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Impact of Maternal Education on Complementary Feeding Parctices of Infants and Young Children in Peapea Village, Kilosa, Tanzania

Abstract

In Tanzania, improper traditional complementary foods contribute to high levels of under nutrition in infants and young children. It occurs during transition from breast milk to solid foods. This study assessed the impact of maternal education on complementary feeding practices of infants and young children 6 to 24 months in Peapea, Kilosa Tanzania. Two phases were involved: Phase one was a cross sectional survey administered to 101 households and four Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The survey was conducted to assess food availability, meal consumption patterns, and knowledge of mothers on effective complementary feeding practices. Phase two, was a 12-weeks interactive nutrition education intervention (control and intervention) on proper complementary feeding practices conducted with 60 mothers and their children 6 to 24 months. Statistical analyzes were done using SPSS (Version 16, SPSS Inc.). Nutritional indices, Z-scores of height-for-age, weight-for-age and weight-for-height were calculated using WHO Anthro (version 3.2.2, 2011)

The cross sectional survey revealed that proper infants feeding practices is still a problem in the studied population. Nearly 60% of the mothers fed their children thin filtered porridge from refined maize flour as the first complementary food. One third of mothers (29.7%) introduced porridge three months after birth. In the second phase, the average weight of children in control group was initially 9.81±1.48 and finally after 12 weeks 10.02±1.43 (Kg). In intervention group the average weight was 9.57±1.45 initially and finally 10.06±1.43 (Kg). The average control group Hb concentration (in g/dL) was 9.47±1.3 initially and 9.5±1.28 after 12 weeks while in intervention group, average Hb concentration was initially 9.27±1.21 and 9.74±1.51 after 12 weeks of intervention. A large percentage of children in the control and intervention groups was anemic (88.35% and 85%), respectively with hemoglobin concentration < 11g/dL. There was no significant difference in weight, height and hemoglobin concentration among control and intervention group. However, significant difference was observed within the intervention group where by individual weight and height increased in this particular group. Behavioral changes toward IYCF practices were also improved in the intervention group.

Maternal knowledge towards IYCF practices was low and IYCF practices were poorly practiced. Exclusive breastfeeding was not practiced and complementary foods were early introduced. Complementary foods were low in energy and nutrient density. This study revealed that through interactive education intervention coupled with use of posters, tradition dances, songs, role plays and demonstrations, behavioral changes towards IYCF practices can be attained in a short duration of time. Therefore, there is an urgent need for education interventions to improve exclusive breastfeeding and traditional complementary foods based on locally available foods.