

**BREASTFEEDING PRACTICES AMONG POSTPARTUM  
MOTHERS IN MAHARAJ NAKHON SI THAMMARAT HOSPITAL  
MUANG DISTRICT, NAKHON SI THAMMARAT PROVINCE**

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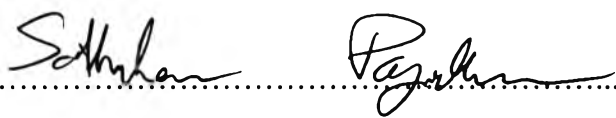
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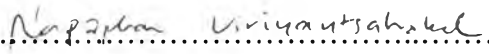
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Breast milk is the most appropriate nutrition for infants. Breast milk also benefits infants, mothers, and society, so breastfeeding is most highly regarded. However, even if breastfeeding has continuously been promoted, the rate and duration of breastfeeding has constantly declined. The objectives of the present study were to investigate duration and rate of breastfeeding in the first four months after child delivery and to determine factors related to exclusive breastfeeding during the first four months of postpartum mothers who gave birth at Maharaj Nakhon Si Thammarat Hospital. The subjects were 400 postpartum mothers who took their four-to-six-month-old infants to the ten Primary Care Units under the network of Maharaj Nakhon Si Thammarat Hospital to receive vaccination between July 1 and August 31, 2003. Data were gathered by means of interview questionnaires, focus group discussion, and observation of public health officials' support of breastfeeding during different phases. The PRECEDE Framework was applied as the conceptual framework of the present study. Data were analyzed in terms of frequency distribution, and Chi-square test was used.

The findings revealed that only 20.5% of the subjects exclusively breastfed their infants for four months and that the period of highest rate of exclusive breastfeeding was one month or less (26.5%). Also, the largest group of subjects, or 35.6%, stopped breastfeeding at one month after delivery or less with the following reasons: having to return to work outside the house (37.7%) and not having enough lactation (33.7%). In addition, the predisposing factors which were statistically significantly associated with exclusive breastfeeding for at least four months at the 0.05 and <0.001 levels were mothers' occupation, place of work, and intention to breastfeed. The enabling factors which were statistically significantly related to breastfeeding for at least four months at the .05 and < .001 levels were experience with breastfeeding, characteristic of nipples, infants' health problems during the first four months, current weight of infants, and type of milk/formula received during hospital stay. However, there was no statistically significant relationship between the reinforcing factor and exclusive breastfeeding for at least four months. The findings of the present study could be used in proposing the project to promote readiness of mothers and relatives to encourage exclusive breastfeeding for at least four months at Maharaj Nakhon Si Thammarat Hospital to prevent and help solve problems and obstacles after hospital discharge and to increase postpartum mothers' chance of successful breastfeeding during the first four months.

Field of study Health Systems Development

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
ABSTRACT .....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	vi
LIST OF TABLES .....	x
LIST OF FIGURES .....	xiii
<b>CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
Background and Significance of the Problem .....	1
Research Questions .....	8
Research Objectives .....	9
Scope of the Study .....	10
Assumption .....	10
Limitations .....	10
Operational Definitions .....	10
Variables .....	12
Expected Outcomes and Benefits .....	13
<b>CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW</b> .....	<b>14</b>
Theories and Conceptions .....	14
1. The definition of success in breastfeeding .....	14
2. Significance of breastfeeding .....	14

3. Situations promoting breastfeeding in Thailand.....	16
4. Public healthcare providers' policy to promote breastfeeding.....	18
5. The PRECEDE Framework.....	25
6. Factors related to breastfeeding.....	27
7. Related research literature.....	30
<b>CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>36</b>
Research Design.....	36
Target Population.....	36
Study Population.....	36
Sample.....	36
Sample Size.....	37
Sampling Techniques.....	38
Instruments.....	39
Validity and Reliability of the Instruments.....	42
Data Collection.....	44
Data analysis.....	46
<b>CHAPTER IV: RESULTS.....</b>	<b>50</b>
Part 1. Predisposing factors related to demographic characteristic.....	51
Part 2. Predisposing factors related to knowledge of breastfeeding practices.....	55
Part 3. Predisposing factors related to attitudes toward breastfeeding practices.....	57

Part 4. Predisposing factors related to intention and plan to breastfeed.....	59
Part 5. Enabling factors related to postpartum mothers.....	60
Part 6. Enabling factors related to infants.....	63
Part 7. Enabling factors related to problems and obstacles in breastfeeding.....	66
Part 8. Reinforcing factors related to support during various stages of pregnancy and childbirth.....	70
Part 9. Breastfeeding practices during the first four months.....	77
Part 10. Relationship between predisposing factors and breastfeeding practices during the first four months.....	80
Part 11. Relationship between enabling factors and breastfeeding practices during the first four months.....	82
Part 12. Relationship between reinforcing factors and breastfeeding practices during the first four months.....	85
<b>CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION.....</b>	<b>86</b>
Discussion of Findings .....	86
<b>CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>105</b>
Conclusion.....	105
Recommendations.....	109
Recommendations for Further Researches.....	112

<b>REFERENCES</b> .....	113
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## **APPENDICES**

APPENDIX A : List of Experts.....	121
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APPENDIX B : Tables.....	122
--------------------------	-----

APPENDIX C : Human Rights Protection form.....	131
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APPENDIX D : Research Instruments: English.....	132
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APPENDIX E : Research Instruments: Thai.....	143
--	-----

APPENDIX F : Proposed Project.....	153
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<b>CURRICULUM VITAE</b> .....	157
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## LIST OF TABLES

	<b>Page</b>
Table 1: Number and percentage of the sample as categorized according to the Primary Care Units under the network of Maharaj Nakhon Si Thammarat Hospital .....	52
Table 2: Number, percentage, mean, and standard deviation of demographic characteristics of the sample .....	54
Table 3: Number and percentage of the sample categorized according to level of knowledge.....	55
Table 4: Number and percentage of the sample's level of knowledge of breastfeeding as categorized according to their breastfeeding practices during the first four months .....	56
Table 5: Number and percentage of the sample categorized according to attitudes toward breastfeeding practices.....	57
Table 6: Number and percentage of the sample's attitudes toward breastfeeding as categorized according to their breastfeeding practices during the first four months.....	58
Table 7: Number and percentage of the sample categorized according to predisposing factors related to mothers.....	59
Table 8: Number and percentage of the sample categorized according to enabling factors related to mothers.....	62
Table 9: Number and percentage of the sample categorized according to enabling factors related to infants.....	64

Table 10: Number and percentage of the sample categorized according to type of milk/formula the infants received during hospital stay.....	65
Table 11: Number percentage of type of milk/formula received during hospital stay as categorized according to breastfeeding practices during the first four months.....	66
Table 12: Number and percentage of the sample categorized according to level of support for breastfeeding practices.....	71
Table 13: Number and percentage of levels of support for breastfeeding as categorized according to breastfeeding practices during the first four months.....	71
Table 14: Number and percentage of the sample categorized according to breastfeeding practices during the first four months.....	77
Table 15: Number and percentage of the subjects as categorized according to exclusive breastfeeding practices.....	78
Table 16: Number and percentage of the sample as categorized according to weaning, duration, and reasons for weaning.....	79
Table 17: Relationship between predisposing factors and breastfeeding practices during the first four months.....	80
Table 18: Relationship between enabling factors and breastfeeding practices during the first four months.....	83
Table 19: Relationship between reinforcing factor and breastfeeding practices during the first four months.....	85
Table 20: Number and percentage of the subjects who got the correct answers of knowledge of breastfeeding categorized from high scores to low scores.....	122

Table 21: Number, percentage, mean and standard deviation of the subjects' attitudes toward breastfeeding as practices categorized per item.....	124
Table 22: Number, percentage, mean, and standard deviation of the subjects' support for breastfeeding received from different individuals and media as categorized per item.....	126
Table 23: Number, percentage, mean, and standard deviation of subjects who received support for breastfeeding during different phase.....	127
Table 24: Number, percentage, mean, and standard deviation of the subjects who received support for breastfeeding as categorized according to topics.....	127
Table 24: (Cont.) Number, percentage, mean, and standard deviation of the subjects who received support for breastfeeding as categorized according to topics.....	128
Table 25: Number, percentage, mean, and standard deviation of the subjects who received support for breastfeeding from public health officials as categorized according to activities.....	128
Table 26: Number, percentage, mean, and standard deviation of the subjects' support for breastfeeding from family members categorized according to activities.....	130

## LIST OF FIGURES

	<b>Page</b>
Figure 1 : The relationship among factors affecting behavior.....	27
Figure 2 : Conceptual framework of the study.....	35