

Forced Feeding Practice in Yoruba Community of Southwestern Nigeria: Evidence from Ethnographic Research

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ABSTRACT Despite health policies on child care, forced feeding is still a widespread practice in Yoruba culture. It is not clear the factors sustaining the practice. This study describes the practice and highlights the factors responsible for its continuity despite advances in medicine and health transition. Ethnographic data were collected in Aiyedire community, examining the biographies of mothers, through focus group discussion with women and men categories, key informant interviews, and case studies. Data revealed that the practice is sustained through gender stereotypes, traditions, and peer influence of mother-in-law. Reasons advanced for the practices include the perception that child will have intimacy with mother, and child's poor attitude to better food and medication. Gender dynamics exists between male and female as the practice is female role. Respondents do not have the knowledge of the health implication of the practice. It was concluded that public enlightenment programme targeting mother and the significant others identified in the study should be put in place.