



ENABLING BREASTFEEDING AT WORKPLACE: BALANCING WORK AND MOTHERHOOD FOR CHILD-WELLBEING

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Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36713/epra16859>

DOI No: 10.36713/epra16859

ABSTRACT

Breastfeeding during the initial phase of an infant's life is crucial for supplying all the necessary nutrients that are specially tailored to meet the needs of a growing baby. It is an ideal meal for an infant. But in the multi-tasker role of a woman as a mother and a professional, it always be a tough challenge to feed the child during the working hours in her busy schedule. Due to this, the child gets neglected and it also hampers the growth and development of the child. The challenge of balancing breastfeeding with work responsibilities is a significant concern for many working women. Without adequate support, resources, and awareness, it can be extremely challenging for women to continue breastfeeding while maintaining their employment. On the other hand, effective workplace accommodations, facilities, awareness, and support can promote breastfeeding and also help to maintain their employment. By prioritizing breastfeeding we can enhance maternal and infant health outcomes, reduce healthcare costs, and contribute to the well-being of future generations. In addition to these challenges, hence some solutions to tackle this challenge and support breastfeeding in the workplace are mentioned intern it can also lead to enhanced productivity, growth, and efficiency for employers.

KEYWORDS – breastfeeding, lactation, maternal health, infant health

INTRODUCTION

Breastfeeding, in the initial phase of an infant's life, supplies all the necessary nutrients to the body which are exclusively needed for the growth and development of the child. A child alone on breastmilk in the initial 6 months of life usually has high IQ levels, timely onset of milestones and it also saves the child from various diseases and infections by building immunity. It is an ideal meal for infants. Breastfeeding also impacts on the health of a mother.

Every woman has a great role to play as a multitasker whether it is her personal life or professional life. Sometimes, professional life interrupts to excel the most important phase of her life i.e. motherhood. The typical problem they face during their working life is to breastfeed their child. Currently, breastfeeding for working women is a matter of concern to manage because of the lack of awareness, resources and places to nurse the child. Hence it is noted that either the women decide to quit the job or else the child may be neglected due to

a lack of support at the workplace. In both conditions either she loses her professional career which might be a dream job for her or either a child may lack an exclusive need for the body to sustain a healthy disease-free life which all parents wish for.

BREASTMILK - A NEED FOR CHILD

Breastfeeding is a basic necessity to survive and lead a healthy life for an infant. Breast milk contains various essential nutrients such as proteins, fats, vitamins, minerals, carbohydrates, hormones, enzymes, immunoglobulins, etc^[1].

- It helps for the growth and development of the child
- Boosts immunity (*Vyadhi kshamatava*)
- Enhances intellectual power, memory and cognition.
- Reduces chances of infection
- Minimizes the chances of chronic ailments
- Accelerates recovery from the diseases, if happens (*Vyadhi pratibandhakatavam*)
- Improves quality of life of a child



- *Ojo vardhanam*

For this, the WHO (World Health Organization) and UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund) together work globally to promote breastfeeding.

BENEFITS OF BREASTFEEDING FOR MOTHER

Breastfeeding is not only necessary for the child but it is also beneficial for the mother to safeguard herself from various health ailments.

- Reduces risk of cancers of ovaries and breast
- Postpartum haemorrhages can be reduced by the release of oxytocin by breastfeeding. Also, oxytocin helps to re-size the uterus after delivery.
- Prevents depression and stress.

CHALLENGES AT THE WORK PLACE FOR BREASTFEEDING

Usually, women face a lot of troubles during the breastfeeding phase of life because there is a lack of awareness among people regarding the importance of breastfeeding for the child. Due to this, the employer will not allow breaks for mothers, lack of a place to breastfeed and the hectic schedule made mothers to reduce breastfeeding in early infancy which will impact the health, growth and development of a child.

A PLAN FOR BREASTFEEDING EMPLOYERS AT THE WORKPLACES

The challenges can be overcome with the support of organizations and a friendly workplace environment. The great support of the organization impacts a lot on the health status of breastfeeding mothers and children. Every organization should provide support to breastfeeding mothers in numerous ways by implementing some special laws or policies to work.

1. **Work From Home** – Recently, the pandemic gave rise and promoted a culture of 'Work from home' for employees. That helps to generate business for companies without closing or hampering their work. The same rules can be implemented by the organization for breastfeeding mothers, for nursing and for taking care of their children in Infancy. Even Government has to come forward with some plans for working females to care for their children even up to Toddler age. Such plans will not only help to support the parents financially without losing jobs but also reduces the load on the hospitality sector as the chances of illness will reduce by this at an early age.
2. **Mid Breaks** - If unable to post the person to do work from home then there should be adequate mid-breaks for breastfeeding mothers to feed the child. Due to this, there must be a reduction and liberation of working hours for the mother without deducting the money.
3. **Liberal work hours** for lactating mothers. It will also avoid the negligence done by mothers to feed their children because of commitments or hurry at work.
4. **Awareness among the Mentors / Head of the departments/ Managers** – The head of every department whoever has a leading role to play to manage man force, must have sufficient awareness and be educated about the importance of breastfeeding. So, they should liberally

support their staff concerning time and morality to nurse the child.

5. **Workshops** – A training program of 2-3 hours will be sufficient to aware the mentors, and employees to ensure exclusive breastfeeding importance among them. It will help the organization with the proper implementation of guidelines or policies for breastfeeding support at the workplace.

6. **Workplace surrounding / Infrastructure** – It must have clean separate rooms or a place for feeding children. The rooms should have adequate facilities like a suitable sitting place to feed in the correct position with privacy, and an attached bathroom to maintain hygiene before breastfeeding and to dress well after feeding. A fridge for the provision to store milk in bottles by withdrawal from breast pumps so that in case of emergency works child will be nursed at least on proper time without substituting the breast milk with alternatives (available in the market). Even there can be a provision of a conducive environment with the staff (nannies) to take care of children at workplace like Creche. It favours the companies by providing minimal short breaks instead of long breaks which may be needed to travel. Also, it contributes to generate employment.

7. **Stress-Free Environment improves work efficiency of employer** – This is a need for every individual to work in harmony but it should be focused well in concern to pregnant ladies, breastfeeding mothers, and diseased employees. In fact, a less stressful environment is most essential for organizations as it yields productive, creative and maximum output.^[2] Education and awareness among people will help to develop such environments.

8. **Role of government agencies in promoting breastfeeding at workplace** – The astringent actions need to be taken by the Government agencies to conduct surveys, check the norms of organizations for breastfeeding mothers, and monitor the conducive environment by the industries. There is an act called Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act 2017^[3] was also established for breastfeeding mothers to feed their children by visiting 4 times at creche. These creches should be nearer to the office to promote the breastfeed and it also reflects its importance. But still, these efforts are neglected and lactating mothers are facing these issues. Hence need to form some supportive agencies to check these protocols at proper intervals.

ADVANTAGE OF FRIENDLY WORKPLACE FOR BREASTFEEDING WORKERS

The major advantage of providing friendly workplace for breastfeeding mothers build a life time bond with employ. It gives value to the work and also boost the confidence of mothers. It helps to retain the employ for the company's welfare. Creating a breastfeeding-friendly workplace offers advantages such as improved employee retention, enhanced morale, and increased productivity. By supporting breastfeeding employees with facilities and flexible schedules, companies demonstrate commitment to employee well-being and attract top talent. Reduced absenteeism and healthcare costs are additional benefits, along with compliance with legal



requirements and a positive public image. Promoting diversity and inclusion, such initiatives foster a supportive environment for all employees. Overall, prioritizing breastfeeding support contributes to a more inclusive, productive, and socially responsible workplace within a concise framework.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, breastfeeding at the workplace is a vital aspect of supporting the health and well-being of both working mothers and their infants. While the benefits of breastfeeding are well-established, there are still challenges that need to be addressed to create truly positive breastfeeding-friendly workplaces. Here, employers, facilities like lactation rooms, mid breaks, work from home culture etc will play a crucial role to manage such conditions and also supports a precious bond of a mother and child. Also, the Government policies need to be framed and executed well to ensure, educate, aware and promote breastfeeding at workplaces. If the barriers are resolved then people can work and nurse their children efficiently and the nutritional needs of a child will be adequately fulfilled. Along with this the productivity, growth and efficiency of the employer will also improve.

“A need to build a breastfeeding culture at workplace, but culture exists if an organization thinks”

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