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**Finnish mothers returning to work after the birth of their youngest child: The child's age, the mother's years of education, and the financial situation as explanatory factors**

The study explored Finnish mothers' experiences of returning to work (RTW) after the birth of their youngest child. It examined how the timing of the return is perceived and how factors such as the child's age, maternal education, and the financial situation influence this experience. Based on attachment theory, a mother's RTW can be a stressful transition for the child, potentially affecting the mother's experience as well. The data included 312 mothers who returned to work within two years of childbirth. Logistic regression analysis was used to examine associations between RTW experiences and the child's age, maternal education, and the perceived financial situation. On average, mothers returned to work when their child was 1 year and 3 months old. Most (72.8%) found the timing appropriate, while 25.6% felt it was too early – these mothers returned when their child was around 1 year and 1 month. Higher education and older child age at return were linked to more positive RTW experiences. The findings underscore the importance of supportive family leave policies and family-friendly work practices.

Keywords: work-family interface, working life, parenting, family leave reform