5

EFFECTS OF OCCUPATION AND EDUCATION OF URBAN WORKING NURSING MOTHERS ON BREAST- FEEDING AND TYPES OF WEANING FOODS

I. O. Olaseha and O. O. Oladepo

Introduction

Woman are important collaborators in ensuring the survival of the family in all cultures and generations. They will continue to play this indispensable role by virtue of their biological endowments relating to the birth, growth and development of children (Adeniyi *et al* 1985).

In the pre-industrialisation period, most Nigerian women were pre-occupied with agricultural activities which did not separate them from their children. This afforded mothers opportunities, for devoting maximum time to the care of their offsprings. Today, in order to contribute towards the upkeep of the family, some women in the rural areas undertake certain income-generation activities which often keep them away from their children for the greater part of the day. Such women, therefore, leave the care of their children to other care-givers.

In many parts of Nigeria, increasing industrialisation and urbanisation have made more women take up paid employment to supplement their family income. As more of them join the work-force, their maternal roles or child-rearing functions suffer. This trend has great implications for the proper growth and development of the child (Sadik1989). In a study conducted in a rural area of Nigeria, Brieger (1984) noted that the migratory trading pattern of women contributes to increased defaulting of mothers from monthly child-welfare clinics and

non-compliance to treatment regimes. This has negative implications for the health status of their young ones.

The importance of breast milk to the growth and development of infants has long been well established (UNICEF/WHO/UNES-CO). Spack (1970) notes that breast milk is not only a nourishing food but helps to protect the child against certain diseases such as diarrhoea, coughs and colds, and other common ailments. It also provides all the nutrients a baby needs in the first four months of life.

In addition, regular breast-feeding enhances child-mother relationship. It has also been observed that the early experience and ideas about the world acquired by children are based on the way they are fed and on the culture of whoever feeds them. The implication of all these, therefore, is that where the feeding and care of a child is left to a surrogate mother, physical, social and psychological problems in the child may occur immediately or in later years. Furthermore, children left in the hands of other care-givers may suffer inadequate care and neglect, resulting in poor physical, social and emotional health development. These may include trauma resulting from home accidents, e.g. fire, cuts, falls, etc, maladaptation problems such as truancy, intolerance, and psychopathy, among others. The above is underscored in a study by Adeniyi *et al* (1985) in which it was revealed that children under ten years of age are particularly susceptible to home accidents. For instance, Spack (1976) had earlier reported that fires and burns are the commonest causes of accidental deaths in children.

One of the major components of Primary Health Care (PHC) is maternal and child health. Two indicators for measuring the success of this component is the maternal and infant mortality rates. This, in turn, is further dependent upon the quality and extent of care provided by mothers. Since the working mother's time is divided between her workplace and the home, less time is left to her to look after the baby. It is, therefore, important to document child-care practices of working mothers for the purpose of establishing baseline data which can be utilised to improve maternal and child health-care services.

Study Area

This study was carried out in 1990 at Ibadan, the capital of Oyo State, Nigeria. Ibadan has an estimated population of 4.5 million, mainly of the Yoruba ethnic group (Contact 1989). In several studies, Ibadan has been divided into three major areas, viz: inner core, transitional and peripheral areas.

The inner area is characterised by the absence of basic infrastructures and facilities such as water, electricity and good roads. In addition, it is densely populated, leading to overcrowding. Furthermore, most houses are not planned and are often built haphazardly

and with poor ventilation. It is inhabited mostly by the traditional indigenes.

The transitional areas, unlike the inner core, enjoys better social amenities. The homes have better ventilation and the areas are less densely populated. In addition, the infrastructural designs are more modern than those of the inner core. The inhabitants comprise both indigenes and immigrants.

The peripheral is a low density area, and enjoys a lot of basic amenities. Most roads are tarred and well lit. The houses are properly laid out and are occupied mostly by the educated and professional elites.

Methodology

A multistage sampling method was used to select the study subjects consisting of working class women.

The first stage involved delineating Ibadan into the three major areas — the inner core, the transitional and the peripheral. The second stage involved the selection of wards. Based on the size of their geographical areas, a proportionate sample of wards in each area was carried out. Thus three wards were selected in the transitional area, two in the peripheral and one in the inner core.

Next, 20% of the households in the selected wards were randomly selected by selecting every fifth house. Two women of child-bearing age who may be self-employed or in paid employment were selected in each household, based on their availability and willingness to participate in the study. In situations where one or both subjects were not available in the household, the next household was automatically selected.

A total of 180 questionnaires were administered, comprising 72, 64, and 44 in the transitional, the peripheral and the inner core households respectively.

The questionnaire guide sought information on demographic characteristics; number of children; time for work; resumption and closing; child-feeding practices, including weaning' practices; and children immunisation status. The questionnaires were administered by research assistants who have been previously trained after pretesting the instruments.

Results

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Most respondents (35.6%) were between the ages of 25 -29, followed by those with the 30 -34 year age-group (28.3%). The majority of the respondents (72.8%) were Christians and married

(96.7%). Most of the marriages were monogamous (69.4%), and a few (23.9) polygamous.

With respect to occupation, 38.3% were civil servants, 17.8% traders, and 16.7% fashion designers of all grades. Approximately half (50.6%) of the respondents had secondary school education and above, followed by 21.1% with primary school education, while 28.3% had no formal education.

Most of the respondents (57.3%) did not belong to any social organisations or clubs, whereas 40.0% were members of various social /religious clubs or organisations. With regard to number of respondents' children, 25.6% had three children, 24.4% had two, while half of the respondents did not specify the number of their children.

Mothers' Resumption and Closure at Work

More than half of the respondents (51.1%) usually leave home for their workplace between 5.30 and 7.00 a.m., and 42.2% between 8 and 10 a.m.

Many respondents (41.7%) usually return home from their workplace between 6 and 8 p.m., and 31.4% between 3 and 5 p.m.

The majority of the mothers (61.1%) had no opportunities to interact with their children during working hours as compared with 14.4% who had such opportunities. Moreover, 30.5% of those who had the opportunity to interact with their children did so for about an hour, and only 35% for about four hours. Similarly, 34.4% of the respondents usually take their children to their workplaces; 28.3% keep their children at day-care centres; while 37.3% usually leave the children at home.

For respondents who left their children at home, 16.7% left the children with grandmothers; 13.3% with mother-in-laws; and 4.4% with nannies; 29% did not respond to this question.

BREAST-FEEDING PRACTICES AND EDUCATION

On the whole, the results revealed that most respondents (54.6%) breast-feed their babies for more than nine months. However, when mothers' educational levels were matched with breast-feeding practices, it was revealed that 78.0%; 58.8% and 42.2% of mothers with primary, post-secondary and secondary education breast-feed their babies for more than nine months respectively. Also, 11.7% of mothers with post-secondary education breast-feed between seven and nine months and 29.4% breast-feed between four and six months; while 33.3% of mothers with secondary education breast-feed between seven and nine months; 19.5% breast-feed between four and

six months and 4.9% breast-feed between zero and three months. The remaining 7.3% of mothers with primary education breast-feed between seven and nine months; while 14.6% breast-feed between four and six months. The differences in these figures, however, were not statistically significant (Table 1).

BREAST-FEEDING PRACTICES AND OCCUPATION

The occupation of the respondents were also matched with their breast-feeding practices using two broad classifications - "others-employed" and "self-employed". The analysis revealed that 3% of "others-employed" comprising employees of government and other business organisations breast-feed their babies between zero and three months; 22% between four and six months; 31% between seven and nine months while 42% breast-feed their babies for more than ten months. As for the "self-employed" respondents, 2.6% breastfeed between zero and three months; 18.7% between four and six months, 15% between seven and nine months and 65% breast-feed their babies for more than ten months. The differences in these figures, however, were not statistically significant (Table 2).

WEANING FOODS AND EDUCATION

An analysis of weaning foods used by mothers by their levels of education showed that 15 out of 17 mothers with post-secondary education (88.3%) wean their children on a combination of carbohydrate and protein foods as compared with 67.6% of mothers for secondary, and 70% with primary school education.

Higher percentages of mothers with secondary (26.2%) and primary (28.1%) education wean their children on mainly carbohydrates compared with mothers with post-secondary education (11.7%). The differences, however, were not statistically significant (Table 3).

WEANING FOODS AND OCCUPATION

An analysis of weaning foods used by respondents by their occupations revealed that 21% of "others-employed" (government employees and other business organisations) wean their babies with mainly carbohydrate foods while 4% wean with mainly proteinous foods. When the weaning foods of "others-employed" were compared with "self-employed" respondents, higher percentage (91%) of "self-employed" respondents wean their babies with mixed foods as opposed to 74% for "others-employed". The differences were, however, not statistically significant (Table 4).

Conclusions

Most of the respondents (72.8%) Christians and 69.4% come from monogamous marriages. This may not necessarily reflect a true picture or position of the Nigerian working women. However, regardless

of this finding, the data still present a pattern of child-care practices probably among young mothers.

Half of the number of respondents did not specify the number of children they had. This was probably due to the Yoruba cultural taboo which forbids a woman to count her children. This is to forestall the effects of the 'evil' eyes of the person counting the children and the fear that such an act may result in either her sterility or the death of one or all of her children.

The results showed that most working mothers ("others- and self-employed") were absent from home between 9*2 hours to 10 hours daily with most of them not having opportunity to interact with their children. Mothers, therefore, had to delegate their child-care roles to other care-givers such as grandmothers, mother-in-laws and housemaids. This behaviour, though compelled by economic necessity, does not augur well for adequate care of the child. Such children may suffer neglect and may be more susceptible to home accidents and poor feeding. This is further buttressed by occasional reports in the Nigerian dailies of the incidence of housemaids and other care-givers consuming foods meant for children put under their care!

That more than half of the respondents breast-feed their babies for more than nine months may be due to the current economic crunch and the resultant soaring prices of processed baby milk formulae which have placed them beyond the reach of the common women. Other factors, such as public child nutrition education, which emphasises the need for longer breast-feeding *via* various communication channels such as the radio, television, Better Life for Rural Dwellers' Programme and clinic education may also be responsible for the long breast-feeding by mothers. However, the greater percentage (65%) of self-employed women breast-feed for longer periods than women who. are employed by governments and other business organisations (54%). Women with post-secondary education breast-feed their babies for a shorter period of time than mothers with lower levels of education. This shows that education also has some negative relationship with the length of period a woman will breast-feed her baby. Although the relationship is not statistically significant, there is the need to provide ample opportunity for child-bearing working mothers to breast-feed their babies even when they are at work. In Malaysia, mothers have opportunities of breast-feeding their babies during working hours (Contact 1985).

The fact that the greater percentage of mothers with primary school education wean their babies with mainly carbohydrate foods than mothers with secondary and post-secondary education shows that the levels of education of mothers have some relationship with the type of foods mothers use in weaning their babies, even though the relationship may not be statistically significant. But this finding

cannot be conclusive because educational level is usually associated with income, and education may, therefore, be an intervening variable for the effect of income on types of weaning foods used by mothers, especially as carbohydrates are cheaper and more accessible than protein foods. Nevertheless, conscious or concerted educational efforts by health planners, community leaders and non-governmental organisations should be aimed at mothers with low and non-formal education in order to improve their weaning practices.

That a higher percentage of self-employed mothers breast-feed their babies for longer periods and wean their babies with a combination of carbohydrates and proteinous foods more than employees of government and other business organisations is probably due to the fact that there is more time available to self-employed mothers for the care of their children even when they are at work.

At the community level, active women groups such as the Better Life for Rural Dwellers, and Lioness Clubs, Jaycees, etc should be involved in the planning and implementation of educational programmes aimed at improving the child-care practices of working mothers in the urban areas as well as of those in the rural areas.

References

Adeniji, E. A.; Agega, T. I.; Akinfenwa, O. O.; Effiong, E. C.; Ekanem, F. U.; Ogunlana, V. O. A.; Osiyale, O. O.; Solagberu, B. A. and Undechukwu, M. U, in "A Survey of Home Accidents in Igboora between July and September, 1985.

Saki, N, : "Investing in Women: The Focus of the Nineties", *Populi Journal of the United Nations Population Fund*, Vol. 16,2; 5-19,1989.

Brieger, W. R.: "Maternal Migrations and Child Health", *Journal of Tropical Paediatrics*, 30, (5); 262 - 64,1984.

UNICEF/WHO/UNESCO: *FACTS FOR LIFE: A Communication Challenge*.

Spack, Benjamin: *Baby and Child Care*, New York: Pocket Books, 1970.

Contact, "Breast-feeding for Life", *Contact: A Bimonthly publication of the Christian Medical Commission*, No. Ill: 4-5,1989.

Table 1 RESPONDENTS EDUCATION BY BREAST-FEEDING PRACTICES

<i>Educational Level of Respondents</i>	<i>Period of Breast-feeding Last Child</i>				
	<i>0—3 months</i>	<i>4 — 6 months</i>	<i>7- 9 months</i>	<i>10 months and above</i>	<i>Total</i>
Post secondary	—	5 (29.4%)	2 (11.7%)	10 (58.8%)	17
Secondary	5 (4.9%)	20 (19.5%)	34 (33.3%)	43 (42.15%)	102
Primary	-	6 (14.6%)	3 (7.3%)	32 (78.04%)	41
Adult/Arabic	—	—	1	1	2
Non-formal Education	—	1	2	9	12
Total	5	32	42	95	174

$$X^2 = 24.36534$$

$$df = 12$$

$$p = 1.813352E - 02$$

Table 2
RESPONDENTS' OCCUPATION BY BREAST-FEEDING

<i>Occupation by Respondents</i>	<i>Period of Breast-feeding Last Child</i>				
	<i>0—3 months</i>	<i>4—6 months</i>	<i>7— 9 months</i>	<i>10 months and above</i>	<i>Total</i>
Employees of Government and other Business Organisations	3 (3.3%)	20 (22.2%)	29 (32.2%)	38 (42.2%)	90
Self-employed	2 (2.6%)	13 (16.6%)	12 (15.4%)	51 (65.4%)	78
Total	5	33	41	89	168

$$X^2 = 9.8255$$

$$df = 3$$

$$p = 0.0211$$

Table 3**RESPONDENTS' EDUCATION BY WEANING FOODS**

<i>Educational Level of Respondents</i>	<i>Weaning Practices</i>			
	<i>Mainfy Carbohydrate</i>	<i>Mainfy Protein</i>	<i>Mixed (combination of carbohydrate and protein)</i>	<i>Total</i>
Post-secondary SMVIfufarV	2 (11.7%) 29 (26.2%) 12(28.1%)	2	15 (88.3%) 71 (69.6%) 29 (70%)	17 102 41
Primary Adult/Arabic	—	-	2	2
Non-formal Education	4	—	8	12
Total	47	2	3125	174

$$X^2 = 4.725352$$

$$df = 8$$

$$p - .786487 < 5$$

Table 4
RESPONDENTS' OCCUPATION BY WEANING FOODS

<i>Occupation of Respondents</i>	<i>Weaning Practices</i>			
	<i>Mainly Carbohydrate</i>	<i>Mainly Protein</i>	<i>Carbohydrate + Protein</i>	<i>Total</i>
Employees of Government and other Business Organisations Self-employed	19 (21.3%) 7 (8.9%)	4(4.5%) 0	66 (74.1%) 72 (91.1%)	89 79
<i>Tota!</i>	26	4	138	168

$X^2 = 9.237$
df = 2
P =0.00987