

While the majority of respondents preferred WhatsApp, a smaller group of radio listeners expressed a liking for stations such as Al'ansar, BRTV, and Dadal Kura. WhatsApp's popularity in the selected communities can be attributed to its user-friendly features, including group messaging and accessibility, which make it suitable for both literate and illiterate users, as highlighted in Old Maiduguri (*...messages can be shared through voice notes by both the educated and uneducated... we have a WhatsApp group where media content is shared daily...*).

The study, addressing objective one, revealed that comedy, sermons, and news and current affairs were the most popular media content frequently consumed by youth in the study area. Comedy emerged as the dominant content type, while preaching and religious messages also held widespread appeal, with several respondents emphasizing their significance (Gwange 3 respondents: *...we make fun of everything, we have to be happy even if you don't have a job, ... we have learnt a lot from social media sermons especially during this Ramadan – how to do a lot of things right*). Youths in the selected wards predominantly engaged with media themes that were accessible and captivating, such as short videos on TikTok and Facebook, direct communication via WhatsApp, and viral videos alongside news content.

Although the respondents did not mention specific hours spent on these popular media, most of them indicated daily engagement with social media. Some respondents said that WhatsApp and Facebook are regularly checked due to their accessibility and group interactions. For instance, not only is a user able to sign up and join groups that are relevant to them, irrespective of the level of education, the user also has the opportunity to either hide or show these groups (WhatsApp) to the public. TikTok and Facebook were highlighted for their role in entertainment and personal development, receiving substantial daily usage. A small number of respondents mentioned listening to the radio, primarily on their phones, while intermittently using social media.

Ideological and attitudinal influences of popular media content

The study found that the process of ideological and attitudinal influence through popular media occurs primarily through continuous exposure to its content and the media figures (personalities) and influencers they follow on various platforms. In this context, social media emerged as a significant force in shaping attitudes and beliefs, both positively and negatively. The interviewees and FGD participants indicated that popular media content significantly influences youth in the selected communities, shaping their attitudes, beliefs, and opinions on various issues, including personal development, as well as religious and political matters.

The interviewees and FGD participants in the selected communities mentioned that media content they are exposed to often offered them valuable life lessons, helped them distinguish between right and wrong, and reinforced ethical behaviour. Some respondents also noted that popular media has enhanced their understanding of religious tenets, including Islamic teachings, preaching, and moral values. For example, one of the interviewed respondents from Mairi Ward in Jere LGA remarked *...through these contents, I have learnt not to look down on anybody and tolerance, I have learnt a lot about my religion*). A respondent from Gwange 3 mentioned that “Dandalin Matasa”, (Youth Forum) a programme in Hausa Language produced by Al’ansar Radio, has impacted the way he sees drug abuse, idleness and the negative impacts on him and society.

Political content on social media impacted the knowledge of youth on governance, and the conduct of politicians. For instance, one respondent from Galtimari Ward mentioned the loss of interest in the National Assembly after closely following the suspension of Senator Natasha Akpoti’s sexual harassment claim. Several interviewees and FGD participants mentioned that the viral video of the man beating two schoolgirls after plucking some mangoes from his compound has made many more conscious of their behaviours in the public (respondent from Old Maiduguri: *as a class room teacher, I love beating students, but after watching that video and I saw what happened to the man, I don’t think I will ever beat any student again*).

In terms of influencing the attitudes of youth, popular media, through frequent exposure, played several key roles, as highlighted by the interviewees and FGD participants. It served as a powerful tool for educating youth, providing religious guidance, sharing business ideas, and offering vocational training. For example, a significant number of youths mentioned that comedy, sermons, music, and drama contributed to shaping their opinions on various issues. They emphasized that the media’s influence on youth is largely attributed to the media figures and influencers they follow on various platforms. Respondents reported, for instance, that many youths follow Islamic preachers such as Mufti, Sheikh Jaafar, Isa Ali Pantami, and Pastor Paul Enenche for religious and moral guidance. Similarly, some youths follow figures like Dan Bello, Dino Melaye, Jaafar Jaafar, among others for political discussions. Additionally, youths noted following actors like Ali Nuhu and entertainers such as musicians and comedians like Brain Jotter and Kenny Black, who blend entertainment with educational messages. Others follow business influencers who provide entrepreneurship and financial literacy insights, as well as local influencers (Mohammed Amina Ali, TJ Jabir Kaura, Aliyu Boro) and programmes like Dandalin Matasa, “Teburin Maishayi”, and “Dereban Kan Hanya”, which play a key role in shaping their perspectives on social issues. For instance, one of the interviewed respondents from Old Maiduguri remarked on his views on religious tolerance:

.... As a Muslim, I used to believe that Christians are haters of Muslims; they never say good things about Muslims until when I read some social media comments and saw the way Christians were praising and saying good things about Muslims... these positive comments about my religion changed my religious orientation about other religions...

Effective strategies for preventing youth radicalization

Regarding effective techniques to address radicalization and promote positive values, the study found that religious preachers, educational programmes on conflict resolution, youth empowerment, skills development, and programmes highlighting the negative impacts of radicalisation on individuals and community development serve as effective popular media content techniques for achieving this. The interviewees and FGD participants emphasised that entertainment programmes such as comedy, drama, and sport as effective avenues for disseminating messages on deradicalization and peacebuilding deradicalisation ideologies and peace. A Respondent in Galtimari mentioned that; *Programmes should stress the negative impact of violence, Programmes on peaceful values should be woven into comedy videos....* While news and media programmes such as Berekete Family, Table Mai Shayi, Dandali Matasa, etc. were highlighted for educating the public on conflict-related issues, popular media influencers were identified as pivotal contributors to the creation of content promoting peace and addressing radicalisation. Furthermore, a respondent from Mairi Ward stressed that media could either support or hinder peaceful values, depending on the intentions of the user and the expertise of the content creator.

For instance, interviewees from Gwange 2, Gwange 3, and Old Maiduguri highlighted specific cases, such as the incident involving the man in Maiduguri who flogged schoolgirls for plucking mangoes from his compound, and how social media exposure brought public awareness and prompted government intervention. Another example of media content addressing radicalisation, as mentioned by one of the FGD respondents from Galtimari Ward, recognised the efforts of former President Jonathan and Peter Obi for their notable advocacy in peacebuilding and adherence to legal procedures, particularly regarding the suspension of Senator Natasha Akpoti. Several respondents also pointed out that live updates on security issues, such as Boko Haram attacks, have helped inform communities and guide government actions. Consequently, respondents suggested producing more dramatic and engaging content, alongside increased awareness campaigns promoting peace, coexistence, and moral values to counter radicalisation.

Furthermore, interviewees and FGD participants identified another effective technique to address tendencies of radicalisation, emphasising that deradicalisation and peace messages should be dramatised in comedic formats and films to deeply resonate with the youth.

Content creators should reflect diversity by incorporating various voices, including individuals from different religious, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. They should share peace-related content and utilise hashtags to promote peace and collaboration:

...It should create opportunity for different voices; Muslims, Christians, Kanuri, Hausa, Yoruba or Igbo in my content and always read and share diverse narrative of issues (FGD respondent, Galtimari Ward)

Framework for reshaping media narratives to promote peace & discourage violence.

Regarding a framework by which popular media discourses can be reconfigured to create awareness of and desire for peace as well as abhorrence of violence, the study found that stakeholders' collaboration is critical. The responses of participants highlighted the crucial role of collaboration among stakeholders, including the media, content creators, and community leaders, in disseminating peace-oriented content. Responses focused on popular media's ability to foster peaceful messages/content, leveraging key media influencers and ensure media inclusivity. Popular media content creators should focus on sharing content that promotes peaceful coexistence and unity. Collaboration between traditional, religious, the government and content creators should be encouraged *...these stakeholders have unique roles, sometimes, these traditional leaders will encourage us to bring out our phones, cover and share online for people to see... building trust and understanding...* (FGD in Gwange 3) to take advantage of the popular media platform to discourse on peace related issues.

In creating awareness about peace and non-violence as a framework, popular media content creators should ensure they share accurate and balanced information and avoid biased messages. An interviewee from Mairi Galtimari noted that *I need to constantly read to have a better idea, especially on issues that has to do with tolerance and coexistence....* Since youth have prioritised social media as their primary platform, respondents noted that content addressing peace and violence should be diverse and inclusive. It should reflect both cultural and religious diversity while promoting peace through engaging formats such as comedy, drama, storytelling, and entertainment.

Furthermore, one of the challenges highlighted by the youth is the increase in the price of mobile internet data imposed by service providers. The youth explained that this would not only reduce the quantity and quality of content produced and shared online but also diminish the number of content creators and users engaging with online platforms. For instance, one interviewee from Gwange 3 mentioned that:

...I don't just view, download and share any content. I have to calculate the amount of data to be used before clicking that button, the increment in the price of data is affecting what I use my data for... sometimes one may not have the data to view or share relevant content...

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study underscores the critical role of popular media in shaping attitudes and behaviours among youths in MMC and Jere local governments in Borno State. The research highlights that popular media, when strategically leveraged, can serve as a powerful tool for peace promotion and the mitigation of youth restiveness. Collaborative efforts between Mass and Social media content creators, community leaders, and government entities are vital to ensure that peace-oriented messages are impactful, relatable, and widely accessible. However, addressing barriers such as the rising cost of internet data is essential to maximize the potential reach and effectiveness of these popular media efforts. By overcoming these challenges and fostering stronger partnerships, popular media can be reconfigured to not only discourage violence but also cultivate a culture of peace and positive engagement among youths in the region.

Recommendations

The State and LGAs should partner with influencers and content creators should develop and disseminate educational and entertaining content on peace and non-violence using platforms frequently accessed by youths, such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and TikTok to promote relatable and impactful messages that resonate with young audiences.

The LGAs should advocate for affordable internet data plans to improve access to online peace-oriented content, especially for youths in underserved areas.

The LGAs should partner content creators to use popular media to integrate peacebuilding themes into comedy, drama, music, and sport-related content to subtly promote non-violence while keeping content engaging.

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AN APPRAISAL OF INFORMATION SOURCES AND USAGE ON EXCLUSIVE BREASTFEEDING BY NURSING MOTHERS IN KOGI STATE, NIGERIA

Muhammad Ibrahim Danja, PhD

Department of Information and Media Studies,
Bayero University, Kano
midanja.ims@buk.edu.ng

Muhammed Salisu

Department of Mass Communication,
Federal University, Lokoja
muhammedsalisu78@gmail.com

Abstract

Exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) is an important public health strategy for improving children and mother's health by reducing child morbidity and mortality as well as healthcare costs. It is considered as one of the major strategies for preventing early childhood deaths. It is against this background that this study examined the sources of information on, and the how breastfeeding nursing mothers in Kogi State use such information on exclusive breastfeeding. Particularly, the study examined the perception of nursing mothers towards exclusive breastfeeding messages. The paper used perception theory of mass communication which enabled careful observation of the perception of subjects under investigation. A total of 381 nursing mothers were randomly sampled and administered with structured questionnaires across the three senatorial zones in the state, out of which 350 questionnaires were returned. The paper found that there was relatively fair knowledge and awareness of exclusive breast feeding by the nursing mothers in Kogi State, however, the nursing mothers in Kogi State have negative attitude towards exclusive breast-feeding messages, despite being knowledgeable about the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding, majority of them engage in mixed feeding instead of exclusive breastfeeding due to cultural, religious and economic reasons

Keywords: Public Health, Exclusive Breastfeeding, Health Communication.

Introduction

Exclusive breastfeeding means that a baby is fed only breast milk for the first six months of his life, with no additional food or drink (Kainth, 2021). Kainth further explained that Breast milk is the perfect food for a baby, containing sugar, fats, water and proteins in the right quantity. Breast milk not only provides the ideal mix of nutrients to aid in the proper growth and development of babies but also contains essential antibodies. World Health Organization clarified that Breastfeeding is one of the most effective ways to ensure child health and survival. However, contrary to WHO recommendations, fewer than half of infants under 6 months old are exclusively breastfed (<https://www.who.int/health-topics/breastfeeding>). The global rate of exclusive breastfeeding is low at 33% (Lucas, Popoola, Amoo, 2022). In spite of its benefits which include lowering the baby's risk of diarrhea, respiratory infections like pneumonia, whooping cough; ear infections, bacterial meningitis, asthma, sudden infant death syndrome, and Type 2 diabetes, in Nigeria, according to *Punch* (2023), only 29 per cent of infants under age six months are exclusively breastfed, while only 42 per cent are breastfed within the first hour of birth. Effectively, 71 per cent of infants are denied the benefits of breast milk in their formative years.

Communication and Health

Health communication is a subset of a much larger communication science discipline that in the latter half of the 20th century grew from diverse roots in sociology, psychology, anthropology, political science, electrical engineering, cybernetics, and, more recently, neuroscience (Storey, Seifert-Ahanda, Adriana, Tsoi, Matsuki, Cutler, 2014). Health and communication scholars work together to ensure that there is maximum knowledge, awareness and practice of exclusive breastfeeding across the nations of the world. Similarly, communication science seeks to understand the diverse processes and effects, including how different channels and types of information can be mobilized instrumentally and strategically in domains such as public health. Ya'u (2011) maintained that health communication can contribute to all aspects of disease prevention and control and is relevant in many contexts including (i) the construction of public health messages and campaigns, (ii) the dissemination of individual and population health risk information, (iii) images of health in the mass media and culture at large. While explaining the linkages between communication and health, Apker (2012) summarized that:

Adverse yet cohesive hospital communicates to solve a complicated medical problem. Moreso, the use of an electric medical record allows a physician to quickly access information from a specialist at another institution during a patient crisis. A health organization's leader struggles with communicating changes that affect quality of work

life for her employees. A social worker seeks mentorship and social support from supervisors and colleagues to ease the strain of job burnout. (p.2)

From the above points therefore, it is clear that communication is inseparable from health. In fact, health promotion and campaign require effective communication to succeed.

According to Parrott (2004) health communication is seen to have relevance for virtually every aspect of health and well-being, including disease prevention, health promotion and quality of life. This increase in the prominence of the field, externally, is happening contemporaneously with important developments taking place, internally, one of which is the focus on the study of environmental, social and psychological influences on behaviour and health. Given the global challenges posed by major threats, health communication scholars and practitioners recognize the importance of prevention and, with it, the need to understand human behaviour through the prism of theory. Intervention efforts to change behaviours are communicative acts (Rimal & Lapinski, 2009). By focusing mostly on the transmission function of information exchange, such efforts often neglect ritualistic processes that are automatically engaged through communication. In adopting the transmission view of communication, it is reasonable to think carefully about the channels through which intervention messages are disseminated, to whom the message is attributed, how audience members respond and the features of messages that have the greatest impact. These considerations reflect the essential components of the communication process: channel, source, receiver and message, respectively. In the ritual view, however, target audiences are conceptualized as members of social networks who interact with one another, engage in social ceremony and derive meaning from the enactment of habitual behaviours. Rimal & Lapinski (2009) itemized the following importance of health communication:

First is the realization that communication interventions do not fall into a social vacuum. Rather, information is received and processed through individual and social prisms that not only determine what people encounter (through processes of selective exposure), but also the meaning that they derive from the communication (known as selective perception), depending upon factors at both the individual (prior experience, efficacy beliefs, knowledge, etc.) and the macro-social (interpersonal relationships, cultural patterns, social norms) levels. Second, it is reasonable to expect discrepancies between messages disseminated and received. They arise not only due to differential exposure to the intervention but also because of the differences in interpretation in decoding information. A careful study of the correspondence between messages as they are sent and received is thus of great importance to avoid unintended (and worse, counterproductive) effects.

Third, communication is a dynamic process in which sources and receivers of information continuously interchange their roles. One of the central tenets of health communication interventions – the need to conduct extensive formative evaluation, audience needs assessment and message pretesting – is the direct offshoot of this understanding. According to USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism (2023) effective communication can have a positive impact on the patient-provider dynamic in numerous ways. One of these ways is that it allows patients to be better educated about their own health, which could enable them to embrace proactive health and wellness strategies. It can also help patients develop a comprehensive understanding of current care strategies involving their health, including acute health situations.

Communication can also help develop a sense of trust between the patient and provider, which might make it easier for patients to adhere to a provider's recommendations. These elements can lead to several key potential long-term benefits, such as reduced patient visits, reduced costs and improved patient outcomes. More so, communication helps mitigate the potential impact of health misinformation that could otherwise lead patients to make poor or improper decisions about their health. It can also help improve communication among other health care professionals who may need to coordinate care across multiple facilities. This can also lead to improved opportunities for delivering care.

Literature Review

Adebayo, Uthman & Wiysonge (2018) conducted a study in Nigeria and found that maternal knowledge of breastfeeding and cultural beliefs influenced exclusive breastfeeding practices. The study showed that educating mothers about the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding and addressing cultural beliefs improved exclusive breastfeeding rates. In the same manner, Ogunlesi, Dedeke, Okeniyi & Oyedeji, (2017) investigated the prevalence and determinants of exclusive breastfeeding among mothers in Lagos, Nigeria. Their finding revealed that only 22.2% of mothers exclusively breastfed their infants for the first six months of life, and identified lack of knowledge about exclusive breastfeeding and inadequate social support as barriers to its practice. Egata, Berhane, & Worku (2018) explored the relationship between maternal knowledge, attitude, and practice of exclusive breastfeeding in Northern Nigeria. They recommended that there was need for improved health education and counseling for mothers and families.

Adebisi, Ojo & Omotoso (2019) conducted a systematic review in Nigeria and found that education, support, and infrastructure were important factors that influenced exclusive breastfeeding practices. Maduforo, Okechukwu & Ezeanosike (2020) stated that counselling and support from healthcare providers were related to the initiation and continuation of exclusive breastfeeding. Oladimeji, Oluwasanmi, & Ogunlaja (2019)

argued that knowledge of breastfeeding benefits, social support, and hospital support influenced exclusive breastfeeding practices. Adeniyi Ogwumike, & Oyeyemi (2018) found that maternal education, income, and healthcare provider support were associated with exclusive breastfeeding practices. These studies highlight the importance of support from healthcare providers, social support, and knowledge of the benefits of breastfeeding in improving exclusive breastfeeding practices.

Adebisi, Ojo, & Omotoso (2019) conducted a systematic review in Nigeria to identify the factors that influence exclusive breastfeeding practices. The study found that education, support, and infrastructure were crucial factors that influenced exclusive breastfeeding practices. It emphasizes the vital role of education in promoting exclusive breastfeeding practices among mothers in Nigeria. Additionally, the study recognizes the importance of supportive policies and infrastructure that enable mothers to breastfeed optimally.

Adeniyi et al. (2018) conducted a study in Nigeria to identify the factors associated with exclusive breastfeeding practices. The study found that maternal education, income, and support from healthcare providers were associated with exclusive breastfeeding practices. The study emphasizes the important role of maternal education and healthcare provider support in promoting exclusive breastfeeding practices.

Theoretical Framework: Perception Theory

According to Anaeto, Onabajo & Osifeso (2008), perception theory was propounded in 1964 by Berelson and Steiner. To Berelson and Steiner (1964, p.88), perception is the “complex process by which people select, organize and interpret sensory stimulation into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world”. The perception theory tells us that the process of interpreting messages is complex and these goals may be difficult to achieve.

This paper is thus interested in investigating the perception of the nursing mothers towards exclusive breastfeeding messages in Kogi State. This is because Perception theory helps us understand how individuals perceive and interpret the world around them (Goldstein, 2019). Additionally, People tend to make decisions based on their perception of the available information (Griffin, 2019). By understanding how perception influences decision-making, we can design better decision-making processes and improve outcomes. More so, several studies about health-related information or messages have employed perception theory.

Method

This paper investigated the perception nursing mothers in Kogi state. The specific objectives are: 1) what are the information sources on Exclusive Breastfeeding to nursing mothers in Kogi state; and 2) How do nursing mothers use messages contained in the