



SOCIO – DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND PRACTICE OF EXCLUSIVE BREAST FEEDING AMONG NURSING MOTHERS IN GOVERNMENT OWNED TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN OSUN STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined socio-demographic characteristics and practice of exclusive breast-feeding among nursing mothers in government owned tertiary institutions of Osun State. The researchers adopted a descriptive survey design using a sample of 400 respondents who were staff and students of the government owned tertiary institutions of Osun State using multi stage sampling procedure. To ensure validity, the questionnaire was pilot tested by administering it to some respondents before the main administration. Reliability of the questionnaire was ascertained by employing test-retest reliability method. Data generated through quantitative technique were analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS). Univariate and Bivariate statistical procedure were adopted in data analysis. Descriptive statistical technique such as simple frequency distribution table, percentage, means, modes charts were used for chi-square and correlation were used for bivariate to explain relationship. The qualitative data were collected through in-depth interviews (IDI) sorted and involved the categorization of responses into the objective of the study. Four research questions and one research hypothesis were raised. The finding of the study revealed that age, education attainment and marital status had significant effects on practice of exclusive breast-feeding. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that researchers should continue to focus on determining the most accurate scale for measuring social and breast-feeding supports.

Key words: Exclusive breast-feeding, Social-demographic, Nursing mothers, Tertiary institutions, Government owned.

Introduction

Infant nutrition is one of the most important determinants of the health of children, with breastfeeding recommended as the main nutrition for babies. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2009) recommends that infants receive only breast milk from their mothers or a wet nurse, or expressed breast milk, and no other liquids or solids, with the exception of oral rehydration solution, drops or syrups consisting of Vitamins, minerals, supplements or medicines in the first 6 months after birth.

There is evidence in the literature to suggest that exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) has better returns for current and future child health outcomes compared to complimentary food and drink. For example, exclusive breastfeeding between 6months and 2years is suggested to be associated with reduction in infant mortality and morbidity (Mulany, Katz, Li, Khatry, Le Clerg, S, Darmstad, et al, 2008), low risk of Necrotizing enterocolitis (IP, Chung, Raman, Trikaliwis & Lau, 2009) and reduced risk of allergic disease, obesity, type II diabetes, hypertension and hypercholesterolemia in later life (Godfrey, Lawrence, 2010). These suggest that optimum growth and development can be ensured through

exclusive breastfeeding of infants. This notwithstanding, the vast evidence on the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding continues to be low.

Globally, less than 40% of infants under 6months of age are exclusively breastfeed (Cai, Wardlaw, Brown, 2012). Developing countries reports an exclusive breastfeeding prevalence of 36% among infants younger than 6 months (Khamis, Omar, Suleiman and Ali, 2017). However, there is a much lower prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding among professional working mothers in developing countries. A study in Nigeria found that the exclusive breast feeding rate among female doctors to be 11.1% (Sadoh, Sadoh and Oniyelu, 2011). Working mothers face the challenge of balancing breastfeeding and paid work, thereby increasing the risk of early breastfeeding in particular.

It can be assumed that the respondents in the study area may likely face the same problems nursing mothers who are professionals are facing. In view of this, the researchers see it as necessary to assess the nursing mother in government owned tertiary institutions in Osun state who can be classified as professional (Academic Staff, Non-Academic staff and female students to know if the recommendations

of World Health Organization and United Nations children fund's standard in the face of work pressure and busy schedules are being followed.

Many socio-demographic factors can influence the acceptance and practice of exclusive breastfeeding by nursing mothers. The age of mothers is a critical factor in understanding their decision to breastfeed exclusively. Younger mothers might have less awareness of the benefits of breastfeeding or face challenges in balancing academic or professional life with breastfeeding. On the other hand, older mothers may have more experience and are more likely to practice EBF. Married mothers may have greater access to support from partners and extended families which can influence their ability to practice EBF. Single mothers particularly those who are in higher education or employed, may face more challenges related to balancing breastfeeding with academic and professional responsibilities.

In the context of tertiary institutions, the occupation of mothers (whether they are students, lecturers or administrative staff) may impact breastfeeding practices. Students face difficulties due to class schedules, while faculty members may have more flexible work hours. Employment status can also influence access to maternity leave and support in the workplace, both of which are critical for EBF. Varying levels of education attained by the respondents could contribute to their higher levels of knowledge about EBF. Education is often associated with better knowledge of the benefits of EBF and greater likelihood of practicing it. Educated mothers may also have better access to information about EBF and understand its importance in the first six months of a child's life. The number of children a mother has can impact breastfeeding practices. First-time mothers may be more focused on the advice and support they receive whereas, mothers with multiple children may have previous experience that informs their breastfeeding decision. The aim of the study, therefore, is to examine the socio-demographic characteristics and the practice of exclusive breastfeeding among nursing mothers in government owned tertiary institutions in Osun State.

Theoretical Framework

Modernization theory underpins this study. This theory according to many proponents refers to model of the progressive transition from a pre-modern or traditional to a modern society. According to the theory, the adoption of the new way to modern will pass its influences to political arena, the communities will be affected not leaving the families and other aspects of society alone (Jones, 2005). The assumptions are relevant to the explanation of the study in the fact that transition from traditional to

modern society brought about change to every social institution. The family structure, motherhood, economy, religion, education and politics were affected.

These changes brought about change in attitude of mothers to breastfeeding. In the traditional African societies, women did not involve in the formal employment so children were fed on "demand" because they were close to their mothers. But there occurred differences when the status of women changed from being household chore keeps to formal employed women who were constrained to be separated during the working hours with their babies. Rational decision making replaced religious beliefs and traditions which nursing mothers in traditional society held due to radical changes in every aspect of life. However, the nursing mothers may stick to the tradition, love, affection and emotional feelings for their babies so they can be pressured to make up and breastfeed exclusive.

Literature Review

Studies revealed that different factors tend to influence the exclusive breast feeding practice among nursing mothers. The factors have divergent and convergent views of different scholars or researchers (Obilade, 2015). Among other certain socio-demographic factors considered are age of the mother, al level, marital status, occupation of mother and other related varieties. In the studies by Essien (2009) and Ajayi, Hellandendu and Odekunle (2011), it was released that the age of mother determines exclusive breast feeding practice. Ajayi et al, for instance, inferred that respondents between age 15-35 breast fed their new borns than those who were in the range of 15-24 years.

The fact is that respondents between the range of 15-24 years may be having their first experiences of delivery, hence, their low level of practice of exclusive breast feeding. Essien (2009) and Obilade (2015) reported that the education status of the mother is one of the variables that significantly influenced the exclusive breast feeding practice among the respondents studied. Obilade states that those with higher level of education were more likely to have correct knowledge of breast feeding practice (P2005) while Wyatt (2002) reported that there is no relationship between educational level of mother and breast feeding initiations. Study by Kronborg (2004) revealed that marital status is a variable that has influence on breast feeding practice while Morrow (2012)'s study indicates that marital status did not have significant relationship with breast feeding practice. To Morrow, marital status is wholly depended on significant others.

Bible (1Samuel, 1:24) and Quran (Chapter 2:233)



as Holy books emphasize exclusive breast feeding. The issue of religion is taken in high esteem by everybody; this may make mothers not to look back in breast feeding their infant exclusively since it is of sacred command, hence, positive influence of religion variable on exclusive breast feeding practice. Employment, status and cadre are seen as variables that influence breast feeding practice. Mohammed (2006)'s study reveals that women in employed work were unable to practice exclusive breast feeding since they return early to work after their maternity leave which is less than six months while non-employed women had the opportunities to breast feed their newborns exclusively since there is no work challenges to them. The ideas of the above mentioned scholars established a relationship of a kind between socio-demographic characteristics and practice of exclusive breastfeeding positively and negatively respectively.

In all, the explanations of the above scholars were limited to their observations in their various environments. However, this study dwelled on socio-demographic characteristics and practice of exclusive breastfeeding among nursing mothers in government owned tertiary institutions of Osun State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Some children attending health centres present diarrhea and other food and water borne diseases such as cholera. Research had revealed a higher incidence of lot death (sudden infant death syndrome) in bottle fed babies (WHO, 2002). The cost of purchasing baby formula substitute is expensive and average numbers cannot afford it, while many of the major causes of childhood preventive diseases in our society is malnutrition. The above problems are numerous in our society and occur in everyday life. The nursing mothers in government owned territory institutions in Osun State are not excluded from facing the problems.

The government of the study area has been putting up various actions to curtail the problem of malnutrition of babies (under 5years) according to World Health Organization's advocate of exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6months of birth, different governmental organizations such as Alive and Thrive, World Health Organization, American Academy of Paediatrics and United Nations Children Fund, the resultant effect is still far from the target of WHO and UNICEF in the world over of which the study area is not excluded. Alive and Thrive (2013) indicates that each year 1.4million children die as a result of in adequate infant and young child feeding. With evidence that great benefits accrued from exclusive breast feeding as good means to solve the problem of malnutrition, evidence had it that there is still much

lower prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding practice among professional working mothers in developing countries of which the study area is inclusive (Sadoh, Sadoh and Oniyelu, 2011).

Coupled with the above is the balancing of the practice of exclusive breastfeeding by nursing mothers and their socio – demographic characteristics in the pursuit of their careers which pose a big problem especially when nursing mothers in tertiary institutions have tight schedule and several roles to perform. It is against this backdrop that this study intends to examine the experiences of nursing mother via their socio-demographic characteristics and the practice of exclusive breastfeeding in the government-owned tertiary institution of Osun State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the socio-demographic characteristics and the practice of exclusive breastfeeding among the nursing mothers in government-owned tertiary institution in Osun-state.

This general objective is broken down into a number of specific ones which are to:

- i. examine the influence of educational background of nursing mothers on practice of exclusive breastfeeding
- ii. investigate the relationship between age of the nursing mother and practice of exclusive breastfeeding?
- iii. examine the influence of occupation of nursing mother on the exclusive breastfeeding practice
- iv. examine the effect of the marital Status of the nursing mother on exclusive breastfeeding practice

Research Question

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, this research question was raised:

1. What is the influence of some socio demographic characteristics on practice of exclusive breast feeding?

Research Hypothesis

The only research Hypothesis formulated for this study is:

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between mother's socio-demographic characteristics and the practice of exclusive breastfeeding.

Significance of the Study

The research of this kind among nursing mothers in government owned tertiary institutions in Osun state will provide information on effect of socio-

demographic characteristics on practice of exclusive breastfeeding among mothers who are working in government owned tertiary institution of Osun state. There is need for greater efforts to promote and support the healthy practice of exclusive breastfeeding. The planning of public health intervention to promote longer and more exclusive breastfeeding requires an understanding of the factors that hinder the practice. Also, it will provide information on evaluation on exclusive breastfeeding programmes and enhance planning strategies for improvement which will be useful to such agencies as World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nation Children's Fund (UNICEF) are interested in promoting exclusive breastfeeding practice. The findings from this study will be useful in providing a basis for future research.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey method. The population for this study is all the nursing mothers who were at the time of the survey nursing babies of ages between a day old and 2years in the government owned tertiary institutions of Osun State (Staff and Students). The respondents were either married, single, divorced, separated or widow. The common denominator of the population was that they were of reproductive age (15 to 49 years). The sample consisted of only the nursing mothers in Osun State who were working or were students in government owned tertiary institution during the survey. The first 400 respondents who were able to fill the questionnaire correctly out of 565 expected were selected and other 20 selected for in-depth interview. All the respondents were selected from the ten (10) selected institutions.

The respondents were selected through multistage sample technique. Firstly, the institutions were stratified by ownership (Federal or State) and type (University, Polytechnic and College of Education etc). The institutions were purposively selected to ensure that the selection cut across the two recognized owners. Simple balloting was used to select institution where they were more than one. The third stage involved the selection of the respondents using snow ball sampling method based on the availability and willingness to participate in the study. Snow ball sampling method was adopted because it accesses respondents through third party since it is difficult to locate the respondents easily.

The instrument used for data collection covered socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. The instrument helps gather relevant information from respondents. For validity, the questionnaire was pilot tested by administering it to some respondents before the main administration.

This helped to determine the necessary changes in term of rephrasing and the logical sequence of the questions in the questionnaire. The reliability of the questionnaire was ascertained by employing the test-retest reliability method using a group of 20 nursing mothers at Osun State College of technology, Esa-Oke. After an interval of three (3) weeks, it was re-administered to the same set of mothers (only 18 were available). The two sets of score were compared. The questionnaire was therefore, considered adequate for the study. Data generated through quantitative technique were analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS). Univariate and Bivariate statistical procedure were adopted in data analysis. Descriptive statistical technique such as simple frequency distribution table, percentage, means, modes charts were used for chi-square and correlation were used for bivariate to explain relationship. The qualitative data were collected through in-depth interviews (IDI) sorted and involved the categorization of responses into the objective of the study.

Results

Research Question

1. What is the influence of some socio demographic characteristics on practice of exclusive breast feeding?

Table 1: Effect of Some Socio Demographic Characteristics on Practice of Exclusive Breast Feeding

Selected variables	B	S.E	WALD	DF	SIG	EXP(B)
Age						
15-19	RC	-	-	-	-	-
20-24	-.461	.242	3.637	1	.057	.631
25-29	-.476	.234	4.155	1	.042	.621
30-34	-.280	.261	1.150	1	.284	.756
35-39	-.054	.725	.006	1	.999	.000
EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION						
NO FORMAL EDUCATION	RC	-	-	-	-	-
Primary	.507	.293	3.000	1	.083	.602

Research Hypothesis

In order to affirm statistically as to whether or not mother's socio-demographic characteristics influence the practice of exclusive breastfeeding, an attempt is made to examine the significant relationship between independent variables and the dependent variable.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between mother's socio demographic characteristics and practice of exclusive breastfeeding.

Table 2: Effect of some socio-demographic characteristics on practice of Exclusive Breastfeeding



Selected variables	B	S.E	Wald	DF	Sig.	Exp(B)
Age						
15-19	RC	-	-	-	-	-
20-24	-.461	.242	3.637	1	.057	.631
25-29	-.476	.234	4.155	1	.042	.621
30-34	-.208	.261	1.150	1	.284	.756
35-39	-.054	.725	.006	1	.999	.000
Educational Qualification						
No formal Education	RC	-	-	-	-	-
Primary Education	.507	.293	3.000	1	.083	.602
Secondary Education	.167	.507	.247	1	.498	.846
Tertiary Education	.027	.186	.020	1	.887	.974
Occupation	RC	-	-	-	-	-
Worker	1.839	1.043	3.112	1	.078	6.290
Student	-.306	.162	3.577	1	.059	.736
Religion						
Christian	RC	-	-	-	-	-
Islamic	.509	.134	14.444	1	.000	1.664
Traditional	1.790	1.049	2.911	1	.088	5.992
Free Thinker	.409	.683	.351	1	.550	1.505
Marital Status	.151	RC	-	-	-	.860
Married	.490	.379	.158	1	.691	.613
Single	1.827	.504	.944	1	.331	.161
Widow	1.587	.622	8.642	1	.003	1.799
Divorce	.587	.602	.951	1	.329	1.799
Cohabiting	1.765	.506	12.147	1	0.000	5.840

Field Survey, 2023

Decision Rule

The inter relationship between some selected socio-demographic variables and the practice of exclusive breastfeeding were computed in this model to identify socio-demographic correlates of practice of exclusive breastfeeding. In term of measurement, the dependent variable in this model (Practice of exclusive breastfeeding) was measured by means of a checking containing practice of exclusive breastfeeding, some of which include usage or non usage. Respondents were classified according to whether (at the time of the survey) they ever engaged in the practice of exclusive breastfeeding. All variables were dichotomized into 0 and 1. Where 0 means the absence of the practice of exclusive breastfeeding and 1 denotes the practice of exclusive breastfeeding.

In the model, the predictors are age, educational attainment, occupation, religion and marital status. The Beta values are equivalent to the B values obtained in a multiple regression analysis, which was used to calculate the probability of a case falling into a specific category.

The contributions of various factors to practice of exclusive breastfeeding are presented here. Age groups 20-24, 25-29, and 30-34 years are negatively associated with the practice of exclusive breastfeeding, indication that those who are below 34years are 0.631, 0.621 and 0.756 less likely to have practiced exclusive breastfeeding compared to those in age group 15-19 years (i.e. the reference category) in the study area. Those in age group 35-49 years are positively related to the practice of exclusive breastfeeding indicating increase in the likelihood of practicing exclusive breastfeeding as age increases. However, the proportion of the unit change in the

practice of exclusive breastfeeding is explained by EXP(B) value 1.056. The findings imply an increased level of the practice of exclusive breast feeding among older women.

Same observations go for the result of education attainment, where primary, secondary and tertiary qualifications show positive association with the predicted variable and are 0.631, 0.621 and 0.756 more likely to practice exclusive breastfeeding compare to RC. This implies that the higher the level of education, the more mothers likely practice exclusive breastfeeding. The study also demonstrated that, marital status also has positive association with the practice of exclusive breastfeeding. Divorce woman had 0.003 level of significance while cohabiting is 1.799 times more likely to be less concerned for the practice of exclusive breastfeeding.

Discussion

Nutrition is a crucial, universally recognized component of the child right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health as lated in the convention on the rights of the child. Children have the right to adequate nutrition and access to safe and nutritious food, and both are essential for fulfilling their tight to the highest attainable standard of health.

The data indicated that in the study area, those above 45 years constitute less than one tenth of the total respondents. This is an indication that formal education is much more valuable among Osun people. In the main, the findings showcased that women still give birth at age 45 years and above, which may influence their exposure to exclusive breastfeeding in the study setting.

Moreover, there is general awareness of exclusive breastfeeding and high knowledge of its benefits in the study setting. This clearly confirms the findings of Obilade (2015) that knowledge about the importance of infant and young child feeding, particularly breastfeeding has vastly surpassed what was known in 1981. No doubt appropriate feeding practices play a crucial role in achieving optimal survival, growth 'and development. Breast milk is a living, substance that fulfils all of a baby's nutritional requirements in the first six months of life and has the additional advantage of containing antibodies that help protect the baby against common childhood illnesses throughout infancy and early childhood.

In an investigation of the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding, findings indicated it makes babies grow very well, healthy, increases babies' knowledge and more importantly that it is universally accepted behaviour in the Nigerian culture in general. Despite the high knowledge of exclusive breastfeeding respondents still desire to know the proper age to stop breastfeeding a baby. The types of food to be taken by

nursing mother while breastfeeding and whether breast milk is enough for a baby after 3 months. In the studies by Essien (2009) and Ajayi, Hellandendu and Odekunle (2011), it was released that the age of mother determines exclusive breast feeding practice. Ajayi et al, for instance, inferred that respondents between age 15-35 breast fed their new borns than those who were in the range of 15-24 years.

In the main, the chi-square result ($\chi^2 = 7.191$ (0.845) with the degree of freedom of 1 at 0.05 level of significance showcases that there is an association between 'significant others' pressure and acceptance of exclusive breastfeeding. However, the correlation result $R = 0.233$ (0.29) shows that there is a relationship between 'significant others' pressure and acceptance of exclusive breastfeeding. Furthermore, this explains that the acceptance of exclusive breastfeeding by nursing mothers and in the study area is determined by the significant others' pressure.

Basically, it could be noted in the literature that the type of occupation that one is engaged in can precipitate one's level of wellness and the ability to breastfeed babies exclusively. Furthermore, those engaging in less paying occupational status are likely having low level of educational qualification or may not have attained educational above primary school certificate. This may consequently indicate that they might not be well enlightened about the danger of not practicing exclusive breastfeeding.

Among other certain socio-demographic factors considered are age of the mother, educational level, marital status, occupation of mother and other related varieties. In the studies by Essien (2009) and Ajayi, Hellandendu and Odekunle (2011), it was released that the age of mother determines exclusive breast feeding practice. Ajayi et al, for instance, inferred that respondents between age 15-35 breast fed their new borns than those who were in the range of 15-24 years.

The fact is that respondents between the range of 15-24 years may be having their first experiences of delivery, hence, their low level of practice of exclusive breast feeding. Essien (2009) and Obilade (2015) reported that the education status of the mother is one of the variables that significantly influenced the exclusive breast feeding practice among the respondents studied. Obilade states that those with higher level of education were more likely to have correct knowledge of breast feeding practice (P2005) while Wyatt (2002) reported that there is no relationship between educational level of mother and breast feeding initiations. Study by Kronborg (2004) revealed that marital status is a variable that has influence on breast feeding practice while Morrow (2012)'s study indicates that marital status did not have significant relationship with breast feeding

practice. To Morrow, marital status is wholly depended on significant others.

Conclusion

There are some gaps of knowledge and attitudes that have arisen from this and other factors in the environment that are detrimental in the practice of breast feeding. These are the specific knowledge of breastfeeding and its exclusiveness till 6 months and continuing with complementary feeding after that but continuing with breast feeding till 24 months. The attitude factors are related with effect of breast feeding cosmetics/shape of the mother, organizational maternity leave allowed for breast feeding and household economical capacity for breastfeeding. Both these knowledge and attitude factors are observed to have their effect on the practice of exclusive breast feeding. Awareness and attitude of mothers towards the practice of exclusive breastfeeding does not translate into higher use. The implication of this is that there is a need to translate positive knowledge, positive attitude into positive practice, to increase the practice of exclusive breastfeeding among mothers.

Different factors including education, culture, age of respondents and monthly income influenced the attitude of mothers towards the practice of exclusive breastfeeding. There is an urgent need to modify existing policy on exclusive breastfeeding to include collaboration between government and other religious bodies to help in disseminating information about the practice and benefits that are related to the practice of exclusive breastfeeding.

Recommendations

The following recommendations will be of use to the employers and the nursing mothers:

1. There is an urgent need to modify existing policy on exclusive breastfeeding to help in disseminating information about the practice and benefits that are related to the practice and benefits that are related to the practice of exclusive breast feeding especially among professional nursing mothers
2. Employers should be encouraged to have day care centre for nursing mothers so that others who go back to paid employment do not have to stop breastfeeding
3. Advocacy efforts targeting the extension of maternity leave up to first six month after delivery should be practiced to prevent sub optional exclusive breastfeeding and associated health problem among children

4. Researchers should continue to focus on determining the most accurate scale for measuring social support and breastfeeding support.

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