

**Thesis Title** Factors Influencing Breastfeeding and Weaning Practices Among Mothers of Children Under Three Years of Age in Ratchaburi Province, Thailand.

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**Degree** Master of Primary Health Care Management

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**Date of Graduation**

19 May B.E. 2538 (1995).

**ABSTRACT**

The cross-sectional exploratory study is conducted at the well-baby clinic of Maternity and Children hospital, in Ratchaburi Province of Thailand. Data were collected retrospectively from 246 mothers of children between 1 to 3 years attended well-baby clinic by structured interviews. This study attempted to identify the existing pattern of breastfeeding and weaning as well as the predictors of practices considering initiation of breastfeeding, introduction of supplementary feeding and timing of complete weaning. The information concerning knowledge and attitudes in relation to breastfeeding practices were also underscored.

Three hypotheses were tested viz: association between selected family factors, selected maternal factors and selected infant factors and breastfeeding practices. Analyses revealed that majority of respondents were housewives under 25 years of age, educated up to primary school level, currently married with average number of living children being  $1.6 \pm 0.7$ , and delivered the index child at the Government Hospital. The mean age of the index child was  $22.83 \pm 7.35$  and were birth order one. 95.9 percent were ever breastfed and 83.5 percent initiated their first breastfeeding soon after delivery. The mean duration of exclusive breastfeeding was  $3.5 \pm 1.2$  months and the mean timing of complete weaning was  $13.2 \pm 7.0$  months. Very small proportion did not have colostrum and were provided with prelacteal feeds. Although the mean knowledge and attitude scores were not low, some practices were not satisfactorily done viz: starting supplementary food and weaning so early.

The significant determinants emerged were, low level of maternal education and low birth weight in relation to initiation of breastfeeding soon after delivery; high monthly family income, high husband's education, employed mothers, the use of oral pills during breastfeeding as well as high attitudinal scores in association with early weaning. Findings suggest the need for further strengthening of maternal

education sessions, couple counselling for those who have feeding problems as well as well-designed operations research to rectify the problems during implementation of breastfeeding promotion in the context of primary health care.