

PROTECTIVE ROLE OF BREASTFEEDING IN POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW



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Background

- Prevalence of Post-Partum Depression (PPD): 13% (WHO)
- Advantages of Breastfeeding (BF) for mothers: strengthen the mother-infant bond, faster postpartum recovery, reduce the risk of some cancers
- Studies suggest that BF may have a protective effect against PPD because of the release of oxytocin, which promotes stress reduction and enhances mood

Aim of Study

We conducted a systematic review:

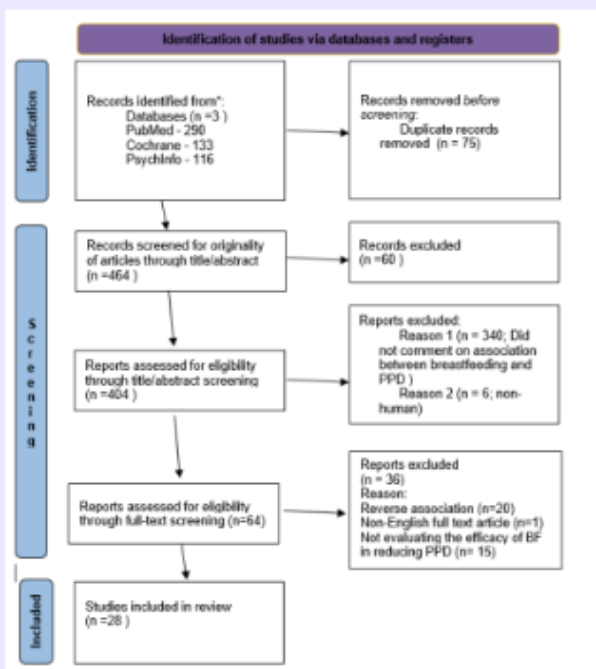
- To evaluate the efficacy of BF in reducing the risk of PPD
- To understand the impact of breastfeeding duration and frequency and identify predictors of the association between BF and PPD

Methodology

- Databases searched: PubMed, Cochrane, and PsycINFO databases
- Followed PRISMA guidelines
- Used the following keywords: "breastfeeding", "lactation", "maternal nursing", "postpartum depression", "postnatal depression", "depression postnatal", "postpartum mood disorder" to identify RCTs and observational studies from the year of 2021-2024.
- Included 28 English-text, human studies out of 464.

Findings

- Exclusive BF reduces postpartum depressive symptoms, particularly if initiated within one hour after delivery.
- There is a trend of higher PPD risk with formula and mixed feeding compared to breastfeeding
- Early cessation of breastfeeding before 6 months increases PPD risk, while longer the duration breastfeeding duration reduces it.
- Maternal factors such as pre-pregnancy BMI, breastfeeding satisfaction, intrapsychic stress, sleep quality, socioeconomic status, breastfeeding education, and social support significantly influence the relationship between PPD and breastfeeding practices.



Discussion

- Oxytocin release and decreased cortisol levels, associated with breastfeeding, mitigate the risk of PPD by reducing stress and enhancing mood.
- Benefits of early breastfeeding initiation, including enhanced emotional bonding between mother and infant, reduced anxiety and depressive symptoms, and greater maternal confidence and connection
- Difficulties in breastfeeding, possibly due to low self-efficacy, can contribute to increased depressive symptoms .

Conclusion

Exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months postpartum, as recommended by WHO, has a benefit against postpartum depression. Maternal stress and social engagement during breastfeeding are some variables that can enhance bonding and ease maternal stress. Thus, advocating for breastfeeding, primarily through comprehensive education and social support, is pivotal in fostering this correlation.

References

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2. Islam, M. J., Brody, L., Baird, K., Rahman, M., & Zobair, K. M. (2021). Early exclusive breastfeeding cessation and postpartum depression: Assessing the mediating and moderating role of maternal stress and social support. *PLoS one*, 16(5), e0251419. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0251419>