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Title: The role of body-mass-index in breastfeeding success

Abstract

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Background: Breastfeeding has many known benefits to mother and infant. Factors contributing to breastfeeding are multifaceted, however, mothers who are overweight or obese are less likely to breastfeed or breastfeed for shorter durations than mothers who are of normal weight. Research is needed to understand why this difference exists and how to better support overweight or obese mothers to breastfeed.

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to identify potential factors contributing to breastfeeding in postpartum mothers of different body-mass-index (BMI) scores.

Methods: Postpartum mothers were recruited from the community to complete a survey regarding concerns and challenges faced during the 4th trimester (birth to 3 months). The survey aimed to gather experiences during pregnancy, birth, and the postpartum periods. Analyses for these studies included current breastfeeding status, depression, race, body shape perception, and body-mass-index score (BMI). Logistic regression was used to examine predictors of breastfeeding at survey completion.

Results: Results confirm prior that BMI was higher in mothers (n= 88) who were not breastfeeding ($p=0.006$, OR 0.77, CI [0.63,0.91]). This finding was consistent when controlling for baby age, depression score, perception of body image, race, and marital status. Mothers of normal weight (BMI 20-25) were 9.78 times more likely to be breastfeeding than mothers with obesity (BMI>30) ($p=0.04$, CI [0.005,0.81]).

Conclusions: These results support prior literature that mothers of higher BMI need greater support to be successful breastfeeding and breastfeeding for a longer duration. Understanding why these differences exist is needed. Future mixed-methods analyses may elucidate reasons to help clinicians better support these mothers. Pediatric nurse practitioners should be aware that mothers of a higher BMI may need additional support during the postpartum period to be successful in breastfeeding.

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