

**DETERMINANTS OF BREASTFEEDING PRACTICES AMONG
MOTHERS ATTENDING THE WELL BABY CLINIC AT THE
MOTHER AND CHILD HEALTH HOSPITAL,
VIENTIANE, LAO PDR**

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DETERMINANTS OF BREASTFEEDING PRACTICES AMONG MOTHERS
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ABSTRACT

Recently, there has been increasing concern about the decline in breastfeeding (BF) in Lao PDR. The objective of this study was to determine the current patterns of BF practices and their contributing factors. The study was designed as cross-sectional descriptive research. A total of 160 married women each with an infant of not more than 24 months of age was interviewed. This study covered basic information of respondents, health and nutrition of mothers, infant characteristics, and infant feeding practices and its determinants. Logistic regression model was used to calculate the adjusted *odds ratio* for the various socio-economic and maternal risk factors related to duration of BF, feeding of infant formula and introduction of complementary food. Findings showed that approximately 81.0% of the mothers had achieved an education of not more than high school level; 19.0% reached college or higher. Their average monthly income was 1,400,000 kips (US\$ 146). Their average age at first pregnancy was 24 years; 38.0% had at least two children. Deliveries by cesarean section were reported by 12.5% of the mothers and low birth weight infants by 12.5%. Nearly all mothers (96.3%) had breastfed their children; the 3.7% of mothers who had not breastfed their children cited lack of breastmilk flow or the infant's refusal to suckle as the main reason. Breastfeeding initiation within one hour was 29.2% with a median duration of one hour. Factors significantly associated with delayed initial breastmilk were the cesarean section deliveries (OR = 5.31 [95% CI, 1.83-15.39] $p = 0.001$) and housewives (OR = 2.09 [95% CI 1.08-4.05] $p = 0.027$), whereas primiparous mothers were less likely to delay initial breastmilk (OR = 0.48 [95% CI, 0.25-0.93] $p = 0.029$). The rate of exclusive breastfeeding was 13.6% with a median duration of 2.0 month (range 1-4 months) and that of total BF duration with a median of 3.7 months (range 1.4 - 19.4 months). Almost 31.0% of infants ceased BF before age of 3 months. The shorter duration of BF was significantly associated with younger maternal age (OR= 2.63 [95% CI, 1.25-5.52] $p = 0.009$) and mothers who did not attend ANC were twice as likely to breastfed shorter duration (OR = 2.05 [95% CI, 1.18-12.17] $p = 0.036$). Infants were introduced to infant formula at a median age of 1.0 month (range 1-19 months) and other complementary foods at a median age of 4.0 months (range 1-6 months). Introduction of infant formula was statistically associated with mother education (\leq high school), low family monthly income, and mothers who did not attend ANC as well as low birth weight infants ($p < .05$), while the early introduction of complementary food was also significantly associated with mother's age (\leq 25 years), low family monthly income, primiparous mothers, and low birth weight infants ($p < .05$). In conclusion, duration of BF for both exclusive and total BF in this study was shorter than recommended. Infant formula was given as early as within first month of infant's age. Compliance with current recommendations on the timing of introduction of complementary food was relatively poor.

KEY WORDS: BREASTFEEDING INITIATION/EXCLUSIVE
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