



Determinants of Infant and Young Child Feeding Practices among Nursing Mothers in Selected Hospitals in Abeokuta South Local Government Area, Ogun State

***Gabriel, E., &Adewunmi, H. O.**

Nutrition and Dietetics Department, The Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro, Nigeria.

***Corresponding email: emmanuel.gabriel@federalpolyilaro.edu.ng**

Introduction

The Optimal Infant and Young Child Feeding practices (IYCF) include exclusive breastfeeding, initiation of breastfeeding as soon as possible after giving birth, starting nutritionally safe and adequate complementary foods at six months, and continuing to breastfeed for up to two years and beyond. Optimal IYCF practices are essential for child health, yet adherence to recommended guidelines remains inconsistent among nursing mothers in Nigeria. This study aimed to assess determinants of IYCF practices among mothers in selected hospitals in Abeokuta South, Ogun State.

Methodology

A cross-sectional descriptive design was used. Data were collected from 253 nursing mothers through structured questionnaires covering socio-demographic characteristics, feeding practices, and maternal knowledge of IYCF. Feeding practices were assessed using WHO indicators such as exclusive breastfeeding, early initiation of breastfeeding, bottle feeding, minimum dietary diversity, minimum meal frequency, minimum acceptable diet, amongst others. Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS v27.0, with descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, mean, etc.) and inferential tests (Chi-square) to identify associations among variables.

Results and discussion:

The findings revealed high rates of breastfeeding initiation (99.6%) and exclusive breastfeeding (71.1%) up to six months, although only 42.7% of mothers-initiated breastfeeding within the first hour of birth. Bottle feeding was common (90.1%), and dietary diversity was limited. However, 44.6% of the mothers practiced mixed milk feeding during the first six months with 76.9% of mothers meeting the minimum dietary diversity (MDD) for complementary feeding. Maternal education and income were significantly associated with IYCF compliance, with higher levels correlating with better adherence. Key determinants of IYCF practices included maternal education and income. Anthropometric measurements indicated mixed nutritional status among children, with 66.4% showing normal weight-for-height, while 19.4% were wasted, with 72.3% having a normal height-for-age and 15.1% stunted signaling severe malnutrition risks. Knowledge of IYCF practices shows that the majority 89% of the mothers had good knowledge. The study revealed a low rate (42.7%) of early initiation of breastfeeding, showing a delay in the practices among mothers in Abeokuta. WHO recommends initiating breastfeeding within the first hour after birth to strengthen immunity and reduce neonatal mortality (WHO, 2021). Studies by Berde and Yalcin (2016) in Nigeria also found delays in breastfeeding initiation, attributed to cultural practices and lack of immediate postpartum support, emphasizing the need for maternal education programs that emphasize the importance of timely breastfeeding initiation for child health.

Conclusion

In conclusion, maternal knowledge and socio-economic factors, particularly education and income, significantly influence IYCF practices. To address gaps, it is recommended to strengthen nutritional education programs that emphasize early breastfeeding initiation and diverse complementary feeding. Additionally, public health campaigns should be expanded to educate mothers on introducing solid and semi-solid foods at six months.

Keywords: IYCF practices, exclusive breastfeeding, determinants, bottle feeding