

ABSTRACT

Background: Responsive feeding appears to be the least practiced component of Infant and Young Child Feeding guidelines in Sri Lanka. The practice and factors associated for responsive feeding is less known.

Objectives: To describe the practice of the responsive feeding and determine the associated factors among primary caregivers and nutrition status of 6-18 months children in Thalawa MOH area, Anuradhapura district.

Methods: A community based cross-sectional study among 373 primary caregivers of 6-18 months children in Thalawa MOH area was carried out. A self-administrated validated tool, RFPAT was used to assess the practice of RF and an interviewer-administrated questionnaire to determine the associated factors of caregivers and children was used, and it was incorporated with validated ELSCA tool for assess household food insecurity . Pre-testing of the study instruments was carried out. Analysis of data was done using chi-squared test at the level of significance $p < 0.05$.

Results: The response rate was 100%. The majority of participated mothers were Sinhala-Buddhists (n=354, 95.4%) The whole concept of responsive feeding was not practiced. Only 55% of participants practiced proactive preparation while 82.8% identified and responded to child's hunger and satiety cues promptly and 75.1 % had quality responsive communication when feeding the child. The caregiver awareness about responsive feeding showed strong positive association with RF (OR=0.045, $p=0.00$). Maternal age between 20-29y (OR=0.3, $p=0.062$), Highest achieved educational level up to O/L and above (OR=0.24, $p=0.002$), Sinhalese ethnic group (OR=0.45, $p= 0.0001$) and monthly income of more than Rs.50000 (OR=0.45 $p=0.01$) were other positive factors for RF. Household food insecurity (OR=1.6, $p=0.049$) and families having more than one child of under- five age(OR=2.07, $p=0.018$) were negatively associated with RF.

Conclusions and recommendations: Responsive feeding is not practiced with all its components effectively. Improving awareness of mothers/caregivers is the key to augment responsive feeding practice. The RFPAT can be used to assess responsive feeding practice and conduct targeted interventions at the field level.

Key words: Responsive feeding, Nurturing care, Feeding styles, Complementary feeding