



Justine Balousek and Itzel Munoz  
Department of Nursing and Health Sciences  
Jeanne Burda MS, RN, Faculty Sponsor  
*Elmhurst University, Elmhurst, Illinois*

## Abstract

In the past, it was unknown whether maternity leave and postpartum mood and anxiety disorders were linked. After reviewing national surveys and research studies, a direct relationship has been found. The length of maternity leave has been found to impact the mental health of a postpartum mother.

## Statement of Problem

In primiparous or multiparous women around the world, does maternity leave impact the likelihood of postpartum mood and anxiety disorders?

## Methods

### Inclusion Criteria:

- Any race or ethnicity
- Studies that were completed between 2014 and 2020
- Studies that included maternity leave as an intervention
- Studies that measured any postpartum mood and anxiety disorders

### Exclusion Criteria:

- Studies that only used men as their participants
- Studies that were published in a language other than English
- Studies that measured mood and anxiety disorders outside of the postpartum time

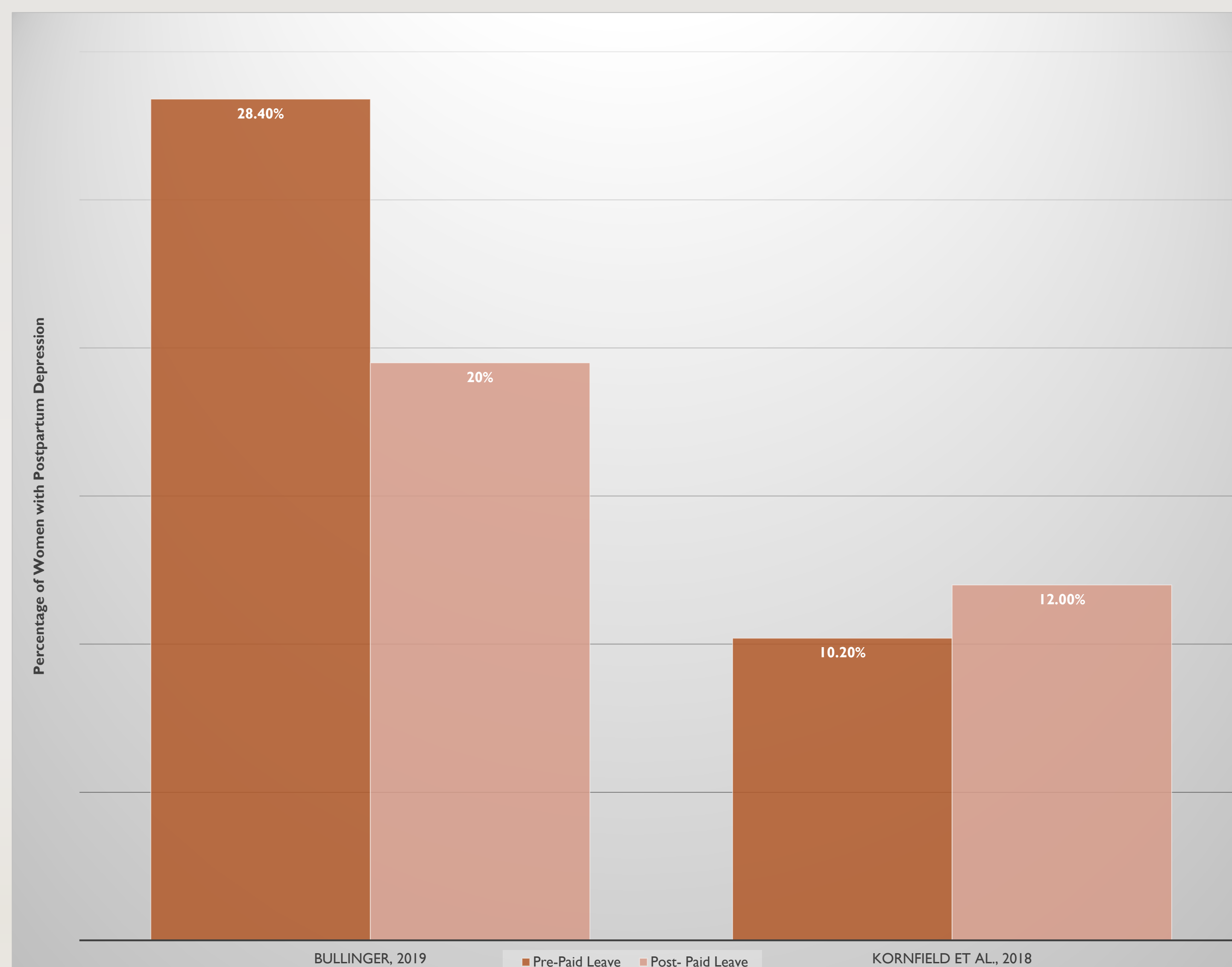
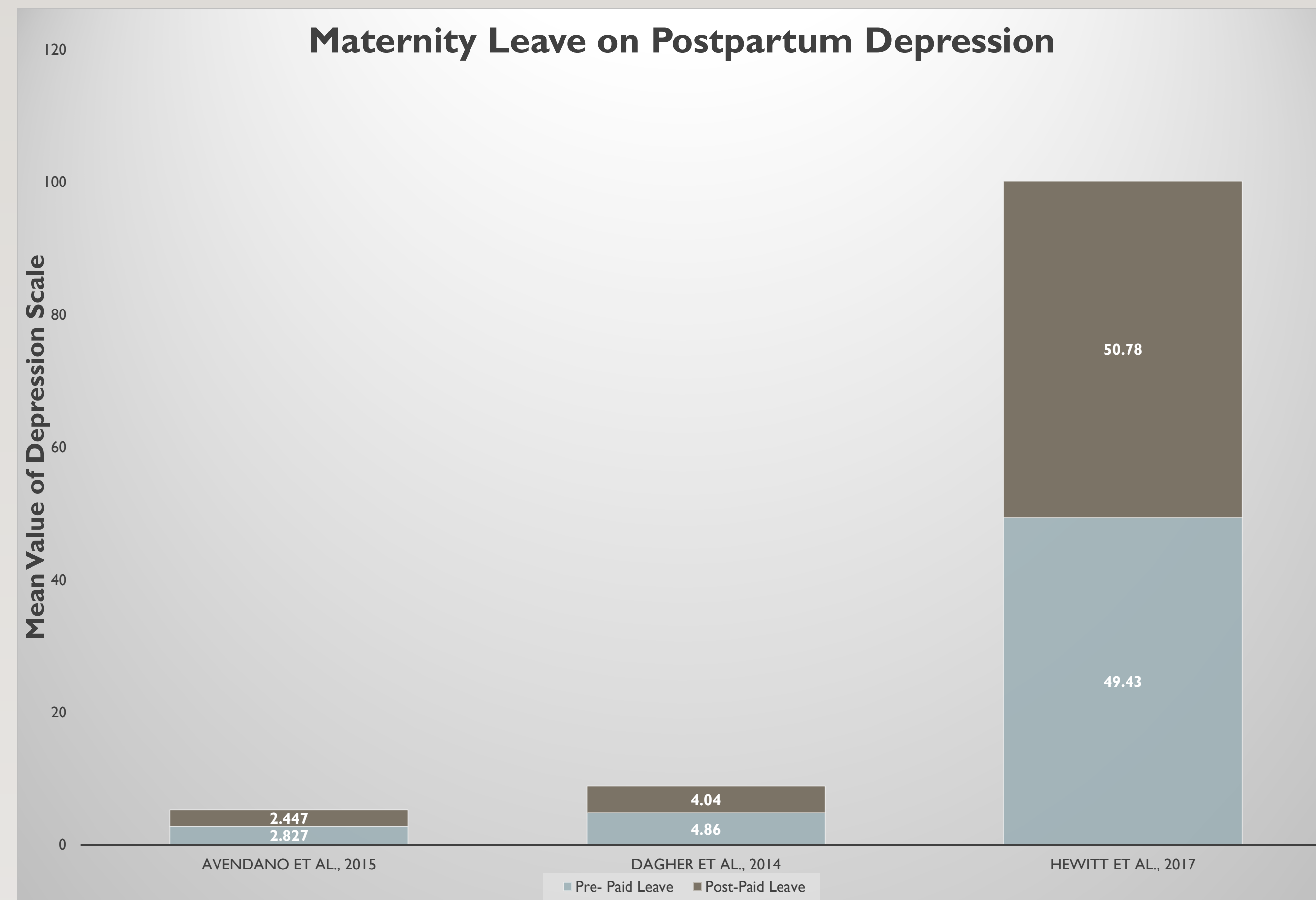
### Search Process:

- Search engines: PubMed, CINAHL Complete, and MEDLINE with Full Text
  - Keywords: maternity leave, postpartum mood & anxiety disorders, postpartum depression
- Two cross-sectional studies, a cohort study, and two difference-in-difference studies were used  
-Two authors reviewed eight articles. Two articles were excluded for not looking at maternity leave and one was excluded for not measuring postpartum mood and anxiety disorders. Five articles met the criteria and were used for data collection.

-3 articles used depression scales (Edinburgh Depression Scale, EURO Depression Scale, and Short Form 12)

-2 articles used surveys/questionnaires (Patient Health Questionnaire and a comparison of self-reported surveys)

## Results



## Conclusion

Based on the evidence from the research studies, there is a prominent link between maternity leave and the risk of women having postpartum mood and anxiety disorders. As for the length of maternity leave, the average length of maternity leave among the research studies were six weeks and did show a decrease in the risk for women developing postpartum mood and anxiety disorders (PPMAD). In particular, one of the articles showed maternity leave up to twelve months long and this length of paid leave showed the greatest overall decrease in developing PPMAD. However, the likelihood of women being able to have a twelve month long maternity leave is unrealistic. Therefore, an average of six weekslong maternity leave is beneficial enough for women to take to help prevent PPMAD. In addition, a woman having unpaid maternity leave instead paid leave does not significantly decrease the possibility of developing PPMAD.

## Future Research

More research should be done on this topic that includes the following changes:

- Research that includes different socioeconomic classes and not just the middle class or above
- The impact of maternity leave on PPMAD if the infant requires special care
- Research if different cultural practices during maternity leave have an effect on developing PPMAD.

## References

- Avendano, M., Berkman, L. F., Brugiavini, A., & Pasini, G. (2015). The long-run effect of maternity leave benefits on mental health: Evidence from European countries. *Social Science & Medicine*, 132, 45–53. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2015.02.037>
- Bullinger, L. R. (2019). The effect of paid family leave on infant and parental health in the united states. *Journal of Health Economics*, 66, 101–116. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhealeco.2019.05.006>
- Dagher, R. K., McGovern, P. M., & Dowd, B. E. (2013). Maternity leave duration and postpartum mental and physical health: Implications for leave policies. *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law*, 39(2), 369–416. <https://doi.org/10.1215/03616878-2416247>
- Hewitt, B., Strazdins, L., & Martin, B. (2017). The benefits of paid maternity leave for mothers' post-partum health and wellbeing: Evidence from an Australian evaluation. *Social Science & Medicine*, 182, 97–105. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2017.04.022>
- Kornfeind, K. R., & Sipsma, H. L. (2018). Exploring the link between maternity leave and postpartum depression. *Women's Health Issues*, 28(4), 321–326. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.whi.2018.03.008>