

Workplace Lactation Support on Low-income Women Exclusively Breastfeeding

Ashley Holmes, Ada Hepler, Camryn Brown, Kayla Lorenc, & Morgan Ireland

School of Nursing, University of Maine

NUR 456: Professional Practice through the Lifespan

Dr. Valerie Herbert

February 28, 2023

Abstract

Low-socioeconomic-status new mothers who wish to exclusively breastfeed, face significant challenges associated with available resources, finances, and maternal leave. To address this issue, the authors explored the following evidence-based PICOT question: among low-socioeconomic-status new mothers that breastfeed, does access to lactation supports in the workplace, compared to no or limited access, affect their ability to exclusively breastfeed for the baby's first six months? This project conducted a search of the literature in CINAHL and PubMed databases using the terms *breastfeeding*, *low-socioeconomic-status*, and *workplace lactational support*. Inclusion criteria included peer-reviewed articles published between 2017 to present, containing keywords/phrases used in the search. Articles that did not discuss lactation support for low-socioeconomic-status breastfeeding women were excluded. Longer maternity leave is associated with increased breastfeeding duration. The literature highlights for working new mothers, lactation support in the workplace includes breastfeeding breaks, flexible work arrangements, private spaces, and facilities for expressing breast milk (Dinour & Szaro, 2017). For women of low-socioeconomic status an extended maternity leave may not be feasible, presenting women with challenges to exclusively breastfeed for the first six months. Additionally, research indicates that for women returning to work, workplace lactational supports are needed to improve the duration of exclusive breastfeeding. Low-income mothers are significantly less likely to have access to extended maternity leave, and lack necessary accommodations within the workplace, including break time and/or a private space to express breast milk. When workplace lactation is supported there is a positive influence on exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months.

Keywords: breastfeeding, low-socioeconomic-status, workplace lactational support

References

- Dinour, L. M., & Szaro, J. M. (2017). Employer-based programs to support breastfeeding among working mothers: A systematic review. *Breastfeeding Medicine, 12*(3), 131–141.
<https://doi.org/10.1089/bfm.2016.0182>
- Francis, J., Mildon, A., Stewart, S., Underhill, B., Ismail, S., Di Ruggiero, E., Tarasuk, V., Sellen, D. W., & O'Connor, D. L. (2021). Breastfeeding rates are high in a prenatal community support program targeting vulnerable women and offering enhanced postnatal lactation support: A prospective Cohort Study. *International Journal for Equity in Health, 20*(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12939-021-01386-6>
- Gray, K. D., Hannon, E. A., Erickson, E., Stewart, A. B., Wood, C. T., Fisher, K., Shaikh, S. K., & Tanaka, D. (2020). Influence of early lactation assistance on inpatient exclusive breastfeeding rates. *Journal of Human Lactation, 37*(3), 556–565.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0890334420957967>
- Hardison-Moody, A., MacNell, L., Elliott, S., & Bowen, S. (2018). How social, cultural, and economic environments shape infant feeding for low-income women: A qualitative study in North Carolina. *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, 118*(10).
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jand.2018.01.008>
- Kim, J. H., Shin, J. C., & Donovan, S. M. (2018). Effectiveness of workplace lactation interventions on breastfeeding outcomes in the United States: An updated systematic review. *Journal of Human Lactation, 35*(1), 100–113.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0890334418765464>
- Martinez, N. G., Strohbach, A., Hu, F., & Yee, L. M. (2020). “Real-world” effect of a peer counselor on breastfeeding outcomes in an urban prenatal clinic in the United States. *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth, 20*(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12884-020-03360-6>

- Pounds, L., Fisher, C. M., Barnes-Josiah, D., Coleman, J. D., & Lefebvre, R. C. (2017). The role of early maternal support in balancing full-time work and infant exclusive breastfeeding: A qualitative study. *Breastfeeding Medicine*, *12*(1), 33–38.
<https://doi.org/10.1089/bfm.2016.0151>
- Snyder, K., Hansen, K., Brown, S., Portratz, A., White, K., & Dinkel, D. (2018). Workplace breastfeeding support varies by employment type: The service workplace disadvantage. *Breastfeeding Medicine*, *13*(1), 23–27. <https://doi.org/10.1089/bfm.2017.0074>
- Taylor, Y. J., Scott, V. C., & Danielle Connor, C. (2020). Perceptions, experiences, and outcomes of lactation support in the workplace: A systematic literature review. *Journal of Human Lactation*, *36*(4), 657–672. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0890334420930696>
- Vilar-Compte, M., Hernández-Cordero, S., Ancira-Moreno, M., Burrola-Méndez, S., Ferre-Eguiluz, I., Omaña, I., & Pérez Navarro, C. (2021). Breastfeeding at the workplace: A systematic review of interventions to improve workplace environments to facilitate breastfeeding among working women. *International Journal for Equity in Health*, *20*(1).
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12939-021-01432-3>