



# 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) <sup>#</sup>	31.16 ± 5.37	21-40
EPDS <sup>+</sup>	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

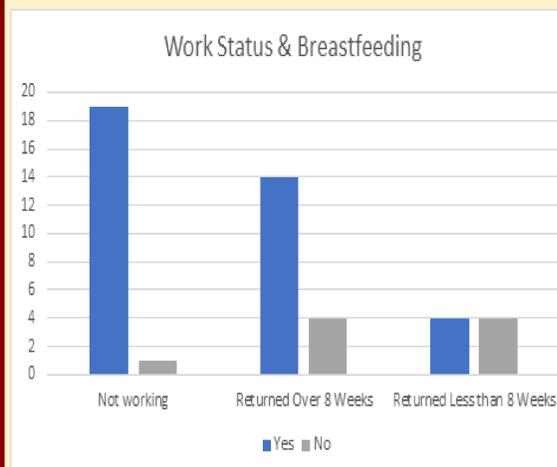


Figure 1. More moms were still breastfeeding in the group not working (p = 0.02).

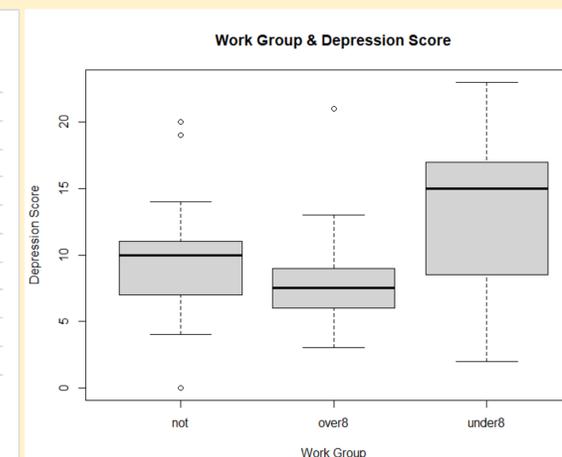


Figure 2. Moms who returned to work at less than 8 weeks reported higher levels of depression (p = 0.13). Mean EPDS score not working = 9.5, mean returning greater than 8 weeks = 8.55, and mean returning less than 8 weeks = 13.

## 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.

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