

OP-ID 21

Physical Health issues faced by the Working Mothers after Return to Work Following Maternity Leave at Nallur and Jaffna MOH.

Fathima Afna A^{1*}, Swarna S¹, Kamalarupan L¹, Umashankar N²

¹Department of Nursing, Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka.

²Teaching Hospital Jaffna, Sri Lanka

*fathimaafna0424@gmail.com

Introduction & Objectives: Postpartum health issues are often prolonged, and some physical issues arise after mothers return to work. These can negatively impact mothers' well-being and work-life balance. Hence, it is necessary to provide support for mothers to help them overcome these issues and enhance their quality of life. This study aimed to describe the self-reported physical health-issues faced by working mothers after return to work from maternity-leave.

Materials & Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 157 working mothers in Nallur, Jaffna MOH. Data was collected using pretreated self-administered questionnaire. Data analysis was performed using IBM-SPSS 26. Descriptive statistics were used to describe physical health issues. Ethical clearance was obtained from Ethics Review Committee, Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna.

Results: Among the 170 eligible working mothers, 157mothers participated in the study, yielding a response rate of 92.2%. The participants' ages ranged from 24 to 42 years. The majority (73.9%) had received 84 days of maternity-leave, and 66.2% were in their mid-extended postpartum-period at the time of the study. Breast engorgement (27.4%) and difficulties with breastfeeding (25.5%) were the most reported physical health issues during the first month after returning to work. Fatigue (32.5%), abdominal pain (32.5%), back-pain (21.0%), tingling or burning sensations in the breasts (13.4%), and dizziness (11.5%) were reported from the time of delivery and remained prominent during the first month after returning to work. Persistent postpartum problems included; pelvic-pain (33.2%), inadequate or irregular sleep (39.5%), and changes in physical appearance, such as hair loss and weight gain (48.4%), which continued beyond the initial postpartum-period.

Conclusions: The findings indicate that working-mothers commonly experience persistent physical-health challenges after returning to work following maternity-leave and highlight the need for extended-postpartum support, workplace adjustment, counselling to promote maternal wellbeing.

Keywords: Physical health issues, Extended-postpartum period, Maternity-leave, Working mothers.