

A study of nutritional status of children and breastfeeding practices of their mothers in Galle Municipality area

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Introduction

Proper breastfeeding practices are of utmost importance as it promotes the health of both mother and infant. Many studies in western settings have suggested that breastfeeding has a protective effect on childhood obesity. This study was aimed to identify the relationship between nutritional status of the children (6 months to 2 years) and breastfeeding practices of their mothers in Galle Municipality area.

Methods

A cross-sectional study was conducted using both quantitative and qualitative methods. A representative sample of 198 children aged between 6 months to 2 years was selected from 16 public health midwife areas of Galle Municipality area using a simple random sampling method. A questionnaire was administered to caregiver of those children. Lengths and weights of all children were measured and the nutritional status was assessed according to the WHO Growth Standards. Chi-square test and Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient were used for analysis.

Results

Majority (83%) of children were exclusively breastfed for 4-6 months while almost all (99.4%) the mothers were educated about good breastfeeding practices by public health midwives. Of the children, 32.8% were stunted and 21% were wasted. Bivariate analysis showed a significant association between duration of exclusive breastfeeding and current weight for age ($P=0.014$) and weight for height ($P<0.001$) of children. Unemployment of the mother was significantly associated with satisfactory levels of current weight for age ($P=0.002$), height for age ($P<0.001$) and duration of exclusive breast feeding ($P=0.001$). The association of socioeconomic status of the family and the growth parameters of children was not significant ($p>0.05$). A weak positive correlation between total duration of breastfeeding and weight for age ($r=0.2403$) and height for age ($r=0.2403$) was perceived.

Conclusions

Exclusive breastfeeding rate was high in this sample and it has shown beneficial effects over nutritional status of the child. Maternal unemployment has a positive effect on breastfeeding practices and nutritional status of the child. Promotion of breastfeeding should further be encouraged especially among the mothers who are employed.