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Paternity Leave Benefits in India: Need, Advantages, and Current Scenario in India

Abstract

Paternity leave stands as a pivotal component of a workplace policy geared towards supporting families. In India, the concept of paternity leave has garnered attention in recent years, as both companies and policymakers recognize the necessity of aiding new fathers in their transition to parenthood. However, despite increasing awareness, the implementation of paternity leave benefits in India exhibits significant variation across different organizations.

The imperative for paternity leave benefits in India arises from the evolving roles and responsibilities of fathers. Traditionally, the bulk of childcare and household duties have rested on mothers. Nevertheless, with changing cultural norms and economic dynamics, fathers are assuming increasingly active roles in caregiving and parenting. Paternity leave offers fathers the chance to bond with their newborns, support their partners, and actively engage in the early stages of their children's development.

Although some forward-thinking companies in India include paternity leave in their employee benefits packages, there remains a lack of consistency and standardization in its implementation nationwide. This discrepancy in benefits frequently results in inequality and inadequacy in supporting new fathers during this pivotal phase in their family life.

Beyond individual family support, paternity leave benefits can yield broader societal ramifications. Encouraging fathers to take paternity leave can facilitate the dissolution of traditional gender roles, foster gender equality, and contribute to a more equitable distribution of caregiving responsibilities within households.

To fully harness the potential benefits of paternity leave in India, heightened awareness, advocacy, and policy reform are essential. Measures such as standardizing paternity leave benefits across organizations, stipulating a minimum duration of leave, and providing financial assistance during the leave period are key steps toward fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment for new fathers in India. By acknowledging the significance of paternity leave, India can take significant strides towards cultivating a workplace culture that is more equitable and family-friendly.

Index Terms: Paternity Leave, Parental Bonding, Workplace Culture, Father-Child Relationship

Introduction

Paternity leave has emerged as a topic of considerable significance, particularly in India, garnering increased attention in recent years.

Paternity leave denotes the period off from work that fathers are granted following the birth of their child. In India, the adoption of paternity leave is gaining momentum as more companies and organizations acknowledge the necessity of supporting new fathers in managing their work and familial obligations concurrently.

The advantages of paternity leave in India are diverse. Initially, it facilitates fathers in establishing a bond with their newborns and actively participating in their early developmental stages. This bonding period has demonstrated lasting positive impacts on the emotional and psychological well-being of the child.

Furthermore, paternity leave fosters gender equality by motivating men to engage in caregiving and household responsibilities. It serves to dismantle conventional gender roles and stereotypes, thereby promoting a more equitable distribution of tasks within families.

From a workplace standpoint, paternity leave can enhance employee morale, contentment, and retention rates. By extending assistance to new fathers, organizations can cultivate a more supportive and inclusive work environment, consequently fostering a more motivated and committed workforce.

Moreover, paternity leave can contribute to overall employee productivity and well-being. Studies have indicated that employees capable of balancing work and family duties exhibit higher productivity levels, reduced stress, and increased job satisfaction.

Despite these benefits, the utilization of paternity leave in India remains relatively low, attributable to factors such as limited awareness, societal expectations, and apprehensions regarding potential negative impacts on career progression. Addressing these obstacles and encouraging the adoption of paternity leave is imperative to fully realize the benefits of this policy.

In conclusion, paternity leave presents substantial advantages for both fathers and society as a whole. By acknowledging and endorsing the significance of paternal involvement in the early stages of a child's life, India can progress toward a more inclusive and equitable society. Encouraging the uptake of paternity leave through policy initiatives, awareness campaigns, and cultural shifts can yield far-reaching positive effects on families, workplaces, and society in general.

Review of Literature

Paternity leave is an important policy tool aimed at promoting gender equality and work-life balance. While several studies have investigated the impacts of paternity leave policies in Western countries, there is a dearth of research on this topic in the context of India. This literature review aims to synthesize existing research findings and highlight potential knowledge gaps and future research directions in the area of paternity leave benefits in India.

Ciccina and Verloo (2012) conducted a study on parental leave regulations and the persistence of the male breadwinner model. The study highlighted the importance of examining gender equality in the context of parental leave policies. However, this study does not specifically focus on India and the unique cultural and social factors that shape paternity leave benefits in the Indian context.

Thévenon and Solaz (2013) studied the labour market effects of parental leave policies in OECD countries. While this study did not specifically address India, it highlighted the broader implications of parental leave policies on labour market dynamics. Future research could explore how paternity leave benefits in India impact workforce participation and gender equality in employment.

Feeney and Stritch (2017) examined family-friendly policies, gender, and work-life balance in the public sector. The study emphasized the role of policy measures in promoting work-life balance. However, there is a need to explore how such policies can be tailored to suit the Indian context, considering the country's distinct cultural and socioeconomic landscape.

Andersen (2018) provided new causal evidence on paternity leave and the motherhood penalty. The study emphasized the significance of paternity leave in addressing gender disparities in the workplace. While this study offers valuable insights, it does not explore the specific implications of paternity leave policies in the Indian context.

Haas and Hwang (2019) highlighted that policy alone is not enough to influence fathers' use of parental leave. The study underscored the influence of the gendered workplace on fathers' uptake of parental leave. This finding is particularly relevant to India, given the unique cultural and societal norms that shape the work environment and family dynamics in the country.

In conclusion, existing research provides valuable insights into the implications of paternity leave policies in various contexts. However, there is a clear knowledge gap in understanding the specific implications of paternity

leave benefits in India. Future research directions should focus on examining the cultural, social, and economic factors that shape the effectiveness of paternity leave policies in promoting gender equality and work-life balance in the Indian context. Additionally, research should explore the impact of paternity leave on child development, family dynamics, and workforce participation in India. Addressing these gaps will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the role of paternity leave benefits in shaping societal norms and promoting gender equality in India.

Need of Paternity Benefits

The significance of paternity benefits is on the rise in India, reflecting the evolving roles of fathers within the family structure. In a society where fathers are assuming more proactive roles in parenting, the necessity for policies accommodating this shift is becoming increasingly evident. Paternity benefits offer fathers the opportunity to establish bonds with their newborns, provide support to their partners during the postpartum phase, and actively engage in their child's early development. Recognizing the importance of a father's involvement in the family, paternity benefits facilitate a more balanced distribution of childcare responsibilities and enhance the well-being of both parents and their offspring. As India progresses towards greater gender equality, the introduction of paternity benefits stands as a pivotal factor in shaping a more inclusive and supportive societal framework for families.

The importance of paternity benefits cannot be overstated in advancing gender equality and fostering a nurturing environment where both parents can fulfil their obligations towards their children. By offering paternity benefits, both governmental bodies and organizations can incentivize fathers to actively engage in their children's upbringing and share caregiving duties with mothers.

Paternity benefits can serve to dismantle gender stereotypes and encourage a more equitable distribution of household and parenting responsibilities. They offer relief to mothers, who often bear the brunt of caregiving responsibilities. Additionally, the involvement of both parents, facilitated by paternity benefits, has been associated with enhanced emotional and cognitive development in children, thereby positively impacting their overall well-being. Furthermore, the introduction of paternity benefits resonates with the evolving dynamics of the contemporary workforce. With an increasing number of women joining the workforce, the traditional notion of the father as the sole breadwinner is transforming. Consequently, fathers also require assistance in juggling their professional and familial commitments, and paternity benefits play a pivotal role in enabling this equilibrium.

Indian Paternity Benefit Bill, 2017

The Indian Paternity Benefit Bill, 2017 represents a landmark legislative effort aimed at addressing the issue of paternity leave and benefits for fathers in India. This bill seeks to offer essential assistance to employed fathers, recognizing their familial role and their duty towards childcare and the holistic development of their children.

If enacted, the bill will entitle fathers to a period of paid leave following the birth or adoption of a child. This measure constitutes a significant stride towards fostering gender equality and distributing childcare responsibilities equitably between both parents. It underscores the significance of paternal involvement during the formative stages of a child's life and strives to establish a more supportive and balanced environment for employed parents.

Moreover, the bill encompasses provisions for supplementary benefits such as flexible work arrangements, telecommuting opportunities, and other support mechanisms to facilitate fathers' active engagement in parenting while fulfilling their professional obligations. This comprehensive approach aims to cultivate a workplace culture that prioritizes family well-being and encourages increased paternal participation in childcare responsibilities.

The implementation of the Paternity Benefit Bill, 2017 holds the potential for profound positive impacts on Indian society. It not only reflects a progressive shift towards acknowledging the evolving roles of men and women within contemporary family structures but also enhances the overall welfare of children by ensuring their access to the nurturing care of both parents.

The Indian Paternity Benefit Bill, of 2017 signifies a significant legislative endeavour with the potential to instigate meaningful social and cultural transformations. By empowering fathers to actively engage in parenting

and providing the requisite support to reconcile work and family commitments, this bill could herald the advent of a more equitable and nurturing society for future generations.

The Scenario of Paternity Leave in India

All provisions concerning paternity leave in India currently pertain solely to government employees, with no inclusion for those working in the private sector under this legislation. Nonetheless, India has observed a shifting trend regarding paternity leave.

The Ministry of Women and Child Development has advocated for legislation on paternity leave in the organized sector. Given that private companies are at liberty to devise their own policies on paternity leave, and there exist no mandates within this Act to dictate their actions, many private enterprises have independently chosen to offer such benefits.

For instance, Zomato has introduced a paternal leave period of 26 weeks for its employees, accompanied by a financial grant of Rs. 69,000 for both male and female staff upon becoming parents. Similarly, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) provides a 15-day paternal leave allowance to its employees, while Wipro offers 8 weeks, and Infosys extends 5 days of leave for new fathers, Microsoft has 12 weeks of Paternity Leave, Facebook has 17 weeks of Paternity Leave and Starbucks has 12 weeks of Paternity Leave.

Recommendations

Paternity leave benefits in India are essential for promoting gender equality and supporting the well-being of families. To ensure fathers can actively participate in child rearing, it is crucial to provide them with paid paternity leave. This will not only help in creating a more balanced and supportive environment for families but also contribute to the overall development of children. Implementing paternity leave benefits will also help break gender stereotypes and encourage a more equitable distribution of caregiving responsibilities within households. Additionally, it will contribute to a more inclusive and diverse workplace culture. Therefore, the Indian government needs to consider and implement policies that support paternity leave to create a more progressive and supportive society.

Conclusion

Ensuring equal participation of women in the workplace inherently necessitates granting men an equal opportunity for involvement in domestic responsibilities, particularly in parenting roles rather than solely as breadwinners. The attainment of genuine substantive equality relies on the simultaneous progression of both these facets; an absence of one would create a societal void. Consequently, the Maternity Benefits scheme in India, in the absence of a corresponding paternity scheme, fails to fully realize its potential. Instead, it perpetuates entrenched gender stereotypes and may even provoke negative reactions against its beneficiaries in the realm of employment.

Given these circumstances, it is imperative to establish paternity leave as an inherent entitlement rather than merely an optional or attractive benefit. This shift is essential for advancing towards a workplace setup characterized by gender equality. Incentives are indispensable for challenging historically ingrained norms that reinforce gender biases within the workplace. Thus, the government ought to devise a comprehensive family leave strategy capable of influencing societal attitudes and behavior patterns. To attract a broad spectrum of male participants, including those who may be undecided, it is essential to not only appeal to their conscience or family values but also offer significant financial incentives.

In essence, a well-structured system of paid paternity leave holds the potential to address these issues effectively and facilitate the achievement of a more harmonious work-family balance.

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