



Examining the Relationship of Postpartum Mothers Employment Status With Breastfeeding and Depression



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Background

- The decision to return to work after having a baby is a very difficult decision for some mothers.
- Most jobs in the United States do not allow long term maternity leave or even provide paid maternity leave.
- Mothers may return to work earlier than desired to stay financially stable.
- Returning to work soon after having a baby can also lead to other issues such as the discontinuation of breastfeeding sooner than the mother may have planned.
- Returning to work earlier than desired can lead to adverse health outcomes for mother and infant.

Purpose

To examine the relationship of mothers' employment status postpartum to factors such as breastfeeding, depression, and mode of delivery.

Methods

- Mothers (N=47) ages 18-40 years who had a baby in the last 6 months and live in the Tallahassee and Gainesville areas are being recruited.
- Mothers who choose to participate will complete a quantitative survey with questions regarding demographics (including work status before pregnancy, during pregnancy, and since giving birth) and experiences during pregnancy, birth, and in the time since birth.
- Maternal work status was categorized into 3 groups:
 - Not yet working since birth
 - Returned to work at less than 8 weeks
 - Returned to work at 8 weeks or greater
- For these analyses, the following measures were analyzed:
 - Breastfeeding (yes/no) at time of survey completion
 - Delivery type: Vaginal vs. C-section
 - Depression as measured by the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS)

Results

	M ± SD	Range
Maternal Age (years) [#]	31.16 ± 5.37	21-40
EPDS ⁺	9.67 ± 5.17	0 - 23
Baby age at visit (days)	95.68	11 - 230
	N	%
Marital Status (married)*	43	91.5%
Education (college graduate)	36	76.6%
Working status		
Returned < 8 weeks	8	17.0%
Returned ≥ 8 weeks	18	38.3%
Not working/maternity leave	21	44.7%
Race*		
White	28	60.9%
Black	11	23.9%
Other/Mixed	7	15.2%
Hispanic, yes	12	25.5%
Infant sex (male)	21	44.7%
Birth Type (vaginal)*	29	61.7%
Current breastfeeding (yes)*	37	80.4%

* n = 46
+ n = 45
n = 44

Variables	Statistical Test	p-value	Effect Size
Work & Breastfeeding	Chi Square	0.02	V = 0.40
Work & Delivery Mode	Chi Square	0.64	N/A
Work & Depression	Kruskal Willis	0.13	r = 0.30

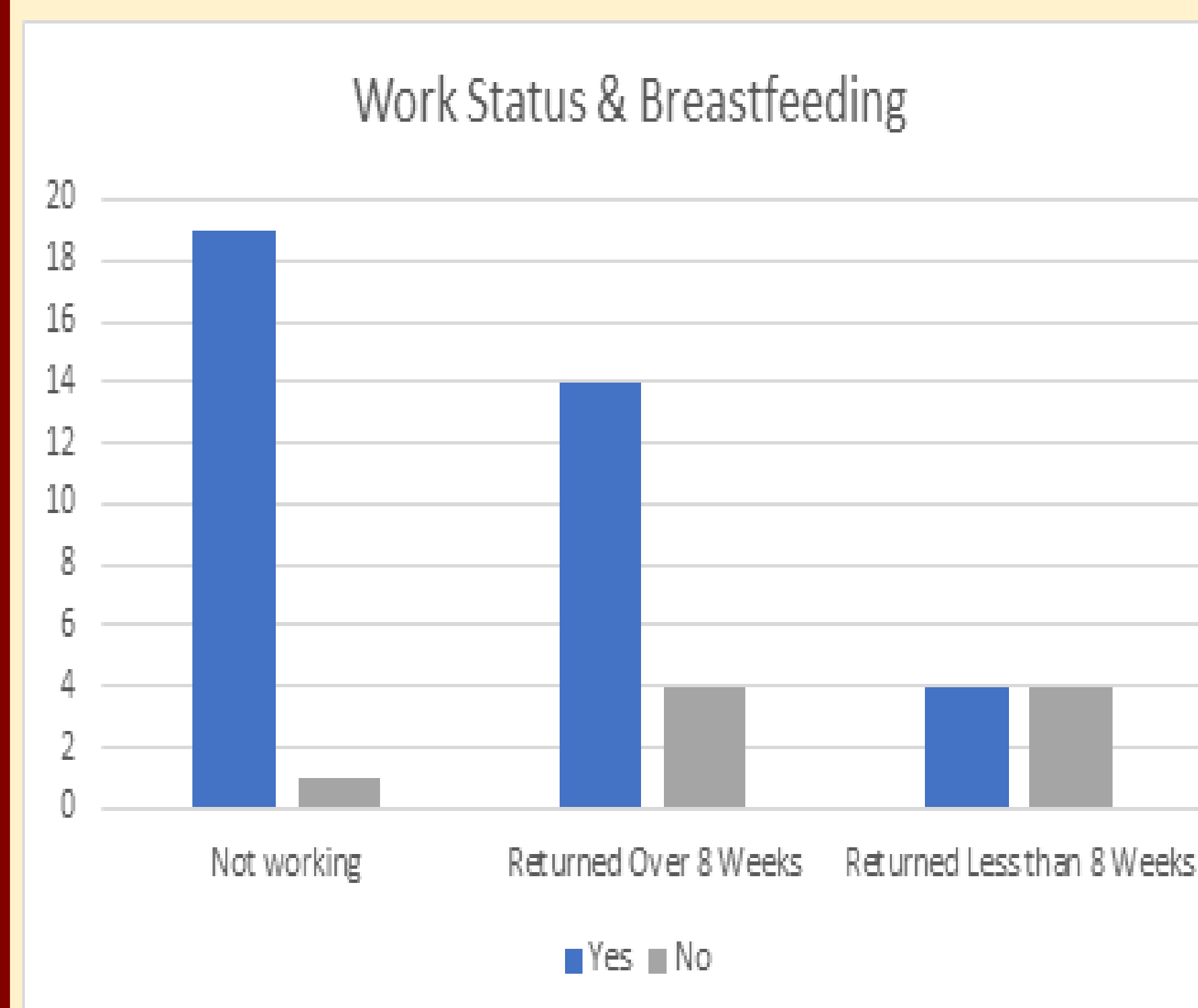


Figure 1. More moms were still breastfeeding in the group not working (p = 0.02).

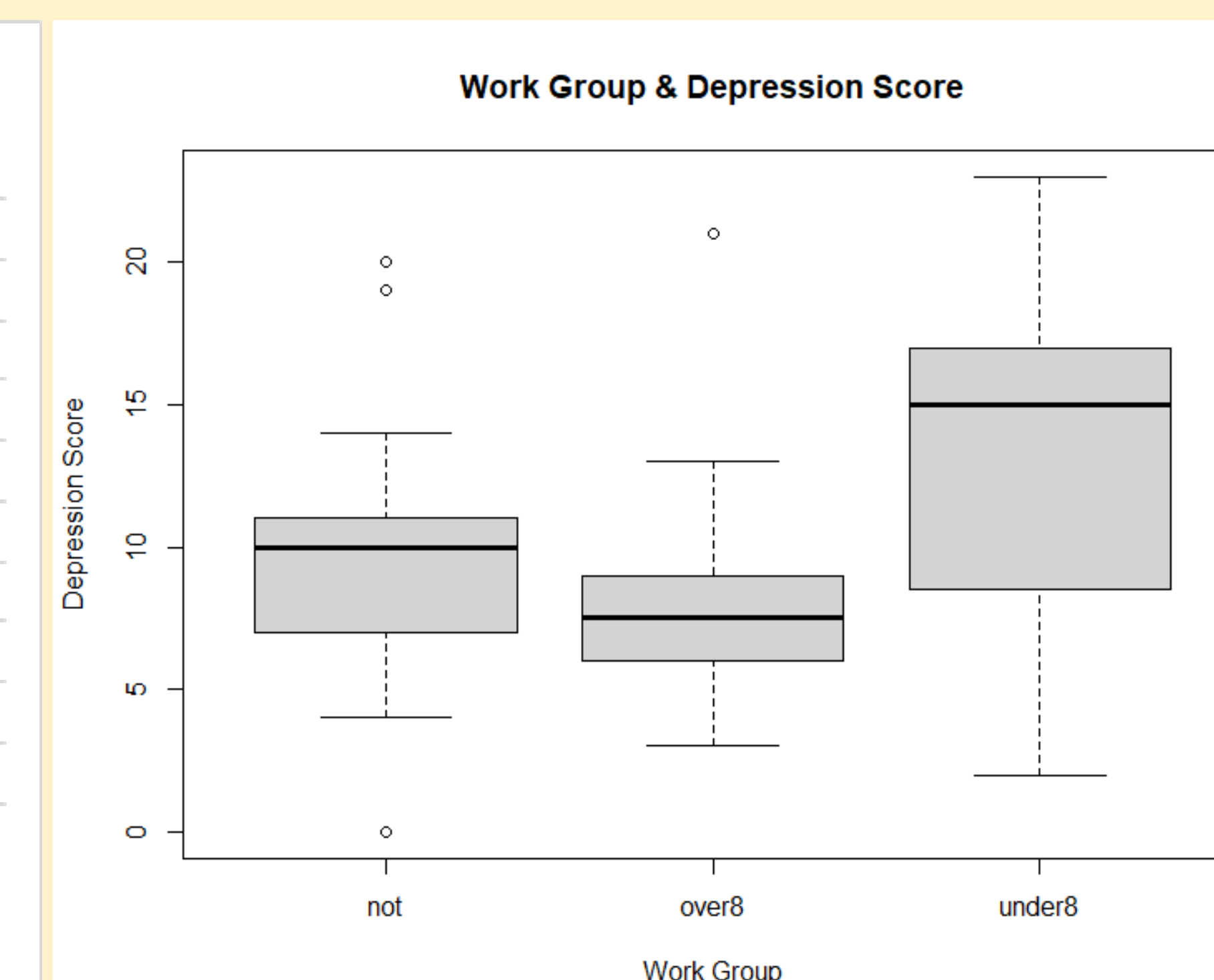


Figure 2. Moms who returned to work at less than 8 weeks reported higher levels of depression (p = 0.13). Mean EPDS score not working = 9.5, mean returning greater than 8 weeks = 8.55, and mean returning less than 8 weeks = 13.

Conclusions

- This research highlights the need to gain a better understanding of how mothers can feel more supported during their postpartum transition.
- Our findings are showing similarities with other studies done in regards of mothers returning to work.
- Consistent with prior studies, breastfeeding rates decreased when mothers return to work.
- The relationship with depression and work seems plausible, but more research is needed.
- The small sample size could have affected significance between variables and mothers returning to work.

Future Directions and Limitations

- The study is ongoing to collect data with a goal of reaching 100 participants.
- Qualitative data is being collected which may provide a better understanding of reasons mothers returned to work.
- Further research is needed to understand why depression and working are intertwined.

Acknowledgements

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