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**Birth and Breastfeeding Events:
The Influence of Birth on Breastfeeding Duration –
An Exploratory Research Study.**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Philosophy

in

Midwifery

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Errata: a conversion error has occurred on page 54 and in Chapter 5,
pages 72 – 107.
Please read σ^2 as χ^2

ABSTRACT

A retrospective exploratory methodology was used to examine the influence perinatal events had on breastfeeding duration measured at four months postpartum. A self-reporting questionnaire and examination of obstetric records provided the quantitative data for 68 normal vaginal birth women and 85 Caesarean section women.

Nonparametric Pearson's Chi-square goodness of fit test was used to measure statistical significance. Almost 88 % (87.6%) of the respondents were breastfeeding four months following birth. This was 86.8% of normal birth women and 88.2% of Caesarean section women. Sixty-four percent of infants were exclusively breastfeeding and 11% fully breastfeeding four months after birth. Prior breastfeeding was the only event or experience found to be significantly statistically associated with type of birth and breastfeeding duration. A marginally significant statistical relationship was found between type of Caesarean section and breastfeeding at four months postpartum. Highly significant statistical relationships were identified between type of birth and: time of first cuddle, concomitant skin-to-skin contact, time of first breastfeed, supplementary feeding in hospital, and receiving help in hospital. A significant statistical relationship was identified between type of birth and having a breastfeeding problem in hospital, and a marginally significant statistical relationship between type of birth and 'rooming in'.

Other events that were expected and identified as highly significant statistically were: multiparity and having breastfed before, having a breastfeeding problem in hospital and receiving help, type of birth and time in hospital, and breastfeeding at four months postpartum and satisfaction. There was a marginally significant statistical relationship

between breastfeeding at four months postpartum and type of caesarean section. This studies finding that there was no difference in breastfeeding rates at four months for either sub-sample of women warrants further exploration.

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This study was conceived and conducted to shed a small amount of light on women's birth and breastfeeding experiences, and has been completed in the hope that that is what has been achieved.

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