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OPEN PEER REVIEW

# The Effect of the 2023 Turkey-Syria Earthquakes on the Sixth-Month Breastfeeding Rate of Infants: A Single-Centre Cohort Study

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## 1 Original submission

1 comment · 10 Aug 2024

**Golnaz Ghazizadeh Esslami** Reviewer

MINOR REVISION 10 Aug 2024

Your manuscript is accepted with minor revision for the following reasons:
First, the manuscript is relatively novel, timely and relevant to a recent significant problem. Second, the study seems well designed and adds a worthy claim to the literature in the conclusion section.
Nevertheless, the following comments should be considered in order to improve the quality:
Abstract
1. The results section of the Abstract does not appropriately summarize the key points of your manuscript. Preferably, a comparison of depression rates between the study and control groups should be included.

Introduction
Although the purpose of the study is clearly defined, please pay attention to these points:
1. Based on the statement in the methods section, "The sample size was calculated by taking into account a study in which only breast milk intake was found to be 47% after the earthquake in a population with a pre-earthquake breast milk intake rate of 10.7%.", you could provide a rationale for performing the study based on a review of the medical literature. The study mentioned and some additional relevant studies regarding environmental factors influencing breastfeeding must be added to the introduction section.
2. Moreover, a well-defined hypothesis about the probable effects of natural disasters on breastfeeding needs to be stated.

Result
1. It would be more informative to add some data regarding the post-natal depression scale test in the study and control groups, both in the text and in the tables.
2. There are some spelling mistakes, particularly in the tables.
Discussion
1. "Although it is stated in the literature that maternal educational status, multiparity and social factors may affect breast milk intake, there are various inconsistencies in this regard" It would be better to explain more about the inconsistencies mentioned and the type of effect on breast milk supply.
2. "This may have positive consequences for both infant and mother psychology" This sentence does not make sense. Please clarify the language according to the meaning you want to convey.
3. "Difficult environmental conditions may lead to more breast milk intake due to more attachment." This could be more conclusive if you looked for some references supporting the idea.
4. "In the literature, when mothers with healthy and sick babies were compared in terms of breastfeeding self-efficacy, it was shown that they had scores between 52-55.(10,20)" This sentence is not clear at all. Do you mean that the healthy and sick children were similar or something else?
3. "In the study, the breastfeeding self-efficacy scale score was 54 (31-70), median (min-max) in the control group, similar to the literature, and 64 (33-70), median (min-max) in the study group, higher than the literature. (P:0.02)"
No reference is specified in this section. Which literature do you mean exactly?
4. Add some references for the association between natural disasters and post-natal depression.

You are kindly requested to consider having the whole manuscript edited by a native English speaker.

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# Revision 1

AUTHORS' RESPONSE TO REVIEWERS

Authors' reply to reviewers

The next pages contain the authors' point-by-point reply to the comments of this revision round, as submitted with the revised manuscript. It is published as the authors wrote it.

***We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Reviewers for their valuable and constructive comments. The Reviewer's insights have significantly contributed to making our manuscript more comprehensive and clear. In response to the Reviewer's suggestions, we have made the necessary revisions throughout the text, which have been highlighted and referenced with the corresponding line numbers.***

***Reviewer 1:***

***Thank you for your work***

*Thank you for your valuable time.*

***Reviewer 2:***

***Abstract***

***1. The result part of Abstract does not appropriately summarize the key points of your manuscript. Depression rate comparison between the study and control group should be mentioned preferably.***

*Depression scores of the study and control group were added to the abstract as you recommended.*

***Introduction***

***Although the purpose of the study is clearly defined, please pay attention to these points:***

***1. According to the statement in methods: "The sample size was calculated by taking into account a study in which only breast milk intake was found to be 47% after the earthquake in a population with a pre-earthquake breast milk intake rate of 10.7%." you could provide a rationale for performing the study based on a review of the medical literature. The mentioned study and some more relevant studies regarding to environmental factors influencing breast feeding must be added in the introduction part.***

*The first sentence in the last paragraph of the introduction section was removed and replaced with a new paragraph explaining the rationale of the study, examples in the literature and the hypothesis.*

***2. Moreover, a well-defined hypothesis consisting of probable effects of natural disasters on breast feeding needs to be stated.***

*The first sentence in the last paragraph of the introduction section was removed and replaced with a new paragraph explaining the rationale of the study, examples in the literature and the hypothesis.*

***Result***

***1. It would be more informative to add some data regarding the post-natal depression scale test among study and control group both in the text and tables.***

*The fourth paragraph of the introduction was rewritten with descriptive and explanatory content about the postnatal depression score used in the study.*

*Additive information for the scale was added to the last paragraph of the results section.*

***2. There are some spelling mistakes particularly in the tables.***

*Detected spelling mistakes have corrected.*

***Discussion***

***1. "Although it is stated in the literature that maternal educational status, multiparity and social factors may affect breast milk intake, there are various inconsistencies in this regard" It would be better to explain more about the mentioned inconsistencies and type of the effect on breast milk supply.***

*Inconsistencies in relevant features have been explained as described in the literature. The last sentence in paragraph 3 of the Discussion section has been revised.*

***2. "This may have positive consequences for both infant and mother psychology" This sentence does not make sense. Please clarify the language according to the target meaning you want to convey.***

***3. "Difficult environmental conditions may lead to more breast milk intake due to more attachment." This could be more conclusive if you look for some references supporting the idea.***

*Response to 2 and 3 statements*

*The last two inconclusive sentences in paragraph 5 of discussion section have been removed. It has been revised by adding and explaining a new reference.*

***4. "In the literature, when mothers with healthy and sick babies were compared in terms of breastfeeding self-efficacy, it was shown that they had scores between 52-55.(10,20)" This sentence is not clear at all. Do you mean that the healthy and sick children were similar or something else?!***

***5. "In the study, the breastfeeding self-efficacy scale score was 54 (31-70), median (min-max) in the control group, similar to the literature, and 64 (33-70), median (min-max) in the study group, higher than the literature. (P:0.02)"***
***No reference is determined in this section. Which literature do you mean exactly?!***

*Response to 4 and 5 statements*

*The sentence of 'In the literature, when mothers with healthy and sick babies were compared in terms of breastfeeding self-efficacy, it was shown that they had scores between 52-55.(10,20) In the study, the breastfeeding self-efficacy scale score was 54 (31-70), median (min-max) in the control group, similar to the literature, and 64 (33-70), median (min-max) in the study group, higher than the literature.*" removed and revised as "In a study of postpartum women, BSES was found to be 55. (23) Another study compared the BSES of mothers with healthy and sick babies and found it to be 55 for mothers with healthy babies and 52 for mothers with sick babies. (10) In this study, the BSES was 54 (31-70), median (min-max) in the control group, similar to the literature, and 64 (33-70), median (min-max) in the study group, higher than the literature. (P:0.02) The high score in the study group suggests that this is due to increased resilience in both mothers and babies.

***6. Add some references for the association between natural disasters and post-natal depression.***

*First sentense of the last paragraph in Discussion added as 'The literature reports that natural disasters such as pandemics, earthquakes and hurricanes increase postnatal depression." With a new reference.*

***You are kindly requested to consider a native English edit for the whole manuscript.***

*Text has been edited for better native English*

***Reviewer 3:***

***Suggestions for improvements:***

***Abstract:***

***The abstract is well-structured and covers the key elements. However, a few points that could be improved:***

***- The objective could be phrased more concisely, e.g., "to investigate the effect of the 2023 Turkey-Syria earthquakes on the 6-month breastfeeding rate of infants."***

*Purpose have rephrased as you suggested.*

***- The results section could be more succinct, focusing on the primary outcome and the key findings related to breastfeeding self-efficacy and postpartum depression.***

*Results section has been reorganised with the addition of depression scores*

***- The conclusion could be more impactful, highlighting the main takeaways and implications more clearly.***

*Conclusion part of the abstract revised as  In general, earthquakes do not affect breast-feeding rates in infants in the 6th month. Continuation of breastfeeding due to increased resilience in difficult conditions increases breastfeeding self-efficacy and is protective for the mother-baby dyad. Breastfeeding should be continued and supported during natural disasters."*

***Methods:***

***One potential limitation is that the control group was partially formed from an online survey, which may introduce some bias. The authors could have considered recruiting the control group entirely from the hospital setting, if feasible, to ensure better comparability between the groups.***

*As you mentioned, in the first version of our study, we had planned to form a control group from the people admitted to the hospital. However, since it was an earthquake zone, the number of people who were not exposed to the earthquake was quite low, so the control group was revised to ensure the sample size.*

***Additionally, the authors could have considered the potential confounding factors they considered and how they were addressed in the analysis.***

*The last paragraph of the discussion section added as "In general, although this study, which compared two groups of earthquake survivors and non-earthquake survivors with available facilities, found that the earthquake did not affect infants' breast milk intake at 6 months, the fact*

*that the control group was taken from a different group meant that the confounding factors could not be analysed in the study. Therefore, the results will guide future studies in this area."*

***Results:***

***The results section is well-organized and presents the key findings clearly. However, the authors could have provided more details on the characteristics of the participants, such as the specific reasons for change in residence, the nature of the property loss, and the details of the hospitalization, injuries, and deaths in the study group.***

*Since the main purpose of the study was to compare the earthquake survivor and non-earthquake survivor groups in terms of breast milk in general, the detailed specific reasons you mentioned were not questioned. Your suggestion will be taken into consideration in future studies on the study group. Thank you for your contribution.*

***Discussion:***

***One area for improvement could be to further elaborate on the potential mechanisms underlying the increased breastfeeding self-efficacy in the earthquake-affected group. The authors could delve deeper into the psychological and behavioral factors that may have contributed to this finding.***

*The last two sentences in paragraph 6 of the discussion section have been added to explain the psychological and behavioural effects in the study group that could lead to the result.*

***References:***

***The references are generally up-to-date and relevant to the topic. However, the authors could consider including more recent literature on the impact of natural disasters on breastfeeding and maternal mental health, as this is an emerging area of research.***

"Balikuddembe JK, Reinhardt JD, Vahid G, Di B. A scoping review of post-earthquake healthcare for vulnerable groups of the 2023 Turkey-Syria earthquakes. BMC Public Health. 2024 Dec 1;24(1)." is included in the study as it provides the most recent data in this area, and Literature " Futterman ID, Grace H, Weingarten S, Borjian A, Clare CA. Maternal anxiety, depression and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) after natural disasters: a systematic review. Journal of Maternal-Fetal and Neonatal Medicine. 2023;36(1). " is added to indicate the impact of other natural disasters.

## 2 Revision 1

1 comment · 12 Oct 2024

**Golnaz Ghazizadeh Esslami** Reviewer

ACCEPT 12 Oct 2024

Hello and best regards
Valuable changes have been made to the manuscript.
I appreciate your efforts and accept the manuscript for publication.