

Parents' Perceptions of Breastfeeding Telephone Support

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Abstract:

Objectives: Breastfeeding is recommended as the most beneficial form of infant nutrition in the first six months of life, which protects infants against childhood illness and reduces the risk of infant mortality and morbidity. The objectives of this study were to explore parents' perceptions of a breastfeeding telephone support intervention and to identify factors influencing the effectiveness of the intervention.

Methods: This qualitative process evaluation was part of an intervention study that investigated the effects of a breastfeeding telephone support on exclusive breastfeeding, postnatal depression and parent-infant bonding. Four breastfeeding telephone counselling sessions were delivered weekly in the first month postpartum for mothers and fathers. Semi-structured interviews were conducted by phone with a purposive sample of 32 parents at early postpartum. Digitally recorded interviews were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis.

Findings: The analysis uncovered three major themes that provide insight into the challenges and benefits of implementing breastfeeding telephone support intervention for postpartum parents. Most parents perceived the intervention as beneficial for enhancing their confidence in breastfeeding and childcare, facilitating problem solving, and improving their emotional control and bonding with the child. Parents particularly valued the professional advice and sharing provided by midwives, and the flexibility in providing telephone counselling during the critical time of early postpartum. Some parents suggested to increase the duration of intervention tailored to the child's developmental stage.

Conclusions: This qualitative process evaluation contributes unique insights into the benefits and factors that may be crucial to successful delivery of breastfeeding support intervention for postpartum parents. The findings highlight the need for tailoring services to engage both parents in providing breastfeeding support to meet diverse family practices and the developmental stages of the child.