

## Attitudes Towards Breastfeeding and Weaning Among Nursing Women



### Psychology

**KEYWORDS :** Breastfeeding, working-class women and self-efficacy.

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### ABSTRACT

*The study investigated the attitudes of women on feeding and weaning, in Primary Health Care Keffi Local Government of Nasarawa State. The purpose is to find out how the women practice breastfeeding and weaning in order to suggest solutions where they will have problems. The review of literature shows that working class women in other places also faced problems like women in Keffi. A descriptive survey research was used where a questionnaire was structure to collect information in the opinions of 120 women in the three centres under study. Mean statistics was employed to analyse the data. It was discovered that the women are not breastfeeding exclusively for six months and most weaned their babies abruptly before two ears. Some of the problems faced are resentment by employers and colleagues; workload is much, lack of family and societal support to encourage nursing mothers are hindrance to exclusive breastfeeding. Base on the findings, recommendation is made that nursing mothers should be given breaks for two hours to go and breastfeed, maternity leave should be extended from three months to six months in order to allow more time to breastfeed their babies before weaning for the children's good health*

### INTRODUCTION

Feeding is the taking of foods and the first ever food a human being feeds on is breast milk. Majority of mammals including man nourish their young ones with the milk from special milk producing organs called mamma of the mother. It is the wish of every mother to see her child growing well and healthy; women are the centre focus of every family as far as feeding is concerned.

In Keffi town, the old tradition holds that women remain at home and their sole duty is to cook for the family mainly meals and snacks. This old tradition has been over shadowed by wide spread of influences such as successful girl-child formal education, inter-marriages, women employment in public and private sectors; urbanization and modernization, family poverty due to other factors. Burgess and King (1992) state that "breastfeeding is not only desirable but it is readily available at all times as the required temperature and desired proportion of food nutrients for the child. "Many policies have been initiated on this issue, such as Baby Friendly Hospital initiative which is to breastfeed a baby exclusively for six months without water or any food. In support to this, ideas, Burgess and King (1922) defined weaning as a process of introducing foods other than breast milk to a child and gradually increasing the amount, so that eventually the child gets enough energy and nutrients from ordinary family food.

The period is very critical in the life of the child because it is a transition during which a child whose main food is breast milk changes over to adult food. The women on paid employment have babies and have careers too, neither of these must be compromised, therefore her dual role of production and reproduction call for recognition and support. The working class woman is a worker, a nursing mother and of course a home manager, who strives to succeed, makes food readily at table for every member of the family; and at the same time feeds her new born or infant tenderly on the breast. She does and effects all actions within the scope of twenty four hours daily.

Infants and child feeding is an important area of public health effort in the United States as breastfeeding is associated with reduced risk for chronic diseases and early-life diseases such as otitis media, respiratory tract infections, atopic dermatitis, and obesity.

Leon-cava, Lutter, & Ross Martin (2002) have observed that improved breastfeeding practices are crucial for child growth and development. However, the advocates of breastfeeding have noticed that there have been global declines in the behaviour among nursing mothers. This is particularly more pronounced in developing countries.

Exclusive breastfeeding rates are low in the United States with 30.5% of mothers exclusively breastfeeding their infants to 3 months of age and 11.3% to 6 months based on data from the 2004 National Immunization Survey. Rates are lower in certain population groups such as African-Americans (19.8% exclusively breastfeeding at 3 months), among mothers with a lower education level (22.9% at 3 months), and in mothers who had an income to poverty ration <100% (23.9% at 3 months). Studies with participants in the special supplemental nutrition program for women, infant and children (WIC) have found that the rate of initiation of breastfeeding was 54.3% among WIC participants and 76.1% among non-WIC participants in 2003. In 2004, breastfeeding initiation in the United States was 73.8%, early breastfeeding was 41.5% at 6 months and 20.9% at 12 months. In general, those with lower incomes and participants in the WIC programme have a lower breastfeeding rate, with those with a household income to poverty ration <100% having 28.9% breastfeeding at 6 months and 12.9% at 12 months. Among WIC participants in 2003 the rate of breastfeeding at 6 months, was 42.7% and at 12 months was 21.0% according to a survey by Ryan and Zhon (2003).

In Wagner, Mark, Wagner, Chatman, Chen and Hulsey (2005) study indicates that despite all the recommendations by expert as regard infant breastfeeding for the first 6 months of life, a significant percentage of mothers choose not to breastfeed. The study conducted by Adeyinka, Ajibola, Oyesoji and Adedeji (2008) revealed the reasons why nursing mothers do not breastfeed because of their own increased nutritional feeding, frustration and painful experience, fear of losing weight, nature of job, lack of confidence in exclusive breastfeeding, long period of recommended exclusive breastfeeding and the fact that the infant may become addicted to the behaviour.

In Alutu's studies in (2000), he reported that the decline of breastfeeding in most cultures has been associated with mothers being frustrated by factors external to them as well as personal.

Igbedion (1994) in a study with Markurdi women in the middle belt region of Nigeria confirmed that the reduction of sucking events (breastfeeding) due to introduction of weaning has a direct proportional effect on the length of the lactation amenorrhea. Mudambi (1981) discovered that Urhobo women in the defunct Bendel state of Nigeria now Edo and Delta states have breastfeeding attitudes towards short duration which is in line with the findings of Barber, Abernatty, Steinmetz and Charles bois (1997) with American women that reported less than 35% of mothers exclusive breastfeeding at 4 months. Quinn, Greame, Greame, Flower, Greame and Zbigniere (2005) reported that in 2003 breastfeeding rate in Ghana jumped from 32 to 62% and then dropped to 40% in 2005.

Despite all these advantages of breastfeeding to both the mother and the child, the incidence of breastfeeding is much lower among educated nursing mothers in African and United Kingdom, hence the need for this present study. In Keffi one the urban area of Nasarawa state.

According to Ebrahim (1980) and Burgess and King (1992), the problems faced by women during feeding and weaning can be regrouped into two, emotional and physiological. Ebrahim (1980) states that normally, the rural mothers have very little difficulty in breastfeeding their infants. Such mothers are natural milk secretors occasionally it has been found that attempts to teach the techniques of breastfeeding to such mother produces confusion in their minds. While Burgess and King in a separate study observed that if there is undue modesty embarrassment at the thought of breastfeeding, the lay down reflex is likely to be inhibited. Similarly, culture which does not attach any stigma to breastfeeding, the amount of sucking allowed is unrestricted and on demand which is known to help milk production.

Shaibu (1997) has reported in his study of family support program technical report on girl child development that, the Nigerian women, working class women just like any other African women faces a lot of difficulties and challenges as they carries onto their duties as an employees in an organization and at the same time a nursing mother. To this study, children born of mothers who are workers in busy organization do not enjoy maternal case expected of them, as their mothers often pre-occupy with the office work. According to this study, it states that even though the working class women have had same levels of western education, they do not have enough time to breastfeed their children and so wean them early.

There is some evidence that nutritional interventions should focus on changing attitudes in addition to providing mothers with enhanced nutritional knowledge. One study with women, infants and children (WIC) mothers in Maryland found the best way to improve consumption of nutritional intake is through increased maternal self-efficacy and attitudes towards nutrition but not necessarily nutrition knowledge. The objectives of this study are to find out attitudes of women towards breast feeding and weaning in Keffi Local Government Area of Nasarawa State.

#### HYPOTHESIS

1. Individual employment status will have significant influence on his behaviour (breastfeeding and weaning)
2. Nursing mothers with high social support will report significantly better in their attitude towards breastfeeding than nursing mothers with low social support.

#### Method

##### Participants

One hundred and twenty breastfeeding women participated in this study from three Primary Health Care's in Keffi Local Government Area of Nasarawa State in Nigeria. The Primary Health Care's selected includes; AngwanWaje, Tsohon-Kasawa, and

Gunduma Primary Health Care. They participants drawn included those on post-natal and post-caesarean section wards of these clinics.

#### Instruments

The researchers adopted existing questionnaire: Attitude towards Breastfeeding Scale (ATBS) developed by Regina Cusson (1993) and some related literature were used to collect data from the respondents. The scale was given to some clinical psychologist in Nasarawa State University to ascertain the suitability of the scale to measure the desire content. The researchers also subjected the test to reliability with one hundred post-natal women in Specialist Hospital Lafia, Nasarawa State. The result show a Chronbach alpha of 0.62 meaning the items could measure what we intent to do.

#### Design/Statistics

The researcher adopted a simple survey design for the study while the independent t-test was used in testing the hypothesis.

#### Result

**Table 1: summary table of independent t-test showing influence of individual employment status in breastfeeding attitudes.**

Employment	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Df	P
Breastfeeding and weaning behaviour						
Working class women (employed)-	53	12.57	2.82	.69	118	.49 (>.05)
Housewife (not employed)-	67	14.91	1.97			

The result on table one shows that nursing women that are not employed (housewife)-(M = 14.91, S.D = 1.97) significantly reported higher breastfeeding behaviour than those that are employed (working class women)-(M = 12.57, S.D = 2.82). This implies that employment has significant influence on breastfeeding behaviour among the nursing women sample. The hypothesis is thereby supported.

**Table 2: Summary table of independent t-test showing difference between nursing with Lumen with low and high breastfeeding self-efficacy on breastfeeding behaviour**

Social support	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Df	P
Breastfeeding and weaning behaviour						
Higher self-efficacy-	76	13.21	3.05	3.82	117	>.001
Lower self-efficacy-	44	11.62	3.18			

Result on the table 2 shows that women with high breastfeeding self-efficacy (mean = 13.21, S.D = 3.05) were reported to have more significant breastfeeding behaviour than those with low breastfeeding self-efficacy (mean = 11.62, S.D = 3.18). This means that self-efficacy has significant influence on breastfeeding behaviour (t (3.82) = 0.00, P < 0.01). Thus, the hypothesis is thereby supported.

#### Discussion

From the findings observed, table one affirmed the first hypothesis which states that individual employment status will have significant influence on his breastfeeding behaviour. The result shows that nursing women who were not employed (Housewife)

reported higher breastfeeding behaviour than their counterparts who were employed (working class women). This finding is supported by the result of a study conducted by Asabebe and Ruth (2006) on employment and breastfeeding behaviour. They researchers observed that breastfeeding mothers which are saddled with office work responsibility are tend to developed emotional pressures than mothers who are full time housewives. Base on their study, they attributed this to the quality and quantity of time spent with the baby. Also Shaibu (1997) study supported this findings, where he reported in his study of family support program technical report on girl-child development that, the Nigerian women, working class women just like any other African women faces a lot of difficulties and challenges as they carries out their duty as an employee in an organization and at the same time a nursing mother. To this study, children born of mothers who are workers in busy organization do not enjoy maternal care expected of them as their mother often pre-occupy with the office work. According to this study, it states that even though the working class women have had same levels of Western Education, they do not have enough time to breastfeed their children and so wean them early.

The second hypothesis on the other hand, states that nursing mothers with high social support will report significantly better in their attitude towards breastfeeding than nursing mothers with low social support was supported on the table.

Second, the result showed that nursing mothers that have low breastfeeding self-efficacy significantly reported low breastfeeding behaviour compared to their counterpart that have high breastfeeding self-efficacy. This finding is consistent with the result of earlier study carried out by Tella (2009) on breastfeeding practices among nursing mothers in Nigeria and Ghana wherein

the researcher found that some nursing mothers do not breast-feed as expected as a result personal frustration, fear of losing weight and lack of confidence in breastfeeding. Breastfeeding self-efficacy is a significant predictor of breastfeeding duration and exclusively (Earle, 2002, Adeyemi, 2009).

### Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the results of this study and the discussion, we conclude that attitude towards breastfeeding is based on individual participation status. Nursing mothers who are employed with organization, industry or institutions tend to have less time to attend to their children because of their tied schedule (office work). This has a great influence on their behaviour towards breastfeeding of their children and as such they wean their children less than the required exclusive breastfeeding period of six months. We also found that those participants who were with low self-efficacy were more likely to have negative attitudes towards breastfeeding; this include, thinking that breastfeeding was embarrassing and difficult in public areas as well as feeling uncomfortable when they are with other people other than their family members. The researchers therefore, recommend that clinical psychologist, counselling psychologist and other health professionals, should take into consideration these problems and proffer the necessary solutions to them. There is need to improve on educating nursing women who are employed (working class women) and others generally on the important of exclusive breastfeeding and weaning practice. Other professionals or researchers interested on this area can wider their scope to include more clinics, including private and compare with other parts of Nigeria other than the northern part of Nigeria, this will assist in giving more information and scientific evidence on the issue.

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