

Relationship and Associated Factors of Breastfeeding Self-efficacy among Postpartum Couples in Malawi: A Cross-sectional Study

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Abstract : Background: Breastfeeding self-efficacy in both mothers and fathers play a crucial role in improving exclusive breastfeeding rates. However, less is known on the relationship and predictors of paternal and maternal breastfeeding self-efficacy. This study aimed to examine the relationship and associated factors of breastfeeding self-efficacy (BSE) among mothers and fathers in Malawi. Methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted on 180 pairs of postpartum mothers and fathers at a tertiary maternity facility in central Malawi. BSE was measured using the Breastfeeding Self-Efficacy Scale Short-Form. Depressive symptoms were assessed by the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale. A structured questionnaire was used to collect demographic and health variables. Data were analyzed using multivariable logistic regression and multinomial logistic regression. Results: A higher score of self-efficacy was found in mothers (mean=55.7, Standard Deviation (SD) =6.5) compared to fathers (mean=50.2, SD=11.9). A significant association between paternal and maternal breastfeeding self-efficacy was found ($r= 0.32$). Age, employment status, mode of birth was significantly related to maternal and paternal BSE, respectively. Older age and caesarean section delivery were significant factors of combined BSE scores in couples. A higher BSE score in either the mother or her partner predicted higher exclusive breastfeeding rates. BSE scores were lower when couples' depressive symptoms were high. Conclusion: BSE are highly correlated between Malawian mothers and fathers, with a relatively higher score in maternal BSE. Importantly, a high BSE in couples predicted higher odds of exclusive breastfeeding, which highlights the need to include both mothers and fathers in future breastfeeding promotion strategies.

Keywords : paternal, maternal, exclusive breastfeeding, breastfeeding self-efficacy, malawi

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