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A new analysis has found that **mothers** who are more **extroverted** and **less anxious** are **more likely** to **breastfeed** and to continue to breastfeed than mothers who are introverted or anxious. Published early online in the *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, the study indicates that new mothers with certain personalities may need additional support and education to help them feel confident, self assured, and knowledgeable about breastfeeding.

Breastfeeding is important for the health of both mother and baby: breastfed babies have lower levels of infections and allergies and are less likely to be overweight, while

mothers who breastfeed are less likely to develop certain cancers.

Many factors can affect whether a mother breastfeeds, but mothers who have lots of support, feel confident, and know how to overcome problems are more likely to breastfeed for longer. Understanding what makes a mother feel confident and supported is important to

increasing breastfeeding rates. Many studies have looked at the role of mothers' education, age, and relationships, but the link between breastfeeding and a mother's personality has not been explored.

To investigate, Amy Brown, PhD, of Swansea University in

the United Kingdom, surveyed 602 mothers with infants aged six to 12 months old. The questionnaire examined the mothers' personalities, how long they breastfed, and their attitudes and experiences of breastfeeding. Data

were collected between March and June 2009.

Mothers who indicated that they were extroverts and were emotionally stable were

significantly more likely to initiate and continue breastfeeding for a longer duration. Mothers who were introverted or anxious were more likely to use formula

milk or only breastfeed for a short while.

Dr. Brown believes that the findings can be

explained by the link between mothers' personalities and their attitudes and experiences of breastfeeding. Mothers who

were introverted felt more self-conscious about breastfeeding in front of others and were more likely to formula

feed because other people wanted them to. Meanwhile mothers who were anxious found breastfeeding

was more difficult and felt that they couldn't get the support they needed. These factors are known to be linked to low

breastfeeding rates.

"The important message from the findings is

that some mothers may face more challenges with breastfeeding based on their wider

personality. Although they may want to breastfeed, more introverted or anxious

mothers may need further support in boosting their confidence and learning about how to solve

problems, and they may need encouragement to make sure they access the breastfeeding

support services that are available," said. Dr. Brown.