



An Analysis About The Awareness And Adequacy Of Maternity Benefits In The Teaching Sector Of Private Schools.

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ABSTRACT

With the significant increase in women's participation in the Indian workforce, it is imperative for organizations and government agencies to assess ways to streamline the experience of women while playing the roles from creator to nurturer. The government has repeatedly tried to solve the problems of women working in organisations by enacting various women-friendly laws and providing necessary benefits for women. Are these women informed about the benefits and regulations?(Patnaik) This article aims to capture the comprehension of staff regarding the Maternity Benefit Act 1961 and its adequacy and availability in the teaching sector of private schools.

Introduction

Women account for 50% of the total workforce. Employment necessitates a balance between work, child-bearing, and child-raising responsibilities. The constitutional framework seeks to ensure equality between women and men in all spheres of life. In line with ILO, Maternity Benefit Act seeks to ensure maternity protection for the female population. Maternity Benefit Act 1961 and Maternity Benefit Act 2017 ensure active economic participation after maternity. Education, information and national support systems are factors that influence and empower women. (Anchu, Pillai, Meenulal, & Jyothilakshmy, 2019) The process of empowering women involves giving them the strength and courage to recognize their place in society, take independent decisions, stand up for their rights, and enjoy their rights. (Rakshitha, 2018)

The term "maternity" refers to the time between the end of pregnancy and the first few days after giving birth. Maternity regulations govern the employment of women in specific establishments during specific times prior to and following childbirth and encompasses maternity benefits and other forms of payment. According to an investigation, marriage and the inability to compete with a competent workforce were cited as major factors in workers' decision to leave their professions. (Dr. Ravi Kumar, 2020)

The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 contains the rules and regulations governing maternity leave in India. According to that maternity law, maternity leave eligible women working in recognized organizations and factories can apply for maternity leave for a maximum period of 6 months. Female employees can take maternity leave either before or after the birth of the child. Their maternity leave can also last before and after the birth. All women who are pregnant, adopting or undergoing a miscarriage are eligible to take maternity leave in India as they meet the criteria for Indian maternity classes. During this free time, the woman and the employer must pay the employee full salary. The main purpose of the law is to remove the obstacles that women face in their journey to motherhood. The main purpose of the law is that women can combine working and not make compromises when choosing to have a child. The law is an important law that protects the dignity of motherhood. It also helps ensure that working women can properly care for their children. Apart from ensuring women's rights, maternity benefits also help women financially. While modernization has provided society with many opportunities, there is still a sense that women are only meant for the domestic sphere and cannot be trusted to handle difficulties. (Gowramma, 2018) The support that Indian mothers receive before and after having a baby is ingrained in our Indian culture. Therefore, it makes sense to focus on motherhood itself in the workplace. This is only possible with the help of the Indian Government's Maternity Benefit Act, which allows expectant mothers to focus on their families and take time off from work in the form of maternity leave.

In 2017 some amendments were made to the law. The 2017 amendment increases the duration of maternity leave from 12 weeks to 26 weeks, required maternity leave for adoptive and surrogate mothers, required employers to provide information on maternity benefits, and made childcare facilities.

This paper deals with probing into the available maternity benefits in India and awareness about these benefits among the women work force. It also includes a study on whether the women are satisfied with the currently provided maternity leave.

As this research topic is broad, this paper focuses on the private school teaching sector. This research is focused on the nude act and studies that identify act effects.

Literature Review

1. Rajshree Karbhari Gethe, Ashish Pandey and Shailesh J. Mehta (2023) studied the impact of Maternity Benefits Act, 1961 [Amendment 2017] on the employment status of employed mothers in India. The report proposes that the government should implement job subsidies to encourage women's employment. The law's proper implementation in the private sector should also be reviewed by the government.
2. (Rai, 2020) examine the scope and sustainability of changes in the Birth Benefit Act over the long term and the changing dynamics of economic sectors. The study makes some recommendations to improve the Maternity Benefit Act to make it more inclusive.
3. (Madhekar, 2020) provided an overview of maternity benefits in India and a comparison with selected countries.
4. Jean D'Cunha (2018) examines the Indian Maternity (Amendment) Act, 2017 and also discusses unpaid care work and gender division of labour.
5. Dr. Ipseeta Satpathy, D.Litt, Dr. B.C.M.Patnaik, Mrs. Mitu Agarwal (2014) made "1961. A YEAR OF awareness of the MATERNITY BENEFITS PROGRAMMING Act in the Semi-urban Region". Semi-urban areas were partially aware or unaware of the Maternity Benefit Act 1961 and that most women were partially satisfied or dissatisfied with the leave provided.
6. Saumya Uma and Aditya Kamath (2020) critically analyze the amendments to the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961. The authors discuss four major changes to the law and then propose three corrective measures to increase state involvement.
7. Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 read with amendment of 2017: The Maternity Benefit Act is the primary maternity care law in India. Realized in 1961, it aims to "regulate pre- and post-natal employment and maternity and other compensations for women". An employer is prohibited from knowingly employing or hiring women under certain circumstances. Mainly, the article provided 12 weeks of maternity leave, which has now been changed to 26 weeks. The Maternity Benefit Act regulates special leave and pay rules and let women rest and nurse. The 2017 amendment added section 11A, which requires establishments with at least 50 employees to provide childcare. Despite the woman's entitlements, the employer cannot terminate or dismiss her for non-combatant absence during maternity leave. The following section prevents deductions from pay for parental leave. According to the law, the punishment is a maximum of 3 months in prison or a fine of up to rupees 500 or both.
8. Dr. A. Bharathy (2023) 'India's Landmark Maternity Act: Preparing for a Working Mother Friendly Workplace' uses a case study approach to explore the world's best working mother strategies and initiatives. the new birth law in our country and emphasizes the need to identify new areas where a workplace friendly workplace can be promoted in our country.
9. C. Horwood, A. Surie, L. Haskins, S. Luthuli, R. Hinton, A. Chowdhury and N. Rollins (2020) examined perspective and observation of breastfeeding in informal work environments among male and female workers. According to the study, mothers were frequently obligated to resume work shortly after delivery due in part to family and financial responsibilities. Upon returning to work, many mothers changed their feeding practices and added maternal substitutes. Sociocultural challenges affected breastfeeding practices. As a result, working mothers were limited in their capacity to breastfeed outside their homes and women who breastfed at their workplace were not given the respect they should deserve.
10. Shashi Bala's (2012) study on the implementation of the Maternity Benefit Act sheds light on essential aspects of maternity leave: duration, benefits and source of funding; to see the impact/significance of Indian legislation in relation to ILO maternity standards; examine the perspective of the employer and the beneficiaries of the law on childbirth; to investigate issues raised in the courts in relation to the Maternity Benefit Act; other protective measures available in the organization; to investigate the irregular work of employees due to maternity problems.
11. Jessamine Mathew (2019) analyzes the intent of the Maternity Benefit Act of 1961 and the Employees' National Insurance Act of 1948 as amended in 2017. According to the author, the maternity allowance law promotes the opportunities of young mothers to participate in working life, without preventing them from having and raising a child. The legislation offers "gender benefits" that are exclusive to male workers. The author outlines three strategies to eliminate gender discrimination in the workplace by reorienting the social structure.
12. Chaitali Wadhwa (2021) "Maternity benefits to avoid discrimination in the workplace: a comparative analysis" explores and elucidate the current legal system, presents a comparison. and explores alternative models of maternity benefits.
13. N. Aariya, Girija Anil (2022) studies about the facility provided for the female teachers in the prenatal period., understand the level of the management's support and to analyse the discrimination on

employment and termination. The investigation revealed that the management is not willing to keep female employees working during pregnancy and instead force them to leave work temporarily. So they have a huge job loss in the last years.

14. G. Gopalakrishnan and Dr G. Brindha (2017) A Study on Maternity Benefit and its Effectiveness in Construction Industry discusses about the various maternity benefits, workers' awareness of the services available and whether they are entitled to benefits or not.
15. Dr K. Kirubakaran, Lavael Selsiya.A (2022) A Study on Maternity Benefit and Its Effectiveness in Workplace analyses the laws and systems made for the period of maternal protection and their rights, their effective implementation and the main problems of women working during the maternity period.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study are:

- To study the awareness of the women employees of the organizations about the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 and the amendments on the same.
- To study the satisfaction of the respondents with the currently provided maternity leave.
- To analyse whether the provision of Crèche facility and nursing breaks affects the satisfaction level of maternity benefits.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study will be conducted among the women working at private schools. A sample of 200 working women will be selected. Since the study focuses on the various aspects of maternity benefits availed by the private teaching sector of Kerala, all the respondents will be women working in private schools located in Kerala. Data intended to be used is primary data which will be collected by distributing questionnaire to the population. A questionnaire of 30 questions has been curated which meets the objectives of the study and provides necessary information for doing the analysis.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS:

The demographics of the respondents are listed below.

Table 1: Profile of the sample

Variable	Category	Percentage frequency
Age	20-40 years	25.4 %
	40-60 years	74.6 %
	Above 60 years	0 %
Have availed maternity leave before	Yes	68%
	No	32%

In this survey, the woman employees who answered 74.6% were in the 40-60 years age group, and their teaching experience are around 2-5 years. The majority of the survey respondents (68%) have taken maternity leave before, and their experiences and challenges with maternity leave contribute to the survey results.

To find out and understand the maternity law knowledge related to the age groups of the respondent employees, chi square analysis is performed and the following results were obtained:

Ho: The respondents are aware of the maternity laws provided in our country

Table 2: Relationship between awareness of maternity benefits and profile of respondents

Independent variable	Dependent variable	Chi -square value	P value	Results
Age group	Awareness of maternity benefits currently provided	3.58	0.06	Ho Accepted

In order to identify and understand the satisfaction with the length of maternity leave mandated by law relating to age group of the responded employees, chi square analysis is performed and the following results were obtained:

Ho: The respondents are satisfied with the length of maternity leave mandated by law

Table 3: Relationship between satisfaction of maternity leave and profile of respondents

Independent variable	Dependent variable	Chi -square value	P value	Results
Age group	Satisfaction with the currently provided maternity leave	3.96	0.04	Ho Rejected

Percentage analysis

It was found through this survey that 91.03 % of respondents were fully aware about Maternity Benefit Act 1961 and 68.09% were aware about the rights under the law.68% of the respondents have availed the maternity

benefits and 18.5% had an excellent experience, 76.5% had good and 4% had bad experience. A major share of 61.02% of the organizations hasn't displayed maternity benefits in the organization's premises. Around 27.02% of the organizations have organized awareness programs or class on the same. 57.3% are aware about the policy held by their organizations on maternity benefits. 77.7% and 60.02% of the organizations doesn't provide crèche facility and nursing breaks respectively. 89.1% and 85.5% agreed to the fact that the provision of crèche facility and nursing breaks respectively affects the satisfactory level of the currently provided maternity benefits. 22.3% of the respondents or their colleagues had damage to their career because of availing maternity benefits. 53.4% of the respondents do not know if there is a way to claim the benefits if it is withheld by the organization. 72.8% think that the law is beneficial in improving the women's health condition. It was found that 58.3% of respondents were fully satisfied with the maternity leave and cash benefits as provided by their organization.

Conclusion

Through this survey it was found that 15-20% of respondents were partially or completely unaware of maternity leave, cash benefits and other benefits such as sick pay, days off, daycare facilities under the Maternity Benefit Act. This ignorance may be due to less effective awareness raising by the administration. Conducting of awareness classes or seminars on maternity benefits were suggested by the respondents as a way for better availing of the maternity benefits. The new regulations aid women in recuperating after childbirth, promoting the child's growth in a calm and safe manner, and enable the mother to care for her child. Additionally, it fosters a stronger bond between mom and kid. The new regulations aid women in recuperating after childbirth, promoting the child's growth in a calm and safe manner, and enabling the mother to care for her child. The decision to increase maternity leave and benefits from 12 weeks up to 26 weeks and mandate employers to provide childcare is an unprecedented move in female employment history. Because they must pay for the infrastructure needed to set up a nursery as well as the overall costs of maternity benefits, this change inadvertently encourages firms to avoid hiring female employees. Thus, the government should take measures to provide tax incentives and subsidies to employers to encourage the employment of women. In the public and government sectors, women employees have job security, thus the new amendment is carefully adhered to; nevertheless, women employees in the private sector do not have job security. Therefore, the government should have the chance to oversee the proper application of this law in the private sector as well. If not, the provisions of the law would just stay on paper and have no impact on the empowerment of women.

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