PSYCHO-SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH BREASTFEEDING PRACTICE AMONG MOTHERS WITH CHILDREN UNDER 4 MONTHS IN SUBURB DISTRICT OF HANOI CITY, VIETNAM

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This study was to examine current exclusive breastfeeding behavior among Vietnamese mothers who had children age 4 to 12 months in Tu Liem suburb district of Hanoi city, Vietnam. A cross-sectional study was carried out from 15 September to 14 November 1997, consisting of 322 mothers who had children aged 4 months to 12 months. 114 of the mothers were living in Co Nhue commune, 107 in Xuan Dinh commune, and 101 of the mothers in Yen Hoa commune.

The study found that 29.5 percent of the mothers practiced exclusive breastfeeding for the first 4 months. Factors, which include psychological, cultural, social support factors, and advertisement of bottle feeding were found to be associated with mothers' exclusive breastfeeding practice. The mothers who had good knowledge about exclusive breastfeeding were more likely to practice exclusive breastfeeding compared to those with poor knowledge. The mothers who had a positive attitude toward bottle feeding were less likely to practice exclusive breastfeeding. The mothers who had a positive attitude toward the benefit of exclusive breastfeeding were more likely to practice exclusive breastfeeding compared to those who had a negative attitude toward benefit of exclusive breastfeeding. The mothers who believed that they had a sufficient quantity and quality of breast milk for the first 4 months were more likely to exclusively breastfeed compared to those who believed that they did not have a sufficient quantity and quality of breast milk for the first 4 months. The mothers who had been encouraged to breastfeed by health staff and mass-media were more likely to exclusively breastfeed than those who were not encouraged to breastfeed. The mothers who were more exposed to bottle feeding advertisement were less likely to exclusively breastfeed than those less exposed to bottle feeding advertisement.

The results of the study suggest that it is necessary to strengthen breastfeeding promotion activities in order to educate mothers about exclusive breastfeeding and help them understand the meaning of "exclusive breastfeeding". It also necessary to have administrative measures to prevent the advertisement of milk companies, especially in urban areas. Breastfeeding practice should become one the standards used to evaluate nutrition education in Vietnam communities.