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Breastfeeding and nutritional status among children in Thailand

Patarapan Odton
University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce, Thailand

Background: Breastfeeding is the gold standard when it comes to infant nutrition, and no artificially produced infant formula will ever be able to replace it. In the first years of life, breast milk protects infants from infections by passing on their mothers' antibodies. In Thailand, there were many studies on prevalence and determinants of breastfeeding since National Breastfeeding Project began in 1989. Only few studies related to effects of breastfeeding on child's nutritional status.

Objective: The objective of this study is to investigate impact of breastfeeding practices on nutritional status of children.

Methodology: The Thailand Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS3 and MICS4) are the main data source. For assessing the nutritional status of children, we use three anthropometric indices, weight-for-age, height-for-age, and weight-for-height. Regression models are performed to assess the effects of breastfeeding on child's nutritional indices, including demographic and socio-economic factors.

Findings: Based on weight-for-age, height-forage, and weight-for-weight z-score, infant aged 0-5 months with exclusively and non-exclusively breastfed are not significantly different in all those three indices. During ages 6-11 months, infants who never been breastfed are moderately underweight and moderately stunted, much smaller and shorter than who ever been breastfed. There are no different in height-for-age when they get older, aged 24-59 months. Results from regression models indicate that infant with less than 6 months of breastfed are significantly higher in weight-for-age z-score than who never been breastfed. Children have been longer breastfed (24 months and over) are smaller than who never been breastfed. It's clear that longer breastfed than 12 months can effects to lower weight-for-height.

Conclusion: Breastfeeding effect to nutrition indices when infant aged 6-11 months. Longer breastfed can effect to lower weight-for-age, height-for-age, and weight-for-height when they aged 12-47 months. At the fifth year of life, all children are in the standard weight and height.

Biography

Patarapan Odton has obtained her PhD in Research Methodology from Prince of Songkla University. She started working in Health Economics Research at Ministry of Public Health since the year 2006. She has moved to perform research in Economics of education during the past 5 years. She has expertise in health economics, statistical modeling and GIS.

podton@riped.utcc.ac.th

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