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A Study on the Fear of Motherhood Penalty Negatively Impacting Career Trajectory of Women

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ABSTRACT

Women have to face a plethora of factors which directly or indirectly affect their career trajectory and one such factor is motherhood. The purpose of the study is to analyse how motherhood limits the career progression of women even in modern. The paper studies the fear of this motherhood penalty and its impact on the career decision of women. This paper provides a preliminary understanding of the fear of motherhood penalty negatively impacting career trajectory of women and uses references of existing infrastructure to address the issue of pregnancy penalty, to understand the same.

There are countless factors that affect women in the career path but some of these factors are purely based on stereotypes that woman are the primary caregivers of the family. Female employees are an integral part of any company and managers need to formulate policies that actually fulfil the needs of the female employees and are inclusive of pregnant women and mothers.

The following research paper attempts to make a contribution to the existing literature which deals with the motherhood penalty levied and the negative impact it has on the career trajectory of women. Various aspects of the subject are studied to comprehend in detail, the reasons for this penalty and if there has been effort in making workplaces inclusive for mothers.

Keywords: *Career breaks, motherhood, career progression, dependent children, employment, pay-gap*

I. INTRODUCTION

Women are considered to be distracted and disengaged in their work if they are pregnant or are even seen talking about their children in their workplace. The notion that women lose focus and dedication for their work after becoming pregnant or if they already are mothers is one that is widespread among employers. As false as the notion is, mothers still have to suffer because

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of it be it their jobs, promotions or compensation.

Meaning and Definition of Motherhood

According to Cambridge Dictionary, motherhood is the state of being a mother.

It is the cultural process of locating women's identities in their capacity to nurture infants and children.

Meaning and Definition of Motherhood Penalty

According to Collins dictionary, motherhood penalty is the "disparity in pay, workplace esteem, etc encountered by women who are mothers compared to men or women without children".

Motherhood penalty is a term coined by sociologists who argue that working women often encounter systematic disadvantages in pay, perceived compensation, promotions and benefits relative to women who have no children. Motherhood penalty is the concept that covers all the issues that have long affected and contributed to a career cliff edge of sorts for many mothers. They suffer a per-child wage penalty, that is, for each child a woman has there is a certain percentage of pay cut in her compensation and it is also predicted that women who are mothers receive less compensation than other working women because employers believe that motherhood makes women less productive at work and this in turn creates a pay gap between mothers and non-mothers that is bigger than the pay gap between men and women.

- **Shelly J. Correll (2007)** identified that mothers experience several disadvantages in the workplace apart from those which are commonly associated with gender stereotypes. The authors employed a laboratory research experiment to evaluate the hypothesis that status-based discrimination plays an important role and to study the real-world applications of the same they did an audit study of actual employers. The paper explored the issue that women have to suffer a pay cut because they are pregnant and the pay cut is levied for each child they bear and this penalty is termed as motherhood penalty. There is a pay gap even between mothers and non-mothers and this pay gap is larger than the pay gap between men and women.

Impact of Motherhood Penalty on Career

According to the latest report by Bright Horizons' annual Modern Family Index, 69% of working Americans believe that mothers who work are more likely to be passed up for a job than other employees and also 60% of them have said that job opportunities will rather be provided to people who are less qualified than a working mother even if they are more skilled and experienced. According to The New York Times, women get a 4% pay cut for each child

they have as compared to men who instead receive a 6% pay increase on average. The more discouraging side of the issue is that this bias affects even those women who do not currently have and may never have children. Even in India even if big corporate firms are eager to have their women employees back on board after long breaks of maternity, the women employees expect a wage cut because of their motherhood. A survey report (with 783 second career women as respondents) by Avtar, which is an organisation that deals with diversity advocacy and workplace inclusion, showed that two thirds or 69% of the respondents expect that they will face a pay cut on their re-entry due to the motherhood wage penalty.

The problem arises because of the mindset of the people of the society who even in the fourth industrial revolution era cannot deal with fact that there are multiple aspects in a woman's life and cannot or are reluctant to accept that they are more than capable of handling these aspects to the best of their abilities. It is assumed that most women would want to have flexible job hours post returning from maternity leaves but contrary to this the report by Avtar showed that 63 percent of the respondents prefer full-time jobs because they want a high and progressive career for themselves. Women believe that they need to keep their pregnancy under wraps at the workplace for fear of being removed from important assignments and projects that they have been working on for years because employers believe that pregnancy will reduce their working capacities.

The concept of motherhood penalty even has a negative impact on the mindset of women regarding their career in the sense that many of their career decisions get clouded by the fear of the penalty they would have to face merely because they are mothers. Sometimes motherhood penalty strikes even before a women becomes pregnant and in a research by Professor Becker and two fellow professors of Business and Economics at Monash Business School, it was suggested that even when women are job hunting they are often penalised for the 'risk' of pregnancy and the main reason behind such discrimination is the general perception that if ever the potential candidate were to have children the childcare is most likely to fall to the woman than the man.

- **Ewa Cukrowska-Torzewska and Anna Matysiak (2020)** identified that motherhood wage gap has been researched and reported in numerous studies and they summarized the existing empirical evidence that was available on the topic and they used meta-analysis and test for several mechanisms to analyse the studies. The study was based in 208 wage effects of having exactly one child and also 245 wage effects of any number of children. The average motherhood gap identified was of around 3.6%-3.8%. It was said to be a result of the loss of human capital of mothers.

In the world of the working people, career trajectories or career paths are often referred to as ‘ladders’ and the aim is climbing these ladders step by step by investing time and energy into their respective jobs to go from a simple trajectory to the ultimate goal, be it an executive, leadership or managerial role or position. But it is not that simple for the trajectories of women and they face a plethora of different factors that influence their careers. Women continue to be subjected to various social stereotypes one of which is pregnancy and motherhood.

(A) Objectives

1. To study the impact of motherhood penalty on career trajectory of women.
2. To study motherhood penalty as a component of gender-pay gap.
3. To study the significance of inclusive workspaces for mothers.
4. To study the long term effects of motherhood penalty.
5. To study if there is a bias against hiring mothers or pregnant women.
6. To study if promotions are withheld because of pregnancy of female employees.

(B) Methodology

Considering the nature of the topic and the research objectives, secondary research method is used by the researcher. Various articles in newspapers, journals, and books, and research papers written by renowned authors were referred to for collection of data. The referencing is done following APA 6th edition style of citation.

(C) Review of Literature

There have been many studies on the impact of motherhood penalty on the career trajectory of women in different countries and how it has an effect even on the career decisions made by women. Some of these studies are gathered by the researcher to review the existing literature on the subject.

The concept of motherhood penalty

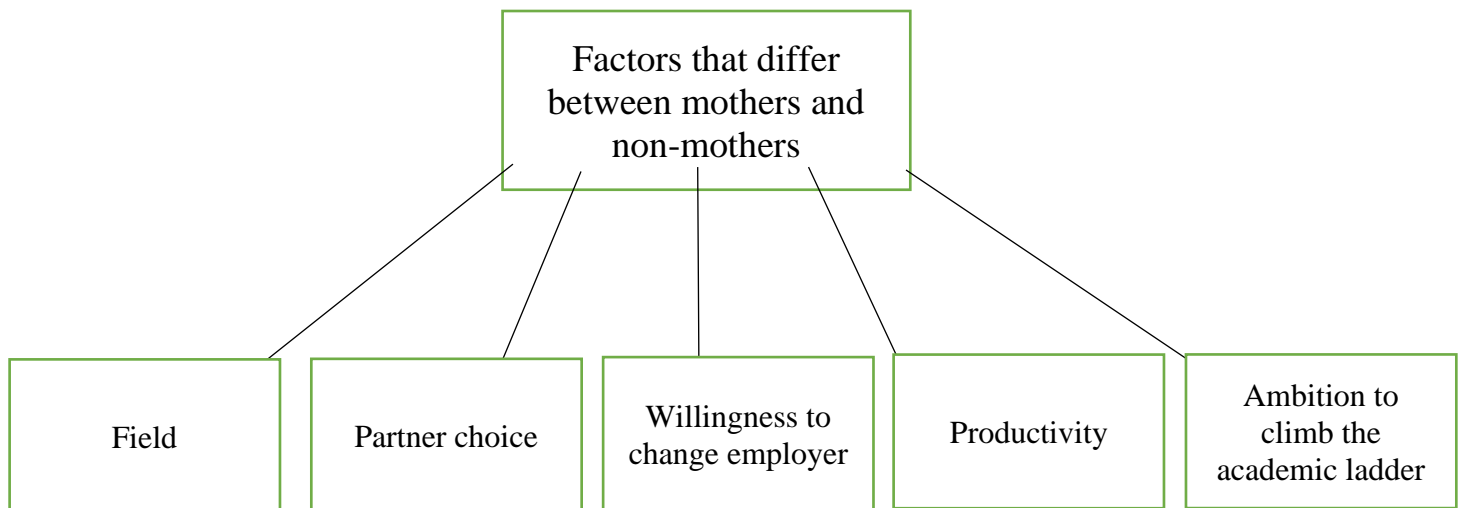
- **Safia Samee Ali (2016)** established that motherhood penalty even affects those women who never even have a child and as women fight for equal pay and equal opportunities, yet another exacerbating fact that continues to affect their work like is that they are penalized for the fact they could, regardless of whether they will, have children. The researcher interviewed 13 women who worked at various levels and in various fields. While much attention has been garnered by the pay-gap between men and women, the pay gap that arises because of “pregnancy penalty” has not attracted much attention. A main reason of this is that this penalty

is comparatively difficult to measure. Women realise that if they announce their pregnancy in their workplace, it will lead to changes like being taken off projects, not being assigned new projects, etc.

Different dimensions of motherhood penalty

- **Bryan McIntosh et. al. (2012)** studied how factors like motherhood, working hours, career breaks, having school aged children etc. impact career progress of women even in feminized occupations such as nursing. They did a longitudinal analysis of a demographically unique national database and had 46,565 registered nursing workforces in NHS Scotland. They examined the factors on the basis of variables like gender, employment, grades, number and length of career breaks, lengths of service, age, working patterns, the number and age of dependent children. They found that motherhood has a regressively detrimental effect on the progression a women's career and that motherhood penalty is an umbrella or simplistic term which covers a lot more complex processes related to the working hours, age of dependent children, number of children and career breaks. It can be said that the degree of women's restricted career progression is directly related to the school age of the dependent children and that the younger the child is the greater is the detrimental impact on the mother's career. A woman who takes a career break of two or more than two years has to bear a depressed and restricted career. The findings of the authors confirmed that whilst gender has a relatively positive effect on male career progression; a women's career progression is reduced incrementally as she has more children, and part-time workers have reduced career progression regardless of maternal or paternal circumstances.

- **Vera E. Troeger et. al. (2020)**, identified different dimensions of motherhood penalty and the various policies that can mitigate motherhood penalties in the academic sector. They conducted a survey asking more than 115 questions and covering 9,671 respondents from 138 UK Higher Education Institutions. They did their survey analysis in three steps i.e. (1) comparison between women with and without children (2) comparing the career progression of mothers and non-mothers (3) factors that can alleviate motherhood penalty. They listed factors that differ between mothers and non-mothers which are shown in the figure below. They found that mothers are more likely than non-mothers to report contentment with their job and they are still considered to be less committed than non-mothers. They also noticed that women whose partners are not really involved in child care responsibilities earn less. They concluded that even though the survey was of highly educated professionals, having a child reduces the chances of a mother to climb the academic ladder.



Mothers v. non-mothers pay gap

- **Jeremy Staff and Jeylan T. Mortimer (2012)** attempted to explain the reason for the hourly wages of mothers being approximately 5% lower (per child) than the wage of non-mothers and how that gap cannot be fully explained by merely stating the differences between the mothers and non-mothers in terms of job characteristics and work experience. They study the above mentioned through longitudinal data for 486 women followed from ages 19 to 31 in Youth Development Study and they explored the discrimination by employers against mothers who are in their early career years and they examined the premise that suggested that when the choice of non-mothers is available to employers, they are less likely to hire mothers and even on the off chance that they do hire mothers, they are penalized with lower wage. They also indicated that when there is a possibility that women who are mothers or are even contemplating motherhood are willing to sacrifice compensation for flexibility and they accept jobs that pay lower if they are compatible with the physical and emotional needs of being a mother. Their study also determined that while the wages of single women increased by 4% when they got married, this increase on an average did not attenuate the motherhood penalty which averaged 6% per child. They also found that the accumulated months where mothers are not a part of the labour force and are not enrolled in schools either explain the residual pay gap between mothers and non-mothers to some extent. The study concluded that women who are considering motherhood will take up jobs that require less educational qualifications and experience because employers are less likely to hire mothers. They stressed upon the fact that the most important single mediator of motherhood penalty is the cumulative time that was spent by a woman in not involving in activities that do not involve human capital acquisition i.e. the periods where a women in neither working nor is she in school.

Effects of fear of motherhood penalty on career decisions of women

- **Noel Burgess (2013)** explored if parenthood has an effect on the judgement of women to the extent that mothers are held in different employment standards than women with no children. The author reviewed different underlying theories that are considered factors because of which this penalty is levied. It put forth the issue that mothers are considered less competent for jobs than non-mothers because they cannot focus solely on their job after becoming mothers and have household interruptions. The paper mentions that mothers face a lot of stereotypes at the workplace and also put forth a hypothesis mentioned in previous studies that women are viewed in the same way a housewife is viewed i.e., they are incompetent for work. The study presented how perceptions of anticipated competence and commitment negatively impacted employment outcomes for women. The author mentioned various factors that contribute to this penalty like, work/family conflict, work engagement, job demands, job resources, flexible work practices etc. The fear that motherhood penalty instils in women leads them to hold back in big and small ways when it comes to their potential and capacity in their working roles and they lack self-confidence and pull back when instead they should be leaning in and take a step towards building a place for themselves in the field. Women get the message that it is wrong to be outspoken, aggressive and more powerful than men and these internalized negative messages lower the expectations of women towards what they can actually achieve. Because of the fear of this penalty many women even stop aspiring to get to senior level positions.

- **Sonica Aron (2019)** emphasised on the fact that while children benefit from the care and supervision that full-time stay at home mothers provide them, mothers are penalised by setbacks in their professional careers. The social conditioning that puts women in charge of bringing up children and therefore it is considered normal for women to take long post maternity breaks or devote less time to their careers when their children need them, this creates a bias in the minds of employers and they tend to hire less mothers in their workforce. The career choices and the career breaks that mothers take impacts their career continuity and so their income levels. The career intentionality of women is questioned after child birth i.e. how mothers plan on pursuing their careers while they navigate motherhood and this leads to reduced employment opportunities and very often loss of increments, promotions and normalized ratings.

Effect on wages paid to working mothers

- **Joan R. Kahn et. al. (2014)** build on previous research carried out on motherhood wage penalty done to examine what career penalties are faced by mothers and how these

penalties change over the life course. They added labour force participation and occupational status in the ambit of the study. They collected data from National Longitudinal Survey of Young Women to changes starting with age in 20s to their 50s. the survey indicated that motherhood has proved to be costly to women's careers. The paper mentioned that the average wage penalties range from 5% to 10 % per child among the women who are in their 20s and 30s and not all of this penalty is explained by differences in productivity as is measured by the human capital indicators like education and accumulated work experience. What also contributes to this penalty is the differential treatment or discrimination that the employers do. It is also suggested that this penalty varies with the level of management the women is working on and the women working at lower levels are likely to face a bigger penalty as compared to those working at the top levels. They found that the wage penalty is relatively lower in the 20s and it peaks in the 30s for those mothers who have two children and in the 40s for mothers with three or more children.

Effects of motherhood timing on career trajectory

- **Amalia R. Miller (2011)** estimated the effects that motherhood timing has on the career path of women and used national panel data from NLSY79. She considered biological fertility shocks as instrumental variables for the age at which a woman bears her first child. It was suggested that as there is a delay in motherhood, women may witness a substantial increase of 10% in career earnings per year of delay. The research showed that fertility timing has an effect on the career average women earnings, hours worked and the wages pre motherhood as well as post motherhood wage rates. A delay in fertility can reduce the gap in pay between mothers and non-mothers. The evidence gathered indicated that women experience reduced earnings around the time of their first birth and witness a gradual flattening of the age-wage profile after motherhood. What cannot be currently established is that the cause of this penalty is because women choose to invest less in their labour supply and human capital development or because the employers offer differential treatment and provide diminished training and advancement opportunities to women post motherhood.

Discrimination against mother due to bias

- **Tamar Kricheli-Katz (2012)** analysed recent studies that documented the penalties associated with motherhood and established that discrimination against women for choosing to be mothers is one that plays a very important role in the existence of this penalty. The researcher argued that the discrimination varies in different parts of the US depending on where motherhood is perceived as totally a women's choice and places where motherhood is

perceived as less of a choice and applied two methods to justify the arguments. The first was to analyse the state differences in wage penalties for motherhood and used hierarchical linear modelling and the second method was to conduct a hiring experiment in a highly controlled setting. It suggests that, the more motherhood is viewed as a choice that women have the more employers may assign responsibility to women who choose to become mothers and discriminate against them with the perception that they are choosing family life above their careers and hence are becoming less competent for their jobs.

- **Sascha O. Becker et. al. (2019)** identified that two factors (1) employers discriminate against hiring women in their fertile age because they are at a ‘risk’ of pregnancy (2) women are more likely to be in-charge of childcare than men due to conventional gender norms, potentially affect the hiring practices of firms. The researchers conducted a large-scale correspondence test in Germany, Switzerland, and Austria and sent out about 9000 job applications varying job candidate's personal characteristics such as marital status and age of children. They found evidence that those who finish their childbearing cycle like part-time jobs, married women with older children who have most likely finished their childbearing cycle and have chores that can be projected on to other members of the family are at an advantage when compared to women who have younger children. Also, women who have recently married are at a disadvantage against women who are single because employers presume that they may soon become pregnant. This bias affects the early career progression of young women even if they are not contemplating having a child. The researchers deliberately picked female-friendly professions for the correspondence study to avoid the comparisons between men and women where women could be perceived as less productive from the beginning. They concluded that the bias does persist and to avoid the controversy of following wage discrimination employers choose to not hire mothers as the latter will most likely go unnoticed.

(D) Research Gap

While much has been discussed on the existence of motherhood penalty as a concept and prior research has established through experiments and surveys that the penalty persists in all levels of management and in all fields, little to no research has been done on what policies exist to curb the spread of this penalty or if no policies exist entirely. There is a lack of existing literature on the policies and facilities that are in place to make sure that this penalty is not levied on mothers, this may be an indicator of absence of such policies and facilities which is very alarming. There is also no solid research on what can be the way out of this penalty. Even though, it can not be solved overnight, there has to be discussion about how the problem can be eradicated or even reduced. The need is to get people talking about the issue and raise

awareness so surveys and interviews can be conducted to help get a way out of this stereotypical practice. Employers have to recognize the fact that this bias against mothers stems from a faulty social conditioning and it can have grave effects on the current as well as the coming economy.

Firstly, there is a need for people at all levels of management and all fields of work to accept the existence of this penalty because it is very real and all women face this and suffer the consequences of a process as natural as childbirth. They have to pay a penalty for bearing and rearing children who are the future assets of the economy and no attention is provided to the issue.

(E) Significance of Study

The examination and review of the literature that is done elsewhere in this paper indicates that there has been significant research into the concept of motherhood penalty in different industries and also the different factors that come under the umbrella term that is motherhood penalty. The pay gap between mothers and non-mothers and men and women is research significantly and is well documented.

This study is unique as it takes into consideration the impact on women of the fear of this motherhood penalty and how it affects young women who are currently not even contemplating motherhood. The issue is that the widespread practice of discrimination against mothers whether it related to opportunities, pay or promotions, instils a sense of fear in young women who feel they will have to go through the same at some point in their careers and they therefore knowingly or unknowingly may take up career paths or fields that makes their transition into a working mother easier than it would be in certain other professions.

According to a theory by Becker, 1985, called the human capital theory, parenthood is said to diminish the hourly wages of mothers for the reason that it impedes the development of human capital. The time that could be spent towards developing the job skills and furthering education or gaining experience in the field or workforce especially when a women is at the onset of her occupational career, is detracted because of childbearing and childrearing.

The effect of this fear is that women who even intend to be mothers at some point in their life may invest less in human-capital activities as compared to those women who do not, merely because they know that they will be discriminated against and their educational qualifications will be secondary to their status as a mother. As a result of this fear, it is seen among the young cohorts that marriages are significantly delayed because employers feel that married women may soon start building a family and they come in the secondary preference to single women.

II. NEGATIVE IMPACT OF MOTHERHOOD PENALTY

As rewarding as being a mother is, it comes with some unintended consequences for mothers who wish to excel in their career while also raising a family. Motherhood penalty affects women and their attempt to make a steady climb up the career ladder for which they have worked extremely hard. This penalty has an effect on their ability to build wealth and create a secure financial future for themselves and even their family.

As unfair as this penalty is, many women have to face it. There is a need of a practical approach to this issue which is deep and complex and people need to acknowledge that this concept exists. Women drop out of the workforce and that impacts the economy as well as the social fabric adversely.

A few researches by international bodies indicate that India could increase its GDP by 27% over a period of time if women participated in the economy at par with men. It is essential to understand how this penalty is imposed on mothers and how it affects the trajectory of their career paths. The impact of motherhood penalty is seen on various aspects of a mother's career, the most significant aspects and the negative impact on them are as follows:

1. Wages

When women re-enter the job matrix, their pay suffers as it has been documented that mother who have young children or are pregnant are offered less compensation because they are considered to be less competent and not functioning to the best of their abilities. A lot of explanations have been set forth as to why there exists a pay gap between mothers and non-mothers. Some of these explanations are reduction in human capital investment by mothers, mothers put in lower work effort when compared to non-mothers, there is an unobserved heterogeneity between non-mothers and mothers and also discrimination against mothers by employers.

2. Pay cut

After the analysis of all the literature studied for research, one thing was clear, all the studies had mentioned that women have to suffer a pay cut of around 4% for each child that they have and this pay cut has not been justified. When women return to their jobs after maternity, they have to re-adjust and suffer stereotypical views which hinders their corporate growth. If mothers take a longer than usual maternity break, this pay cut increases and the explanation provided for this is the loss of human capital investment and that women could have used that time in studying or bettering their skills. This pay-cut is not only unfair but also arbitrary

because there are no solid grounds which prove that a woman becomes less competent or less efficient after she re-joins the workforce after a maternity break.

3. Promotions

Women are skeptical about announcing their pregnancies in the workplace because there is a possibility that they may lose opportunities that they otherwise would receive. Employers often with-hold promotions instead of promoting women who are pregnant or have young children because they are considered as less focused in their work and therefore incapable.

4. Job opportunities

Women often leave their jobs due to pregnancy and have to re-join the workforce and they are discriminated against by employers at the time of hiring. Employers would almost never consider early mothers if they have single women or even men to fill the positions. This is mainly due to the bias which is repeatedly mentioned in the study that new mothers are considered less capable. Women get rejected at the first stage of the process because they are new mothers and this has a negative impact on their career paths as now they have to settle for jobs which may be less than their potential because of the bias that exists in the minds of employers.

5. Reduced advancement opportunities

At the workplace, women who are pregnant or are new mothers may be overlooked when offering a new opportunity to an employee which might help them grow. These opportunities may be big projects, workshops, pitch meetings, international programmes, peer conferences etc. Women have to miss these opportunities which may be very beneficial for their career solely because of the bias that may exist in the mind of the employers who considers the mother distracted from her job.

6. Fear impacts career decisions

Women often develop a fear of what might happen if this penalty is levied on them and it may negatively affect all the hard work they have done for a long time. Some times women choose their career paths where they assume they will not have to face this penalty and their transition into a working mother will be smooth, what the risk is that they might not really be unaffected from this penalty in any field they choose. This fear has a very degrading impact on the potential of women and may cost the workforce great talent.

III. CORRECTIVE MEASURES TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE

The motherhood penalty is not something that can be eliminated overnight because despite

the changes in gender equality at work many women still continue to face the effects of this penalty. For women who are even contemplating motherhood, having a solid plan for securing her financial health is very wise. Different companies have different rules and regulations with regard to gender disparities which are to be followed at the workplace and the magnitude of the motherhood penalty and the other factors that affect work culture depend on the constellation of work-family laws, policies and measures, gender stereotypes, societal expectations and labour market institutions. There are some policies that can be applied to address such issues.

- Women should be provided job-protected parental leave with no down gradation in their wages or the workload they handled i.e. projects and assignments they were responsible for before maternity and the leave should be of adequate duration and with income-related pay which should be funded by social insurance.
- Affordable and quality child care services should be easily accessible to women and there should be a flexible working arrangement for mothers.
- Mothers should be offered tax and benefit rules which treat them as economically independent adults.
- The implementation gap between work-family and social policies must be addressed.
- There should be total prevention and elimination of discrimination which is based on maternity and family responsibilities which women have to suffer at the hands of their employers.
- Generally men are not asked about what their personal responsibilities consist of and that should change. Both men and women should be transparent about their personal responsibilities.
- Parents in an organization should be provided professional support and pathways to leadership and mothers should be promoted to leadership positions so they can become role models in the workplace and they can also receive the support they need through this.
- For companies to be able to both attract and retain the best talent, they need to create parental policies that are useful and that will adjust for an employee's life stages. There must be inclusive leaves policies in the workplace which take into account the needs of new mothers and instead of bringing them down with things like pay-cuts, uplifts them to do better in their careers.

- The need is to normalize caregiving because the notion that only mothers are responsible for their children and family is a false one and creates biases leading to discrimination. Caregivers make the best leaders because they consider the needs of others and make sure that they bring out the best in their employees. The modern family index suggests that 89% of American workers are of the opinion that working mothers bring out the best in their employees because they are more diplomatic, better listeners, better team players and they remain calmer in times of crisis when compared to working fathers or employees without children.
- Organisations can start with practical solutions such as providing women the time and resources to help mothers settle back into their work post their maternity breaks and they should be provided with child care facilities and lactation facilities.
- Organizations can play a very positive role in breaking the gender norms and stereotypes by starting conversations that help all employees and helps them in real time problem solving regarding issues like life stage navigation, child care issues etc.

IV. FINDINGS

After the research it is evident that motherhood penalty exists and that mothers have to pay a price for reading in wearing their children. The fact that mothers have to suffer a wage penalty for being a woman raises concerns not only for gender equality but also for the capacity of societies to manage a sustainable balance between their economic aims of active female participation in paid work and social aims of providing a fair distribution of income to support the reproduction and rearing of children. When motherhood penalty is levied it impedes the progress that has been achieved till now towards gender equality and it affects both high income and middle to low-income countries. One important reason is that practices like this reflect on the gender stereotypes that women are expected to sacrifice their earnings and their careers and not men because of a natural process and the explanation provided is that there is a loss of human capital investment at the part of women. Not only does this increase pay gap between men and women it also creates a piggy between mothers and non-mothers which is significantly larger than the piggy between men and women.

The issue is that there is not much awareness on the topic and employers find a way out by not hiring mothers entirely then having to face the fact that the mothers had to face which cards and there were no reasonable explanation is provided for the same as other women who were just as equally qualified and experienced were getting a higher compensation.

The research also suggested that while there have been some discussions on the topic and some

literature exists which discusses motherhood penalty and its impact and how it can be addressed not much has been discussed about what the existing policies are and what accurate steps and policies will help address this issue at particular levels of management and in particular fields.

V. CONCLUSION

The setbacks that issue like motherhood penalty create for women in their career trajectories is alarming and such issues need to be addressed. Policies should be put in place which aim at curbing the penalty levied on mothers who are investing in the future of the economy by rearing and bearing children but for this have to risk their own careers and financial future.

Different explanations are provided for the existence of such penalty and these explanations include but are not limited to:

- (1) Mothers undergo a depreciation period which affects the human capital and its lower accumulation during career breaks following childbirth,
- (2) Mothers have a tendency to choose flexible jobs that give them better opportunities to combine childcare with paid work which makes them less reliable as their primary focus is not their work and career.
- (3) Productivity differs significantly between mothers and non-mothers and therefore preference is given to non-mothers while hiring, promoting or providing career advancement opportunities.
- (4) Employers discriminate against mothers solely because they become less capable and competent for their jobs as they lose focus.
- (5) Mothers have to take breaks which could instead be spent building up their investment in human capital like studying or sharpening the skills required for their jobs.

This penalty instils a sense of fear in all women and even those who may plan to never have children because it directly or indirectly affects all women. Awareness needs to be raised and employers who discriminate against mothers need to take responsibility for such faulty actions and even though this widespread practice cannot be tackled in a day, a start is required before this issue becomes all pervasive and more difficult to handle because it has been normalized overtime.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Post the research a few suggestions that the researcher would like to put forth are:

- Awareness should be raised by organisations on the issue of the existence of motherhood

penalty in various fields and at various levels and this could be done through seminars, professional interactions, discussion panels etc.

- When women leave for maternity breaks their superiors should be provided with assistance in form of temporary helps which will ensure the employer that they will not be burdened with workload in the absence of one of her employees and they would be less reluctant to hire women who are pregnant or our mothers.

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