Project Title: Exploring Infant feeding Implicit Bias

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Keywords: Implicit bias, infant feeding, implicit association test

Project Summary:

This research study will allow the student to develop a hosting platform and implement program code for the Infant Feeding Implicit Association Test, which will be circulated to an international cohort of healthcare professionals (HCP) with a view to analysing emerging data and to further understand Infant Feeding Bias.

Implicit bias refers to unconsciously held attitudes, which arouse feelings, emotional and physical, when exposed to a topic or experience. These result from learned associations formed from our upbringing, sociocultural conditioning, and media influence. Being unconscious, most are unaware they may have implicit biases. These implicit biases have potential to drive us towards or away from an experience, topic or people.

Research demonstrates that HCPs hold biases that can influence practice. In the case of infant feeding, considering the infant formula predominant culture, we hypothesise that people will have biases in favour of bottle-feeding which may negatively affect practice, where HCPs are likely to advise formula to breast feeding mothers experiencing difficulties, thus negatively affecting breastfeeding practices.

Global Breastfeeding practices are suboptimal. The Lancet breastfeeding 2016 series proposed that if global practices of Breastfeeding were optimal 800,000 children's lives would be saved yearly. This research has potential to help inform changes in governmental and health care policies to support, protect and promote breastfeeding. It will also contribute to the WHO's extensive report in Feb 2022 showing how infant formula marketing negatively affects peoples' infant feeding choices.

Candidate Qualifications/Requirements:

Candidates should have achieved 1st class or 2:1 BSc Hons in Computer Science. Software programming experience in a web environment is essential using a well-known language such as Javascript, Ruby Rails or Angular. Ideally the candidate should have previous experience using statistical tools such as SPSS, R, or Python.

The successful candidate will be offered the opportunity to transfer at the end of the MRes to PhD mode of study if their research progresses as expected by the project supervisors.