FEEDING PRACTICES AND NUTRITIONAL STATUS OF CHILDREN (AGED 0 TO 3 YEARS) IN TWO CLINICS IN THE MORETELE DISTRICT

by

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ABSTRACT

The research was undertaken to obtain baseline data on the nutritional status and feeding practices of two rural communities. Two health care clinics (Makapanstad and Mathibestad) in the Moretele District north of Pretoria were identified. Children (0-36 months) visiting the baby clinic with their mothers / caregivers were targeted. The exploratory investigation can be described as cross sectional, prospective and descriptive in the qualitative and quantitative research domains. This study aimed to examine, explore and describe the nutritional status (anthropometry, dietary intake) and feeding practices (food intake / security, knowledge, attitude) of the studied children and to determine if malnutrition existed in these communities.

The technique of convenience sampling was used to draw the sample. The sample was compiled from mothers / caregivers with children (six age categories) that visited the baby clinic on a Tuesday morning in both areas. The research was conducted from September 1995 to March 1996. Two interviewers (one per clinic) of the same ethnic group were used to overcome cultural, literacy and language problems associated with cross-cultural research. Individual interviews, using structured questionnaires (biographic questionnaire, hunger scale (48) and a 24-hour-recall) and anthropometry were done in the quantitative research domain and structured focus group interviews in the qualitative research domain. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used on the quantitative data and content analysis and ethnography on the qualitative data. Systematic coding of data as part of the content analysis produced numerical descriptions. Ethnography provided descriptive data / results.

Quantitative results revealed that the children in both areas grew according to their birth percentiles, but all showed an abnormal growth pattern between the ages of 12-24 months. The nutritional evaluation, using two sets of standards [WHO and RDA (½ cut off) reference values], revealed that iron, calcium and zinc intakes were low. Though the protein and kilojoule intakes were sufficient, it was only marginally so. The hunger scale measurements revealed that the subjects from the Makapanstad and Mathibestad areas perceived themselves as food insecure (58% and 25% respectively).

Qualitative results revealed that breast feeding was the choice feeding for newborn babies. Bottle feeding was only given where breast feeding was physiologically / clinically impossible. Solid food was introduced very early (at two-three months). The reasoning behind the specific sequence for the introduction of solid foods could not successfully be uncovered. The children's diets were nutritionally poorly balanced due to the foods chosen and the limited variety offered in their diets. The mother's / caregiver's nutrition knowledge with regard to specific foods, their functions and recommended quantities, was poor. The women adhered to their cultural beliefs regarding food choices and preparation practices for babies / young weaning-age children. Certain misconceptions were revealed in the discussion on attitudes.

The results provided insight regarding the feeding practices, nutrition knowledge and attitudes, and were used to substantiate recommendations aimed at the improvement of the feeding practices / nutritional status of the children. Education on health care practices and nutrition might positively influence the attitudes and consequently the feeding practices.

KEY WORDS: nutritional status, dietary adequacy, anthropometry, feeding practices, breast feeding, bottle feeding, weaning, nutrition knowledge, attitudes, food security, content analysis, ethnography
SAMEVATTING

Hierdie navorsing is ondernem om basislyndata oor die voedingstatus en die voedingpraktyke van twee landelike gemeenskappe te bekom. Twee gesondheidsorgklinieke (Makapanstad en Mathibestad) in die Moretele Distrik, noord van Pretoria, is geïdentificeer. Die teikengroep was kinders (0-36 maande) wat die babakliniek met hul moeders / versorgers besoek het. Hierdie verkennende ondersoek kan beskryf word as 'n dwarsnee, prospektiewe, beskrywende ondersoek in die kwantitatiewe- en kwalitatiewe navorsingsdomeine. Die studie het ten doel gehad om die voedingstatus (antropometrie, dieetinname) en die voedingpraktyke (voedselinname / sekuriteit, voedingkennis en houding) van die bestudeerde kinders te ondersoek, te verken, te beskryf, asook om te bepaal of wanvoeding in hierdie gemeenskappe voorkom.

Die tegniek van geriefsteekproeftrekking is gebruik om die steekproef saam te stel. Die steekproef is saamgestel uit moeders / versorgers met kinders (ses ouderdomsgroepe) wat die babakliniek op Dinsdagoggende in beide areas besoek het. Die navorsing is uitgevoer vanaf September 1995 tot Maart 1996. Twee onderhoudvoerders (een per kliniek) van dieselfde etniese groep is gebruik om die kulturele-, taal- en geletterdheidsprobleme, wat met kruis-kulturele navorsing geassosieer word, te oorkom. Individuele onderhoudte wat gestrukturiseerde vraelyste (biografiese vraelys, hongerskaal (48), 24h-herroep) en antropometrie ingesluit het, is in die kwantitatiewe navorsingdomein gedoen en 'n gestrukturiseerde fokusgroeponderhoud in die kwalitatiewe navorsingsdomein. Beskrywende en inferensiele statistiek is op die kwantitatiewe data gebruik en inhoudsanalise en etnografie op die kwalitatiewe data. Sistematiese kodering van die data as deel van die inhoudsanalise het numeriese beskrywings gelewer. Etnografie het die beskrywende data / resultate gelewer.

Die kwantitatiewe resultate het getoon dat die kinders in beide areas volgens hul geboortepersentiele gegroei het, maar almal het 'n abnormale groeipatroon tussen die ouderdomme van 12-24 maande getoon. Die nutrisionele evaluasie, gedoen met twee stelle standaarde [WHO en RDA (½ afsny punt) verwysingswaardes], het getoon dat die yster-, kalsium- en sinkinnames laag was. Alhoewel die proteïen- en kilojouleinnames voldoende was, was dit marginaal. Die hongerskaalmetings het getoon dat die proefpersone van die Makapanstad- en Mathibestadareas hulself as voedselonseker beskou het (58% en 25% respektiewelik).

Die kwalitatiewe resultate het getoon dat borsvoeding as keusevoeding vir pasgebore babas beskou is. Bottelvoeding is alleenlik gegee waar borsvoeding fisiologies / klinies onmoontlik was. Vaste voedsel is baie vroeg reeds (teen twee tot drie maande) in die dieet ingesluit. Die redes vir die bepaalde volgorde van insluiting van vaste voedsel kon nie suksesvol vasgestel word nie. Die voedingkennis van die moeders / versorgers met betrekking tot spesifieke voedsels, hul funksies en aanbevolde hoeveelhede, was swak. Die kinders se diete was nie nutrisioneel ongebalanceerd weens die swak voedselkeuses en beperkte verskeidenheid. Die vroue het steeds hul kulturele gewoontes met betrekking tot voedselkeuses en voorbereidingspraktyke vir babas / jong speningouderdom kinders beoefen. Bepaalde wanopvattinge is in die besprekings oor houding geïdentiseer.

Die resultate het insig gebied oor die praktyke, kennis en houdings aangaande voeding- en voedingpraktyke en is gebruik om voorstelle gemik op die verbetering van die voedingpraktyke / voedingstatus van die kinders te bewerkstellig. Onderrig oor gesondheidsorgpraktyke en voeding mag die houdings en gevolglik die voedingpraktyke positief beïnvloed.

SLEUTELTERME: voedingstatus, dieettoereikendheid, antropometrie, voedingpraktyke, borsvoeding, bottelvoeding, spening, voedingkennis, houding, voedselsekuriteit, inhoudsanalise, etnografie
LIST OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT iii
SAMEVATTING iv
LIST OF ADDENDUMS xii
LIST OF FIGURES xiii
LIST OF TABLES xv

CHAPTER 1 BACKGROUND TO THE INVESTIGATION 1
1.1 THE EFFECTS OF CHRONIC MALNUTRITION IN COMMUNITIES 1
1.2 SUBSTANTIATION OF THE RESEARCH 1
1.3 INVESTIGATION 2

PART 1 LITERATURE REVIEW 4

CHAPTER 2 CHRONIC UNDER NUTRITION AND THE YOUNG IN DEPRIVED COMMUNITIES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES 4

2.1 INTRODUCTION 4
2.1.1 MALNUTRITION DEFINED 5
2.1.2 NATURE OF THE PROBLEM: THE VICIOUS CIRCLE OF MALNUTRITION 6

2.2 PREVALENCE 7

2.3 GROWTH AS AN INDICATOR OF CHILDREN’S HEALTH 13
2.3.1 GENERAL IMPACT OF GROWTH ON CHILDREN’S HEALTH STATUS 13
2.3.2 FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE GROWTH 13
2.3.3 GROWTH MONITORING 14

2.4 CLASSIFICATION OF MALNUTRITION 14

2.5 CLINICAL SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF MALNUTRITION 16
2.5.1 MARASMUS AND KWASHIORKOR 16
2.5.2 MARASMIC KWASHIORKOR 18
2.5.3 NUTRITIONAL DWARFING 18
CHAPTER 3  FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE NUTRITIONAL
STATUS OF YOUNG CHILDREN

3.1  INTRODUCTION

3.2  THE IMMEDIATE CAUSES
3.2.1  INADEQUATE DIETARY INTAKE
3.2.1.1  Food behaviour
3.2.2  DISEASE

3.3  THE UNDERLYING CAUSES
3.3.1  HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY
3.3.2  HEALTH SERVICES, SAFE WATER AND SANITATION
3.3.3  CARING PRACTICES
3.3.3.1  Breast feeding
3.3.3.2  Bottle feeding
3.3.3.3  Complementary feeding
3.3.3.4  Essential health care
3.3.3.5  Education and information

3.4  BASIC CAUSES
3.4.1  CONTROL AND MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN, ECONOMIC AND ORGANIZATIONAL
RESOURCES
3.4.2  POTENTIAL RESOURCES: ENVIRONMENT, TECHNOLOGY, PEOPLE
3.4.2.1  Physical Environment
3.4.2.2  Culture
3.4.2.2.1  The economic system
3.4.2.2.2  The political system
3.4.2.2.3  The social system
3.4.2.2.4  The technological system
3.4.2.2.5  The belief system
3.4.2.3  Social systems

PART 2  EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

CHAPTER 4  RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
4.1 RESEARCH PROBLEM
4.1.1 AIM OF RESEARCH
4.1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

4.2. RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE

4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN
4.3.1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
4.3.2 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

4.4 OPERATIONALIZATION
4.4.1 BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION
4.4.2 ATTITUDES AND NUTRITION KNOWLEDGE
4.4.3 FEEDING PRACTICES
4.4.4 FOOD SECURITY
4.4.5 NUTRITIONAL STATUS
4.4.5.1 Dietary adequacy
4.4.5.2 Anthropometry

4.5 MEASURING INSTRUMENTS

4.6 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

4.7 COLLECTION OF DATA

4.8 DATA ANALYSIS
4.8.1 QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH DOMAIN
4.8.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DOMAIN

4.9 ASSUMPTIONS

CHAPTER 5 QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH STRATEGY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

5.2 MEASURING INSTRUMENTS: SELECTION, DEVELOPMENT AND METHODOLOGY
5.2.1 BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE
5.2.1.1 Biographic indicators
5.2.1.2 Methodology as implemented for this research study
5.2.2 NUTRITIONAL STATUS
5.2.2.1 Anthropometry
PART 3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

CHAPTER 7 QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH RESULTS

7.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY GROUP
7.1.1 AGE, GENDER AND ETHNICITY
7.1.2 ADULT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CHILD
7.1.3 FEEDING PRACTICES
7.1.4 BIOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE MOTHER
7.1.5 PROFILE OF THE FAMILY
7.1.6 DESCRIPTION OF THE MICRO ENVIRONMENT OF THE FAMILY
7.1.7 CLINIC INVOLVEMENT

7.2 ANTHROPOMETRIC EVALUATION
7.2.1 RECUMBENT LENGTH
7.2.2 WEIGHT
7.2.2.1 Body mass index
7.2.3 HEAD-CIRCUMFERENCE
7.2.4 WEIGHT-FOR-HEIGHT

7.3 DIETARY ADEQUACY

7.4 FOOD SECURITY
7.4.1 HOUSEHOLD HUNGER
7.4.2 INDIVIDUAL HUNGER: WOMEN'S HUNGER
7.4.3 INDIVIDUAL HUNGER: CHILDREN'S HUNGER

CHAPTER 8 RESULTS OBTAINED FROM QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS: GENERAL HEALTH AND FEEDING PRACTICES

8.1 THE DATA REDUCTION PROCESS
8.2 PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FOCUS GROUP DATA
8.2.1 SAMPLING UNIT: GENERAL KNOWLEDGE ON INFANT FEEDING AND HEALTH
8.2.1.1 Baby care
8.2.1.2 Baby feeding
8.2.1.3 Sick children
8.2.1.4 Clinic involvement
8.2.2 SAMPLING UNIT: BREAST FEEDING
8.2.2.1 Breast feeding as the feeding choice
CHAPTER 9  RESULTS OBTAINED FROM QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

METHODS: NUTRITION KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

9.1 PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FOCUS GROUP DATA

9.1.1 SAMPLING UNIT: NUTRITION KNOWLEDGE

9.1.1.1 Meal frequencies

9.1.1.2 Hygiene control of meals

9.1.1.3 Foods given to the child

9.1.1.4 Drinks given to the child

9.1.1.5 Nutrition knowledge

9.1.2 SAMPLING UNIT: ATTITUDE TOWARDS NUTRITION

9.1.2.1 Health and eating

9.1.2.2 Food and money

9.1.2.3 Culture and traditions

CHAPTER 10  EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

10.1 BACKGROUND

10.2 RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

10.2.1 QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

10.2.1.1 Anthropometry

10.2.1.2 Dietary adequacy

10.2.1.3 Food security

10.2.2 QUALITATIVE RESULTS

10.2.2.1 General knowledge on infant feeding and health
10.2.2.6 Attitudes on nutrition 308

10.3 REFLECTIONS ON RECOMMENDATIONS 311

10.4 IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS 315

10.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH 317

LIST OF REFERENCES 319

ADDENDA 330
**LIST OF ADDENDA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Addendum</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Questionnaire Used for Quantitative Research</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Interview Schedule - Focus Groups</td>
<td>355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Instructions for the Pilot Study</td>
<td>371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Training Instructions for Interviewers - Individual Interviews</td>
<td>378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Training Instructions for Moderators / Interviewers - Focus Groups</td>
<td>383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Visual AIDS and Equipment Used During the Focus Group Interviews</td>
<td>386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Standard Conversions and Food Codes Used in the Analysis of Dietary Intakes (MRC food composition and food quantities tables)(85, 105)</td>
<td>388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Analysis Categories Used for the Data Reduction Phase of the Qualitative Research Methodology</td>
<td>395</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FIGURE 1</td>
<td>VICIOUS CIRCLE OF MALNUTRITION</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURE 2</td>
<td>AFRICA'S CHILDREN: UNDER-FIVE MORTALITY Declines</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURE 3</td>
<td>INFANT MORTALITY RATES</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURE 4</td>
<td>DIFFERENCES IN CLINICAL SIGNS BETWEEN KWASHIORKOR AND MARASMUS</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURE 5</td>
<td>CAUSES OF CHILD MALNUTRITION / SURVIVAL AND DEVELOPMENT</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURE 6</td>
<td>INADEQUATE DIETARY INTAKE / DISEASE CYCLE</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURE 7</td>
<td>PATHS LEADING FROM EARLY WEANING TO NUTRITIONAL MARASMUS AND FROM PROTRACTED BREAST FEEDING TO KWASHIORKOR</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURE 8</td>
<td>GRAPHIC OVERVIEW OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH TYPES</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURE 9</td>
<td>STEPS IN THE DESIGN AND USE OF FOCUS GROUPS</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURE 10</td>
<td>THE FRAMEWORK FOR CONTENT ANALYSIS</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURE 11</td>
<td>ANTHROPOMETRIC RESULTS - NCHS PERCENTILE GRAPHS FOR GIRLS, BIRTH TO 36 MONTHS FOR WEIGHT-FOR-AGE AND HEIGHT-FOR-AGE</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURE 12</td>
<td>ANTHROPOMETRIC RESULTS - NCHS PERCENTILE GRAPHS FOR GIRLS, BIRTH TO 36 MONTHS FOR WEIGHT-FOR-HEIGHT AND HEAD CIRCUMFERENCE</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURE 13</td>
<td>ANTHROPOMETRIC RESULTS - NCHS PERCENTILE GRAPHS FOR BOYS, BIRTH TO 36 MONTHS FOR WEIGHT-FOR-AGE AND HEIGHT-FOR-AGE</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURE 14</td>
<td>ANTHROPOMETRIC RESULTS - NCHS PERCENTILE GRAPHS FOR BOYS, BIRTH TO 36 MONTHS FOR WEIGHT-FOR-HEIGHT AND HEAD CIRCUMFERENCE</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURE 15</td>
<td>THE DATA REDUCTION PROCESS</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURE 16</td>
<td>&quot;TRIPLE-A&quot; CYCLIC PROCESS OF ASSESSMENT, ANALYSIS AND ACTION, USED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NUTRITION STRATEGY APPROACH TO ADDRESSING MALNUTRITION</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FIGURE 17: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY DEPICTED IN THE TRIPLE-A APPROACH

FIGURE 18: A SUMMARY OF FEEDING PRACTICES AND NUTRITIONAL STATUS (AS STUDIED) IDENTIFIED IN THE MORETELE DISTRICT
LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1: GROUPS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS 4
TABLE 2: ESSENCE OF THE WELLBEING OF CHILDREN 5
TABLE 3: PROPORTION OF INFANTS WITH LOW BIRTH WEIGHTS (BELOW 2.5 KG) 9
TABLE 4: PROPORTION OF CHILDREN WASTED AND STUNTED, 1980-1990 9
TABLE 5: CHILDREN IN SOUTH AFRICA: BASIC INDICATORS FOR DEMOGRAPHICS AND NUTRITION 12
TABLE 6: WELCOME CLASSIFICATION OF INFANTILE NUTRITION 15
TABLE 7: WATERLOW CLASSIFICATION OF MALNUTRITION 15
TABLE 8: GOMEZ CLASSIFICATION OF MALNUTRITION BASED ON WEIGHT-FOR-AGE STANDARDS 15
TABLE 9: CHARACTERISTICS OF KWASHIORKOR AND MARASMUS 18
TABLE 10: WORLD WIDE VARIATIONS IN BREAST FEEDING PATTERNS 27
TABLE 11: BREAST FEEDING: BENEFITS, DISADVANTAGES AND REASONS FOR NOT BREAST FEEDING 28
TABLE 12: RISKS OF BOTTLE FEEDING WHICH CAN LEAD TO DISADVANTAGES FOR CHILDREN’S HEALTH 30
TABLE 13: MALNUTRITION PREVALENCE BY SINGLE YEAR OF AGE 32
TABLE 14: AVERAGE DAILY VITAMIN, MINERAL AND TRACE ELEMENT REQUIREMENTS (ALL AGE GROUPS) 33
TABLE 15: PROTEIN AND ENERGY REQUIREMENTS (WHO, 1985) 33
TABLE 16: CONSEQUENCES OF WEANING ONSET 34
TABLE 17: FOOD CUSTOMS AND/OR CULTURAL TABOOS IN SOUTH AFRICA THAT MAY HAVE AN EFFECT ON NUTRITION 40
TABLE 18: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

TABLE 19: DIFFERENT FORMATS OF A MULTIMETHOD APPROACH

TABLE 20: NUTRITIONAL ASSESSMENT METHODS

TABLE 21: DESCRIPTION OF THE 24-HOUR RECALL METHOD

TABLE 22: DIMENSIONS AND COMPONENTS OF A CONCEPTUAL DEFINITION OF HUNGER

TABLE 23: ITEMS TAKEN UP IN RADIEMER’S HUNGER SCALES

TABLE 24: RADIEMER’S MODIFIED HUNGER SCALE

TABLE 25: SUMMARY OF MEASUREMENT RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY TYPES

TABLE 26: ADVANTAGES / STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS / WEAKNESSES OF FOCUS GROUP RESEARCH

TABLE 27: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW CONSIDERATIONS

TABLE 28: ETHNICITY AND GENDER OF CHILDREN (n=30) IN THE AGE GROUP 0-3 MONTHS

TABLE 29: ETHNICITY AND GENDER OF CHILDREN (n=25) IN THE AGE GROUP 3.1-6 MONTHS

TABLE 30: ETHNICITY AND GENDER OF CHILDREN (n=30) IN THE AGE GROUP 6.1-9 MONTHS

TABLE 31: ETHNICITY AND GENDER OF CHILDREN (n=27) IN THE AGE GROUP 9.1-12 MONTHS

TABLE 32: ETHNICITY AND GENDER OF CHILDREN (n=37) IN THE AGE GROUP 12.1-24 MONTHS

TABLE 33: ETHNICITY AND GENDER OF CHILDREN (n=25) IN THE AGE GROUP 24.1-36 MONTHS

TABLE 34: COMPARISON OF THE DIFFERENT ESCORTS OF THE CHILDREN IN THE VARIOUS AGE GROUPS (N=174) IN THE TWO CLINICS

TABLE 35: COMPARISON OF THE DIFFERENT PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR CARING OF THE CHILDREN IN THE VARIOUS AGE GROUPS (N=174) IN THE TWO CLINICS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Comparison of the different feeds in the various age groups (N=174) in the two clinics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Comparison of the different bottle feeding practices of the children in the various age groups (N=174) in the two clinics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Comparison of the different ages for introduction of solid food in the two clinics (N=154)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Comparison of the age distribution of mothers and their children in the various age groups (N=173) in the two clinics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Comparison between the two clinics of the position of the studied child (N=174) relative to sibling ages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Comparison of the qualifications of the mothers of the children in the two clinics (N=174)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Comparison of the occupations of the mothers of the children in the two clinics (N=174)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Comparison of the family size of the studied children in the various age groups (N=174) in the two clinics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Comparison of the fathers' involvement (financial contribution) with the children in the various age groups (N=173) in the two clinics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Comparison of the number of rooms and building materials used for houses, the sources of drinking water and availability of electricity in the two clinics (N=174)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Comparison of the sources of food for the children in the two clinics (N=174)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Comparison of the people responsible for food purchasing and preparation for the family in the two clinics (N=174)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Comparison of the different reasons for clinic attendance of the children in the various age groups (N=173) in the two clinics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Recommended age groups for the presentation of anthropometric data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Age Groups for the Presentation of Anthropometric Research Results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Average Ages Used for Percentile Graphs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>Anthropometric Results and Indicators: Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>Anthropometric Results and Indicators: Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Comparison of the Body Mass Index of Children in Three Age Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>Nutritional Status Indicated by Body Mass Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>Estimates of Energy Consumption from Breast Milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>Estimates of Nutrients Provided with Regard to Energy Contribution from Breast Milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Comparison of the Mean Nutrient Intakes of Children Aged 0-6 Months (n=55) in the Two Clinics (RDA as Reference Value)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>Comparison of the Mean Nutrient Intakes of Children Aged 7-12 Months (n=57) in the Two Clinics (RDA as Reference Value)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Comparison of the Mean Nutrient Intakes of Children Aged 13-36 Months (n=60) in the Two Clinics (RDA as Reference Value)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>Summary of Dietary Recommendations by Americans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>Comparison of the Mean Nutrient Intakes of Children Aged 0-6 Months (n=55) in the Two Clinics (WHO as Reference Value)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>Comparison of the Mean Nutrient Intakes of Children Aged 7-9 Months (n=29) in the Two Clinics (WHO as Reference Value)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>Comparison of the Mean Nutrient Intakes of Children Aged 10-12 Months (n=27) in the Two Clinics (WHO as Reference Value)</td>
</tr>
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</tbody>
</table>