

**EXCLUSIVE BREASTFEEDING AS A ROAD MAP TO THE ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT OF FAMILIES IN URUAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA,  
AKWA IBOM STATE.**

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**BY**

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***ABSTRACT***

*The study investigated exclusive breastfeeding as a road map to the economic development of families in Uruan Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State. The population of this study consisted of all mothers between the ages of 18 and 45 in Uruan Local Government Area, with a total number of 9,844. The study adopted a non-experimental survey to assess exclusive breastfeeding and the health status of infants and mothers. The Data collected from the respondents were coded and transferred into a spreadsheet and summarized. They were coded into the computer and analyzed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) 11.0 while all the hypotheses were tested at .05 alpha. The instrument for data collection was the questionnaire. The questionnaire was titled “Benefits of Exclusive Breastfeeding on Babies and Mothers Questionnaire (BEBFBMQ)” and had two sections. A total of 400 mothers were selected for the study through accidental sampling technique. From the results of the data analysis, it was observed that exclusive breastfeeding has a tremendous influence on the family and society. In conclusion, there is a significant influence of exclusive breastfeeding on the family and society and exclusive breastfeeding has a significant influence on psychological values. One of the recommendations was that mothers as well the public should be educated or enlightened by the government on the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding through seminars, mass media, churches and local means of disseminating information.*

**KEYWORDS: Exclusive Breastfeeding, Family, Society, Psychological Values, Uruan Local Government Area**

**INTRODUCTION**

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Exclusive breastfeeding not only benefits the baby and the mother, but also the husband, family and the society at large. Mothers are able to maintain complete physical and emotional bonds with their babies during breastfeeding. Breastfeeding contributes to the health and wellbeing of mothers, increases family and national resources. It is a secured way of feeding and is safe for the environment (UNICEF, 2006).

A review of evidence has shown that, on a population basis, exclusive breastfeeding for six months is the optimal way of feeding infants and thereafter infants should receive

complementary foods with continued breastfeeding up to two years of age or beyond (WHO 2002; WHO 2010). To enable mothers to establish and sustain exclusive breastfeeding for six months, WHO and UNICEF (2006) recommended: Initiation of breastfeeding within the first hour of life; exclusive breastfeeding, that is, the infants only receive breast milk without any additional food or drink, not even water; breastfeeding on demand, that is, as often as the child wants, day and night and no use of bottles, teats or pacifiers. Breast milk provides all the energy and nutrients that the infant needs for the first months of life. It continues to provide up to half or more of a child's nutritional needs during the second half of the first year and up to one-third during the second year of life (WHO, 2007).

In recent years, many activities have been directed at investigating infants feeding and at publicizing the importance of exclusive breastfeeding. There is still much to be done, however, to halt the spread of bottle and formula feeding that continues in both towns and rural areas and to protect the precious custom of breastfeeding that is still for our babies the normal way to feed. This research work seeks to reveal how knowledgeable mothers are on the benefits of breastfeeding and to throw more light on these benefits on the baby, the mother, family and society which will go along way to help promote the activity, hence contribute to the health of our children and mothers now and in the future.

### **Statement of the Problem**

With the introduction of modern technologies and the adoption of new life-styles, the importance attached to exclusive breastfeeding has been noticeably reduced in many societies. Increasing number of mothers becoming working class citizens is another factor that is aiding the decline of exclusive breastfeeding. This situation has a devastating effect on the health values achieved from breastfeeding by infants and can lead to serious malnutrition and even death of the infants. The prevalence and duration of exclusive breastfeeding have declined in our society for a variety of cosmetic, social and cultural reasons. This paper is therefore designed to throw more light on exclusive breastfeeding as a road map to the economic development of families in Uruan Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to assess exclusive breastfeeding as a road map to the economic development of families in Uruan Local Government Area. Specially, the study intends to:

1. Examine the influence of exclusive breastfeeding on the family and society.
2. Assess the psychological values of exclusive breastfeeding.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions under consideration are:

1. What is the influence of exclusive breastfeeding on the family and society?
2. What is the influence of exclusive breastfeeding on psychological values?

### **Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses guided the study:

1. There is no significant influence of exclusive breastfeeding on the family and society.
2. There is no significant influence of exclusive breastfeeding on the psychological values.

### **Literature Review**

#### **How Milk is produced**

It is important to write about the female breast since it is the organ that produces breast milk for the nourishment of the new born infant. The breast, otherwise called the mammary gland, is an accessory organ of female reproduction and it is highly adored as an index of

femininity and female beauty. A woman has normally two breasts, one on either side of the breastbone (sternum) and lying mostly over the major muscle (pectoralis major) of the corresponding side of the chest wall.

The breast consists partly of gland tissues and partly of supporting tissues and fat and these gland tissues make the milk, which then goes along small tubes or ducts towards the nipples but before they reach the nipples, the ducts become much wider and form lactiferous sinuses in which milk collects. About 10-20 fine ducts lead from the lactiferous sinuses nipple to the outside, through the tip of the nipple. The nipple contains many sensory nerves so it is very sensitive which is important for the reflexes which help milk to come out. Around the nipple there is a circle of dark skin called the areola. On the areola are small swellings (glands) that produce oil fluid which helps to keep the nipple skin soft and in good condition. Beneath the areola are the lactiferous sinuses (Essien, 1999).

According to Essien (1999) and Sutter Health (2008), milk is produced as a result of the action of hormones and reflexes. The pituitary gland at the base of the brain produces a hormone called prolactin which makes the gland cells in the breast secrete milk. Milk is ejected by small muscle cells around the breast glands which contracts and increases the pressure on the milk inside. The hormone oxytocin makes the muscle cells contract. For the first few days after delivery the breasts feel soft and empty. They secrete only small amounts of the first milk, yellowish, called colostrums. After a few days, the breasts begin to feel full and sometimes hard. They start to produce a lot of milk. It happens more quickly if the baby is allowed to feed whenever he wants from the time of delivery.

#### **Factors that can Increase the Production of Breast-Milk**

Nwazor (2008) gave the three most important factors as being:

1. Frequent suckling – repeated stimulation of the nipples associated with frequent suckling provokes both prolactin reflex and oxytocin reflex for the production and flow of breast milk respectively.
2. Good maternal feeding – breastfeeding mothers need to avoid hunger and eat balanced diet.
3. A relaxed attitude in the mother – the breastfeeding mother should be kept free from stress, while keeping her as close as possible to her baby. This helps her to bond well with her child as well as establish her lactation.

#### **Practices that Disturb or Hinder Exclusive Breastfeeding**

Linkages (2004) stated that supplementation with water is one of the practices. It was explained that the practice of giving water and other liquids such as beverages, sugar water and juices to breastfed infants in the first month is widespread throughout the world with reasons listed below:

- Necessary for life.
- Quenches thirst.
- Relieves pains (from colic or earache).
- Prevents and treats colds and constipation
- Soothes fretfulness.
- Cultural and religious beliefs that water is the source of life, and is a spiritual and psychological necessity, a way of welcoming the child into the world. Even proverbs passed down from generation to generation advice mothers to give their babies water. It is

also believed that colostrums, the first part of breast milk, is stale and contaminated and should not be given to babies.

- Cosmetic reason – most women refuse to practice exclusive breastfeeding because they do not want their breasts to become flat; they want to remain young to enjoy their lives.

### **Exclusive Breastfeeding and Benefits to the Family and Society**

Breastfeeding reduces the cost of healthcare by promoting healthier children and mothers, increases global population by decreasing the use of resources and energy required to produce, process, package, distribute, promote and dispose of materials created by the manufacturer from the use of artificial baby milk.

Breastfed babies are less likely to be put in the hospital with illness (Eyo, 2002). This reduces cost of healthcare, reduces mortality as well as morbidity rate and aids economic savings.

Exclusive breastfeeding reduces absenteeism in the workplace due to children's illness. It reduces the number of sick days that families must use to care for their sick children. Breastfeeding is cheap and also can be afforded. It is always ready-made, encourages child spacing, hence population control. The siblings can drink express breast milk when baby cannot finish all of it (Nwazor, 2008).

### **Exclusive Breastfeeding and Psychological Benefits**

Hormones released during breastfeeding help to strengthen the maternal bond, help to manage common difficulties associated with higher breastfeeding rates, give support to a mother while breastfeeding, assist in familial bonds, and help to build a paternal bond between father and child (Gartner, 2005).

Breastfeeding saves time. You have no bottle or formula to buy or prepare, no bottles to heat in the middle of the night. It gives you time to relax and enjoy a special closeness with your baby (Eyo, 2002).

- Breastfed babies know their mothers and will never confuse them with a baby sitter.
- Great satisfaction for feeling experienced when baby suckling with your breasts and letting go with a big smile. You know that the growth of your baby comes from what your body produces and that you are giving your baby the best start in life.
- You can nurse while sleeping. Breastfeeding saves mothers about 7 hours a week off their feet, and no screaming baby in the middle of the night waiting on the formula to heat up. All these reduce stress.
- In case of times of disaster, or when travelling, you do not have to worry about finding formula.

## **Methods**

### **Research Design**

The survey design was adopted for the study.

### **Areas of the study**

The area of study covered all the villages in Uruan Local Government Area.

### **Population of the study**

The population of the study comprised all mothers between the ages of 18-45 in Uruan Local Government Area, with a total number of 9,844.

### **Sample and Sampling Techniques**

A sample size of 400 mothers was selected for the study through accidental sampling technique.

### **Instrumentation**

The researcher developed instrument titled “Benefits of Exclusive Breastfeeding on Babies and Mothers Questionnaire (**BEBFBMQ**)”. The questionnaire was divided into two sections, A and B, with a 4–point rating scale of Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD). It contained 20 items. Section A obtained the personal data of the respondents, while section B gathered information about the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding on babies and mothers.

### **Validity of Instrument**

The instrument was validated for its face and content validity by three experts from Faculty of Education, University of Uyo, Uyo.

### **Reliability of Instrument**

The instrument was administered to 50 mothers from the population that was not used for the actual study, at four weeks interval for trial test. The data from the two tests were correlated for coefficient. The reliability co-efficient was .80.

### **Method of Data Collection**

The researcher administered the questionnaire to mothers in different villages in Uruan L.G.A. Collection of the questionnaire from the respondents was done by the researcher.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

Mean and t-test were used for data analysis.

### **Data Analysis and Results**

#### **Research Question One**

What is the influence of exclusive breastfeeding on the family and society?

#### **Table 1: Mean rating of the responses of mothers on the influence of Exclusive Breastfeeding on the Family and Society**

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<b>S/N</b>	<b>mean (X)</b>	<b>Remark</b>
1.	3.05	Agreed
2.	3.17	Agreed
3.	3.17	Agreed
4.	2.98	Agreed

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Table 1 indicates that items 9-12 have mean scores which are above the cut-off point of 2.50, showing that the respondents had agreed that exclusive breastfeeding has a remarkable influence on the family and society.

## Research Question Two

What is the influence of exclusive breastfeeding on psychological values?

**Table 2: Mean Rating of the Responses of Mothers on the Influence of Exclusive Breastfeeding on Psychological Values.**

S/N	Mean (X)	Remark
1.	3.16	Agreed
2.	3.84	Agreed
3.	3.01	Agreed
4.	3.98	Agreed

Table 2 indicates that items 13-16 have mean scores of 3.16, 3.84, 3.01 and 3.98 respectively which are above the cut-off point of 2.50, indicating that respondents had agreed that exclusive breastfeeding has a great influence on the psychological values.

## Hypotheses Testing

### Hypothesis One

There is no significant influence of exclusive breastfeeding on the family and society

**Table 3:**

### t-test Analysis of the Influences of Exclusive Breastfeeding on the family and society

Variable	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit
Exclusive Breastfeeding	400	13.80	8.11	798	2.98*	1.98
Family & society	400	12.01	8.91			

\* = Significant at  $P < .05$  alpha level.

Since the calculated t (2.28) is greater than the critical t (1.98) at df of 798 and 05 alpha level, the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a significant influence of exclusive breastfeeding on the family and society.

### Hypothesis Two

There is no significant influence of exclusive breastfeeding on psychological values.

**Table 4: t-test Analysis of the influence of Exclusive Breastfeeding on the Psychological Values.**

Variable	N	X	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit
Exclusive Breastfeeding	400	13.98	10.11	798	2.42*	1.98
Psychology Values	400	12.31	9.43			

\* = Significant at  $P < .05$  alpha level.

Since the calculated t (2.42) is greater than the critical t (1.98) at df of 798 and .05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a significant influence of exclusive breastfeeding on psychological values.

### Discussion on the Findings

Result of data analysis in hypothesis one indicated that there is a significant influence of exclusive breastfeeding on the family and the society. The findings of this study confirm that of Eyo (2002), who asserted that breastfed babies are less likely to be put in hospitals for illness. This reduces cost of health care, reduces mortality as well as morbidity rates and aids economic savings. Besides, breastfeeding is cheap and can be afforded by even the poorest family in any community (Nwazor, 2004).

The result of data analysis in Hypothesis Two indicated that there is a significant influence of exclusive breastfeeding on psychological values. The findings of the study go in line with that of Gartner (2005), who contended that hormones released during breastfeeding help to strengthen the maternal bond, help to manage common difficulties associated with higher breastfeeding, and can assist in family bonds and help to build a paternal bond between father and child.

### Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that exclusive breastfeeding has a tremendous influence on the family and society. Also, there is a significant influence of exclusive breastfeeding on the family and society and exclusive breastfeeding has a significant influence on psychological values.

### Recommendations

The following recommendations were proffered:

1. Mothers as well the public should be educated or enlightened by Government on the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding through seminars, mass media, Churches and local means of disseminating information.
2. Nursing mothers should be encouraged to adhere strictly to the directives and information regarding the practice of exclusive breastfeeding.



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