

BREASTFEEDING PRACTICES AMONG  
MALAYSIAN MOTHERS  
IN A SELECTED PRIVATE HOSPITAL

by

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## ABSTRAK (MALAY)

Kadar penyusuan susu ibu secara eksklusif di Malaysia kekal rendah pada 14.5 peratus meskipun penyusuan susu ibu adalah cara terbaik untuk membekalkan baby zat makanan yang mereka memerlukan. Dengan mempergunakan *Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)*, penyelidik cuba memahami pilihan ibu-ibu Malaysia bila membuat keputusan untuk menyusu dengan susu ibu. Berasaskan teori tersebut, niat adalah ditakrifkan sebagai fungsi kepada dua factor. Satu faktor adalah sikap peribadi and satu lagi adalah kebiasaan subjektif yang bergantung kepada pandangan masyarakat.

Seramai 160 orang ibu-ibu Malaysia yang melawat ke suatu hospital swasta telah ditemuduga. 76 peratus daripada responden pernah menyusu anak-anak mereka sebelum ini. Antara mereka, 24 peratus menyusui sehingga sebulan dan 32 peratus menyusui melebihi 12 bulan. Sebab utama yang mendorong ibu-ibu tersebut menyusu dengan susu ibu adalah kerana susu ibu menawarkan zat makanan yang lengkap and perlindungan daripada jangkitan. Masalah pengeluaran susu dan kekurangan keyakinan menyusu/pengalaman pula menjadi rintangan utama yang menghalang kebanyakan ibu menyusu dengan susu ibu.

Semua soalan and andaian penyelidikan telah dijawab dan disokong melalui analisi ujian. Kedua-dua sikap peribadi and kebiasaan subjektif dibuktikan mempunyai hubungan positif dengan niat penyusuan susu ibu. Niat tersebut juga boleh digunakan sebagai wakil kepada perangai penyusuan susu ibu. Disebabkan manfaat susu ibu yang tidak boleh dipertikaikan, penemuan penyelidikan ini menggalakkan pekerja kesihatan and pendidikan untuk mempertimbangkan sikap peribadi ibu and kebiasaan subjektif dalam usaha memupuk penyusuan susu ibu.

## ABSTRACT

The exclusive breastfeeding rate in Malaysia remains low at 14.5 per cent despite breastfeeding is the best way to provide newborns with the nutrients they need. By utilizing the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), the researcher tried to understand the decision making process of Malaysia mothers when decide for breastfeeding. Based on the TRA, intention is defined as a function of two factors, one is personal attitude and the other one is subjective norm that is influenced by social acceptance.

A 160 number of Malaysian mothers were interviewed at a private hospital. Result revealed that 76 per cent of the respondent used to breastfeeding their children before. Among these mothers, 24 per cent of them breastfed their infant for one month only and 32 per cent breastfed for more than 12 months. The most important reason that encourages the mothers to breastfeed is to give the best nutrients and protection against infection for their infants. Lactation and lack of confidence/prior experience are major obstacles that hinder most mothers from breastfeeding.

Based on the survey findings, all research questions have been answered and the hypotheses were supported. Both Attitude and Subjective norm were positively related to the intention of breastfeeding. Test result also shown that Intention to perform breastfeeding can be used as a proxy of behaviour of breastfeeding. Due to the indisputable benefits of breastfeeding, the recent findings warrant health care workers and educators to consider mothers' attitude and subjective norms factors when promoting breastfeeding.

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Introduction

Breastfeeding is the best way to provide newborns with the nutrients they need. World Health Organization (WHO) recommends exclusive breastfeeding until an infant baby is six months old, and continued breastfeeding with the addition of nutritious complementary foods for up to two years or beyond. World Breastfeeding Week is celebrated every year from 1 to 7 August in more than 120 countries to encourage breastfeeding and improve the health of infants around the world. The theme of World Breastfeeding Week 2009 is "Breastfeeding - a vital emergency response. Are you ready?" It highlights the need to protect, promote and support breastfeeding in emergencies for infant and young child survival, health and development (World Health Organization, 2009).

The Ministry of Health (MOH) introduced a National Breastfeeding Policy in 1993 which also followed the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative introduced by the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and the WHO in 1991. The policy was revised 12 years later in accordance with the World Health Assembly Resolution which recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life and continued up to two years with complementary food in line with UNICEF and WHO's Guidelines for Infant Feeding (UNICEF Malaysia/2008/Jeswan Kaur).

## 1.2 Background

According to the MOH's 2006 statistics, although almost 95% of mothers in Malaysia have ever breastfed their children, less than two in 10 infants are exclusively breastfed for six months (UNICEF Malaysia/2008/Tee Shiao Eek). Only 14.5 per cent infants in Malaysia were exclusively breastfed below six months in 2006. In addition, only 19.3 per cent babies were exclusively breastfed below four months. Comparing the findings of the National Health and Morbidity Survey 2 in 1996, there was a significant decline of 9.7 per cent in the prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding below four months (UNICEF Malaysia/2008/Jeswan Kaur). The Annual Report 2006 of MOH also shown that breastfeeding exclusively was least common among Chinese women (MOH, 2006).

A number of factors may influence whether mother choose to breastfeed or not. The restriction in work place or work commitments, pressure of family responsibilities or lack of social support, inconvenient or inconsistent with lifestyles, lack of confidence or prior experience, fear of pain or breast sagging, embarrassment, can, and do interfere with a mother's preference to exclusively breastfeed her children (Hill, Arnett and Mauk, 2008).

Expressing concerns over the country's low levels of breastfeeding, the UNICEF's representative to Malaysia, Mr. Youssouf Oomar stressed recently that accelerated actions are urgently needed to remove all obstacles that discourage working women from breastfeeding their infants (UNICEF Malaysia/2008/Nadchatram).

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

Despite the fact that Malaysia is one of the only three countries in the world, after Sweden and Oman, to have all its government hospitals accredited as baby friendly (Nama, July 30, 2008), many mothers in Malaysia will either never breast-feed or discontinue breastfeeding prematurely. The rate of breastfeeding in Malaysia is still very much lower (29 per cent) if compare to the neighboring countries such as Philippines (34 per cent), Indonesia (40 per cent), India (46 per cent), China (51 per cent), etc. (Nama, August 8, 2008).

The researcher is wondering what are the determinants that make both expectant mother and mother in Malaysia possible to breastfeeding or not possible to breastfeeding? This study tries to investigate whether attitudes and subjective norms will lead to intention of breastfeeding among Malaysian mothers. Along the same line, the researcher also tries to investigate if intention of breastfeeding can be used as proxy to behaviour of breastfeeding.

### **1.4 Problem Objectives**

The introduction and maintenance of breastfeeding becomes an important agenda in today's highly commercial environments in which breast-milk substitutes are easily available in the market place. But since the benefits of breastfeeding for both infant and mother are numerous, the practice of breastfeeding should be encouraged and promoted to assist the mothers make the right decision of their feeding choice.

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) was developed by Ajzen and Fishbein in 1980 (Ajzen, Fishbein, 1980) and has been found to be very useful in predicting a wide range of behaviour. As cited by Ajzen (1988), the TRA has also been applied in explaining and

predicting many health-related behaviors including research work on breast-vs. bottle-feeding by Manstead et al (1983), having an abortion by Smetana and Adler (1980), using birth control pills by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), etc.

The theory suggests that a person's behavior is determined by his/her intention to perform the behavior and that this intention is, in turn, a function of his/her attitude toward the behavior and his/her subjective norm. In this research, the researcher will conduct a two stages testing of the TRA.

Firstly, this research attempts:

- i. To examine whether attitudes toward breastfeeding will lead to intention to breastfeeding; and
- ii. To examine whether subjective norms will lead to intention to breastfeeding.

Secondly, this research also attempts to investigate whether intention to breastfeeding can be used as proxy of behaviour of breastfeeding.

## **1.5 Research Questions**

A lot of previous empirical researches have been done on the topic of breastfeeding. Until now, most researches are done in European countries and the U.S.A. Little studies have been conducted in Asian region, especially Malaysia to specifically discuss the determinants that influencing the uptake and maintenance of breastfeeding.

The researcher will close this gap by analyzing variables that determine the breastfeeding practice of Malaysian mother by answering the following questions: -

- i. Is intention to perform breastfeeding a proxy to breastfeeding behaviour of mothers?
- ii. Do attitudes toward breastfeeding lead to intention to perform breastfeeding?
- iii. Do subjective norms lead to intention to perform breastfeeding?

## **1.6 Definition of Key Terms**

### **1.6.1 Breastfeeding**

Oxford Advanced Learner's English-Chinese Dictionary defines breastfeeding as feeding a baby (an infant) with milk from the breast. In this research, the breastfeeding also include the behaviour of breast milk expression to a bottle and bottle-feeding an infant the breast milk. It also covers a wider scope and not limits to exclusive breastfeeding only.

### **1.6.2 Malaysian mothers**

The Malaysian mothers in this research comprise of Malaysian expectant mothers that visiting Obstetrician and Gynaecologist as well as the Malaysian mothers whom bring their children visiting Paediatricians at the selected private hospital.

### **1.6.3 Selected private hospital**

The selected private hospital refers to Metro Specialist Hospital (Metro) that is located at No. 1, Lorong Metro, 08000 Sungai Petani, Kedah. Equipped with a team of experienced specialists and dedicated nurses, the hospital offers a diverse range of healthcare services to take care the public's well-being.



## 1.7 Significance of the Study

The researcher believes this study is important and worthy of investigation because of the implications for the health of Malaysian infant as well as their mothers. Breastfeeding allows the mother to provide an infant with all the needs for growth and development. Breast milk not only contains all the nutrients an infant needs, but also contains antibodies to protect an infant from all kinds of infection. Breast milk is essentially an infant's first immunization and these essential nutrients given at infancy help make a lasting impression on a child's development and future. Breast-fed child are protected from infections, have better eyesight, higher IQs and are less likely to become overweight than those fed with substitutes. Research has shown that babies who were breastfed have fewer problems later in their life with chronic diseases like asthma, diabetes and even cancer.

A mother's own health can also benefit from breastfeeding her child. In addition to lose weight faster, mothers also benefit from reduced risk of ovarian cancer and premenopausal breast cancer. Both healthy children and mothers mean less medical expenses to a family on a micro economy aspect. On a larger scale, it means less national expenditure on health care, fewer work absenteeism and greater work productivity.

Besides, the findings from the research if unable to add new knowledge to literature, will at least re-affirm the previous research findings. The findings will serves as guidelines for policy makers in their effort to promote breastfeeding among Malaysian mothers. With the knowledge about determinants that influence the mothers in decision making of breastfeeding, it helps to give direction to the policy makers to provide opportunities for targeted interventions and improved breastfeeding practice among Malaysian mothers.

The importance of breastfeeding is emphasized across the globe. There actually a lot of initiatives from non-government organizations (NGOs) including WHO and UNICEF as well as the breastfeeding support groups like La Leche League, etc that support breastfeeding and ensure that women in maternity care have full information and support to breastfeeding. The researcher turned new mother 15 months ago and has breastfed exclusively her little daughter for six months. From her personal experience and the growth of her infant, she witnessed the miracle of breastfeeding. It is the wish of the researcher that with the survey done among the Malaysian mothers, it will encourage and motivates more expectant mother and mothers to breastfeed their infant. Thus, make small contribution to support the works of NGOs.

## **1.8 Organization of Remaining Chapters**

In Chapter 1, research problems will be highlighted, the objectives will be set and questions will be raised accordingly. Chapter 2 that concentrates in literature review will discuss in details the theoretical framework. From there, the key variables will be identified and hypotheses will be proposed. In Chapter 3, the researcher will go through the research methodology in which research design, data collection method and data analysis method are being crafted. The research findings will be shown, verified and hypotheses will be tested in Chapter 4. Finally, the paper concludes with managerial implication, limitations of current research as well as proposal for future research in Chapter 5.

## **Chapter 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

In developing countries, where the knowledge and skills of breastfeeding have been retained within society, women consider it the normal thing to do. Practice of breastfeeding can provide the baby protection against infection. On the other hand, in the so-called developed world, majority of women choose to breastfeed because they regard it as the fulfillment of motherhood and are less conscious of the benefits of human milk for their babies (Myles, 1993)

The first year of an infant's life is the most critical because amazing changes take place. An infant experiences the most rapid growth and development throughout the first year. Therefore, appropriate amounts of essential nutrients such as protein, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, and minerals are necessary to ensure and sustain this rapid yet normal rate of growth and development. An infant deserves the best of everything that can be offered and nutrition of the infant should be of a major concern to parents.

Ideally, all infants should be fed exclusively with breast milk for the first six months of life. No other liquid or food, not even water, is needed during this period. Infants who are exclusively breastfed for the first six months grow well and are healthy generally.

## 2.2 Review of the Literature

### 2.2.1 Benefits of Breastfeeding

Breast milk is well-balanced in protein, fat, carbohydrate, minerals and vitamins and is considered nutritionally and therapeutically adequate for infant feeding (Sarkar, 2003). Benefits claimed by breastfeeding including better nutrition, fewer illness due to transfer of maternal antibodies, no microbial contamination, prevent allergies, promotion of jaw development by suckling, mother-infant bonding, cost and contraception (Williams and Stehlin, 1997).

Infants are meant to be breastfed. Research has proven that breast milk is essentially an infant's "first immunization". It is safer and contains all the best nutrients a healthy infant need, including 160 fatty acids. There is simply no breast-milk substitute, no matter how good the claim is, that can match the superior nutrition of a mother's milk (UNICEF Malaysia/2008/Soewargo).

While a lot of emphasis is placed on the benefits infants can get out of breast milk, mothers benefit too from the act of nursing. In addition to having a happy and healthy infant, mothers who breastfed often lose their pregnancy weight faster and experience better bone strength. A mother who breastfeeds may also decrease her chances of experiencing postpartum (after-delivery) bleeding and developing hormone-dependent cancers, like ovarian or breast cancer, if she does not have any other risk factors. Other benefits include uterus contraction to its original size and natural contraception during the first six months of exclusive breastfeeding. Healthier children and women profits every one as it means less national expenditure on health

care, fewer work absenteeism, improved employee loyalty and greater work productivity (UNICEF Malaysia/2008/Nadchatram).

Breastfeeding involves physical contact between a mother and child. Emotional growth, just as important as physical growth and development, is promoted by this close, enjoyable mother-child interaction (Infant Feeding & Nutrition).

Equally important in today's landscape of rising food prices, breastfeeding helps families save between RM85 and RM275 a month on infant food (UNICEF Malaysia/2008/Soewargo).

Gathering all the above, the benefits and advantages of breastfeeding is indisputable and as such volitional choice of breastfeeding was not significant impeded. Every mother will wish to breastfeed their infants at their level best if possible.

### 2.2.2 Cessation of Breastfeeding

From the literature review, studies suggested a number of factors may influence whether mothers choose to breastfeeding. As cited by Hill, Arnett and Mauk (2008), many mothers believe that breastfeeding is inconvenient or inconsistent with their lifestyles or work commitment (Scott, Shaker and Reid, 2004); a general lack of social support (Mitra, Khoury, Hinton et al, 2004), lack of confidence or prior experience (Chezem, Friesen and Boettcher, 2003), fear of pain or breast sagging

(Koeblen-Tarver, Thompson and Miner, 2002), and embarrassment (Raisler, 2000) may also contribute to the decision to infant formula feeding or breastfeeding

On the other hand, Sarkar (2003) cited reasons attributable to the cessation of breastfeeding by mothers may be due to lack of education, industrialization and urbanization, inconvenience, social status (Misra, 1982), insufficient lactation of milk, illness of mother or child, refusal of infant to suckle and lack of mother's interest in breastfeeding (Satto Escobar and Castaneda, 1974).

Lack of active protection and support for breastfeeding is a big factor in preventing breastfeeding. There is not enough priority given to protection and skilled support for breastfeeding, which means ensuring that mothers are safe and secure, have priority access to food, water, shelter, and if necessary, private places to breastfeed.

Yet, mothers always do not receive adequate support and protection that enable them to breastfeed their children exclusively for the first six months of life, and continue thereafter until the age of two (UNICEF Malaysia/2008/Tee Shiao Eek). Breastfeeding is a joint effort and require support from family members and important referent to encourage the mother for breastfeeding

### **2.3 Development of Hypotheses**

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) was developed by I. Ajzen and M. Fishbein (1975, 1980) and was derived from previous research that started out as the theory of attitude,

which led to the study of attitude and behavior. TRA is an extension of earlier work of M. Fishbein on Expectancy-value theory that was originally created in order to explain and predict individual's attitudes toward objects and actions based on assessments about beliefs and values. Some important limitations of the Expectancy-value theory were they failed to include certain critical elements such as behavioral intention as a precursor to behaviour, the importance of socially-based beliefs and the potential importance of socially-based beliefs (expectations) about the attitude object. Such omissions have resulted in a weak prediction of behaviour (Fishbein, 1971). Over the years, the model has been refined, developed and tested and it is now known as Theory of Reasoned Action.

TRA is considered as the most widely applied model of beliefs and attitudes in social psychology setting. TRA is concerned with rational and volitional behaviour. The volitional behaviour is behaviour that an individual has control. The components of TRA are three general constructs, there are attitude (A), subjective norm (SN) and behavioral intention (BI). TRA suggests that a person's behavioral intention depends on the person's attitude about the behavior and subjective norms. In summary,  $A + SN = BI$ . TRA corresponds with the topic of breastfeeding because it provides an approach for explaining, predicting, and influencing a willful human social behaviour. The important point of willful behaviours is that their occurrence is a direct result of deliberate attempts made by an individual (Ajzen, 1988).

According to Ajzen (1988), a person forms an intention to engage in a certain behavior. Intentions are assumed to capture the motivational factors that have an impact on a behavior; they are indications of how hard people are willing to try, of how much of an effort they are planning to exert, in order to perform the behavior. These intentions remain

behavioral dispositions until, at the appropriate time and opportunity, an attempt is made to translate the intention into action. Assuming that the behavior is in fact under volitional control, the attempt will produce the desired act. This implies that the disposition most closely linked to a specific action tendency is the intention to perform the action under consideration. In other words, when dealing with volitional behavior people can be expected to do what they intend to do. Expressions of behavioral intention should thus permit a highly accurate prediction of corresponding volitional action.

As cited by Keith, Nikolaos and Panagiotis (1994), in proposing the TRA, Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) argued that it provided a complete explanation of volitional control, and that the addition of other variables would not significantly enhance the prediction of behavioral intention. Nevertheless, a number of additional components have been proposed, such as perceived moral obligation, past behaviour, habit and self identity. Perhaps the most significant of these proposed additions involves the influence of perceived behavioural control proposed by Ajzen in his Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) in 1988. TPB deals with behavior where individual have incomplete faculty of using one's will or situation where they have incomplete control of their behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Perceived behavioral control is defined as one's perception of the difficulty of performing a behavior. TPB views the control that people have over their behavior as lying on a continuum from behaviors that are easily performed to those requiring considerable effort, resources, etc.

However, the TPB approach has been criticized by Dutta-Bergman (2005). TPB is based on cognitive processing and level of behavior change. Compared to affective processing models, TPB overlooks emotion variables such as threat, fear, mood and negative



or positive feeling and assessed them in a limited fashion. In particular in the health related behavior situation, given that most individuals' health behaviors are influenced by their personal emotion and affect-laden nature, this is a decisive drawback for predicting health-related behaviors.

A healthy debate about additions and modifications to the TRA continues. Other criticisms include limited applicability criticized by Sarver (1983), and conceptual problem criticized by Lalljee, Brown and Ginsburg (1984). Meanwhile, the basic proposals of the TRA model have received widespread empirical corroboration, including research works done by Smetana and Adler (1980) on abortion; and Manstead, Proffitt and Smart (1983) on mothers' infant-feeding intentions.

Keith *et al* (1994) also cited the research work of Sparks that concluded that in the context of food-choice behaviour, the perceived control is likely to prove applicable to those classes of action where volitional choice is significantly impeded. Since from the initial stages of study, the researcher has indicated that breastfeeding is a willful behaviour of a mother, breastfeeding as volitional choice is not significant impeded. Thus, perceived behavioral control is not measured and TPB is not applicable for this study. Instead, TRA is used in the study.

People intend to perform a behavior when they evaluate that particular behavior positively within their belief system. Furthermore, people also intend to perform a behaviour when they believe that people whom are important to them think they should perform it. The same principle applies to the breastfeeding behavior of a mother. The intention of

breastfeeding will be determined by the mother's need to comply with her own expectations for herself as well as her persuaders' attitudes. Thus, the first and second hypotheses were developed as below.

- H1. Attitude toward breastfeeding will positively influence intention of breastfeeding.
- H2. Subjective norm will positively influence intention of breastfeeding.

In their research, Gina et al (2008) has cited that social support has an impact on intention to breastfeeding. Women planning to breastfeed report greater perceived social support than do women planning to exclusively infant formula feeding. Furthermore, higher incidence of breastfeeding is associated with a strong approval of breastfeeding by the father and Wagner *et al* reported that 97% of mothers who perceived that the father preferred breastfeeding initiated breastfeeding.

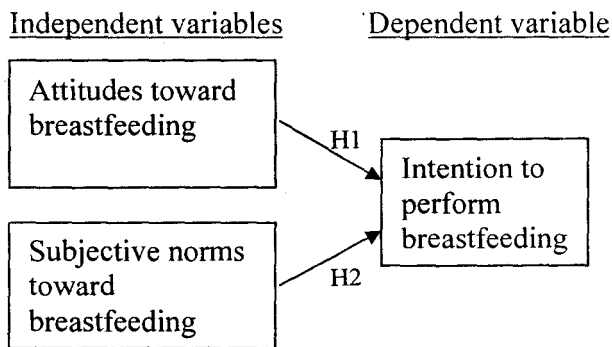
Intention refers to a person's choice to engage in a particular behavior in the future. Based on the theory, the best predictor of behavior is behavioral intention. Expression of behavioral intention permits a highly accurate prediction of corresponding action. For example, researches done by Manstead, *et al* (1983) about mothers' infant-feeding intentions has shown intention-behavior correlation as high as 0.82. The same goes to research done by Smetana and Adler (1980) about having an abortion in which the intention-behavior correlation shown even higher rate at 0.96 was cited by Ajzen (1988). Therefore, the third hypothesis was developed as below.

- H3 Intention to perform breastfeeding is a proxy of behaviour of breastfeeding.

## 2.4 Theoretical Framework

TRA proposes that mother's intention to breastfeed are influenced directly by (1) the mother's overall attitude toward breastfeeding in which is defined as a person's overall feeling either positive or negative about a behaviour (personal belief) and her evaluation on this behaviour, and (2) the person's overall perceptions concerning how others (important to them) view the act of breastfeeding subjective norm). In graphic, it is shown in Figure 2.1.

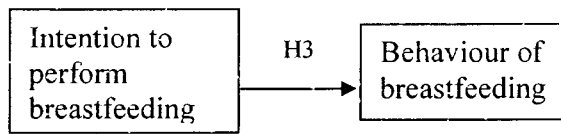
Figure 2.1 Theoretical Framework Part 1



The theory is based on the assumption that human beings usually behave in a sensible manner; that they take account of available information and implicitly or explicitly consider the implications of their actions. TRA provides a framework that can be used to predicting an individual behavior from an intention. A person forms an intention to engage in a certain behavior (Ajzen, 1988).

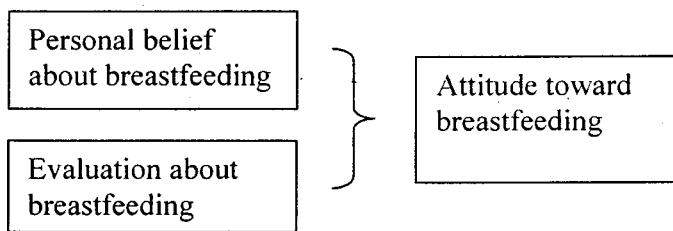
The TRA views intention as a predeterminant of behaviour. As such this study was designed to find out if behavioral intention can be used as a proxy for behaviour. In graphic, it is shown in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2 Theoretical Framework Part 2



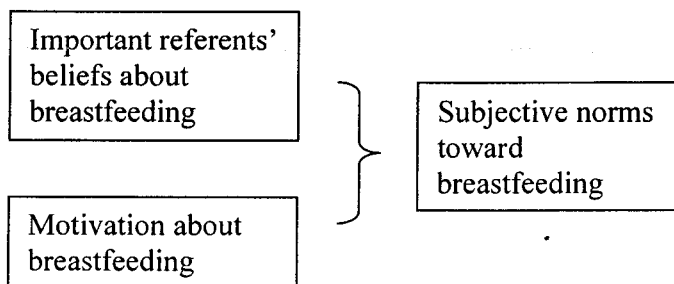
Meanwhile, the person's attitude is influenced positively by the person's beliefs that breastfeeding will result in overall better results than bottle feeding with breast milk substitutes, e.g. breastfed infants are healthier and smarter than formula fed infants. Figure 2.3 shown the combination of attitude toward breastfeeding.

Figure 2.3 Attitude toward Breastfeeding



Subjective norms is influenced positively by the person's perception of important referents feeling toward breastfeeding and public's perception whether breastfeeding is socially acceptable. The important referents including the person's husband, parents, siblings and friends. Figure 2.4 shown the combination of subjective norms toward breastfeeding.

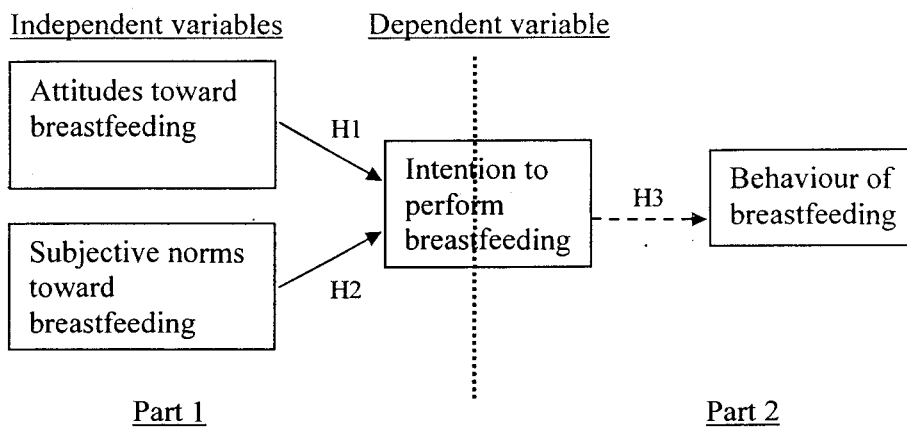
Figure 2.4 Subjective Norms toward Breastfeeding



In this study, no attempts were made to examine whether attitude toward breastfeeding was made up by the components of personal belief and evaluation about breastfeeding. The same goes to the components of subjective norms. Reason being, the researcher assume it is correct from the beginning following the theory of TRA. The complete theoretical framework is a combination of Part 1 and Part 2 as explained in the early section.

Therefore, as a summary, the complete theoretical framework is as shown in Figure 2.5.

Figure 2.5 Complete Theoretical Framework



## 2.5 Summary

According to the TRA, intentions are a function of two basic determinants. The first one is personal attitude towards the behavior that this attitude is the individual's positive or negative evaluation of performing the particular behavior. The second determinant is subjective norms that reflecting social influence or the person's perception of social pressure to perform or not to perform the behavior under consideration. The study was designed to measure the influence of certain factors in the decision process of breastfeeding, including personal belief, evaluation, important referents' belief, motivation, attitude and subjective norm.

### **3.3.1 Independent Variables**

#### **3.3.1.1 Attitude**

Attitudes refer to an individual's judgment that performing a particular behaviour, for example breastfeeding, is good or bad. According to the TRA, the attitude toward the behavior is determined by the salient beliefs about that behavior and the person's evaluation of the outcomes associated with the behavior. By multiplying belief strength and outcome evaluation, and summing the resulting products, we obtain an estimate of the attitude toward the behavior (Ajzen, 1988, chapter 6 pg 6).

Personal beliefs are the underlying characteristics, qualities, and attributes associated with an object (e.g. breastfeeding) (Hill et al, 2008). A person will hold a favorable attitude toward performing a given behavior if he believes that performing the behavior will lead to positive outcomes. On the other hand, will hold an unfavorable attitude toward performing a given behavior if he believes that performing the behavior will lead to negative outcomes.

#### **3.3.1.2 Subjective norms**

Subjective norm is a person's overall perceptions of what other people think about certain behavior. According to the TRA, the subjective norm toward the behavior is determined by two factors. First one is the person's beliefs that specific individuals or groups approve or disapprove of performing the behavior. This is so called normative beliefs. Another determinant of

### **3.3.2.2 Behaviour of breastfeeding**

Intention is the cognitive representation of a person's readiness to perform a given behavior, and it is considered to be the immediate antecedent of behavior. A general rule, the more favorable the expectant mothers and mothers' attitude and the social subjective norm, the stronger should the expectant mother and mother's intention to perform the breastfeeding behavior. Following TRA, The best predictor of breastfeeding behaviour is intention of breastfeeding.

## **3.4 Population**

Population of the research consists of Malaysian expectant mothers that visiting Obstetrician and Gynaecologist (registered patients) at Metro Specialist Hospital (Metro) as well as the Malaysian mothers whom bring their young children visiting Paediatricians (registered patient's mothers) at Metro. They were considered as eligible respondents for the study due to the reason that they were either pregnant at the time of survey or they have higher chance of getting pregnant and breastfeeding their child in near future. Therefore, these child bearing age women apparently were the group of people that has higher level of concern about breastfeeding and their opinion and comments about breastfeeding were significantly relevant to this research. No differentiation or comparison was made between these two groups of mothers in this survey. In this survey, they were considered as a single group that shares the same opinion about breastfeeding.

### **3.4.1 Background of Metro**

Metro is located in a fast growing town, Sungai Petani, Kedah Darul Aman, West Malaysia. It started the operations in 1993 as Bersatu Medical Centre and was

later named Metro Specialist Hospital since 1996. Metro achieved ISO 9001:2000 for provision of hospital services, operations and management since 2002. The hospital offers a diverse range of healthcare services. By envisioning new services, lifestyles and by emphasizing on the best relationship mix for winning and satisfying customer needs, Metro constantly creates new products and service values to venture into new business opportunities. The vision of Metro is to be the leading health care provider of choice in the Northern Region.

As written by Sister Sundari in the 12<sup>th</sup> Edition of Metro News, Metro has organized a Lactation Team and the chairman is Dr. Loh Chee San, the Consultant Paediatrician. The objective is to encourage mothers to give exclusive breastfeeding. Exclusive breastfeeding means:

- a. No drinks or food other than breast milk given to an infant.
- b. No pacifiers or artificial teats.
- c. Infants are breastfed at least 8 – 12 times in 24 hours including night feeds.

The researcher was in the opinion that those expectant mothers and mothers that visiting Metro were likely to support the action of breastfeeding and able to contribute useful opinion toward this research. Thus, Metro was identified as a target venue for interviewing the qualified respondents for this research. On the other hand, Metro has also shown its full support to the breastfeeding activities. Immediate approval has been granted to the researcher to conduct the relevant interview within its premise with co-operation from their specialists and nurses.



### **3.5 Data Collection Method**

A structured questionnaire in English language was designed for a survey to be conducted at the clinics of Obstetrician and Gynaecologist as well as Paediatrician at Metro after obtaining the hospital's approval. The survey were carried out for three days on January 24, January 31 and February 7, 2010 during Metro's consultation hours from 9:00am to 5:00pm. All three days were falls on Sunday. Sunday was selected because from the registration record it shown this was the busiest day in a week with the most number of patients. The first 160 eligible respondents that visit the above-mentioned clinics during the three specific survey days set by researcher were interviewed and given a set of self-administrative questionnaire each. The survey was done based on respondent's willingness basis because being a private hospital, the hospital do not wish to force their patients to do anything that they feel offended or reluctant to do.

### **3.6 Procedures**

On the three selected survey days, the researcher stayed one whole day at Metro until the survey with 160 respondents was completed. The researcher moved around between clinics of Obstetrician and Gynaecologist as well as Paediatrician. The eligible respondents were approached individually for participation in this survey while waiting for their number to be called. The research's purpose and objective were explained and consent from the eligible respondent was obtained prior to providing the subject a self-administrated questionnaire. The survey took approximately ten minutes to complete. During the process of filling questionnaire, the respondents have made questions to the researcher whenever they have doubt. The completed questionnaire was returned to the researcher once it has been done.