



Factors related to breastfeeding length among Filipino migrant women in South Korea

Z. Dai¹, W. Dhestina² and JE. Lee²

¹School of Population Health; Room 240, Level 2, Samuels Building, Faculty of Medicine and Health, UNSW SYDNEY NSW 2052 AUSTRALIA

²Nutritional Epidemiology Lab, 626, Building 222, 1, Gwanak-ro, Gwanak-gu, Seoul, Republic of Korea

Breastfeeding is vital to infants' health and development during their first year. The quality and quantity of breastmilk are closely linked to the mother's nutrition^[1]. However, for migrant women who become new mothers, various social, economic, and family factors can pose challenges that negatively affect their dietary and breastfeeding practices. Due to the limited research evidence, this study aimed to investigate the factors associated with breastfeeding duration in migrant women. The study sample was drawn from the Filipino Women's Diet and Health Study (FiLWHEL). These women migrated to South Korea through marriage. At baseline (2014-2016), 504 women provided survey data, including demographic characteristics such as age, marital status, education, employment, income, and language proficiency. Anthropometric measures such as body mass index (BMI) and lifestyle factors were also recorded. Dietary intake of each food group was assessed using 24-hour recalls. We derived the Minimum Dietary Diversity for Women (MDD-W) from the ten food groups^[2]. Breastfeeding (any) duration was defined as the average length in months per child. Multivariable logistic regression was used to evaluate the associations between participants' characteristics and breastfeeding duration, with a cut-off of 12 months (<12 months; ≥ 12 months). Linear regression analysis was used to assess the relationship between each of these factors and breastfeeding duration in months. Out of the initial 504 women, 271 met the eligibility criteria, with the median age of 35 [interquartile range (IQR): 30,40] years, median breastfeeding duration of 4 [IQR: 1, 10] months, mean BMI of 23.8kg/m², median (IQR) of fruits, vegetables, and legumes of 162.2 [76.9, 265.9] grams/day, and median of MDD-W score of 5 [IQR:4, 6]. Over 50% of the sample held a university degree or higher, but only 47.8% were employed. Most women were married (90%) and earned less than 20 million won (~AU\$23,114.58) per year (65%). Over half had a good understanding of the Korean language. The cross-sectional regression analysis found no associations for breastfeeding length, except for the total fruit, vegetable, and legume intake. Women in the highest tertile of this consumption had a two-fold likelihood of breastfeeding for 12 months or longer [adj.OR (95% CI): 2.15 (0.99-4.68)]. While the MDD-W score had a positive association with breastfeeding for at least 12 months, it did not reach statistical significance [adj.OR: 1.11 (0.92-1.34)]. In the linear regression analysis, only vegetable consumption (per gram increase) was positively related to the length of breastfeeding (beta-coefficient: 0.016; SE: 0.006; p = 0.01). This study among Filipino migrant women in Korea suggests that higher consumption of fruit, vegetables, and legumes positively linked to breastfeeding for at least 12 months. Given the study's small sample size, interpreting these results should be cautious and warrants further validation in other studies.

Keywords: diet quality; socioeconomic factors; breastfeeding; migrant women

Ethics Declaration

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References

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