

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Factors Associated with Early Complementary Feeding among Breastfeeding Mothers with Infants 0-6 Months in Kapkatet County Hospital, Kericho County.

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Abstract

The practice of complementary feeding (introducing solid foods alongside breastfeeding) is an important aspect of infant nutrition. However, the timing of introducing complementary feeding is crucial for optimal growth and development. This study aims to investigate the factors associated with early complementary feeding among breastfeeding mothers with infants aged 0-6 months in Kapkatet County Hospital, located in Kericho County. A cross-sectional analytical study design was employed, involving 246 breastfeeding mothers attending Kapkatet County Hospital. Data on demographic characteristics, individual characteristics, cultural practices, and knowledge regarding complementary feeding were collected through structured questionnaires and key informant interviews. Statistical analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The study found that a significant proportion of infants (70.7%) in Kapkatet County Hospital were introduced to complementary feeding before the recommended age of 6 months. Reasons for early introduction included concerns about the negative impact of exclusive breastfeeding on body shape and breast size, pressures from the mother-in-law, infant hunger, maternal responsibilities, slow weight gain in infants, breastfeeding-related pain, and cultural practices, such as the use of herbal remedies. The findings of this study highlight the need for targeted interventions to address the factors associated with early complementary feeding. To promote appropriate feeding practices, it is recommended to create mother-friendly work environments and implement information education and communication (IEC) strategies, coupled with behavioural change communication (BCC) approaches using mass media platforms. These measures will help raise awareness among breastfeeding mothers regarding the importance of adhering to recommended guidelines for complementary feeding.

Keywords: Early complementary feeding, breastfeeding mothers, infants, Kapkatet County Hospital, Kericho County