

The Effectiveness of Prenatal Breastfeeding Education on Breastfeeding Uptake Postpartum: A Systematic Review

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Abstract : Introduction: Breastfeeding has been shown to provide numerous health benefits for both infants and mothers. The decision to breastfeed is influenced by physiological, psychological, and emotional factors. However, the importance of equipping mothers with the necessary knowledge for successful breastfeeding practice cannot be ruled out. The decline in global breastfeeding rate can be linked to a lack of adequate breastfeeding education during the prenatal stage. This systematic review examined the effectiveness of prenatal breastfeeding education on breastfeeding uptake postpartum. Method: This review was undertaken and reported in conformity with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systemic Reviews and Meta-Analysis statement (PRISMA) and was registered on the international prospective register for systematic reviews (PROSPERO: CRD42020213853). A PICO analysis (population, intervention, comparison, outcome) was undertaken to inform the choice of keywords in the search strategy to formulate the review question, which was aimed at determining the effectiveness of prenatal breastfeeding educational programs in improving breastfeeding uptake following birth. A systematic search of five databases (Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature, Medline, Psych INFO, and Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts) was searched between January 2014 until July 2021 to identify eligible studies. Quality assessment and narrative synthesis were subsequently undertaken. Results: Fourteen studies were included. All 14 studies used different types of breastfeeding programs; eight used a combination of curriculum-based breastfeeding education programs, group prenatal breastfeeding counselling, and one-to-one breastfeeding educational programs, which were all delivered in person; four studies used web-based learning platforms to deliver breastfeeding education prenatally which were both delivered online and face to face over a period of 3 weeks to 2 months with follow-up periods ranging from 3 weeks to 6 months; one study delivered breastfeeding educational intervention using mother-to-mother breastfeeding support groups in promoting exclusive breastfeeding, and one study disseminated breastfeeding education to participants based on the theory of planned behaviour. The most effective interventions were those that included both theory and hands-on demonstrations. Results showed an increase in breastfeeding uptake, breastfeeding knowledge, an increase in a positive attitude to breastfeeding, and an increase in maternal breastfeeding self-efficacy among mothers who participated in breastfeeding educational programs during prenatal care. Conclusion: Prenatal breastfeeding education increases women's knowledge of breastfeeding. Mothers who are knowledgeable about breastfeeding and hold a positive approach towards breastfeeding have the tendency to initiate breastfeeding and continue for a lengthened period. Findings demonstrate a general correlation between prenatal breastfeeding education and increased breastfeeding uptake postpartum. The high level of positive breastfeeding outcomes inherent in all the studies can be attributed to prenatal breastfeeding education. This review provides rigorous contemporary evidence that healthcare professionals and policymakers can apply when developing effective strategies to improve breastfeeding rates and ultimately improve the health outcomes of mothers and infants.

Keywords : breastfeeding, breastfeeding programs, breastfeeding self-efficacy, prenatal breastfeeding education

Conference Title : ICM 2023 : International Conference on Midwifery

Conference Location : New York, United States

Conference Dates : December 11-12, 2023