of health benefits for both mother and infant. Breastfeeding can eradicate the peril of diseases which involve infectious and allergic bacteria during the early years of infancy. Moreover, in mothers, it reduces the possibilities of ovarian as well as breast cancer. Breastfeeding is encouraged by several organizations, including Jewish, Muslim, and anti-commercialists; furthermore, the feminist movements and followers of green practices support the practice to a great extent. Some social movements are against the use of formula milk not because of its adverse effects on infants but because of sustainability and environmental issues. According to such social activists, formal milk production causes pollution to the atmosphere. A few schools of thought consider formula milk compatible with nursing and believe that formula milk can help the extended duration of breastfeeding. (Flaherman, 2015) Such matters draw an intersection between social and health concerns. Medically, breastfeeding plays an imperative role in enhancing the reproductivity of females and, therefore, satisfies the requirements of feminist movements. Nevertheless, the social pressure and financial and job responsibilities make women cease the practice, and they prefer to follow the social norm instead of nursing their babies in public places.

Feminist activists stress that sexualized perspectives of breastfeeding in public are merely another case of biological differences between men and women. Females always become the target of stereotyping because of the narrow approach to society, which always interrelates females to sexuality. Different countries have different laws and frameworks of mind regarding breastfeeding in

public. In India, it is standard practice and seldom gets noticed. On the other hand, in Saudi Arabia, it is strictly banned to breastfeed a baby in public. When it comes to the United States, people are confused because the U.S. has two diverse sorts of laws about breastfeeding on public premises. In some states, including North Carolina and Virginia, the government has legalized the right of breastfeeding in public settings. On the contrary, in a few states, breastfeeding is a part of criminal and offensive statutes. A few states are entirely unclear and discreet about the regulations and legal implications of practising breastfeeding in public.

Regardless of legal rules, people criticize breastfeeding in public and even celebrities and famous personalities are not saved from social judgment. A renowned actress, Mila Kunis, admits that she feels ashamed to breastfeed her baby in public. (Shaw, 2016) The sex-obsessed social and cultural framework of restrictions makes it taboo, and in turn, it brings shame to devoted and rightful moms. To cope with the situation, activists and feminists are organizing different social movements, which include the social movement to normalize breastfeeding as well. (Horner, 2018) The first breastfeeding-promoting social movement was initiated in the year 1930, which emerged as a reaction to the increasing popularity of bottle-feeding. Presently, the normalized movement is playing its part in altering the culture regarding breastfeeding. The underlying purpose of this movement is to provide women with a comfortable and hesitation-free environment in which to nurse their babies, even in open public places. Regardless of supportive law structures, there are concert cultural obstructions that need to be overcome. According to the fundamental posit of normalizing breastfeeding social movement, women are required to nurse infants every 1 to 4 hours, which makes it unrealistic to plan an outing in the absence of ease of breastfeeding in public. To boost the understanding and crucial nature of the subject, different magazines featured celebrities and model mommies breastfeeding their babies. Such depictions are essential for spreading the message throughout society and communities.

Social movements are imperative when it comes to dealing with social or political changes. Through the power of social movements, females attained the right of suffrage, divorce, birth control, and child custody, and if they stayed persistent, they would accomplish the freedom of breastfeeding babies openly. Breastfeeding has endless health benefits for both mom and baby and can diminish the adverse clinical and environmental effects of using formula milk. Allowing breastfeeding in a public setting can save the lives of babies and can help working women enjoy their motherhood in a hassle-free manner. Society and cultural dimensions should be reshaped to give capacity for such beneficial practices. And it is advised to shun the policy of making breastfeeding sexualized and a taboo subject. It is a modern era and women have equal rights, they are doing great work in almost every field of life, and therefore they should not be only considered as a symbol of sexuality. Mothers and babies share a very pious and scary relationship, and it is not an appropriate thing to point out their nature-based practices. Being a mother is a proud factor and social and cultural norms should not turn it into shame by implicating illiterate and backward perceptions.

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