

BREASTFEEDING AND WEANING PRACTICES
AMONG MALAY AND CHINESE POPULATIONS
IN KLANG

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ABSTRACT

Breastfeeding and exclusive breastfeeding practices are one of the most important aspects in life to both infants and mothers due to its enormous amount of benefits. Appropriate weaning practices also play an important part in infants' development in providing sufficient nutrients for their growth. Hence, this study aimed to assess breastfeeding and weaning practices among Malay and Chinese populations and to determine the relationship between social-demographic factors such as total monthly income, educational level, and ethnicity with breastfeeding and weaning practices. A cross-sectional study was carried out between September to December 2009 involving 160 mothers with infants aged 6 months to 2 years old. Study locations were Damo Clinic & Maternity Centre and Arunamari Medical Centre. Data on socio-demographics, breastfeeding practices, and weaning practices were collected using self-administered questionnaires. The mean age of the infants in this study was 16 months. In total, 116 out of 160 mothers breastfed their child; 62.9% and 37.1% from Malay and Chinese mothers respectively. However, it was found that only 45.2% from 62.9% of Malay mothers and only 4.7% out of 37.1% Chinese mothers exclusively breastfed their child for 6 months. 81.4% of Chinese mothers breastfed their child for less than 6 months. Significant association were noted between total household incomes with breastfeeding practices ($p < 0.05$) while non-significant association were noted between educational levels of mothers with breastfeeding practices ($p > 0.05$). Most Malay and Chinese mothers started weaning their infants at the age of 6 to 12 months, 71.3% and 63.8% respectively. 42.5% and 23.3% of both Malay and Chinese mothers, respectively, continued to breastfeed their babies even after the introduction of complementary foods. Non-significant association were noted between total household incomes with weaning age ($p > 0.05$) while significant association were noted between educational levels of mothers with weaning age ($p < 0.05$). In conclusion, 7 out of 10 mothers in this study followed the recommendations by WHO to start weaning at 6 months. However, the exclusively breastfeeding rate was low in this study. Hence, interventions program should be targeted to educate mothers on the importance of exclusive breastfeeding.