Abstract

Background: The prevalence of diarrhoeal diseases is increasingly becoming an aspect of public health significance in the world today especially in developing countries like Uganda. Mbale, a district in Uganda has showed the same trend. Outbreaks of common diarrhoeal diseases including dysentry, enteric fevers and cholera are regularly reported among children under five years of age with increased cases of sickness and deaths. Unfortunately, there is also varied and increased prevalence in the rural and urban areas of which the risk factors responsible are unknown.

Objective: The study aimed at evaluating the risk factors for the prevalence of diarrhoeal diseases in the rural and urban areas of Mbale district.

Methods: A descriptive comparative cross sectional study was conducted involving rural and urban areas on 790 households (rural=405, urban=385) with cases and non-cases of diarrhoea from June to October 2011. The sample size was estimated using the Kish and Leslie (1965) formula. Data was collected through structured interviews using questionnaires and analyzed using SPSS version 17. Bivariate and Multivariate analyses were also used.

Results: The rural areas had a high prevalence of 59.8% diarrhoeal diseases among the children under-fives years of age compared to urban areas with 42.6%. Sanitation facilities such as pit latrines, bathrooms etc. were significantly associated with diarrhoeal diseases prevalence in rural and urban areas e.g. rural homes without pit latrines registered 94.0% (227/242) cases (p-value=0.0053) compared to 5.5% (9/164) without latrines in urban area.

Conclusions: As the rural areas had a higher prevalence compared to the urban areas, appropriate intervention programs should be formulated focused on the significant risk factors.

Key Words: Diarrhoea, risk factors, rural areas, under-fives children, and urban areas