

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the study

Breastfeeding is the very first stage of improving child's survival. Breast milk as food for infants is very beneficial for the all round growth of a child. It enhances the physical, mental, and social growth of a child. Breast milk contains many nutritional values like antibodies which boost the immunity of a child, prevents child mortality and morbidity. Breast milk has an enormous impact on the health of infants, most especially those who weighed less at birth. It has been discovered that breast milk is far more nutritious than processed milk. Aside from the benefits of breast milk on an infant, breastfeeding creates an inevitable bond between a mother and her child (Heckman J.J, 2011).

World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) recommended breast milk as an ideal food for infants, and that is why in the past decades, these organizations have been encouraging mothers worldwide to embrace the practice of breastfeeding, particularly exclusive breastfeeding (EBF).

Exclusive breastfeeding according to WHO entails feeding an infant with just breast milk (and syrups if need be) for six months and after that period of time give the infant complementary food (Cattaneo et al., 2000). It has been revealed by a study that infants who are not fed with breast milk at the first 60 days of their birth are likely to die from infection than those who are breastfed (WHO, 2014). Exclusive breastfeeding has a dual advantage on both a child and his mother. Apart from ensuring the good health of a child, it saves cost for the mother; as well as prevent her from breast cancer and other related diseases.

However, despite the recommendation of Exclusive breastfeeding by WHO, the rate of Nigerian mothers who practice EBF is fluctuating. A study proved that the rate of children between ages 1-5 who are exclusively fed dropped from 18% in 2003 to 12% in 2008 and 12% in 2010 and returned to 18% in 2010; consequently, increasing the rate of child mortality (NPC and ICF macro, 2008). It was still discovered in this study that the number of people who are enlightened about EBF in the urban areas of Nigeria is higher than those in the rural areas and this poses a threat on the importance of EBF (NPC and ICF Macro, 2009).

Not minding the enormous benefits of EBF, Nigerian mothers for reasons best known to them do not practice EBF. Some of them who sluggishly try to practice it might just do it partially not up to six months, while some could be based on their cultural beliefs as some traditions in Nigeria see EBF as being unnecessary and some this obnoxious idea of their breast sagging due to breastfeeding.

Based on the many factors that could hamper the practice of breastfeeding in Nigeria, this study is aimed at discovering the attitude and perception of nursing mothers in Uyo LGA. To know their thoughts on the practice of exclusive breastfeeding.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Due to the reduction in the rate of breastfeeding among nursing mothers in Nigeria, particularly nursing mothers in Uyo LGA, this study discovered some problems associated with this.

One of such problem is the high level of poverty in the country. Some nursing mothers have this notion that it is only the rich mothers that can practice EBF; reason being that a mother who is breastfeeding must feed very well. She is expected to feed at least 8 times in a day. Considering the economic situation of things, which mother has the food in her kitchen to feed up to such number of times?

In addition to the aforementioned point, in many homes in Nigeria, some mothers are the bread winners in their homes. This makes them go out to hustle for money; thereby not having the needed time for to breast feed their babies.

Another problem of this study is the fact that some cultural beliefs in Nigeria kick against EBF. A good example is the Yoruba culture which so much belief in the giving of an infant some herbs to keep the child healthy. They believe it is unnecessary to feed a child with just breast milk.

Also, the problem of poor sensitization of nursing mothers on the nitty-gritty of EBF poses a challenge, as some nursing mothers have various negative feelings about EBF. This is common to nursing mothers who live in the rural parts of the country.

These are some of the problems observed could affect the attitude and perception of nursing mothers in Uyo LGA towards EBF.

## **1.3 Aims/ Objectives of the study**

The major aim of this study is to know the attitude and perception of nursing mothers towards exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) in Nigeria (a case study of Uyo LGA).

Other specific objectives include:

1. To examine the factors that can hamper the practice of EBF in Uyo LGA.
2. To ascertain the extent at which nursing mothers in Uyo LGA are well enlightened about EBF.
3. To determine whether EBF can drastically reduce the rate of child mortality in Nigeria.
4. To determine ways nursing mothers in Uyo LGA can be encouraged to practice EBF.

#### **1.4 Research questions**

1. What are the attitude and perception of nursing mothers in Uyo LGA towards EBF?
2. Are there factors that can hamper the practice of EBF in Uyo LGA?
3. Can EBF drastically reduce the rate of child mortality in Nigeria?

#### **1.5 Research Hypothesis**

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There are no factors that can hamper the practice of EBF in Uyo LGA.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** There are factors that can hamper the practice of EBF in Uyo LGA.

#### **1.6 Significance of the study/Justification of the study**

This study is meant to educate the general public, especially nursing mothers on the benefits of EBF.

It is also meant to inform the government that they have a role to play in enlightening the general public, especially nursing mothers on the need to practice EBF.

This study will be of immense benefit to other researchers who intend to know more on this topic and can also be used by non-researchers to build more on their work. This study contributes to knowledge and could serve as a guide for other work or study.

#### **1.7 Scope/ Limitations of the study**

This study is restricted on the attitude and perception of nursing mothers towards exclusive breastfeeding in Nigeria, with Uyo LGA as a case study.

#### **Limitations of study**

**1. Financial constraint-** Insufficient fund tends to impede the efficiency of the researcher in sourcing for the relevant materials, literature or information and in the process of data collection (internet, questionnaire and interview).

**2. Time constraint-** The researcher will simultaneously engage in this study with other academic work. This consequently will cut down on the time devoted for the research work.

### **1.8 Definition of terms**

**Attitude:** A predisposition or a tendency to respond positively or negatively towards a certain idea, object, person, or situation.

**Perception:** This is the ability to see, hear, or become aware of something through the senses or the way in which something is regarded, understood, or interpreted.

**EBF (Exclusive Breastfeeding):** This means that the infant receives only breast milk. No other liquids or solids are given – not even water – with the exception of oral rehydration solution, or drops/syrups of vitamins, minerals or medicines.

**WHO (World Health Organization):** This is a specialized agency of the United Nations that is concerned with international public health. It was established on 7 April 1948, headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.

**UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund):** Is a United Nations' programme headquartered in New York City that provides humanitarian and developmental assistance to children and mothers in developing countries.

### **References**

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