



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

Course: BSc (Hons) Health and Social Care

Module: Independent Project (BMHP6020_BIRM)

Component 1: Element 1 - Project Proposal

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Element 1 - Project Proposal

My project title: Effects of Breastfeeding on the Mental Health of Young Mothers in the UK

1) Aim:

This research explores the effects of breastfeeding on the mental health of young mothers in the UK, and to evaluate its influence on the cognitive development of children, with a particular focus on those diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. Studies show breastfeeding can influence maternal mental health (Packineau, 2025). This research seeks to understand the correlation between breastfeeding practices and the psychological well-being of mothers (aged 18-30) within the UK.

2) Objectives:

- Define and examine the correlation between breastfeeding duration and exclusivity, the prevalence of postpartum depression among UK mothers and cognitive development in children, especially those with autism.
- Analyse current literature in relation to the impact of social support systems on breastfeeding practices, maternal mental health outcomes, and cognitive development in children, particularly those with autism, among young mothers in the UK.
- Provide an evaluation of the effectiveness of current UK healthcare policies and interventions in promoting breastfeeding, supporting the mental health of young mothers, and enhancing cognitive development in children with autism, identifying gaps and areas for improvement through the form of a thematic analysis.
- Provide recommendations for targeted interventions to enhance breastfeeding rates, improve mental health support for young mothers, and optimise cognitive development in children with autism in the UK.

3) Background/Rationale:

This research addresses critical gaps in understanding the intricate relationship between breastfeeding, maternal mental health, and child cognitive development within the UK (Yuen et al., 2022).

Breastfeeding practices have been linked to significant benefits for both mothers and children, yet the psychological impact on young mothers, particularly those (aged 18-30) requires deeper investigation. The cognitive development of children, especially those with autism, may be influenced by breastfeeding duration and exclusivity (World Health Organisation, 2017).

By exploring the correlation between breastfeeding practices, support systems, and maternal psychological well-being, this study aims to provide evidence-based insights (Handayani et al., 2025).

Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing targeted interventions and policies that promote breastfeeding, support maternal mental health, and optimize cognitive outcomes for children in the UK.

4) *Methods:*

- Approach: Secondary research focused on existing UK-specific data.
- Data Types: Includes peer-reviewed journal articles, NHS reports, and relevant UK policy documents.
- Selection Criteria: Sources must be directly related to breastfeeding, maternal mental health, and autism in the UK.
- Analysis: Will involve a thematic review to identify common trends and gaps in current research.
- Ethics: Strict adherence to citation standards to prevent plagiarism and ensure academic integrity throughout the research process.

5) *Resources:*

Online databases (PubMed, Scopus), university libraries, citation management software (Mendeley) and MS Word software.

6) *Timescale: 27 weeks*

Months	My plan
September	Finding my research title and project initiation.
October	Research proposal submission.
November	Interim research analysis.
December	Research adjustments and refinements.
January	Intensive research data collection.
February	Research data analysis.
March	Final Submission

7) Self-reflection as researcher (any strengths or challenges):

A significant challenge will be time management, balancing deadlines with thorough research. Effectively integrating large amounts of data is another concern, potentially impacting the depth of analysis. Both require careful planning and the development of effective strategies, like setting realistic milestones and utilising data analysis tools, to ensure the research process remains on track and the results are comprehensive.

References

Handayani, L., Prihadi, K.D., Vergawita, T., Fitriani, I., Hafidz, B. and Aisyahrani, A.I.B. (2025). The role of social-psychological support in breastfeeding promotion among young mothers: literature review. *International Journal of Public Health Science (IJPHS)*, 14(1), p.148. doi:<https://doi.org/10.11591/ijphs.v14i1.25515>.

Yuen, M., Hall, O.J., Masters, G.A., Nephew, B.C., Carr, C., Leung, K., Griffen, A., McIntyre, L., Byatt, N. and Moore Simas, T.A. (2022). The Effects of Breastfeeding on Maternal Mental Health: A Systematic Review. *Journal of Women's Health*, 31(6). doi:<https://doi.org/10.1089/jwh.2021.0504>.

Packineau, Q. (2025). *The Effect of Breastfeeding on Maternal Mental Health*.UND Scholarly Commons. Available at: https://commons.und.edu/nurs-capstones/386/?utm_source=commons.und.edu%2Fnurs-capstones%2F386&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages (Accessed 10 Oct. 2025).

World Health Organisation (2017). *Continued Breastfeeding for Healthy Growth and Development of Children*. www.who.int. Available at: <https://www.who.int/tools/elena/bbc/continued-breastfeeding>.