

THE IMPACT OF WORKING MOTHER'S ON THE NUTRITIONAL STATUS OF CHILDREN AGED 4-24 MONTHS IN KHARTOUM STATE

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To assess the impact of work of mothers on the nutritional status of children aged 4-24 months in Khartoum state. **Methodology:** The study sample were 100 working and 100 non-working mothers who have children aged between 4-24 months. In the current study working mothers means women who are employed outside the home. **Results:** The study found that (68%) of the children of working mothers are normal weight, while (61%) of the children of non-working mothers are moderate malnutrition. **Conclusion:** Work of

mother might be positive factors effect on nutrition status among children of Sudanese women.

KEYWORDS: Working Mothers, Nutritional Status, Children.

INTRODUCTION

Good nutrition allows children to survive, grow, develop, learn, play, participate and contribute while malnutrition robs children of their futures and leaves young lives hanging in the balance (UNICEF, 2018). In fact, broad coverage of breastfeeding and complementary feeding interventions can reduce about 20% of deaths in young children (FMOH, 2015). Regarding nutrition and breast feeding practices in the Sudan, the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) in 2014 found that there is high prevalence of child malnutrition in Sudan: 33%, 38.2% of children under-five years are underweight and stunted, and 16.3% children is wasted. There is a high breastfeeding practice in Sudan with approximately 96 percent of children ever breastfed. However only 55.4% of children 0-5 months are exclusively breastfed, nearly 90 percent aged 12-15 months are having continued breastfeeding at year of age and 48.8% of the children aged 20-23 months are receiving continued breastfeeding at 2

years of age (MICS, 2014). Childhood illnesses such as respiratory infection and diarrhoea also become significant from 6 months and the child needs all the immunity it can gather from breast-milk and good food (FMOH, 2015). The nutritional status of a child depends on the mother's care. Women have always worked, either with in their homes or away from homes. Today in all parts of the world, women still collect, grow, and prepare food, take care of their homes, educate their young and tend to the physical and emotional needs of family members. Women are also part of the visible workforce and have been for centuries (WABA, 2000). The report of the Central Bureau of Statistics in Sudan found that the rate of women in the labour force are increasing (CBS, 1995). Several studies have shown that the nutritional status of the children of mothers working outside the home is poorer than that of children of non-working women (Rabiee and Geissler, 2006). But new research shows that quality is much more important than quantity when it comes to spending time with an infant or toddler. Working mothers tend to compensate for the time they spent outside the home by spending more time with their children on weekends and by decreasing the time they spend doing housework and engaging in leisure and social activities (Boyles, 2005). Also it was suggested that children whose mothers worked during their infant and toddler years were not significantly different from children whose mothers stayed at home during this period (Huston, 2005).

SUBJECTS AND METHODS: The study was carried out in Khartoum State, in four areas, Ombada, El-Thawra, El-Hajusuf, and El-Mogran. The data was collected from several health centers for mother and child health, nurseries, work places, and households. The sample size was 100 working mothers, and 100 non-working mothers. 25 working mothers and 25 non-working mothers were selected from each of the four areas. The researcher used questionnaire to collect data from mother's. The researcher obtained a little percentage from targeted groups, completed to use snowball methods by visiting mothers in their homes. Data was collected using anthropometric measurement namely, weight for age, mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC).

RESULTS

The objectives of this study were to assess the impact of the work of mothers on the nutritional status and exclusive breast feeding children aged 4-24 months. Also it is aimed at comparing the nutritional status of infants cared of by their non-working mothers and those by a day substitute for their working mothers.

Table (1): Child age.

	Working mothers		Non-working mothers	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
4-12 months	43	43	61	61
13-24 months	57	57	39	39
Total	100	100	100	100

Children of working mothers (57%) are aged in the range of 13-24 months. While, (61%) of the children of non-working mothers are aged 4-12 months.

Table (2): Age of respondents (years).

	Non- working mothers		Working mothers		Mothers substitute	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Less than 20	4	4	1	1	-	-
20-30	55	55	31	31	33	37
31-40	40	40	66	66	27	29
41-50	1	1	2	2	21	22
More than 50	-	-	-	-	11	12
Total	100	100	100	100	92	100

The age of non-working mothers (55%) are between 20-30 years, and 66% of the working mothers aged between 31-40 years, (37%) of mother's substitute range between (20-30), and few (12%) are above 50 years of age.

Table (3): Educational level.

	Non- working mothers		Working mothers		Mothers Substitute	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Illiterate	10	10	-	-	2	2
Khalwa	3	3	1	1	5	5
Primary	15	15	-	-	21	23
Intermediate	13	13	-	-	12	13
High secondary	34	34	37	37	41	45
University	23	23	57	57	10	11
Graduate	2	2	5	5	1	1
Total	100	100	100	100	92	100

The majority of the non-working mothers (34%) have high secondary education. The majority of the working mothers (57%) have university education. The mothers substitute (45%) have high secondary education.

Table (4): Information on the distance of work place for working mother.

	Frequency	%
Far from house	78	78
Near the house	22	22
Total	100	100

Most of the work places (78%) are far from the working mother's houses.

Table (5): Existence of a place for breast feeding in work place.

	Frequency	%
Yes	33	33
No	67	67
Total	100	100

Most of the work places (67%) do not have special place for breast feeding, and only (33%) have places for breast feeding.

Table (6): Person who takes care of the child during the work time.

	Frequency	%
One of the family members	26	26
A neighbor	1	1
A home care taker	5	5
Nursery	55	55
Accompany mothers to work	13	13
Total	100	100

Result shows that (55%) of the children are cared of in nurseries, (26%) by one of the family members, and (13%) accompany their mothers to work.

Table (7): Time when child is breast fed.

	Frequency	%
Before going to work	11	11
After a while from returning back from work	6	6
During the work time	28	28
Before and after work	52	52
Not breast-fed	3	3
Total	100	100

Half of the mothers (52%) breast feed their children before and the after returning back from work. Only one third (28%) are able to breast feed during the work time.

Table (8): Number of breast feeds/day.

	Working mothers		Non-working mothers	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1-2	19	19	12	12
3-4	18	18	11	11
5-6	22	22	30	30
More than 6	30	30	34	34
No application	11	11	13	13
Total	100	100	100	100

Result shows that (30%) of the working mothers, and (34%) of non-working mothers breast feed their children more than 6 times per day.

Table (9): Number of external milk feeds/day.

	Working mothers		Non-working mothers	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1-2	72	74	43	51
3-4	13	14	21	20
5-6	5	5	5	5
More than 6	2	1	2	1
No application	8	6	29	22
Total	100	100	100	100

Most of working mother (74%) feed their children external milk 1-2 times, compared to (51%) of non-working mothers.

Table (10): Presence of another child to care by mother substitute?.

	Frequency	%
Yes	63	69
No	29	31
Total	92	100

Table (28) shows that (69%) of the mother substitutes have other children to care for.

Table (11): Presence of any bottles prepared by the mother's substitute.

	Frequency	%
Yes	35	38
No	57	62
Total	92	100

Result shows that (38%) of the mother's substitute prepare bottles for infant they care for.

Table (12): Weight of children.

	Working mothers		Non-working mothers	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Normal weight	57	57	53	53
Under weight	43	43	42	42
Malnourished	0	0	5	5
Total	100	100	100	100

The majority of the children of both working mothers (57%) and non-working mothers (53%) have normal weight. However, few (5%) of the children of non-working mothers are malnourished.

Table (13): Mid upper arm circumference (MUAC).

	Working mothers		Non-working mothers	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
> 13.5 cm	68	68	33	33
12-13.5 cm	31	31	61	61
< 12 cm	1	1	6	6
Total	100	100	100	100

Children of working mothers (68%) have a MUAC of >13 cm, (i.e. normal weight). (61%) of the children of non-working mothers have a MUAC of 12-13.5cm, (i.e. moderate malnutrition).

DISCUSSION

Mothers work and exclusive breastfeeding

The result's showed that working mothers stayed more time in the work places and the distance was far from their homes. Also (67%) of the mothers do not have a suitable place in at work to breast feed their babies which is one of the main challenges that working mothers who want to breastfeed (WABA, 2000). Moreover, the World Health Organization (WHO) has concluded that for optimal maternal and infant health, working women need four to six weeks of leave before giving birth and at least sixteen weeks afterwards (IBFAN, 2004). However, the Sudan legislations have awarded mothers a paid maternity leave of only eight weeks (Ehsan, 2004). This is not sufficient to care for infants and does not allow exclusive breast feeding specially for working mothers. In order to 55% of the working mothers in this study were forced to take their infants to nurseries and 38% depend on bottle feeding though feeds prepared by mother's substitute during work time. Also (69%) of the mother's substitute have more than one child to care for at the same time, that may lead to cross infections between the children. Also when the nurseries are far from work place, it is known

that mothers cannot make use of the one-hour break time they have from the Sudan maternity protection legislation to breastfeed the child. This makes working mothers more dependent on the bottle feeding which has adverse effects of the child health (Rabiee, 2006).

Mother's work and the nutritional status of children

The weight of children of both working mothers (57%) and non-working mothers (53%) is in the normal scale. However, few (5%) of the children of non-working mothers were found to be malnourished. But when using the MUAC measurement, the research found that 68% children of working mothers compared to 33% of those of non-working mothers have a MUAC of > 13cm, (i.e. normal weight). Also 31% and 61% of working and non-working mother's children's respectively have a MUAC in the range of 12-13.5cm (i.e. mild malnutrition). This results indicate that the nutritional status of working mother's children is better than children of non-working mothers. This result disagrees with some studies that have shown that the nutritional status of the children of mothers working outside the home is poorer than that of children of non-working women (e.g. Rabiee, 2006). This could be due to the educational level and good knowledge of working mothers and also could be attributed to the existence of more income in the mothers have to spend on the family.

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