

Abstract

Original Article

Breastfeeding Among Somali Mother's Living in Finland Under Salutogenic Approach

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Background: Breastfeeding is important to both mother and child. However, adapting to a new culture decreases initiation of breastfeeding and also breastfeeding duration.

Objective: Examine Somali women's perceptions towards breastfeeding using a salutogenic approach.

Design and Method: A qualitative methodological approach is used for a single focus-group and two personal interview sessions. Snowball sampling was used to recruit the informants. Data were analysed using deductive content analysis. The interviews were conducted during May–August of 2012.

Results: The sample of 7 Somali women ages 20-32 had a total of 11 children, all born in Finland. Somali mothers are motivated to breastfeed due to their religious and cultural beliefs. The most important source of information about breastfeeding for a new mother is the knowledge of her own mother and other elderly female relatives. Health professionals can support and complement that cultural information. It is the wish of Somali mothers to have a traditional postpartum period, as dictated in their tradition, but that is rarely possible in Finland. Because of these challenges, the breastfeeding period usually ends prematurely – indeed earlier than what the mothers had planned for or wanted.

Key Conclusions: It is important to recognize the key factors that are affecting Somali mothers' breastfeeding, such as the changed position of the husband in the family's life, and exploit the general resistance resources of Somali mothers during the breastfeeding counselling. To advocate exclusive breastfeeding, it becomes important to discuss the possibilities for creating a balance between exclusive breastfeeding, daily routines, and breastfeeding in public. Using breastfeeding promotion interventions targeted toward Somali parents, as well as increasing the cultural competence of Finnish maternity care should, therefore, be strongly considered.

Keywords: Breastfeeding, immigrant, Somali, salutogenesis, qualitative research, focus group t