

Brexting: A Modern Distraction During Breastfeeding

VENKATA KRUTHI TELLAKULA¹, AKSHAY JAGTAP²
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To the Editor,

Breastfeeding is the recommended method of infant feeding because of its well-established nutritional, immunological, and health benefits for both infants and mothers [1]. With the widespread use of smartphones, the term “brexting” has emerged to describe maternal engagement with mobile devices while breastfeeding. At present, however, brexting has no universally accepted definition. For the purpose of this discussion, brexting refers to maternal use of a smartphone or other handheld digital device during breastfeeding that diverts attention away from the infant. Importantly, there is currently no validated instrument to measure brexting.

The strongest evidence specifically addressing brexting comes from the recent descriptive cross-sectional study by Arezi E et al., who found that mobile phone use was among the most common distractions during breastfeeding and infant caregiving, particularly among younger mothers [2]. However, the study did not examine breastfeeding duration, exclusivity, maternal-infant attachment, infant growth, or developmental outcomes.

Ventura AK and Teitelbaum S reported that maternal distraction occurred during a substantial proportion of both breast- and bottlefeeding sessions [3]. Although distraction was frequently observed, the study did not demonstrate that smartphone use resulted in poorer breastfeeding outcomes or impaired infant development.

Much of the concern surrounding brexting has been extrapolated from the broader concept of technoference, which describes interruptions in parent-child interactions caused by digital technology. A study has reported associations between parental technology use and lower-quality parent-child interactions and increased child behavioural problems [4]. Similarly, technoference has been associated with less optimal parent-infant interactions

and slower early vocabulary development [5]. Nevertheless, these investigations were conducted in general parenting contexts rather than specifically during breastfeeding. Therefore, their findings should not be interpreted as direct evidence that brexting adversely affects breastfeeding outcomes.

Current evidence should also be interpreted with caution due to potential selection bias and residual confounding. In conclusion, brexting represents an emerging behavioural phenomenon in the digital era. Although maternal distraction during breastfeeding is biologically plausible as a factor influencing responsive feeding, current evidence remains limited, largely observational, and insufficient to establish clinically meaningful effects on breastfeeding outcomes. Prospective longitudinal studies using standardised definitions and validated measures of brexting are needed to determine whether smartphone use during breastfeeding influences breastfeeding success, maternal-infant bonding, or infant development.

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PARTICULARS OF CONTRIBUTORS:

1. Junior Resident, Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Dr. D. Y. Patil Medical College, Hospital and Research Centre, Dr. D. Y. Patil Vidyapeeth (Deemed to be University), Pune, Maharashtra, India.
2. Assistant Professor, Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Dr. D. Y. Patil Medical College, Hospital and Research Centre, Dr. D. Y. Patil Vidyapeeth (Deemed to be University), Pune, Maharashtra, India.

NAME, ADDRESS, E-MAIL ID OF THE CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Akshay Jagtap,
Assistant Professor, Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Dr. D. Y. Patil Medical College, Hospital and Research Centre, Dr. D. Y. Patil Vidyapeeth (Deemed to be University), Pune, Maharashtra, India.
E-mail: dr.akshayj01@gmail.com

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