

# Whether the Same Number of Maternity and Paternity Leave Days Contribute to Weaken Gender Discrimination in the Workplace

Hang Zhang, Chuqi Huang

School of Economics and Management, Beijing Jiaotong University, Beijing, China

**Keywords:** gender equality, time gap, career development, workplace

**Abstract:** With the improvement of living standard and self-consciousness, diversity and gender equality in the workplace have gradually been emphasized. Especially in China, a country with great stubborn stereotype, gender discrimination in the workplace caused by maternity leave becomes a controversial topic. Based on these ideas, this report aims to explore whether the policy adjustments could make efforts. Specifically speaking, “whether the same number of maternity and paternity leave days contribute to weaken gender discrimination in the workplace”, this is my research question. The report will analyse the effectiveness the policy on two aspects, the influence of time gap in the workplace and then the further influence on gender stereotype. Besides, the research method plays significant role in the accuracy of analysis. Firstly, wide-ranging investigation about current situation and general attitude shows the current situation. Then, we get deep communication through specific discussion with interviewees. Meanwhile, the participants are various such as staff and managers around the Chinese, which aims to obtain comprehensive understanding in terms of different perspectives. Certainly, all answers are confidential and all identifying information will be kept anonymous.

## 1. Introduction

With the general improvement of self-awareness of people, the concept of “diversity” is getting more and more attention in various fields such as social environment and workplace, which aims to call for the alleviation of discriminations [1]. Especially, the research shows [2] that gender discrimination is the key part of workplace inequality. However, the maternity leave policies are regarded as the reflection and cause of gender discrimination because it is just available to women [3]. Followed by the hot discussion of whether the adjustments of paternity leave policy could make efforts. Notably, recently, Chinese National people’s congress proposed a bill that suggest extends the paternity live to the same number of maternity leave [4]. Under the guidance of above this idea, this report will carry out in-depth research from two perspectives: time gap in the workplace and further influence on social stereotype through various tools such as interview and questionnaire. The purpose is to analyse whether extending paternity leave to the same number of days as maternity leave can weaken gender discrimination in Chinese workplace.

## 2. Literature review

There is general agreement that diversity is regarded as inclusive culture to accept the difference of individuals [5]. The emphasize of diversity is the outcome of social development, people are no longer satisfied with simple material needs, the pursuit of spirit and equality gradually become important. During the 1990s, the focus of diversity shifted to the workforce and workplace [6]. Today, diversity is considered as a fight for equality [7], workplace diversity has become a significant social and business concern in the twenty-first century. However, the causes are complex. Recent years, maternity leave policy has become a controversial topic and been continuously discussed. Meanwhile, during the implementation of traditional maternity leave policy, people begin to recognize it actually is one of causes and results of gender discrimination in the workplace, China owns traditional culture for thousands of years, gender discrimination in the workplace is still serious. Notably, recently, Chinese National people’s Congress propose to extend the paternity

leave to the same number of maternity leave. The effects of it on improving gender discrimination could be analysed in two perspectives.

According to the extensive investigation, one major cause of gender inequality in the labour market is women's discontinuous participation [8]. During the period of maternity leave, woman is forced to leave the workplace for a long time even completely exit. For enterprises, it is considered as resources waste because part of salary still be paid in this period of time. When it simply comes to maternity leave, companies really care about the different outputs between women and men, which are caused by the time gap. Naturally, compared to a woman who probably need to apply maternity leave, man seems to be better choice. However, by implementing the same days of maternity and paternity leave, woman could be more active participants in workplace and the time gap would not be the consideration when enterprises are making decisions [9].

### **3. Methodology**

This report is considered to research through an interpretive perspective, which aims to deeply analyse the attitude and thoughts of people instead of describing simply. Also, this report utilizes two key methods: questionnaire and interview, which aims to obtain comprehensive understanding in terms of different perspective.

Polit Study: Firstly, considering the regional differences in maternity leave and gender inequality, in order to achieve the balance and obtain the national average as much as possible, the questions set is not specific to certain region.

Ethics: The participant's privacy is of great concern for our group. The group promises that all answers are confidential and all identifying information will be kept anonymous. Specially, for interviews, every participant is voluntary and is contacted by group members in advanced. To be honest, we regard participants' privacy security as our responsibility. Naturally, only in this way, the participants are able to express their feelings and positions without any pressure.

In general, the following part of this report would like to combine the research findings and analysis to explore whether the same number of maternity and paternity leave days contribute to weaken gender discrimination in the workplace.

### **4. Finding and Analysis**

As the research progressed, there are 253 valid questionnaire responses. The number of female participants is three times as men, which could be attributed to women being more sensitive to the topic. Besides, the participants of interview include four managers (female: male=1:3), five staffs (female: male=3:2). The following context will show the findings and make deep analysis through two above perspectives.

Finding 1: Family planning is considered in hiring women & Unequal gender distribution in management. From the interviews, two staff members are asked future family planning during the employment interview while another male participant and female doctor have not been asked. Future family planning has indeed been one of factors in whether women could be employed successfully, which is exactly unfriendly for women career development. However, maternity leave does not have great impact on doctors because hospitals are generally national units with different recruitment and promotion policy. Additionally, the gender distribution in management also indicate that only if after giving birth, which means company's interests risks caused by giving birth are relatively small, women probably have opportunity to have equal competition with men. However, this kind of inequality in the workplace cannot be accepted any more, followed by the massive discussions and fight for equality.

#### **4.1 Time Gap in the Workplace**

Finding 2: People willing to eliminate the discrimination caused by time gap of maternity and paternity leave. According to figure 1, there are detailed duration of maternity and paternity leave of interviewees. The women own maternity leave for 90-150 days, which could be extended based on

special circumstances in certain enterprises. However, the paternity of men just for 0-15 days. Meanwhile, there is almost 75% think female fertility affects promotions. One of important reasons chosen by participants is that maternity leave seriously affects working hours. Naturally, looking at figure 2, there is almost 85% of participants agree that male should be given the same amount of paternity leave as female.

Interviewee	Maternity Leave (days)	Paternity Leave (days)
Interviewee 1	128 (+15)	15
Interviewee 2	132	15
Interviewee 3	158	15
Interviewee 4	90~180	13
Interviewee 5	120	0
Interviewee 6	90	0
<b>Average</b>	<b>119~137</b>	<b>10</b>

Figure 1: The maternity and paternity leave of participants' enterprise

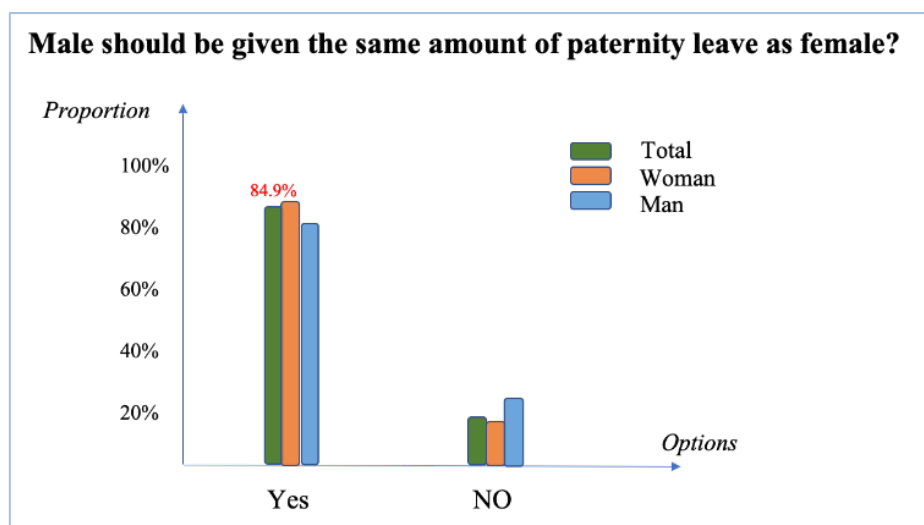


Figure 2: The proportion of question

Giving maternity leave to women alone cause big time gap between maternity and paternity leave, which forces women leave workplace for long term. However, scholars point out discontinuous participation of women significantly lead to gender inequality in the labour market. The physical limitations of women make them failed to create value like before even if they try best. However, it requires that women need to have stronger abilities to make up this weakness while men do not. This is also why people choose 'Yes'.

#### 4.2 Further Influence on Gender Stereotype

Finding 3: The greater impact of fertility on women's career development is mainly due to stereotype. Gender equality in the workplace is regarded as the responsibility of enterprise and public opinion & Women begin to reject traditional idea about 'family first, career second'. The different influence of fertility on the career development of men and women leads to gender inequality of maternity leave to some extent. Looking at the figure 3, there are three main reasons for people's choice, except have already mentioned one 'maternity leave reduces working hours.

There are traditional social norms about women all over the world, especially in China, women are expected to pay more attention to family and parenting. However, this social expectation only focuses on women instead of every family member. That why women are thought not to work hard as before after giving birth and maternity leave is much longer than paternity leave, as if fertility is the responsibility of women alone. Certainly, enterprises are reluctant to devote resources to women who may not be fully engaged. Thus, in order to avoid such waste and risks, companies are willing to provide fewer recruitment and promotion opportunities for women.

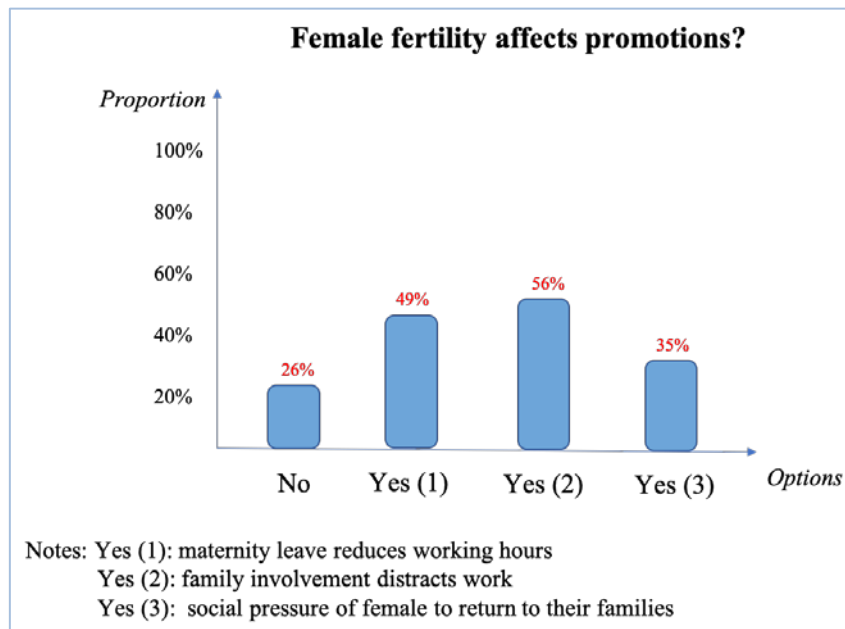


Figure 3: The proportion of choices

According to the figure 3, no matter as a whole or as separate men and women, it is generally accepted that the responsibility lies with enterprise and public opinion. Additionally, the other question “women should be encouraged family first and career second?”, which is to investigate current social stereotype through direct method.

## 5. Conclusion

**Limitation:** This report mainly focuses on the efficiency of the policy on gender discrimination. However, there are also many problems related to feasibility of it, for example the influence of enterprise’s operation and family economic burden. These factors that may affect the effectiveness of policy are worth considering. **Future research:** The future research is expected to focus on deeply analysing how the extension of paternity leave affects enterprise and family. Besides, the purpose is to explore a method to achieve balance.

In conclusion, people has recognized that gender discrimination in the workplace is mainly caused by social gender stereotype and public opinion. The unequal maternity leave policy is regarded as both result and because of it. Besides, few days ago, Chinese People’s Congress has passed this bill and is pushing it forward. Although some questions have also been raised about the implementation of the policy, people agree that it can alleviate gender discrimination in the workplace.

## References

- [1] Bell, J.M. and Hartmann, D., 2007. Diversity in everyday discourse: The cultural ambiguities and consequences of “happy talk”. *American Sociological Review*, 72(6), pp.895-914.
- [2] Bobbitt-Zeher, D., 2011. Gender discrimination at work: Connecting gender stereotypes,

- institutional policies, and gender composition of workplace. *Gender & Society*, 25(6), pp.764-786.
- [3] Casey, J. and Corday, K., 2008. Parental leave policies in 21 countries: Assessing generosity and gender equality.
- [4] Espinola-Arredondo, A. and Mondal, S., 2008. The effect of parental leave on female employment: evidence from state policies. *Washington State University School of Economic Sciences working paper series WP*, 15, p.2008.
- [5] Herring, C., 2009. Does diversity pay: Race, gender, and the business case for diversity. *American Sociological Review*, 74(2), pp.208-224
- [6] Nie, N.H., Hillygus, D.S., Erbring, L., Wellman, B. and Haythornthwaite, C., 2002. The internet in everyday life.
- [7] Stojmenovska, D., Bol, T. and Leopold, T., 2017. Does diversity pay? A replication of Herring (2009). *American Sociological Review*, 82(4), pp.857-867.
- [8] Thor Arnarson, B. and Mitra, A., 2010. The Paternity Leave Act in Iceland: implications for gender equality in the labour market. *Applied Economics Letters*, 17(7), pp.677-680.
- [9] Wright, K.B., 2005. Researching Internet-based populations: Advantages and disadvantages of online survey research, online questionnaire authoring software packages, and web survey services. *Journal of computer-mediated communication*, 10(3), p. JCMC1034.