

Role of Social Media in Enlightening Nursing Mothers on the Practise of Exclusive Breast Feeding

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ABSTRACT: *The globalization of technology which gave rise to Information Communication Technology (ICT) has changed the information seeking behaviour of human which has shifted attention from broadcast and print media to Social Media(SM). Exclusive Breast Feeding (EBF) practice over the years has been a global discussion and its significance has been passed across to Nursing Mothers through several sources i.e. Open campaigns, Hospital Seminars, Television, Radio etc. which has not yielded desirable results. Little or no attention has been paid to the role of SM hence the need to examine the role of SM in enlightening Nursing Mothers on the practise of Exclusive Breast Feeding in Ekiti State. The study adopted a Survey design with a study population of 952 Nursing Mothers. Total enumeration technique was used for selecting sample for the study through Questionnaire. Data collected were analysed with statistics. Findings revealed that Nursing Mothers in Ekiti State are enlightened about EBF through several SM sources but Facebook and WhatsApp appear to be the most prevalent SM source of enlightenment on EBF practice, a large percentage of Nursing Mothers were encouraged to breastfeed their infants through the enlightenment obtained from SM and some of the challenges in the use of SM is the fact that it consumes time, poor network signal, high cost of data subscription etc. The study concluded that Facebook and WhatsApp are the most effective SM source on EBF. Therefore, the study recommended that stakeholders should push their adverts and campaigns on Facebook and WhatsApp more frequently.*

KEYWORD: social media, enlightening, exclusive breast feeding, nursing mother

INTRODUCTION

To ensure sustainable development world over, effective communication is highly essential to drive the policies, plans and strategies of government, stakeholders and individuals. The media are a powerful tool that drive the all-round development of these key players. Mass media refers to

diverse array of media technologies that reach a large audience through a medium like broadcast media (television, radio), print media (newspaper, magazines etc.), digital media and the internet media (email, social media sites). The mass media through its campaigns and advertisements package programmes enhance the development and realization of set goals by government, organizations, individuals etc. Though it goes beyond packaging the message but to ensure the message meets its target audience and its purpose well achieved. Many developmental campaigns have been carried out in Nigeria, which has touched every aspect of human endeavour ranging from politics, sports, education, economics, technology, health etc. One of such campaigns is on Exclusive breast feeding.

According to Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Health (2011), exclusive breastfeeding refers to feeding babies with breast milk only, without giving them water, mixtures from local herbs or other forms of liquid and food. Drops such as vitamins, minerals supplements or medicines can however be given when they are prescribed. Knowing that breastfeeding has a lot of benefits for both the mother and the child especially in the improvement of cognitive ability, intelligence and good academic achievement, breastfeeding should be encouraged. Experience has shown that breast milk promotes sensory and cognitive development, and protects the infant against infectious and chronic diseases (Wendy, 2011), (Kyei-Arthur, Agyekum & Afrifa-Anane 2021).

Nigeria demographic health survey (2018) evaluated Nigeria to have the highest number of stunted children in the continent and ranks third globally with more than ten million stunted children. Although breastfeeding is a widespread practice in Nigeria but there is a significant variation in rates of breastfeeding and complementary feeding. NDHS (2018) said the main indicator for malnutrition is stunting which is prevalent in South West, Nigeria with infant mortality rate of 40%. Ekiti State is a South Western State in Nigeria with an account of stunting and infant mortality rate of 17%, in children less than five years. This means that some percentage of children under five years have symptoms of malnourishment in Ekiti State. Exclusive breastfeeding practice in the state is below expectation which necessitates the current approach to EBF promotion in Ekiti State University Teaching Hospital (EKSUTH) and Federal Teaching Hospital Ido (FETHI) being a Breastfeeding Friendly Hospital has at best only increased awareness through Anti-natal seminars, health talks, immunization orientations etc.

The advent of technology which gave rise to Information Communication Technology (ICT) has shifted attention from broadcast and print media to social media. Social media has been defined as websites or web-based applications which allow profile creation, visibility of relationships between users, functionality for sharing, group and individual conversation (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). Social media over the years has provided open space for the exercise of the right to receive and impart information which has redefine public discourse and information sharing process. In Nigeria, before the advent of social media, there was a deep reliance by the people on the conventional media i.e. print and broadcast media, for the dissemination of credible news information (Wilson & Umar 2019).

The emergence of social media (SM) and social networking services to communicate in real-time and on-the-go by patients and health professionals is recognized as an important public health development. Kietzmann & Kristopher, (2011) emphasized that many people turn to social media for information than any other medium. Ansari & Khan (2020) asserts that social media is a veritable tool for collaborative learning and a good source of enlightenment. Based on the above assertions it's believed that social media will be a better tool of enlightenment. It therefore becomes imperative to investigate the role social media has played in enlightening nursing mothers on the practise of exclusive breast feeding in Ekiti State.

Objectives of the Study

1. Identify the Social Media sources from which nursing mothers get information about the practice of EBF.
2. Investigate the extent to which Social Media enlighten nursing mothers on the practice of EBF.
3. Assess the challenges faced by nursing mothers in Ekiti State in the usage of Social Media as an enlightenment platform for EBF.

Research Question

1. What are the social media sources from which nursing mothers get information on the practice of exclusive breastfeeding?
2. To what extent do social media enlighten nursing mothers on the practice of exclusive breast feeding in Ekiti State?
3. What are the challenges faced by nursing mothers in Ekiti state on the usage of social media as an enlightenment platform for exclusive breast feeding?

Scope of the Study

This study was delimited to the effectiveness of social media to enlighten nursing mothers in Ekiti State on the practice of exclusive breastfeeding. The study covered nursing mothers in Ekiti State using the two Teaching Hospitals in the State, which are EKSUTH and FETHI, these two hospitals were selected because they have heavy traffic of nursing mothers.

METHODOLOGY

The research employed a survey design, this enabled the researcher collect and analyse data generated from a sample of the population. The researcher investigated nursing mothers that are currently attending post-natal care and immunisation as at April 2021 in Ekiti State with a total number of seven hundred and fifty-six (756). The breakdown of the figure is as follows;

Table 1: Breakdown of the population

S/N	Names of Teaching Hospitals	Population
1	Ekiti State University Teaching Hospital (EKSUTH)	436
2	Federal Teaching Hospital, Ido (FETHI)	320
	TOTAL	756

SOURCE: Antenatal and Immunisation Register (March, 2021)

This study adopted a Total enumeration technique to sample all nursing mothers attending post-natal and immunisation at EKSUTH and FETHI in April 2021. Copies of questionnaire were administered by the researcher to nursing mothers during their post-natal and immunisations talk over a period of one month. The researcher made use of trained assistants who are literate in the Yoruba language for interpretation. A total of 520 copies of the questionnaire was found useful, three hundred and sixteen (316) nursing mothers in EKSUTH and two hundred and four (204) nursing mothers in FETHI. Data collected were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Data was collected from 520 nursing mothers in Ekiti State. The respondents were drawn from Ekiti State Teaching Hospital (EKSUTH) and Federal Teaching Hospital, Ido (FETHI). The data are presented in tables and figures below:

Research question 1: what are the social media sources from which nursing mothers get information on the practice of exclusive breast feeding?

Table 2: Social Media sources

Social Media sources	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std.dev
I get information on the practice of exclusive breast feeding through Facebook	289 55.8%	137 26.3%	69 13.2%	25 4.87%	2.90	0.420
I get information on the practice of exclusive breast feeding through WhatsApp	163 31.3%	165 31.7%	137 26.3%	55 10.6%	2.77	0.614
I get information on the practice of exclusive breast feeding through Instagram	120 23.1%	92 17.7%	177 34.0%	131 25.2%	2.55	0.719
I get information on the practice of exclusive breast feeding through Twitter	120 23.0%	51 9.8%	240 46.2%	109 21%	2.46	0.840
I get information on the practice of exclusive breast feeding through blogs	100 19.2%	78 15%	220 42.3%	122 23.5%	2.19	0.702
I get information on the practice of exclusive breast feeding by other means(hospital, interpersonal communication etc)	251 48.3%	72 13.8%	180 34.6%	17 3.3%	2.66	0.695

The result in table 1 shows that 82.11% got information on the practise of exclusive breast feeding on Facebook. Also, 63% got information from WhatsApp. The table further shows that 41% got

information from Instagram, 32.8% and 34.2% of the respondents got information via Twitter and blogs respectively. 62% of the respondents get information from other sources.

The finding revealed that nursing mothers in Ekiti State are enlightened about exclusive breast feeding through several social media. Facebook and WhatsApp appear to be the most prevalent social media source of enlightenment on EBF practice. This finding supports the assertion of Connelly (2018) that social media platforms could be considered a pillar of support for breastfeeding mothers, especially Facebook. In a similar study by Bylaska-Davies (2011) Facebook was found to be a major source of information for parents regarding exclusive breastfeeding.

Research question 2: to what extent do social media enlighten nursing mothers on the practise of exclusive breast feeding in Ekiti state?

Table 3: The extent to which social media enlighten nursing mothers.

	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std. dev
From what I hear about exclusive breastfeeding on Social Media, I am encouraged to breastfeed my infant.	215 41.4%	155 29.8%	80 15.4%	70 13.5%	3.73	0.614
I learnt that exclusive breast milk should be given during first 6 months through social media	271 52.1%	91 17.5%	90 17.3%	68 13.1%	3.77	0.599
I learnt that breast feeding should be continued up to 2 years through social media	248 47.7%	122 23.5%	84 16.2%	66 12.7%	3.55	0.702

Table 2 above shows that 71.2% are encouraged to breastfeed their infants through the enlightenment obtained on social media, while 70% of the respondents learnt through social media that exclusive breast milk should be given during the first 6 months. In the same vein, 71.2% learnt through social media that breast feeding should continue up to 2 years.

The finding revealed that a large percentage of nursing mothers are encouraged to breastfeed their infants through the enlightenment gotten on social media. More so, nursing mothers have gained understanding from campaigns on social media that only breast milk should be given to infants during the first Six months while breast milk alongside other supplements are encouraged up to 2 years. Nzete (2010), Jaun (2018) & Kyei-Arthur, Agyekum & Afrifa-Anane (2021) corroborated this assertion that social media enlighten and influence the attitude of nursing mothers on the practise of exclusive breast feeding.

Research Question 3. What are the challenges faced by nursing mothers in Ekiti state on the usage of social media as an enlightenment platform for exclusive breast feeding?

Table 4: Challenges of nursing mothers on social media access to information on exclusive breast feeding.

CHALLENGES	SA	A	D	SD
The cost of internet data subscription to social media is too high	167 32.1%	130 25%	115 22.1%	108 20.8%
Too much time needed to stay on social media	159 30.6%	235 45.2%	91 17.5%	35 6.7%
Poor network signal	189 36.4%	150 28.9%	105 20.2%	76 14.6%
Cost of getting a smart phone is high	64 12.3%	95 18.3%	205 39.4%	156 30%
Language of EBF campaigns are not domesticated	200 38.5%	81 15.6%	171 32.9%	68 13%
Too many irrelevant information on social media	248 47.7%	102 19.6%	109 21%	61 11.7%

The data collected in the table above indicate that 57.1% considered internet subscription as high, 75.8% perceived social media usage to be time consuming while 65.3% respondent agreed that poor network signal is a challenge. Also, 54.1% agreed that the language of EBF campaigns are not familiar and 67.3% of women agreed that there is too many information on social media.

The findings indicate that the greatest challenge to the use of social media is that its time consuming, while poor network signal is also a key challenge. Nzete (2010) affirmed this.

CONCLUSION

The role of media is to project policies, plans and strategies of government, stakeholders and individuals to create informed decisions for the public. It is no longer news that the advent of ICT has changed the information seeking behaviour of humans as they now turn to social media for information.

Social media has been found to be a strong predictor on enlightenment of nursing mothers on exclusive breastfeeding. World over, more people are turning to social media for information than any other medium of information.

This study has established that Facebook and whatsapp were recognized as a well-known social media source, making it obvious that Facebook and whatsapp has proven to be very informative, in matters concerning exclusive breastfeeding. It also enlightened nursing mothers on the practice and benefits of EBF.

The study therefore suggests: While the hospitals maintain face-to-face talks with nursing mothers, they should enhance their campaigns through social media especially through facebook, and creating whatsApp groups.

Government and stakeholders in the telecoms should improve on the challenges that impedes the use of social media; poor network signal, high cost of internet subscription. Etc.

Hospitals and stakeholders should ensure that adverts and campaigns are short and concise to avoid information weariness.

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