

Access to and use of breastfeeding information among parents in Mbeya city

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The main objective of this study was to examine the access to and use of breastfeeding information among parents in Mbeya City. Specifically, the study aimed at: identifying breastfeeding information needs; examining breastfeeding information sources used by parents; exploring the perceptions of parents towards the usefulness of breastfeeding information sources; identifying factors influencing access to breastfeeding information; and examining challenges facing parents in accessing and using breastfeeding information in Mbeya city. The study deployed a mixed approach (quantitative and qualitative) to gather, process, and analyse data. A survey in which 70 respondents participated was conducted at Ruanda and Igawilo health centres in Mbeya City. Stratified random, convenience, and purposive sampling techniques were used to select the respondents. Data were collected from parents of infants and children between 0 and 2 years of age, and health care professionals by using questionnaire, interview, and observation methods. The quantitative data collected were analysed with the help of Statistical Package for Service Solutions (SPSS) version 20 and Microsoft Excel 10 while content and thematic analysis was used to analyse qualitative data. The study's key findings indicate that parents in the study area mainly depend on informal sources such as relatives and friends to access and use breastfeeding information as compared to formal sources such as print and electronic ones. The findings also reveal that majority of the parents perceived that access to and use of breastfeeding information as important in enhancing breastfeeding practices. Further, the findings indicate that low income, low level of education, bad attitudes, socio-cultural practices, and language and formats used are the factors hindering effective access to and use of breastfeeding. Based on these results, the study recommends that: health agencies and other stakeholders should ensure that breastfeeding information is available to parents; education on breastfeeding should be increased; and seminars and training should be used to promote breastfeeding practices. Further, the study recommends making breastfeeding information available in various packages to enhance access and usage.