

## ABSTRACT

Nutritional deficiencies are important issues among developing countries including Myanmar. These can occur at any age but the impact is more severe among 6-23 months children. This period is the window of opportunity for the foundation of brain development, optimal health and growth across the lifespan. Proper infant and young child feeding (IYCF) practices are solution to the nutritional problems and to prevent irreversible damages among children. The aim of this study is to assess the awareness, practice and perception of exclusive breast feeding (EBF), complementary feeding (CF) among mothers of 6 – 23 months children and the nutritional status of those children. A community based cross sectional analytical study with mix methods was conducted in Pyinmana Township. A total of 227 participants were included in this study. Regarding EBF, 73% of mothers had good awareness and 76% of mothers practiced EBF. Mothers giving birth their child by using health facilities had more awareness ( $p=0.030$ ,  $AOR=2.03$ ,  $95\%CI;1.06,3.90$ )and more practiced EBF ( $p=0.031$ ,  $AOR=2.06$ ,  $95\% CI; 1.05,4.03$ ). In addition, practice of EBF was higher in mothers with good awareness ( $p<0.001$ ,  $AOR=8.13$ ,  $95\% CI;4.12,16.07$ ). Most of mothers had good awareness on CF and children who received minimum dietary diversity, minimum meal frequency and minimum acceptable diet were 30%, 74% and 24% respectively. The proportion of stunting was 22%, that of wasting was 21% and that of underweight was 26%. Stunting was higher in children who had history of fever previous 2 weeks ( $AOR=1.99$ ;  $95\%CI 1.02, 3.87$ ). Wasting and underweight were higher as the child grows older ( $AOR=3.30$ ;  $95\%CI 1.46, 7.47$  and  $AOR=2.69$ ;  $95\%CI 1.28, 5.63$ ) and children of working mothers ( $AOR=2.30$ ;  $95\%CI; 1.14, 4.65$  and  $AOR=2.51$ ;  $95\%CI; 1.30, 4.87$ ). The proportion of underweight were also higher in child who had fever previous two weeks ( $AOR=2.17$ ;  $95\%CI; 1.08, 4.35$ ), and who received minimum dietary diversity ( $AOR=3.98$ ;  $95\%CI 1.10, 14.36$ ).In qualitative finding, EBF and its benefits for children were well perceived and practiced by majority of mothers. However, some knowledge gap on both EBF and CF still exists. Employment and influences from families were main challenges for both EBF and optimal CF. The study concluded that mother's awareness and knowledge on EBF and CF should be improved to promote IYCF practices. Maintenance of proper feeding practice was essential because the proportion of under-nutrition was higher as the child grows older.