

Pattern of Breastfeeding Adopted By Working Class Nursing Mothers in South-South Nigeria

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DOI: [10.36348/sjnhc.2023.v06i08.005](https://doi.org/10.36348/sjnhc.2023.v06i08.005)

| Received: 14.07.2023 | Accepted: 19.08.2023 | Published: 24.08.2023

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Abstract

Breastfeeding is one of the important and natural mode of feeding a child and it should be encouraged in every society irrespective of your occupational status. Every woman owes a duty to breastfed their child to ensure a healthy living. This study is to ascertain the Pattern of Breastfeeding Adopted by Working Class Nursing Mothers in South-South Nigeria. This was a cross-sectional study involving 320 working class nursing mothers who were within the age of 18 to 47 years. A well-structured questionnaire was administered to participants. Each participant had one questionnaire to fill appropriately and independently after instructions were given to them by the Research Assistants. The study lasted for a period of 6 months. The research findings revealed that 20(6.30%) were within 18-22 years, 40(12.50%) were within 23-27years, 50(15.60%) were within 28-32 years, 120(37.60%) were within 33-37 years, 60(18.80%) were within 38-42 years while 30(9.40%) were within 43-47 years. The study also revealed the educational status of the participants which shows that 50(15.60%) had primary level of education, 80(25.00%) had secondary level of education, while 190(59.40%) had tertiary level of education respectively. The occupational distribution of the respondents shows that 80(25.00%) were farmers, 100(31.30%) were business women, and 140(43.80%) were civil servants. 300(93.80%) of the participants were nursing mothers whereas 20(6.30%) were not nursing mothers. 300(93.8%) of the participants agreed that they are aware of exclusive breastfeeding and 20(6.3%) said no awareness. The findings also revealed that 250(78.10%) of the participants do not breastfed their child / children while 70(21.90%) agreed that they do. 20(6.30%) of the respondents agreed that they carried out exclusive breastfeeding and 300(93.80%) did not. 280(87.50%) of the participants who are working class women said they preferred non-breastfeeding methods of child's nutrition.

Keywords: Pattern, Breastfeeding, Working, Class, Women.

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INTRODUCTION

Exclusive breastfeeding has been described as feeding of an infant with breast milk only without giving any other foods, not even water except the prescribed medicines, immunizations, vitamins and mineral supplements. (WHO, 2023). Breastfeeding is the act of milk transference from mother to baby that is needed for the survival and healthy growth of the baby into an adult. Breastfeeding creates an inimitable psychosocial bond between the mother and baby,

enhances modest cognitive development and it is the underpinning of the infant's wellbeing in the first year of life even into the second year of life with appropriate complementary foods from 6 months (Ibekwe *et al.*, 2022). Also, breastfeeding reduces the risk of neonatal complications, respiratory and other varieties of illnesses (Ibekwe *et al.*, 2022).

Breast milk is a natural liquid's food given to babies who are between one-day old to about 2 years

old depending on mothers and locations (Gbaranor *et al.*, 2023). Breastfeeding patterns and behaviour depend on a complex interplay between the mother and the infant and a number of influencing factors. Majority of studies revealed that the frequency and duration of feeds affects the milk output and milk fat. The frequency of feeds is in turn affected by the infant's demand and the mother's ability to provide milk (de Carvalho *et al.*, 1982; de Carvalho *et al.*, 1983; Woolridge *et al.*, 1990; Woolridge *et al.*, 1993; Daly and Hartmann, 1995 Part 1; Daly and Hartmann, 1995 Part 1). The total duration of breastfeeding is correlated with many factors, such as breastfeeding support, the mother's age, education, working conditions, socio-economic status, smoking, the infant's use of a pacifier, and co-sleeping (Sjo`lin *et al.*, 1979; Ford *et al.*, 1994; Pe`rez-Escamilla *et al.*, 1995; Victora *et al.*, 1997). Exclusive breastfeeding during the first 6 month of life, followed by continued breastfeeding and complemented by appropriate and adequate foods, for up to 2 years or beyond is recommended by WHO (WHA, 1994). The continued breastfeeding is not only for the low-income countries but also for the industrialized countries, where sustained breastfeeding beyond 6 months has been linked to improved health (Saarinen and Kajosaari, 1995) and development (Horwood and Fergusson, 1998).

Breastfeeding is a natural phenomenon through which newly born babies received their nutrition from their mothers. This act is being control by neurochemicals, secreted from the hypothalamus and the pituitary gland (Gbaranor *et al.*, 2023). The act of breastfeeding also increases the bond between mother and child (Gbaranor *et al.*, 2023). Exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) is a process and it is important to carry it out for a period of 6 months (Gbaranor *et al.*, 2023). This process is crucial because it contains certain substances that confer natural immunity on the child (Gbaranor *et al.*, 2023). However, for this process to become improved in an environment, particularly rural areas, awareness and importance of this process (exclusive breastfeeding) must be made known to nursing mothers. These variations in pattern of breastfeeding carried out by the respondents could be due to certain factors such as economic, social, culture, occupation, lack of awareness and inability of the breasts to produce milk (lactogenesis). Economic factor, that is, some of the participants could be handy and as such could afford the supplementary foods for their children (Gbaranor *et al.*, 2023).

Occupation is one of the influential factor that determine most variations in pattern of breastfeeding (Gbaranor *et al.*, 2023). Previous study revealed that

some of the nursing mothers left their child home with house maid and also kept a prepared solid or semi-solid food that will be given to the child while they are away (Gbaranor *et al.*, 2023). This study was to ascertain the Method or Pattern of Breastfeeding Adopted by Working Class Women in South-South Nigeria

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This is a descriptive cross-sectional study involving 320 working class nursing mothers who are within the age of 18 to 42 years. The nursing mothers were recruited from the six states that make up South-South Geopolitical zones. A well-structured questionnaire was administered to participants. Each participant had one questionnaire to fill appropriately and independently after a well informed consent was granted. The study lasted for a period of 6 months (January to June, 2023). Statistical analysis of data was done using SPSS Version 25 and P value < 0.05 was considered significant for data.

RESULTS

The results of age distribution revealed that 20(6.30%) were within 18-22 years, 40(12.50%) were within 23- 27years, 50(15.60%) were within 28-32 years, 120(37.60%) were within 33-37 years, 60(18.80%) were within 38- 42 years while 30(9.40%) were within 43-47 years (Table 1). Information gathered on the educational status of participants indicated that 50(15.60%) had primary level of education, 80(25.00%) secondary level of education, while 190(59.40%) had tertiary level of education (Table 2). The results of the occupational distribution of respondents shows that 80(25.00%) were farmers, 100(31.30%) business, and 140(43.80%) were civil servants (Table 3). The results gathered on the number of nursing mothers among the respondents shows that 300(93.80%) agreed with YES response that they were nursing mothers while 20(6.30%) responded NO (Table 4). The results gathered on exclusive breastfeeding among the respondents shows that 300(93.8%) agreed with YES response that they are aware of exclusive breastfeeding while 20(6.3%) responded NO (Table 5). The information gathered on the number of respondents who breastfeed their children shows that 70(21.90%) agreed YES while 250(78.10%) disagreed with NO response (Table 6). Information on number of respondents who carry out exclusive breastfeeding shows that 20(6.30%) agreed YES, while 300(93.80%) disagreed NO (Table 7). The methods adopted by the working class respondents examined in this study indicated that 40(12.50%) said they adopted breastfeeding method while 280(87.50%) sad that they use non-breast feeding methods (Table 8).

Table 1: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Distribution	Frequency	Percent (%)
18-22 YEARS	20	6.3
23-27 YEARS	40	12.5
28-32 YEARS	50	15.6
33-37 YEARS	120	37.5
38-42 YEARS	60	18.8
43-47 YEARS	30	9.4
Total	320	100.0

Table 2: Educational Distribution of Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
PRIMARY	50	15.60
SECONDARY	80	25.00
TERTIARY	190	59.40
Total	320	100.0

Table 3: Occupational Distribution of Respondents

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
FARMING	80	25.0
BUSINESS	100	31.3
CIVIL SERVANT	140	43.8
Total	320	100.0

Table 4: Percentage Nursing Mothers

Item	Frequency	Percentage
Nursing mothers	300	93.8
Non-nursing mothers	20	6.3
Total	320	100.0

Table 5: Awareness on exclusive breastfeeding

Item	Frequency	Percentage
Participants who are aware	300	93.8
Participants who are not aware	20	6.3
Total	320	100.0

Table 6: Breastfed mothers

Item	Frequency	Percentage
Participants who carry out breastfeeding	70	21.9
Participants who do not carry out breastfeeding	250	78.1
Total	320	100.0

Table 7: Respondents who carried out exclusive breastfeeding

Item	Frequency	Percentage
Carried out exclusive breastfeeding	20	6.3
Do not carried out exclusive breastfeeding	300	93.8
Total	320	100.0

Table 8: Method preferred or adopted during child's nutrition

Item	Frequency	Percentage
Breastfeeding method	40	12.5
Non-breastfeeding method	280	87.5
Total	320	100.0

DISCUSSION

Breastfeeding is an act which most nursing mothers carried out to ensure a healthy body of their infants. This breastfeeding is a process that are is influenced by certain factors like hormones that are secreted from pituitary gland through the influence of hypothalamus. It is the beauty of an African women to

breastfed their children. Though, certain African's culture does not encourage exclusive breastfeeding rather they prefer complementary and / or supplementary breastfeeding. Again, most women find it difficult to properly expose their breast during breastfeeding placing or making their children uncomfortable and some of them denied their children

breast milk while attending public functions or in office place.

The research revealed that 6.30% were within 18-22 years, 12.50% were within 23-27years, 15.60% were within 28- 32 years, 37.60% were within 33-37 years, 18.80% were within 38-42 years while 9.40% were within 43-37 years. Majority of the participants were within 33-37 years of age (Table). This shows that the women who are nursing mothers can take independent decision on matters that affects them. 15.60% of the participants had primary level of education, 25.00% had secondary level of education and 59.40% had tertiary level of education. Majority of the participants are had tertiary level of education and therefore, they are highly educated. With their level of education, the participants are capable of knowing the best practice for themselves and family. The research findings revealed that many of the participants were working class (43.80%), 25.00% were farmers and 31.30% business women. The occupational status of this working class nursing mothers could affect their breastfeeding process because most of them could be family's breadwinner. This study agreed with previous study that revealed that, in low- and middle- income countries (LMICs), employed women are less likely to maintain EBF for the recommended 6 months (Oddo & Ickes, 2018). Again, this study is in agreement with previous study which found that mothers' employment was negatively associated with breastfeeding, as babies whose mothers worked had a lower likelihood of being exclusively breastfed at 6 months of age than those whose mothers were not in employment (Alzaheb, 2017; Amin *et al.*, 2011; Mwiza *et al.*, 2023). The study also revealed the marital status of respondents and it shows that 62.50% were married, 12.50% were single, and 25.00% were divorced. Also, the research shows that 93.80% of the participants were nursing or lactating mothers and 93.8% of them are aware of exclusive breastfeeding and also 68.8% are aware of the importance or benefits of breastfeeding to their children. This study is in consonance with previous study by Ibekwe *et al.*, (2022) who revealed that majority of the respondents were aware of the information about breastfeeding.

Again, 78.10% of the participants do not breastfed their children. This is probably because most of them are working class and do not give attention to breastfeeding process. For the fact that majority of the participants are highly educated and are aware of the importance of breastfeeding and do not carry out breastfeeding, its means that their occupation does not allow them to carry out, that important assignment. It could also be that they are afraid of query or sack from their work if they pay attention to their babies than their work. In this present economy, getting a new job is not easy and so they need to be careful and that could be why several of the nursing mothers who are working class do not breastfeed their children. Again, these

nursing mothers who do not carry out breastfeeding gave different reasons such as: breast will become pendulous (38.80%), breast was not producing milk (28.40%), they(mothers) are not always around due to their work/business (15.00%) while 17.80% said their child were adopted. This study agreed with previous study by Kebede *et al.*, (2020), who revealed that, early exclusive breastfeeding's (EBF) cessation has been associated with workplace factors, including short maternity leave, full- time employment, not pumping breast milk, lacking a lactation break, workplace distance from children and inflexible work schedules, The issue of sagging breast is a trend among young nursing mothers who do not want their breast to be in slippers-shaped and ever want their breast to remain standing, pointed and succulent, thereby, denying their precious babies the breastmilk that would have served to protect them from infectious disease. It could also be that these nursing mothers are protecting and preserving their breasts for their husband who serve as competitors to their children, thereby exposing their babies to uncertainty. The study also, revealed that 93.80% of the participants do not carry out exclusive breastfeeding despite the awareness they have concerning breastfeeding and its importance to children. This shows that, their occupation affected their pattern of breastfeeding.

The study revealed that majority (87.50%) of working class respondents examined adopted the non-breastfeeding method. This could be attributed to the fact that most of them are breadwinners and for that reason, they don't want to lose their job. It could also be due fashion that may cause them not to carry out breastfeeding. These means that these set of working class women will always encourage or carry out supplementary pattern or method of feeding and this could have negative effects on the babies. Most of them adopted this method because they leave the house early and came back late. However, this method of non-breastfeeding could interfere with the physical and psychosocial bonding between the mother and the child.

CONCLUSION

Majority of the participants had tertiary level of education and also had good knowledge about exclusive breastfeeding. Also, most of the participants were working class and do not have time to practice or carry out exclusive breastfeeding. Again, majority of the participants do not carry out breastfeeding due to several reasons such as breast will become pendulous, breast were not producing milk, they(mothers) are not always around due to their work/business and their child were adopted

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We acknowledge Nazor Barinua-Gbaranor, Nuazor Victory Barinua-Gbaranor, Kedumle Success. Barinua-Gbaranor and Excellent Support Global

Foundation for their moral support, understanding, and encouragement during the period of research.

FUNDING: No funding.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST: None declared. Ethical Approval: Not required

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