



## Awareness, Attitude, and Responses of South-East Breastfeeding Mothers Towards Media Messages on Exclusive Breastfeeding

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### ABSTRACT

Exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) means giving breast milk in response to the entire child's need for food, drink, suckling, and soothing. Despite the concerted efforts of governmental and non-governmental groups, EBF in Nigeria continues to be suboptimal. The survey method was used to collect data. The population consisted of registered antenatal mothers between 18-45 years old in South-East, Nigeria. Multi-stage sampling technique was used. From the population of 10,282 registered antenatal mothers, a sample size of 370 was derived. Six hospitals, one primary and one tertiary were purposively selected from Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo States. The Health Belief Model formed the theoretical framework. Findings revealed that 75.3% of the women are aware of media messages on exclusive breastfeeding. There were also greater positive attitude and responses from women who go to tertiary hospitals compared to lower positive responses to media messages from women who go to primary hospitals. The study recommends that the media campaign on EBF should be expanded to combat misinformation, myths, and disinformation in society. Public media enlightenment campaigns to educate families, hospitals, etc. are vital in curbing the level of myth and misinformation about EBF in South-East Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Exclusive, breastfeeding, mothers, media, messages, awareness, attitude, response,

### Introduction

Despite the implementation of crucial complementary nourishment, human breast milk remains a significant ongoing contributor to a child's nutritional welfare. Breast milk is a comprehensive source of sustenance that encompasses all the essential nutrients required by a newborn throughout the initial six months of its existence. WHO (2014) state that infants who do not receive breast milk within the initial sixty days after birth face a higher risk of mortality due to infections compared to their breastfed counterparts. In the case of infants born to low-income women, extended nursing is often imperative for both optimal growth and, in many instances, survival. WHO (2005) note that breast milk serves as the initial and innate source of nourishment for infants. This is primarily due to the fact that breastfeeding serves as the sole accessible and reliable supply of high-quality protein and vital fatty acids for a duration of two years or longer.

The WHO and the UNICEF initiated the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) in 1991 with the aim of enhancing breastfeeding practices on a global scale. The Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) endeavours to safeguard, advance, and provide assistance for exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) within the nations comprising its membership. Several African countries, including Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana, Madagascar, Mali, Senegal, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, have demonstrated significant progress in exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) since 1990, as reported by the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS, 2003).

In numerous developing nations, the practice of exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) is not optimally implemented, despite the various advantages and initiatives aimed at promoting it. The global prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding among babies is reported to be 35% (Cai, Wardlaw & Brown, 2012). In sub-Saharan Africa, which has high rates of newborn and child mortality, only 33% of infants are exclusively breastfed (WHO & UNICEF, 2013; Cai, et al., 2012). An EBF coverage of 90% is required in order to benefit from a 11.6% reduction in child mortality in low-income countries (Black, Victora, Bhutta, Christian, De Onis, & Ezzati, 2013; Jones, Steketee, Black, Bhutta, Morris, & Survival, 2003). Nutrition in the early years of life is a crucial determinant for good growth and development, and to satisfy the evolving nutritional requirements, newborns should get adequate and safe supplemental foods while nursing continues for up to two years or beyond (Muanya & Adekunle, 2016).

Despite the problem that inadequate sensitization of nursing mothers to the complexities of (EBF) poses, some nursing mothers have displayed a range of unfavorable emotions towards EBF, (Agunbiade & Ogunleye, 2012). There exists a perception among certain nursing mothers that (EBF) is a practice limited to affluent individuals, as it is believed that breastfeeding mothers must have lax access to ample nourishment (Akadri & Odelola, 2020).

Additional factors that contribute to the lack of adherence to (EBF) can be attributed to other issues. These include: adherence to traditional cultural beliefs, the necessity for mothers to resume employment or education, the perception that breast milk alone does not adequately fulfil infants' nutritional requirements, the short duration of maternity leave, societal and cultural pressures to introduce supplementary water and artificial feeds, cultural expectations, patriarchal influences, challenging working conditions, a lack of awareness, religious convictions, maternal negative attitudes, and personal beliefs (Agunbiade & Ogunleye, 2012).

The mass media is widely recognized as a formidable and all-encompassing mode of communication that possesses the capacity to influence societal norms (Bylaskas-Davies, 2011). The significance of media involvement in promoting awareness and disseminating information regarding the necessity of exclusive breastfeeding cannot be overstated, particularly in the context of Nigeria, which exhibits one of the lowest rates of exclusive breastfeeding in Africa. The mass media fulfils various roles, including but not limited to education and entertainment, influencing public sentiment, endorsing or advocating policies, disseminating public service announcements, and providing amusement (Agba, 2002; Noar, 2006; Wakefield, Loken & Hornik, 2010). The term 'mass media' encompasses the communication system employed for the dissemination of information to targeted or broad audiences, with the ability to reach individuals or large groups of people simultaneously (Vidanapathirana, Abramson, Forbes, & Fairley, 2005; Bylaskas-Davies, 2011). The utilisation of this tool has the potential to enhance public consciousness regarding health concerns and has been identified as a contributing element in influencing various health-related behaviours (Primack, 2004).

The media have the potential to exert influence and facilitate the promotion of alterations in health behaviours (Fishman & Casarett, 2006). The influence of the media in contemporary society is significant since it plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' views, attitudes, and perceived social norms. Furthermore, the media have been utilised as a means to coordinate public communication campaigns, which are deliberate endeavours aimed at informing, persuading, or motivating behavioural modifications among extensive and specific target audiences (Rice & Atkin, 2002).

Consequently, media campaigns focusing on exclusive breastfeeding have consistently prioritised the implementation of effective and well-crafted communication strategies. These strategies aim to raise awareness among the general public, particularly nursing mothers, regarding the advantages of exclusive breastfeeding. The ultimate goal is to foster positive attitudes and behaviours towards this practice. The mass media has played a central role in disseminating exclusive breastfeeding awareness campaigns across multiple platforms, including radio, television, newspapers, and magazines.

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## Objectives of the Study

The study's general objective is to determine the attitude, responses, and awareness of media messages on exclusive breastfeeding among mothers in South-East Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Assess the extent to which breastfeeding mothers are aware of media messages on EBF.
2. To determine the attitudes and responses of South-East mothers to media messages on exclusive breastfeeding (EBF).

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## Literature Review

Breastfeeding is a longstanding cultural practice and an essential method by which newborns sustain themselves prior to the introduction of solid foods. The act entails a woman providing nourishment to a newborn by dispensing milk from her mammary glands. According to Terzungwe (2013), breast milk possesses inherent qualities such as natural availability, hygiene, safety, and convenience, which contribute to the optimal growth and development of a healthy infant. Despite the implementation of crucial complementary nourishment, human breast milk remains a significant ongoing contributor to a child's nutritional welfare. In the case of infants born to low-income women, extended nursing is often imperative for both optimal growth and, in many instances, survival.

Akor (2017) opines that there exists a potential for enhancing breastfeeding practices within the nation. However, this can only be achieved through collaborative efforts across all societal strata to dismantle the political and social obstacles that impede Nigerian women from engaging in exclusive nursing for a duration of six months.

Nigeria currently implements a maternity leave policy of 16 weeks, consisting of 12 weeks of leave upon childbirth (equivalent to three months). This policy deviates from the guidelines outlined in Article no.183 of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), which mandates a minimum leave period of 14 weeks for women around childbirth, and its accompanying Recommendation (No. 191) promotes the optimal maternity leave to be at least 18 weeks (ILO Gender Network Handbook, 2006).

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## Media Campaign on Exclusive Breastfeeding

According to Ndolo (2006), the media is considered a knowledge-producing institution within society. The societal roles of media encompass several key functions, namely information dissemination (surveillance), fostering consensus (correlation), cultural preservation (transmission of shared values), alleviating social strain (entertainment), and promoting national objectives (mobilization). The multifaceted roles of the media, specifically in information dissemination, education, and entertainment, impose several responsibilities and require comprehensive coverage of diverse human activities and topics.

The significance of mass media in disseminating health-related information is widely acknowledged. Consequently, media campaigns focusing on exclusive breastfeeding have consistently prioritised the implementation of effective and well-crafted communication strategies. These strategies aim to raise awareness among the general public, particularly nursing mothers, regarding the advantages of exclusive breastfeeding. The ultimate goal is to foster positive attitudes and behaviours towards this practice. The mass media has played a central role in disseminating exclusive breastfeeding awareness campaigns across multiple platforms, including radio, television, newspapers, and magazines. Additional avenues for mobilisation encompass health professionals, acquaintances, and family members, with the objective of disseminating the desired outcomes to the broader population (Ezeah & Odionye, 2017).

However, despite the collective endeavours made at both international and local levels, the adherence to breastfeeding guidelines among lactating mothers has not yet achieved the optimal rate of one hundred percent, as advocated by the WHO (2010). Iheanacho, Anyaegbu, & Etumnu (2021) conducted a study to assess the extent of awareness regarding exclusive breastfeeding among women of reproductive age in Owerri Urban. The findings indicated that women who engaged in six months of exclusive breastfeeding said that the awareness campaign significantly contributed to the realization of the advantages associated with EBF. The implementation of media campaigns promoting EBF has resulted in increased acceptance and endorsement of this practice among breastfeeding women, who are more inclined to suggest EBF to their peers and other nursing mothers, mostly due to the associated benefits.

### ***Factors Affecting Adherence to Messages on Exclusive Breastfeeding***

Ifijeh (2017) highlighted the importance of exclusive breastfeeding for Nigerian children, despite its numerous benefits. He argued that many Nigerians prioritise their children's well-being, even when it comes at a high cost. However, only 17% of Nigerian nursing mothers give their children exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life, while only 11% breastfeed exclusively beyond the sixth month (Okorie, 2017).

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## **Empirical Review**

Uwalaka and Nwala (2020) found that breastfeeding mothers residing in Port Harcourt who reported receiving information and learning about exclusive breastfeeding through social media platforms were more inclined to engaging in exclusive breastfeeding. This finding aligns with the results of the survey, which indicated that social media was the primary medium through which respondents received campaign messages on EBF, accounting for 67.8% of the total.

However, Naugle's (2016) research observed that mass media campaigns alone were ineffective in promoting exclusive breastfeeding practices in Vietnam. The implementation of a mass media campaign led to more substantial changes in exclusive breastfeeding behaviour, with social dispersion in geographical regions.

Chukwu-Okoronkwo, Okugo, Ihechu & Okoronkwo (2019) found that antenatal channels were the predominant source of information for women in the region regarding exclusive breastfeeding. The research suggested that traditional media platforms should enhance their efforts in terms of dynamic programme design and dedicated publicity to effectively fulfil their role in this campaign.

Furthermore, Iheanacho, Anyaegbu, & Etumnu (2021) conducted a study to assess the extent of awareness regarding exclusive breastfeeding among women of reproductive age in Owerri Urban. The findings indicated that women who engaged in six months of exclusive breastfeeding said that the awareness campaign significantly contributed to the realization of the advantages associated with EBF. The implementation of media campaigns promoting EBF has resulted in increased acceptance and endorsement of this practice among breastfeeding women, who are more inclined to suggest EBF to their peers and other nursing mothers, mostly due to the associated benefits.

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## **Theoretical Framework**

The research is based on the Health Belief Model (HBM), introduced in the 1950s by Godfrey Hochbaum, Irwin Rosenstock, and Stephen Kegels as a framework in social psychology. This model elucidates how individuals participate in health-promoting behaviours by examining their beliefs on health risks, perceived advantages of action, perceived barriers to action, and self-efficacy in their ability to act. The Health Belief Model is extensively used in health behaviour research. Health communication disseminates essential information to society through media messages, campaigns, talk programmes, radio jingles, television ads, editorials, and features. This allows people to implement essential beneficial health practices for their enhanced well-being. [Health](#) behaviours are shaped by cognitive processes, perceptions of personal risks, expected benefits, perceived drawbacks, and external influences, including age, social status, education, and familial relationships. The application of the HBM to this study hinges on the idea that breastfeeding moms or women in their reproductive prime may demonstrate a favourable attitude towards the information and communication strategies employed in the EBF campaign. We suggest that communication will influence public perspectives, leading to subsequent behavioural modifications, especially the embrace of healthier lifestyles.

## Methodology

The research employed a survey method. The study gathered data from pregnant women (aged 18–45) in three states of South-East Nigeria: Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo (Table 1). We registered the women as prenatal patients in three primary and tertiary hospitals. Over the course of eight months, from January to August 2021, we visited the hospitals. Utilising the Wimmer and Dominic sample size calculators, we determined a sample size of 370 from a population of 10,282, with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%

**Table 1: Registered Antenatal Mothers**

The purposive technique was used to select one primary and one tertiary hospital from each of the three selected states. The Bowley

Ebonyi		Enugu		Imo	
Primary	Tertiary	Primary	Tertiary	Primary	Tertiary
General Hospital Onueke	Alex Ekwueme Federal University Teaching Hospital Abakaliki	Nsukka General Hospital	University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital (UNTH)	Imo Specialist Hospital	Federal Medical Center, Owerri (FMC)
1,079	1,910	378	2,416	620	3,879
Grand Total = 2,989		Grand Total = 2,794		Grand Total = 4,499	

proportionate technique was employed to allocate equitable numbers of the questionnaire to the participants.

**Table 2: Projected Population of the Study Area and Number of Questionnaire.**

S/N	STATE	PROJECTED POPULATION OF HOSPITAL REGISTERED WOMEN BETWEEN 18-45YEARS	COPIES OF QUESTIONNAIRE
1.	Ebonyi	2989	84
2.	Enugu	2794	110
3.	Imo	4499	176
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10282</b>	<b>370</b>

**Table 3: Projected Distribution of Questionnaire.**

1.	<b>Ebonyi</b>	<b>84</b>
	Primary	12
	Tertiary	72
2.	<b>Enugu</b>	<b>110</b>
	Primary	15
	Tertiary	95
3.	<b>Imo</b>	<b>176</b>
	Primary	24
	Tertiary	152
	<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>370</b>

The questionnaire was administered to pregnant and nursing mothers visiting the hospital during the study period using an accidental sampling technique. The accidental sampling method was employed to select breastfeeding mothers from both primary and tertiary hospitals. A 48-item self-developed structured questionnaire was designed to address each research question, incorporating both open-ended and closed-ended questions. A total of 370 questionnaire were distributed by the researcher and trained research assistants, with 354 completed responses received. The response rate was notably high. The research instrument underwent face validation. To ensure the validity of the questionnaire, three lecturers from the Department of Mass Communication and two statistics experts validated the instrument. The reliability of the research instrument was assessed through the test-retest method,

utilising 20 copies of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed to participants in two study areas: Enugu and Imo. We re-administered the identical copies of the questionnaire to the same respondents two weeks later, observing and documenting any errors. The reliability, or consistency between the two response sets, was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, yielding an internal consistency coefficient of 0.861. This level was deemed sufficient, indicating the instrument's reliability in producing the required data. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were employed to analyse the research questions. Chi-square tests and measures of association were utilised to evaluate the hypotheses using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

## Results

Out of the 370 copies of the questionnaires, 354 copies were returned. I considered this number suitable for analysis because the sample size of 370 was determined using the Wimmer and Dominic online sample size calculator using a confidence level of 95% and a margin of 5%. The 354 respondents had birth experience.

### Objective 1: The extent to which breastfeeding mothers are aware of media messages on EBF.

Results revealed that 75.3% of the women have often or very often seen or heard media messages about exclusive breastfeeding. This indicates that most of the respondents are aware of EBF. The majority of these women are from Imo State, while the lowest percentage of those who are aware of EBF are from Ebonyi State (15.9%). The most common or very common sources of media messages on EBF are radio (55.5%), television (61.7%), magazines (45.7%), social media (67.8%), and newspapers (24.5%). This shows that overall, social media and television are the media through which the respondents often or most often receive campaign messages on EBF. The newspaper was the most rarely used medium for media messages on EBF. Radio was mostly used by respondents from Enugu, while television and social media were mostly used by respondents from Imo State. On the other hand, newspapers and magazines were rarely or never used as media for EBF media messages, mostly by respondents from Imo.

**Table 4.1: Medium of Awareness of Media Messages on EBF by State**

Medium of Awareness to		State			
Campaign of EBF	Extent	Ebonyi State	Imo State	Enugu State	Total
Seen or heard any media message on exclusive breastfeeding	Never	5(1.5%)	14(4.3%)	3(0.9%)	22(6.7%)
	Rarely	18(5.5%)	33(10.1%)	8(2.4%)	59(18.0%)
	Often	32(9.8%)	73(22.3%)	38(11.6%)	143(43.6%)
	Very often	20(6.1%)	37(11.3%)	47(14.3%)	104(31.7%)
Radio as medium of hearing media messages on EBF	Never	9(4.5%)	17(8.4%)	13(6.4%)	39(19.3%)
	Rarely	10(5.0%)	36(17.8%)	5(2.5%)	51(25.2%)
	Often	18(8.9%)	26(12.9%)	24(11.9%)	68(33.7%)
	Very often	8(4.0%)	14(6.9%)	22(10.9%)	44(21.8%)
Television as medium of hearing/seeing media messages on EBF	Never	7(3.3%)	21(10.0%)	3(1.4%)	31(14.7%)
	Rarely	12(5.7%)	32(15.2%)	8(3.8%)	52(24.6%)
	Often	24(11.4%)	23(10.9%)	31(14.7%)	78(37.0%)
	Very often	13(6.2%)	14(6.6%)	23(10.9%)	50(23.7%)
Newspaper as medium of seeing media messages on EBF	Never	9(6.0%)	16(10.6%)	5(3.3%)	30(19.9%)
	Rarely	14(9.3%)	33(21.9%)	37(24.5%)	84(55.6%)
	Often	8(5.3%)	8(5.3%)	10(6.6%)	26(17.2%)
	Very often	4(2.6%)	5(3.3%)	2(1.3%)	11(7.3%)
Magazine as medium of seeing media messages on EBF	Never	10(6.3%)	12(7.5%)	5(3.1%)	27(16.9%)
	Rarely	13(8.1%)	41(25.6%)	6(3.8%)	60(37.5%)
	Often	10(6.3%)	8(5.0%)	21(13.1%)	39(24.4%)
	Very often	3(1.9%)	4(2.5%)	27(16.9%)	34(21.3%)
	Never	5(2.0%)	12(4.8%)	4(1.6%)	21(8.4%)

Social media as medium of hearing/seeing media messages on EBF	Rarely	11(4.4%)	42(16.9%)	6(2.4%)	59(23.7%)
	Often	17(6.8%)	42(16.9%)	24(9.6%)	83(33.3%)
	Very often	22(8.8%)	20(8.0%)	44(17.7%)	86(34.5%)

The analysis of the medium through which the respondents from the two hospitals are made aware of media campaign messages on EBF is summarised in Table 4.4. The level of awareness of media campaign messages on EBF was indicated by the extent to which the respondents had seen or heard media messages on EBF. The results show that 65.3% of respondents from tertiary hospitals have often or very often seen or heard media campaign messages on EBF. Only 10.0% of respondents from tertiary hospitals have often heard or seen such EBF campaign messages. This shows that the level of awareness of media messages is higher among respondents from tertiary hospitals than among patients from primary hospitals.

The respondents from tertiary hospitals showed a consistently higher percentage use of radio, television, newspapers, magazines, and social media as the sources by which they saw or heard campaign messages on EBF. Social media, television, and then radio are the highest sources of awareness of media campaign messages on EBF.

**Table 4.2: Medium of Awareness of Media Messages on EBF by Hospital Type**

Medium of Awareness to		Hospital		
Campaign of EBF	Extent	Primary	Tertiary	Total
Seen or heard any media message on exclusive breastfeeding	Never	4(1.2%)	18(5.5%)	22(6.7%)
	Rarely	8(2.4%)	51(15.5%)	59(18.0%)
	Often	24(7.3%)	119(36.3%)	143(43.6%)
	Very often	9(2.7%)	95(29.0%)	104(31.7%)
Radio as medium of hearing media messages on EBF	Never	3(1.5%)	36(17.8%)	39(19.3%)
	Rarely	4(2.0%)	47(23.3%)	51(25.2%)
	Often	9(4.5%)	59(29.2%)	68(33.7%)
	Very often	4(2.0%)	40(19.8%)	44(21.8%)
Television as medium of hearing/seeing media messages on EBF	Never	0(0.0%)	31(14.7%)	31(14.7%)
	Rarely	3(1.4%)	49(23.2%)	52(24.6%)
	Often	12(5.7%)	66(31.3%)	78(37.0%)
	Very often	5(2.4%)	45(21.3%)	50(23.7%)
Newspaper as medium of seeing media messages on EBF	Never	3(2.0%)	27(17.9%)	30(19.9%)
	Rarely	3(2.0%)	81(53.6%)	84(55.6%)
	Often	4(2.6%)	22(14.6%)	26(17.2%)
	Very often	1(0.7%)	10(6.60%)	11(7.3%)
Magazine as medium of seeing media messages on EBF	Never	0(0.0%)	27(16.9%)	27(16.9%)
	Rarely	5(3.1%)	55(34.4%)	60(37.5%)
	Often	5(3.1%)	34(21.3%)	39(24.4%)
	Very often	3(1.9%)	31(19.4%)	34(21.3%)
Social media as medium of hearing/seeing media messages on EBF	Never	6(2.4%)	15(6.0%)	21(8.4%)
	Rarely	4(1.6%)	55(22.1%)	59(23.7%)
	Often	11(4.4%)	72(28.9%)	83(33.3%)
	Very often	8(3.2%)	78(31.3%)	86(34.5%)

The respondents' preferred source(s) of information on exclusive breastfeeding are summarised in Table 4.2 according to the state of residence of the respondents. The results show that 80.3% of the respondents preferred television, radio, social media, etc. as their sources of receiving media messages on EBF often or very often, while 72.6% preferred posters, pamphlets, magazines, etc. as their sources. The respondents who prefer health

centres as their sources of messages on EBF constitute 88.3%, while 75.4% prefer friends and families. Also, 62.2% prefer religious bodies and non-governmental organisations (NGO) to often receive messages on EBF, while 49.5% prefer business and market environments. Very few respondents subscribed to any preferred source(s) for receiving EBF messages, but 35.7% consider official meetings for such information. The health centre is the most preferred source of messages and information on EBF, followed by television, radio, social media, etc., and the present media, such as posters, magazines, pamphlets, etc. This shows that, apart from health centres, the mass media is highly preferred by the respondents for information on EBF.

The majority of the respondents from Imo State have the most preference for all the available sources of messages on exclusive breastfeeding. Most respondents from Ebonyi State indicated that they do not prefer any of the sources of messages on exclusive breastfeeding. Enugu and Imo States have equal preferences for magazines and pamphlets as sources of messages and information on exclusive breastfeeding.

## Objective 2

### To Determine the Attitudes and Responses of South-East Mothers to Media Messages on Exclusive Breastfeeding (EBF)

The results in Table 4.3 show that over 90.0% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they are willing to carry out exclusive breastfeeding, encourage their female friends and family members to carry out EBF, and accept that breastfeeding increases the bonding between mothers and their infants. Similarly, over 70.0% of the respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed that they prefer formula feeding to breastmilk; financial and economic reasons made them not to effectively carry out EBF; may have health problems if they breastfeed exclusively for six months; accepted that non-utilisation of first milk is right; only breastmilk will not be sufficient for the nutritional needs of the baby after three months; and that media messages have not made them to start EBF. Those who are opposed to (disagreed) to being indifferent to mass media campaign messages on EBF are 57.0% of the respondents, while 64.1% disagreed that they usually pay attention but know they will not implement the advice on EBF. These results clearly show that listening to media messages has improved, to some extent, the attitudes and responses of the respondents to EBF.

**Table 4.3: Attitudes and Responses to Media Messages on EBF by State of Residence**

Attitude on EBF messages	Level	State			Total
		Ebonyi State	Imo State	Enugu State	
I am willing to carryout exclusive breastfeeding	Strongly disagree	3(0.9%)	8(2.3%)	3(0.9%)	14(4.0%)
	Disagree	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)
	Agree	19(5.4%)	71(20.2%)	30(8.5%)	120(34.2%)
	Strongly agree	62(17.7%)	90(25.6%)	65(18.5%)	217(61.8%)
I encourage my female friends and family to do EBF	Strongly disagree	1(0.3%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	1(0.3%)
	Disagree	4(1.1%)	8(2.3%)	1(0.3%)	13(3.7%)
	Agree	28(8.0%)	86(24.6%)	22(6.3%)	136(39.0%)
	Strongly agree	50(14.3%)	74(21.2%)	75(21.5%)	199(57.0%)
I prefer formula feeding to breastmilk	Strongly disagree	21(6.1%)	48(14.0%)	40(11.7%)	109(31.8%)
	Disagree	44(12.8%)	88(25.7%)	46(13.4%)	178(51.9%)
	Agree	8(2.3%)	21(6.1%)	4(1.2%)	33(9.6%)
	Strongly agree	10(2.9%)	8(2.3%)	5(1.5%)	23(6.7%)
I am not able to effectively carryout EBF as a result of work and time	Strongly disagree	13(3.8%)	23(6.7%)	27(7.8%)	63(18.3%)
	Disagree	26(7.6%)	52(15.1%)	43(12.5%)	121(35.2%)
	Agree	26(7.6%)	72(20.9%)	19(5.5%)	117(34.0%)
	Strongly agree	18(5.2%)	19(5.5%)	6(1.7%)	43(12.5%)
I am not able to effectively carryout EBF as a result of financial and economic reasons	Strongly disagree	21(6.0%)	46(13.2%)	38(10.9%)	105(30.2%)
	Disagree	30(8.6%)	73(21.0%)	43(12.4%)	146(42.0%)
	Agree	23(6.6%)	39(11.2%)	8(2.3%)	70(20.1%)
	Strongly agree	10(2.9%)	10(2.9%)	7(2.0%)	27(7.8%)
	Strongly disagree	35(10.1%)	69(19.9%)	46(13.3%)	150(43.2%)

I may have health problems if I exclusively breastfeed for 6 months	Disagree	32(9.2%)	58(16.7%)	42(12.1%)	132(38.0%)
	Agree	13(3.7%)	32(9.2%)	3(0.9%)	48(13.8%)
	Strongly agree	4(1.2%)	9(2.6%)	4(1.2%)	17(4.9%)
I accept that non-utilization of first milk is alright	Strongly disagree	26(7.6%)	47(13.8%)	49(14.4%)	122(35.8%)
	Disagree	28(8.2%)	63(18.5%)	29(8.5%)	120(35.2%)
	Agree	15(4.4%)	29(8.5%)	9(2.6%)	53(15.5%)
	Strongly agree	14(4.1%)	22(6.5%)	10(2.9%)	46(13.5%)
I feel that only breastmilk will not be sufficient for the baby's nutrition after 3 months	Strongly disagree	28(8.1%)	39(11.3%)	41(11.9%)	108(31.4%)
	Disagree	22(6.4%)	52(15.1%)	37(10.8%)	111(32.3%)
	Agree	26(7.6%)	60(17.4%)	9(2.6%)	95(27.6%)
	Strongly agree	8(2.3%)	15(4.4%)	7(2.0%)	30(8.7%)
I accept that breastfeeding increases the bond between mother and infant	Strongly disagree	8(2.3%)	3(0.9%)	2(0.6%)	13(3.7%)
	Disagree	4(1.1%)	5(1.4%)	0(0.0%)	9(2.6%)
	Agree	18(5.2%)	50(14.3%)	20(5.7%)	88(25.2%)
	Strongly agree	53(15.2%)	110(31.5%)	76(21.8%)	239(68.5%)
I am indifferent about mass media messages on EBF	Strongly disagree	8(2.3%)	20(5.8%)	38(11.1%)	66(19.3%)
	Disagree	24(7.0%)	67(19.6%)	38(11.1%)	129(37.7%)
	Agree	29(8.5%)	57(16.7%)	14(4.1%)	100(29.2%)
	Strongly agree	22(6.4%)	18(5.3%)	7(2.0%)	47(13.7%)
I usually pay attention to adverts on EBF from the mass and social media though I won't adhere	Strongly disagree	17(4.9%)	38(11.0%)	45(13.0%)	100(29.0%)
	Disagree	28(8.1%)	61(17.7%)	32(9.3%)	121(35.1%)
	Agree	19(5.5%)	42(12.2%)	9(2.6%)	70(20.3%)
	Strongly agree	19(5.5%)	26(7.5%)	9(2.6%)	54(15.7%)
Media messages have not made me to start EBF	Strongly disagree	13(3.8%)	34(9.9%)	32(9.3%)	79(23.0%)
	Disagree	36(10.5%)	86(25.0%)	49(14.2%)	171(49.7%)
	Agree	15(4.4%)	28(8.1%)	8(2.3%)	51(14.8%)
	Strongly agree	19(5.5%)	179(4.9%)	7(2.0%)	43(12.5%)

The results also showed that the attitudes and responses of the breastfeeding mothers towards exclusive breastfeeding improved as a result of listening to media messages, with the highest responses coming from those residents in Imo State. Respondents from Enugu and Ebonyi States experienced an almost similar change in attitudes and responses towards EBF due to listening to media campaign messages. The respondents' attitudes and responses to media campaign messages on EBF according to the category of hospitals are summarised in Table 4.3. The results show positive attitudes and responses to media messages on EBF from both respondents from primary and tertiary hospitals, though those from tertiary hospitals showed a greater positive attitude and response to the mass media messages.

**Table 4.4: Attitudes and Responses to Media Messages on EBF by Hospital Type**

Knowledge of EBF	Level	Hospital		
		Primary	Tertiary	Total
I am willing to carryout exclusive breastfeeding	Strongly disagree	5(1.4%)	9(2.6%)	14(4.0%)
	Disagree	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)
	Agree	15(4.3%)	105(29.9%)	120(34.2%)



	Strongly agree	28(8.0%)	189(53.8%)	217(61.8%)
I encourage my female friends and family to do EBF	Strongly disagree	0(0.0%)	1(0.3%)	1(0.3%)
	Disagree	3(0.9%)	10(2.9%)	13(3.7%)
	Agree	20(5.7%)	116(33.2%)	136(39.0%)
I prefer formula feeding to breastmilk	Strongly agree	25(7.2%)	174(49.9%)	199(57.0%)
	Strongly disagree	14(4.1%)	95(27.7%)	109(31.8%)
	Disagree	20(5.8%)	158(46.1%)	178(51.9%)
	Agree	7(2.0%)	26(7.6%)	33(9.6%)
I am not able to effectively carryout EBF as a result of work and time	Strongly agree	6(1.7%)	17(5.0%)	23(6.7%)
	Strongly disagree	11(3.2%)	52(15.1%)	63(18.3%)
	Disagree	19(5.5%)	102(29.7%)	121(35.2%)
	Agree	12(3.5%)	105(30.5%)	117(34.0%)
I am not able to effectively carryout EBF as a result of financial and economic reasons	Strongly agree	4(1.2%)	39(11.3%)	43(12.5%)
	Strongly disagree	16(4.6%)	89(25.6%)	105(30.2%)
	Disagree	21(6.0%)	125(35.9%)	146(42.0%)
	Agree	5(1.4%)	65(18.7%)	70(20.1%)
I may have health problems if I exclusively breastfeed for 6 months	Strongly agree	6(1.7%)	21(6.0%)	27(7.8%)
	Strongly disagree	20(5.8%)	130(37.5%)	150(43.2%)
	Disagree	20(5.8%)	112(32.3%)	132(38.0%)
	Agree	3(0.9%)	45(13.0%)	48(13.8%)
I accept that non-utilization of first milk is alright	Strongly agree	4(1.2%)	13(3.7%)	17(4.9%)
	Strongly disagree	8(2.3%)	114(33.4%)	122(35.8%)
	Disagree	16(4.7%)	104(30.5%)	120(35.2%)
	Agree	12(3.5%)	41(12.0%)	53(15.5%)
I feel that only breastmilk will not be sufficient for the baby's nutrition after 3 months	Strongly agree	10(2.9%)	36(10.6%)	46(13.5%)
	Strongly disagree	16(4.7%)	92(26.7%)	108(31.4%)
	Disagree	17(4.9%)	94(27.3%)	111(32.3%)
	Agree	6(1.7%)	89(25.9%)	95(27.6%)
I accept that breastfeeding increases the bond between mother and infant	Strongly agree	6(1.7%)	24(7.0%)	30(8.7%)
	Strongly disagree	0(0.0%)	13(3.7%)	13(3.7%)
	Disagree	1(0.3%)	8(2.3%)	9(2.6%)
	Agree	8(2.3%)	80(22.9%)	88(25.2%)
I am indifferent about mass media messages on EBF	Strongly agree	39(11.2%)	200(57.3%)	239(68.5%)
	Strongly disagree	3(0.9%)	63(18.4%)	66(19.3%)
	Disagree	15(4.4%)	114(33.3%)	129(37.7%)
	Agree	16(4.7%)	84(24.6%)	100(29.2%)
	Strongly agree	11(3.2%)	36(10.5%)	47(13.7%)
	Strongly disagree	9(2.6%)	91(26.4%)	100(29.0%)

I usually pay attention to adverts on EBF from the mass and social media though I won't adhere	Disagree	8(2.3%)	113(32.8%)	121(35.1%)
	Agree	13(3.8%)	57(16.5%)	70(20.3%)
	Strongly agree	17(4.9%)	37(10.7%)	54(15.7%)
Media messages have not made me to start EBF	Strongly disagree	10(2.9%)	69(20.1%)	79(23.0%)
	Disagree	17(4.9%)	154(44.8%)	171(49.7%)
	Agree	7(2.0%)	44(12.8%)	51(14.8%)
	Strongly agree	14(4.1%)	29(8.4%)	43(12.5%)

## Discussion of Findings

**Research question one** sought to determine the extent to which breastfeeding mothers are aware of mass media messages about exclusive breastfeeding. Findings revealed that 75.3% of the women are aware of media messages about exclusive breastfeeding. It was also established that social media channels such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and WhatsApp are the core medium through which most of the respondents often receive campaign messages on EBF. The majority of the respondents (94.0%) are aware of the importance of breastfeeding, but the level of exposure is higher among respondents in tertiary hospitals.

The study also revealed that social media, television, and radio are the media through which the respondents often or most often receive campaign messages on EBF, and that newspapers were the most rarely used medium for media messages on EBF. This finding complements the findings by (Ezeah & Odionye, 2017), where it was revealed that television, healthcare professionals, and radio are the major sources of information on exclusive breastfeeding for nursing mothers. This is a clear reflection of the prevailing situation regarding mass media access in the study region. Apart from social media, television and radio are the most available sources of mass media among households and families and could also be accessed in some offices, making them easy means of accessing information on EBF. The importance of television in the dissemination of media campaign messages, especially in relation to breastfeeding, was reiterated by its adoption by the government of Bangladesh, which launched a nation-wide mass media campaign to educate mothers on the importance of breastfeeding (Mashreky et al., 2015). Therefore, television and radio are very vital in the propagation of EBF messages and information among nursing mothers in the South-East region of Nigeria.

Social media channels such as Facebook, X, Instagram, WhatsApp, etc. have made information dissemination simple, easy, and faster, with wider coverage within a very short time. This is a very important mass media innovation over traditional media such as television, radio, etc., which do not boast of the same rate and level of coverage as social media channels. This medium becomes more imperative because of its availability in every household, individual, etc. due to the availability of smart phones and other smart devices. Hence, such campaign messages are carried around by people on their smart phones to access at their convenience. Flax, Ipadeola, Schnefke, Ralph-Opara, Adeola, Edwards, & Brower (2022) reported an increase in the number of nursing mothers who were able to continue to exclusively breastfeed their babies until six months in private healthcare facilities in Lagos, Nigeria. The study revealed that the ability to exclusively breastfeed and persist for six months was drawn from the use of social media (WhatsApp) to educate the women by sending regular messages on EBF through their WhatsApp group. This has shown that social media is a veritable source of mass media campaigns, hence its role as a key source of information in EBF media messages.

The study by (Ezeah & Odionye, 2017) also revealed that newspapers and magazines were not identified as sources of information for exclusive breastfeeding. This is also in line with the findings of this study, whereby newspapers were identified as the medium rarely used to access information on exclusive breastfeeding among nursing mothers in South-East Nigeria. This is obvious, as many households and families could hardly afford a newspaper, which is seen as a luxury and a reflection of affluence. This was further established in the works of Chukwu-Okoronkwo et al. (2019) that the print media (that is, newspapers and magazines) were not regular sources of media campaigns on breastfeeding. This is similar to the findings by Nzete (2010), who revealed that most of the respondents in selected villages in Umuahia, Abia State, Nigeria, only receive regular information and education on exclusive breastfeeding through television and radio but rarely receive such campaign messages from newspapers and magazines. This further reiterates the ineffectiveness of the print media, especially newspapers and magazines, in mass media campaigns on exclusive breastfeeding in South-East Nigeria.

The study revealed that the majority (88.0%) of the respondents preferred health centres as their sources of messages on EBF. This shows that the respondents learn more about EBF from the health centres than from the media campaign messages. This underscores the regular teachings given at the health centres by the health professionals at the health centres in the Southeast during antenatal and postnatal visits. This is in line with the findings by Chukwu-Okoronkwo, et al. (2019), who indicated that nursing mothers draw more information about breastfeeding from antenatal visits. The fact that the respondents in this study identified radio, television, etc. as their second preferred sources of information on EBF indicates the major role of the media in propagating media campaigns on EBF.

Research question two analysed data on attitudes and responses of South-East women to media messages on exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) shows that the media campaign messages on exclusive breastfeeding have impacted the attitudes and responses of nursing mothers to exclusive breastfeeding in the study area. The respondents indicated their willingness to carry out exclusive breastfeeding, encourage friends and family to engage in EBF, provide no

more support for formula feeding, and exclusively breastfeed, baring economic reasons. These are clear indications of serious changes in attitude among the nursing mothers and women of Southeast Nigeria due to the mass media messages. The key indicator here is the willingness expressed by the respondents to engage in EBF after encounters with mass media messages on EBF. There are signs of adaptation to the requirements and benefits of breastfeeding, as shown by the attitudes and responses of the respondents to the media messages.

Iheanacho et al. (2021), in their study of the level of awareness of exclusive breastfeeding among women of reproductive age in Owerri Urban, revealed that the women who participated in six months of exclusive breastfeeding indicated that the campaign was very helpful in actualizing the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding. The women admitted that their response was facilitated by media messages on EBF. Chukwu-Okoronkwo et al. (2019) also revealed that the media campaign on exclusive breastfeeding has made breastfeeding mothers embrace the practice and readily recommend the practice of EBF to friends and other nursing mothers due to the benefits. Through their study, they reaffirmed the health benefits of exclusive breastfeeding to the babies, as their respondents admitted knowing that EBF affords children immunity against early childhood diseases and that babies exclusively breastfed look healthier than babies fed with formula milk.

That about 43.0% of the respondents indicated that they were indifferent to the media campaign messages on exclusive breastfeeding shows that not all the respondents keyed into the message on exclusive breastfeeding or appreciated the benefits for both mother and child. Further analysis shows that those who indicated indifference to the media messages on EBF are the respondents who are mostly single and/or within the lower age range (below 30 years). Similar results were presented by Mashreky et al. (2015), where intervention efforts to improve the response and attitudes of some nursing mothers to exclusive breastfeeding concepts after a period of one month yielded insignificant improvement. There is, therefore, a need for more enlightenment and education of men and women in society, especially would-be fathers and mothers, health workers, etc., on the need to imbibe the best practices of EBF.

Similar studies by Mashreky et al. (2015) in Bangladesh demonstrated that exposure to television programs on EB has a significant impact on respondents' attitudes and responses to EBF, as well as on their willingness to do EBF, encouraging friends and; family, and strengthening the bond between mother and child.

The study revealed that the frequency of attendance at antenatal has significant influence on the attitude of the respondents to media messages of exclusive breastfeeding for  $p < 0.05$  respondents who never attended antenatal have least positive attitudes and responses to EBF. This is because the health professionals educate expectant mothers on the need to exclusively breastfeed their babies at birth, reaffirming the media messages on EBF. Expectant mothers who never attended these antenatal programmes do not acquire such important knowledge that enable them to develop positive attitude to EBF. This showed that the more a respondent attends antenatal, the higher the odds of having positive attitude to EBF. This also emphasized the recommendations by Naugle (2016) that media alone are not enough to impact the right attitudes to EBF among women of childbearing age but combination of media campaign messages and other methods are more beneficial.

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## Conclusion

There is a high level of awareness of the importance of breastfeeding, knowing the right time to begin early initiation of breastfeeding, the duration (first six months) for exclusive breastfeeding, and the right time to introduce complementary food for the baby. This showed that the mass media (television, radio, newspapers and magazine), especially the social media campaign on exclusive breastfeeding, is playing a very important role in educating women on the importance of exclusive breastfeeding. Furthermore, public enlightenment campaigns such as educating families, hospitals, etc., along with mass media campaigns, will be very vital in curbing the level of myth and misinformation about breastfeeding in the Southeast region. Therefore, to actualize the desired behavioural change (exclusive breastfeeding), it is necessary to utilise social media since they have the capacity to reach a wider audience.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest

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