

HEALTH WORKERS PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF EXCLUSIVE BREASTFEEDING ON WELLBEING OF PRESCHOOLERS

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the health workers perceived benefits of exclusive breastfeeding on wellbeing of preschoolers. The study examined benefits of exclusive breastfeeding on physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, social wellbeing, immunity level of preschoolers in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria. A cross-sectional survey design was employed for this study. The population for this study comprised of 470 nursing mothers within the study area. A multistage sampling technique that consist of stratified, simple random and proportionate sampling techniques were used to select 200 respondents. Researchers designed questionnaire was used for the study. A reliability co-efficient of 0.75r was obtained through test re-test method using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The four postulated null hypotheses were tested using inferential statistical method of chi-square at 0.05 alpha level of significance. The findings of this study showed that exclusive breastfeeding have significant benefit on the physical wellbeing of preschoolers because calculated χ^2 value of (23.19) > critical value of (16.92), exclusive breastfeeding have significant benefit on the mental wellbeing of preschoolers because calculated χ^2 value of (67.13) > critical value of (16.92), exclusive breastfeeding have significant benefit on the level of immunity of preschoolers because calculated χ^2 value of (26.47) > critical value of (16.92), exclusive breastfeeding have significant benefit on the social wellbeing of preschoolers because calculated χ^2 value of (42.79) > critical value of (16.92). Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that, health workers should endeavour to educate nursing mothers on the importance of exclusive breastfeeding to their children so as to improve their physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, social wellbeing, immunity system and in line with the health status of preschoolers in Ilorin metropolis. Also there is need for more awareness programme on the radio and television so as to change the mindset of nursing mothers towards exclusive breastfeeding in the life of preschoolers in Kwara State.

Keywords: Perceived, benefits, exclusive, breastfeeding, preschoolers, health, workers.

1. INTRODUCTION

The breast milk is a natural food reach in all the essential nutrients needed by newly born baby. Exclusive breastfeeding is the ideal natural feeding practice expected to be adopted by nursing mothers in the first 6 months to 1 year after birth before weaning period. Some nursing mothers paid non-challant attitude towards its practice. Exclusive breastfeeding is the method of feeding babies with natural milk directly from the mother breast. World Health Organization (2009) noted that exclusive breastfeeding implies the process by which newly

born infants are given no other food(s) except breast-milk produced by the nursing mother before weaning period or introduction of supplementary foods. Exclusive breastfeeding is recommended and encouraged as a means of achieving one of the sustainable health development goals of improved maternal health and reduce infant morbidity and mortality incidences in Nigeria.

According to World Health Organization (WHO) (2006), United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) in 1991 began an international campaign called baby friendly hospital initiative. The initiative was meant to promote, protect and support breastfeeding. The initiatives were aimed at ensuring adequate breastfeeding of infants and discourage use of formula or artificial feeding.

Exclusive breastfeeding for six months of an infant's life is a cost effective intervention in saving children lives. WHO (2009) estimated that exclusive breastfeeding coverage of 90% averts mortality of infants by 13 to 15% in low and middle income countries. Exclusive breastfed infants have shown to have lower rates of acute respiratory infection and diarrhea (WHO, 2009). Exclusive breastfeeding if properly practiced and strictly adhered will be of immense benefits to the nursing mothers and their babies in many ways. In the first instance, a baby that is exclusively breastfed will be physically active and agile as he/she grows up. Mathur (2008) and Kesley (1990) affirmed that exclusively breastfed baby usually possessed good physique and posture. Also, Baker (2003) stressed that breastfeeding reduce the risk of obesity in infants and children. Riggins and Adda (2020) asserted that breastfeeding provide ideal nutrient that ensure rapid growth and development which make the baby to be more active and healthy.

There is consensus that an exclusively breastfed baby exhibit high level of mental alertness and cognitive development at every stage of his/her infancy to adolescent stage. Hansa 2020 posited that breastfeeding improve the intelligent quotency right from earlier childhood to adulthood. Palmer (2009) posited that children who enjoy adequate breast-feeding for more than 6 months usually in depend minded and mentally healthy during childhood to adolescent periods. Baker (2003) noted that one of the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding is that it makes children to be intelligent and wiser than others who are deficient in exclusive breastfeeding. WHO (2017); Jedrychowski, Perera and Jankowski (2012) noted that breastfeeding lowers the baby's risk of having asthma or allergies as well as ensuring sound cognitive development of the babies. Krol, and Grossmann (2018); and Mortensen, Michaelsen, Sander and Reinish (2001) revealed that prolong breastfeeding from bad to infancy stage are linked to discreet cognitive development and performance during adulthood.

Exclusively breastfed babies relate with their mothers well at infancy stage and other children during childhood period. Most of the babies breastfed for long period of times often have deep love for their mothers as commonly expressed during breastfeeding. Lawrence (2009) observed that a child who is breastfed exclusively stand a chance of relating and behaving maturely with other children of their age range. WHO (2007) asserted that all children breastfed for one year and above develop optimally and showed social maturation. Kanazawa (2015) posited that breastfeeding has been found to impact on social and emotional development of a child. This is the reason why baby always love and have good will for the mother. Also, Hansa (2020) stressed that breastfeeding ensure rapid without becoming overweight.

It has been revealed by different research finding and outcomes that exclusive breastfeeding improve the immune system of a baby right from infancy stage to the adolescent period. WHO (2007) noted that adequate breastfeeding of infants promote their level of immunity and boost their immune system to fight infections. Human breast milk according to WHO helps the infants in maintaining rapid growth and at the same time resist infections. Breastfeeding improve the level of immunity of the baby thereby prevent spread of diseases

and promote longevity at old age, (Pam, 2015). Hansa reported that breastfeeding prevent infection of respiratory tract, digestive tract, ear infection and so on.

It has been observed by the researchers that majority of nursing mothers paid lip services to breastfeeding despite repeated campaign by the health workers on benefits accruable from it. Some health workers are equally ignorant of inherent values of exclusive breastfeeding. This category of health care providers often paid lip service to awareness creation on its benefits to nursing mothers. It has also been observed that some of the health workers that paid non-challant attitude to sensitization talk on need for exclusive breastfeeding did so because of some medically exempted cases that required controlled management of infant breastfeeding. Exclusive breastfeeding is often jettison for the medically exempted cases or conditions that can be managed simultaneously with adequate breastfeeding for recommended period.

The researchers observed that majority of health workers often ignore express breast milk strategy meant to take care of some of medically exempted breastfeeding cases such as breast lumps, breast engorgement, inability of baby to suck breast and so on. These group of health workers usually recommend artificial of baby formular feeding to substitute exclusive breastfeeding. All these observations and identified factors motivate the researchers to carry out this study. Thus, the main purpose of this study was to investigate health workers perceived benefits of exclusive breastfeeding on wellbeing of preschoolers in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State. Specifically this study determine the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding on physical wellbeing of preschoolers in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State; Nigeria.

2. METHODS AND MATERIALS

2.1 Participants

This study adopted descriptive research design. The study population comprised of all health workers in fifteen (15) public health facilities within Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State. The study population is five hundred and three (503) health workers within the metropolis consisting of three (3) local government areas (Ilorin East, Ilorin West and Ilorin South). A multi stage sampling technique was employed to select two hundred respondents used for the study. The first stage of the sampling process involves the use of stratified sampling technique to identify the three (3) local government areas within the metropolis which include Ilorin East, Ilorin South and Ilorin West Local Government Areas. The second stage of sampling process employed proportionate technique based on 40% and simple random technique to select two hundred (200) respondents used for the study.

2.2 Tools and Data Collection

The instrument used for the study is researchers structured questionnaire validated by three (3) experts from Department of Health Promotion and Environmental Health Education and Department of Epidemiology and Community Health, University of Ilorin, Nigeria. The instrument was pilot tested with the use of test re-test method in which a reliability coefficient of 0.75r was obtained.

2.3 Data Analysis

The data generated for the study were coded, sorted and analyzed using inferential statistics of chi-square (χ^2) at 0.05 alpha level of significance. The results of analysis were tabulated below.

3. RESULTS

Table 1: The chi-square (χ^2) test of benefit of exclusive breastfeeding on the physical wellbeing of preschoolers

Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Cal. value	df	Crit. value
Exclusive breastfeeding often brings about good physical appearance of children 0-5 years old.	55 (62.75)	60 (62.50)	45 (42.50)	40 (32.25)	200	23.19	9	16.92
Breastfeeding prevent children from being physically challenged and inactive.	48 (62.75)	70 (62.50)	35 (42.50)	47 (32.25)	200			
Benefits of breastfeeding usually enhance good posture of children of 0-5 years old.	85 (62.75)	30 (62.50)	65 (42.50)	20 (32.25)	200			
Inadequate breastfeeding of preschoolers usually lead to abnormality in the body system as regard their physique.	63 (62.75)	90 (62.50)	25 (42.50)	22 (32.25)	200			
Total	251	250	170	129	800			

$p < 0.05$

The finding from Table 1 revealed the calculated χ^2 value of 23.19 against the critical χ^2 value of 16.92, with degree of freedom of 9 at 0.05 alpha level of significance, since the calculated χ^2 value is greater than the critical χ^2 value, this implies that exclusive breastfeeding have significant benefits on the physical wellbeing of preschoolers in Ilorin metropolis.

Table 2: The chi-square (χ^2) test of benefit of exclusive breastfeeding on the mental wellbeing of preschoolers

Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Cal. value	df	Crit. Value
Benefits of breastfeeding often contribute to high level of intelligence of children.	75 (72.50)	65 (71.25)	20 (23.75)	40 (32.50)	200	67.13	9	16.92
Benefits of breastfeeding makes children of 0-5 years old to be smart among their mates.	75 (72.50)	75 (71.25)	15 (23.75)	35 (32.50)	200			
Children who are properly breastfed usually becomes smart and active.	60 (72.50)	90 (71.25)	30 (23.75)	20 (32.50)	200			
Breastfeeding often contribute to high rate of mental illness of children.	80 (72.50)	55 (71.25)	30 (23.75)	35 (32.50)	200			
Total	290	285	95	130	800			

$p < 0.05$

Table 2 shows the calculated χ^2 value of 67.13 against the critical χ^2 value of 16.92, with degree of freedom of 9 at 0.05 alpha level of significance, since the calculated χ^2 value is greater than the critical χ^2 value, this implies that exclusive breastfeeding have significant benefits on the mental wellbeing of preschoolers in Ilorin metropolis.

Table 3: The chi-square (χ^2) test of benefit of exclusive breastfeeding on the social wellbeing of preschoolers

Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Cal. value	df	Crit. Value
Breastfeeding usually makes children happy and interact freely.	50 (62.50)	90 (73.75)	15 (29.25)	45 (34.50)	200	42.79	9	16.92
Exclusive breastfeeding makes children to isolate themselves from others while playing	65 (62.50)	70 (73.75)	30 (29.25)	35 (34.50)	200			
Exclusive breastfeeding positively enhances social interaction of children.	80 (62.50)	60 (73.75)	40 (29.25)	20 (34.50)	200			
Most children of 0-5 years have sense of belonging as a result of exclusive breastfeeding.	55 (62.50)	75 (73.75)	32 (29.25)	38 (34.50)	200			
Total	250	295	117	138	800			

$p < 0.05$

Table 3 revealed the calculated χ^2 value of 42.79 against the critical χ^2 value of 16.92, with degree of freedom of 9 at 0.05 alpha level of significance, since the calculated χ^2 value is greater than the critical χ^2 value, this implies that exclusive breastfeeding has significant benefits on the social wellbeing of preschoolers in Ilorin metropolis.

Table 4: The chi-square (χ^2) test of benefit of exclusive breastfeeding on the improved level of immunity of preschoolers

Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Cal. value	df	Crit. value
The body immune system of children is often affected by exclusive breastfeeding.	60 (60)	80 (80.75)	27 (27.75)	33 (31.50)	200	26.47	9	16.92
Exclusive breastfeeding improves immune system of babies to fight against infections..	55 (60)	75 (80.75)	40 (27.75)	30 (31.50)	200			
Breastfeeding often help to boost the immune system of children which enhance their health status.	50 (60)	83 (80.75)	29 (27.75)	38 (31.50)	200			
The immune system of babies is maintained through exclusive breastfeeding.	65 (60)	85 (80.75)	15 (27.75)	25 (31.50)	200			
Total	230	323	111	126	800			

$p < 0.05$

The finding from Table 4 indicates the calculated χ^2 value of 26.47 against the critical χ^2 value of 16.92, with degree of freedom of 9 at 0.05 alpha level of significance, since the calculated χ^2 value is greater than the critical χ^2 value, this implies that exclusive breastfeeding has significant benefits on the level of immunity of preschoolers in Ilorin metropolis.

4. DISCUSSION

The findings from tested hypothesis one revealed that exclusive breastfeeding has significant benefit on the physical wellbeing of preschoolers in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State. This result tallied with the view of Mathur (2008) and Kesley (1990) who affirmed that exclusive breastfeeding brings about good physique and good posture of babies. Also, Baker (2003); and Riggins and Adda (2020) stressed that breastfeeding appears to reduce the risk of extreme obesity in children. Infant who are properly breastfed tends to look healthy and stronger in

the midst of their contemporary. Hansa(2020) stated that breastfeeding ensure rapid growth without becoming overweight.

The finding from tested hypothesis two indicated that exclusive breastfeeding has significant benefit on the mental wellbeing of preschoolers in Ilorin metropolis. This result supported the findings of Palma (2009) and Karen, Charles, Maria, Seeba, Seth, and Betty (2006) that children who enjoy adequate breastfeeding for more than 6 months is an independent predictor of better mental health through childhood and adolescents. The more months' children were exclusively breastfed the less likely they were to suffer from depression, delinquent behaviour, and psychological problems. Also Baker (2003); Mortensen, Michealsen and Reinish (2001); and Hansa (2020) observed that one of the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding is that it makes such children to be intelligent and wiser than others who are deficient in exclusive breastfeeding.

The findings show that exclusive breastfeeding has significant benefits on the social wellbeing of preschoolers in Ilorin metropolis. This result tallied with the view of Lawrence (2009); and Kanazawa (2015) who observed that children who enjoy exclusive breastfeeding stand a chance of relating with others very well and more so they behave maturely and interact freely with others. Also in the same vein World Health Organization (2007) stressed that some pediatricians recommend that infants should be breastfeed for at least the first year of life and possibly into the second and third years for optimal development. Exclusive breastfeeding often brings about social interaction among children which contribute positively to development of their health status.

The finding revealed that exclusive breastfeeding has significant benefit on the level of immunity of preschoolers in Ilorin metropolis. This result agreed with the findings of World Health Organization (2007) that adequate breastfeeding of infants often improve their level of immunity and boost their immune system where their bodies tend to fight or resist diseases. Jedrychowski, Perera, and Jankowski (2012), Hansa (2020) asserted that human milk has anti-infective properties which are good for babies' growth especially the infants and it helps to fight against diseases like sepsis, jaundice and others.

5. CONCLUSION

The findings from the study reveals that exclusive breastfeeding has benefits on physical, mental, social and immune system of the preschoolers in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara state. Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made-

- Health workers are advised to educate nursing mothers on the importance of exclusive breastfeeding to their children so as to improve their physical appearances.
- There is need for nursing mothers to understand the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding on how it improves the mental alertness of their children and how it constitutes high level of intelligent.
- There is need for all the stakeholders in the health sectors especially doctors and nurses to create more awareness programmes on how prospective mothers will breastfeed their children exclusively so as to improve their immunity system, social wellbeing and psychological wellbeing of children.

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