

# Experiences and Contextual Factors Related to Exclusive Breastfeeding in Full-time Working Mothers \*

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** To explore the experiences and contextual factors, including barriers and facilitators, related to exclusive breastfeeding for full-time working mothers before and after returning to work.

**Design:** Qualitative research employing interviews.

**Methods:** A total of 29 full-time working mothers were selected for purposive sampling from well-baby and lactation clinics at Siriraj Hospital. Data were collected through semi-structured face-to-face interviews at 2, 4, and 6 months postpartum and analyzed by using content analysis.

**Main findings:** Four main themes of experiences and contextual factors, including barriers and facilitators related to exclusive breastfeeding, emerged. These were: 1) Insufficient information for breastfeeding during work. Mothers could not prepare for breastfeeding prior to returning to work and faced problems with insufficient breast milk; 2) Struggles in maintaining sufficient breast milk for 6 months depending on working contexts that supported breast milk expression. This included work characteristics, feeling secure at work, and understanding and support from colleagues; 3) Seeking information to facilitate breastfeeding. Mothers received insufficient information on methods of breast milk expression and feeding breast milk to their babies; and 4) Support from family members and child care workers. These could be both a support and an obstacle to breastfeeding.

**Conclusion and recommendations:** A breastfeeding plan and preparation system for full-time working mothers should be developed, including training of health care providers to provide clear information and knowledge of breastfeeding to working mothers, and help them to accomplish 6 months of exclusive breastfeeding. Moreover, breastfeeding-support environment policies need to be established in workplaces.

**Keywords:** breastfeeding experiences, working mothers, contextual factors, qualitative research

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