

Knowledge, Practices, and Factors Associated with Complementary Feeding among the Mothers of Children Aged 6-24 Months Attending the Child Welfare Clinic at Piliyandala Medical Officer of Health Area

AKGTD Nimalarathna^{1#}, HADO Hegoda¹, CMNYR Chandrasekara¹, KLKTD Sandharenu¹, and D Vidanage¹

¹Department of Nursing and Midwifery, Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University, Sri Lanka.

#thimega98@gmail.com

Complementary feeding refers to introducing safe and nutritious foods alongside breast milk at six months of age, as breast milk alone may not be sufficient for the infant. However, most community based studies currently focus on breast feeding practices, neglecting infant and child feeding practices. Inadequate knowledge about complementary foods and poor feeding practices are more likely to cause malnutrition, stunting, delayed development, and increased susceptibility to diseases. Therefore, this study was conducted to determine knowledge, practices and the factors associated with complementary feeding among mothers of children aged 6-24 months attending the Child Welfare Clinic at Piliyandala Medical Officer of Health (MOH) area. A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 300 mothers who were recruited using the non-probability convenient sampling method at six Child Welfare Clinics, using a pretested self-administered questionnaire. Ethical approval was obtained prior to data collection (RP/S/2023/54). Data were analyzed using SPSS version 23. The majority of the respondents (98%) portrayed a good level of knowledge (Mean score-19.17 ± 1.72) and a good level (98%) of practice (Mean score 19.54 ± 1.63) regarding complementary feeding. A statistically significant association was observed between the mother's age and the level of knowledge ($p = 0.001$), the level of practice ($p = 0.001$), and level of education ($p = 0.033$). Moreover, a weakly positive correlation was observed between knowledge and practice ($r = 0.231$, $p = 0.001$). Thus, these results indicate that mothers with good knowledge showed better practices regarding complementary feeding. Further, it is suggested to strengthen the existing practices among mothers and replicate similar studies for broader insights.

Keywords: *mothers' knowledge, practices, complementary feeding*