

The influence of social media on Greek mothers' attitudes and knowledge on breastfeeding

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ABSTRACT

Recently, maternal breastfeeding in Greece has shown a positive trend. However, breastfeeding rates in Greece still lag behind those of other European countries. The participants of this quantitative study were recruited via social media and by personal connections. Data were gathered through questionnaire and analyzed utilizing descriptive statistics with SPSS 20. The study investigates: i) Trust levels among Greek mothers in social groups and their awareness of breastfeeding issues. ii) The impact of active participation in Greek parenting and breastfeeding support groups on Facebook on choosing and sustaining exclusive breastfeeding. iii) Whether engagement in social media groups positively influences the duration of exclusive breastfeeding and extends the overall breastfeeding period for infants. Out of the 776 participants, 727 were part of social media parenting groups. About 27.9% credited these groups for influencing their decision to breastfeed. Moreover, they perceived significant assistance from social media in staying well-informed about breastfeeding. The data collected confirms social media parenting groups positively influence breastfeeding mothers, enhancing knowledge, self-confidence, and deterring negative attitudes. This factor increases the likelihood of sustaining exclusive breastfeeding up to the recommended six months.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Breastfeeding has been described as "An ancient art and a contemporary miracle". Its benefits for the infant, mother, and society are undeniable, and it should, therefore, be promoted and protected [1]. Breastfeeding has been correlated with better long-term health outcomes for both the mother and the infant [2]. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations, it is advisable to initiate breastfeeding within the first hour of a baby's birth, followed by exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months. Subsequently, complementary foods should be introduced, and breastfeeding should continue for at least two years [3]. Although the multiple benefits of breastfeeding are recognized, fewer than half of infants are optimally breastfed according to WHO guidelines [4].

Technology holds a significant place in people's lives and in our culture, so that is interesting to understand its impact on individuals and society. Its use can influence how people interact with the world around them [5]. Over the years, the number of social media platforms and their active users has increased, making them significant online applications [6]. Contemporary research indicates that seeking help for breastfeeding issues on social media is a common phenomenon of our society [7] with online platforms serving

as hubs for exchanging information on various social phenomena, including breastfeeding. Breastfeeding is considered an urgent issue for the global community because it has numerous benefits for improving people's lives [8]. The number of Facebook users is increasing over time [9]. As technological progress continues to advance, social media plays a significant role in the lives of billions of people worldwide and can impact nearly every sector [10]. Therefore, with the rise of technology especially after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, even breastfeeding support through social media has become increasingly popular [11]. Studies have shown that certain Facebook pages focusing on breastfeeding topics can enhance knowledge, provide psychological support, and improve breastfeeding intention among users [12]. In Greece, there is no published research investigating the impact of social media on mothers' attitudes toward breastfeeding issues.

Support for breastfeeding is defined as any available information and assistance to achieve successful breastfeeding [13]. Interpersonal relationships that ensure a positive attitude toward a behavior provide social support. Similarly, people who endorse and accept an idea serve as sources of social support for an individual in a stressful situation [14]. A person is significantly influenced by social relationships and interactions within the broader social system. This social network of an individual has the potential either to hinder or provide access to knowledge and skills exchanged and utilized to achieve goals [15]. In the digital age we live in, being online allows individuals to find online counterparts. Technological innovation has made it possible to create emotional closeness among people with vast distances between them. Thus, from these "online friends," one can receive support similar to what they would get from relatives or friends who are really close [14].

It is challenging to formulate a clear definition of social media, although we are familiar with what social media is [16]. However, we will define them as a set of internet applications based on the idea of Web 0.2. Three aspects have been identified for their definition. Specifically, on social media, individuals are allowed to create a personal public or semi-public profile. They can connect with other users and showcase their activity, while simultaneously interacting with other people or their activities that are published [17]. One useful feature of Facebook is that it creates a communal space, a virtual community for discussion, sharing, and promoting an issue [18]. Social media allows direct communication with people that would traditionally be difficult to approach. There are indications that social media provides an unusual opportunity for personalized intervention, and indeed, this personalized intervention can be effective [19].

The initiation and duration of breastfeeding are influenced and determined by various factors. Some of these factors include the personal and sociocultural characteristics of the mother, child, and family, elements of the public health and healthcare system, and the promotion of alternative feeding methods for infants [20]. One factor contributing to lower breastfeeding rates is the lack of social support. Mothers receiving inadequate social support for exclusive breastfeeding tend to discontinue it before the infant reaches six months of age [21]. It is argued that targeted interventions on social media can help overcome some of these sociocultural barriers that contribute to lower breastfeeding rates [22]. Support for women who choose to breastfeed is essential from family, the environment, and employers. Furthermore, there is a growing interest in promoting and supporting breastfeeding through the use of social media. While the optimal way to disseminate messages through Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram is beginning to be clarified, there is limited empirical evidence for understanding it. However, the potential for promoting breastfeeding through these platforms has been recognized [23]. The application of these social media increases the wealth of information and the speed of its dissemination among and within groups. It is known that misinformation about health issues spreads faster and more deeply through social media than scientifically valid information [24]. A recent study showed that participating mothers experienced the emotional support they expected from groups on social media. At the same time, they received practical advice and knowledge from these platforms [25]. Social media and the internet, in general, have become the most significant external source of influence, as new technologies penetrate all aspects of our lives, affecting us all [26].

Breastfeeding can indeed be a challenge for new mothers, and support from a community can play a significant role in the successful breastfeeding process. Criticism from the immediate environment can create stress for new mothers, and seeking support from parenting groups on social networks can help them cope with this challenge. Parenting groups on social networks, such as Facebook and Instagram, as well as specialized fertility forums, create a virtual space where parents can connect, exchange information, and seek support. Through these groups, new mothers can share their experiences, ask questions, and receive advice from others who have similar experiences. The digital community can offer support, encouragement, and information based on personal experience, which can be extremely beneficial for new mothers facing challenges in breastfeeding. Despite numerous international studies focusing on maternal support in breastfeeding practices [27]–[29] there is still a need for further research on the interaction and the degree of online influence among breastfeeding mothers [30].

The aim of this study is to investigate the influence of social media on Greek parenting groups and breastfeeding support groups, an area for which there is currently a lack of published data. The research aims to address the following specific questions: i) What is the level of trust of Greek mothers in social groups and how well informed on breastfeeding issues are they? ii) Do mothers actively participating in Greek parent

groups and breastfeeding support communities on Facebook exhibit an inclination towards selecting and perpetuating exclusive breastfeeding practices? iii) Did the participation of breastfeeding mothers in social media groups contribute to the duration of exclusive breastfeeding and to extending the breastfeeding period of infants? The answers to the above questions will contribute to understanding the need for information among modern breastfeeding mothers and how the opinions of unknown individuals can influence people's attitudes towards the practice of breastfeeding. This study contributes data regarding the interaction of Greek users on social media platforms concerning the exchange of information about breastfeeding. In a broader context, this understanding can contribute to perceptions of how the general public perceives and responds to health advice received through social media [31].

2. METHOD

2.1. Design

A quantitative research design was selected. Data was collected via a pilot questionnaire from a remote sample without being influenced by the author's opinions. The pilot questionnaire aimed to be used in a study that provide insights into potential long-term developmental benefits associated with breastfeeding practices. This study received ethical approval from the University of Ioannina's Ethical Committee, ensuring adherence to research standards (Ethical Clearance number 38555/20-07-2022).

2.2. Participants, recruitment, and adequacy of sample size

The study focused on Greek mothers who are active social media users. The opinions of mothers participating in online parenting and breastfeeding support groups hold particular interest. Given the rising popularity of social media among Greek mothers and the particular focus on breastfeeding practices, large sample size was essential to capture a diverse array of experiences and insights. This approach allowed for a more nuanced understanding of breastfeeding's impact on child development.

Sample sizes in similar studies were reviewed to ensure our sample was comparable and adequate. Studies investigating the influence of social media on breastfeeding behaviors often recruit several hundred participants to achieve statistically significant results. For example, a study by Morse and Brown included 2,028 mothers in their survey on Facebook breastfeeding support groups [32]. Another study by Sanchez *et al.* utilized a large sample size of 832 women to evaluate the effects of social media-based intervention on breastfeeding practices among participants [33].

For the Chi-square tests and Kruskal-Wallis tests used in this study, the power analysis confirmed that the sample size used ($N=776$) could detect medium effect sizes with a power of 0.80 and an alpha level of 0.05. To achieve a power of 0.80 (80%) and a confidence level of 95%, the required sample size was calculated using standard statistical formulas. For detecting a medium effect size (Cohen's $d=0.5$), the required sample size is approximately 380 participants. Considering the study's aims and the anticipated diversity in responses, a larger sample size was considered essential to ensure the results were robust and generalizable.

The study successfully recruited 776 participants, which exceeds the minimum requirement for statistical power and confidence. This large sample size allows for more detailed subgroup analyses and increases the precision of the findings. The chosen sample size of 776 participants is well within the recommended range for studies of this nature. The large sample size enhances the validity of the results by ensuring that the study can detect even small effects and can provide reliable insights into the influence of social media on breastfeeding practices among Greek mothers.

2.3. Data analysis

The questionnaire included a wide range of inquiries, focusing on various aspects of children's breastfeeding practices and the level of maternal involvement in social media parenting groups. It also gathered details about the child, such as their gender, age, school environment, the children's interests, and daily habits. Finally, information about the mothers was collected, such as their age, education, and professional background, in order to create a more holistic mother-child profile and to better analyze the potential influence of these factors on breastfeeding practices and child development.

Data analysis was performed using the statistical package SPSS (version 20). In statistical analysis, mean, standard deviation (sd), median, range, maximum, and minimum values were used to describe quantitative data, as well as hierarchical data measured on a Likert scale. Absolute (N) and relative frequencies (%) were used for qualitative variables. The Mann-Whitney U test was applied for relationships between a categorical variable with 2 levels and a hierarchical variable on the Likert scale for non-normally distributed data. The Chi-square test was used for categorical variables with 2 levels, and the Kruskal Wallis test with post-hoc analysis for variables with more than two levels. Two-tailed tests were applied, and the significance level was set at 0.05.

To control for confounding variables in this study, the following strategies were employed: Random selection: participants were randomly chosen to reduce selection bias and ensure the sample was representative. This approach helps distribute potential confounding variables evenly across study groups. Matching: participants were matched based on key demographic variables such as age, education level, and employment status. This process helps control for confounding factors that might affect both social media usage and breastfeeding practices. Statistical controls: Advanced statistical techniques were used to manage confounding variables during analysis. For instance, multivariate analysis was conducted to adjust for potential confounders. Additionally, non-parametric tests such as the Kruskal-Wallis test with post-hoc analysis and Chi-square tests were used to explore relationships between variables while controlling for confounding effects. Detailed data collection: the questionnaire gathered extensive data on potential confounders, including socio-economic status, previous breastfeeding experience, and access to breastfeeding support. This detailed data collection allowed these variables to be included in the analysis to control for their potential confounding effects.

2.4. Validity and reliability of the questionnaire/instrument

The questionnaire was designed to thoroughly evaluate various aspects of breastfeeding practices and the impact of social media on Greek mothers. To ensure content validity, experts in maternal and child health were consulted, and feedback from a pilot study was incorporated. The questionnaire included questions on demographics, breastfeeding practices, social media group engagement, and perceptions of social support.

The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, which measures internal consistency. The Cronbach's alpha value for the questionnaire was 0.756, indicating acceptable reliability. This means that the questionnaire items have a satisfactory level of consistency and effectively measure the same underlying construct.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Most of the 776 participants, were 31-40 years old, university-educated, private company employees, and married. The majority of women (97.55%) who responded to the questionnaire had breastfed. Many mothers (66.2%) breastfed exclusively for more than six months. For the total breastfeeding duration, we received 628 responses. The 27.9% of mothers consider that their participation in parent groups on social media helped them make the decision to breastfeed.

Regarding the reasons for discontinuing breastfeeding, 26.5% of mothers stopped breastfeeding by personal choice, while 24.2% felt the need for independence from their infants. A small percentage of mothers (0.9%) stopped breastfeeding because the infant showed an allergy to maternal milk, and others (0.4%) because their infants were born with low weight. Additionally, 9.8% reported insufficient milk quantity, and 7% stopped due to the need to return to work.

On the other hand, 2.83% of the participants did not breastfeed. The majority of them (41%) stated that maternal milk was insufficient. 28.2% chose not to proceed with breastfeeding. Another discouraging reason for initiating breastfeeding (25.6%) was the low birth weight of the infants, and 15.4% of mothers answered that breastfeeding is a tiring process compared to formula milk. A significant portion of mothers (10.3%) reported a lack of a supportive environment to proceed with the breastfeeding process.

3.1. The influence of social media encouragement on the decision to initiate breastfeeding

Mothers' participation in social media parenting groups and the influence on breastfeeding initiation were studied. A notable 27.9% of mothers believe that their participation in parent groups on social media helped them decide to breastfeed, while 14.5% stated that they were encouraged by their family and friends. Mothers who were encouraged by social media groups to start breastfeeding have a higher mean rank in the duration of exclusive breastfeeding and total breastfeeding compared to those who claimed that the groups on social media did not encourage them to start breastfeeding Table 1. According to the literature, education on breastfeeding as well as support from peers can increase breastfeeding initiation rates [27]. Online peer support for breastfeeding is considered valuable because it makes mothers feel like they are not alone in their breastfeeding journey [34]. Breastfeeding mothers can gain knowledge and emotional support through their participation in social media groups [7]. Online support positively contributes to promoting breastfeeding initiation. Feeling like you belong to a community helps overcome the initial challenges that sometimes arise with breastfeeding [35].

3.2. The impact of social media on the duration of exclusive breastfeeding

A non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test with post-hoc analysis was conducted regarding mothers' information on breastfeeding issues and encouragement to continue breastfeeding from Facebook parent groups in comparison with the time they spent exclusively breastfeeding. The distribution of scores in each group is not identical, indicating different shapes and variabilities. For this reason, the Kruskal-Wallis test was used to compare the mean ranks. In the ranking Table 2, we can observe how much the social media groups encouraged mothers to continue breastfeeding. Additionally, the variable "how much these groups

helped mothers to be informed about breastfeeding" is also examined. Whichever group has a higher ranking, it also presents a higher score on how much they were influenced by social media groups to continue breastfeeding and to be informed about breastfeeding. From the data in Table 3, we see that both breastfeeding encouragement and information through social media groups show statistically significant differences between the levels of exclusive breastfeeding time. In both cases respectively, it is evident that: Chi-square index=49.930, $p=0.000<0.05$, and Chi-square index=48.806, $p=0.000<0.05$ as shown in Table 3.

Post-hoc analysis made comparisons between exclusive breastfeeding groups with respect to encouragement to continue breastfeeding. The mean rank for each exclusive breastfeeding group and the distances between them indicate individual differences. The only statistically significant differences were observed between the following breastfeeding groups: i) mothers who breastfed for 21-30 days compared to those who breastfed exactly six months ($p=0.024$), ii) mothers who breastfed for 21-30 days compared to those who breastfed more than six months ($p=0.014$), iii) mothers who breastfed up to two months compared to those who breastfed exactly six months ($p=0.001$), iv) mothers who breastfed up to two months compared to those who breastfed more than six months ($p=0.000$), and finally, mothers who did not breastfeed at all compared to those who breastfed more than six months ($p=0.010$). From the above, it is evident that statistically significant differences were mainly observed between the groups that exclusively breastfed for six months or more, compared to those who breastfed up to two months or less.

Table 1. Mean rank analysis using Chi-square test

Case	Encouragement from SM to start breastfeeding	N	Mean rank
Exclusive breastfeeding	No	566	377.25
	Yes	210	418.83
	Total	776	
Total duration of breastfeeding	No	453	288.92
	Yes	175	380.70
	Total	628	

Table 2. The average rank for each group of the independent variable (exclusive breastfeeding) in relation to the score received by the dependent variable

Case	Exclusive breastfeeding	N	Mean rank
Participating in a social media parenting group has motivated me to continue breastfeeding	I didn't breastfeed	30	249.73
	21-30 days	8	129.56
	Up to 2 months	19	174.61
	Up to 3 months	9	337.28
	Up to 4 months	11	277.86
	Up to 5 months	15	269.77
	Up to 6 months	44	351.63
	6 months exactly	100	386.28
	More than 6 months	499	389.57
	Total	735	
Participating in a social media parenting group has helped me become more informed about breastfeeding issues	I didn't breastfeed	33	238.17
	21-30 days	8	179.75
	Up to 2 months	18	185.22
	Up to 3 months	9	306.94
	Up to 4 months	11	293.82
	Up to 5 months	16	280.78
	Up to 6 months	44	369.17
	6 months exactly	100	381.47
	More than 6 months	498	390.45
	Total	737	

Table 3. Social media parenting group participation impact on exclusive breastfeeding duration

Kruskal-Wallis Tests	Participating in a social media parenting group encouraged me to continue breastfeeding	Participating in a social media parenting group helped me become more informed about breastfeeding issues
Chi-square	49.930	48.806
P-value	0.000	0.000

Furthermore, a post-hoc analysis was conducted to compare the groups of exclusive breastfeeding in relation to the information about breastfeeding. The mean rank for each exclusive breastfeeding group and the distances between them indicate individual differences. The statistically significant differences identified involve the following groups: a) mothers who breastfed up to two months compared to those who breastfed up to six months ($p=0.034$), b) mothers who breastfed up to two months compared to those who breastfed exactly six

months ($p=0.004$), c) mothers who breastfed up to two months compared to those who breastfed more than six months ($p=0.001$), d) those mothers who did not breastfeed at all compared to those who breastfed exactly six months ($p=0.012$), and finally, those who did not breastfeed at all compared to those who breastfed more than six months ($p=0.001$). Here, statistically significant differences are observed between mothers whose breastfeeding duration was six months or more and those who breastfed for two months or did not breastfeed at all.

According to Alianmoghaddam *et al.* [14], the practices of exclusive breastfeeding in mothers are positively influenced by both real-life and online social networks. Utilizing platforms such as Facebook and other smartphone applications can significantly contribute to the enhancement of breastfeeding rates. A recent study demonstrated that online communities encouraged young mothers under the age of 25 to continue exclusive breastfeeding. These young mothers reported that social media platforms provide a safe and supportive environment [36]. After all, the new generation of mothers has grown up under the influence of technology, and social media is a significant communication channel for them [33].

3.3. The impact of social media on the overall duration of breastfeeding

A non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted with post-hoc analysis regarding mothers' information about breastfeeding and encouragement to continue from parent groups on Facebook, compared to the total duration of breastfeeding for their infants. The distribution of scores in each group is not identical, indicating different shapes and variabilities. For this reason, the Kruskal-Wallis test was used to compare the mean ranks.

In Table 4, the degree to which mothers were encouraged to continue breastfeeding by Facebook parenting groups is recorded. Simultaneously, the variable regarding how much these groups helped them to be informed about breastfeeding is examined. Any group with a higher rank also shows a higher score in how much they were influenced by Facebook groups to continue breastfeeding and to be informed about breastfeeding issues. Here, mothers who breastfed for more than four years have a higher rank compared to other groups. Second in the ranking is the group of mothers who breastfed for more than three years. From the data in Table 5, we see that both encouragement for breastfeeding and information about breastfeeding from Facebook groups show statistically significant differences between the levels of the total breastfeeding duration, and in both cases respectively, Chi-square index=54.489, $p=0.000<0.05$ and Chi-square index=57.806, $p=0.000<0.05$ as presented in Table 5.

Table 4. Mean rank for each group of the independent variable (total breastfeeding duration) in relation to the score received by the dependent variable

Case	Total duration of breastfeeding	N	Mean rank
Participation in a social media parenting group has encouraged me to continue breastfeeding?	6 months	13	265.73
	6-12 months	58	206.64
	12-18 months	77	232.56
	18 months-2 years	50	294.95
	2 years-2.5 years	108	313.71
	2.5 years-3 years	114	310.74
	More than 3 years	136	349.06
	More than 4 years	50	380.98
Participating in a social media parenting group has helped me become more informed about breastfeeding issues?	Total	606	
	6 months	14	184.68
	6-12 months	58	201.04
	12-18 months	77	262.25
	18 months-2 years	51	282.05
	2 years-2.5 years	107	311.99
	2.5 years-3 years	113	322.21
	More than 3 years	136	341.15
	More than 4 years	51	382.67
	Total	607	

Table 5. Social media parenting group participation impact on total duration of breastfeeding

Kruskal-Wallis Tests	Participation in a social media parenting group has encouraged me to continue breastfeeding	Participating in a social media parenting group has helped me become more informed about breastfeeding issues
Chi-square	54.489	57.806
P-value	.000	.000

Post-hoc analysis made comparisons between the groups of total breastfeeding duration in relation to the encouragement for breastfeeding from social media groups. The mean rank for each group of total breastfeeding and the distances between them indicate the individual differences. Significant differences were observed between the following breastfeeding groups: mothers who breastfed for 6-12 months compared to those who breastfed for 2.5-3 years ($p=0.004$), mothers who breastfed for 6-12 months compared to those who breastfed for 2-2.5 years ($p=0.03$), mothers who breastfed for 6-12 months compared

to those who breastfed for more than three years ($p=0.000$), mothers who breastfed for 6-12 months compared to those who breastfed for more than four years ($p=0.000$), mothers who breastfed for 12-18 months compared to those who breastfed for 2.5-3 years ($p=0.048$), mothers who breastfed for 12-18 months compared to those who breastfed for 2-2.5 years ($p=0.036$), mothers who breastfed for 12-18 months compared to those who breastfed for more than three years ($p=0.000$), and finally, mothers who breastfed for 12-18 months compared to those who breastfed for more than four years ($p=0.000$).

Furthermore, a post-hoc analysis was conducted to compare the groups of total breastfeeding duration in relation to the information about breastfeeding from social media groups. The mean rank for each group of total breastfeeding and the distances between them indicate the individual differences. Significant differences were found in the following groups: mothers who breastfed for six months compared to those who breastfed for more than three years ($p=0.016$), mothers who breastfed for six months compared to those who breastfed for more than four years ($p=0.001$), mothers who breastfed for 6-12 months compared to those who breastfed for 2-2.5 years ($p=0.001$), mothers who breastfed for 6-12 months compared to those who breastfed for 2.5-3 years ($p=0.000$), mothers who breastfed for 6-12 months compared to those who breastfed for more than three years ($p=0.000$), mothers who breastfed for 6-12 months compared to those who breastfed for more than four years ($p=0.000$), mothers who breastfed for 12-18 months compared to those who breastfed for more than three years ($p=0.018$), mothers who breastfed for 12-18 months compared to those who breastfed for more than four years ($p=0.001$), and mothers who breastfed for 18 months-2 years compared to those who breastfed for more than four years ($p=0.048$).

These findings agree with those of other studies which confirm that the influence of social media environments can positively contribute to prolonging the desired duration of breastfeeding [37]. According to the bibliography, some social media groups can improve the experience, the knowledge, and the duration of breastfeeding [38] and mothers who used social media groups experienced longer durations of breastfeeding [32]. This suggests that social media can play a critical role in promoting and sustaining breastfeeding.

On the other hand, 2.83% of the participants in the study did not breastfeed, with the majority (41%) stating that their maternal milk was insufficient. A significant portion of mothers (10.3%) stated that they did not have a supportive environment to proceed with the breastfeeding process, confirming Wilson [21] finding that inadequate social support leads to low breastfeeding rates. Breastfeeding women with limited social support report insufficient knowledge about breastfeeding, reduced self-confidence, and a negative attitude towards breastfeeding. The same factor also reduces the likelihood of exclusive breastfeeding until the age of six months for the infant.

A grade number of mothers ($N=727$) were members of a parenting group on social media, while 49 were not. Mothers consider the influence of these groups as moderate in encouraging them to continue breastfeeding, with a mean score of 3.56. They believe that social media groups have significantly helped them stay informed about breastfeeding-related issues (Mean=4, SD=1.223). According to Black *et al.* [39], online groups create a supportive community and can provide information and knowledge on breastfeeding as well as positively influence the attitudes and behaviors of breastfeeding women.

A non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted with post-hoc analysis regarding mothers' information on breastfeeding and encouragement to continue breastfeeding from parenting groups on Facebook, in comparison to the time they exclusively breastfed. The distribution of scores in each group is not identical, indicating different shapes and variabilities. For this reason, the Kruskal-Wallis test was used to compare Mean Ranks. Additionally, the variable "how much these groups helped mothers to be informed about breastfeeding" was examined. Any group with a higher ranking also has a higher score in how much they were influenced by social media groups to continue breastfeeding and stay informed about breastfeeding. Mothers who exclusively breastfed for more than six months have a higher ranking compared to other groups. The second-ranking group consists of mothers who breastfed for exactly six months. Both the encouragement for breastfeeding and the information about it through social media groups show statistically significant differences between the levels of exclusive breastfeeding time. In both cases, it is evident that $p=0.000<0.05$.

In addition, both encouragement for breastfeeding and breastfeeding information from Facebook groups show statistically significant differences between the levels of total breastfeeding time. In both cases, the p -value is 0.000, which is less than 0.05, indicating statistical significance. Our findings align with the findings of earlier research, which concluded that the relationship among members of social media groups contributes to both greater breastfeeding success and longer duration [39].

3.4. Limitation

The questionnaire was distributed to Greek mothers, regardless of whether they had breastfed or not. It was posted on Facebook, not only in breastfeeding support groups but also in general parenting groups. However, it appeared that the respondents were mainly mothers who had breastfed. Therefore, although our sample was satisfactory in terms of the number of participants, due to the lack of mothers who did not breastfeed, we did not have enough data for further statistical analysis.

4. CONCLUSION

This study revealed certain aspects regarding the encouragement and information that mothers in Greece receive from parenting groups and breastfeeding support groups on Facebook. The focus of the study was breastfeeding. In conclusion, it appeared that social media groups provide support to mothers to initiate breastfeeding, continue it exclusively, and delay its cessation. Specifically, more mothers responded that they were encouraged to start breastfeeding through their participation in social media groups than those who reported support from their family and friends. Conversely, among the non-breastfeeding mothers, a small sample mentioned the lack of social support as a reason. Factors such as age, educational level, professional and family status of women were found to be unrelated to the degree of influence of social media on their breastfeeding practices.

We conclude that the participation of breastfeeding mothers in parenting groups on social media encouraged them to initiate and continue breastfeeding. Simultaneously, it helped them to become more informed about breastfeeding, resulting in a longer duration of exclusive breastfeeding. Additionally, they reported a chronologically more extensive success in breastfeeding compared to those who claimed less influence from social media groups.




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