
Evaluating the Breastfeeding Policy Implementation and Its Influence on Breastfeeding Practices Among Primiparous Adolescent Mothers in a Primary Government Hospital

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ABSTRACT

This quantitative evaluative-correlational study examined the implementation of hospital breastfeeding policies and its influence on the breastfeeding practices of primiparous adolescent mothers in a selected primary government hospital in Palawan, Philippines. It involved 20 adolescent mothers aged 14 to 19 who gave birth to their first child. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire aligned with the principles of the Mother-Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative (MBFHI), which emphasizes the importance of immediate skin-to-skin contact, rooming-in, breastfeeding education, and follow-up support to guide and sustain breastfeeding. Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed for data analysis. The results revealed that all respondents had positive breastfeeding practices and reported early initiation, exclusive breastfeeding, and a strong intention to continue breastfeeding for up to 2 years. The postpartum mothers' perceptions of breastfeeding policy implementation, along with their views on the effects of these policies, yielded very high mean scores, indicating strong adherence to the recommended breastfeeding standards. Despite these positive findings, statistical analysis revealed no significant relationship between the two variables. This outcome may be attributed to the small sample size and a ceiling effect in the responses. The study highlighted the necessity for breastfeeding interventions aimed at adolescent mothers. It called for breastfeeding education that includes family members, improved lactation support services, an effective discharge and follow-up monitoring system, and future longitudinal studies with larger sample sizes to explore other factors that may affect breastfeeding practices.

Keywords: *Primiparous, breastfeeding policy implementation, breastfeeding practices, skin-to-skin contact, rooming-in*

INTRODUCTION

Breastfeeding has long been recognized as the finest and most natural way to feed babies. It offers comprehensive nourishment, strengthens immunity, fosters mother-child connection, and promotes growth and development. Hospital policies that include skin-to-skin contact, rooming-in, and breastfeeding instruction and counseling may increase a mother's confidence and ability to breastfeed.

The World Health Organization (WHO) advises that newborns be nursed exclusively for the first 6 months of life, followed by at least 2 years of nursing, with appropriate supplementary feeding (WHO, 2023). Despite solid proof of the advantages of nursing for both mother and child, the frequency of recommended breastfeeding practices remains low across the world. (Maramag et al., 2023). In response to the Mother-Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative

(MBFHI), health institutions have developed standardized breastfeeding policies to promote a friendly environment for nursing mothers.

The findings of this study will help improve hospital breastfeeding programs tailored specifically for young mothers. Healthcare institutions can develop targeted interventions to improve breastfeeding support by identifying gaps in policy implementation and learning from their actual experiences.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to evaluate the breastfeeding policy evaluation and its influence on breastfeeding practices among primiparous adolescent mothers who delivered at a selected Primary Government Hospital.

Scope and Delimitations

The objectives of the study are:

1. Examine the breastfeeding practices adopted by these mothers in terms of initiation, exclusivity, and continuation.
2. Evaluate the level of breastfeeding policies being implemented in the hospital as perceived by the respondents.
3. Determine if there is a significant relationship between hospital breastfeeding policy implementation and breastfeeding practices of primiparous adolescent mothers.

Review of Related Literature

A systematic review highlighted that young mothers needed comprehensive support, including healthcare guidance, familial and peer encouragement, culturally sensitive education, and continued follow-through after hospital discharge (Yas et al., 2024).

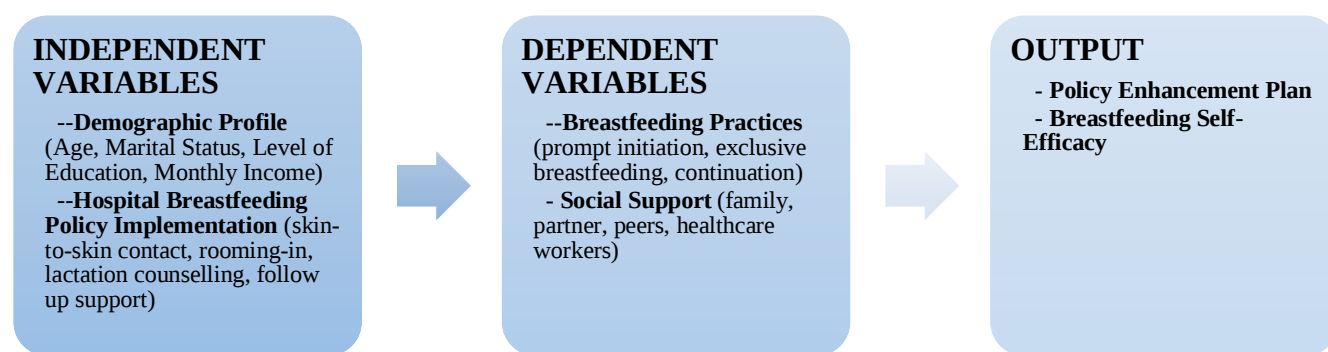
Research has shown globally that following recommended hospital practices leads to better breastfeeding outcomes. It is found that greater exposure to supportive hospital care, such as skin-to-skin contact, rooming-in, and skilled breastfeeding counseling, is associated with better initiation and ongoing breastfeeding (Burgard et al., 2023).

More recent evidence supports the idea that implementing the MBFHI is associated with better breastfeeding outcomes. A meta-analysis showed that hospitals using MBFHI practices had higher breastfeeding rates at multiple time points after birth (Martinez-Garcia et al., 2025).

Theoretical Framework

The Mother Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative (MBFHI) is a practical framework that outlines the “Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding,” emphasizing the importance of immediate and uninterrupted skin-to-skin contact, rooming-in, breastfeeding education, and ongoing support after leaving the hospital. It offers adolescent mothers a clear path to follow, which is important because they often need help and guidance due to their limited experience.

Conceptual Framework



METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A quantitative, evaluative-correlational research design was utilized, which is most suitable for understanding how hospital breastfeeding policies are implemented and how they influence the breastfeeding behaviors of primiparous adolescent mothers.

Research Steps

Ethical clearance and approval from the institution were requested. Eligible participants were screened through purposive sampling. Parental consent and adolescent assent were secured. Questionnaires were administered through an interview in a private setting. All accomplished questionnaires were coded numerically to preserve anonymity. Data were encoded into a statistical software program for analysis. After the data analysis was complete, electronic files were permanently deleted, and physical copies were discarded in accordance with the institutional research data management protocols.

Data Collection and Sample Selection

Data were gathered from a primary government hospital in the Province of Palawan, Philippines. Eligible participants screened were between the ages of 14 and 19, who had given birth for the first time in the chosen facility and were in good health and stable condition at the time of data collection. A structured questionnaire developed by the researcher based on the MBFHI guidelines was used to interview participants.

Data Analysis Methods

Data analysis was conducted using statistical software, employing descriptive and inferential statistics, including frequencies, weighted means, standard deviations, and Pearson Correlations, to determine relationships between variables.

Research Hypothesis and Validation

There is no significant relationship between breastfeeding policy implementation and the breastfeeding practices of primiparous adolescent mothers. The instrument was created using items from the published literature and the WHO/DOH MBFHI breastfeeding guidelines. A panel of three experts evaluated the content to determine whether it was clear, relevant, and complete.

Study Limitations and Ethical Considerations

The study is limited to adolescent mothers aged 14 to 19 years who have given birth for the first time and received postpartum care at the designated hospital. This examined hospital policies, including breastfeeding education, skin-to-skin contact, rooming-in, staff support, and

compliance with the MBFHI guidelines. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained. Ethical principles of autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, and confidentiality were meticulously upheld.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

SOP 1. What are the breastfeeding practices adopted by these mothers in terms of initiation, exclusivity, and continuation?

All respondents reported skin-to-skin contact immediately after birth, breastfeeding within the first hour, and received assistance from healthcare providers to initiate breastfeeding after delivery. These practices reflect effective implementation of immediate postpartum care for mothers. All respondents also reported that they are currently exclusively breastfeeding, planned to breastfeed exclusively, and believed their milk supply is sufficient for the baby's needs. These findings indicate effective breastfeeding promotion. All respondents planned to continue exclusive breastfeeding for six months and to introduce complementary feeding at six months while continuing to breastfeed, and 95% intended to breastfeed for up to two years or beyond. These findings reflect strong maternal intention and commitment to recommended breastfeeding practices.

SOP 2. What is the level of breastfeeding policies being implemented in the hospital as perceived by the respondents?

All respondents Strongly Agreed that hospital staff provided breastfeeding education and counselling, immediate skin-to-skin contact was performed, mothers were helped to breastfeed within half hour after birth, rooming-in with baby, hospital staff discouraged use of infant formula unless medically indicated and the use of dummies and pacifiers, encouraged to breastfeed on demand, visual aids were posted for breastfeeding promotion, hospital staff provided support in managing breastfeeding challenges, and that the hospital environment supported and promoted successful breastfeeding practices.

SOP 3. Is there a significant relationship between hospital breastfeeding policy implementation and breastfeeding practices of primiparous adolescent mothers?

The results revealed that both hospital breastfeeding policy implementation and breastfeeding practices were rated high by respondents, with minimal variability in responses. This suggests that the perceived level of policy implementation at this hospital does not significantly influence the breastfeeding practices of primiparous adolescent mothers.

SUMMARY

This quantitative evaluative-correlational study examined the implementation of breastfeeding policies and its influence on breastfeeding practices among primiparous adolescent mothers. It revealed that, despite positive results from policy implementation, no significant relationship was found between the two variables. This suggests that breastfeeding behaviors may be influenced by other factors outside the hospital setting. Nevertheless, there is still a need to enhance hospital policies focused on adolescent mothers, and longitudinal studies with larger samples may be employed in future research.

CONCLUSIONS

The hospital demonstrates strong compliance with breastfeeding policy standards, as perceived by primiparous adolescent mothers. The respondents perceived and reported very high levels of implementation of breastfeeding policies, including skin-to-skin contact, rooming-in, breastfeeding counseling and education, and follow-up support. Breastfeeding initiation, exclusivity, and continuation intentions among the respondents were uniformly high, which expressed strong commitment to the global standards recommended. Despite strong perceived implementation and positive breastfeeding practices, no statistically significant relationship was found between policy implementation and breastfeeding practices. The lack of a significant relationship may be attributed to ceiling effects and limited variability. While this study found no statistically significant relationship, effective policy implementation is essential to improve breastfeeding outcomes among adolescent mothers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended to strengthen breastfeeding education for adolescent mothers by developing age-appropriate, simplified breastfeeding modules that include visual aids and instructional guides to ensure that young mothers learn and understand proper breastfeeding techniques before discharge. The institution should enhance lactation support services by establishing a dedicated breastfeeding and lactation management committee composed of nurses, midwives, and lactation counselors to assist mothers and provide bedside coaching during the immediate postpartum period, thereby enhancing their skills and building maternal confidence. It is also recommended to include family members or a support person during counseling sessions to reinforce the mother's support system at home. A discharge monitoring system should be implemented through a 48- to 72-hour follow-up service after discharge at the Outpatient Department or the local Rural Health Unit to support sustained breastfeeding. Future research should employ larger sample sizes and longitudinal designs to better understand other factors or variables that may influence breastfeeding practices.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I humbly express my heartfelt gratitude to all those who made the completion of this study possible. To my adviser, mentors, family, and friends for unwavering assistance and support. Most especially to the participants of this study, whose participation served as the foundation of this study. To all who contributed, directly or indirectly, to the success of this study, I offer my sincere appreciation and gratitude.

AI DECLARATION STATEMENT:

AI-supported tools helped with grammar and structure in creating this article. No AI tools were used to collect, analyze, or interpret data; all authors are credited for their academic contributions.

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