

POSTER

EXPLORING THE ROLE OF INTEROCEPTIVE AWARENESS IN BREASTFEEDING

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ABSTRACT

Breastfeeding is an embodied task intertwining physical and emotional aspects that profoundly impact both parents and infants. This study sought to investigate experiences of milk let-down among breastfeeding parents, an aspect regarded as crucial for successful breastfeeding yet lacking substantial documentation in existing literature. We recruited 193 breastfeeding parents via social media and employed a mixed-methods approach including quantitative measures of breastfeeding self-efficacy (BF-SE), duration, and general interoceptive awareness (MAIA2), alongside a novel measure of interoceptive awareness focussing on the experience of milk let-down (BF-IA). Additionally, participants provided written responses detailing their breastfeeding experiences. Our findings indicated duration and BF-IA significantly predicted breastfeeding self-efficacy scores, but MAIA2 score did not. Initial qualitative analysis has revealed a range of positive and negative physical and emotional experiences during breastfeeding & milk let-down, and most interestingly a group of participants reporting an absence of sensations. The qualitative exploration continues, but these preliminary analyses offer intriguing insights into the interplay between mind and body during breastfeeding, with potential implications for maternal and infant well-being.