



Social and bio-medical predictors of exclusive breastfeeding among nursing mothers in Lagos and Taraba States, Nigeria

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Highlights

- Many social and biomedical factors determine exclusive breastfeeding practice.
- Bio-medical factors may be more important as they are uncontrollable for mothers.
- We emphasize that social and bio-medical factors co-determine EBF practice.
- The benefits of and fulfilment of infant's dietary needs by EBF must be explained.

Abstract

Purpose

Although exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) is known to have positive consequences for mothers and infants, EBF rate in Nigeria is <25%. This study investigated if social factors were stronger predictors of EBF than bio-medical factors in the metropolitan areas of Lagos and Taraba States. Social factors included mother's education, infant sex, place of birth, and nature of mother's employment, while bio-medical factors included nature of birth (whether vaginal or caesarean section), problems with breast/nipple, breast milk insufficiency, and mother's age.

Design and methods

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design and mixed method of data collection. From the two states, 500 mothers with babies between 7 and 12 months of age completed a structured questionnaire. Twenty respondents from each state were interviewed using an in-depth interview guide.

Results

Education ($\beta = 1.743$; $p < 0.001$), infant sex ($\beta = -0.454$; $p < 0.05$), and place of delivery ($\beta = -1.552$; $p < 0.001$) were significant social predictors. Breast milk insufficiency ($\beta = -1.851$; $p < 0.001$) and mother's age ($\beta = 0.064$; $p < 0.001$) were significant bio-medical predictors. When all the eight factors were considered, only two of the three social factors, namely, education and infants' sex, remained significant, while three bio-medical factors, namely, breast milk insufficiency, mother's age, and nature of delivery, were significant.

Conclusions

Social and bio-medical factors co-determine the practice of EBF and must not be considered dichotomous.

Practical implications

Interventions to encourage EBF among Nigerian mothers must focus on education regarding its benefits and correction of misconceptions that breast milk alone is insufficient as an infant's diet.

Keywords

Bio-medical; Exclusive breastfeeding; Nigeria; Social

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