

## *Original Paper*

# Balancing Dual Roles in the Face of Missing On-Site Child Care Arrangements: Lived Experiences of Breast-Feeding Student Mothers at Kyambogo University

Dr Elizabeth Opit<sup>1</sup>, Dr Nabukeera Madinah<sup>2</sup>, & Ms. Namubiru Aisha<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Foundation of Education, Faculty of Education, Kyambogo University, P.O.Box 1 Kyambogo, Kampala, Uganda

<sup>2</sup> Department of History and Political Science, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Kyambogo University, Kampala, Uganda

<sup>3</sup> Department of Foundation of Education, Faculty of Education, Kyambogo University, Kampala, Uganda

\* Dr Nabukeera Madinah, Department of History and Political Science, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Kyambogo University, Kampala, Uganda

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### **Abstract**

*Through the use of a phenomenological approach this study explored lived experiences of breast-feeding student mothers in the face of missing institutionalized on-campus child care arrangements at Kyambogo University (KyU). Specifically, the study sought to; identify the missing institutionalized on-campus child care arrangements at the university, establish the dilemmas breast feeding student mothers experience in undertaking the dual roles of mother and student hood due to the missing institutionalized on campus child care arrangements at KyU and examine the effect of the missing institutionalized on campus child care arrangements on undertaking of academic activities by breast-feeding student mothers. A total of 10 breast feeding student mothers were interviewed and data was analyzed using themes. Results indicated that the following institutionalized on-campus child care arrangements were missing at Kyambogo University; adequately furnished baby care rooms, baby playgrounds, immunization and pediatric medical services, professional nannies, child care responsive; teaching time tables, teaching sessions, time frames for course work assignments, tests and examinations' undertakings, and child care responsive-remedial lessons. Dilemmas of breast feeding student mothers' in this scenario included choosing between; baby-sitting vs attending lectures,*

*completing a lecture vs breastfeeding a crying hungry baby, undertaking child bonding activities vs undertaking academic activities, completing an exam or a test vs breast feeding a crying hungry baby, baby care vs attending academic group discussion and baby care vs completing a coursework assignment in time. Student mothers at KyU have devised means of coping and have learnt how to resolve the tension of combining motherhood and education in an academic environment without on-campus childcare arrangements so as to pave a brighter career and family future. Such strategies included; receiving child care support from family and student friends, use of privately hired nannies, ignoring one of the two roles, time tabling the activities for the two roles, creating extra time to read, and getting help from spouses. The voices of the interviewees revealed that when the two roles were in conflict, they would rather miss academic activities than abandon their babies especially in critical times like when the babies were sick. It was therefore recommended that KyU considers putting in place various institutionalised on campus arrangements as a critical resource that will enhance academic undertakings of breast-feeding student mothers in their pursuit of Higher Education.*

### **Keywords**

*institutionalized, on campus child care, arrangements, breast feeding student mothers, dual roles, dilemmas*

## **1. Introduction**

This study took cognizance of student mothers as part of the student population existent in today's Higher Institutions of Education (HIE). The name "Student- Mothers" connotes the dual roles of "Mother" and "Student" experienced by this category of students in HIE. It is worth noting that; the scenario of a perfect balancing of the two roles can only suffice in situations where the On-Campus Child Care Arrangements (OCCAs) are commensurate with adequate and appropriate child care needs for all the categories of student mothers; the breastfeeding and non- breast-feeding student mothers. Available literature reveals that in HIE, OCCAs are more available and user-friendly for non-breast-feeding student mothers than for their breast-feeding counterparts. Yet, despite this scenario, the number of breast-feeding mothers in HEIs is on the increase. This scenario implies that such student mothers do prefer to move on with the dual role un-interrupted.

This study thus, sought to provide scientific evidence on the; the missing institutionalized OCCAs in HEIs, the coping strategies of breast-feeding student mothers in the face of missing OCCAs and the effect of the missing OCCAs on academic undertakings of breast-feeding student mothers

## **2. Contextualisation and statement of the problem**

Uganda, a former British colony located in East Africa, is one of the developing countries in the world . It has a population of about 44.27 million of which 80% is engaged in subsistence agriculture . The government of Uganda recognises education as a basic human right; therefore, it continues to provide basic education to all its citizens. The education structure in Uganda is divided into pre-primary,

primary, secondary and tertiary education.

The Government, in its commitment to inclusive education established several strategies to accelerate girls' participation, retention in schools as well as access to higher education. Through the introduction of strategies such as the policy on affirmative action in the 1990s, female students were awarded 1.5 points to boost their entry into public universities. This has led to increased enrolment of female students at university level to almost 50% in some universities in Uganda. Furthermore, the introduction of various in-service (mature age entrant) programs such as: distance learning, evening, and weekend programs ushered in a significant shift where by many mature students are entering HIE, including women who are parents as well. While such interventions target equality of opportunity in widening access to education, they fail to address issues of retention, specifically of breast-feeding student mothers, who have now proliferated in the tertiary education system of Uganda.

HIE ought to acknowledge that students' years at the university coincide with child bearing ages between 18-35 years where a considerable number of female students find themselves bearing children while studying. Naturally after giving birth, women are mandated to breast feed their babies, therefore university students who give birth cannot evade that natural phenomenon. Thus, student population in many universities all over the world, KyU inclusive, comprise of female students some of whom are breast-feeding student mothers.

In this study, student mothers were female students enrolled and registered by Kyambogo University to undertake any of its academic programs and were breast-feeding children aged 0-3 years. They were called breast-feeding student mothers because they were pursuing education and were at the same time parents of breast-feeding children.

By time of this study was conducted records regarding breast feeding student mothers in Kyambogo university weren't available because no data on students' parental status is collected either at the time of application for admission or during registration. The usual sources of information such as on-line applications, course enrolments, faculty and departmental records do not show parental information in the statistical records for the different academic programs within the university. Consequently, using snowball sampling method the researchers were able to identify 10 breast-feeding student mothers at Kyambogo University. Although the total number of breast-feeding student mothers at KyU could be much more, the sample of 10 breast-feeding student mothers served to demonstrate their existence in KyU.

Available literature indicates that breast feeding students are a special category of the female student population that requires specific institutionalised on-campus childcare arrangements for their babies. Across different nations, higher education leaders are coming to understand that high-quality childcare services are not only essential to the mission of their colleges and universities but are also vital for the enrollment, retention, graduation, and success of student mothers. Consequently, universities and numerous community colleges across the United States of America have made a commitment to student parents by advocating for the needs of this unique population, and ensuring that they have equal access

to campus opportunities and resources that other students have. Therefore, breast-feeding student mothers at KyU are equally a special category of the female student population that requires specific institutionalised on-campus childcare arrangements for their babies.

In this study institutionalised on-campus childcare arrangements for breast feeding student mothers were conceptualized as institutional childcare services that are put in place at university campuses to enable them undertake motherly and student roles at the same time. According to institutionalised on-campus childcare arrangements include strategically instituted provisions such as; a childcare center with play equipment and facilities for babies aged 0-3 years, breast feeding rooms, playing area for children, medical facilities for children, professional childcare-takers, rooms for baby sitters, pantry and kitchen services for the breast feeding children who are weaned off, university policies, strategic plans and budgets that are sensitive to childcare needs of breast-feeding student mothers. Adequate institutionalised on-campus childcare arrangements facilitate student mothers to effectively undertake their academic and parental responsibilities in universities.

Whereas institutionalised on-campus childcare arrangements exist in some universities in developed countries, such facilities are either lacking or totally absent in universities in Africa Uganda inclusive . The inadequacy or absence of such facilities may limit breast-feeding student mothers' access to education undertakings and thus affect their academic success. While student mothers' experiences in engaging in their seemingly conflicted roles have been researched in other countries there remains a paucity of studies from the African, Ugandan and specifically Kyambogo University context.

The study was situated within KyU, the second largest of Uganda's six public universities. KyU is mandated to provide a conducive learning environment for all students. The study fits within the Ugandan government's political decision "to take into account gender equality concerns in all policy, program, administrative and financial activities". The findings of this study are expected to inform Kyambogo University's policy and practice to achieve gender-equitable access within higher education affirmatively. As affirms, affirmative action can meaningfully impact gender-equitable access to university education, if governments and universities adopt multifaceted approaches in which various strategies support each other towards closing the gender gap within higher education.

### **3. Methodology**

The study was premised on the role conflict theory of. The basic principle of the theory is that role conflict occurs when the different obligations a person plays in his or her everyday life happen at the same time. In such instance's role conflict may lead to better performance of one role at the expense of the other. However, it is also not true that underperformance will always occur when individuals undertake several roles at the same time because some individuals are highly skilled at particular tasks and can therefore afford to undertake several tasks at the same time effectively. Based on the role conflict theory, the study anticipated instances when student mothers may face role conflict in undertaking the dual roles of motherhood and student hood. In such instances where breast feeding

student mothers have to forego one of their dual role obligations at the expense of the other, the foregone role is underperformed with undesirable outcomes. However, such underperformance can be averted in the presence of strategically instituted on-site child care arrangements by Higher Education Institutions.

Based on the role conflict theory this study focused on; establishing the status of institutionalised On-Campus Childcare Arrangements (OCCCs) for breast feeding student mothers at Kyambogo University, illuminating the coping strategies of breast feeding student mothers in taking up the dual roles of mother hood and student hood in the face of missing institutionalized OCCCs, examining the effect of missing institutionalized OCCCs on undertaking of academic activities by breast-feeding student mothers.

Academic undertakings as per the study were conceptualized as; attendance of lecture sessions by breast-feeding student mothers, attending group discussions with course mates, participating in tutorial sessions, writing exams, making academic presentations in lectures, doing and completion of course work tasks and tests as well as taking part in co-curricular activities.

The study adopted the phenomenological design because it enabled the researchers to carefully capture the information given by the breast-feeding student mothers objectively (Silverman, 2016; Creswell, 2003; Glasow, 2005). The design also enabled the researchers to accurately describe the experiences of the breast-feeding student mothers by refraining from any type of a pre given frame work but remaining true to perspectives given by the respondents so as to enhance university policies in this regard.

A total of ten breast feeding student mothers were selected from the seven faculties and the one School in the university. Due to the absence of statistical records on breast feeding student mothers at KyU, the snowball sampling technique was used for tracing breast feeding students from each faculty and the School. The researchers relied on participant referrals to get other potential respondents. The use of log books, photos, voice records, document analysis, check lists and interview guides ensured the reliability and validity of the data collected during the research process through triangulation of information collected from the above-mentioned sources. The various methods of data collection were also used for purposes of supplementation. Data was analyzed using the NVivo software version 10 and the triangulation techniques. It was presented in themes in accordance to the study objectives in order to make a final deduction and create a deeper understanding of the phenomenon . Cluster analysis diagrams extracted from the NVivo software provided a graphical representation of data which made it possible to visualise the connections among words, which were used to develop themes.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

Results were presented and discussed in themes under the respective study objectives.

##### 4.1 The status of Institutionalised on-Campus Childcare Arrangements in KyU

The findings revealed that institutionalised on-campus childcare arrangements for the 0-3 years' babies were missing at two levels; the available ones were too inadequate to be used and others were totally absent.

##### *Inadequacy of the institutionalised on-campus childcare arrangements in KyU*

The findings portrayed inadequacy in terms of quantity and quality. Only one out of the 10 interviewees knew about the existence of the child study centre at the University and she did not even use it. The one Interviewee # 4 who knew about the child study center had this to say; *I hear that there is a day care centre in the university but I have never used it...they say it is not good (15<sup>th</sup>.05.19)*. The researchers' interview with the head teacher of the child study centre on interviewee # 4's submission revealed that this facility was not advertised in the university due to its substandard condition as shown in his narrative:

*First of all, I must admit that the centre is not in a state where we expect it to be. Even our day care service leaves a lot to be desired. We don't have equipment. In fact, we normally even send away many children because of lack of facilities for them because you can imagine we have only one day care attendant who is actually like a baby sitter and is not even professional. We don't have materials or facilities that can make her look after three, five or ten children. So, lack of those facilities incapacitates us, we cannot even go out to advertise because you would want to advertise something, you're even proud of. And secondly apart from the facilities the place itself actually, our rooms have many things lacking. You will go there and you will see the room leaking, the floor is very dirty, by nature even if you scrub it, it doesn't clean up and..... so those kinds of things make us not to perform as expected. We have been hoping really every year that we are supported but in vain. We need to improve it and make it known to the students and probably the staff members. Incidentally we have actually one staff member who has a child here but we requested her to come with her baby sitter and we simply oversee the baby sitter because we cannot dedicate our single staff on that particular child.* (M. W. Lenard, personal communication, February, 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019)

Information in the above excerpt revealed that the day child care services in the University's child study centre aren't user-friendly. In this context, the inadequacy of the child care services in the child study centre negates the recommended institutionalised on-campus childcare arrangements for student mothers where care and supervision of multiple children at a time is undertaken. These include arrangements of children of ages 0-3 years (Toddlers), 3-7 and 7-10 years of age being catered for by nannies, babysitters, teachers or other providers who are well qualified and well paid. Different scholars also assert that the ratios of the care providers for children should be at 1:3 in order to cover all aspects of child development like physical, emotional, social, language, psychomotor and cognitive development. From the above discussion, it is evident that the arrangements in child study centre at

KyU are too inadequate to cater for day child care needs of the 0-3-year-old children. This may have ripple effects on access, equity and progression of breast-feeding student mothers pursuing higher education.

#### *4.2 Absent Institutionalized on Campus Child Care Arrangements*

According to the study findings these included; a childcare centre with: modification provisions for separating young non-mobile infants from older and mobile infants, breast feeding rooms for infants of 0-3 years that are divided into cubicles furnished with seats, tables, play toys, eating areas, diaper areas and bath-rooms; professional childcare takers; security for babies; pediatric medical facilities; kitchen and pantry provisions. A number of student mothers' voices were heard in this regard. Interviewee # 3 had this to say in this regard:

*Mmm there are no baby care facilities and play grounds for children, I don't see them around, I don't see any day care sort of arrangement where our children can be kept nor rooms. I mean a room, ya rooms where there are some beds, chairs, playing toys for the babies, which they can play with and may be sleep when they are tired on the beds. Such things are not available. (06<sup>th</sup>.04.19)*

To this list Interviewee 2 added the absence of warm water for bathing babies. She said;

*Because babies are still young, we need to have those things in place plus water you know that kids like bathing a lot. Warm water for that matter, all those things must be put in place to make them grow well as we also the mothers stay in class comfortably. (06<sup>th</sup>.05.19)*

Interviewees further pointed out that the university's medical facility did not cater for their babies; it only offered its services to the university students. On this aspect Interviewee # 2 had this say;

*I do not see medical facilities specific for babies here like those pediatrician services because when you go at the university hospital, they tell you they don't have services for babies like immunisation. So at least if they put like some... treatment facilities for our children, like even if you are in a lecture and the baby gets some abnormality like temperature rising, they can take care of him even when you're not there." (06<sup>th</sup>.05.19)*

The interviewees, too, cited the absence of shelters for breast feeding their babies and for baby-sitting them by the nannies in case they came with them at the university. This is evidenced in following narrative of interviewee # 1:

*There are no gazetted areas where you can leave your baby when you go for a lecture here in KyU. For example, tents may be for breast-feeding mothers. At least when you go to university with your child and maid, they sit there in a favourable environment, you go to class and find them there after the lecture. But in Kyambogo there is no such a place, the maids sit under the tree, when it rains, they rush to the classrooms, they find students there, they send them away, so you find you have nowhere to put your child and this disturbs a lot. And sometimes you find the child is sick, you cannot leave the child at home because the distance is a bit far and you cannot go with the child to Kyambogo because you have nowhere to leave it. (14<sup>th</sup>.02.19)*

In conclusion, the data for objective one revealed that most of the relevant the Institutionalised

on-campus childcare arrangements for breast-feeding mothers were missing at KyU. The only existent one was substandard and was hardly neither known nor used by the breast-feeding student mothers due to its substandard facilities. This finding indicates that KyU like many other Institutions of HE addresses by default the needs of the child free students and not student mothers. It should be noted that several scholars are in agreement that institutionalised on-campus childcare arrangements are a critical resource for the success of student mothers in pursuing their degrees and diplomas in higher institutions of learning as they can help student mothers enrol, remain in colleges and universities and graduate more quickly. This therefore makes the availability of childcare services in universities critical because their absence affects the academic and parental achievement of student mothers.

#### *4.3 Coping Strategies Student Mothers Undertake in the Absence of OCCAs at KyU*

Through the observation method, some student mothers were seen breast feeding in classrooms, in cars, and others under tree shades by the researchers. Study participants also reported that they had devised several provisions for managing their motherly roles alongside their academic undertakings in the face of missing on campus child care arrangements. Such strategies included; receiving child care support from family and student friends, use of baby sitters, ignoring one of the two roles, time tabling the activities for the two roles, creating extra time to read, and getting help from spouses.

##### *Assistance from student friends*

Friends helped student mothers cope with the dual roles in the face of missing childcare arrangements at KyU. For instance; one interviewee was escorted by a friend who helped her take care of the baby during the interview. Furthermore, networking with student friends enabled absentee student mothers to receive up-dates on the; content covered in the lecture sessions, assignments issued by lectures and examinations' time table as explained by Interviewee # 2 in the following narrative:

*Friends are the ones who can be there for you; sometimes you don't know that deadlines for handing in course works are due because you have other responsibilities to do at home so the friends keep you updated. They call and tell you they want this assignment, we are having this test or exam on such and such a date, where are you, the lecturer has come (06<sup>th</sup>.05.19).*

##### *Assistance from family and relatives*

The role of family such as; sisters, aunts, grandmothers, in-laws and husbands equally helped student mothers juggle their dual roles quite successfully. The interviewees revealed that sometimes their husbands helped them in the conceptualization of class materials, paying baby sitters and also staying home to carry babies during critical times such as the examination period. For example, in one instance, one researcher observed a father baby-sit his baby at the university campus because the mother was in a lecture session because they did not have a nanny. Such scenarios occur in the absence of a baby sitter as indicated by interviewee # 3 who had this to say concerning help from her spouse:

*Ya, ya the father of the child is very supportive. Mmmm I remember a time when I did not have someone to help, I would leave the child with my spouse, and you see he is also just a student. So, I would leave him with the child and when I come back, he could also go. He is very supportive;*

*sometimes he can even take out the child so that I can read. (06<sup>th</sup>.04.19)*

#### *Assistance from hired nannies*

Eight out of the ten interviewees indicated that going to the university with hired nannies helped them attend to their dual roles simultaneously. This was illustrated by interviewee # 10's explanation in the following narrative:

*What I have seen most mothers use these baby care services within campus... I have seen most of them come with their baby sitters to campus and stay near the lecture rooms. They don't move far away because the mother has to keep checking on the baby to breastfeed. For me I have a baby sitter who has a home, so I just take my baby to her and pick her in the evening. So, I normally see mothers coming with their baby sitters to campus in case they feel they have to breast feed, they move out and do it for a short time and run back for lectures. So, these babysitters help us a lot. (14<sup>th</sup>.02.19)*

The above excerpt shows privately hired nannies enable student mothers attend to their babies within proximity and to academic programs as well. This helps to alleviate fears that may arise within the student mother in case the baby is far away from her. It is also evident that despite absence of on-campus childcare arrangements for breast-feeding student mothers, they still come to university premises with their children because it is unavoidable to attend to them particularly when they are still breast-feeding.

However, these nannies were shelter-less as indicated in interviewee # 7's explanation that;

*Most times i see baby sitters on the other side of vocational studies faculty, I see some of them seated under those trees, and they lay pieces of cloth down and put their babies there. (6<sup>th</sup>.05.19)*

This excerpt reveals that the above mentioned privately provided childcare arrangement by the student mothers needs to be enhanced at an institutionally. This excerpt reveals that student mothers miss institutionalised on campus baby care rooms as shelters for their nannies and babies. This is especially critical during the rainy season and in the case of breast-feeding student mothers in the evening program. The absence of such facilities left lecture rooms as the only option for nannies and their babies shelter themselves from darkness and rain. In the worst-case scenarios, the nannies baby sat children in lecture rooms where evening lectures were going on in because custodians locked up all those that were un- occupied.

#### *4.4 Creating Extra Time*

Findings from interviewees' responses indicated that student mothers sought created extra time for successfully under taking the two roles by either sleeping very late in the night, waking up very early in the morning or using all the free time in between lecture hours for undertaking academic activities. For instance, interviewee # 5 stated that she usually started her day very early in the morning; between 3:00 am- 5:00am in the morning in order to take care of her baby's needs before running to the university. In this regard, interviewee 6, too, said: *I wake up early, cook the porridge, boil the milk and prepare the child ..... (06<sup>th</sup>.04.19)*

Three out of the ten interviewees said they maximally use the time outside the lecture sessions for

doing assignments, revision and any other relevant academic undertakings. Interviewee 7 indicated this scenario as follows:

*Another thing is that I always create my extra time for revision; I make sure that when I am at campus I revise before going back home. Then when I go home, I pay attention to the baby and in case I still want to revise and the baby is also within, I do it when he is sleeping. Another thing is that when I am given course work, I immediately begin working on it. I make sure I do the research faster from the library and by the time we are handing in, my work is ready and not sketchy because I shall have done it already beforehand. (6<sup>th</sup>.05.19)*

Four out of the ten interviewees reported that they sleep very late in the night after 11.00 pm and use all their free as a strategy for accommodating the two roles. Interviewee 9 reiterated on the issue of time tabling when she explained that:

*If it's time for the baby, I give it utmost attention. In other words, i create time for I time like for personal reading. I stretch; I sacrifice sleep late in the night like at 1.00 or 3.00 am in the morning and read when the baby is sleeping. (10<sup>th</sup>.05.19)*

Similar to the above interviewee 10 noted in her own words that:

*Exactly, you time table yourself, this is first, this is second like that like that. If I want to bathe in the morning, I first prepare, boil milk and as am bathing the milk is boiling. Then after bathing I come and check on it. I do all the things concurrently because the time is not enough if I do one activity at a time. (14<sup>th</sup>.02.19)*

*Mother-hood as a motivation for undertaking academics seriously*

Interviewee # 5 revealed that her child encouraged her to excel in her academic undertakings when she explained that:

*...because when I got the child, I think I got more reason to focus and to know that I have to read for something. I now have a goal. I have to read and pass highly and do better for me and my child because now I have a responsibility; I have someone to take care of, I have someone to be there for so I do my best (08<sup>th</sup>.04.19)*

From the above narration, it is evident that student mothers surpass all the negative energies around the mother-hood role and instead focus on their studies as an asset for a brighter future for both of them.

*Ignoring one of the two roles*

All the ten interviewees acknowledged that sometimes, there was collusion in the child care and academic schedules. This led to some student mothers concentrating on one role at the expense of the other. In such instances most interviewees (07 out of 10) said they would forego academic activities than abandon their babies, especially in critical times like when the babies became sick. This state of affairs was ably expressed by interviewee # 1 when she said narrated her experience as follows:

*Now the challenges are sometimes too much, I totally fail to get time to go for studies, you come from the university, and you find the baby is sick, so you have to attend to the baby. You have course work; the deadlines are like deadlines but your baby is sick and you cannot leave your baby so you don't*

*concentrate on the course work because the time is not there. Another challenge is when you find the maid sick at home, you have to go to the university yet you cannot leave the baby alone. So, you have to remain home therefore you will not have time for lectures because you will be baby-sitting (14<sup>th</sup>.02.19)*

Conclusively, in cases where the university has not provided institutionalised on-campus childcare arrangements, student mothers have devised means of coping and have learnt how to resolve the tension of combining motherhood and education so as to pave a brighter career and family future. Many other scholarly findings too, found that student mothers continued to play their dual roles amidst the challenges they encountered because in the end they hope to benefit from the individual rates of return that accrue from higher education . However, student mothers in this study, like those in Australia attested to the fact that it becomes impossible to effectively balance the two roles in the absence of proper, appropriate support and coordination extended to them by the university's management.

#### *4.5 Academic Undertakings in the Absence of Institutionalized on Campus Childcare Arrangements*

In this section, findings on how child care dilemmas affected academic undertakings of breast-feeding student mothers are presented and discussed. Interviewees unanimously indicated that due to the missing institutionalised on-campus childcare arrangements, their participation in academic undertakings was inadequate in various ways. This involved missing: lectures, academic discussions, tutorials and revision time; handing in course work assignments late and starting examinations late or finishing them pre-maturely.

##### *Missing lectures*

Nine out of the ten interviewees reported that they missed lectures in order to attend to their childcare roles. Interviewee #10 illustrated this finding when she explained her experience as indicated in the following narration:

*It happened to me last month on a Wednesday when I was supposed to attend lectures yet it was the day that this baby had to be immunized so I had to take the baby to Naguru hospital so that he is immunized and doesn't miss the process. That day I missed three lectures and again this coming month I am again taking back the baby for immunisation so I am going to miss lectures on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> because this baby is supposed to be taken back for the third immunization on that day. (14<sup>th</sup>.02.19)*

In the above scenarios, it is evident that student mothers' attendance of lectures was inhibited by the absence of institutionalized on campus immunisation services for their children.

Interviewee # 3 explained that she normally missed lectures due to the un-bearable pain accumulating breast milk inflicted on her. She resorted to breast feeding her baby several times. Consequently, she also incurred extra transport costs in the process of going to and fro several times to breast feed her child. The following excerpt of interviewee #3's narrative illustrates this scenario:

*... like me now the challenge I find is that I have a lot of breast milk and if I have lectures from morning up to evening, I have to miss one and attend another because I have to breastfeed the baby. Either I have to go and come back which is a bit costly because I have to board a boda-boda (motor-cycle) to*

*and from since when breast milk accumulates, you cannot be comfortable so that is also another challenge. (06<sup>th</sup>.04.19)*

Interviewee # 3 further observed that baby care rooms and pantries were absent in the university, so she could not bring her baby and nanny to the university. This finding indicates that irregular attendance of lectures and the transport costs incurred by this student mother could have been addressed by the above-mentioned missing institutionalised on campus childcare arrangements.

The student mother in the aforementioned excerpt continued breast-feeding her baby because of the benefits derived from it. Documentary evidence, too, confirms that breast-feeding protects babies against numerous infections and diseases like; otitis media, respiratory infections, diarrhoea, and also promotes natural bonding between the mother and the baby. Based on these findings it is therefore important to promote breast feeding student mothers' commitment to physically breast feed their children because its many benefits to them as well as the babies cannot be underestimated. These findings, too, imply that despite innovations like the use of breast pumps and breast milk storage facilities that have been developed, physical breast-feeding remains the best for babies .

#### *4.6 Starting Examinations Late or Finishing Prematurely*

Five out the ten interviewees indicated that they had experienced having to enter late for or prematurely finishing examinations due to child care demands. In explaining this experience, interviewee 4 narrated that:

*I remember when I was writing my second last exam, I had no one to keep the baby. I moved around in confusion, I wasted almost 30 minutes; I reached an extent of even leaving the exam. I then said to myself that instead of leaving my baby alone, I rather miss the exam. As with the exam, I can still come back but with the baby I have got one. In case something bad happens to him, I will leave to regret. Then finally some young girl found me while I was standing, she told me, madam you are not entering the exam, your friends are already doing the paper. I told her I don't have anyone to keep the baby, it's that girl who helped me carry the baby as I wrote my exam. (15<sup>th</sup>.05.19)*

In the above mentioned quote it is evident that the student mother was unable to report for the examination on time due to the absence of an institutionalised on campus childcare arrangement of a baby sitter.

Two interviewees (02) also mentioned absence of institutionalized on campus medical services for their children as a factor that hindered some student mothers from completing examination papers. Interviewee # 2 expounded this aspect in the following narrative:

*You find difficulties maybe you are going in an examination; they call you that your son is very sick, you go with that pressure, you have to worry about your son and at the same time write the exam. Maybe your still in the exam and you have done like two or three numbers out of the expected four, you then rush to take the child in the hospital, yet if the baby was in the university hospital you are a bit okay. You find that you lack concentration in the exam because you're worried about the sick child and at the end of the day, you end up not performing well hence you feel so bad. (06<sup>th</sup>.05.19)*

This excerpt indicates that the presence of on campus childcare medical arrangements for student mothers could go a long way to enhance their academic undertakings at the university.

#### 4.7 Limited Concentration on Academic Undertakings

All the ten interviewees indicated that whenever they overlooked their childcare demands in order to attend lectures, their concentration span was low. This was because they continuously thought about the babies they had left at home- *whether they had eaten, whether they were doing well*, among other concerns related to childcare. The divided attention experienced while in lecture sessions made student mothers unable to fully understand and grasp concepts. The interviewees explained that such experiences resulted in posting low grades in examinations. This phenomenon was illustrated by interviewee # 5's narrative when she explained that:

*I used not to concentrate in class and sometimes I got out of the lectures early. Like I used to think about him all the time, like how is he, has he eaten, what is he doing right now and sometimes my sister would call me when am in the lecture room. Hurry up I have some where I want to go (08<sup>th</sup>.04.19).*

This excerpt demonstrates that student mothers are restless in lecture sessions when they are unable to monitor their babies at close range. This finding implies that the presence of baby-sitting rooms and nannies among other childcare facilities within the university are institutionalised requirements that enable student mothers to concentrate on academic undertakings in HEIs.

#### 4.8 Handing in Substandard Course Work Assignments

All the ten interviewees indicated that the deadlines set by academic staff for handing in course work assignments are non-responsive to the childcare responsibilities of student mothers. According to the interviewees, deadlines for handing in course work assignments are the same for all students. No clauses of consideration for special cases like breast feeding student mothers are indicated in these deadlines. Consequently, student mothers are shy to request for additional time due to the absence of an on-campus policy on breast feeding student mothers that gives them the right to do so. This scenario has resulted into student mothers handing in course work assignments that are substandard, hence scoring low grades. This concern was emphasized by interviewee 2 who said:

*Sometimes you find that the baby is sick, he is admitted, you take the whole day, the whole week without looking into the book and at the end of the day you need to pass. They need course works, they need those assignments and at the end of the week you find you have not done anything so you do them hurriedly and you know what it means doing something hurriedly, it can't be proper like when you have given it time so you end up failing. (06<sup>th</sup>.05.19)*

On this view, interviewees were quick to acknowledge that in many cases exemption from handing in course on time was on humanitarian grounds. However, they also observed that not all lecturers have a human face in this matter. Interview # 4 with tears in her eyes narrated a scenario when a female lecturer rebuked her for giving birth during her studies. This happened when she delayed to hand in her assignment due to child care related reasons. In this context, breast feeding student mothers are missing a university policy that protects their right to take care of their babies while having the chance to attend

to their course work assignments with some considerations from the academic staff.

#### *4.9 Missing Tutorials and Group Discussions*

Seven out of the ten interviewees expressed that when they were unable to participate in tutorials and group discussions due to childcare demands fear of failing academically was always lingering in their minds. Interviewee #1 articulated this concern in the following narrative of her explanation:

*Me personally this semester I don't know how am going to perform. I have to look after my son and study at the same time. Balancing the two is not easy so you find that things are so hard. Sometimes I miss discussions and tutorial as I have to go back when they call me that the child is crying so hard or has refused to feed on the bottle. Now that means that it is me who has to go and attend to him personally. Me being a mother I can't leave him to continue crying like that because it might cause some diseases to him so I leave off everything at the university and go and attend to him. By doing so I end up missing group discussions and tutorials, the result will be failing. (10<sup>th</sup>.05.19)*

In summary, the aforementioned findings reveal that student mothers at KyU continued playing their dual roles unceasingly in an academic environment without on-campus childcare arrangements. It was also evident from the voices of the interviewees that when the two roles were in conflict, they would rather miss academic activities than abandon their babies especially in critical times like when the babies were sick. Too, found that in case breast feeding student mothers focused all the attention on studies in their struggle to achieve their educational goals without sacrificing for the fulfillment of the mothering roles, such behavior would contrast with their traditional role of motherhood. As such, the academic community must provide the required support to breast-feeding student mothers as a platform on which to balance their two roles effectively. This observation is supported by who found that graduation rates were higher for student mothers in the University of New York when they had the support service of on-campus childcare than when they didn't have it.

## **5. Conclusions**

First, the study established that the only available institutionalised on-campus childcare arrangement for breast-feeding student mothers offered inadequate services, especially for the 0-3-year olds. Other childcare arrangements for breast-feeding student mothers were also found to be missing at KyU and these included; breast-feeding rooms, a childcare centre with equipment and facilities for babies of 0-3-year olds, professional childcare takers, and security for the babies, paediatric medical facilities, and kitchen and pantry services for babies.

Secondly, despite the absence of on campus child care arrangements, breast feeding student mothers have devised means of coping and have learnt how to resolve the tension of combining motherhood and academic undertakings so as to pave a brighter career and family future. However, their efforts were limited by the missing on campus child care arrangements, especially shelters for their babies and privately hired nannies.

Thirdly, when the two roles were in conflict student mothers easily abandoned academic undertakings

in order to attend to their babies, especially in critical times like when the babies were sick. Meaning that better access to on-campus childcare arrangements could have helped them avoid taking a break from their academics.

## 6. Recommendations

Based on the study findings it was recommended that KyU affirmatively supports breast feeding mothers in the ways:

Bench mark other universities, government departments and agencies that provide adequate childcare facilities for mothers so as to design and develop relevant childcare facilities localized to Kyambogo University.

Develop gender-based policies and budgets that enable breast feeding student mothers to fully participate in academic undertakings equally with their non-parent student counterparts. Specifically, the forms of institutionalized on-campus child care arrangements desired by breast feeding student mothers at Kyambogo university included: Teaching sessions, tests, examinations' and assignments' frameworks that have child-care responsive considerations for student mothers' time spent on child care activities (breast feeding, babies' ill- health based needs of the babies, babysitting); baby's and mother's food supplements; security for babies; counseling services tailed for breast feeding student mothers; relevant sanitation facilities for on-campus child care; provision of basic child play materials, play rooms and furnished rest rooms; a fully furnished kitchen and pantry; pediatric and immunization medical services, registration of the breast feeding student mothers, inclusion of breast feeding mothers in the university's strategic plans, policies and budgets, baby care rooms, professional nannies, quality and free of charge on campus child care arrangements. The university should consider putting in place mechanisms for capturing data (statistics) of breast-feeding mothers with a view of strategically improving their participation in academic undertakings as well as their self-esteem and partner with entrepreneurs who can avail private on campus child care arrangements to breast feeding student mothers at a cost in instances where it lacks the funds to do so. This will go a long way to enhance academic undertakings of student mothers who can partake of such an arrangement.

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