

First Time Mothers Perception and Experience About Breastfeeding Support Received from Nurses in Health Facilities in Aba

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ABSTRACT: *This study investigated perception and explore the experiences of first-time mothers on breastfeeding support received from nurses in health facilities in Aba Nigeria. Four research questions and two hypothesis guided the study. The design of the study was a quantitative and qualitative design method. The population of this study comprised an accessible population of 386 women attending antenatal and post-natal in selected health facilities in Aba. Random sampling techniques was used to select 198 first time mothers from the population. A researcher made questionnaire and interview was used to collect data for the study. The questionnaire was subjected to a reliability test using Crombach Alpha and a reliability index of 0.71 was obtained. The data gotten from the instrument were analysed using mean and standard deviation while the interview data were analysed through several steps of systematising, condensing, and interpreting the data. The findings of the study revealed that 2% of the respondents were singles, 65% were married, 23% were divorced, 5% were separated while 5% were widows. 5% of the respondents had attended primary education, 25% had attended secondary education, 60% had attended tertiary education while 10% had no formal education. 5% of the respondents were business women, 25% were civil servants, 60% worked in private sector while 10% were artisans. Furthermore, the result revealed that the perception of first-time mothers on information breastfeeding support received from nurses in some selected health facilities in Aba includes and not limited to the fact that Nurses give enough breastfeeding information to first time mothers and that the encouragement of first time mothers is very important. The study concludes that first-time mothers do need professional, practical and social support in the form of information, emotional support and encouragement for initiation and maintenance of exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months. Therefore, the study recommends that Nurses should they educate first time mothers on the importance of breastfeeding during antenatal.*

KEYWORDS: first time, mothers' perception, experience, breastfeeding support, nurses, health facilities, Aba

INTRODUCTION

First time parenting is a very sensitive period especially to mothers as they are experiencing child birth and care for the very first time in life, and as a result, may have challenges about their new roles and on how to go about obtaining reliable support to enable them care for their health and that of their baby safely. As a way of promoting and supporting breastfeeding, the World Health Organization (WHO), together with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), launched the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) in 1991 with one of its goals recommending that a newborn should be breastfed for at least the first six months of life (exclusively) to a year (Breastfeeding, 2018, WHO, 2017; WHO, 2019). Currently only about 44% of infants between the ages of 0 and 6 months are exclusively breastfed around the world. (WHO, 2017; WHO, 2019), and the figure is much lower in Nigeria at 29% (UNICEF, 2019). Breastfeeding difficulties is a common experience in postpartum mothers, and are likely to contribute to poor infant breastfeeding practices. Most women experience breast related issues during breastfeeding, such as latching difficulties, low milk production, and others that could result to non-breastfeeding or early termination to child breastfeeding (McFadden et al., 2017). It has also been explained that breast issues during breastfeeding are likely to occur more among adolescence and first time mothers (Wambach & Cohen, 2009).

Aside health reasons, most mothers still practice poor breastfeeding while some quit breastfeeding and all of these are associated with poor breastfeeding support ranging from lack of knowledge about breastfeeding, low self-efficacy, problems with latching, and belief that they have low milk production (Busch, Logan, and Wilkinson, 2014). The implication to this is that such mothers are likely to be encountering inconsistency in information and uncertainty in the reliability of support received (Henshaw et al, 2018). To that effect, the extent of protection of the baby against exposure to certain diseases associated with poor breastfeeding could be at risk.

However, breastfeeding importantly is beneficial to the health of both mothers and infants including short-term and long-term benefits, such as reduced mortality and morbidity rates of infant infection, and cognitive development (Kramer et al, 2013). Mothers need both informative, emotional and other forms of breastfeeding support to understand and enjoy its accompanying short-term and long-term benefits. To improve on this, it has been recommended that the processes involved in infant breastfeeding practices should require adequate learning and education (WHO, 2017).

For first-time mothers, support for breastfeeding is a beneficial form of care required at this stage. First time mothers have the need for breastfeeding education and skilled support to successfully induct and introduce them on child breastfeeding (WHO, 2019). While first time mothers usually do receive some forms of social support on child breastfeeding from their spouse and other relatives such as their mothers, mothers-in-law, they also need support from healthcare professionals such as nurses in order to obtain reliable information on child breastfeeding (Henshaw et al, 2018).

For first-time mothers, support for breastfeeding is a beneficial form of care required at this stage since many of them may be ignorant of possibility of having lactation problems. To improve on this, it has been recommended that the processes involved in infant breastfeeding practices should require adequate learning and education (WHO, 2017). First time mothers have the need for breastfeeding education and skilled support to successfully induct and introduce them on child breastfeeding. However, most first time mothers could be receiving some important forms of social or practical support on child breastfeeding from their spouse and other relatives such as their mothers, mothers-in-law, and female friends, they also need support from healthcare professionals such as nurses in order to obtain reliable information on child breastfeeding (Henshaw et al, 2018).

It is the role of nurses to adopt breastfeeding-friendly practices and support breastfeeding mothers by informing them on how to go about initiating breastfeeding, how to maintain lactation, and also the benefits of breastfeeding (Kronborg et al., 2015; WHO, 2019). The BHFI provided ten steps-guide for health workers that describes how to support mothers initiate and maintain lactation (WHO, 2017; WHO, 2019).

Nurse's support can be of immeasurable help to first time mothers to identify and overcome breastfeeding difficulties early on. Such support when provided, could assist the new mothers with information on how to initiate and maintain reliable lactation techniques and several other varied support information from friends and relatives (National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners, 2013). Breastfeeding support from nurses could be in form of educational or informative support and emotional or encouragement support which can be offered through at the clinics, home visits or other forms of contacts such as phone calls and social media to access possible breastfeeding difficulties.-

Obviously, the importance of such supports on breastfeeding could be quite enormous, for instance informative support on breastfeeding is capable of increasing the mother's knowledge, on the benefits of breastfeeding, and access to breastfeeding support, as well as her breastfeeding behaviors (McFadden et al., 2017). On the other hand, emotional or encouragement support on breastfeeding is associated with increase in the mother's feeling of adequacy and affects her attitude, perception towards adequate and lasting breastfeeding as well as raising the level of satisfaction from breastfeeding support received by mothers which is key to maternal well-being at postpartum period (Gianni et al., 2020; Cross-Barnet et al., 2012).

For first time mothers, the perception and experience on breastfeeding at first few feeding days is usually debilitated and frightening as many do not know much about infant breastfeeding and sometimes feel that the baby will get starved. In Hong et al., 2003, most mothers confessed that they were initially frustrated and scared as they rely on emotional encouragement to breastfeed their babies. But all the support they got helped them to understand better on breastfeeding position as well as the confidence to continue breastfeeding.

However, the experience of first-time mothers on emotional /encouragement of breastfeeding support received from nurses at antenatal and postnatal period should be adequately explored and reviewed to promote broader breastfeeding practices among mothers. This is because, caring supportive nursing behaviours can help breastfeeding woman to feel understood, accepted, validated and informed (Hang, Callister and Schwartz, 2003). It has been reported that support to mothers received from the health professionals such as nurses has contributed positively to more involvements in child breastfeeding initiation and duration, as well as in mothers' feelings of satisfaction about breastfeeding (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2012; Ericson, Eriksson, Hellström-Westas, Hoddinott & Flacking, 2018).

On the other hand, poor or lack of support from nurses either through actions or behaviours may lead to main impediment to child breastfeeding especially on first time mothers (Chaput et al., 2015). Some health facility practices and actions such as material gifts on formula packs at birth could discourage perceptions on breastfeeding. Poor educative and emotional supports from nurses could lead to insufficient breast milk supply and eventual cessation of breastfeeding which could be detrimental to child development (Chantry et al., 2014; WHO, 2022). Hence the index study targets to examine the perception of first-time mothers as well as their experiences on breastfeeding support received from nurses so as to narrow the issues likely to affect the overall compliance to the recommended breastfeeding rate and frequency.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to investigate the perception and explore the experiences of first-time mothers on breastfeeding support received from nurses in health facilities in Aba. The following objective are used to address the overall aim of the study:

1. To assess the perception of first-time mothers on information breastfeeding support received from nurses in some selected health facilities in Aba
2. To assess the perception of first-time mothers on encouragement of breastfeeding support received from nurses in some selected health facilities in Aba.

Research hypothesis

The following research questions emanates from this study:

1. There is no significant different on the perception of information breastfeeding support and encouragement they received from nurses in some selected health facilities in Aba.
2. There is no significant relationship in the perception of breastfeeding support between antenatal and postnatal period received from nurses.

METHODOLOGY

The study was designed to capture both quantitative and qualitative forms. The population of this study comprised of all first-time mothers, from 18 years old and above, who were at the last trimester of their pregnancy and were attending antenatal section at the health facilities of study. It also included postnatal mothers from birth to 6 months postpartum, who had life births, and were attending postnatal services at the study selected health facilities during the study

period. The postnatal mothers were also considered for inclusion in the study on the basis that their babies were at least three months but not older than six months at the time of the study. The sample frame comprised first time mothers in Primary Healthcare (PHC) facilities in Aba metropolis Abia State. They were in all a total of 386 first time mother in PHC facilities within the 5 LGA in the metropolis. Two sampling techniques, random sampling technique and non-random purposive sampling technique were applied to select study participants used respectively for quantitative and qualitative study. For the quantitative study, the first mothers attending care at the selected health facilities were randomly identified and selected through the information they supplied to the health facilities. Data collection lasted 1-2 months. And was performed in two different phases for the quantitative and qualitative samples. Data collection was performed by the researcher for the qualitative data, while trained research assistants were used in the quantitative data collection. The Verbal informed consent was obtained from all the first time mothers that met the inclusion criteria, before they were allowed to participate in the study.

The instruments used for data collection include the questionnaire for quantitative data. Separate data analysis was performed to analyse the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the data. For the quantitative data, descriptive analysis method was used to analyze the data hence frequency distribution tables were constructed and expressed as the percentage of the distribution. Mean and standard deviations were computed. Chi square test was used to test for significant association of informational support and encouragement support with the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

For the qualitative data, the qualitative content analysis method was applied (Bäckström, Wahn, & Ekström, 2020). For the focus group discussions and interviews, thematic analysis was performed to transcribe audio recordings. Thematic analysis is useful for identifying themes in qualitative data (Hale *et al.*, 2006). The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim.

RESULTS

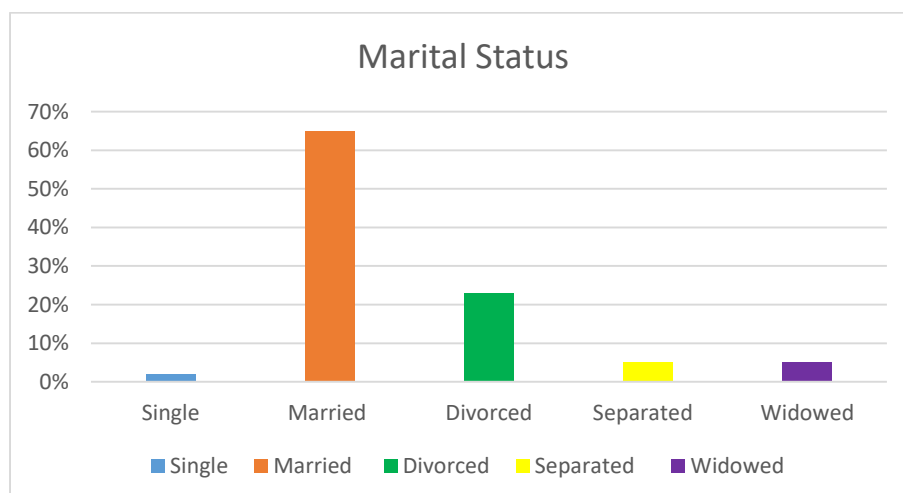


Fig. 4.1 Marital status of the respondents

Fig. 4.1 show that 2% of the respondents were singles, 65% were married, 23% were divorced, 5% were separated while 5% were widows.

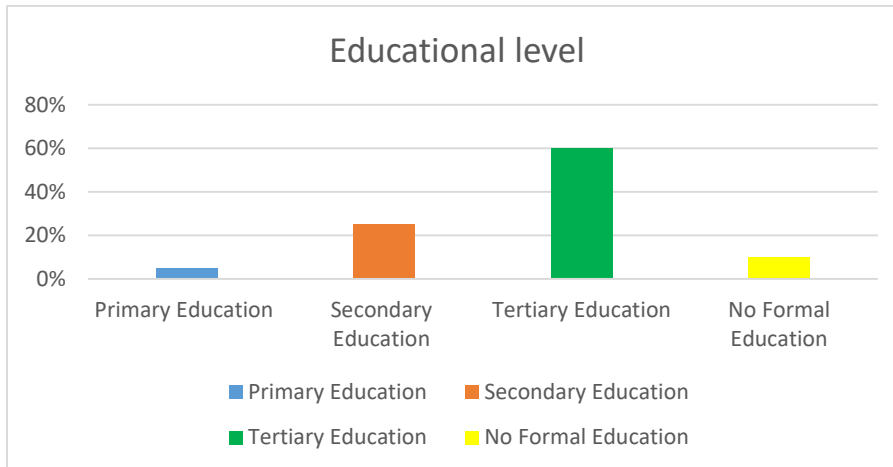


Fig. 4.2: Educational Qualifications of the Respondents

Fig. 4.2 showed that 5% of the respondents had attended primary education, 25% had attended secondary education, 60% had attended tertiary education while 10% had no formal education.

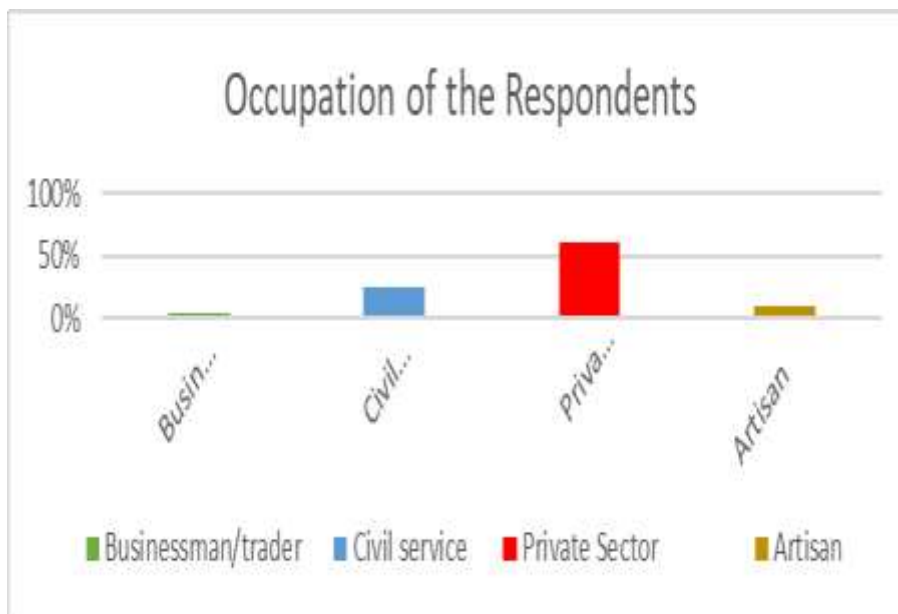


Fig. 4.3 Occupation of Respondents

Respondents

Fig. 4.3 shows that 5% of the respondents were business women, 25% were civil servants, 60% worked in private sector while 10% were artisans.

Objective 1: Perception of first-time mothers on information breastfeeding support received from nurses in some selected health facilities in Aba?

Table 4.1: Mean and standard deviation of the perception of first-time mothers on information breastfeeding support received from nurses in some selected health facilities in Aba.

Table 4.1 shows the mean ratings and standard deviations of the perception of first-time mothers on information breastfeeding support received from nurses in some selected health facilities in Aba. The mean value ranges from 2.51 to 3.98 with a grand mean value of 3.08 which is above the criterion mean of 2.5 thereby showing that It is important for mothers to understand breastfeeding problems they may face, First time breastfeeding required nurses training, Understanding breastfeeding is important are the perception of first-time mothers on information breastfeeding support received from nurses in some selected health facilities in Aba.

Objective 2: Perception of first-time mothers on encouragement of breastfeeding support received from nurses in some selected health facilities in Aba?

Table 4.2: Mean and standard deviation of the perception of first-time mothers on

Items	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Exclusive breastfeeding should be used for babies (only breast milk and no other food or drink, not even water)	193	2	4	2.51	.769
First time breastfeeding is a difficult experience	193	2	4	2.61	.774
First time breastfeeding required nurses training	193	1	4	3.23	.673
Understanding breastfeeding is important	193	1	4	3.98	.225
It is important for mothers to understand breastfeeding problems they may face	193	1	4	2.61	.497
Nurses give chance for questions on breastfeeding education	193	1	4	3.96	.176
Nurses give enough breastfeeding information to first time mothers	193	1	4	2.57	.628
Relying on information from nurses is enough for first time mothers to get reasonable information that can tackle breastfeeding problems	193	1	4	3.23	.673
Average Mean				3.08	0.55

encouragement of breastfeeding support received from nurses in some selected health facilities in Aba.

Items	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
First time breastfeeding is a difficult, and experiencer required nurses emotional encouragement	193	1.00	4.00	3.5	.85
Interaction with nurses on breastfeeding gives confidence and hope	193	2.00	4.00	3.9	.35
Nurses make mothers adopt exclusive breastfeeding without fear of punishing or harming the baby	193	1.00	4.00	3.5	.92
Nurses treat first-time mothers well	193	1.00	4.00	3.8	.66
Based on the nurses support, it is wise to say that mothers have chosen to continue breastfeeding after 6 months and to at least 1 year	193	1.00	4.00	3.9	.75
Nurses are very patient with first time mothers on breastfeeding matters	193	1.00	4.00	3.7	.64
Relying on encouragement from nurses is adequate for first time mother to continue breastfeeding				3.7	.69

Table 4.2 shows the mean ratings and standard deviations of the perception of first-time mothers on encouragement of breastfeeding support received from nurses in some selected health facilities in Aba. The mean value ranges from 3.50 to 3.90 with a grand mean value of 3.70 which is above the criterion mean of 2.5 thereby showing that First time breastfeeding is a difficult, and experiencer required nurses emotional encouragement, mothers on breastfeeding matters, Relying on encouragement from nurses is adequate for first time mother to continue breastfeeding etc.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant different on the perception of information breastfeeding support and encouragement they received from nurses in some selected health facilities in Aba
 Table 4.3: Significant different on the perception of information breastfeeding support and encouragement they received from nurses in some selected health facilities in Aba

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	54.000 ^a	8	.000
Likelihood Ratio	34.005	8	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	4.698	1	.030
N of Valid Cases	9		

Table 4.3 show that the Pearson chi square statistic is 54.00 and the p value is 0.256. The likelihood chi-square is statistic is 34.005 and the p-value is 0.000. Therefore, at a significant level of 0.05, we accept H_0 , hence we conclude that there is no different on the perception of information breastfeeding support and encouragement they received from nurses in some selected health facilities in Aba.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship in the perception of breastfeeding support between antenatal and postnatal period received from nurses.

Table 4.4 Relationship in the perception of breastfeeding support between antenatal and postnatal period received from nurses.

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	24.000 ^a	8	.000
Likelihood Ratio	14.005	8	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	4.698	1	.020
N of Valid Cases	9		

Table 4.6 show that the Pearson chi square statistic is 24.00 and the p value is 0.000. The likelihood chi-square is statistic is 14.005 and the p-value is 0.937. Therefore, at a significant level of 0.05, we accept H_0 , hence we conclude that there is a significant relationship in the perception of breastfeeding support between antenatal and postnatal period received from nurses.

DISCUSSION

Perception of first-time mothers on information breastfeeding support received from nurses in some selected health facilities in Aba.

The perception of first-time mothers on information breastfeeding support received from nurses in some selected health facilities in Aba was determined using mean and standard deviation. The mean value ranged from 2.51 to 3.98 with a grand mean value of 3.08 which is above the criterion mean of 2.5 thereby showing that It is important for mothers to understand breastfeeding problems they may face, First time breastfeeding required nurses training, Understanding breastfeeding is important are the perception of first-time mothers on

information breastfeeding support received from nurses in some selected health facilities in Aba. The findings of the study is in accordance with that of Catunda et al., (2015) who said that during antenatal care, nurses support first-time mothers through education about breastfeeding practice, and during labour, practical support is given by assisting women to initiate breastfeeding. All mothers and babies without complications after childbirth are discharged home within six hours of the postnatal period. Once discharged, first-time mothers majorly depend on the family members, friends, and community for continued support on EBF. The support significantly influences the practice and success of EBF (Labbok et al., 2013). Furthermore, the social, cultural, economic, biological, psychological aspects, and health professionals' support are critical (Siziba et al., 2015).

Perception of first-time mothers on encouragement of breastfeeding support received from nurses in some selected health facilities in Aba.

The perception of first-time mothers on encouragement of breastfeeding support received from nurses in some selected health facilities in Aba were analysed using mean and standard deviation. The result revealed the mean value ranged from 3.50 to 3.90 with a grand mean value of 3.70 which is above the criterion mean of 2.5 thereby showing that First time breastfeeding is a difficult, and experienter required nurses emotional encouragement, mothers on breastfeeding matters, Relying on encouragement from nurses is adequate for first time mother to continue breastfeeding etc. the findings from this study substantiated information from other studies related to the importance of adequate breastfeeding support interventions from healthcare providers. In these studies, breastfeeding mothers identified emotional, informational, and tangible support as necessary interventions for nurses when promoting breastfeeding (Drago et al., 2010). Researchers also revealed that a significant number of Nigerians seek support from healthcare providers because of their perception that healthcare providers are capable of influencing mothers' breastfeeding decisions (Kramer et al., 2015).

CONCLUSION

First-time mothers do need professional, practical and social support in the form of information, emotional support and encouragement for initiation and maintenance of exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months. However, timing and the kind of support given to these mothers is critical for successful exclusive breastfeeding. Individualised support after the delivery of the baby and postnatal period assist the first-time mothers to put the information received during antenatal care into practical use. There is also a need to ensure that the nurses and community members share the same knowledge and skills, to adequately support the first-time mothers succeed in EBF.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommends thus;

1. The study recommends that strategies, to promote compliance with exclusive breastfeeding practices should be targeted not only towards mothers but to their relations as well, since they play a key role in the mother's decision to exclusively breastfeed her baby.

2. Formation of support groups whether in a physical or virtual space would bridge the gap for any additional support needed by these mothers.
3. Health workers need to help community members form breastfeeding support groups to motivate mothers whom are faced with breastfeeding challenges to develop strategies to continue breastfeeding exclusively for six months.
4. Much emphasis should be placed on uneducated mothers during antenatal and postnatal classes to prevent misconception of the policies.

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