

FEEDING PRACTICES AMONG CHILDREN AGED 6 TO 36 MONTHS IN THE EASTERN PROVINCE OF SRI LANKA

S. Sujendran^{1*}, U. Senarath² and J. Joseph¹

¹*Department of Supplementary Health Sciences, Faculty of Health-Care Sciences,
Eastern University, Sri Lanka*

²*Department of Community Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo,
Sri Lanka*

**sankarapillaisujendran@gmail.com*

The prevalence of wasting (weight-for-age Z score) in the Eastern Province was 19.4%, which is higher than the average wasting in the country (14.8%). This study aims to assess the nutritional status of the preschool children aged 6-36 months and to describe feeding practices of infants and young children in two districts of the Eastern Province.

A cross-sectional quantitative survey was conducted from July to December 2013, in Batticaloa and Kalmunai health districts. A sample of 1400 children was identified using stratified cluster sampling method, and the data were obtained from mothers/care givers using a questionnaire. Data were analyzed using SPSS 17.0 and WHO-anthro softwares.

There were 760 (54.3%) children from Batticaloa and 640 (45.7%) from Kalmunai in the study group. Among them 51.4% were male and 48.6% were female. The prevalence of wasting (weight-for-height Z score) is 23.4% (according to WHO standard, below -2SD, at 95% CI) among the children aged 6-36 months. The percentage of stunting (height/length-for-age Z score) is 13.9% and underweight is 17.2%. Among the sampled 18.8% of children fall under -2SD category according to their Mid Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) Z-score. In comparison with boys, 2.7% of girls are affected more by acute under nutrition. Of the children, 15.6% were born with low birth weight (<2.5kg). Practice of exclusive breastfeeding by the end of 6th month was 28.4%. Only 89% of the children were ever breastfed. Approximately 61.6% of mothers had education level below G.C.E (O/L)

The nutritional status of children is lower than the average level, in the Eastern Province. Breastfeeding and the complementary feeding practices need improvements through improved feeding behavior of mothers/care givers.

Financial assistance given by Higher Education for the Twenty first Century of Sri Lanka (HETC-HETC/CMB/QIGW3/MED/TOR-04) is acknowledged