

Breastfeeding in the Vhembe district of Limpopo Province, South Africa: Duration and Factors

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ABSTRACT Breastfeeding has been one of the significant traditions to follow because it ensures anticipated growth and development in infants and young children. Malnutrition is high in South Africa and contributes to 64% of deaths in children under-five years. Breastfeeding is one of the most effective ways of preventing malnutrition and infectious diseases by boosting the child's immunity level. Currently, in Africa, mothers are reducing the period of breastfeeding as compared to the traditional period of minimum of twenty-four months and above to barely fifteen months or less. A 3-stage sampling covering all the six municipalities in the Vhembe district was conducted. Structured questionnaire was used to capture information from women in the child-bearing age. Applying basic statistical methods, this study shows that mothers in Vhembe breastfeed their babies for an average of about eighteen months. The study recommended that pregnant women should attend prenatal medical check-ups early so that they could be taught more about the importance of breast milk for healthy growth of their young children.