

## **Knowledge and Attitudes of Male Employees towards Paternity Leave in Iringa Municipality, Tanzania**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to establish the knowledge and attitudes of male employees towards paternity leave in Iringa Municipality. A cross-sectional research design and multistage sampling technique were used to select 150 male employees from private and public sectors. Respondents' awareness on paternity leave was captured by using open and closed ended questions. Attitudes of male employees towards paternity leave were captured by using a five-point Likert Scale. Findings show that the majority of male employees were not aware of paternity leave in the study area. The study found that the majority of male employees were aware of paid paternity leave did not apply for. Furthermore, the study revealed that male employees had unfavourable attitude towards paternity leave. The study recommends for workers' trade unions to increase efforts in educating their members about paternity leave and its benefits as it will help to change male employees' negative attitude towards paternity leave.

**Key words:** Awareness attitude, paternity leave, employee benefits

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### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Paternity leave is often discussed as a policy measure to encourage greater gender equality both in the family and in the labor market. It strengthens women's position in the labor market, reduce the gender wage gap and give children a chance to bond with their fathers, it also increases men's involvement in child caring. In this study the male employees' awareness and attitudes towards

paternity leave were assessed (Burtle and Bezruchka, 2016). In Tanzania, Employment and Labor Relations Act No. 6 entitled three days paternity leave to employee if the leave is taken within seven days of the birth of the child and the employee is the father of the child (URT, 2004). Despite the paternity leave entitlement under Tanzania Labour Act of 2004, very little empirical evidence is available about males' awareness and attitude towards paternity leave. This study was undertaken to fill that gap using a case of Iringa Municipality, Tanzania. In the Employment and Labour Relations Act no. 8 of 2006 section 34 sub-section 1, it is stated 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 LITERATURE REVIEW

Paternity is the legal term for the relationship between a father and his child. 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 a 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. 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"*. However this applies to internationally employed males. Such other forms of leave continue to be subject to existing criteria and provisions of employers.

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 United States of America (USA), it is reported that only 10% of private sector employees access the leave 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 granted 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 the private and public sectors. The Zambia Labour Act, for instance, provides 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 for employees. 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 a birth certificate if the employee's child before the employee is paid (Cloud, 2015).

## 3.0 STUDY AREA, DATA AND METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in Iringa Municipal Council, Iringa regional. The core activities in Iringa Municipality are business, tourism, agriculture, and manufacturing industries. It is a fast growing town accelerated by the fast growing population which has fostered the booms in demand for different forms of services together with the industrial products.

The study used a cross sectional research design. Purposive technique was used to select the respondents. This technique is appropriate when respondents are tied with particular characteristics (Palys, 2008). In this case respondents were to be male employees. 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 or 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 selected for 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.

Interview guide was used to collect information from the key informants concerning the issue under the study. Data from questionnaire were analysed by descriptive statistics including frequencies, means, and percentages using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences. The responses from interviewees were interpreted, categorised and summarised by merging similar ones to have categories of information based on the study objectives. Mayring (2000) argues that aspects of interpretation following the research objectives may put into categories, which are carefully found and revised within the process of analysis.

## 4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Male Employees' Background information

More than a half (64%) of respondents were taken from the public sector. Results from the study reveal that about one third (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. 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%).

**Table 1.** Male Employees' Background Information ( $n = 150$ )

Variable	Frequency	Percent
<b>Sector</b>		
Public	96	64
Private	54	36
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Age category</b>		
26 – 30	15	10
31 -35	21	14
36 -40	32	21.3
41 – 45	42	28
46- 50	40	26.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>No. of children</b>		
1 to 3	88	58.7
4 to 6	48	32
More than 6	14	9.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Occupation</b>		
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
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>

#### 4.2 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 employers at their work place had not fully informed male employees on their rights. Awareness is lower in private sector than in public sector which might imply that in the 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%) came from the public sector and received information from Trade Unions at their work place, while the minority (30%) from the private sector received information from the mass media and trade unions (Table 2). The implication of this situation is that employers in private sector may not be willing to inform employees because by doing so male employees might apply for paternity leave and hence reduce productivity. Ladden (2014) also argue that it is a challenge in the private sector that longer leave period such as maternity or paternity leaves reduce production and income unless the beneficiary is replaced.

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

Variable	Public sector		Private sector	
	n	%	n	%
Aware	42	45.8	20	37.0
Not aware	52	54.2	34	63.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Source of information (n=62)</b>				
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
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>

#### 4.3 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 difference between the two sectors might concur with the argument by Ladden (2014) 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 the private sector tend not be ready to replace employees on leave, these employers would rather not informing employees of such a leave benefit.

The results might also 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 a research on men and paternity leave, it was found that 70% of working fathers did not take paternity leave due to social stigma attached to it. William 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 taking time off for childcare is hindered by social stigma. This stigma 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
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Reason for not applying (n = 45)</b>				
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
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>

During interviews, respondents were requested to give reasons why they did not apply for the leave even if they were aware of their right to do so. It was revealed that 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. McLynn (2014) asserts 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.

#### 4.4 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 rather than helping their wives. The reason 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, showing 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. At household level women do the bulk of the chores and primarily responsible for looking after the children (Schober and Scottt, 2012)

During interviews with some employers, it was found that many men, who openly identify 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 society dictates 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:

**Table 4.** Activities done by 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
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100</b>

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 said they would help their wives even if their relatives come and stay in their homes during their leave time.

The results are contrary to those in America, Australia, Britain and Denmark where fathers who had took paternity leave were more likely to feed, dress, bathe and play with their children during their leave and after the period of leave had ended (Koune, 2015). Weber (2013) asserts that increased father-child interaction at an early stage helps children with their development later in life. Miller (2014) and Luden (2014) also argue 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) adds 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. However, the contrary results show that in Tanzania culture dictates the gender roles for men and women. In this case the role for child care is primarily left for women alone.

#### 4.5 Male Employees' Attitude towards Paternity Leave

A five-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. 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		
	pblc	prvt	pblc	prvt	pblc	prvt	pblc	prvt	pblc	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 Disagree; D=Disagree; U=Uncertain; A=Agree; Strongly Agree

Pblc = Public; prvt = Private

Majority of the respondents (30.7% and 43.2%) from the public and private sector respectively viewed that; paternity leave was costly to employers. Some male employees also viewed paternity leave as worthless. This might be explained that male 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 did not apply for it 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 might be 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.

#### **4.6 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 40.0 respectively with an average point of 32.2. Out of the maximum of 40.0 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)*

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

Mason (2013) asserts 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 not apply for maternity leave.

#### **5.0 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. The study draws the following recommendations: workers trade union should increases 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 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. There should be programmes to create awareness on the importance of paternity leave to male employees at work place to reduce the cultural stigma among them

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