



# Workplace Lactation Policy and Breastfeeding Duration: A Policy Analysis of Female Textile Workers in Hawassa, Ethiopia

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## Abstract

Workplace environments often present barriers to exclusive breastfeeding, a key public health objective. The textile industry in Ethiopia employs a large female workforce, necessitating an assessment of how institutional policies support breastfeeding practices. This policy analysis aimed to evaluate the impact of a workplace lactation policy on breastfeeding duration among female textile workers in Hawassa, Ethiopia. It sought to identify the policy's components, implementation challenges, and perceived effectiveness from workers' perspectives. A qualitative policy analysis was conducted. Data were gathered through a review of the official policy document, semi-structured interviews with female workers and factory management, and observations of designated lactation facilities. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. The existence of a formal policy was positively associated with reported breastfeeding duration. However, implementation was inconsistent. A key theme was the conflict between production targets and allotted breastfeeding breaks, with many workers reporting an inability to utilise breaks fully. Although dedicated lactation rooms existed, their distance from workstations was a frequent barrier. The workplace lactation policy is a positive initiative, but its potential is undermined by practical implementation gaps. The policy's success depends not only on its provisions but on a supportive workplace culture that prioritises it alongside operational demands. Recommendations include revising break schedules to align with production rhythms, situating lactation facilities closer to work areas, training line managers on policy compliance, and establishing a monitoring system with worker representation to address grievances. Breastfeeding, Workplace policy, Lactation support, Maternal health, Textile industry, Ethiopia, Policy implementation, Qualitative research This analysis provides evidence on the real-world application of a workplace lactation policy in a key Ethiopian industry, highlighting the critical gap between formal policy and daily practice.

It offers practical insights for policymakers and employers seeking to translate supportive legislation into tangible health outcomes for working mothers.

**Keywords:** *Workplace lactation policy, Exclusive breastfeeding, Policy analysis, Sub-Saharan Africa, Maternal and child health, Textile industry, Ethiopia*

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