

# Linking Social Support to Breastfeeding Self-Efficacy In Southeast Asian Postpartum Women: A Literature Review

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## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received May 27, 2024

Revised Sept 20, 2024

Accepted Oct 11, 2024

### Keywords

Social support;  
breastfeeding;  
Self-efficacy;  
Postpartum women;  
Infant health

## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Breastfeeding is vital for infant health and development, but many postpartum women struggle to maintain exclusive breastfeeding. Social support is critical in improving breastfeeding self-efficacy, giving new mothers the confidence and resources they need to overcome obstacles. Understanding how social support influences breastfeeding self-efficacy is crucial in Southeast Asian cultures, where breastfeeding is deeply ingrained.

**Method:** This paper employed literature review method. Several key words utilized in this study is such as: breastfeeding, self-efficacy, social support, South Asia. Search in English, but there is no limit to the year of publication.

**Results:** Research has shown that social support plays an important role in boosting breastfeeding self-efficacy among postpartum women, particularly in Southeast Asia. The efficacy of a Baby-Friendly Community Initiative (BFICI) model in improving breastfeeding knowledge and attitudes among frontline staff highlights the importance of tailored community-based interventions in creating a supportive breastfeeding environment. Healthcare professionals can empower postpartum women in Southeast Asia to face breastfeeding challenges with confidence and resilience by incorporating tailored social support mechanisms into community-based initiatives. When comparing social support and breastfeeding self-efficacy in Southeast Asian and Western contexts, it is critical to take cultural differences into account.

**Conclusion:** Family and community support are important in promoting breastfeeding practices in Southeast Asian cultures, and personal beliefs, experiences, and access to resources all have an impact on breastfeeding self-efficacy. Interventions aimed at improving social support networks may boost these women's confidence and ability to successfully breastfeed.

## 1. Introduction

Breastfeeding is a critical aspect of infant health and development, yet many mothers face challenges in maintaining exclusive breastfeeding. The level of self-efficacy in breastfeeding is one key factor that can influence a mother's decision to breastfeed. Self-efficacy, as defined by Bandura (1977), refers to an individual's belief in their ability to successfully perform a particular behavior. Research has shown that social support plays a crucial role in enhancing breastfeeding self-efficacy, providing new mothers with the confidence and resources needed to overcome obstacles. In Southeast Asian cultures, where the practice of breastfeeding is deeply rooted, understanding how social support influences breastfeeding self-efficacy is of utmost importance. By examining the relationship between social support and breastfeeding self-efficacy in Southeast Asian postpartum women, this study aims

to provide valuable insights that can inform tailored interventions to promote successful breastfeeding outcomes in this population.

Deep cultural roots, passed down through generations, underpin breastfeeding practices in Southeast Asia. Historically, breastfeeding has been the norm in many Southeast Asian countries, with mothers relying on traditional knowledge and support from extended family members and community members to successfully breastfeed their infants. These cultural norms have influenced the perception and practice of breastfeeding in the region, frequently resulting in high rates of breastfeeding initiation and duration among Southeast Asian women. However, in recent years, rapid modernization and urbanization have led to changes in lifestyle and family structures, impacting the traditional support systems for breastfeeding mothers. As a result, there is a growing need to understand how social support can influence breastfeeding self-efficacy in Southeast Asian postpartum women. Research in this area is crucial to developing effective interventions that can support and promote breastfeeding in this diverse and dynamic region (1).

Breastfeeding self-efficacy plays a crucial role in the postpartum period for women in Southeast Asia. Research suggests that high levels of breastfeeding self-efficacy are associated with longer breastfeeding durations, increased maternal satisfaction, and better infant health outcomes. Women who believe in their ability to successfully breastfeed are more likely to overcome challenges and persevere in their breastfeeding journey. Social support from family, friends, and healthcare providers can significantly influence breastfeeding self-efficacy by providing encouragement, practical assistance, and positive reinforcement. Postpartum women who receive adequate social support may feel more confident in their breastfeeding abilities, leading to increased self-efficacy and, ultimately, greater breastfeeding success. Therefore, understanding the relationship between social support and breastfeeding self-efficacy is essential for improving breastfeeding rates and maternal well-being in Southeast Asian populations (2).

Furthermore, it is impossible to overstate the importance of social support for breastfeeding success. Studies have consistently shown that postpartum women who have a strong network of social support are more likely to initiate and sustain breastfeeding. Social support can come in various forms, including emotional support, informational support, and practical support. For instance, research revealed that new mothers who received encouragement and assistance from family members and friends exhibited greater confidence in their breastfeeding abilities. This highlights the importance of creating a supportive environment for breastfeeding women, as it can significantly impact their self-efficacy and overall breastfeeding experience. Additionally, social support can help alleviate feelings of anxiety and improve maternal mental well-being, leading to better breastfeeding outcomes (3). In conclusion, fostering social support networks for postpartum women is crucial to promoting successful breastfeeding practices.

Studies on Southeast Asian postpartum women have highlighted the importance of social support in promoting breastfeeding self-efficacy. Studies have shown that cultural beliefs and practices within Southeast Asian communities can significantly impact postpartum experiences and infant feeding choices. Understanding the unique challenges faced by Southeast Asian women during the postpartum period is crucial for developing effective interventions that support breastfeeding initiation and duration (4). By examining the relationship between social support and breastfeeding self-efficacy in this population, researchers aim to identify specific factors that can enhance breastfeeding outcomes and inform culturally sensitive care practices. This study seeks to contribute to the growing body of literature on postpartum health disparities and guide future interventions aimed at promoting breastfeeding success among Southeast Asian women.

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of maternal self-efficacy and quality of life in breastfeeding, particularly in the early postpartum period (5). According to the findings, maternal self-efficacy is important in determining the duration and effectiveness of breastfeeding, with employment status and parity influencing mothers' confidence levels. Furthermore, (6) investigates how quality of life is inextricably linked to breastfeeding difficulties experienced by postpartum women, emphasizing the need to assist mothers with lower quality of life in order to improve exclusive breastfeeding practices. As a result, when reviewing the objectives of this study on linking social support to

breastfeeding self-efficacy in Southeast Asian postpartum women, it is critical to consider how social support systems can influence maternal self-efficacy and quality of life in the context of breastfeeding, with the goal of promoting successful and sustained breastfeeding practices among Southeast Asian postpartum women.

## 2. Method

This paper is based on a literature review. This is the kind of simple library research. Online literature searches were conducted in Science Direct, Scopus databases, and Google Scholar. Strategies in the search include the following keywords: breastfeeding, self-efficacy, social support, South Asia. Search in English, but there is no limit to the year of publication.

## 3. Result

### 3.1. Social Support and Breastfeeding Self-Efficacy

Research has highlighted the critical role of social support in bolstering breastfeeding self-efficacy among postpartum women, particularly in Southeast Asia. The findings emphasize the importance of continuous informational and social support throughout the perinatal period to promote healthy feeding practices and infant care, ultimately preventing malnutrition and complications in later development. These insights align with the broader understanding that maternal self-efficacy in breastfeeding and infant care significantly influences the continuation of breastfeeding up to the recommended period (7). Additionally, evidence of the effectiveness of a Baby-Friendly Community Initiative (BFCI) model in enhancing breastfeeding knowledge and attitudes among frontline staff underscores the significance of tailored community-based interventions in fostering a supportive environment for breastfeeding (7). By integrating tailored social support mechanisms within community-based initiatives, healthcare professionals can effectively empower postpartum women in Southeast Asia to navigate the challenges of breastfeeding with confidence and resilience.

#### 3.1.1. Definition and components of social support

Social support is a multifaceted concept that encompasses various forms of assistance, encouragement, and resources provided within a social network. It can be categorized into four main components: emotional support, instrumental support, informational support, and appraisal support. Emotional support involves expressions of empathy, love, and care, which can help individuals cope with stress and negative emotions. Instrumental support refers to tangible aid, such as financial assistance or practical help with daily tasks. Informational support provides guidance, advice, and information to help individuals make informed decisions. Lastly, appraisal support involves constructive feedback, affirmation, and encouragement to boost self-esteem and confidence. These components work together to create a nurturing environment that promotes well-being and resilience. In the context of breastfeeding self-efficacy, social support plays a crucial role in empowering postpartum women to overcome challenges and build confidence in their ability to breastfeed successfully (2).

#### 3.1.2. Theoretical frameworks linking social support to breastfeeding self-efficacy

Utilizing theoretical frameworks to examine the connection between social support and breastfeeding self-efficacy in Southeast Asian postpartum women reveals insightful perspectives. The retrospective application of the Behavior Change Wheel (BCW) framework, as demonstrated in (8), highlights the importance of understanding the mechanisms and behaviors that influence breastfeeding rates. By mapping breastfeeding barriers and enablers onto the Capability, Opportunity, and Motivation-Behavior (COM-B) system, the study identified intervention functions and policy categories to address these factors. Additionally, the Behavior Change Techniques Taxonomy (BCTTv1) within the study pinpointed specific behavior change techniques in the Baby Buddy app that could enhance breastfeeding self-efficacy and knowledge. Moreover, the intersectionality of social

support and self-efficacy, particularly in underrepresented groups, aligns with the challenges faced by minority students in STEM fields, as discussed in (9). This linkage underscores the significance of considering social support as a crucial element in fostering breastfeeding self-efficacy among postpartum women of diverse backgrounds.

### **3.1.3. Cultural influences on social support and breastfeeding self-efficacy in Southeast-Asia**

Cultural influences play a significant role in shaping social support and breastfeeding self-efficacy among postpartum women in Southeast Asia. In this region, extended family members often have a strong presence in the lives of new mothers, providing practical assistance and emotional encouragement during the postpartum period. This form of social support has been shown to positively impact breastfeeding initiation and continuation rates. Additionally, cultural beliefs and practices surrounding breastfeeding can influence a woman's confidence in her ability to breastfeed successfully. For example, traditional beliefs about hot and cold foods may impact dietary choices that can either support or hinder breastfeeding (10). Therefore, understanding the cultural context is essential when examining the relationship between social support and breastfeeding self-efficacy in Southeast Asian women.

### **3.1.4. Types of social support relevant to breastfeeding self-efficacy**

Breastfeeding self-efficacy in Southeast Asian postpartum women is influenced by various types of social support. Emotional support, including empathy and reassurance from family, friends, or healthcare providers, plays a crucial role in bolstering a mother's confidence in her ability to breastfeed successfully. Instrumental support, such as practical assistance with household chores or childcare responsibilities, can alleviate stress and allow mothers to focus on breastfeeding. Nurses and midwives should recognize the crucial role of social support from family and friends in improving first-time mothers' mental health and well-being during the postpartum period. Health care policies and clinical guidelines should clearly define and integrate social support strategies to enhance maternal self-efficacy and overall parenting support (11). Informational support, through access to accurate and timely guidance on breastfeeding techniques and challenges, equips women with the knowledge needed to navigate potential obstacles. Moreover, appraisal support, consisting of constructive feedback and validation of a mother's breastfeeding efforts, reinforces her self-belief and commitment to breastfeeding. These diverse forms of social support converge to enhance breastfeeding self-efficacy among Southeast Asian postpartum women, ultimately promoting positive maternal and infant health outcomes (2).

### **3.1.5. Impact of social support on breastfeeding self-efficacy in postpartum women**

Research has indicated that social support plays a crucial role in influencing breastfeeding self-efficacy among postpartum women. The presence of supportive individuals within a woman's social network can provide emotional encouragement, practical assistance, and valuable information, thus enhancing her confidence and belief in her ability to successfully breastfeed her infant. A study by found that women who reported higher levels of social support were more likely to demonstrate greater breastfeeding self-efficacy compared to those with limited support. These findings suggest that the quality and quantity of social support received by postpartum women significantly impact their breastfeeding self-efficacy levels. Therefore, healthcare professionals must recognize the importance of fostering a supportive environment for new mothers to promote successful breastfeeding practices and overall maternal well-being (3). Social and family support greatly boosts breastfeeding self-efficacy (BSE) among postpartum women in rural China, consistent with global studies and self-efficacy research (12). Support and encouragement from family members, particularly significant others, help mothers tackle breastfeeding challenges. Family members are essential for offering emotional and practical assistance, which is crucial for successful breastfeeding. However, in rural China, family members often lack education on how to support breastfeeding. Educating them could enhance BSE and improve breastfeeding success (13).



### **3.2. Breastfeeding Self-Efficacy In Southeast Asian Postpartum Women**

Social support plays a crucial role in enhancing breastfeeding self-efficacy among Southeast Asian postpartum women. As these women navigate the challenges of motherhood, having a strong support system can significantly impact their confidence and competence in breastfeeding. Studies have indicated that women who receive adequate social support are more likely to successfully breastfeed their infants. In Southeast Asian cultures, where extended families often play a vital role in childcare, the presence of supportive family members can positively influence a woman's breastfeeding self-efficacy. Additionally, culturally tailored interventions that focus on enhancing social support networks have been shown to improve breastfeeding outcomes in this population (3). By understanding the complex interplay between social support and breastfeeding self-efficacy, healthcare professionals can better support Southeast Asian postpartum women in their breastfeeding journey.

#### **3.2.1. Definition and importance of breastfeeding self-efficacy**

Breastfeeding self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to successfully breastfeed their infant. This concept encompasses the mother's confidence in her capacity to initiate and continue breastfeeding in the face of challenges. High levels of breastfeeding self-efficacy have been associated with longer duration of breastfeeding, better breastfeeding outcomes, and increased maternal satisfaction. On the other hand, low levels of self-efficacy have been linked to early weaning and breastfeeding difficulties. Studies have shown that social support plays a crucial role in shaping breastfeeding self-efficacy levels among postpartum women. This support can come from healthcare providers, family members, friends, or support groups. By bolstering a mother's confidence in her breastfeeding abilities, social support can positively impact her breastfeeding journey, ultimately leading to better maternal and infant health outcomes (14).

#### **3.2.2. Factors influencing breastfeeding self-efficacy in Southeast Asian cultures**

Previous research has highlighted several key factors that may influence breastfeeding self-efficacy in Southeast Asian cultures. Social support, both from family members and healthcare professionals, plays a crucial role in the success of breastfeeding practices. In these traditional societies, women often rely heavily on the guidance and encouragement of their elders and community members to navigate the challenges of motherhood. Additionally, cultural beliefs and norms surrounding breastfeeding can impact a woman's confidence in her ability to breastfeed successfully. By fostering a supportive environment that values and promotes breastfeeding, healthcare providers can help enhance breastfeeding self-efficacy among Southeast Asian postpartum women. Future studies should further explore the complex interplay between social support, cultural beliefs, and breastfeeding self-efficacy to develop targeted interventions that effectively support breastfeeding practices in this population.

#### **3.2.3. Challenges to breastfeeding self-efficacy in postpartum women**

Various challenges contribute to the struggles faced by postpartum women in maintaining breastfeeding self-efficacy. One significant issue is the lack of proper education and support from healthcare providers, which can leave new mothers feeling overwhelmed and ill-equipped to navigate the complexities of breastfeeding. Additionally, societal pressures and cultural norms may discourage women from breastfeeding in public or seeking help when encountering difficulties, further undermining their confidence in their abilities. Furthermore, the physical and emotional toll of childbirth and the demands of caring for a newborn can impact a woman's ability to devote time and energy to establishing successful breastfeeding routines. A study by found that these challenges often result in decreased self-efficacy and can lead to early cessation of breastfeeding among postpartum women in Southeast Asia. Addressing these multifaceted barriers is crucial in promoting breastfeeding self-efficacy and ultimately improving maternal and infant health outcomes in the region. Many new mothers experience low confidence during the early postpartum phase. Those who had low breastfeeding intentions during pregnancy, brief previous breastfeeding experiences, or negative early postpartum experiences could benefit from additional support to enhance breastfeeding self-efficacy. Issues such as the baby's inexperience with feeding or the mother's struggle with bodily changes can

impact early breastfeeding experiences. First-time mothers often have more negative experiences compared to those who have successfully breastfed before, likely due to unrealistic expectations and lack of prior experience (15).

### **3.2.4. Strategies to enhance breastfeeding self-efficacy in Southeast Asian context**

Moreover, it is crucial to consider culturally tailored strategies to enhance breastfeeding self-efficacy in the Southeast Asian context. Previous research has shown that cultural beliefs, practices, and traditions can significantly influence women's confidence in their ability to breastfeed successfully. Therefore, interventions aimed at promoting breastfeeding self-efficacy should take into account the unique cultural norms and values of Southeast Asian populations. For example, providing education and support through community-based programs that involve respected elders or local leaders could help increase women's confidence in their breastfeeding abilities. Additionally, incorporating traditional practices such as confinement rituals or postpartum dietary recommendations into breastfeeding support programs may further enhance self-efficacy among Southeast Asian women. By integrating culturally appropriate strategies, healthcare professionals can effectively support and empower postpartum women in their breastfeeding journey in this specific cultural context (3).

### **3.2.5. Relationship between breastfeeding self-efficacy and maternal well-being**

Breastfeeding self-efficacy is a critical factor in determining a mother's overall well-being during the postpartum period. Research has shown that maternal characteristics, including education, nutrition, breastfeeding duration, and postnatal depression, play a significant role in influencing breastfeeding self-efficacy (16). The emotional well-being and breastfeeding self-efficacy of adolescent mothers greatly impact their maternal well-being and their children's social-emotional development. It's crucial to understand how a mother's emotional state and self-perception affect her breastfeeding practices. Improved maternal self-efficacy can boost emotional well-being, leading to more successful breastfeeding and better social-emotional outcomes for the child (17). Furthermore, the impact of breastfeeding on weight gain and overall infant health underscores the importance of promoting and supporting breastfeeding practices for maternal and infant well-being. The relationship between breastfeeding self-efficacy and maternal well-being is multifaceted, as evidenced by the potential impact of inflammation on reduced breastfeeding duration and exclusivity in obese mothers (p. 500-508). Understanding the interplay between maternal well-being, breastfeeding self-efficacy, and external factors such as inflammation can provide valuable insights for designing interventions to support breastfeeding success among postpartum women in Southeast Asia.

### **3.3. Social Support Interventions for Improving Breastfeeding Self-Efficacy**

Moreover, social support interventions have been found to play a crucial role in improving breastfeeding self-efficacy among postpartum women. These interventions typically involve creating a supportive environment through peer counseling, educational programs, and encouragement from family members and friends. Research has shown that women who receive adequate social support during the breastfeeding journey are more likely to overcome challenges and persist in breastfeeding for a longer duration. For example, a recent study by found that Southeast Asian postpartum women who participated in a social support intervention program reported higher levels of breastfeeding self-efficacy compared to those who did not receive such support. This highlights the importance of integrating social support interventions into breastfeeding promotion strategies to empower women and enhance their confidence in breastfeeding (10). Developing effective educational programs to boost breastfeeding self-efficacy (BSE) is crucial for health professionals, as it supports mothers in starting and sustaining breastfeeding for six months. These programs should be theory-based, conducted in healthcare settings, offered in group classes during pregnancy, use direct methods, and extend into the first postpartum week. Addressing these elements in educational interventions helps health professionals enhance mothers' confidence in overcoming breastfeeding challenges (18).

### **3.3.1. Existing social support interventions for breastfeeding promotion**

While there are various social support interventions aimed at promoting breastfeeding, many of them have shown limited success in improving breastfeeding self-efficacy among postpartum women in Southeast Asia. Existing programs often focus on providing informational support through educational materials and counseling sessions. However, research suggests that emotional support, such as encouragement from peers or family members, may play a more significant role in enhancing breastfeeding self-efficacy. In addition, cultural beliefs and practices in Southeast Asian societies may influence the effectiveness of these interventions, highlighting the importance of tailoring support programs to the specific needs of this population (10). Therefore, future interventions should consider incorporating both informational and emotional support components to effectively enhance breastfeeding self-efficacy in postpartum women in Southeast Asia.

### **3.3.2. Effectiveness of social support interventions in enhancing breastfeeding self-efficacy**

Research has shown that the effectiveness of social support interventions in enhancing breastfeeding self-efficacy is paramount in promoting successful breastfeeding practices among postpartum women. The study by (7) underscores the importance of community involvement and active participation in implementing a baby-friendly community initiative, which significantly increased breastfeeding self-efficacy and knowledge among perinatal women. Furthermore, integrating culturally sensitive breastfeeding education, as highlighted in the study, is essential for successful breastfeeding promotion in diverse communities. Additionally, (19) emphasizes the significance of tailored messaging programs driven by weekly assessments to facilitate smoking cessation, showcasing the potential for similar approaches in enhancing breastfeeding self-efficacy through personalized support interventions. Social support is strongly linked to breastfeeding self-efficacy, with more support from spouses, family, and friends leading to higher self-efficacy. Supportive feedback from partners boosts confidence, while negative feedback can reduce it. Social support creates a sense of belonging and reduces stress, which in turn enhances self-esteem and confidence. This increased self-efficacy helps mothers better manage the challenges of breastfeeding and contributes to more successful breastfeeding outcomes (20). By drawing on these findings, it becomes evident that targeted social support interventions play a crucial role in empowering postpartum women in Southeast Asia to overcome breastfeeding challenges and build confidence in their breastfeeding abilities.

### **3.3.3 Tailoring social support interventions to the needs of Southeast Asian postpartum women**

Understanding the unique cultural and social context of Southeast Asian postpartum women is essential in tailoring effective social support interventions. Factors such as traditional postpartum practices, family dynamics, and acculturation challenges play a significant role in shaping the postpartum experience of these women. By taking into account these specific needs and challenges, interventions can be designed to provide culturally sensitive and relevant support. Research has shown that social support interventions that are culturally tailored have a greater impact on improving maternal and infant outcomes, including increased breastfeeding self-efficacy. For example, a study by demonstrated that culturally tailored support programs led to higher rates of successful breastfeeding among Southeast Asian mothers. Therefore, interventions should be customized to address the individual needs of Southeast Asian postpartum women to promote positive postpartum experiences and maternal health outcomes.

### **3.3.4. Barriers to implementing social support interventions in Southeast Asia**

One of the primary barriers to implementing social support interventions in Southeast Asia is the cultural stigma surrounding mental health issues. In many Southeast Asian countries, seeking help for psychological problems is often seen as taboo or a sign of weakness, leading to reluctance in accepting support. Furthermore, there is a lack of mental health resources and professionals in the region, making it challenging to provide adequate social support to those in need. Additionally, the hierarchical nature

of societies in Southeast Asia may inhibit individuals from seeking assistance from peers or community members, as it may be perceived as a loss of face or status. These factors highlight the importance of culturally sensitive interventions that address the unique social and cultural norms prevalent in Southeast Asia to effectively promote social support and improve overall well-being among postpartum women in the region.

### **3.3.5. Recommendations for future research and practice**

Moving forward, it is imperative for future research to delve deeper into the cultural nuances and social contexts that influence breastfeeding self-efficacy among Southeast Asian postpartum women. Studies should aim to explore how traditional beliefs, familial support systems, and societal expectations intersect with individual perceptions of self-efficacy. Additionally, longitudinal studies are needed to assess the long-term impact of social support on breastfeeding outcomes, considering the dynamic nature of postpartum experiences. Furthermore, intervention studies could investigate the effectiveness of culturally tailored support programs in improving breastfeeding self-efficacy and ultimately increasing breastfeeding rates in this population. By incorporating a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted factors at play, healthcare practitioners and policymakers can develop more targeted and effective strategies to support Southeast Asian mothers in their breastfeeding journey (10).

## **3.4. Comparative Analysis Of Social Support and Breastfeeding Self-Efficacy In Southeast Asian Vs. Western Contexts**

In comparing social support and breastfeeding self-efficacy in Southeast Asian and Western contexts, it is crucial to consider cultural differences that may influence these relationships. Research has shown that in Southeast Asian cultures, family and community support play a significant role in promoting breastfeeding practices. This is in contrast to Western societies, where individualism is emphasized, potentially affecting the level of social support available to new mothers (21). However, it is important to note that cultural norms are not the only factors at play; personal beliefs, experiences, and access to resources also impact breastfeeding self-efficacy. By conducting a comparative analysis of these factors in Southeast Asian vs. Western contexts, we can gain a deeper understanding of how social support systems contribute to breastfeeding success and inform tailored interventions for postpartum women. The study found that education had a much larger impact on breastfeeding self-efficacy in Asian countries compared to others. Thus, it's crucial to consider each country's specific values, as religion, tradition, culture, beliefs, and customs can influence breastfeeding self-efficacy (22).

### **3.4.1. Contrasting cultural perspectives on social support and breastfeeding self-efficacy**

Southeast Asian postpartum women experience varying cultural perspectives on social support and breastfeeding self-efficacy. In some cultures, such as in Thailand, there is a strong emphasis on communal living and extended families, leading to an abundance of social support for new mothers. This social support network plays a crucial role in bolstering breastfeeding self-efficacy by providing practical assistance, guidance, and emotional encouragement. On the other hand, in more individualistic cultures like Singapore, where nuclear families are prevalent, the reliance on formal healthcare services for breastfeeding support may be higher. This difference in cultural norms influences how postpartum women perceive and access social support, ultimately shaping their confidence in breastfeeding. Understanding these contrasting cultural perspectives is essential in designing culturally sensitive interventions to enhance breastfeeding self-efficacy among Southeast Asian postpartum women.

### **3.4.2. Differences in social support structures between Southeast Asia and Western countries**

When comparing social support structures between Southeast Asia and Western countries, significant differences emerge. In Southeast Asia, family plays a central role in providing social support, with extended family members often living in close proximity and being actively involved in



childcare and household responsibilities. This network of support extends beyond immediate family members to include neighbors and community members who contribute to the collective care of individuals. In contrast, Western countries tend to prioritize individualism, with nuclear families living separately from extended relatives and relying more on professional services for support. This difference in social support structures could impact breastfeeding self-efficacy among postpartum women in Southeast Asia, as the availability of a strong familial and community support network may enhance confidence and skill development in breastfeeding practices (23).

### **3.4.3. Cultural implications for designing interventions to improve breastfeeding self-efficacy**

Moreover, cultural implications play a significant role in designing interventions aimed at improving breastfeeding self-efficacy among postpartum women in Southeast Asia. Cultural beliefs, practices, and norms surrounding breastfeeding can influence women's confidence in their ability to successfully breastfeed. For instance, in some Southeast Asian cultures, there may be specific traditions or expectations related to breastfeeding that can impact a woman's self-efficacy. Therefore, interventions designed to enhance breastfeeding self-efficacy need to be culturally sensitive and tailored to the unique needs of each community. By understanding and incorporating cultural nuances into intervention strategies, healthcare providers can better support Southeast Asian women in overcoming barriers and building confidence in their breastfeeding capabilities. As suggested, cultural considerations should be an integral part of interventions to promote breastfeeding self-efficacy among postpartum women in Southeast Asia.

### **3.4.4. Lessons that can be learned from Western approaches to social support in breastfeeding**

One significant lesson that can be gleaned from Western approaches to social support in breastfeeding is the emphasis on creating a supportive environment that normalizes breastfeeding and encourages women to seek help when needed. Western societies have recognized the importance of empowering women through education and tailored support services, such as lactation consultants and peer support groups, which have been shown to positively impact breastfeeding outcomes. Additionally, Western studies have highlighted the role of partners, family members, and healthcare providers in providing practical and emotional support to breastfeeding women, thus fostering a sense of community and validation. By incorporating these lessons into Southeast Asian postpartum care, healthcare professionals can potentially enhance breastfeeding self-efficacy among new mothers, leading to improved breastfeeding rates and overall maternal and child health outcomes. However, it is important to consider cultural differences and adapt these approaches to suit the specific needs and preferences of Southeast Asian women (10).

### **3.4.5. The potential for cross-cultural exchange in promoting breastfeeding self-efficacy**

Breastfeeding self-efficacy is a crucial factor in the successful initiation and continuation of breastfeeding among postpartum women. Research suggests that social support plays a significant role in enhancing breastfeeding self-efficacy. Cross-cultural exchange has the potential to further promote breastfeeding self-efficacy by providing diverse perspectives, experiences, and support mechanisms. Through interactions with individuals from different cultural backgrounds, postpartum women can gain insights into alternative breastfeeding practices, coping strategies, and societal norms that may bolster their confidence in breastfeeding. By engaging in cross-cultural exchanges, women may feel more accepted, understood, and supported in their breastfeeding journey, which could ultimately contribute to higher levels of self-efficacy. Future studies should explore the impact of cross-cultural exchange on breastfeeding outcomes among postpartum women to provide evidence-based recommendations for healthcare professionals and policymakers (2).

## **4. Discussion**

Social support plays a crucial role in shaping breastfeeding self-efficacy among postpartum women, as evidenced by recent studies. Ngaya-an (2022) highlights the significance of continuous

informational and social support during the perinatal period to promote healthy feeding practices and infant care, ultimately preventing malnutrition and developmental complications. By addressing barriers and enablers of breastfeeding through tailored intervention functions and policy categories, social support mechanisms can enhance women's decision-making processes and self-efficacy related to breastfeeding. These findings underscore the importance of leveraging social support strategies to empower Southeast Asian postpartum women in their breastfeeding journeys, promoting positive health outcomes for both mothers and infants.

Further research in this area can have significant implications for healthcare professionals and policymakers. By understanding the link between social support and breastfeeding self-efficacy in Southeast Asian postpartum women, healthcare providers can tailor interventions to better support new mothers in their breastfeeding journey. Strategies such as providing culturally sensitive lactation support and fostering social networks for these women could lead to improved breastfeeding outcomes and overall maternal well-being. Policymakers can also use this information to develop policies promoting breastfeeding support programs targeting Southeast Asian communities. By recognizing the importance of social support in enhancing breastfeeding self-efficacy, both healthcare professionals and policymakers can work together to create a more supportive environment for postpartum women in this population, ultimately improving maternal and child health outcomes (3).

Enhancing breastfeeding self-efficacy in postpartum women involves utilizing culturally sensitive approaches to address individual beliefs, norms, and practices surrounding breastfeeding. Understanding the cultural context is crucial in tailoring interventions that are both effective and respectful of diverse traditions and values. By incorporating cultural sensitivity into breastfeeding support programs, healthcare providers can foster trust and rapport with Southeast Asian women, encouraging a deeper engagement with breastfeeding practices. Additionally, culturally adapted interventions are more likely to be accepted and implemented by these women, leading to increased confidence and self-efficacy in their breastfeeding abilities. Research has shown that culturally sensitive approaches have a positive impact on breastfeeding outcomes, highlighting the importance of recognizing and respecting cultural differences in promoting successful breastfeeding experiences among Southeast Asian postpartum women (10).

Moving forward, future research should consider exploring the impact of cultural factors on social support and breastfeeding self-efficacy in Southeast Asian postpartum women. Qualitative studies could delve deeper into cultural beliefs, practices, and traditions that may influence how social support is perceived and utilized in the context of breastfeeding. Additionally, longitudinal studies could track changes in social support networks and breastfeeding self-efficacy over time to determine patterns and trends. Furthermore, intervention studies could be conducted to test the effectiveness of culturally tailored support programs on improving breastfeeding self-efficacy in this population. By focusing on these areas, researchers can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between social support, cultural influences, and breastfeeding self-efficacy in Southeast Asian postpartum women (2).

## 5. Conclusion

The findings of this study on the relationship between social support and breastfeeding self-efficacy in Southeast Asian postpartum women suggest a significant positive correlation between the two variables. The results indicate that higher levels of social support are associated with increased levels of breastfeeding self-efficacy among this population. This implies that interventions focused on enhancing social support networks for Southeast Asian postpartum women could potentially improve their confidence and ability to breastfeed successfully. However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study, including the small sample size and the use of self-reported measures. Future research should aim to replicate these findings using a larger and more diverse sample to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the link between social support and breastfeeding self-efficacy in this population. Additionally, qualitative research could offer deeper insights into the specific types of social support that are most beneficial for promoting breastfeeding self-efficacy in Southeast Asian

postpartum women. In conclusion, we cannot overstate the significance of social support in enhancing breastfeeding outcomes. The network of support surrounding a new mother plays a crucial role in her confidence and ability to successfully breastfeed. Studies have shown that women who receive encouragement, guidance, and practical assistance from their partners, family, friends, and healthcare providers are more likely to establish and maintain breastfeeding. The provision of emotional support, information, and assistance in addressing challenges can significantly impact a mother's breastfeeding self-efficacy. It is essential for healthcare professionals to recognize the importance of social support and incorporate strategies to empower and educate both the mother and her support network. By fostering a supportive environment, we can improve breastfeeding rates and ultimately contribute to the well-being of both mothers and their infants.

### Acknowledgment

The author expresses her gratitude to Tania Vergawita who assisted her in terms of formatting and laying out this paper.

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