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Assessing the link between exclusive breastfeeding and infants birth weight

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Background: There is increasing evidence that breastfeeding has long term beneficial effects on the infant. The study was to investigate the link between breastfeeding and weight gain on infants.

Methods: A cross-sectional study design was employed with a sample size of 200 breastfeeding mothers (that is; from six months to one year) within the age range of 15 years to 49 years were selected from 5 clinics in Gaborone. Questionnaire items addressed demographics, knowledge and practice of exclusive breastfeeding, weight of infants and the challenges of practicing exclusive breastfeeding.

Results & Findings: The study depicts that, 115 (57.5%) of the mothers interviewed had never practiced exclusive breastfeeding as specified by World Health Organisation. The study also indicates that, age and marital status of the participants significantly contribute to exclusive breastfeeding ($p=0.032$ and $p<0.001$ respectively). A chi-square test shows that, there is a statistical association between practicing exclusive breastfeeding and infants weight gain ($p=0.041$). The study revealed critical challenges affecting exclusive breastfeeding practices and these include medical conditions and the type of occupation of the mothers.

Conclusion: It can be concluded that exclusive breastfeeding was less practiced among the participants selected for the study and moreover, exclusive breastfeeding significantly contribute to reduce over weight among infants considered for the study. There is a great need for health education and promotion to explain to mothers the importance of exclusive breastfeeding to maternal mothers in Botswana.