

WHEN WORK AND FAMILY BLEND TOGETHER: EXAMINING THE DAILY EXPERIENCES OF BREASTFEEDING MOTHERS AT WORK

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Although several work–family theories describe complexities associated with fulfilling work and family roles, extant research has not fully explained blended work–family experiences, such as women working full-time and breastfeeding at work. To address this shortcoming, we conducted a multistudy investigation. In Study 1, we interviewed 38 women about their daily experiences surrounding breastfeeding at work. We then developed a theoretical model to examine possible challenges and benefits associated with this blended work–family experience and tested it with an experience sampling investigation assessing 106 women over 15 workdays in Study 2. Results suggested that breastfeeding interference increased negative affect and decreased positive affect daily, with negative affect hindering breastfeeding goal progress (i.e., ounces of breast milk produced at work) and work goal progress. However, positive experiences tied to breastfeeding enrichment decreased negative affect and increased positive affect, with positive affect increasing work–family balance satisfaction. Beyond these relationships, we explored effects associated with contextual features of breastfeeding at work—breastfeeding stigma, breastfeeding compassion, and quality of the breastfeeding space. Combined, our work enhances theoretical understanding of blended work–family experiences, highlighting that blending work and family roles daily can yield both positive and negative consequences across domains.

This research was funded in part by the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology Small Grant Program and the Department of Management and Organizations Small Grant Program at the University of Arizona. Previous versions of this manuscript were presented at the 2018 Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology Annual Conference (Chicago, IL) and the 2018 Academy of Management Annual Conference (Chicago, IL). This paper benefited immensely from constructive feedback received from the faculty at the Department of Management at the University of Arkansas, the Department of Management and Organization at the University of Notre Dame, the Department of Human Resources Management at Temple University, the School of Labor and Employment Relations at the University of Illinois

at Urbana-Champaign, the Organizational Behaviour and Human Resource Management area at Wilfrid Laurier University, and the Organizational Behaviour and Human Resources Division at the University of British Columbia. Invaluable feedback was also provided by Joseph Broschak, Joanna Tochman Campbell, Wendy Casper, Nitya Chawla, Sarah Doyle, Aleksander Ellis, Joel Koopman, Brent Lyons, and Nathan Podsakoff, as well as Associate Editor Lisa Leslie and our three anonymous reviewers. Finally, we wish to recognize the courageous and empowered women who shared their energy, time, and bodies to support this work.

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