

ABSTRACT

Introduction

Complementary feeding (CF) reflects a transition from exclusive breastfeeding to solid or semi-solid food items. Proper CF practices are critically important as it routinely commences at the completion of 6 months of age when the demand of the infant for energy and nutrients exceeds what is provided by breastmilk alone. Maternal knowledge, attitude, and practice of complementary feeding are among the key determinants of nutritional status of children. There is paucity of literature on these domains in relation to Northern Province.

Objective

To describe the maternal knowledge, attitude, practices on complementary feeding and anthropometric indices in infancy and their associated factors among 12-month-old children attending Child Welfare Clinics in the Jaffna district

Method

A cross-sectional study with analytical component at Child Welfare Clinics (CWCs) in Jaffna district was carried out recruiting 418 mother-baby dyads with cluster sampling technique. An interviewer-administered questionnaire to assess the knowledge, attitudes and practices and a data extraction tool to gather anthropometry measurements were used. Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 25 was used for analysis. Following the descriptive analysis that included knowledge and practice scores, their associations were evaluated using Chi-square test at 5% significance level.

Results

The response rate was 82.7%. Among mothers, 56.5% (n=236) had “knowledge score above mean” and 48.6% (n=203) had practice scores above mean. Mothers’ educational status and occupational status were significantly associated with maternal knowledge [OR (95%CI) = 0.67 (0.46 to 0.99) and 1.63 (1.05 to 2.52)], and practices [OR (95% CI) = 0.46(0.31 to 0.68) and 0.59(0.38 to 0.91)]. Among the children in the 12 month age group, 15.7% (n=34) males and 5.9% (n=12) females were underweight, 10.1% (n=24) and 4.5% (n=9) were stunted, and 12.0% (n=26) and 9.4% (n=19) were wasted respectively. Female sex of the child, mother’s low-educational status, mother’s being housewives and higher family income were associated

with better nutritional status of the children ($p < 0.05$), but not mother's knowledge and practice of complementary feeding ($p > 0.05$).

Conclusions and recommendation

Overall knowledge and attitudes of mothers on CF are satisfactory and comparatively practices are not satisfactory. Nutritional assessments and related interventions must be implemented irrespective of knowledge of mothers and self-reported practices. The possible omissions made by working mothers and those with high educational levels must be explored. Further comprehensive studies should be carried out to assess the confounding factors of the associations of nutritional status of children with knowledge and practices of mothers.

Key words: Complementary feeding, knowledge on complementary feeding; attitudes on complementary feeding; practices on complementary feeding; undernutrition in infancy; Jaffna district