

FACTORS AFFECTING THE EARLY INITIATION OF BREASTFEEDING AT BIRTH IN THE JAFFNA MUNICIPAL COUNCIL AREA

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World Health Organization (WHO) recommends early initiation of breastfeeding to reduce neonatal morbidity and mortality. The objective of the study is to determine the rates of initiation of breastfeeding and selected factors influencing it in the Jaffna Municipal Council Area. A Population based descriptive study was conducted. The sample size was calculated using the formula, $N = Z^2 * P(1-P) / d^2$. For P - anticipated prevalence of Exclusive breastfeeding in this area was taken as 50 percent, the required number of sample size is 422. As the mean number of births per year in this study area is 1012, all the births (400) from 10 October 2011 to 29 February 2012 were included. Interviewer administered questionnaire was used. All deliveries occurred at institutions and there were no home deliveries. Calculation of rates and Chi-square significant test for bivariate analysis were used.

Rate of initiation within first hour was 76.7%, which is slightly more than the Sri Lankan national rate of 75%. Initiation rate within first hour among the babies who were delivered by caesarean section was 35.3%. Initiation rate was 79.9% among babies with a birth weight of 2500 grams

and above. Five percent of the babies, who had illness and admitted to Primary Baby Unit (PBU), were given formula and normal saline. The association between the initiation of breastfeeding and factors such as mother's age ($P=0.004$), mode of delivery ($P=0.00$), Period of Amenorrhoea (POA) ($P=0.00$), birth weight ($P=0.00$), health worker assisted to breastfeed at the first time ($P=0.003$), the health workers instructed to breastfeed after delivery ($P=0.00$) were statistically significant at p value 0.05 level. Factors such as mothers' educational level, occupation and parity were not significant. According to the study, pregnancy and related care service factors may influence the initiation of breast feeding. Further exploration of these factors, could be useful to improve the initiation of the breast feeding.