

Nutritional status assessment among infants under six months exclusively breastfed and non-exclusively breastfed in Jos North LGA, Plateau State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Objective: To determine breastfeeding practices and the nutritional status of infants under six months in Jos north LGA, Plateau state, Nigeria **Design:** A cross-sectional study design was employed. 310 mother-infant pairs were selected as study sample from three primary health care centers in the study location. Data collection consisted of the administration of a validated questionnaire and anthropometric measurements were taken. **Results:** 39.7 % were seen to practice exclusive breastfeeding while 60.3 practiced non-exclusive breastfeeding. 33 % of infants had already been introduced to complementary foods even before the age of 6 months. In terms of prevalence of malnutrition among males, 13.2 % were severely stunted, 1.6 % were severely underweight and 6.5 % were wasted. Among females, 8.4 % were severely stunted, 0.6 % were severely underweight and 6.6% were severely wasted. There was a significant difference in nutritional indices and breastfeeding patterns ($p < 0.05$). **Conclusion:** For a decline in malnutrition prevalence, the early introduction of complementary foods by mothers and care givers must be strongly discouraged. Counselling should be targeted at mothers to encourage exclusively breastfeed for 6 months after which appropriate and adequate complementary foods should be introduced.

Keyword: Nutritional; Infants; Under six months; Exclusively breastfed; Non-exclusively breastfed; Nigeria