

Social Economic Factors Associated With The Nutritional Status Of Children In Western Uganda

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Abstract : The study explores socio-economic factors, health related and individual factors that influence the breastfeeding habits of mothers and their effect on the nutritional status of their infants in the Rwenzori region of Western Uganda. A cross sectional research design was adopted and it involved use of the self-administered questionnaires, interview guides and focused group discussion guides to assess the extent to which socio-demographic factors associated with breastfeeding practices influence child malnutrition. Using this design, data was collected from 276 mother paired infants over a period of ten days. Findings reveal that children of mothers who used milk substitutes besides breastfeeding are over two times more likely to be stunted, compared to those whose mothers exclusively breastfed them. Feeding children with milk substitutes instead of breastmilk predisposes them to both stunting and underweight. Children of mothers between 18 and 34 years of age are less likely to be underweight, as were those who were breastfed over 10 times in a day. The study further reveals that 55% of the children were underweight and 49% were stunted. Of the underweight children, an equal number (58/151) are either mildly or moderately underweight (38%); and 23% (35/151) were severely underweight. Empowering Community outreach programs by increasing knowledge and increased access to services on integrated management of child malnutrition is crucial to curbing down child malnutrition in rural areas.

Keywords : infant and young child feeding, breast feeding, child malnutrition, maternal health

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