






A mixed-methods systematic review on barriers to exclusive breastfeeding

Divya Sussana Patil , Prachi Pundir , Vijay Shree Dhyani, Jisha B. Krishnan, Shradha S Parsekar , Sherize  Show less ^
Merlin D'Souza, N Ravishankar, Vishnu Renjith 

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Article information 



Abstract

Introduction:

The World Health Organization recommends exclusive breastfeeding for every newborn during the first 6 months of life, yet women come across various challenges to continuing it.

Aim:

This systematic review was intended to identify barriers to exclusive breastfeeding among mothers.

Methods:

MEDLINE, Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied health literature, ProQuest, Web of Science and Scopus databases were searched from January 1990 to October 2017. The systematic review included quantitative, qualitative and mixed-methods studies to identify barriers to exclusive breastfeeding among mothers of reproductive age with an infant aged between 0 and 12 months. All studies were screened based on titles, abstracts and full text by two reviewers independently. The methodological quality of included studies was assessed using appropriate tools. Of the 9737 eligible records, 44 studies were included for analysis. Classification of barriers to exclusive breastfeeding was adopted from the conceptual framework of factors affecting breastfeeding practices given by Hector and colleagues.

Results:

In total 32 barriers were grouped under individual, group and society level factors. Meta-analysis indicated that mothers who smoked had 2.49 times more odds of not exclusively breastfeeding than non-smoking mothers and mothers who had undergone caesarean section had 1.69 times more risk of cessation of exclusive breastfeeding than mothers who have had a vaginal childbirth.

Conclusion:

The systematic review revealed a complex interplay of various barriers related to exclusive breastfeeding. It is recommended that context-specific strategies should be designed in accordance with barriers existing in a region or country.

Keywords

Breastfeeding barriers, breastfeeding practices, exclusive breastfeeding, mixed methods, systematic review

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