



Empowerment in breastfeeding as viewed by Iranian women: a qualitative study

Zeinab Heidari¹, Shahnaz Kohan^{2*}, Mahrokh Keshvari²

- 1- PhD candidate of reproductive health, student research center, school of nursing & midwifery, Isfahan University of Medical Sciences, Isfahan, Iran
- 2- assistant professor in Faculty of Nursing & Midwifery, Nursing & Midwifery Care Research Center, Isfahan University of Medical Sciences, Isfahan, Iran

*Address correspondence to Shahnaz Kohan, Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery, Isfahan University of Medical Sciences, Isfahan, Iran. Email: kohan@nm.mui.ac.ir

ABSTRACT: Background: the positive effect of breastfeeding on mother's, infant's, and community's health is globally accepted. However, breastfeeding is not yet practiced at an acceptable level. Empowerment of mothers is an important factor for continuity of breastfeeding; thus, the present study was conducted in an attempt to explore Iranian women's perception of empowerment in breastfeeding.

Methods: The present qualitative study was conducted as per conventional content analysis method. The participants were selected purposefully; 24 semi-structured deep interviews were made with 12 mothers with breastfeeding experience, 2 key family members, and 10 other personnel involved in breastfeeding services. Content analysis was performed along with data gathering.

Results: an analysis of participants' descriptions of their experience led to emergence of 5 main categories: Enough Knowledge and Skill for breastfeeding, feeling adequate for breastfeeding, Overcoming Breastfeeding Problems, Informed belief in the value of breastfeeding, Perceiving comprehensive support for breastfeeding. These main categories indicate the empowerment aspects from their view.

Conclusion: in participants' viewpoint, empowerment in breastfeeding can be formed through acquiring "Enough Knowledge and Skill for breastfeeding" as well as assurance about the proper quality and quantity of mother's milk. Overcoming Breastfeeding Problems will lead to consolidation of the empowerment in breastfeeding. Additionally, data analysis showed that informed belief in the value of breastfeeding strengthens the empowerment in breastfeeding and presence of perceived comprehensive support for breastfeeding facilitates the empowerment in the continuity of breastfeeding. Thus, comprehensive plans should be devised for improving and promoting breastfeeding with a focus on empowerment of women in breastfeeding.

Key words: women empowerment, breastfeeding, qualitative content analysis