

Effect of COVID 19 on women and childcare in Iraq

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Abstract:

Introduction: Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is a new mutation of coronavirus (SARS-CoV) that cause a pandemic in 2019. During COVID-19 pandemic, women and children were affected by the disruption of health services, specifically in developing countries. **Patients and methods:** The study was done in Iraq ,Descriptive study was done to identify the effect of Covid19 on women and child care in many aspects including: site of births, primary health care services and breastfeeding for three years (2019,2020,2021).

Results: The total births decreased in year 2020 compared to 2019, while in 2021 it is more than 2019, a decrease in births within governmental hospitals with the onset of the pandemic, and then return to the rise. Increased births in the private hospitals during the years 2020, 2021.

Discussion: Decrease of governmental hospital birth and antenatal care visits because the women afraid from getting infection with COVID-19 in health centers.

Keywords: COVID 19, antenatal care, breastfeeding, birth.

مستخلص

مرض فيروس كورونا (COVID-19) هو طفرة جديدة لفيروس كورونا (SARS-CoV) تسبب جائحة في عام 2019. خلال جائحة كوفيد-19، تأثرت النساء والأطفال بتعطيل الخدمات الصحية، وتحديدًا في البلدان النامية. المرضى والأساليب: أجريت الدراسة في العراق، وتم إجراء دراسة وصفية لتحديد تأثير Covid19 على رعاية النساء والأطفال في العديد من الجوانب بما في ذلك: موقع الولادة وخدمات الرعاية الصحية الأولية والرضاعة الطبيعية لمدة ثلاث سنوات (2019، 2020، 2021). النتائج: انخفض إجمالي المواليد في عام 2020 مقارنة بعام 2019، بينما في عام 2021 كان أكثر من عام 2019، وانخفض عدد المواليد داخل المستشفيات الحكومية مع بداية الجائحة، ثم عاد إلى الارتفاع. زيادة الولادات في المستشفيات الخاصة خلال عامي 2020، 2021. المناقشة: انخفاض زيارات الولادة الحكومية والرعاية السابقة للولادة في المستشفيات لأن النساء يخشين الإصابة بـ COVID-19 في المراكز الصحية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: COVID 19، رعاية ما قبل الولادة، الرضاعة الطبيعية، الولادة.

Introduction:

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is a new mutation of coronavirus (SARS-CoV) that cause a pandemic in 2019, which overspread internationally. ⁽¹⁾ According to WHO, during pandemics all supports directed to overcome the emergencies, so, the routine and basic health care services usually neglected. ⁽²⁾ During epidemics of Ebola at 2014, The maternal and neonatal mortality caused by Ebola virus itself is less than that caused by indirect effect of health care services destruction due to epidemic shift of services. ⁽³⁾ During COVID-19 pandemic, women and children were affected by the disruption of health services, specifically in developing countries. ⁽⁴⁾ Pregnant women and children in low resources countries are likely to face big impact during pandemics. ⁽⁵⁾ For example , In 2020, the maternal mortality ratio (MMR) was 211 per 100,000 live births while there were around 5.3 million under five deaths. ⁽⁶⁾ Restriction for visiting hospitals to patients relatives during pandemics ,and depending on tele-consultations, together with fear of infection, make confusion to pregnant ladies and patients about seeking health care from health centers or not. ⁽⁷⁻⁹⁾ in order to not overburden the hospitals, during epidemic many patients think that their health problems are not important enough to go to hospitals which are already overcrowded with patients. ⁽¹⁰⁾ Many countries adopt lockdown and low person-person contact due to unavailability of vaccine at the beginning and deficiency of treatment. ⁽¹¹⁻¹³⁾ about breast-feeding and covid19, theoretically newborns do not have immunity against disease. ⁽¹⁴⁾ This put breastfeeding among infected ladies understudy during pandemic, ⁽¹⁵⁾ also the mother afraid from transmitting the virus to their babies. ⁽¹⁶⁾ Finally two reviews in 2020 favored continue lactation even if the mother is infected. ^(17,18)

Patients and methods:

Study setting: The study was done in Iraq, the data from the monthly reports sent from the primary health care centers, hospitals and the statistics of the Ministry of health and environment.

Study design: Descriptive study was done to identify the effect of Covid19 on women and child care in many aspects including: site of births, primary health care services and breastfeeding for three years (2019,2020,2021).

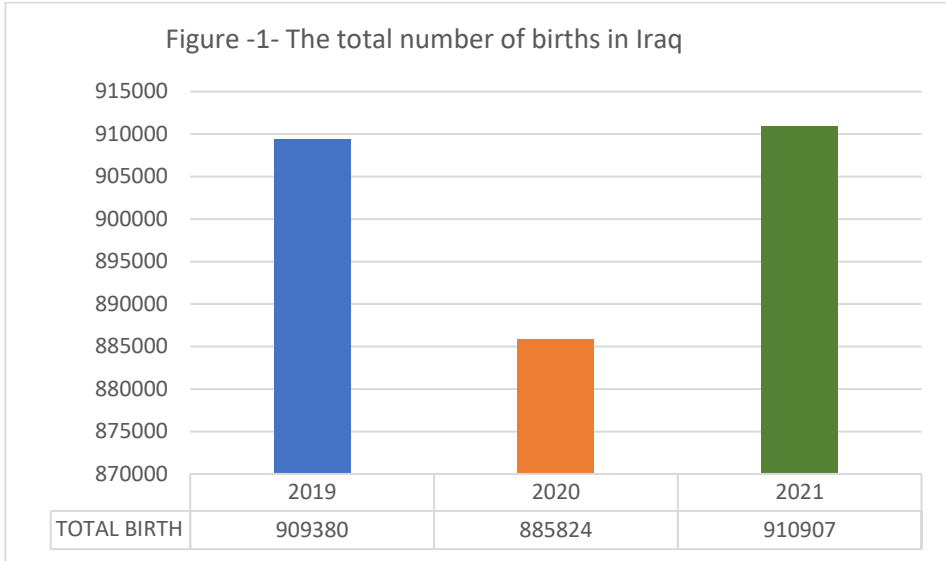
Data analysis: Computer feeding and statistical Analysis was done by Acer computer and Minitab (18th edition), many statistical diagrams was used to explain the relations.

Results:

I. Site of births:

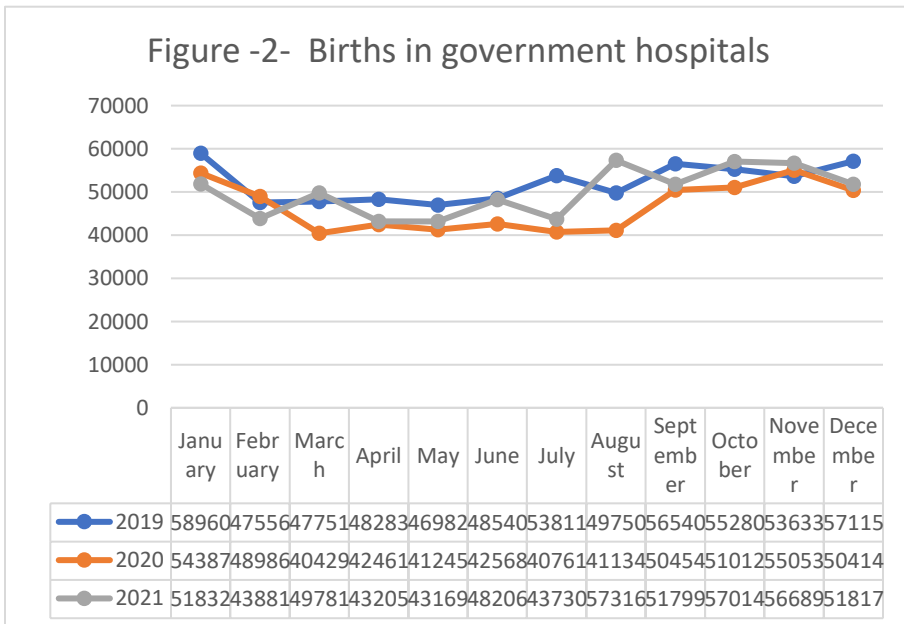
I.1 Total births:

The total births in Iraq decreased in year 2020 compared to 2019, while in 2021 it is more than 2019 as shown in figure -1-



I.2 Births in governmental hospitals:

we note a decrease in births within governmental hospitals with the onset of the pandemic (2020) and then return to the rise by 2021,



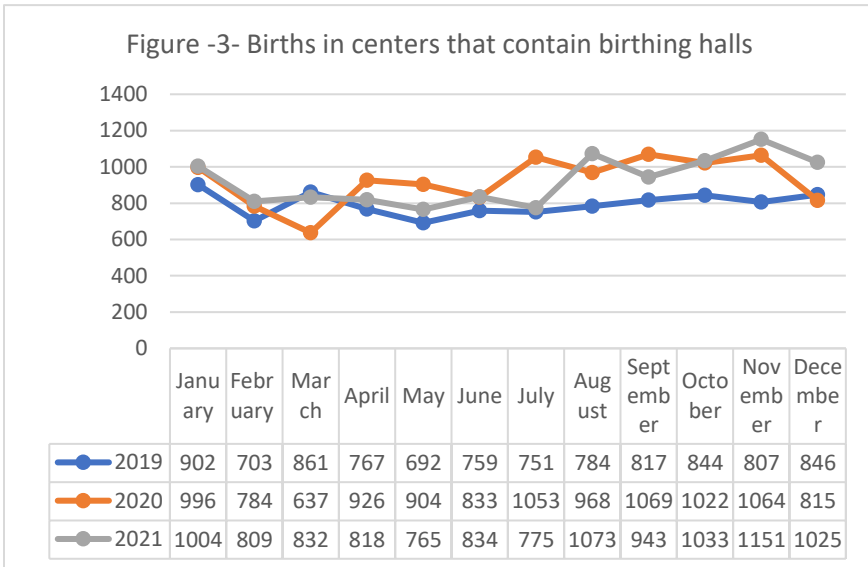
especially in the months after the first quarter to the end of the year as shown in figure -2 - with non-significant p-value(0.336).

I.3 Births in centers that contain birthing halls:

The results show fluctuating increase and decrease during the three years of the study as shown in figure -3- with non-significant p-value(0.0154).

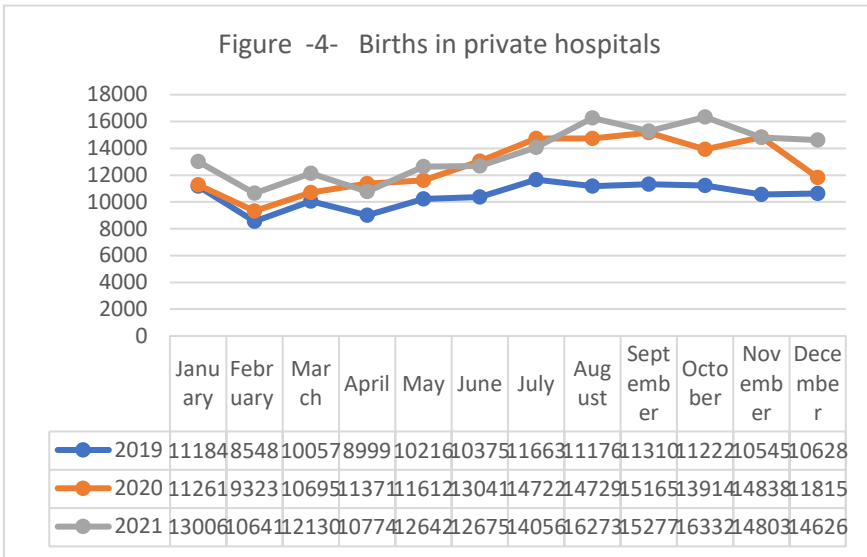
I.4 Births in private hospitals:

Results showed increased births in private hospitals during the years

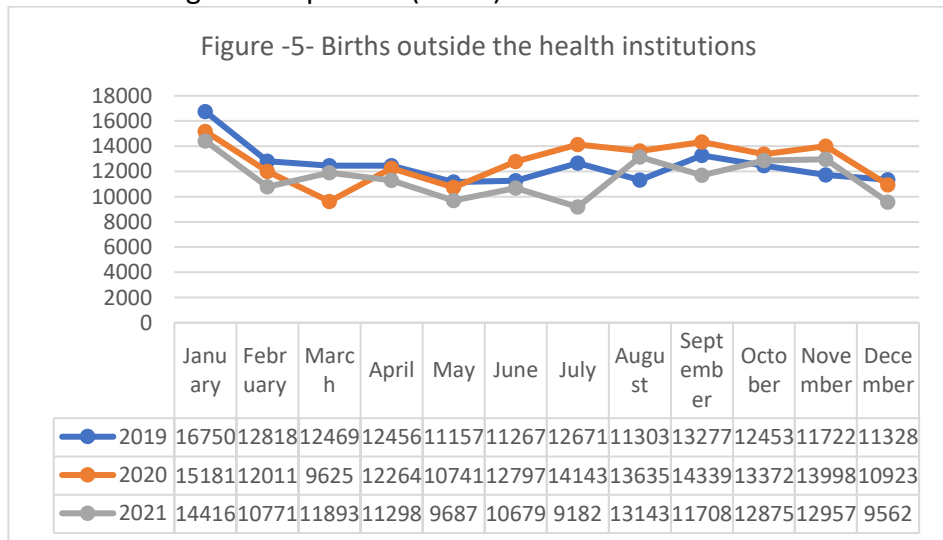


2020,2021 in comparison to year of 2019 as shown in figure -4- with highly significant p-value (0.007).

I.5 Births outside the health institutions:



Results shows increase of births outside the health institutions in second half of the years 2020, 2021 in comparison to 2019 as showed in figure - 5- with non-significant p-value (0.511).



II. Primary health care services

Comparisons were made between the first and fourth antenatal care visits for pregnant women in Iraq on monthly basis for the three years of the study. In addition, the results shows that the first and forth visits percentages were declined in 2020, 2021 in comparison to 2019 for the

months (January to April), while in months (May to August) there is increase of visits in comparison to first third of the year. From September to December, there is fluctuation in the percentage of visits (figures 6-17). In addition, the results shows that Anbar directorate recorded the lowest visits (first and fourth) in comparison to other health directorates.

Figure -6- Periodic medical examination for pregnant women and mothers for the month of January

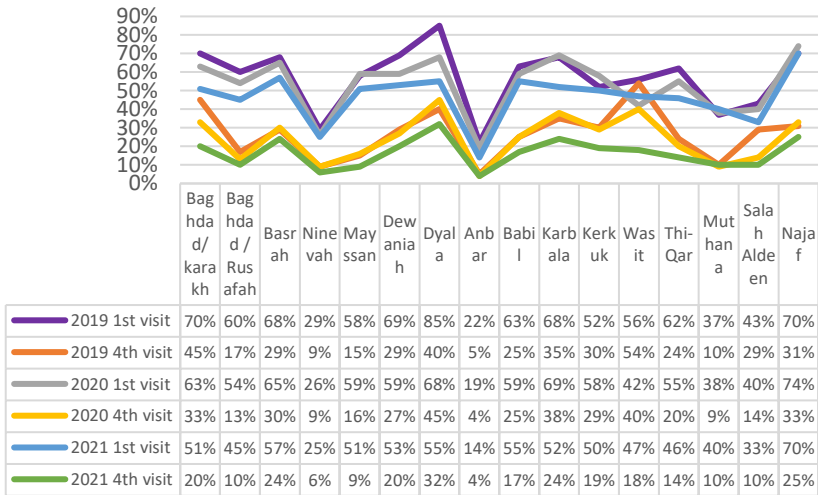


Figure -7- Periodic medical examination for pregnant women and mothers for the month of February

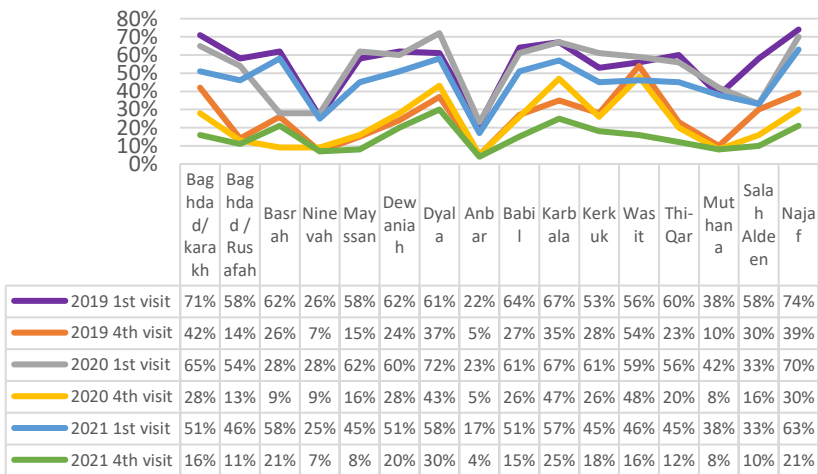


Figure -8- Periodic medical examination for pregnant women and mothers for the month of March

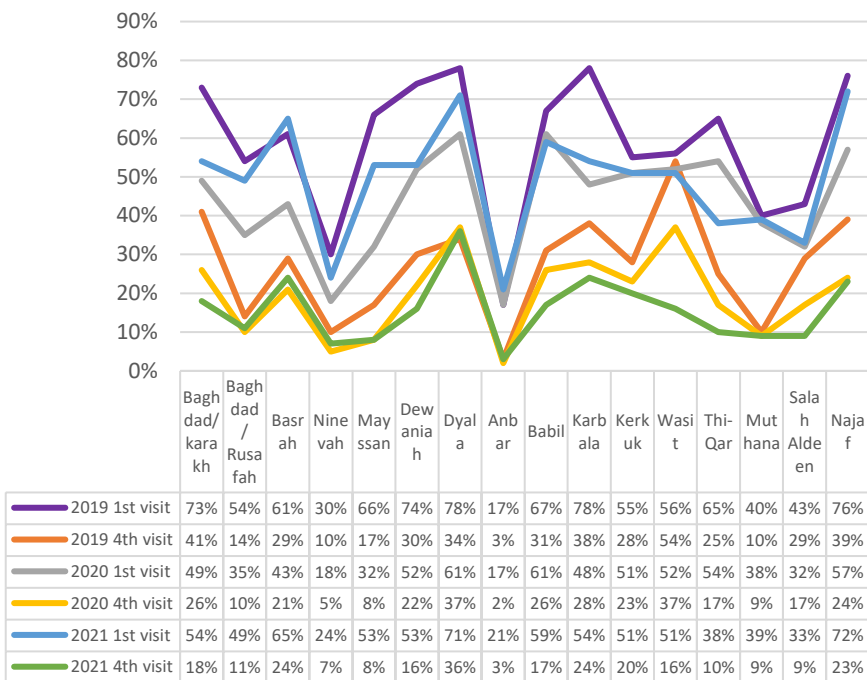


Figure -9- Periodic medical examination for pregnant women and mothers for the month of April

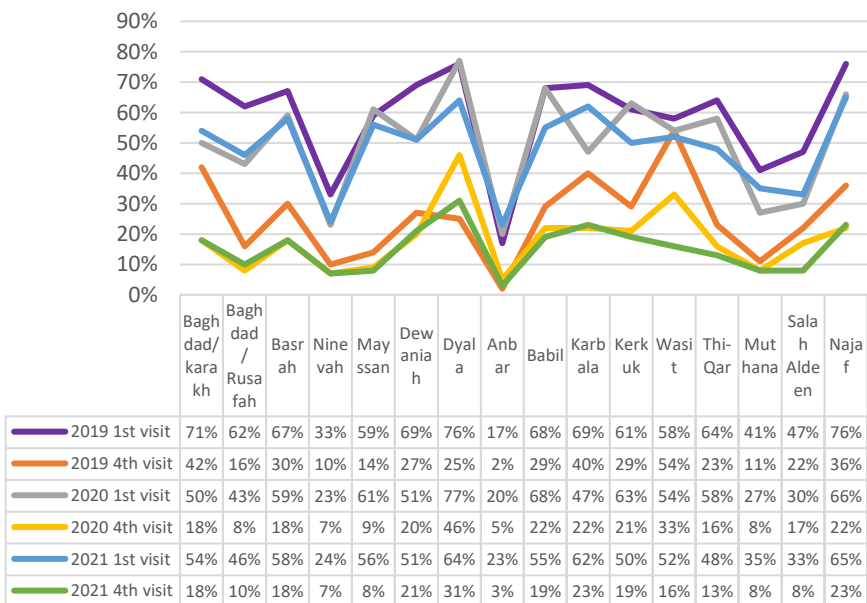


Figure -10- Periodic medical examination for pregnant women and mothers for the month of May

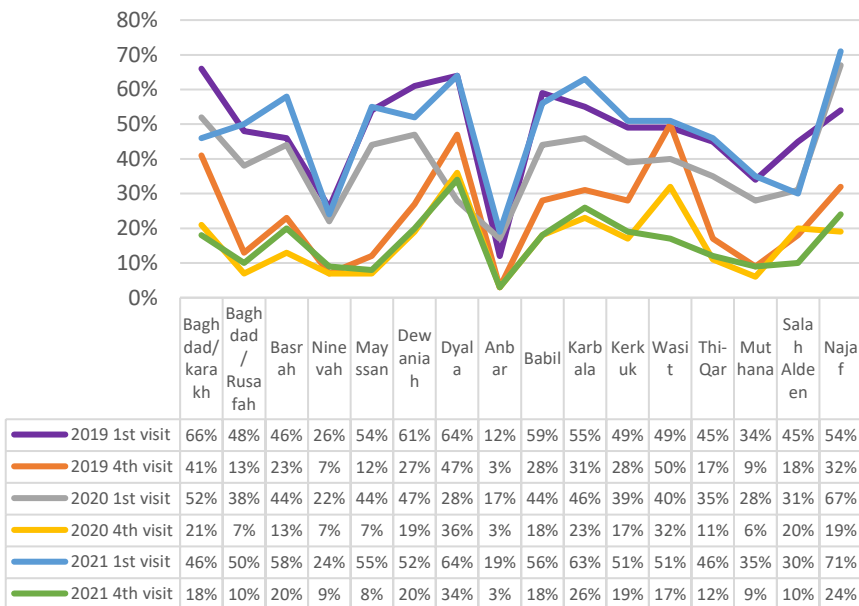


Figure -11- for the periodic medical examination of pregnant women and mothers for the month of June

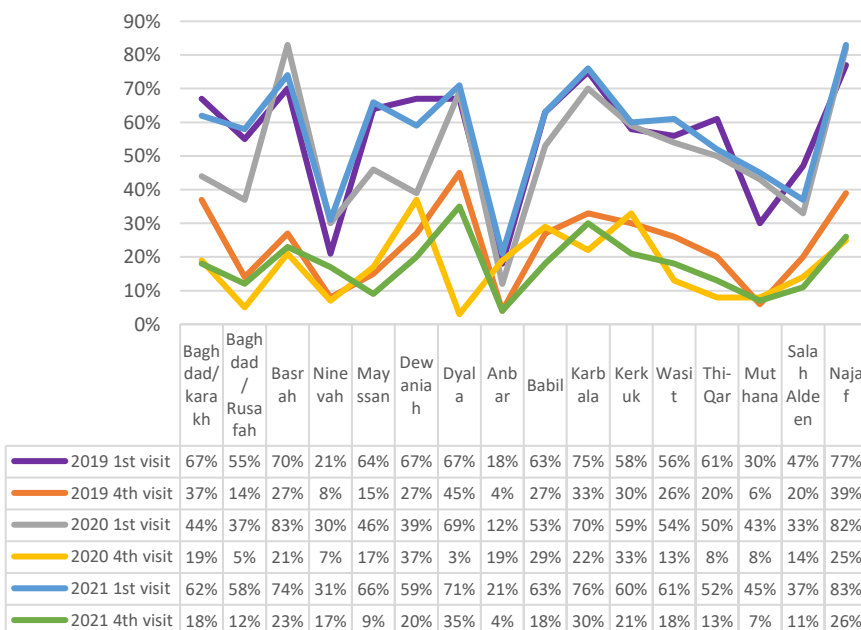


Figure -12- Periodic medical examination for pregnant women and mothers for the month of July

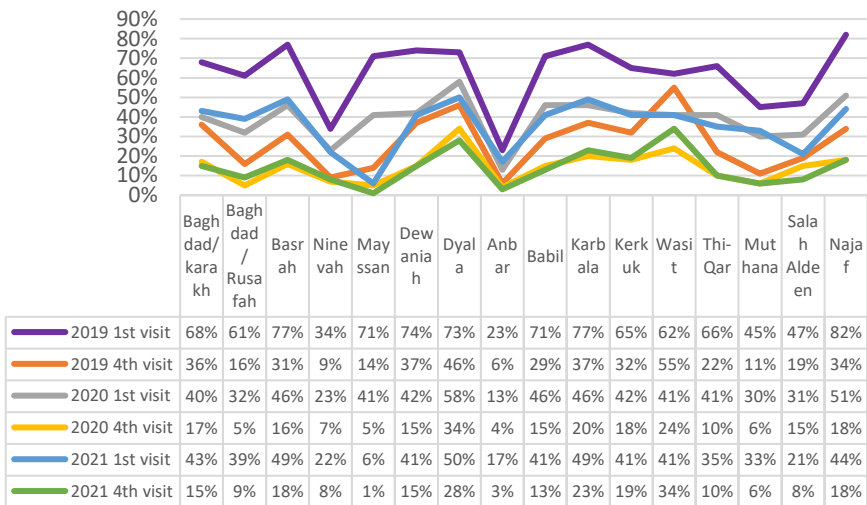


Figure -13- Periodic medical examination for pregnant women and mothers for the month of August

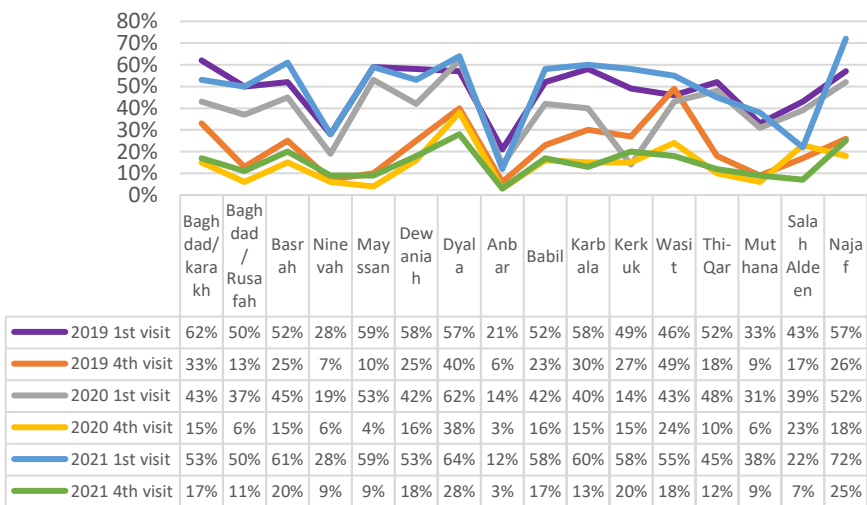


Figure -14- Periodic medical examination for pregnant women and mothers for the month of September

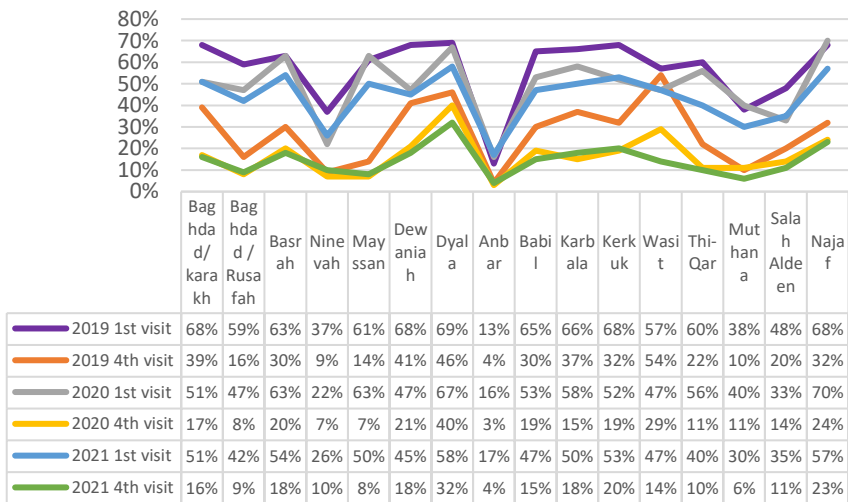


Figure -15- A periodic medical examination for pregnant women and mothers for the month of October

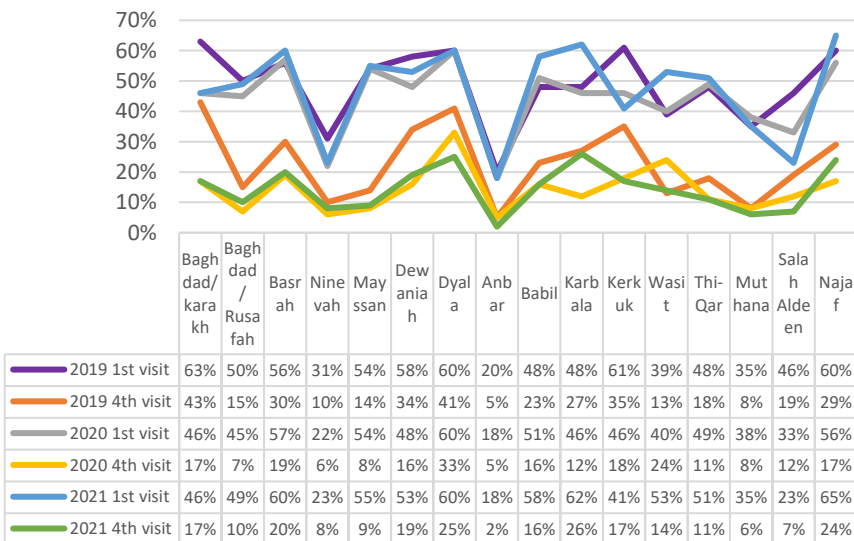


Figure -16- Periodic medical examination for pregnant women and mothers for the month of November

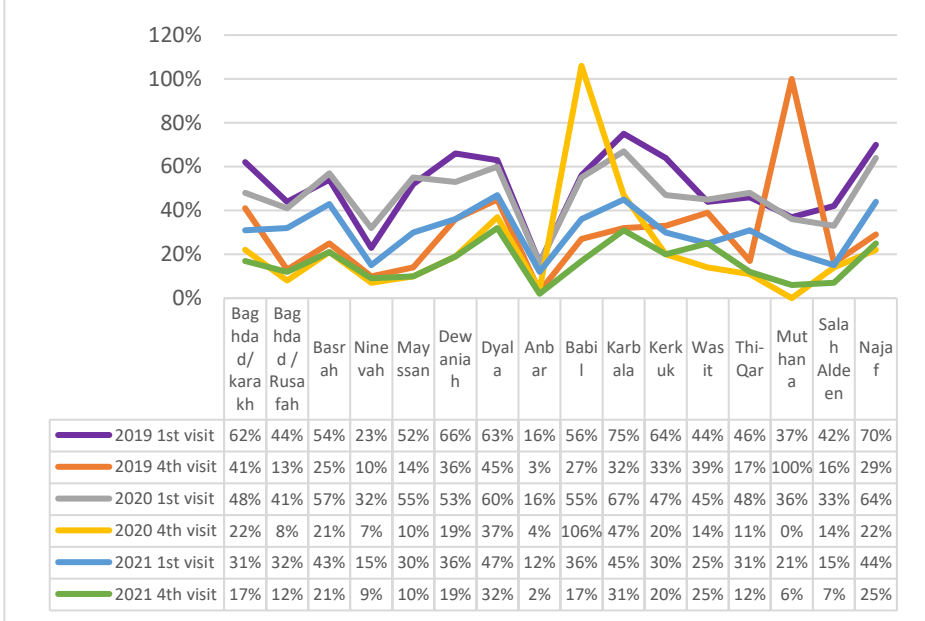
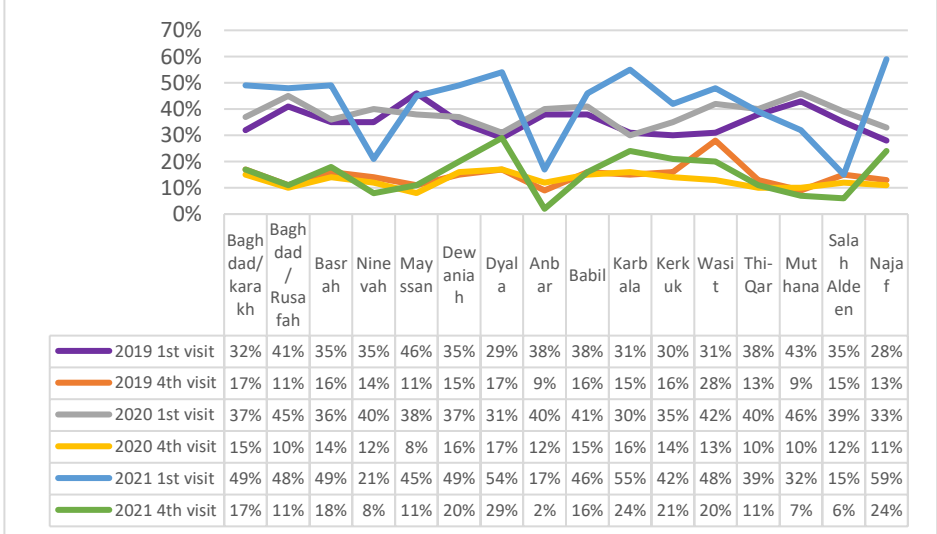


Figure -17- Periodic medical examination for pregnant women and mothers for the month of December



Breast-feeding:

The results show increase percentage of breast feeding in most of Iraqi cities for the years of 2020, 2021 in comparison to 2019 (figures 18-29).

Figure -18- Percentage of newborns who were breastfed for the month of January

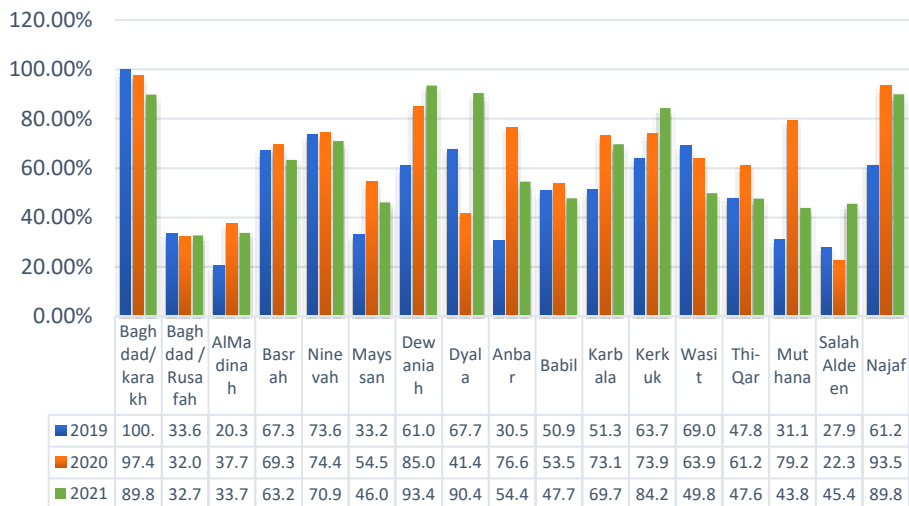


Figure -19- Percentage of newborns who were breastfed for the month of February

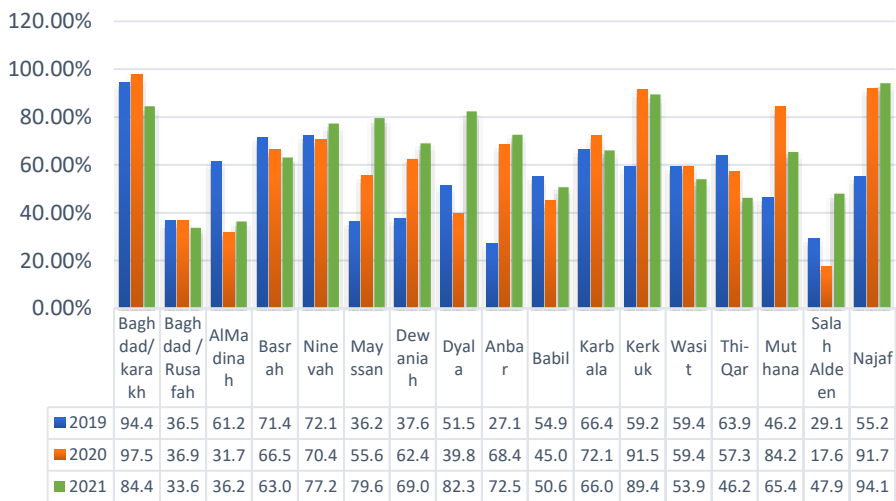


Figure -20- Percentage of those who were breastfed for the month of March

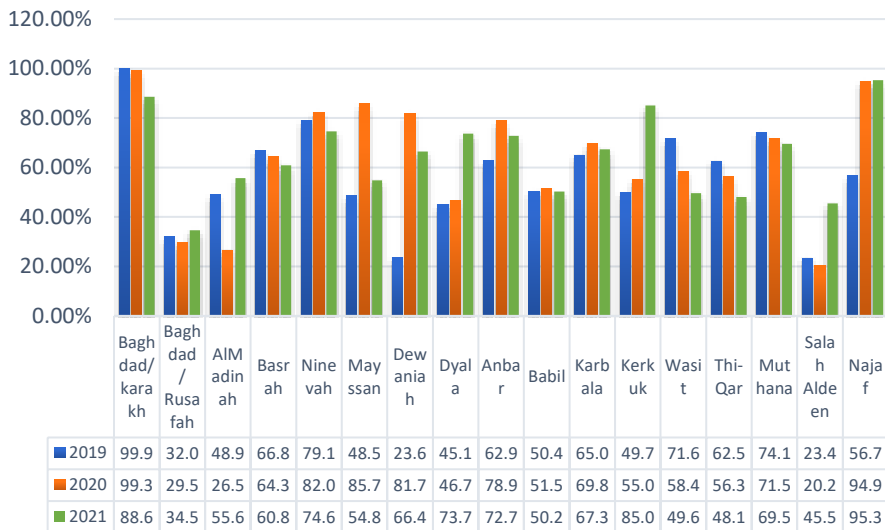


Figure -21- Percentage of those who were breastfed for the month of April



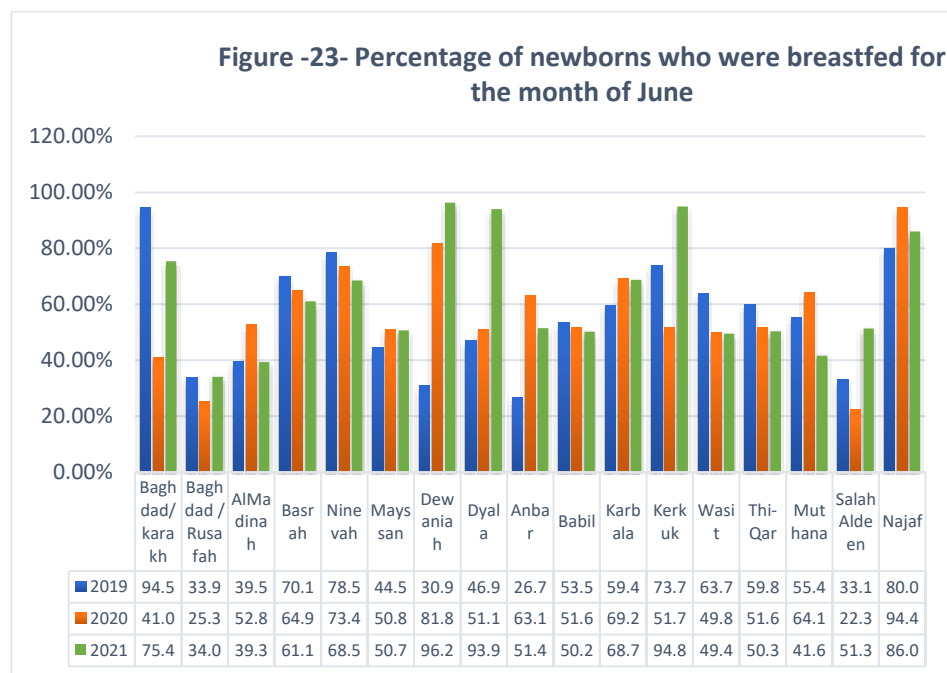
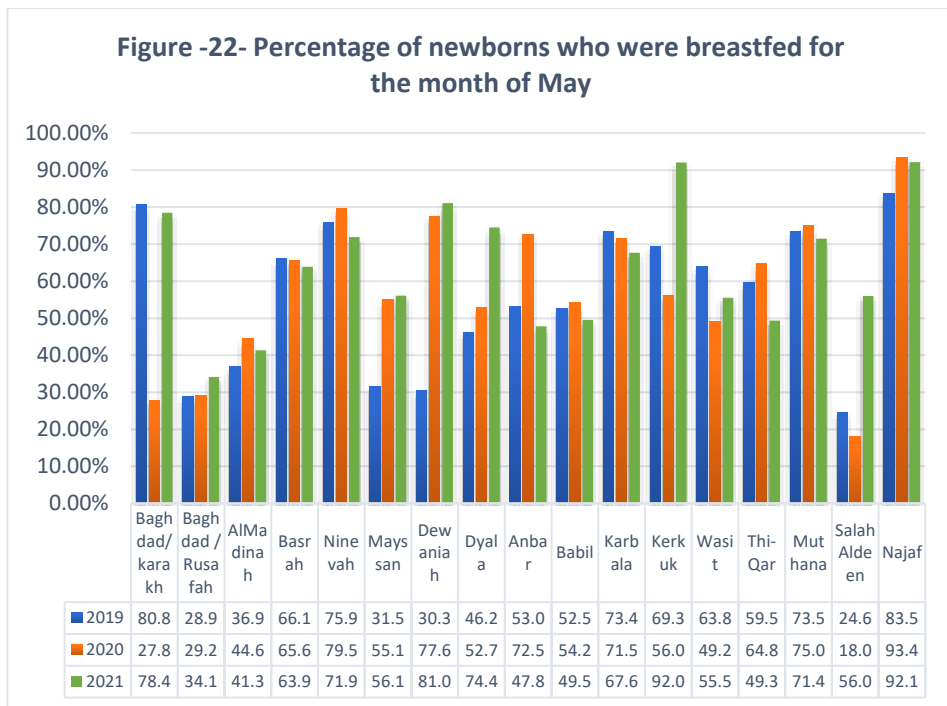


Figure-24- Percentage of newborns who were breastfed for the month of July

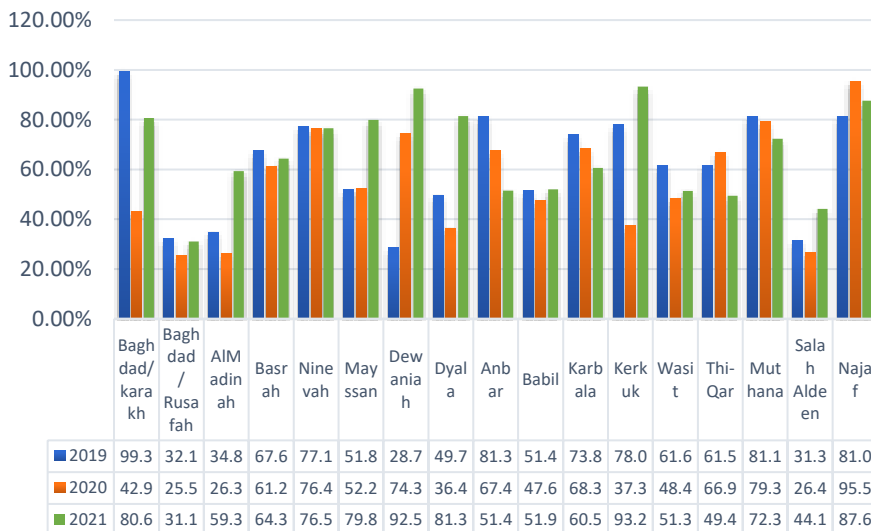


Figure -25- Percentage of newborns who were breastfed for the month of August

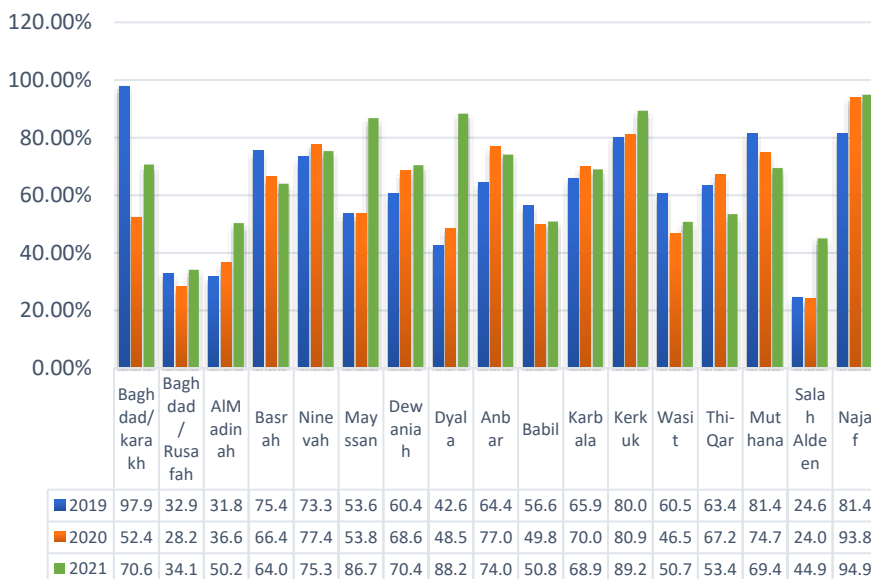


Figure -26- Percentage of newborns who were breastfed for the month of September

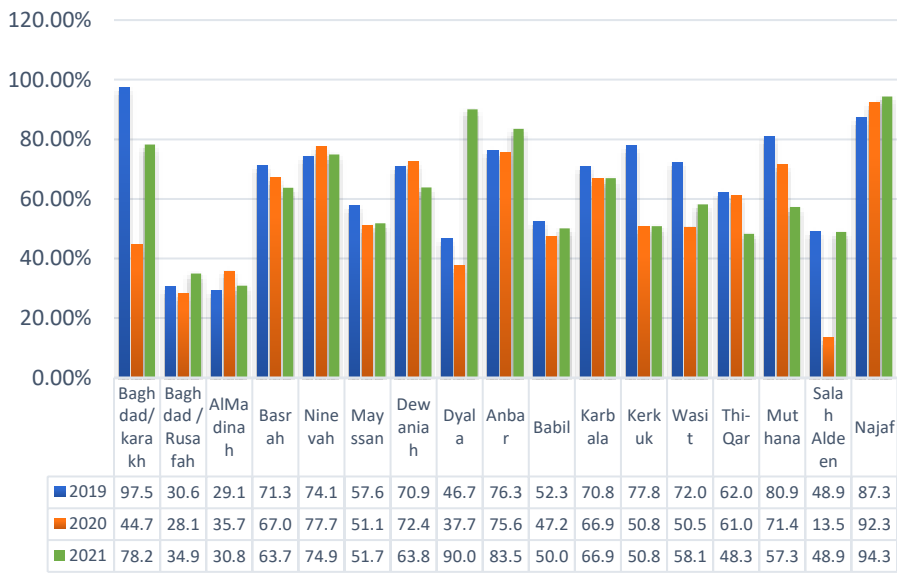


Figure -27- Percentage of newborns who were breastfed for the month of October

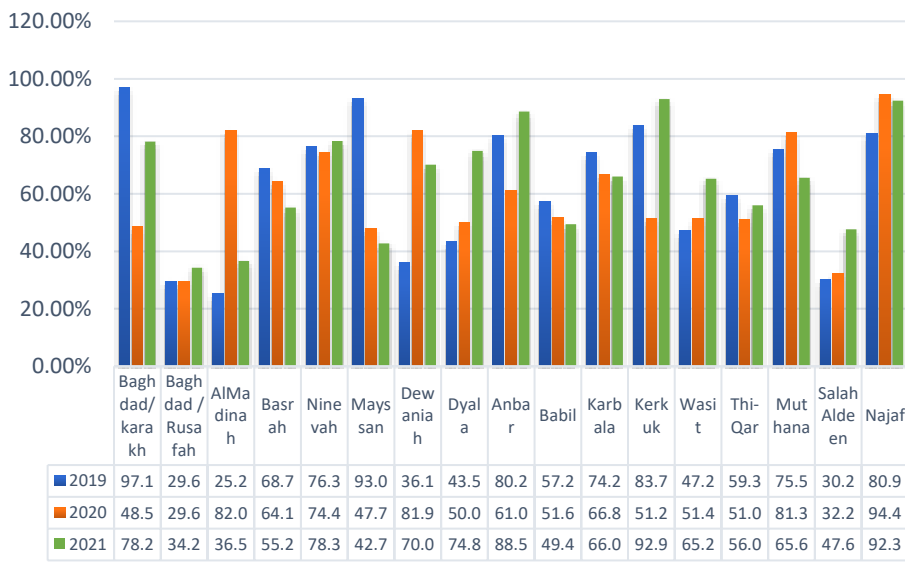
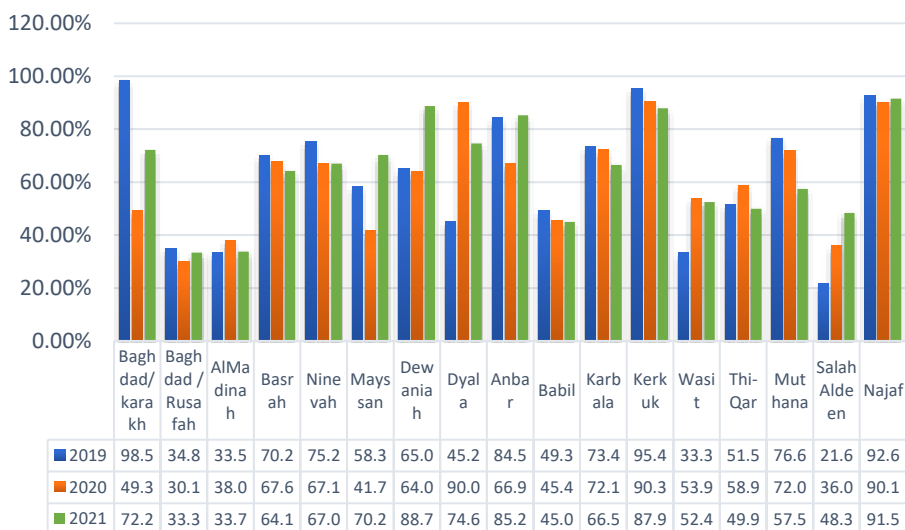


Figure -28- Percentage of newborns who were breastfed for the month of November



Figure -29- Percentage of newborns who were breastfed for the month of December



Discussion:**Site of births****Total births**

This study show decreased total births in 2020, this may be due to fear of having congenital anomalies in newborns if getting the infection, while in 2021 it is more than 2019 and this might be due to increase in vaccination rate and the people want to complete their families after the decrease in births in the previous year.

Births in governmental hospitals:

This study show decrease in deliveries in these hospitals in 2020, like result of Anil K. Singh et al, Binyam Tilahun et al results ^(19,20) this may be due to the fact that the ladies afraid from getting infection with covid 19 in hospitals, the percentage begin to rise in 2021 after increase in vaccination rate and increase in preventive care strategies, on the contrary, Shweta Bankar et al study shows that deliveries in hospitals are increased during pandemics, because women think that this will let them able to receive better medication for themselves and their newborn. ⁽²¹⁾

Births in centers that contain birthing halls:

The results show fluctuation in percentages of births in these centers with no direct relationship with the pandemic, may be because these centers are the only place for labor in rural areas.

Births in private hospitals:

The study show Increase in deliveries in private hospitals because the governmental hospitals was used to treat covid 19 patients mainly and the people thinks that the isolation and protective care equipment and sanitization techniques are better in private hospitals than other places, the result is same like Shweta Bankar et al results. ⁽²¹⁾

Births outside health institutes:

The results show increase in deliveries outside health centers during the pandemic like Binyam Tilahun et al results, ⁽²⁰⁾ in which 60-70% of mothers delivered at home, authors suspect this is due to fear from being infected with covid 19.

Primary health care services:

The results show decrease visits in the winter, like Binyam Tilahun et al Shweta Bankar et al, Mar Requena-Mullor et al, Faran Emmanuel et al results, ⁽²⁰⁻²³⁾ in May to august there is increase in visits, fluctuating percentages of visits from September to December. The decrease in visits belong to many reasons like: fear from getting infected with covid 19 virus, ⁽²⁴⁾ some women think that their complains are not so important

and don't want to increase the burden on health workers and may be due to the availability of tele-consultations programs which don't need health centers visits.

III. Breast feeding:

This study show increase breast feeding rate during the pandemic may be due to decrease job times of the working mothers because many countries depend on the lockdown to flatten the curve of infections which gave the women more time for lactation, also they know that breast feeding support the immunity of their infants, and forbidding many private jobs with crowded nature during the pandemic lead to decrease the income of many families so they depend on breast feeding as a cheap and available method of feeding, on the contrary, Mar Requena-Mullor et al results shows breastfeeding of newborns decreased during the pandemic (76.0% before versus 70.6% during the pandemic),⁽²²⁾ and this may be due to geographic and social differences between the studies.

Nowadays, many articles recommend breastfeeding regardless of infection, arguing that transmission of the virus by this route is impossible and that the benefits outweigh the dangers.⁽²⁵⁻²⁹⁾

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