ABSTRACT

Over the past few years, there has been a raising concern on the decline in the rates of exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) practiced by women in Malaysia. EBF is defined as a type of breastfeeding practice which involves the act of feeding an infant with solely breast milk for the first six months of an infant’s life. The objective of this study was to identify and determine the common barriers faced by Malay and Chinese mothers in Klang. Other supporting objectives include the comparison of the attitude and knowledge on breastfeeding between Malay and Chinese mother to determine if these factors contribute to their EBF practice and also to establish if any correlation exists between respondents of different socio-demographics and their practice of exclusive EBF. This study was designed as a cross-sectional descriptive research. Respondents were mothers that had an infant aged between 6 months to 2 years of age. This survey was conducted in Damo Clinic and Maternity Centre and Arunamari Hospital, both situated in Klang. A self-administered questionnaire which consists of 3 parts was used. A total of 160 respondents participated in this study. Majority of the respondents were between the ages of 25 to 29, with an equal representative of Malay and Chinese respondents. Results revealed that only 13.8% of respondents successfully implemented EBF. 25% of the Malay respondents exclusively breastfed their infants for six months as compared to 2.5% of Chinese respondents. The major barriers which prevent success of EBF include work constrains (69.4%), time constrains (68.8%), difficulty in milk expression (56.9%) and lactation problems (50.6%). Other factors include maternal fatigue (28.8%), inadequate maternity leave (26.9%), did not know that EBF excludes water (26.3%), and embarrassed to breastfeed in public (21.9%) among others. Knowledge scores between Malay (5.43±1.6) and Chinese (5.03±1.9) respondents were not significantly different. However, the attitude of Malay mothers (9.52±1.3) towards breastfeeding was significantly more positive compared to Chinese mothers (8.58±1.4). A correlation was found between the total household income (p<0.001), education level (p=0.028) and employment status (p<0.001) to exclusive breastfeeding practice. No correlation was found between maternal age (p=0.438) and exclusive breastfeeding practice. In conclusion, although initiatives such as the BFHI and Breastfeeding Week has been establish, the practice of exclusive breastfeeding is still relatively low despite the importance and advantages it has over breast milk substitutes. The determination of these barriers would help in structuring new and improved methods to tackle this situation based on barriers women are currently facing.