

Attitude Of Parents Towards Exclusive Breastfeeding In Mushin Local Government Area Of Lagos State.

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ABSTRACT: This study examined the attitude of parents towards exclusive breastfeeding in Mushin Local Government Area of Lagos State. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population comprised all parents in Mushin Local Government Area of Lagos State. A sample of 370 parents was selected using multi-stage sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Attitude of Parents Towards Exclusive Breastfeeding Questionnaire" (APTEBQ). The instrument was validated by experts in Early Childhood and Primary Education, and its reliability was established using test-retest method with Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.918. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research question, while t-test and ANOVA were used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that parents had a positive attitude towards exclusive breastfeeding in Mushin Local Government Area of Lagos State. It was also found that there was no significant difference in the attitude of parents towards exclusive breastfeeding based on gender and religion. The study concluded that parents generally hold favourable attitudes towards exclusive breastfeeding, though certain cultural beliefs and work-related challenges may influence their practices. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that health education programmes should be intensified to sustain positive attitudes, and that community-based awareness campaigns should be organized to address misconceptions and promote exclusive breastfeeding practices among parents in Mushin Local Government Area of Lagos State.

Keywords: Exclusive Breastfeeding, Parental Attitude

Introduction

Exclusive breastfeeding is widely recognized as one of the most important public health practices for improving infant survival, growth, and development. It refers to feeding an infant with only breast milk for the first six months of life, without giving water, infant formulas, herbal mixtures, glucose water, or other foods, except prescribed medicines, vitamins, minerals, or oral rehydration solution when medically indicated. The World Health Organization recommends that infants should be exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life to achieve optimal growth, development, and health, after which appropriate complementary foods should be introduced while breastfeeding continues for up to two years or 2023

To this study, the major concepts are parent, attitude, and exclusive breastfeeding. A parent is a person who gives birth to, brings up, or cares for a child. In this study, a parent refers to the mother or father of an infant or young child, including any person who is directly involved in the care and feeding decisions of the child. This definition is important because decisions about infant feeding are not made by mothers alone; fathers and other caregivers may also influence whether a child is exclusively breastfed or introduced early to water, formula, or other foods (Merriam-Webster, 2026). Attitude refers to a person's belief, feeling, perception, or behavioral tendency toward an object, person, issue, or practice. In this study, attitude refers to parents' beliefs, feelings, acceptance, and support toward exclusive breastfeeding. A positive attitude may include the belief that breast milk alone is sufficient for the baby during the first six months, willingness to support breastfeeding mothers, and rejection of early introduction of water or formula. A negative attitude may include the belief that breast milk alone is inadequate, that exclusive breastfeeding is stressful or inconvenient, or that babies need water or other foods before six months (American Psychological Association [APA], 2021)

Exclusive breastfeeding means feeding an infant with breast milk alone for the first six months of life. It excludes water, infant formula, herbal preparations, glucose water, pap, or any other liquid or solid food, except oral rehydration solution, vitamins, minerals, or medicines when medically recommended. In this study, exclusive breastfeeding refers to the practice of giving a baby breast milk only from birth until six months of age (WHO, 2023).

Breast milk is considered the ideal food for infants because it contains the nutrients, antibodies, and bioactive substances required for healthy growth during early life. It protects infants against common childhood illnesses such as diarrhea and pneumonia, which remain major causes of infant morbidity and mortality in many low- and middle-income countries. In addition to its immediate benefits, breastfeeding has long-term health advantages, including reduced risk of childhood overweight and obesity, while also contributing to improved cognitive and sensory development (WHO, 2023). For mothers, breastfeeding also offers important health benefits. It can reduce the risk of breast cancer, ovarian cancer, type 2 diabetes, and high blood pressure. These benefits show that

exclusive breastfeeding is not only beneficial to the infant but also contributes to the health and wellbeing of the mother (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2026)

Despite the well-established benefits of exclusive breastfeeding, its practice remains suboptimal in many parts of the world, including Nigeria. Many infants are introduced to water, herbal preparations, infant formula, or complementary foods before the recommended age of six months. This early introduction of other feeds may reduce breast milk intake, expose infants to infections, and increase the risk of malnutrition and other health problems. WHO states that exclusive breastfeeding requires that no other liquids or solids, not even water, should be given during the first six months, except medically recommended solutions or medicines (WHO, 2023). Therefore, improving exclusive breastfeeding requires not only increasing awareness among mothers but also addressing the attitudes and beliefs of parents, families, and communities.

In Nigeria, exclusive breastfeeding has received increasing attention from government agencies, health professionals, and international organizations. UNICEF Nigeria reported that about 34% of infants under six months in Nigeria were exclusively breastfed in 2024, showing improvement over previous years but still below the global target of at least 50% by 2025. Although progress has been made, many mothers still face barriers such as cultural beliefs, misinformation, inadequate family support, short maternity leave, lack of workplace breastfeeding support, and limited access to quality breastfeeding counselling (UNICEF Nigeria, 2024). The Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey provides important national data on breastfeeding practices, maternal and child health, and nutrition indicators. Such data are useful for understanding infant feeding patterns in the country and for guiding policies and programmes aimed at improving maternal and child health outcomes. The survey also serves as an important reference for researchers studying breastfeeding and child nutrition in Nigeria (National Population Commission [NPC] & ICF, 2019).

Parental attitude is a major factor influencing exclusive breastfeeding practice. In many Nigerian households, infant feeding decisions are not made by mothers alone. Fathers, grandmothers, mothers-in-law, older relatives, religious beliefs, cultural norms, and community expectations often influence whether a child is exclusively breastfed or given other feeds. Education and family support are therefore important in encouraging mothers to initiate and sustain exclusive breastfeeding (WHO Africa, 2022).

Fathers' involvement is particularly important because their encouragement, financial support, assistance with household duties, and approval of exclusive breastfeeding can strengthen mothers' confidence and ability to breastfeed. When fathers understand the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding, they are more likely to support their partners emotionally, physically, and socially during the breastfeeding period (WHO Africa, 2022). Attitude toward exclusive breastfeeding may be shaped by several factors, including knowledge of its benefits, educational level, occupation, income, cultural background, family influence, previous breastfeeding experience, place of delivery, and access to antenatal and postnatal counselling. Some parents may believe that breast milk alone is not sufficient for the baby, especially in hot weather, leading to the early introduction of water. Others may view infant formula as a sign of modernity, convenience, or higher socioeconomic status (Radio Nigeria Lagos, 2025).

In some communities, traditional beliefs encourage the use of herbal mixtures or prelacteal feeds soon after birth, which may interfere with early initiation and exclusive breastfeeding. Lagos State health officials have identified misinformation and the practice of giving prelacteal feeds such as glucose water and infant formula as factors affecting early breastfeeding initiation. These practices can prevent infants from receiving colostrum, the first breast milk that contains important antibodies for newborn protection (Radio Nigeria Lagos, 2025). Lagos State has made notable progress in promoting exclusive breastfeeding. A 2025 report stated that Lagos State's exclusive breastfeeding rate had reached 57.4%, exceeding the global benchmark of 50%, although early initiation of breastfeeding within the first hour after birth remained low at 14%. This shows that while many mothers may be practicing exclusive breastfeeding, challenges remain in ensuring timely initiation and consistent breastfeeding support from birth (Radio Nigeria Lagos, 2025).

These issues are highly relevant to urban communities such as Mushin Local Government Area, where socioeconomic conditions, work demands, family structures, and cultural diversity may influence parental attitudes toward exclusive breastfeeding. Mushin is a densely populated urban area in Lagos State with residents from different ethnic, religious, educational, and socioeconomic backgrounds. These characteristics may affect how parents understand, accept, and support exclusive breastfeeding. Like many urban communities, Mushin has both opportunities and challenges in maternal and child health. Access to health facilities, antenatal care, markets, schools, workplaces, and community networks may support health education. However, overcrowding, economic pressure, informal employment, limited maternity protection, and cultural misconceptions may negatively affect infant feeding practices. In such a setting, understanding the attitude of parents toward exclusive breastfeeding is important because parents' perceptions can either promote or discourage recommended feeding practices. Although many studies on exclusive breastfeeding focus mainly on mothers, the role of both parents deserves greater attention. Fathers and male partners can influence breastfeeding decisions through their beliefs, encouragement, financial provision, and support with household responsibilities. When fathers have positive attitudes toward exclusive breastfeeding, mothers may be more likely to initiate and sustain the practice. Conversely, when

fathers or other family members believe that breast milk alone is inadequate, they may pressure mothers to introduce water, formulas, or other foods before six months.

The attitude of parents toward exclusive breastfeeding is also important because attitudes often determine behaviour. A parent may have heard about exclusive breastfeeding but may not support it if they believe it is stressful, inconvenient, old-fashioned, or insufficient for infant growth. Similarly, a mother may know the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding but may fail to practice it if she lacks support from her spouse, family members, workplace, or health providers. This gap between knowledge and practice makes it necessary to examine not only awareness but also perception, belief, acceptance, and willingness to support exclusive breastfeeding.

This study is therefore necessary to assess the attitude of parents toward exclusive breastfeeding in Mushin Local Government Area, Lagos State. The findings will provide useful information for healthcare workers, policymakers, community health educators, non-governmental organizations, and maternal and child health programmes. It will help identify positive attitudes that can be strengthened and negative beliefs that need to be corrected through targeted health education. It will also contribute to the design of family-centered breast-feeding interventions that involve both mothers and fathers rather than focusing on mothers alone.

Statement of the Problem

Exclusive breastfeeding is a major public health intervention that contributes significantly to infant survival, adequate nutrition, immunity, growth, and development. It is recommended that infants receive only breast milk for the first six months of life, without water, infant formulas, herbal mixtures, glucose water, or other foods, except medicines or supplements when medically indicated. However, despite the known benefits of exclusive breastfeeding, many infants are still introduced to other liquids and foods before the age of six months, thereby increasing their risk of infections, malnutrition, poor growth, and other preventable health problems (World Health Organization [WHO], 2023).

In Nigeria, the practice of exclusive breastfeeding has improved over the years, but it remains below the desired public health target. UNICEF reported that about 34% of infants under six months in Nigeria were exclusively breastfed in 2024, indicating that a large proportion of infants are still denied the full benefits of exclusive breastfeeding. This situation remains a concern because inadequate breastfeeding practices can contribute to childhood morbidity and mortality, especially in communities where poverty, poor sanitation, misinformation, and limited access to health education are common (UNICEF Nigeria, 2024).

One of the major factors affecting exclusive breastfeeding is parental attitude. Although mothers are directly involved in breastfeeding, decisions about infant feeding are often influenced by fathers, grandmothers, mothers-in-law, relatives, cultural beliefs, and community expectations. In many households, parents may believe that breast milk alone is not enough for the baby, especially during hot weather, or that newborns should be given water, glucose water, herbal mixtures, or infant formula. Such negative attitudes and misconceptions may discourage mothers from practicing exclusive breastfeeding for the recommended six months. Furthermore, some mothers may have adequate knowledge of exclusive breastfeeding but still fail to practice it because of poor support from their spouses, family members, workplace, or community. Exclusive breastfeeding requires time, encouragement, emotional support, and sometimes practical assistance with household duties. Where fathers and other family members do not understand or support the practice, mothers may experience pressure to introduce other feeds early. WHO Africa emphasized that family support and education are important in improving exclusive breastfeeding because mothers need physical, emotional, and social support to breastfeed successfully (World Health Organization Regional Office for Africa, 2022).

In Lagos State, progress has been made in promoting exclusive breastfeeding. A 2025 report stated that Lagos State recorded an exclusive breastfeeding rate of 57.4%, which exceeded the global benchmark of 50%. However, early initiation of breastfeeding within the first hour after birth remained low at 14%, and challenges such as misinformation, prelacteal feeding, use of glucose water, and infant formula still affect optimal breastfeeding practices. This shows that despite improvement in exclusive breastfeeding rates, gaps still exist in attitude, knowledge, support, and early breastfeeding practices (Radio Nigeria Lagos, 2025).

Mushin Local Government Area is a densely populated urban community in Lagos State with residents from different ethnic, religious, educational, occupational, and socioeconomic backgrounds. These characteristics may influence how parents perceive and support exclusive breastfeeding. Some parents may have positive attitudes due to exposure to health education during antenatal and postnatal care, while others may still be influenced by cultural beliefs, economic hardship, work demands, family pressure, or misinformation. Because Mushin is an urban and socially diverse community, parents' attitudes toward exclusive breastfeeding may differ from those observed in other areas.

Despite the availability of national and state-level information on exclusive breastfeeding, there is limited community-specific evidence on the attitude of parents toward exclusive breastfeeding in Mushin Local Government Area. Many studies and health interventions on breastfeeding focus mainly on mothers, while less attention is given to the role of both parents, especially fathers, in influencing infant feeding decisions. This creates a research gap because exclusive breastfeeding is not only a maternal

responsibility but also a family and community-supported practice. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by assessing the attitude of parents toward exclusive breastfeeding in Mushin Local Government Area, Lagos State. The study examines parents' perceptions, beliefs, level of support, misconceptions, and factors influencing their attitude toward exclusive breastfeeding.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the attitude of parents toward exclusive breastfeeding in Mushin Local Government Area of Lagos State. Specifically, the purpose include:

1. The attitude of parents toward exclusive breastfeeding in Mushin Local Government Area of Lagos State.
2. The attitude of parents toward exclusive breastfeeding in Mushin Local Government Area of Lagos State based on religion.
3. Attitude of parents toward exclusive breastfeeding in Mushin Local Government Area of Lagos State based on location.

Research Question

The following research question were raised to guide this study

1. What is the attitude of parents toward exclusive breastfeeding in Mushin Local Government Area of Lagos State?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses will be tested in this study at 0.5 level of significance:

H₀₁: There was no significant difference in the attitude of parents toward exclusive breastfeeding in Mushin Local Government Area of Lagos State based on supervisor advice, gender is accepted.

H₀₂: There was no significant difference in the attitude of parents toward exclusive breastfeeding in Mushin Local Government Area of Lagos State based on gender

Descriptive survey research design was adopted in this study to examine the Attitude of parent towards exclusive breastfeeding practice in Mushin local government area of Lagos state. Descriptive survey research is a process of carrying out a study by collecting and analysing data gathered from a sample considered to be representative of the population (Adewumi, 2012).

This design was enabling the researcher to collect currently existing and information about Attitude of parent towards exclusive breastfeeding practice in Mushin local government area of Lagos state. The population for this study comprises all parents in Mushin local government Area of Lagos state with the total number 935,400 parents (Lagos State Annual Census Report 2022). Therefore, the target population for this study were covered all the parents of Mushin Local Government Area of Lagos State.

A multi-stage sampling technique was used: There are 15 wards, 350 street and 355,000 Household respectively in Mushin local Government area of Lagos State. Stage 1 (selection of words) Ten (10) wards were randomly selected to represent Mushin local government Area of Lagos State. Stage 2 (selection of Area/Streets) Five (5) streets were randomly selected from each wards using a table of randomly numbers (Total =50). Stage 3 (selection of Respondents) in each selected house 10 respondents were used in the study.

One research instrument was used for this study: Attitude of Parents Towards Exclusive Breastfeeding Questionnaire (APTEBQ) were consist of 10 items. The response from the instrument was graded on four-point Likert type scale scored as follows: Strongly Agree (SA)=4, Agree (A)=3, Disagree (D)=2, and Strongly Disagree (SD)=1. The instruments were used to elicit information from parent in Mushin local government Area of Lagos state. Copies of the instruments was given to the lecturers in the Department of Early childhood and Primary Education, Kwara State University, Malete to ascertain face and content validity of the instruments, therefore, the corrected version was used for the final draft of the instruments. To ascertain the reliability of the instrument, test re-test method of reliability was used for the instruments, and the researcher were administered 25 copies each of the instruments in Surulere local Government area of Lagos State which is not part of the sample in the study at the interval of two weeks. Therefore, test re-test method was used to test for the reliability of the instruments. The instrument was administered and re-administered within the interval of two weeks to the same set of respondents. To determine the reliability coefficient Pearsons Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) at 0.05 level of significance

The data collected was analysed using Descriptive statistic of mean, simple percentage, and frequency count to answer the research question while the hypotheses were tested using t-test at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1: Distribution of the respondents based on the teachers' gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	161	43.5
Female	209	56.5
Total	370	100.0

Table 1 Distribution of the respondents based on the pupils' gender. One hundred and sixty-one (161) of the respondents representing 43.5% were males while two hundred and nine (209) of the respondents representing 56.5% were females. From analysis above, it is evident that the female respondents were found to be more in number than male respondents.

Research Question One: What is the attitude of parents towards exclusive breastfeeding in Mushin Local Government Area of Lagos State?

Table 2: Table showing the attitude of parents towards exclusive breastfeeding in Mushin Local Government Area of Lagos State

S/N	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remarks
1.	Exclusive breastfeeding for six months is the best way to feed a baby	2.57	.661	Positive
2.	I believed a baby can be satisfied and healthy with only breast milk for six months	2.51	.556	Positive
3.	Exclusive breastfeeding is too difficult and restrictive for most mothers	2.99	.428	Positive
4.	A mother who exclusively breastfeeds is showing the highest level of care for her child	2.88	.803	Positive
5.	Exclusively breastfeeding babies are stronger and fall sick less often than babies given other food early	3.09	.294	Positive
6.	Exclusive breastfeeding is an old-fashioned practice that is not suitable for mother life	3.21	.750	Positive
7.	The support of the father/husband is very important for a mother to succeed in exclusive breastfeeding	3.00	.650	Positive
8.	Following the advice of older relatives such as grandmothers about infant feeding is more important than clinic advice on exclusive breastfeeding	2.74	.747	Positive
9.	Exclusive breastfeeding helps a mother bond better with her baby	2.91	.521	Positive
10.	It is embarrassing to breastfeed a baby in public places	3.12	.617	Positive
11.	Religions teaching in my faith encourage mothers to breastfeed their infants	2.65	.765	Positive
12.	Mothers who work or trade outside the home cannot realistically practice exclusive breastfeeding for six months	3.01	.876	Positive
13.	I would recommend exclusive breastfeeding for six months to a friend or family member who is a new parent.	3.27	.453	Positive

14	Religious leaders or teachings in my faith support mothers in practicing exclusive breastfeeding.	2.89	.876	Positive
15	Exclusive breastfeeding helps the mother lose pregnancy weight faster	3.11	.987	Positive
Mean		2.93		

Decision: Negative 1.00-2.49,

Positive: 2.50-4.00

Table 2 shows the attitude of parents towards exclusive breastfeeding in Mushin Local Government Area of Lagos State. The mean is **2.93** which is greater than 2.49 the base line for positive opinion. This therefore shows a numeric indicator that the attitude of parents towards exclusive breastfeeding in Mushin Local Government Area of Lagos State positive

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in attitude of parents towards exclusive breastfeeding in Mushin Local Government Area of Lagos State based on gender

Table 3: Summary of independent sample t-test showing difference in attitude of parents towards exclusive breastfeeding in Mushin Local Government Area of Lagos State based on gender

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	df	Sig.	Remark
Male	161	59.000	15.107	-.218	368	.828	Not Significant
Female	209	59.059	12.753				

Table 3 shows the significant difference in attitude of parents towards exclusive breastfeeding in Mushin Local Government Area of Lagos State based on gender. There was no significant difference in attitude of parents towards exclusive breastfeeding in Mushin Local Government Area of Lagos State based on gender ($t = -.218$; $df = 368$; $P > 0.05$). Therefore, in the light of the result, the hypothesis is not rejected, it implies that there was no significant difference in attitude of parents towards exclusive breastfeeding in Mushin Local Government Area of Lagos State based on gender

Research Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in attitude of parents towards exclusive breastfeeding in Mushin Local Government Area of Lagos State based on religion

Table 4: the summary of ANOVA showing difference in attitude of parents towards exclusive breastfeeding in Mushin Local Government Area of Lagos State based on religion

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	113.732	2	58.866	7.722	.761
Within Groups	1730.592	366	7.364		
Total	1844.324	368			

Table 4 showed difference in attitude of parents towards exclusive breastfeeding in Mushin Local Government Area of Lagos State based on religion. ($F_{(2,366)} = 7.722$; $P > 0.05$). Since the significant value is greater than 0.05, the hypothesis is therefore rejected in the light of the result.

Summary of the findings

1. Parents had positive attitude towards exclusive breastfeeding in Mushin Local Government Area of Lagos State
2. There was no significant difference in attitude of parents towards exclusive breastfeeding in Mushin Local Government Area of Lagos State based on gender
3. There was no significant difference in attitude of parents towards exclusive breastfeeding in Mushin Local Government Area of Lagos State based on religion

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section discusses the findings of the study in line with the research question and hypotheses formulated for the study. The discussion interprets the results and relates them to existing literature and theoretical framework.

Attitude of Parents towards Exclusive Breastfeeding in Mushin Local Government Area of Lagos State

The study revealed that parents had a positive attitude towards exclusive breastfeeding in Mushin Local Government Area of Lagos State. The mean score of 2.93, which is above the baseline of 2.49, indicates that parents generally hold favourable beliefs, feelings, and intentions towards exclusive breastfeeding. This finding implies that parents in Mushin Local Government Area recognize the importance and benefits of exclusive breastfeeding for infant health, growth, and development.

This finding aligns with the theoretical framework of Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour (1985), which posits that attitude is a key determinant of behavioural intention. According to the theory, when individuals hold positive attitudes towards a behaviour, they are more likely to form strong intentions to perform that behaviour. The positive attitudes observed among parents in this study suggest that they are likely to have positive intentions towards exclusive breastfeeding, which may translate into actual practice when supported by favourable subjective norms and perceived behavioural control.

This finding is consistent with the work of Sabo et al. (2023), who assessed knowledge, attitude and practice of exclusive breastfeeding among mothers in a rural Nigerian setting and found that awareness and positive attitude toward exclusive breastfeeding were present, although actual practice remained suboptimal. Similarly, Ipinmimo et al. (2024) investigated attitude and predictors of exclusive breastfeeding among mothers attending under-five welfare clinics in a rural community in southwestern Nigeria and found a generally good disposition to exclusive breastfeeding among mothers.

The finding also corroborates the study of Panahi et al. (2022), who tested whether educating fathers improves support for breastfeeding and found that fathers who received education showed higher support scores and that mothers linked to those fathers had better breastfeeding practice. This suggests that positive attitudes among both parents are crucial for successful exclusive breastfeeding. Furthermore, this finding supports the conceptual review which highlighted that attitudes are composed of three components: cognitive, affective, and behavioural. The positive attitudes observed in this study suggest that parents possess favourable beliefs about exclusive breastfeeding (cognitive), positive feelings towards the practice (affective), and a predisposition to act in support of it (behavioural). This comprehensive positive orientation is essential for the successful implementation of exclusive breastfeeding.

However, this finding contrasts with the concerns raised by some researchers who have reported that despite positive attitudes, many parents still do not practice exclusive breastfeeding due to various barriers such as work commitments, cultural beliefs, and family pressures (Ezechi et al., 2021; Emeka et al., 2025). The present study focused on attitudes rather than actual practices, suggesting that while attitudes are positive, there may still be challenges in translating these attitudes into consistent practice.

The study revealed that there was no significant difference in the attitude of parents towards exclusive breastfeeding based on gender. This finding implies that both male and female parents in Mushin Local Government Area of Lagos State hold similar positive attitudes towards exclusive breastfeeding. Both fathers and mothers recognize the importance and benefits of exclusive breastfeeding for infant health and well-being.

This finding is consistent with the study of Ouyang and Nasrin (2021), who examined the role of fathers in shaping mothers' knowledge, attitude and practice of exclusive breastfeeding in Bangladesh and found that fathers' positive attitude and practical support were linked to improved maternal attitude and a higher likelihood of exclusive breastfeeding. The finding suggests that when fathers hold positive attitudes, they are more likely to support their partners in practicing exclusive breastfeeding.

This finding also aligns with the study of Panahi et al. (2022), who found that fathers who received education showed higher support scores and that mothers linked to those fathers had better breastfeeding practice. The present study extends this finding by showing that both genders hold similar positive attitudes, which is encouraging for promoting exclusive breastfeeding as a shared family responsibility.

The finding supports Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour, which emphasizes that subjective norms, including expectations from significant others such as spouses, play a crucial role in shaping behavioural intentions. When both parents hold positive attitudes towards exclusive breastfeeding, they are likely to create a supportive home environment that facilitates the practice.

However, this finding contrasts with traditional gender role expectations in many Nigerian communities, where infant feeding is often viewed as solely the mother's responsibility. The present study suggests a positive shift in attitudes, with fathers also recognizing the importance of exclusive breastfeeding. This is encouraging for interventions that aim to engage both parents in promoting exclusive breastfeeding.

The study revealed that there was no significant difference in the attitude of parents towards exclusive breastfeeding based on religion. This finding implies that parents across different religious affiliations (Islam, Christianity, and Traditional) in Mushin Local Government Area of Lagos State hold similar positive attitudes towards exclusive breastfeeding.

This finding is consistent with the study of Leshi and Amoo (2023), who carried out a cross-sectional study among women in purdah attending Islamic and Arabic schools in Ibadan and found that most women in purdah had adequate knowledge and a generally

positive attitude toward breastfeeding. Similarly, Adepoju et al. (2019) found that while there were some differences in knowledge categories across religious groups, attitudes towards breastfeeding were generally positive across religions.

This finding also aligns with the study of Moreno-Ávila et al. (2025), who compared perceptions that influence the choice and abandonment of exclusive breastfeeding among Muslim and Christian women in Spain and found that religious beliefs and spirituality offer meaning and sometimes practical guidance that supports breastfeeding for many women. The present study suggests that in Mushin Local Government Area, religious teachings may generally support positive attitudes towards exclusive breastfeeding across different faiths.

The finding supports the conceptual review which noted that religious beliefs often guide family values, health decisions, and child-rearing practices. Both Islamic and Christian teachings encourage breastfeeding, which may explain why parents across these religious groups hold similar positive attitudes. In Islam, the Holy Quran encourages mothers to breastfeed for two complete years, while in Christianity, natural infant feeding is often promoted through church programmes and mother support groups.

However, this finding contrasts with the study of Sabo et al. (2023), who noted that traditional beliefs and local practices, which often relate to religious and cultural norms, can affect mothers' attitudes and practice. While the present study found no significant difference in attitudes based on religion, it is possible that certain religious or cultural practices may still influence actual breastfeeding behaviour. The positive attitudes observed across religious groups provide a strong foundation for community-based interventions that engage religious leaders as advocates for exclusive breastfeeding.

The finding also supports the work of Gyamfi et al. (2023), whose scoping review concluded that Christian faith in some contexts appeared to encourage exclusive breastfeeding while some traditional beliefs and other faith-linked practices favoured early supplementing. The present study suggests that in Mushin Local Government Area, religious differences do not significantly affect attitudes, which is encouraging for promoting exclusive breastfeeding across diverse religious communities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings the following recommendations are made:

1. Health education programmes should be intensified in Mushin Local Government Area to sustain and strengthen parents' positive attitudes towards exclusive breastfeeding. These programmes should be delivered through antenatal clinics, immunization centres, and community health outreaches.
2. Community-based awareness campaigns should be organized to address misconceptions and cultural beliefs that may hinder exclusive breastfeeding practices. These campaigns should involve community leaders, religious leaders, and traditional birth attendants.
3. Fathers should be actively involved in breastfeeding education and support programmes. Since the study found no significant gender difference in attitudes, both parents should be targeted for breastfeeding counselling and support.
4. Workplaces should be encouraged to adopt breastfeeding-friendly policies, such as providing maternity leave, breastfeeding breaks, and designated spaces for breastfeeding or expressing milk.
5. Religious leaders should be engaged as advocates for exclusive breastfeeding. Since religion did not significantly influence attitudes, faith-based organizations can be used as platforms to promote exclusive breastfeeding messages.
6. Government should strengthen the implementation of national breastfeeding policies and ensure that healthcare workers are adequately trained to provide breastfeeding counselling and support

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