

Creche at the workplace: A tool for women empowerment

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Structure of Indian Society has changed a lot in past decades. Man playing a role of bread earner and woman playing a role of housewife is a thing of past. Over the years the concept has been this: if the mother works, the grandparents take care of the child. While the mother is expected to take jobs like teaching or banking, her exploring and being outgoing to take up challenging tasks and high profile jobs is looked down upon. She has to take the harsh decision of choosing between what she wants more and what is expected out of her. It is not that she lacks efficiency but the dual burden makes it difficult for her to handle both.

2. It has been reported that women make up 24% of India's workforce. But only 5% of them reach the top layer, compared to the global average of 20%. A majority of them give up their jobs or fall behind on performance during their 'start a family' period in life. When we think of the reasons for this imbalance, one major point seen is the sheer absence of day-care at the workplace keeping millions of working women from working. Indian work places and environments force women to choose between work and children, instead of adapting itself to the changing roles of women in our society. The Hindu reported earlier that women in tech companies in Hyderabad were losing out on career opportunities due to lack of creche facilities.

3. Women employees have different problems because of the responsibility they share. Women employees taking care of young children are always worried about the health of their young one and have to stay at home when the child is not well. Children sometimes refuse to leave their mother and prevent woman employee from attending their place of work.

4. Child upbringing particularly of the children up to the age of 6 years is a major challenge for women employees. This is a major reason women employees ask for leave. Large number of women employees is working in

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courts in Mumbai and Moffusil. Considering the heavy work in all the courts absence of one employee from the court hampers regular work. Absence of the employees reduce productivity and affect the output i.e. disposal of the cases by the court.

5. This problem to some extent can be solved by establishing creche in every court. Establishing creche will not only resolve problem of absence of women employees from duty for several days in a year but will also benefit to the welfare of children who suffer mentally and emotionally because of temporary separation from mother when she is out of the house for several hours. If a child stays in creche established in court where mother is working there will be union between child and mother at intervals of few hours. Child and mother both will have feeling of togetherness throughout day. This will have positive impact on the psychological and physical development of child. Mother i.e. woman employee keeping her child in creche will also be able to concentrate on her work as her mind will be in the state of peace and harmony and she will perform his job stress free.

What it needs

6. For having a creche in every office accommodation of around 400 sq. feet to 600 sq. feet will be required. Creche is required to be taken care of by specially trained employee who is aware of health care. Furniture like swings and small beds would be required. Besides these toys will be required to keep the children busy and entertained. Accommodation of around 400 sq. ft. can easily be made available in the premises of District Courts and in the premises of larger court premises in Mumbai such as High Court, City Civil Court, Family Court, Industrial Court, court of CMM, etc. Furniture and Toys can be made available by Employees Association and Officers Association. Post of Health Worker is required to be created by the Government.

Financial implications

7. In view of the above assessment, the only financial implications which will be borne by the government would be salary of Health workers. Considering the salary of Anganwadi workers or Nurses, the post of 'Health

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Worker' can be created under the Pay Scale of Rs.5200 - Rs.1900 - Rs.20,200/-. Average per month emolument of each Health Worker would be Rs.25, 000/- p.m. Initially, creches may be established in all the Courts and Forums in Mumbai and in all District places. Approximately 50 creches are required to be established initially. Salary of the health Worker for 50 creches would be Rs.7, 50,000/- p.m. i.e. Rs.90 lacs p.a.

8. Pros and Cons

- Presence of young child of women employee in office will keep her happy and stress free. The women employees will therefore work more effectively as compared to her present situation where she is stressful for health and safety of her child. This change will positively affect her work and final outcome will be increased productivity.
- The child, who will remain in association of his mother and feel nearness of his mother throughout the day, will grow better physically, emotionally and mentally. Arrangements can be made for regular visits of doctors and health care services to the creches in co-ordination with Health Department of the Government. Periodical immunization of the children can be taken care of at creches. A child taking facility of creche will have better and healthy physical growth. Thus, the benefits of establishment of creches are very significant for administration of office and for the development of child.
- A creche provides a comfortable and stimulating environment for children.
- There are a range of age-appropriate development toys that children may not have at home. Creche will help learn about socializing and playing with other children of his age.
- When a women employee enroll her child in a creche she don't have to worry about leaving her child alone at home with a stranger (in

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case of a nuclear family) or keep home accessible to outsiders like maid.

- Child gets to interact with other children of his age-group and others as well in a crèche is a huge advantage. Such interactions enhance his capabilities to interact with others and intelligently work his way around people and things. Perhaps this is the reason that children at creches are often found to be more confident and independent than their peers.
- A creche or a nursery may not offer your child the kind of attention which a mother can give.
- Child may be exposed to sick children and may tend to catch infection.
- There may be a criticism that woman employee keeping child in the creche will often visit creche leaving her place of work now and then. Such a situation if arises can be tackled by Presiding officer of the office where employee is working.

Conclusion

9. Considering pros and cons, establishment of creches have more benefits and fewer disadvantages. Above disadvantages can be taken care of by appointing caring women as caretaker at creche and maintaining hygiene at creche. Establishment of creche is thus not only beneficial to women employee but it is a mantra for building a better society with physically and mentally healthy human beings. Creche in every office will also be a tool for women empowerment. More women will opt for job in offices and more work force will be available for nation building.

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