



Family Members' Infant Feeding Preferences, Maternal Breastfeeding Exposures and Exclusive Breastfeeding Intentions

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Globally, there is an increasing trend of mothers choosing to breastfeed their infants⁽¹⁾. However, in many developed countries, despite numerous benefits for the infant and the mother, breastfeeding duration is short and exclusive breastfeeding rates are low⁽¹⁾. Maternal breastfeeding intentions are strongly associated with breastfeeding exclusivity and duration⁽²⁾. Factors that affect new mothers' exclusive breastfeeding intentions have not been adequately examined. The purpose of this study was to examine the association between family member's infant feeding preferences, breastfeeding exposures, and women's exclusive breastfeeding intentions.

This study was part of a large prospective cohort study investigating the impact of free infant formula supplied to hospitals and mothers on breastfeeding duration and exclusivity⁽³⁾. Briefly, 1277 breastfeeding mother-infant pairs were recruited from four public hospitals in Hong Kong. We used multiple logistic and linear regression models to explore the impact of the family members' infant feeding preferences and breastfeeding exposures on exclusive breastfeeding intentions.

78.1 % mothers reported an intention to exclusively breastfeed, and the median intended duration of exclusive breastfeeding was 26 weeks. The husband's preference for breastfeeding (aOR = 1.67; 95 % CI 1.20–2.31), previous breastfeeding experience (aOR = 1.56; 95 % CI 1.10–2.23) and attendance at an antenatal breastfeeding class (aOR = 2.09; 95 % CI 1.45–3.02) were all strongly associated with higher maternal intention to exclusively breastfeed. For every additional family member who preferred breastfeeding, the odds of intending to exclusively breastfeed increased by 32 % (aOR 1.32; 95 % CI, 1.13–1.55). Similarly, the proportion of participants intending to exclusively breastfeed increased progressively with more breastfeeding exposures.

In conclusion, including fathers and other significant family members in antenatal breastfeeding education can help to maximize breastfeeding support for the new mother and promote exclusive breastfeeding.

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