**Attitude Of Married Female Students Towards Infants Breastfeeding In South-West Colleges Of Education**

**Kareem, Kazeem Kayode**

*Department of Educational Psychology,*

*Federal College of Education (Special),*

*P.M.B. 1089,*

*Oyo.*

*kareemkazeem4u@gmail.com*

**Abstract**

*This study investigated, into the attitude of married female students towards infants breastfeeding in South West Colleges of Education. The study employed descriptive survey research design. The population for the study included all the married female students in colleges of education in the South-West geo-political zone in Nigeria. 100 married female students were selected for the study, using multistage sampling technique. Simple Random sampling technique was used to select four Colleges of Education in South West Nigeria and purposive sampling technique was used to select only the married female students. Three research hypotheses were raised and questionnaire was used to collect information from the respondents. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significant. The results showed that the age, religious believes and years in marriage were not significantly showing difference in the attitudes of married female students in colleges of education towards breastfeeding. It was recommended that married women need to be more enlightened on the important of breast milk on the all-round development of their children. Government, through National Orientation Agencies, should aggressively campaign for exclusive breastfeeding of the child within the first six months.*

**Keywords:** Attitude, Married Female Students, Infant, Breastfeeding.

**Introduction**

The importance of breastfeeding as a determinant of infants nutrition, child mortality and morbidity has long been recognized and documented in the public health literature. The Nigeria government established the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) in Benin, Enugu, Maiduguri, Lagos, Jos and Port-Harcourt with the aim of providing mother and their infants a supportive environment for breastfeeding and to promote appropriate breastfeeding practices, thus helping to reduce infant morbidity and mortality rates. Despite these efforts, child and infant mortality continue to be major health issues affecting Nigeria.

As submitted by WHO (2021), the research indicates that only 25% of infants in Nigeria are exclusively breastfed, and UNICEF has acknowledged that 50% breastfeeding is the goal to be achieved by 2025. The research also reveals that only 25% of mothers follow the recommendation that an infant be breastfed for the first six months without supplementation—not even water—and that pressure to give newborns water in addition to breast milk is high. This presents challenges because the baby's tiny stomach, which can barely hold 60ml of liquid when filled with water, leaves no room for breast milk and its life-sustaining nutrients, Walker L. O, Freeland-Graves J. H & Milani T, (2004). It has been established that exclusive breastfeeding reduces infant mortality rates by up to 13% in low-income countries. A large cohort of study undertaken in rural Ghana concluded that 22% of neonatal deaths could be prevented if all infants were put to breast within the first hour of birth, World Health Organisation (2017)

According to recent analysis, suboptimum breastfeeding, especially non-EBF in the first 6 months of life, results in 1.4 million deaths and 10% of the diseases burden in children younger than 5 years in low-income countries.

**Infant**

This refers to the new born baby. According to medical dictionary infant means a human child from birth to the end of the first year of life. A new project to raise breastfeeding rates worldwide was proposed by UNICEF, WHO, and the Global Breastfeeding project. They believed that no nation on earth fully complies with the prescribed breastfeeding standards.

According to a recent Tribune newspaper assessment, the Global Breastfeeding Scorecard assessed 194 countries and revealed that just forty percent of infants under six months old receive exclusive breast milk, and only 23 countries have exclusive breastfeeding rates higher than 60% World Health Organisation (2017). According to Walker's (2004) research, children (5–18 years old) who breastfed for shorter periods of time have a lower risk of developing asthma. He came to the conclusion that breastfeeding prevents asthma.

The aforementioned data does not account for mothers who are literate worldwide. Is it possible that only literate moms in Nigeria adhere to the widely publicized push for exclusive breastfeeding, or is there a low inclination among nursing mothers toward this practice? The purpose of this study is to find out how married female students feel about nursing their young children.

Around the world, there are numerous infants feeding system. These systems vary greatly both in principle and in reality, but they all seem to achieve roughly the same level of effectiveness. The standard method of giving newborn infants the nutrition they require for healthy growth and development is breastfeeding. Breast milk represents an important and inexpensive source of protein and essential nutrient for the effective growth of an infant. Hwang (2016) observed that breastfeeding has been the principal mode of feeding infants world over. Few infants do survive without breastfeeding. This may be through the employment of nurses to use other supplements like artificial milk if surrogate mother cannot be found. A few years ago, there was a global decrease in breastfeeding, and the effects—particularly in underdeveloped nations—have garnered significant media attention Gay (2015). Due to the negative consequences of breastfeeding rates dropping over time, exclusive breastfeeding is currently being emphasized in the majority of countries worldwide. Globally, fresh and intriguing biochemical insights have been made in the last few years. Breastfeeding has positive effects on immunity, reduces allergies, and boosts the economy (Spady & Pabst 1990, Clement 1990, Lucas 1996).

According to WHO (1981), research on feeding behaviors worldwide shows that most nations are moving through three stages:

1. A Traditional Phase = High prevalence and duration of breastfeeding
2. A Transformation Phase = Breastfeeding falling becoming shorter
3. A Resurgence phase = Rising prevalence and duration of breastfeeding.

Mother’s decision about breastfeeding, artificial feeding or a mixed feeding varies with culture. Different reasons are often given by mothers for choosing any of the approaches over the breast. Such reasons as:

1. breast milk is likely to be insufficient in quantity and quality
2. infant must learn to drink from a bottle early or may have trouble learning it later,
3. bottle-fed babies are bigger and healthier
4. breastfeeding disfigures the breast and thus ruins mother’s figure.
5. Bottle feeding is more convenient, less time consuming

 and so, on are some of the reasons identified by Edegbai(1986).

Of the 135 million babies born every year, only 42% are breastfed within the first hour or life, only 38% of mothers practice exclusive breastfeeding during the first six months, and 58% of mothers continue breastfeeding up to the age of two years and beyond WHO (2021).

**Statement of the Problem**

The report on breastfeeding practice on any world breastfeeding day always shows that the percentage of children been breastfed exclusively is still low across the globe. As revealed by WHO (2017), the investment in breastfeeding is far too low. Each year, government in lower and middle income countries spend approximately US $250million on breastfeeding promotions and donors provide only an additional US $85million. The categories of mothers who resist this act is not always specify in the available report. Could it be elite mothers, illiterate mothers, young or old mothers? These questions prompted the researcher to investigate the attitude of married female students towards breastfeeding. Also, the campaign for exclusive breastfeeding for the first-six months is very low (if totally not available) in our tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Does it mean some students nursing babies totally complied with the UNICEF’s recommendation, regarding breastfeeding? Available records have also shown that infants mortality rate in the country is also principally caused by lack of excluding breastfeeding in the first six months of child’s birth. As always reveal in Nigerian newspapers, most of the mothers failed to comply with this due to economic reasons and family problems at times.

This research work thereby responds to some of the questions yet unanswered with respect to breastfeeding.

**Significance of the Study**

The research work is significance in that it’s - findings would be of help to the following categories of people- the government, the mothers, mothers-to-be, the students, the counselors and the society at large.

* It would be beneficial to the government since it supports the idea of family planning programme.
* It would also be economical to the nation because it would help in reducing cost of baby foods importation.
* It is beneficial to the mothers because it creates an awareness of importance of breastfeeding to the health of the nursing mothers.

Counselors and medical practitioners also benefit from this study as it gives them more insights into the attitude of parents towards breastfeeding of their babies. It is of great significance in marital counselling. This study will however help to determine the current attitude of mothers towards breastfeeding and find out the factors responsible for the attitude of (mother) students towards current breastfeeding practices. It will also help to reduce the high infants mortality and maternal mortality rate in the country.

**Scope of the study**

The coverage area for this study is South-West geo-political zone of Nigeria. The study will make use of the married female students from some selected colleges of Education within the six (6) states of the geo-political zone.

**Research Hypotheses**

The researcher formulated the underlisted hypotheses for the study.

**H01**: There is no significant difference in the attitude of married female students in the colleges of education towards breastfeeding based on religion.

**H02**: There is no significant difference in the attitude of married female students in the colleges of education towards breastfeeding based on years in marriage.

**H03**: There is no significant difference in the attitude of married female students in the colleges of education towards breastfeeding based on their ages.

**Methodology**

**Research Design**

The research design employed for this study is the descriptive survey method. The data collected will be examined to determine whether or not the attitude of the respondents towards breast feeding differs based on religion, age and years of marriage. The population of the study consists of all married female students in colleges of education in the South-West geo-political zone in Nigeria.

**Sample and Sampling Techniques**

Multi-stage sampling procedure will be used in this study. The researcher selected four from the existing colleges of education, using simple random sampling and then selects only the married female students using purposive sampling technique .

**Research Instrument**

The instrument used to collect data for this study is researcher’s self-designed questionnaire, titled, attitude of Married College Student Towards Breastfeeding’. The questionnaire consists of two sections. The first section (Section A) is on the personal data of the respondents such as, age, marital status, religion, level, number of children and year in marriage, while the second section (Section B) contain 20 items aimed at collecting information on respondents’ opinion on their attitude toward breastfeeding.

**Validity & Reliability of the Instrument**

The validity of the instrument was ensured by subjecting the instrument (questionnaire) to proper vetting by the professionals in the field of research. The constructive corrections helped to do away with irrelevant items, thereby ensuring the instruments are truly sampling appropriate opinions suitable for the purpose of the study. The reliability of the instrument was determined by using split-half method and the reliability coefficient was 0.87, which was considered high enough for the study.

**Procedure For Data Collection**

The Researcher visited the four selected institutions and took permission from the authority before he was directed to the crèches in the colleges. Researcher assistant were of help by ensuring that the questionnaires were distributed only to the real mothers because some brought children for some students. The researcher, with the assistants, then administered the instrument on the respondents to determine their attitude regarding infant breastfeeding.

**Method Of Data Analysis**

Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics including frequency count and mean score of the participants. Also, inferential statistics of t-test was used in testing the differences in the attitudes based on religion, age and years in marriage. All the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 significant levels.

**Analyses of Data and Presentation of Results**

**H01**: There is no significant difference in the attitude of married female students in the colleges of education towards breastfeeding based on religion

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Group  | Number  | Mean  | Standarddeviation | Df | t-cal | t-critical | Remark  |
| Christianity  | 37 | 55.09 | 11.91 |  |  |  |  |
| Islam  | 63 | 59.52 | 10.81 | 98 | 0.88 | 1.98 | NS |

In the above table, differences in the attitudes of married female students towards breastfeeding based on religion were compared at 0.05 level of significance. Since the t-calculated (0.88) is less than the critical value (1.98) the hypothesis is accepted. Hence, there is no difference in the attitude of married female students towards breastfeeding based on religion.

**H02**: There is no significant difference in the attitude of married female students in the colleges of education towards breastfeeding based on years in marriage.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Group  | Number  | Mean  | Standarddeviation | Df | t-cal | t-critical | Remark  |
| Below 5yrs in marriage | 43 | 60.43 | 11.21 |  |  |  |  |
| 5yrs and Above in marriage | 57 | 57.54 | 10.28 | 98 | 0.92 | 1.98 | NS |

In the above table, differences in the attitudes of married female students towards breastfeeding based on years in marriage were examined at 0.05 level of significance. Since the t-calculated (0.92) is less than the critical value (1.98) the hypothesis is accepted. Hence, there is no significant difference in the attitude of married female students towards breastfeeding based on the number of years spent in marriage.

**H03:** There is no significant difference in the attitude of married female students in the colleges of education towards breastfeeding based on their ages.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Group  | Number  | Mean  | Standarddeviation | Df | t-cal | t-critical | Remark  |
| Below 25 | 36 | 59.11 | 13.1 |  |  |  |  |
| 25 and Above  | 64 | 62.54 | 12.8 | 98 | 0.79 | 1.98 | NS |

In the above table, differences in the attitudes of married female students towards breastfeeding based on religion were compared at 0.05 level of significance. Since the t-calculated (0.79) is less than the critical value (1.98) the hypothesis is accepted. Hence, there is no difference in the attitude of married female students towards breastfeeding based on their ages.

**Discussion of Results and Findings**

This study investigated the attitude of married female students in South West college of education towards breastfeeding, based on their ages, years in marriage and religious belief. This study was carried out among female married students of Colleges of Education in the South-West Nigeria. It was found that there is no difference in the attitude of married female students based on either age, years of marriage and religious belief. This is in line with the opinion of Gay (2015) and WHO (2021) that there is decline in the rate at which women breastfed their children exclusively. The campaign for exclusive breastfeeding is experiencing backwardness in Nigerian media. This should not be so, even if significant percentage of mothers already complied with the ideal method, at least, to maintain it, the campaign should continue. This will not only be beneficial to the child and the mother but to the society at large as it will avert the high adverse effects the lack of proper practice of exclusive breastfeeding can cause.

**Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher concluded that most of the married female students in South West colleges of education are of poor attitude towards infant breastfeeding practice. Their ages, religious beliefs and years in marriage are not significantly make any difference in their attitudes.

**Recommendations**

1. Health care givers should improve on educating young mothers on importance of breastfeeding to the overall growth and development of infants
2. There should be strict punishment for any mother who failed to comply with infant breastfeeding
3. Campaign for infants breastfeeding should be given priority on Nigerian social media
4. National Orientation Agency should pay more attention on breastfeeding campaign and extend this to maternity centers available around their domains

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