



The Impact of Employment on Maternal and Infant Outcomes

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Background

Mothers in the United States (U.S.) face a hard decision after giving birth, whether to leave their baby before they are two months old or leave their job. The U.S. is one of the less infant-friendly nations, evidenced by no national paid maternity leave requirement. Some women are forced by economic factors to go back to work as soon as possible after they give birth. A quick return to work can dictate many of the decisions that have to be made postpartum, such as the method of feeding and who takes care of the infant. It can also cause health issues for the mother and infant and developmental issues for the infant.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to understand the impact that work has on a mother and infant during pregnancy and the postpartum period.

Methods

- We will recruit mothers who are between 0-6 months postpartum and aged 18-40 years from the Tallahassee, Gainesville, and Jacksonville areas
- After the initial stages of the research, we will do targeted recruitment to make sure our survey sample is representative of the population
- We will survey the mothers on their demographics, pregnancy experience, birth experience, post-partum experience, employment status in each stage, and reasons/feelings about employment
- We will conduct qualitative interviews on a select few mothers after the initial survey to gain a deeper understanding on how their employment or lack of employment is impacting themselves and their infant
- We will analyze the data to find common challenges associated with work and pregnancy/postpartum

Literature Review

Pregnancy

- 56% of women in the U.S. work while they are pregnant¹
- Working rotating shifts is associated with an increased chance of Preterm Delivery (PTD), small for gestational age (SGA) infant, preeclampsia, and gestational hypertension²
- Working night shifts is associated with an increased chance of PTD and miscarriage²
- Working longer hours is associated with an increased chance of PTD, miscarriage, low-birth-weight infant, and SGA infant²

Post-partum

- 73% of women in the U.S. return to work within 6 months after giving birth¹
- 12-week maternity leave decreases the odds of being re-hospitalized for mothers 50% and for infants 75% in the U.S.³
- Women who take maternity leave are more likely to do exercises and handle stress well³
- In the U.S. most women will terminate breastfeeding by the second month of returning to work.⁵
- Women who return to work within 12 weeks in the U.S. are less likely to breastfeed⁵

Reasons for Work

- Working during Pregnancy⁴
- They are the sole source of income
 - They are unable to take time off
 - They enjoy the work setting

- Returning Postpartum
- They love their job
 - They are the sole source of income
 - They like earning the extra income

Timeline



Hypothesis

Working during pregnancy and postpartum negatively impacts the mother and infant's physical and mental health. There are lower breastfeeding rates, higher cases of PPD, and lower mother-infant bonding in working mothers.

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