

## **Knowledge and Effect of Exclusive Breastfeeding among Nursing Mother's in Aba North Local Government Area.**

Utah-Iheanyichukwu, Chioma<sup>\*1</sup>, Samuel, Joseph Magnus<sup>2</sup>, Anagbakwuonye, Kaosisochukwu Ifechukwu<sup>2</sup>, Allison, Trust-Jah Tuaegwuchukwu<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>Department of Human Nutrition and Dietetics, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, PMB 7267 Umuahia, Abia State, Nigeria.

<sup>2</sup>Department of Nutrition and Dietetics, Temple Gate Polytechnic Aba, Abia State, Nigeria.

<sup>3</sup>Unilever/African Global Logistics Distribution Center, Abuja, Nigeria.

**Corresponding Author:** [ttchioma@gmail.com](mailto:ttchioma@gmail.com).

### **Abstract**

*It has been documented over the years that the practice of exclusive breastfeeding has not been adopted universally; and most mothers embrace the idea but fail to breastfeed exclusively few weeks after giving birth to their baby. Evidences from previous studies have shown that early initiation of breast feeding is linked to significant gains and improved childhood survival, bolstering the recommendation to begin breast feeding as soon as possible after child birth. Rates of early initiation of breast feeding still needs to be improved in order to reap the benefits of proper feeding habits during early infancy; thus, understanding breast feeding patterns is critical for prioritizing knowledge gaps in the field of childhood survival.*

*A survey was carried out in Aba North is a Local Government Area in Abia State, Nigeria. The study population are breastfeeding mothers of 0-24 month's old children in the area. Sample size using the prevalence formula was used. A structured questionnaire was used to collect information on socio-economic/demographic characteristics, knowledge and practice of exclusive breastfeeding. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 23) was used to analyze the data. The study revealed that majority (66.5%) of the respondents was between the ages of 18-35 years while 0.8% was 56 years and above. About 62.8% of the respondents had secondary education while 0.4% had no formal education. More than half (54.4%) of them were traders, and lower (4.2%) than five percent were civil servants. Majority (82.0%) of the Nursing Mothers got the awareness of exclusive breastfeeding from hospital/health centers. A total of 65.3% of the respondents had a fair knowledge of exclusive breastfeeding.*

*In conclusion, nursing mothers in the study area were aware and knowledgeable about exclusive breast-feeding of baby's at the early months of life.*

**Key-words:** Awareness, Exclusive breastfeeding, Knowledge, Nursing mothers

### **Connaissance et effet de l'allaitement maternel exclusif chez les mères qui allaitent dans la zone de gouvernement local d'Aba North.**

### **Résumé**

Il a été démontré au fil des années que la pratique de l'allaitement maternel exclusif n'a pas été adoptée universellement ; et la plupart des mères acceptent l'idée mais ne parviennent pas à allaiter exclusivement quelques semaines après avoir donné naissance à leur bébé. Les preuves

d'études antérieures ont montré que le début précoce de l'allaitement maternel est lié à des gains significatifs et à une meilleure survie de l'enfance, renforçant ainsi la recommandation de commencer l'allaitement maternel dès que possible après la naissance de l'enfant. Les taux d'initiation précoce à l'allaitement maternel doivent encore être améliorés afin de récolter les bénéfices de bonnes habitudes alimentaires pendant la petite enfance ; ainsi, comprendre les habitudes d'allaitement est essentiel pour prioriser les lacunes dans les connaissances dans le domaine de la survie de l'enfance.

Une enquête a été réalisée à Aba North, une zone de gouvernement local de l'État d'Abia, au Nigéria. La population étudiée est constituée de mères allaitantes d'enfants âgés de 0 à 24 mois dans la région. La taille de l'échantillon utilisant la formule de prévalence a été utilisée. Un questionnaire structuré a été utilisé pour collecter des informations sur les caractéristiques socio-économiques/démographiques, les connaissances et la pratique de l'allaitement maternel exclusif. Le progiciel statistique pour les sciences sociales (SPSS version 23) a été utilisé pour analyser les données. L'étude a révélé que la majorité (66,5 %) des personnes interrogées étaient âgées de 18 à 35 ans, tandis que 0,8 % avaient 56 ans et plus. Environ 62,8% des personnes interrogées avaient une éducation secondaire tandis que 0,4% n'avaient aucune éducation formelle. Plus de la moitié (54,4 %) d'entre eux étaient des commerçants et moins de 5 % (4,2 %) étaient des fonctionnaires. La majorité (82,0 %) des mères allaitantes ont été informées de l'allaitement exclusif dans les hôpitaux/centres de santé. Au total, 65,3 % des personnes interrogées avaient une assez bonne connaissance de l'allaitement maternel exclusif. En conclusion, les mères allaitantes de la zone d'étude étaient conscientes et bien informées sur l'allaitement maternel exclusif de leur bébé dès les premiers mois de sa vie.

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**Mots-clés :** Sensibilisation, Allaitement exclusif, Connaissance, Mères allaitantes

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تم توثيق ممارسة الرضاعة الطبيعية الحصرية على مر السنين لم تعتمد على الصعيد العالمي ؛ ومعظم الأمهات يتبنين الفكرة ولكنها تفشل في الرضاعة الطبيعية بعد أسابيع قليلة فقط من ولادة طفلها. أظهرت الأدلة من الدراسات السابقة أن الشروع المبكر في الرضاعة الطبيعية يرتبط بالمكاسب الكبيرة وتحسين بقاء الطفولة، تعزيز التوصية ببدء الرضاعة الطبيعية في أقرب وقت ممكن بعد الولادة. لا تزال معدلات الشروع المبكر في الرضاعة الطبيعية بحاجة إلى تحسين من أجل جني فوائد عادات التغذية السليمة خلال مرحلة الطفولة المبكرة ؛ وبالتالي، فإن فهم أنماط الرضاعة الطبيعية أمر بالغ الأهمية لتحديد أولويات الفجوات المعرفية في مجال بقاء الطفولة. تم إجراء مسح في أبا نورث هي منطقة حكومية محلية في ولاية أبا، نيجيريا. تقوم مجموعة الدراسة برضاعة أمهات لأطفال تتراوح أعمارهم بين 0-24 شهرًا في المنطقة. تم استخدام حجم العينة باستخدام صيغة الانتشار. استخدم استبيان منظم لجمع المعلومات بشأن الخصائص الاجتماعية - الاقتصادية والمعرفة وممارسة الرضاعة الطبيعية الخالصة واستخدمت المجموعة الإحصائية للعلوم الاجتماعية (النسخة 23 من نظام الصحة والصحة النباتية) لتحليل البيانات. كشفت الدراسة أن (66.5٪) من المستجيبين تتراوح أعمارهم بين 18 و 35 عامًا بينما كان 0.8٪ 56 عامًا فما فوق. حوالي 62.8٪ من المستجيبين حصلوا على تعليم ثانوي بينما 0.4٪ لم يحصلوا على تعليم رسمي كان 54.4٪ منهم من التجار، وكان أقل (4.2٪) من خمسة٪ من موظفي الخدمة المدنية حصلت 82.0٪ من الأمهات المرضعات على وعي بالرضاعة الطبيعية الحصرية من المستشفى ما مجموعه 65.3٪ من المستجيبين لديهم معرفة عادلة بالرضاعة الطبيعية الحصرية. في الختام، كانت الأمهات المرضعات في منطقة الدراسة على دراية ومعرفة الرضاعة الطبيعية الخالصة للطفل في الأشهر الأولى من الحياة

## Introduction

Breast milk is known to be the best food for the infants because it contains all the nutrients in the correct proportions. It is readily produced, easily digested and assimilated, has the correct temperature and is always available at no cost (Frazer and Cooper, 2013). Breastfeeding creates an inimitable psychosocial bond between the mother and baby (Okolo and Ogbonna, 2012), and enhances modest cognitive development (Mbada *et al.*, 2013). According to World Health Organization (WHO, 2019) sub-optimal breastfeeding, especially non-exclusive breastfeeding in the first 6 months of life resulted in 1.4 million deaths and 10% of the disease burden in children younger than 5 years of age. Exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) for the first 6 months of life improves the growth, health and survival status of newborns (WHO, 2017). Over the years, the practice of exclusive breastfeeding has not been strictly adhered to universally as many mothers accept this notion but do not zealously practice exclusive breastfeeding in the first six months of their babies lives. Studies carried out in Africa, especially in Nigeria by Ajibuah (2013), Ekanem *et al.* (2012), and Munyaradzi and Edmos (2019) clearly demonstrated the lack of awareness and knowledge on EBF affect the attitude and practice of the mothers towards EBF. The objective of this study was to assess the knowledge and effect of practice of breastfeeding among nursing mothers in Aba North Local Government Area of Abia State.

## Materials and Method

A cross sectional study design was used. A survey was carried out in Aba North Local Government Area of Abia State, Nigeria. The Local Government Area is located in the North-South axis of Abia State which is in South East agro-ecological zones of

Nigeria. Abia State lies between longitudes 7°00'E and 8°00'E and latitude 4°45'N and 6°17'N of the equator.

The study population includes all the breastfeeding mothers of 0-24 month's old children in Aba North Local Government Area. The sample size for the study was calculated using the prevalence formula for sample size calculation. The 2013 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) showed that only 17 percent of children under age 6 months are exclusively breastfed in Nigeria (NDHS, 2014).

$$\text{Sample size (n)} = \frac{Z^2 p(1-P)}{d^2}$$

Where n = sample size

$Z^2$  = confidence interval (95%) = 1.96

P = expected prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding in Nigeria (17%)

d = precision (5%) = 0.05

$$(n) = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.17(1-0.17)}{0.05^2}$$

$$= \frac{3.8416 \times 0.1411}{0.0025} = 217$$

10% of the sample size would be added to make up for possible drop out.

$$21.7 + 217 = 238.7$$

Before the commencement of data collection, preliminary visits were made to the health centers and hospitals to seek permission from their authorities. A letter of introduction and identification was given by the Head of Department of Nutrition and Dietetics, Temple Gate Polytechnic, Aba. This letter was presented to their heads and the day of commencement of the field work was agreed on before the collection of data, the participants was informed of the objectives and requirements of the study and given the assurance that information provided will be handled confidentially. Verbal/oral consent was obtained from the study participants before including them in the study.

A structured questionnaire comprising four (4) sections was used to collect information on socio-economic/demographic characteristics, knowledge and practice of exclusive breastfeeding. The questionnaire was validated by lecturers of the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics, Temple Gate Polytechnic, Aba. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 23) was used to analyze the data.

## Results

**Table 1: Demographic characteristic of the respondents**

Variables	Frequency	Percent
<b>Age</b>		
<18 years	8	3.4
18-35 years	159	66.5
36-55 years	70	29.3
56 years and above	2	0.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Number of children</b>		
One	9	3.8
Two	40	16.7
Three	30	12.6
Four	160	67.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>House lived in</b>		
Thatched	2	0.8
Corrugated iron sheet	140	58.6
Aluminum sheet	60	25.1
Synthetic roofing	37	15.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Source of water</b>		
River/stream/pond	11	4.6
Dug well	60	25.1
Borehole	128	53.6
Public water	40	16.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Type of toilet</b>		
Bush	20	8.4
Bucket	9	3.8
Pit latrine	130	54.4
Water closet	80	33.5

<b>Total</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>100</b>
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Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Many (66.5%) of the respondents were between the ages of 18-35 years while a few (0.8%) of them were 56 years and above. More than half (67.0%) of the nursing mothers had four children only while a few (3.8%) had one child only. A little above half (58.6%) of the respondents lived in corrugated iron sheet buildings while a few (0.8%) of the respondents lived in thatched houses. Borehole was the source of water supply to 53.6% of the nursing mothers compared to the 4.6% whose source of water supply is streams/rivers/ponds. Pit latrine (54.4%) was the prevalent type of toilet used by the respondents' while skeletal number of them (3.8%) used buckets as the type of toilet.

**Table 2 Socio-economic characteristics of the subjects**

Variables	Frequency	Percent
<b>Educational qualification</b>		
No formal education	1	0.4
Primary education	79	33.1
Secondary education	150	62.8
Tertiary education	9	3.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Occupation</b>		
Civil/public servant	10	4.2
Trader/business	130	54.4
Farmer	70	29.3
Artisan	29	12.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Monthly earning</b>		
Less than N5,000	4	1.7
N5,000-N15,999	80	33.5

N16,000-120	50.2
N49,999	
N 50,000 and above	14.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>239</b>
	<b>100</b>

Table 2 shows the socio-economic characteristics of the nursing mothers. Many (62.8%) of them had secondary education while 0.4% had no formal education. Trading/business was the main occupation of more than half (54.4%) of the respondents while a few (4.2%) of them were civil/public servants. Above half (50.2%) of the respondents earned a monthly income of N16,000 to N49,999 whereas only a few of them earned below N5,000 per month.

**Table 3: Knowledge and awareness of exclusive breastfeeding among nursing mothers**

Variables	Frequency	Percent
<i><b>Awareness of exclusive breastfeeding</b></i>		
Yes	238	99.6
No	1	0.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>100</b>
<i><b>Source of awareness</b></i>		
Hospital/health centers	196	82.0
From Television	10	4.2
From friends/relatives	20	8.4
from radio and television	12	5.0
No response	1	0.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>100</b>
<i><b>Categories of</b></i>		

<i><b>knowledge of awareness</b></i>	63	26.4
Poor knowledge		
Fair knowledge	156	65.3
Good knowledge	20	8.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 3 shows the knowledge and awareness of subjects on exclusive breastfeeding. Result shows that a vast majority (99.6%) of the subjects were aware about exclusive breastfeeding while 0.4% has not heard about it. Majority 82.0% of the subjects reported hospital/health centers as their source of awareness with a further 8.4%, 5.0% and 4.2% reporting friends/relatives, radio and television and television respectively. Many 65.3% of the subjects had a fair knowledge on exclusive breastfeeding with a further 26.4% having poor knowledge while 8.3% had good knowledge on exclusive breastfeeding.

**Table 4: Attitude of the respondents to exclusive breastfeeding**

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Poor	54	22.6
Fair	109	45.6
Good	76	31.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4 shows the attitude of the respondents to exclusive breastfeeding. Nearly half of the respondents (45.6%), 31.8% and 22.6% of the respondents had a fair, good and poor attitude respectively towards exclusive breastfeeding.

**Table 5: Attitude of the respondents to exclusive breastfeeding**

Variables	Mean	Std deviation	Remark
Breastfeeding a baby with only milk and no water is the best food for the child for 6 months	4.06	1.34	Agree
Children breast fed with only breast milk are more intelligent than children breast fed with water	2.55	0.15	Undecided
A mother can express her breast milk to be given to a baby if she is not around	3.50	1.12	Agree
Breastfeeding a child without water makes the child to become wicked later in life	2.40	1.15	Disagree
There is no need practicing exclusive breastfeeding because even those that teach about it do not practice it	3.00	0.18	Undecided
it is not healthy giving infants expressed breast milk	2.00	1.32	Disagree

The attitude of the respondents to exclusive breastfeeding is presented in Table 5. The respondents agreed that breastfeeding a baby with milk only and not water is the best food for a child for 6 months ( $4.06 \pm 1.34$ ). A mother can express her breast milk to a baby if she was not around ( $3.50 \pm 1.12$ ). However, they were undecided about the belief that children breastfed with milk only are more intelligent than those breastfed with water ( $2.55 \pm 0.15$ ). Similarly, they were undecided whether there is no need practicing exclusive breastfeeding because those who preach exclusive breastfeeding do not practice it ( $3.00 \pm 0.18$ ).

The practice of exclusive breastfeeding by nursing mothers is shown in Table 6. As at the time when the study was carried out, more than 60.3% of the respondents were breastfeeding their babies while 39.7% were not. Thirty-one percent of them could not practice exclusive breastfeeding due to their work schedule, while 2.0% gave health reasons for not practicing exclusive breastfeeding. Greater than fifty percent of the nursing mothers breastfed their child on demand while others (34.3%) breastfed when their child started crying. A fewer (1.7%) of them breastfed when they are less

busy. Majority (87.9%) of the nursing mothers fed their children with expressed breast milk.

### Discussion

The age ranges 18-35 years as well as 56 years and above could be attributed to the kind of urban setting where the study was carried out which was similar to the findings of Ekanem *et al.* (2012). More than half of the subjects lived in corrugated iron sheet buildings while few of the respondents lived in thatch houses and this can be attributed to the area which the study was carried, which was in Aba North Local Government Area – known to be an urbanized area. Urban environment is not known for thatch houses as reported by Khamnian *et al.* (2013) and it is in line with the result of the study where most of the respondents lived in corrugated iron sheet buildings.

Socio-economic characteristics of the respondents indicated that many of them had secondary education while few had no formal education and could have affected their attitude and knowledge of respondents to exclusive breastfeeding as majority of them had a fair knowledge of exclusive

**Table 6** practice of subjects towards exclusive breastfeeding

Variables	Frequency	Percent
<b><i>Still breastfeeding</i></b>		
Yes	144	60.3
No	95	39.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>100</b>
<b><i>Reason for not breastfeeding</i></b>		
No time due to work	74	31.0
Inadequate breast milk	16	6.7
Health reasons	5	2.0
No response	144	60.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>100</b>
<b><i>Frequency of breastfeeding</i></b>		
On demand	126	52.7
Only when breast is full	7	2.9
When child starts to cry	82	34.3
When am less busy	4	1.7
When am at home or in private	20	8.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>100</b>
<b><i>Breastfeeding when not around</i></b>		
With expressed breastmilk	210	87.9
Breastfeed child when I come back	29	12.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>100</b>

breastfeeding. This was in agreement with the report of Goosen *et al.* (2009) who reported that 7.1% and 68.6% of mothers had a negative and relatively positive (fair) attitude as well as a complete positive attitude about breastfeeding. Other studies (Ekanem *et al.*, 2012) also revealed that maternal knowledge about exclusive breastfeeding was at moderate level, but

their attitude was at moderate and low levels.

The study showed that more than half of the respondent earned a monthly income between N16, 000-N49, 999 whereas only few earned below N5, 000 monthly and this could be attributed to the fact that despite Aba is an Urbanized area, there are low income earners especially amongst women – breast feeding mothers which are expected to stay at home and care for the baby which is consonance with the findings of Ajibuah (2013) and Munyaiadzi and Edemos (2019).

Trading/business was the main occupation of more than half of the respondents with few of them civil/public servants this could be because Aba city is known to be an area of commerce and as recorded by Ajibuah, (2013) that Aba is a business city where everyone seems to be involved with business.

Majority of the respondents reported hospital/health centers as their source of awareness with a further few reporting friends/relatives, radio and television and these revealed that these professionals do strongly advocate to their clients that breastfeeding is the optimum method of infant feeding (Munyaradzi and Edmos, 2019) and this buttresses the point that the area is an urbanized area due to access to hospitals/health centers as well as the claim by some respondents that the awareness reached them through media.

## Conclusion

This present study concludes that despite the knowledge of exclusive breastfeeding of many of the nursing mothers were good; they however, had a generally poor attitude towards exclusive breast feeding. Some of the nursing mothers had poor practice or did not practice exclusive breastfeeding as some socio-economic variables were also shown

to have effect on the breastfeeding practices of the mothers. To that effect, adequate practice of exclusive breastfeeding will likely depend on the right attitude towards the practice as well as the type of occupation the nursing mother did or is doing which will determine the frequencies in having physical contacts the nursing mother has with her baby.

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