

PEER REVIEW HISTORY

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ARTICLE DETAILS

TITLE (PROVISIONAL)	"Surely you're not still breastfeeding": A qualitative exploration of women's experiences of breastfeeding beyond infancy in the United Kingdom
AUTHORS	Thompson, Amy Jane; Topping, AE; Jones, Laura

VERSION 1 – REVIEW

REVIEWER	Alyson Norman University of Plymouth, Devon, UK
REVIEW RETURNED	06-Jan-2020

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>This is a very important paper and a topic that is often overlooked in the academic literature. I applaud the authors for addressing it, particularly in relation to the stigma surrounding 'natural-term' breastfeeding.</p> <p>I have a few comments that i feel need addressing:</p> <p>Abstract: please include the sample size here</p> <p>Introduction: the introduction is well written with good representation of literature and i have no further comments</p> <p>Method: Please explicitly state that research ethics approval was obtained for this study.</p> <p>Design & Setting: authors should comment on how their choice of data collection may have influenced the data –there may be multiple differences across skype, phone and face-to-face so this needs acknowledging and discussing both here and in the discussion.</p> <p>Sampling and recruitment: The authors should provide a reference for data saturation</p> <p>Results: The results are beautifully presented and the quotes support the themes concisely.</p> <p>Discussion: The authors rightly draw attention to the bias in the sample towards those who are white and well educated. I feel that this needs to be expanded upon as it is an issue with the sample. Please comment on how HCPs and further research could support those not from these backgrounds to breastfeed for longer. Additionally, the sample consists of women who are mainly homemakers or work part time. This is an important point to draw attention to in the discussion as working full time puts further constraints on a woman's ability to breastfeed past 12 months.</p>
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REVIEWER	Dr Iain Willamson De Montfort University, Leicester
REVIEW RETURNED	07-Jan-2020

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>This is a very well written and expertly organised submission which extends our understanding of the experiences of women who breastfed their infants beyond twelve months of age in a British context significantly. Careful and methodical consideration has been applied to the key quality criteria outlined in the COREQ framework. The paper is appropriately succinct with well chosen extracts. It was also useful to be able to see additional exemplars of quotations.</p> <p>I strongly recommend publication.</p> <p>I had two observations for further enhancement of the paper</p> <p>1. I felt it might have been useful to have included a quotation for the last claim in section 3.2 (page 20): "The women perceived that their decision to breastfeed was not considered private by family members or co-workers, and found their choices being discussed publicly"</p> <p>2. The main limitation to the paper and findings is the lack of diversity in the sample. This is recognised and acknowledged by the authors to some extent although I did wonder whether employing an additional sampling strategy may have been useful especially as women in many BAME communities may seek peer support in their communities and extended families rather than on-line where groups are perceived (with some justification) as being by and for white middle class women. Was ethnicity included in the initial survey and as part of the maximum variation sampling frame, and if not why not? It is currently unclear why only one non-White participant from a potential 191 ultimately was included.</p>
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VERSION 1 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

REVIEWER 1: Alyson Norman

1) REVIEWER COMMENT: Abstract: please include the sample size here

AUTHOR RESPONSE: We agree this would be helpful and have edited the abstract to include this.

MANUSCRIPT EDIT: "Nineteen semi-structured interviews were conducted (in-person, or via phone or Skype), transcribed and thematically analysed using the Framework Method."

2) REVIEWER COMMENT: Introduction: the introduction is well written with good representation of literature and I have no further comments

AUTHOR RESPONSE: Thank you for your feedback.

MANUSCRIPT EDIT: None.

3) REVIEWER COMMENT: Method: Please explicitly state that research ethics approval was obtained for this study.

AUTHOR RESPONSE: This has now been included at the start of the method section.

MANUSCRIPT EDIT: "Ethical approval was sought and a favourable decision obtained from the University of Birmingham Internal Ethics Review Committee (ref: IREC2017/1319061)."

4) REVIEWER COMMENT: Design & Setting: authors should comment on how their choice of data collection may have influenced the data –there may be multiple differences across skype, phone and face-to-face so this needs acknowledging and discussing both here and in the discussion.

AUTHOR RESPONSE: Thank you for raising this point. We have now included a short reasoning for our choice of data collection in the design section, and acknowledgement of how this could have influenced the data in the discussion.

MANUSCRIPT EDIT:

Design and setting:

“Interviews were conducted face to face, or via phone or Skype, depending on participant preference and location so as not to limit participation due to geographical location or cost.”

Discussion:

“Employing telephone and Skype interviews as a method of data collection meant participation was not limited by geographical location. Criticisms of these methods suggest they may impair rapport formation and, in the case of telephone interviews, limit interpretation of non-verbal cues (32,33). However, the interviewer did not feel that rapport was compromised compared to face-to-face interviews, and research suggests they are a viable alternative to face-to-face qualitative interviews (32,33).”

5) REVIEWER COMMENT: Sampling and recruitment: The authors should provide a reference for data saturation.

AUTHOR RESPONSE: We agree and have now added this.

MANUSCRIPT EDIT: (27) Glaser BG, Strauss AL. The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research. Chicago: Aldine; 1976.

6) REVIEWER COMMENT: Results: The results are beautifully presented and the quotes support the themes concisely.

AUTHOR RESPONSE: Thank you for your feedback.

MANUSCRIPT EDIT: None.

7) REVIEWER COMMENT: Discussion: The authors rightly draw attention to the bias in the sample towards those who are white and well educated. I feel that this needs to be expanded upon as it is an issue with the sample. Please comment on how HCPs and further research could support those not from these backgrounds to breastfeed for longer.

AUTHOR RESPONSE: We agree that this is an important limitation in our study. In hindsight, it would have been better if we had collected data on ethnicity as part of the sampling frame. When the study was designed, we focussed on exploring a range of infant and maternal ages, and hoped that having variation in the sample around these demographics may potentially include a range of ethnicities. However, this did not play out in reality. As we only collected the ethnicity data at the time of interview, it was not possible to purposively sample additional non-White participants from the survey data. We believe that this is an important area for future research, and have added to the discussion section to reflect this.

MANUSCRIPT EDIT: “These findings may, therefore, not be transferable to women from non-White backgrounds, and exploring the experiences of women from black and minority ethnic (BAME) communities is an important area for future research to ensure they are supported.”

8) REVIEWER COMMENT: Additionally, the sample consists of women who are mainly homemakers or work part time. This is an important point to draw attention to in the discussion as working full time puts further constraints on a woman's ability to breastfeed past 12 months.

AUTHOR RESPONSE: We agree that this is a limitation, although 7 (37%) of the 19 participants were employed full time, and it would be valuable to explore work as a factor in decisions to continue breastfeeding in the future. We have now included this in the discussion.

MANUSCRIPT EDIT: “It is also notable that only seven (37%) of the 19 participants were employed full-time, and further research exploring the impact of work upon breastfeeding continuation may be valuable.”

REVIEWER 2: Iain Williamson

1) REVIEWER COMMENT: I felt it might have been useful to have included a quotation for the last claim in section 3.2 (page 20): "The women perceived that their decision to breastfeed was not considered private by family members or co-workers, and found their choices being discussed publicly"

AUTHOR RESPONSE: Thank you for this helpful suggestion. We have now included a quotation which represents this sentiment.

MANUSCRIPT EDIT: "They all think I'm mad, the whole family! They're quite nice to my face... It's more that I know when I'm not in the room that comments are made about it, and I know she [my mother] has said things to my husband." (P6)

2) REVIEWER COMMENT: The main limitation to the paper and findings is the lack of diversity in the sample. This is recognised and acknowledged by the authors to some extent although I did wonder whether employing an additional sampling strategy may have been useful especially as women in many BAME communities may seek peer support in their communities and extended families rather than on-line where groups are perceived (with some justification) as being by and for white middle class women. Was ethnicity included in the initial survey and as part of the maximum variation sampling frame, and if not why not? It is currently unclear why only one non-White participant from a potential 191 ultimately was included.

AUTHOR RESPONSE: The suggestion of employing an additional sampling strategy is excellent, and would have helped increase the diversity in the sample.

We also agree that, in hindsight, it would have been better to collect data on ethnicity as part of the sampling frame, but unfortunately it was not included. When the study was designed, we focussed on exploring a range of infant and maternal ages, and hoped that having variation in the sample around these demographics may potentially include a range of ethnicities. However, this did not play out in reality. As we only collected the ethnicity data at the time of interview, it was not possible to purposively sample additional non-White participants from the survey data. We accept that this is a limitation of our study, and that this is an important area for future research. We have added to the discussion section to reflect this.

MANUSCRIPT EDIT: "These findings may, therefore, not be transferable to women from non-White backgrounds, and exploring the experiences of women from black and minority ethnic (BAME) communities is an important area for future research to ensure they are supported."

VERSION 2 – REVIEW

REVIEWER	Alyson Norman University of Plymouth
REVIEW RETURNED	07-Feb-2020
GENERAL COMMENTS	Thank you for addressing the previous comments. This paper is now suitable for publication and will be a useful addition to the literature.