

ABSTRACT

A total of eighty first time/non first time mothers attending post-natal clinics at Mount Hope Women's Hospital, Cunupia Health Centre and Chaguanas Health Clinic, Trinidad West Indies were interviewed and administered questionnaires at least 2 weeks postpartum regarding their breast-feeding practices, patterns and problems. The questionnaires aimed at identifying the socio-economic and cultural factors influencing breastfeeding in Trinidad. Breastfeeding in public was disapproved by 48 of the mothers, while 32 approved to breastfeeding in public. Fifty one first time mothers were interviewed and only 3 of them planned to breastfeed exclusively, while 11 planned to utilize formula and 35 intended to breastfeed and utilize infant formula. Larger households provided greater breastfeeding support towards a mother compared to smaller households. Higher income levels in the household were associated with the utilization of infant formula and breast milk. Early return to the workplace, reduced the duration of breastfeeding. The lack of on-site day care at the work place minimized the chance of an infant being exclusively breastfed. Patterns of breastfeeding were significantly affected by religion, education, family support and employment or socioeconomic status. Socio-economic and cultural factors seem to be influential on a post natal mother's compliance/ refusal to breastfeed her infant.