

Knowledge and Attitude of Male Employees towards Paternity Leave in Iringa Municipality, Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted in Iringa Municipality with the aims of verifying the knowledge and attitudes of male employees towards paternity leave. A cross-sectional research design and multistage sampling technique was used. The sample was comprised of 150 male employees from private and public sectors. Respondents' awareness on paternity leave were captured by using open and closed ended questions while the attitude of male employees towards paternity leave was captured by using a five point Likert Scale. Qualitative and quantitative data were analysed by using content analysis and Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) computer software respectively. The findings show that majority of male's employees were not aware of paternity leave in the study area. Chi-square test analysis showed that male's paternity leave awareness was not influenced by employee's occupations ($p \leq 0.05$). The study also identified that majority of male's employees who were aware of paid paternity leave did not applied for the leave. Furthermore, the study revealed that male employees had unfavourable attitude towards paternity leave. The study recommends worker's trade unions to increase efforts in educating their members about paternity leave and its associated benefits in order to change male employees' negative attitude towards paternity leave.

Key words: Male employees, knowledge, attitude, paternity leave

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Paternity is the legal term for the relationship between a father and his child while Paternity leave is a leave of absence from work granted to a father to care for an infant or a period of paid or unpaid absence from work granted by an employer immediately after the birth of his child (Moss, 2012). United Nations (2012) defines paternity leave as an employee benefit that provides paid or unpaid time off to care for a child or make arrangement for the newborn's welfare. Williams (2004) defines paternity leave as period of paid or unpaid absence from work granted to a man by his employer immediately after the birth of his child. The United Nations (UN) explains that male employees receive special leave (Paternity leave) for the birth of the child. The internationally recruited male employees are granted a period of up to four weeks and those who work at non-family duty may receive up to eight weeks paternity leave. This period of the leave may be taken continuously or in separate periods during the following the birth of the child (United Nations, 2012). According to Field-Office Memorandum No. 67/2001 of the United Nations, paragraph 11: *"Paternity Leave is not a mandatory, and the employee may choose to use it fully or not to use it at all. It may be taken in conjunction with or independently of other approved forms of leave such as annual leave, special leave, and uncertified sick leave. Such other forms of leave continue to be subject to existing criteria and provisions"*.

In the United Kingdom, paternity leave was introduced in 2003 with a minimum of two weeks off work, paid at a minimum of 120 Euros and above per week. The leave allows a male parent (the father) to stay home with a newborn, recently adopted or foster child (Fisher, 2014). In the US, it is analysed that only 10% of private sector employee access to the leave which is more likely if an employee is well paid, works in a managerial or professional occupations or working in a company having at least 100 employees. On the other hand only four percent (4%) of workers with low paid may access the paternity leave (Miller, 2014).

In the United Arab Emirates (UAE), new fathers in the private sector are gratified to another type of leave such as annual leave or unpaid leave in order to support their wives and welcome their new child (Lewis, 2015). In some parts of Africa there are some laws guiding paternity leave in private sector as well as public sector. The Zambia Labour Act for instance, illustrates that paternity leave will allow a working father to spend seven days supporting and looking after partners and the newly born babies (Mywage, 2013). In South Africa, there is no paternity leave provision in place. However, workers who have been employed for longer than four months may take at least three days off – paid leave for family responsibility (paternity leave) where an employer may request an employee to provide reasonable proof of such event such as a birth certificate if the employee's child is born before the employee is paid (Cloud, 2015). In Tanzania, Employment and Labour Relations Act No. 6 also entitled three days paternity leave to employee if the leave is taken within seven days of the birth of the children and the employee is the father of the child (URT, 2004). Despite existence of paternity leave entitlement in Tanzania Labour Act of 2004, yet little empirical information is known about males' knowledge and attitude towards paternity leave. This study was undertaken to determine the knowledge and altitude of male employees towards paternity leave using a case of Iringa Municipality, Tanzania. The Employment and Labour Relations Act no. 8 of 2006 section 34 sub-section 1, states that: *"During any leave cycle, a male employee shall be entitled to at least three days paid paternity leave if (i) the leave is taken within seven days of the birth of the child and (ii) the employee is the father of the child"*.

2.0 STUDY LOCATION AND METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in Iringa Municipal Council, Iringa regional. Iringa Municipal Council has a population of 151,345 which are composed by 79,413 females and 71,932 males (URT, 2012). The core activities in Iringa Municipality are business, tourism, agriculture, and manufacturing industries. It is fast growing town that accelerated by the fast growing population of people which proportionally has fostered the booms in demand of different forms of services together with the industrial products.

The study used a cross sectional research design. Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used to select the respondents. Male employees were selected purposively followed by simple random sampling within the population. The study involved male employees from both private and public sector, where 96 men employees were selected from public sector and 54 men employees from private sector making a sample size of 150 respondents. The study also involved key informants based on their positions they hold in different organizations/companies. They included Human Resource Officers, CEOs and the Heads of Sections or Departments from the employees' work place. The Municipal Labour officer was also involved in the study. A questionnaire with closed-ended and open-ended questions was used to male employees after being pretested to ensure its reliability. The questionnaire also included a five point Likert scale with four positive and four negative attitudinal statements to determine the attitudes of men employees towards paternity leave. The scale was rated with 1 to 5 points, where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Agree and 5 = Strongly Agree.

On the other hand an interview guide was used to collect information from the key informants concerning the issue under the study. Quantitative data analysis was done by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) based on descriptive statistics including frequencies, means, percentages and cross-tabulations. A Chi-Square test was used to determine association between awareness and sector of employment of the respondent at 5% level of significance. Analysis of qualitative data from interviews was done by categorising information based on the study objectives. The responses from interviewees were categorised and summarised by merging similar ones to have one category of information. Mayring (2000) commented that various aspects of interpretation following the research objectives may put into categories, which are carefully found and revised within the process of analysis.

3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Male Employees' Background Information (n = 150)

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Sector		
Public	96	64
Private	54	36
Total	150	100
Age category		
26 – 30	15	10
31 -35	21	14
36 -40	32	21.3
41 – 45	42	28
46- 50	40	26.7
Total	150	100
No. of children		
1 to 3	88	58.7
4 to 6	48	32
More than 6	14	9.3
Total	150	100
Occupation		
Teacher	50	33.3
Agricultural Officer	25	16.7
Social worker	20	13.3
Lecturer	20	13.3
Security guard	15	10
Health worker	15	10
Police officer	5	3.3
Total	150	100

3.1 Male Employees' Background Information

More than a half (64%) of respondents were sampled from the public sector. Results from the study reveal that more than quarters (33.3%) of respondents were employed as teachers from secondary schools and primary schools followed by Agricultural officers who were less than a quarter (16.7%). Very few (3.3%) respondents were police officers who were picked from the public sector only. This is due to the fact that in Tanzania it is not allowed to have police officers in private sector. Only security guards can be employed by the sector and these were ten percent in this study. Other respondents were social workers (13.3%), lecturers (13.3%), and health workers (10%) as it is indicated in Table 1.

3.2 Male Employees' Awareness of Paternity Leave by Sector

Results show that majority (54.2% and 63.0%) of the respondents from both public sector and private sectors respectively were not aware of existence of paternity leave. This indicates that the employers at their work place had not fully played their role to inform male employees on their right that they deserve. The situation of unawareness is even worse in private sector than in public sector which might imply that in private sector most employers were more reluctant to inform their male employees about paternity leave. The results also reveal that those who were aware of it, more than a half (59.5%) of them from the public sector received information from Trade Unions at their work place and, while the majority (30%) from the private sector received information from mass media and trade unions (Table 2). The implication of this situation is that employers in private sector may not be willing to inform because by doing so male employees might apply for paternity leave and hence reduce productivity. Ladden (2014) argued that it is a challenge in the private sector that longer leave period like maternity or paternity leave reduces production and income unless the beneficiary is replaced by another person in the job.

Table 2: Male Employees' Awareness of Paternity leave (*n* = 150)

Variable	Public sector		Private sector	
	N	%	n	%
Awareness				
Aware	42	45.8	20	37.0
Not aware	52	54.2	34	63.0
Total	96	100	54	100
Source of information (n=62)				
Trade Union	25	59.5	6	30.0
Employer	12	28.6	3	15.0
Mass media	4	9.5	6	30.0
Colleagues	1	2.4	5	25.0
Total	42	100	20	100

$\chi^2 = 0.128$ *P*-value = 0.721*

* = Not significant at $p \leq 0.05$

The results also revealed that trade union leaders are working harder than employers to inform male employees' on their rights to paternity leave (Table 2). However, after testing using chi-square at $p \leq 0.05$ it was found that there was no significant association between respondents' sector of employment and their awareness of paternity leave. This means that awareness of paternity leave could not be determined by the respondents' sector of employment.

3.3 Male Employees' Application for Paternity Leave

Nearly three-fifths (59.5%) of respondents who were aware of paternity leave from the public sector did not apply for the leave while all (100%) who were aware from the private sector did not apply (Table 3). This big difference between the two sectors might concur with the argument of Ladden, *supra*, that the biggest challenge in private sector is that longer leave periods like maternity or paternity leaves reduce production and incomes unless the beneficiary is replaced by another person in the job. Therefore employers in private sectors might not be ready to employ other persons for replacement while others are on leave.

The results also might imply that being aware of the leave does not mean that men employees feel that paternity leave is important for them to help their wives in taking care of the new baby and therefore would apply for it. Williams (2004), in his research on men and paternity leave, found that 70% of working fathers did not take paternity leave due to social stigma attached to it. He also found that 40% of men who opted to take time off for childcare stayed in the office instead. This suggests that social stigma against men who would like to take time off for childcare is culturally constructed.

Table 3: Respondents' Application for Paternity Leave by sector (n = 62)

Application for paternity leave	Public sector		Private sector	
	n	%	n	%
Applied	17	40.5	0	0.0
Did not apply	25	59.5	20	100.0
Total	42	100	20	100
Reason for not applying (n = 45)				
Very few days	10	40.0	4	20.0
Loss of job/deduction of salary	0	0.0	3	15.0
It is worthless	7	28.0	3	15.0
Not well informed	8	32.0	10	50.0
Total	25	100	20	100

During interview, respondents were requested to give reasons as to why they did not apply for the leave even if they were aware of their right to do so. It was revealed that among the reasons for not applying paternity leave include: the time (three days for the leave is very short and therefore the leave is just useless, worry due to salary deductions especially in the private sector, worry of loss of job, as many employers in the private sector would prefer to have unmarried men to avoid absenteeism at work and others said they feel shy to apply for the leave. ... "*We are expecting our second baby soon, and the problem is my company has no formal policy that allows paternity leave*" (Commented by one male employee". Another male employee said "*I have heard my immediate boss making remarks about it that*" ... "*you are not the one having the baby, so why do you need time off?*" McLynn (2014) asserted that many employers enhance statutory maternity entitlements but were reluctant to do so for shared parental leave, because of fear that there would be a massive take-up of such entitlements from eligible male employees. Weber (2013) also comments that leave is the norm for women, but men have only become a part of the discussion as traditional housewife and breadwinner roles have shifted. This confirms that men may not be provided with paternity leave due to employers' reluctances.

3.4 Activities during the Three Day Paternity Leave

Respondents who applied for paternity leave were requested to explain what they did during the leave. About three quarters (70.6%) of them reported to be out of home and doing other activities like business, visiting friends and colleagues and having leisure than helping their wives. The reason for this was that during this time other female relatives like mother in-law, sister in-law or aunt come at home and help the wife with the new born.

Respondents also said that their culture did not allow them to perform household tasks like washing and cooking for their wives and that if they do so their relatives would not allow that. They also added that men who requested paternity leave were being stigmatized because they were perceived to have negative traits that are used to stigmatize women, like weakness and uncertainty, not masculine and ambitious. This gives an implication that culture is still a barrier for men to be involved in women dominated activities (household tasks). The implications are also harsh for gender equality in the workplace as well as at household, meaning that gender equality in terms of who does the bulk of the chores and who is primarily responsible for looking after the children has made very little progress in terms of what happens in this situation (Schober and Scottt, 2012)

During interviews with some employers it was revealed that many men who openly identified with their parental role at work face pressure or resentment from co-workers. Men who are active caregivers get teased and insulted at work more than so-called traditional fathers and men without children. It is as if societies dictate that men are incapable of giving the same amount of care to a child as a woman would do. One of the men employees said: “...*You know, when I used to come home from work and the laundry wasn’t done and dinner wasn’t done and I said I totally understand? I didn’t. I just said that. Now I really get it.*” He added: “*It’s good for men to see, it is a lot of work.*”

Table 4: Activities OF Respondents during Paternity Leave ($n = 17$)

Activities done during leave time	Frequency	Percentage
Do other activities out of home	12	70.6
Stay at home and help the wife with the new born	5	29.4
Total	17	100

The rest (29.4%) stayed at home and helped their wives by performing different roles like cooking, washing, doing shopping, and clean their houses. However, they said that they had to do so because they had no relatives to help in their homes as they were living far from their relatives especially the in-laws who could take care of their wives and the new born. Only two respondents among them said they would help their wives even if their relatives could come and stay in their homes during their leave time.

The results are contrary with those in America, Australia, Britain and Denmark where fathers who had taken paternity leave were more likely to feed, dress, bathe and play with their children during their paternity leave and after the period of leave had ended (Koune, 2015). Weber (2013) asserted that increased father-child interaction at an early stage helps children with their development later in life. Miller (2014) and Luden (2014) also argued that fathers who take longer leaves are more involved in child care even some months more after returning to work. This implies that providing paternal leave is about more than just giving time to men with their new born, but it gives babies the sense of security and nurturing, and creates men (fathers) who understand parenting role. Mason (2013) added that paternity leave is aimed at helping parents to share the load of caring for a newborn, to help fathers play a greater role in the earliest of stages of their child’s life, and enable the mother to return to her normal health earlier than when she is doing it alone.

3.5 Male Employees’ Attitude towards Paternity Leave

A forty-point Likert scale with eight attitudinal statements was used to measure male employees’ attitudes towards paternity leave. Four of the statements had positive connotations and four had negative connotations on which men were required to indicate whether they strongly disagreed, disagreed, were uncertain, agreed or strongly agreed. Thereafter, the points scored were added up to determine the overall attitude of the respondents.

The results (Table 5) show that majority (37.28% and 40.6%) from public and private sectors respectively strongly disagreed that men employees were well informed about paternity leave, thus they were not in favour of the statement. The time given for paternity leave was also found to be not enough as majority (35.2% and 40.6%) of the respondents from the two sectors respectively did not agree with the statement that: “The time for paternity leave is enough”

Table 5: Male Employees’ Attitude towards Paternity Leave by sector (*n* = 150)

Attitudinal statement	Response (%)										Total
	SD		D		U		A		SA		
	pbic	prvt	pbic	prvt	pbic	prvt	pbic	prvt	pbic	prvt	
Men employees are well informed on paternity leave	37.2	40.6	1.5	1.4	2.4	1.0	14.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	100
Men co-workers usually apply for paternity leave	10.2	7.0	32	38.2	2.2	1.0	2.0	0.0	1.3	0.0	100
The time for paternity leave is enough	6.0	8.0	35.2	40.6	1.0	2.0	3.0	4.0	0.0	0.0	100
Paternity leave is important for men to help their wives	2.8	0.0	9.0	8.0	2.5	0.0	30.7	43.2	2.6	1.4	100
Paternity leave is costly to employers	3.2	0.0	29.0	23.0	7.0	9.8	7.0	18.0	0.0	2.0	100
Paternity leave is worthless	7.2	7.4	22.0	28.0	4.8	3.0	19.0	16.8	0.0	1.8	100
Men employees are reluctant to apply for paternity leave	2.2	0.0	13.0	9.0	8.0	10.8	28.0	25.0	2.0	3.0	100
Men employees do not need the leave as it is for mothers only	4.0	0.0	27.6	23.0	5.3	2.5	20.0	16.8	0.8	0.0	100

Key: SD=Strongly Disagaree; D = Disagree; U = Uncertain; A = Agree; Strongly Agree
 Pblc = Public; prvt = Private

As it was explained earlier this was among the reasons of some respondents not applying for paternity leave. On the other hand, most of the respondents (30.7% and 43.2%) from the two sectors respectively viewed that; paternity leave was costly to employers. Some male employees also viewed paternity leave as worthless. This implies that men employees did not regard that helping their wives in taking care of their newborn as an important task and therefore there was no need for paternity leave. However, it was also revealed that some men employees needed paternity leave, as they did not agree with the statement that: ‘Men employees do not need the leave as it is for mothers who are responsible of taking care of young babies.

This response gives an implication that men employees would like to have paternity leave but they were not ready to apply for it. This might be due to the fact that they were reluctant because of stigma at their work place and that majority of them were not aware of their right to the leave as asserted by Weber (2013). Another reason as stated earlier was that the time for the leave is too short (3 days). The cultural aspect also would not be forgotten as stereotypes on this issue had a great role to play in hindering men from applying for paternity leave.

3.5.1 Overall Attitudes of Male Employees towards Paternity Leave

Based on the attitudinal statements used to determine the attitudes of male employees towards paternity leave the findings revealed that the minimum and maximum overall attitude points were 21.0 and 42.0 respectively with an average point of 32.2. Out of the maximum of 42.0 points, all the points up to 23.0 indicated unfavourable attitudes; neutral attitude was represented by 24 points and favourable attitude was represented by 25 to 40 points. The results revealed that almost three- fifths (61.3%) of the male employees had unfavourable attitude towards paternity leave, 25.4% had favourable attitude towards paternity leave and the rest (13.3%) were uncertain.

Table 6: Male Employees’ Overall Attitudes towards Paternity Leave (*n* = 150)

Overall attitudes	n	%
Unfavourable	92	61.3
Uncertain	20	13.3

Overall attitudes	n	%
Unfavourable	92	61.3
Uncertain	20	13.3
Favourable	38	25.4
Total	150	100

The implication of these overall attitudes is that the male employees in different sectors were not well informed and/or reluctant to apply for paternity leave. Similarly, Mason (2013) assert that men are too often mocked in the work place for wanting to go part time or leaving early to care for their children. Due to this fact which in most cases is caused by cultural issues, male employees may be reluctant to apply for maternity leave.

4.0 CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATION

The study set out to establish the knowledge and attitude of males' towards paternity leave in Tanzania with special reference to private and public sector employee of Iringa Municipality of Iringa Region. It was found that majority of interviewed male employees had no awareness of the existence of paternity leave implying that they were not well informed. The male's paternity leave awareness was found not to be influenced by employees' sector of employment. This implies that majority of the male employees were not informed on their rights of paternity leave regardless their occupation. The study also had revealed that, majority of male employees who were aware of the existence of paid paternity leave from both sectors did not apply for the leave. This gives an implication that male employees were reluctant to apply for paternity leave. On the other hand, majority of male employees had unfavourable attitude towards paternity leave in the study area. The study draws the following recommendations: workers trade union should increase effort to ensure more employees have the right knowledge about existence of paternity leave and its associated benefits to their members in order to change their negative attitude towards paternity leave. There is a need also for policy makers particularly the employment policy to increase the number of days for paternity leave to give more time for males to engage on activities that support their wives on caring the new born as a significant number of male employee said that the time for paternity leave was short.

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