**Breastfeeding and Childhood Diseases: Evidence from Nationally Representative Survey**

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**Abstract**

Breastfeeding is a normal feeding method for infants and young children that ensures optimal growth and development. Moreover, it protects against common childhood illnesses and can also have long-term health benefits for mother and baby. We aimed to determine the association between exclusive breastfeeding and common childhood diseases. We used the 2014 Bangladesh demographic and health survey data and considered 763 children aged less than seven months, in which 376 (52%) were non-exclusively breastfed and 387 (48%) were exclusively breastfed. We analyzed data using the Poisson regression model. In adjusted model (important confounding added to the model), infants who were not exclusively breastfed (Risk Ratio (RR) 1.33, 95% CI 1.14–1.55, p = 0.000) were found to be a greater risk of having childhood diseases rather than who were exclusively breastfed. The risk of a child getting affected by diseases was more acute if the mothers' age lies between 15-19 years (RR 1.12, 95% CI: 0.78-1.62). Infants belonging to mothers who have secondary education were (RR 0.80, 95% CI: 0.64-1.00) less likely to affected by diseases than non-educated mothers. Children delivered via normal delivery were (RR 0.77, 95% CI: 0.61–0.97) less likely to be getting diseases compared to the children with C-section delivery. We also found some other factors, such as division, father occupation, C-section, and child's sex, were significantly associated with childhood disease. In conclusion, we found a significant association between EBF and childhood diseases in Bangladesh. So, the necessary steps should be taken to improve the existing situation of exclusive breastfeeding practice by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in Bangladesh.

**Keywords:** Exclusive breastfeeding, Childhood diseases, Poisson regression.

**Presenting author's information**

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