

Effectives of the Implementation of the Maternity Benefits among Textile Workers in Tiruppur

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Abstract

This research study has evaluated the implementation effectiveness of the maternity benefits conferred on women workers employed in the textile industry of Tiruppur. The labor laws in India have conferred maternity benefits on women workers as a social security measure to help them overcome the difficulties arising out of the contingent situations on account of pregnancy and child birth thereby ensuring secure employment and humane working conditions for women. As the textile industry in Tiruppur employs a huge number of women there is a need to examine the effectiveness of the implementation of the provisions related to maternity benefits. The respondents for the study are married women workers with children employed in the textile industry. The sample size for the study is 78 collected by convenience sampling method. Regression method using SPSS version 23 was employed data analysis. The results have found lack of effectiveness in the implementation of the maternity benefits among the women workers.

Keywords: Maternity Benefits, Maternity Benefit Act, ESI Act, Textile Employee, Women Workers.

Introduction

The textile industry in India is one of the largest providers of employment opportunities. The industry is said to offer employment to 4.5 crore people in its core area and to 6 crore people in its ancillary operations and out of this, 60 to 70% of the employees are women. With women comprising a large portion of the manpower in the textile industry, it is significant to investigate the effectiveness of the implementation of the women specific benefits which are guaranteed by law. One such benefit is related to maternity provisions offered to working women during their pregnancy and child birth, which helps them to continue their employment without any interruption, maintain work life balance and physical wellbeing. The two prominent laws that ensure maternity benefits to women employees in factories and other establishments are the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 and Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948. The Maternity Benefit Act helps in the regulation of the employment of women during the period covering before and after child birth and provides certain other benefits to pregnant women. The act applies to women in factory, mine, plantations and establishments of the government. It also covers women employed in equestrian, acrobatic and other performances and also covers shops and establishments. The Act ensures the physical safety of pregnant women as it prohibits employment of pregnant women in works that are arduous and involve long hours of standing which will interfere with the pregnancy leading to miscarriage or affects foetal development.

The latest amendment to the Act was made in the year 2017 and the amendment enhanced the benefits by increasing the leave with cash benefit from 12 weeks to 26 weeks, provided for establishment of crèche, made it obligatory on the employer to inform the maternity benefits to women employees at their time of joining, brought under its fold commissioning mothers and provided the option of work from home to women workers, if the nature of work permits the same.

The ESI Act provides for maternity benefit to and insured women in the following situations – confinement or miscarriage or sickness arising out of pregnancy, confinement, premature birth of the child or miscarriage.

Despite more than 60 years since the laws related to maternity benefits have come in to force, research studies have found that the purpose of the enactment have not been fulfilled. The study by Satpathy et.al (2014) and Gopala krishnan & Brindha (2017) have proven the lack of awareness among women workers regarding the maternity benefits and Mishra & Pradhan (2015) have confirmed a huge gap in the availability of benefits across different sectors of employment. In this backdrop there needs to examine the implementation effectiveness of the maternity benefits among the women workers employed in textile industry

Need for the Study

The reproductive nature of women cannot be a hindrance to their employment. Pregnancy and child birth should not affect the physical health, financial condition and employment of working women. Thus maternity benefits were offered to women workers for ensuring work life balance, uninterrupted employment and physical health, which otherwise got disrupted due to pregnancy and child birth. With a high number of women workers employed in the textile and ancillary units in Tiruppur, it gets significant to investigate the effectiveness of the implementation of the maternity benefits for ensuring the better working condition of women workers. Given the educational background of the textile workers, their level of awareness towards the maternity benefits as provided by law need to be examined.

Objectives of the Study

- To analyze the effectiveness of the implementation of the maternity relief provisions in the Textile industry.
- To investigate the awareness among women employees towards the provisions and laws related to maternity benefits.
- To analyze the impact of the maternity benefits on uninterrupted employment in the working life of women.

Review of View of Literature

The work of Janwal & Gupta (2010) is conceptual study that has analyzed the evolution of laws which are related to women and their impact on women's entry in the workforce. The authors have analyzed the provisions in various labor laws that have conferred benefits on women labor. Despite the wide array of laws with its special provisions for women workers, the participation of women in the workforce has not seen a great increase and it is concluded that the statutory obligations on employers to provide maternity benefits and other benefits to women employees adds up as financial burden for the employers, thereby restricting the recruitment of women. Satpathy et.al (2014) explored the awareness of women employees living in semi urban areas towards the Maternity Benefit Act in the state of Odisha. The authors have taken the stand that the increasing participation of women in the job market makes it necessary to investigate their awareness towards maternity benefits and the results have shown 28.09% having complete awareness and 68.09% have partial awareness.

The study found lack of proper awareness on Maternity Benefit Act and it was found that vast majority of respondents did not receive many of the benefits under the Maternity Benefit Act. Mishra & Pradhan (2015) investigated the maternity benefits that are able to avail conferred by Maternity Benefit Act in the formal sector in the state of Odisha and authors have concluded the existence of huge gap in providing maternity benefits to women employed in various sectors. According to Thakur & Bansal (2015) the maternity benefit extended to woman employees ensures equality of opportunity between women and men in the workplace as it enables women to

continue their organizational role which temporarily get affected by the reproductive role of women. A comparative analysis of the maternity leave available to working women in India and United Kingdom has been examined and the conclusion drawn from the analysis have highlighted the maternity leave policy of United Kingdom as the best. Ghosh & Chanchal (2016), have held that with increasing women in labor force, the working conditions and benefits for women are different and this difference needs to be noted by the organization and provisions made accordingly. Due to the increase of women in the job market, organizations must ensure the working conditions to meet the requirements of women employees. As the Maternity Benefit Act offers such provisions, the authors have explored the working conditions and benefits received by working women in the health care sector in Delhi and the study have found that the benefits were not received by most of the women which leads to dissatisfaction. Gopala krishnan & Brindha (2017) examined the effectiveness of maternity benefit in the construction industry. The authors have analyzed the awareness of the various schemes related to maternity benefit and the effectiveness of the same. The results concluded the lack of awareness among workers regarding the statutory benefits and about the maternity benefits. Rai & Niyogi (2017) have examined the scope of the Maternity Benefit Act with focus on the amendments.

The important changes made in the act relate to the following – making the employer obligatory to inform their employees about the Maternity Benefits at the time of joining the organization, increasing the paid maternity leave to 26 weeks, provision for crèche, inclusion of the terms adoptive and commissioning mothers and work from home mothers. It was concluded that despite the Act and schemes, the condition of women has not improved. Ghosh (2019) has examined the evolution of the Maternity Benefits in India and the obstacles that hinder its implementation. The Indian Constitutional provisions provide for just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief and the laws which ensures the same are Maternity Benefit Act, 1961; ESI Act, 1948; and the Central Civil Services Rule, 1972. It has been viewed that, though the rules

ensure maternity benefits, such benefits are enjoyed by women who are employed in the organized sector and not in the unorganized sector. It is suggested to extend the coverage of the Maternity Benefit Act to bring the women in the unorganized sector under its fold. Ramachandran & Kaur (2019) have explored the maternity and paternity leave practices and the impact of the same on women's career. The authors have examined the Maternity Benefit Act in India and the applicability of the Paternity Act (limited only to government employees). It is concluded that a strong maternity and paternity leave rules will enhance the participation of women in the workforce. Gayathri Devi & Loga sakthi (2020) have made a comparative study on the maternity benefits available in India with that of other nations. The countries taken up for the study are India, Singapore, Australia, China and Belgium. The study has established India in a higher place among other countries terms of maternity benefits and leave period. Verma et.al (2020) have investigated the awareness and satisfaction level of workers towards the implementation of Maternity Benefit Act in the state of Himachal Pradesh. From a survey conducted among 313 female workers it was found that the provisions of the Maternity Benefit Act was shaped by the employers which affected the possibility to return back to work and the insufficient welfare measures were found to be a cause of depression and stress.

Hypothesis

H1: There is a relation between leave with cash benefits and uninterrupted employment of women workers.

H2: There is a relation between availability of crèche in the company and uninterrupted employment of women workers.

H3: There is a significant relation between education and the degree of awareness among women employees towards maternity benefits.

Research Methodology

Research Design

Evaluation research was employed for the research work as the study has evaluated the implementation effectiveness of the benefits and provisions as mandated by the law.

Sampling

Convenience Sampling method was used to collect the samples. The sample size for the study is 78. The respondents for the study are married women with children employed in the textile units of Tiruppur district of Tamil Nadu state.

Instrument and Method of Data Collection

A questionnaire was constructed to collect the data and the questionnaire was personally administered to the respondents.

Tool for Data Analysis

Regression method using SPSS version 23 was the statistical technique used for data analysis.

Analysis

Table 1 Category Wise Distribution of the Respondents

Variable	Category	Number of Respondents	%
Age	20 - 25 years	6	7.69
	26 – 30 years	17	21.79
	31 – 35 years	12	15.38
	>35 years	43	55.13
Experience	0 – 10 years	26	33.33
	11 – 15 years	13	16.67
	>15 years	39	50
Nature of employment	Permanent Worker	21	26.92
	Temporary worker	57	73.08
Education	High School	51	65.38
	Middle School	27	34.62
Awareness towards maternity benefits	Fully aware	0	0
	Partially aware	63	80.77
	Unaware	15	19.23
Intimation of maternity benefits by the employer	Yes	0	0
	No	78	100

Leave with cash benefits received during pregnancy	Yes	32	41
	No	46	58.98
Creche Availability	Yes	23	29.49
	No	55	70.51
Availability of Nursing Breaks	Yes	0	0
	No	78	100
Preventing Pregnant women from arduous works	Yes	57	73.08
	No	21	26.92
Maternity benefit and uninterrupted employment	Yes	19	24.36
	No	59	75.64

Table 2 Test of Hypothesis 1

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.699	.488	.482	.31109

Table 3 Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant) Leave with cash benefits	.774	.121	.699	.649	.000
	.613	.072			

Dependent Variable: Uninterrupted employment

Table 4 Test of Hypothesis 2

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.878	.770	.767	.20851

Predictor: (Constants), Creche Availability

Table 5 Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	std. Error	Beta		
(Constant) Creche Availability	.348	.091	.878	3.806	.000
	.826	.052			

Dependent Variable: Uninterrupted Employment

Table 6 Test of Hypothesis 3

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.671	.450	.442	.29617

Predictor: (Constants), Education

Table 7 Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant) Education	1.444	.101	.671	14.352	.000
	.556	.070		7.881	.000

Dependent Variable: Degree of Awareness towards maternity benefits

Findings and Discussion

The percentage analysis from Table 1 reveals that 80.77% of women workers are partially aware, 19.23% are completely unaware and none of them have complete awareness towards maternity benefits. 41% of the respondents have received leave with cash during pregnancy and 29.49% have confirmed the availability of crèche. All the respondents have expressed the non existence of nursing breaks and 73.08% have confirmed that they are not allowed to perform arduous tasks during pregnancy. 24.36% of women workers have stated that the maternity benefits have helped them to continue in their employment. With the amendment to the Maternity Benefit Act in 2017 which have made it mandatory on the employers to inform women workers about the maternity benefits, the study has found that none of the employers have communicated about the benefits.

Lack of proper awareness is a drawback to women workers which prevents them from demanding such benefits from the employers. For the Maternity Benefits to reach the intended beneficiaries, the government can create awareness on the same through print, electronic and social media.

The R2 value from Tables 2 and 4 indicate that leave with cash benefits and crèche availability account for 48.8% and 77% variance in the uninterrupted employment of women workers respectively; the R2 value from Table 6 indicates education of the respondents account for 45%

variance in the degree of awareness towards maternity benefits.

Based on the significance values ($p < .05$) from Tables 3 and 5 it is concluded that there exists a significant relation between availability of leave with cash benefits and crèche with the uninterrupted employment of women, leading to the acceptance of hypothesis H1 and H2 which also validates the reason for the enactment of laws related to maternity benefits. Though the intended reason for the enactment of laws on maternity benefits have been confirmed, from the analysis of Table 1 it can be inferred that less than half of the women workers have received the maternity benefits, which signifies the lack of effectiveness in the implementation. The significance value from Table 7 ($p < .05$) confirms the significant relation between education and degree of awareness towards maternity benefits, leading to acceptance of hypothesis H3.

Conclusion

The effectiveness of the implementation of the maternity benefits among the women workers in the textile industry of Tiruppur is found to be weak. Despite the various laws enacted by the government, the implementation of the same is found to be poor.

The employers must in the first place inform the women workers the various provisions that deal with maternity benefits and confer the same on their women workers. Making the benefits available to women workers alone can encourage more women to enter in to the workforce and will also help them to continue in their employment without interruption.

A proper implementation of the maternity benefits alone will help to achieve the social security objectives behind enactment of the laws related to maternity benefits.

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