

# ABSTRACT

## Introduction

Second half of infancy is a crucial period for the child nutrition wise where there is rapid change of food from exclusive breastfeeding at six months of age to a normal adult diet on completion of one year. COVID 19 pandemic was a new experience faced by the whole population across the world. Therefore, the study on both direct and indirect effects on COVID 19 pandemic on nutrition is a timely important matter.

## Objective

To describe the factors associated with selected nutritional problems among infants aged 6-12 months during the COVID - 19 pandemic in Nuwaragam Palatha Central (NPC) MOH area, Anuradhapura district

## Methods

A community based Cross-Sectional Study was conducted among 380 infants aged between six to twelve months in Nuwaragam palatha central(NPC) MOH area. Sample was taken by using a multistage sampling method. Pre-tested, structured interviewer-administered questionnaire had been used as the study instrument. Data analysis will be done by using SPSS version 21 software. Frequency tables, Bar charts and pie charts were used to describe the categorical data. Chi square test and fisher's exact tests were used to analyze the factors associated with the nutritional problems selected for the study. And associations with a p value < 0.05 was taken as statistically significant.

## Results

The response rate of the participants was 95%(N=380). Among the participated infants, a statistically significant association was observed in the age of the infants with the growth status (p=0.002) and the infant's position among the other siblings in the family with the growth status ( $\chi^2=17.912$ , df = 4, p=0.001) during the COVID 19 pandemic. The mother's educational level had a statistically significant association with the growth status of the infants who participated. (p=0.028) A statistical significance of the growth status of the participated infants with the COVID 19 related experience could not be

captured directly in this study. Nevertheless, there was a statistically significant association of the food security and access to food during the COVID 19 pandemic period with the feeding practices during the COVID 19 pandemic period ( $\chi^2 = 48.692$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) which in turn had a statistically significant association with the growth status of the participated infants. ( $\chi^2 = 11.544$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) A statistical significant association of the field health service provision during the COVID 19 pandemic with the growth status of the infants during the COVID 19 pandemic period was not observed in this study.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Measures should be taken to continue child health care services, including health promotional and health educational programs. with adapting to disease prevention strategies in order to identify growth insults as early as possible to plan timely and effective interventions and priority should be given to infant and child nutrition when recommencing the health services.

Key words - Growth faltering, Wasting, Stunting, Infants aged six to twelve months, COVID 19 Pandemic