

MARKETING OF BREASTMILK SUBSTITUTES AND EARLY BREASTFEEDING PRACTICES AMONG NATIVE AND MIGRANT WOMEN

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BACKGROUND

There is a large body of evidence regarding the benefits of breastfeeding for mothers and their children. However, the influence of marketing of breastmilk substitutes on breastfeeding practices remains a big concern. The aim of this study is to examine the association between exposure to different breastmilk substitutes market factors and exclusive breastfeeding within 1 month postpartum, comparing migrant with native women.

METHODS

This study is part of the project baMBINO, an ongoing research on perinatal health among migrant (foreign-born) and native women in Portugal. Women with a live-birth and aged ≥ 18 years were recruited in 33 Portuguese public hospitals during admission for delivery. Data on breastfeeding practices and exposure to market factors were collected by telephone interviews at 1-3 months postpartum. The final sample included 2027 women (926 natives and 1101 migrants). According to their feeding practices within 1 month after delivery, women were classified into two categories: those who have not breastfed or have dropped exclusive breastfeeding, and those who have maintained exclusive breastfeeding. Five market factors were assessed: free samples, discounts, television, newspaper/magazine, and shop/pharmacy advertisement. Logistic regression was used to study the association between the exposure to market factors and early breastfeeding practices, adjusting for the country of birth (native vs. migrant), maternal age, education, parity, gestational age, mode of delivery, and skin-to-skin contact in the first hour after birth. Adjusted odds-ratio (aOR) and a respective 95% confidence interval (95%CI) were obtained.

RESULTS

Among women exclusively breastfeeding within 1 month postpartum, there was a higher percentage of migrants than natives (56.7 % and 43.3% respectively). After adjustment, migrants were more likely to exclusively breastfeed within 1 month postpartum, compared to natives (aOR= 1.29, 95%CI: 1.06-1.58). Mothers receiving free samples of breastmilk substitutes from a health professional (aOR= 0.69, 95%CI:0.49-0.98) and those exposed to discounts of breastmilk substitutes (aOR= 0.68, 95%CI: 0.54-0.85) were less likely to exclusively breastfeed within 1 month postpartum. Other market factors were not significantly associated with the main outcome.

CONCLUSION

Our results revealed that exclusive breastfeeding within 1 month postpartum is more prevalent among migrants. Free samples and discounts of breastmilk substitutes are risk factors for not breastfeeding or dropping exclusive breastfeeding within 1 month after delivery, regardless of the fact of being migrant or native. Stricter policies are needed to counter breastmilk substitutes marketing, particularly free samples and discounts.

Table 1. Characteristics of the study participants (n= 2027)

	Not breastfeeding or stopped exclusive breastfeeding within 1 month (n=668)	Exclusive breastfeeding within 1 month (n=1359)	p-value
	n(%)	n(%)	
Country of birth			
Natives	338 (36.5)	588 (63.5)	0.002
Migrants	330 (30.0)	771 (70.0)	
Maternal age (years)			
18-24	74 (27.0)	200 (73.0)	0.004
25-34	355 (31.8)	760 (68.2)	
≥ 35	239 (37.5)	399 (62.5)	
Marital status			
Not married	166 (31.1)	367 (68.9)	0.300
Married	502 (33.6)	992 (66.4)	
Years of education			
<10	120 (30.2)	278 (69.8)	0.057
10-12	252 (31.6)	546 (68.4)	
>12	286 (36.2)	505 (63.8)	
Household income			
≤ 1000	357 (31.4)	781 (68.6)	0.093
>1000	275 (35.0)	510 (65.0)	
Parity			
Primiparous	374 (37.5)	624 (62.5)	<0.001
Multiparous	293 (28.6)	733 (71.4)	
Mode of delivery			
C-section	245 (40.0)	368 (60.0)	<0.001
Vaginal	423 (29.9)	991 (70.1)	
Gestational age			
≥ 37 weeks	603 (32.2)	1271 (67.8)	0.003
<37 weeks	54 (45.4)	65 (54.6)	
Skin-to-skin contact			
No	121 (46.9)	137 (53.1)	<0.001
Yes	547 (31.0)	1216 (69.0)	

Table 2. Breastfeeding practices within the first month postpartum

	Natives (n=926)	Migrants (n= 1101)	p-value
	n(%)	n(%)	
Not breastfeeding or stopped exclusive breastfeeding	338 (50.6)	330 (49.4)	0.002
Exclusive breastfeeding	588 (43.3)	771 (56.7)	

Table 3. Exposure to market factors

	Natives (n=926)	Migrants (n= 1101)	p-value
	n(%)	n(%)	
Free samples			
No	841 (45.1)	1023 (54.9)	0.061
Yes	85 (52.8)	76 (47.2)	
Discounts			
No	500 (39.4)	768 (60.6)	<0.001
Yes	423 (56.2)	330 (43.8)	
Television ads			
No	558 (42.1)	768 (57.9)	<0.001
Yes	309 (54.5)	258 (45.5)	
Newspaper/Magazine ads			
No	684(43.7)	883 (56.3)	<0.001
Yes	169 (58.9)	118 (41.1)	
Shop/Pharmacy ads			
No	549 (41.2)	785 (58.8)	<0.001
Yes	318 (56.9)	241 (43.1)	