

Abstract

The following study aimed to examine whether a person’s opinion on breastfeeding in public can be influenced by the media. Participants were instructed to read one of two separate articles before taking an online survey.

One article was in support of breastfeeding, the other was neutral. Results showed no significant difference between the two groups. Results suggest that the media has no influence over people’s opinions on breastfeeding in public.

Introduction

There are many societal norms that reflect a negative attitude towards women breastfeeding in public, and have supported the perception that breastfeeding “normally” occurs within the confinement of the home. It is likely that the practice of breastfeeding in public reflects societal attitudes towards the behavior.

Healthy mothers and their babies participated in a survey that was designed to assess feeding practices and the duration of breastfeeding. The consumer survey administered six weeks postpartum gathered information about attitudes and behaviors of parents in regards to feeding related issues, such as breastfeeding in public. The results showed that the participants disagreed with the statement “women should not breastfeed in public places such as restaurants.” In support of these findings, it was found that the more a mother agreed with the statement, the less likely they were to have ever breastfed in public. Additionally it was found that society and the beliefs of those around you influence your opinion (Scott et al. 2015).

It has been found that if a woman has breastfed in public there is a lower chance of the discontinuation of breastfeeding in the first twelve months. This is important because of the benefits that an infant stands to gain from his mother’s milk.

While designing this experiment we based our expectations on a research study which stated that people who had higher levels of education demonstrated more support towards breastfeeding in public (Meng et al. 2013). The experimental paragraph was intended to educate people on the benefits of breastfeeding. With this it was hypothesized that participants would be more supportive of breastfeeding in public.

Attitudes Towards Breastfeeding in Public

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Methods

Participants

A total of 82 participants shared their opinions about breastfeeding on a survey. These people were recruited locally through a combination of Facebook posts, the distribution of flyers, and by offering it as an extra credit activity for a psychology course that was offered through Eastern Oregon University.

Materials and Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to read either a positive or negative article about breastfeeding in public on an electronic device. After reading the article participants completed a survey measuring their attitudes towards breastfeeding. Participant’s attitudes were measured based on the degree of support that their answers demonstrated towards breastfeeding.

Results

When the results were examined there were no significant results. There was no correlation shown between the age of participants and their demonstrated attitude towards breastfeeding. In addition to this the participants that read the positive paragraph demonstrated no signs of having been influenced into having a different opinion towards breastfeeding in public.

Discussion

This study shows that people's attitudes towards breastfeeding may not be as easily changed as we had previously thought. While conducting the study there were some weaknesses that were discovered. During the application of the surveys 11 of the participants responded that they had not read the assigned article. The people that did not take the time to read the article may have been the ones that were most susceptible to being changed by having read it. These responses were not included in the results, as they were not considered an accurate representation of the influence that the assigned articles could have. Another weakness to consider is that the experimental article may not have been manipulative enough to persuade the participants that breastfeeding in public is acceptable.

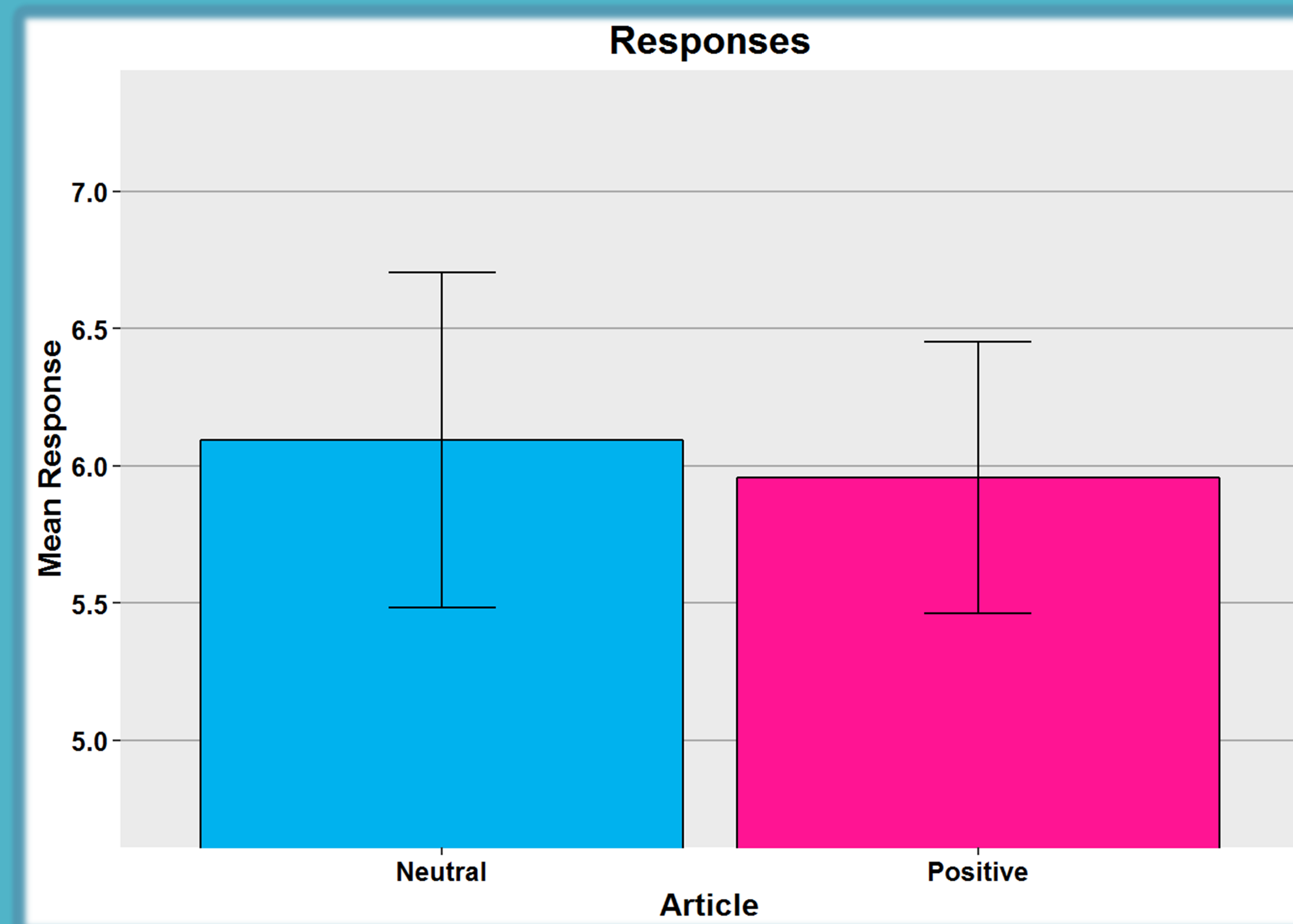


Figure 1, showing that the participants who read the neutral article demonstrated a slightly higher amount

of support than the participants who read the experimental article •

References

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