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XIAO YU: THE EFFECT OF WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT ON BREAST-FEEDING IN URBAN AREAS OF SICHUAN, CHINA. THESIS ADVISORS: CHAI PODHISITA, Ph.D., KUSOL SOONTHORNDHADA, Ph.D., ISBN 974-664-688-5

While breast-feeding and employment of mothers have received much attention among researchers in other countries, in China this issue is relatively new. This study was designed to identify the effect of factors related to mothers' employment and work status on duration of breast-feeding. Data were collected from 1,533 mothers whose babies were between 6-12 months old in Sichuan province during 1997-1998. Measurements of mothers employment characteristics in the present study included type of work, timing of returning to work, shift work, flexibility of work hours, time away from baby, distance to work place, having a breast-feeding place at work, and ability to take a break for breast-feeding.

Overall, about 98 per cent of the sampled women reported that they breast-fed their babies. Among those who breast-fed, the average duration of the exclusive breast-feeding was about 100 days, while the average duration of total breast-feeding period was about 190 days.

Bivariate analysis indicated significant relationships between all employment characteristics and breast-feeding duration and in the expected direction. However, multivariate analysis revealed that for exclusive breast-feeding, ability to take a break for breast-feeding, timing of returning to work and time away from baby per day significantly affected breast-feeding duration. For all breast-feeding, type of work, ability to take a break for breast-feeding, timing of returning to work and time away from baby per day showed significant effects. Among the factors affecting the duration of breast-feeding, ability to take a break for breast-feeding and timing of returning to work had a positive influence, while time away from baby, performing service work, office work and self-employed work had negative effects.

The findings lead to some important policy implication for promoting longer breast-feeding duration in Sichuan province and in China as a whole.