

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF AWARENESS AMONG WOMEN
WORKERS REGARDING THE MATERNITY
BENEFITS ACT, 1961

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Abstract

Passed in 1961, the maternity Benefits Act continues to be a key piece of legislation protecting women's rights and welfare throughout the life-changing stage of motherhood. This thorough abstract examines the Act critically, examining its legislative provisions, significant court decisions, common critiques, and reform suggestions to guarantee the Act's ongoing applicability. The Act covers maternity leave, health benefits, and protection against termination during pregnancy, among other protections that are essential to female employees. This section of the research aims to assess the efficacy and adequacy of these laws, taking into account their flexibility in response to various working situations and their conformity to the demands of modern society. The Maternity Benefits Act's interpretation and implementation are greatly influenced by the legal precedents set by these instances. This analysis attempts to clarify subtleties, interpretive difficulties, and the practical implications of the Act in actual situations by looking at these examples. Despite the Act's undeniable contribution to the advancement of maternal rights, critiques are still ongoing. This paper assesses the Act's drawbacks severely, pointing out its limited scope, omission of some job types, and apparent inadequacies in handling high-risk pregnancies. The lack of paternity leave provisions and difficulties with enforcement are also examined. This analysis makes a number of suggestions for improving the Maternity Benefits Act in order to solve the issues that were found. Proposals include broadening the scope of the Act's application to include a wider range of establishments, including provisions for paternity payments, putting in place strong enforcement mechanisms, and periodically updating the Act to reflect changing workplace and society dynamics. Additionally, there is a focus on pushing companies to implement family-friendly policies and awareness campaigns. By providing a nuanced interpretation of the Maternity Benefits Act and arguing for a comprehensive and inclusive legal framework that adjusts to the changing needs of the modern workforce, the in-depth abstract hopes to add to the continuing conversation about maternity benefits.

Keywords

maternity, miscarriage, establishment, dismissal and termination

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Introduction

An important piece of law in India that tackles the particular difficulties experienced by working women during their maternity leave is the Maternity Benefits Act, 1961. The Act, which was passed with the intention of offering expectant mothers and new mothers all-encompassing assistance, creates a framework for controlling work conditions during this critical period of life.

As long as they employ 10 or more people, a broad variety of businesses, including factories, mines, plantations, and stores, are subject to the Act. By providing certain advantages and facilities, its main goal is to protect the health and well-being of female employees during their pregnancies and deliveries.

A woman must have worked for her employer for at least 80 days in the 12 months prior to the anticipated delivery date in order to be eligible for maternity benefits under the Act. The Act stipulates a 12-week maternity leave term, which includes six weeks of antepartum leave (taken before the projected date of delivery) and six weeks of postpartum leave (taken after childbirth). The earnings for the whole duration of the maternity leave, which are based on the average daily salary for the actual duration of absence, must be paid by the employer. The Act also mandates the payment of a medical incentive to cover pregnancy-related medical costs.

For six weeks after birth or miscarriage, pregnant women are not allowed to work at jobs that might endanger the health of the foetus. In order to further encourage a family-friendly workplace, companies employing fifty people or more are also required to offer crèche facilities for children under the age of six.

The Act highlights the value of communication between the employer and the pregnant worker, mandating that the latter give notice of the pregnancy and the anticipated delivery date in the appropriate way. The Act's requirements are enforced by inspectors chosen by the relevant government, and non-compliance is penalised. The Maternity Benefits Act has been modified throughout time to better suit evolving social demands and improve the total benefits offered to working women. It continues to be an essential part of India's legal system, supporting working moms' well-being and upholding the values of gender equality in the workplace.

Status of women with respect to the Maternity benefit Act, 1961

A number of measures are in place under the Maternity Benefits Act of 1961 to protect women's employment status during pregnancy and delivery. The main points outlining how women are treated under the Maternity Benefits Act are listed below:

- Application of the Act: Every type of establishment—factories, mines, plantations, stores, and other businesses with 10 or more employees—is covered by the Maternity Benefits Act.⁵⁵
- Rights Regarding Maternity Leave: Maternity leave is granted to expectant mothers for a maximum of 26 weeks. Eight weeks of leave prior to the anticipated delivery date and eighteen weeks of leave following the delivery are included in this.⁵⁶
- Benefit of Maternity: A woman is entitled to maternity benefit during her maternity leave, which is computed at the rate of her average daily salary for the duration of her actual absence.⁵⁷
- Maternity Benefit Payment: Within two days after the application for maternity benefits, the employer must provide the benefit at the specified rate.⁵⁸
- Leave for Medical Termination or Miscarriage: If a woman experiences a miscarriage or a medical termination of her pregnancy, she is entitled to six weeks of paid leave.⁵⁹
- Head out for the tubectomy procedure: A lady having a tubectomy is entitled to a full pay period of two weeks off.⁶⁰
- Notification and Evidence of Pregnancy: It is mandatory for a woman to inform her employer in writing about her pregnancy and the anticipated delivery date. Proof of pregnancy may also be required by the employer.⁶¹
- Dismissal Is Not Permitted: A woman cannot be fired or terminated while she is on maternity leave or for any other reason related to her pregnancy-related absence. A woman is not allowed to be fired while on maternity leave unless it is due to misconduct unrelated to the lady's pregnancy.⁶²
- Rights Regarding Nursing Breaks: A mother is entitled to two breastfeeding breaks every day until the kid becomes 15 months old, in addition to normal breaks.⁶³

⁵⁵ Maternity Benefits Act 1961 (No. 53 of 1961), s.2

⁵⁶ Maternity Benefits Act 1961 (No. 53 of 1961), s.4

⁵⁷ Maternity Benefits Act 1961 (No. 53 of 1961), s.5

⁵⁸ Maternity Benefits Act 1961 (No. 53 of 1961), s.6

⁵⁹ Maternity Benefits Act 1961 (No. 53 of 1961), s.9

⁶⁰ Maternity Benefits Act 1961 (No. 53 of 1961), s.9A

⁶¹ Maternity Benefits Act 1961 (No. 53 of 1961), s.6

⁶² Maternity Benefits Act 1961 (No. 53 of 1961), s.12

⁶³ Maternity Benefits Act 1961 (No. 53 of 1961), s.11

- Assignment of Tasks During the Pregnancy: If a woman's pregnancy prevents her from carrying out her responsibilities, her employer must provide her a job that she can do instead.⁶⁴
- Legal Defences: Due to the Act's prohibition on discrimination or termination due to pregnancy, women are granted legal protection and provision for penalty is provided in the case of contravention of the Act.⁶⁵
- Rights to Maternity Leave in the Event of Adoption: Additionally, the Act offers maternity leave in the event of adoption. A woman may take maternity leave for a total of twelve weeks from the date of the adoption if she lawfully adopts a kid under three months old.⁶⁶
- Flexibility Regarding Maternity Leave Timing: A woman can opt to start her maternity leave as early as six weeks before the planned birth date, however it usually starts a few weeks sooner.⁶⁷
- The ability to work from home: If the nature of their jobs permits it, women may choose to work from home according to the Act. This may be especially important in the postpartum phase.⁶⁸
- Two Children's Rights During Nursing Breaks: For a maximum of fifteen months from the date of delivery, a mother is entitled to nursing breaks to care for her child. This clause covers up to two kids.⁶⁹
- Consequences of non-compliance: Fines and even jail time are possible outcomes for employers that violate the Act's restrictions. It is imperative that employers follow the legal obligations.⁷⁰
- Internal Complaints Committee: The Act requires the establishment of an Internal Complaints Committee at the place of employment in the event that there are any grievances or complaints about maternity benefits.⁷¹

⁶⁴ Maternity Benefits Act 1961 (No. 53 of 1961), s.4

⁶⁵ Maternity Benefits Act 1961 (No. 53 of 1961), s.21

⁶⁶ Maternity Benefits Act 1961 (No. 53 of 1961), s.5

⁶⁷ Maternity Benefits Act 1961 (No. 53 of 1961), s.4

⁶⁸ Maternity Benefits Act 1961 (No. 53 of 1961), s.5

⁶⁹ Maternity Benefits Act 1961 (No. 53 of 1961), s.11

⁷⁰ Maternity Benefits Act 1961 (No. 53 of 1961), s.21

⁷¹ Maternity Benefits Act 1961 (No. 53 of 1961), s.15

- Maternity Leave Extension for Illness: On the recommendation of a licenced medical professional, the maternity leave may be prolonged past the designated time in the event of illness resulting from pregnancy, childbirth, or associated problems. A woman is entitled to a maximum of one month of paid leave with earnings at the authorised rate if her illness results from pregnancy, delivery, early birth, or miscarriage.⁷²
- Bonus for Medical: The Act offers a medical bonus in addition to benefits and maternity leave. In cases where a woman is not eligible for maternity benefits, her employer is required to provide her with a medical bonus.⁷³
- Paid Time Off for Several Pregnancies: The right to maternity leave does not change for a mother who has two or more living children. Nonetheless, if a pregnant woman becomes unwell, her leave may be prolonged.⁷⁴
- Notification of Absence: It is mandatory for a woman to provide written notice to her employer about her desire to take maternity leave, together with the anticipated duration of her absence. The notification must to be sent out as soon as feasible.⁷⁵
- Rights while Away Temporarily: It is against the law for an employer to fire or terminate a woman who is on maternity leave, or to offer notice of termination or discharge during or as a result of the woman's absence.⁷⁶
- Facilities for Creches: It is mandatory for establishments with fifty or more workers to offer childcare services. The lady should be able to attend the creche four times a day, and it should be convenient to her place of employment.⁷⁷
- Employer's Obligation for Child Care: Employers are in duty of keeping the creche in good condition and making sure a woman with the necessary qualifications is in charge of it.⁷⁸
- Right to pursue legal action: Women have the right to pursue legal action in the event that the Act's provisions are broken. The Act offers judicial redress for complaints about maternity benefits.⁷⁹

⁷² Maternity Benefits Act 1961 (No. 53 of 1961), s.10

⁷³ Maternity Benefits Act 1961 (No. 53 of 1961), s.8

⁷⁴ Maternity Benefits Act 1961 (No. 53 of 1961), s.10

⁷⁵ Maternity Benefits Act 1961 (No. 53 of 1961), s.6

⁷⁶ Maternity Benefits Act 1961 (No. 53 of 1961), s.12

⁷⁷ Maternity Benefits Act 1961 (No. 53 of 1961), s.11 A

⁷⁸ Maternity Benefits Act 1961 (No. 53 of 1961), s.11A

⁷⁹ Maternity Benefits Act 1961 (No. 53 of 1961), s.12

Through the implementation of these provisions, the maternity Benefits Act seeks to promote a better work-life balance for women in the workforce by guaranteeing that they get sufficient support, protection, and benefits throughout the critical period of motherhood. It is important for acknowledging and protecting the rights of female employees as they become mothers.

It is imperative that employers and female workers possess comprehensive knowledge about these regulations in order to provide a seamless and encouraging shift during the maternity time. It's also possible that these provisions may undergo recurring evaluations and adjustments, so it's critical to remain updated on any changes made to the Act.

Judicial pronouncements

- *Tanuja Tolia v. State of Uttarakhand*⁸⁰

After taking maternity leave, Tanuja Tolia, a contractual Ayurvedic physician with Uttarakhand's State Medical and Health Services, applied for Child Care Leave (CCL), but her application was denied since she was an employee of a contract company. The defendants contended that it was impossible to award 730 days of CCL because her entire employment period was barely twelve months. The split bench of the High Court stressed that CCL should be interpreted generously since it is a constructive provision for the advantage of female workers in all job types. It referenced a Supreme Court decision that established equal maternity leave rights for all employees, including those on muster rosters, and made comparisons to those rights.

In line with the government decree of May 30, 2011, the court upheld the entitlement to child care leave even for contractual employees with a twelve-month employment term. Recourse available to the petitioner under Article 39(f), Article 42, and Article 45 of the Constitution was acknowledged.

- *Prachi Sen v. Ministry of Defence*⁸¹

The Karnataka High Court defined the circumstances under which the work-from-home benefit, as stated in Section 5(5) of the amended 2017 Act, might be awarded in the matter of *Prachi Sen v. Ministry of Defence* (2021). Following her maternity leave, Prachi Sen, an executive engineer at the Indian Ministry of Defence's Semiconductor Technology and Applied Research Centre (STARC), requested to work from home. The Court determined that it was not practicable for her to work from home due to the sensitive and private nature of

⁸⁰ AIR ONLINE 2020 UTR 246

⁸¹ WP NO. 22979 OF 2021

her work in military research. The decision emphasises that the option to work from home should only be approved when the nature of the job permits it.

It highlights the challenges that certain organisations may have while delivering benefits under Section 5(5) and exhorts employers to take proactive measures to make accommodations for nursing mothers by guaranteeing sufficient on-site or nearby childcare facilities. Even while the Court decided against allowing work-from-home options in this particular instance, it ordered STARC to offer appropriate daycare and demonstrate sympathy for working moms throughout the epidemic. The ruling highlights the necessity for a sophisticated strategy to strike a balance between job demands and workers' wellbeing, especially that of nursing moms.

- Pooja Jignesh Doshi Vs. The State of Maharashtra and Ors⁸²

The petitioner decided to use surrogacy as a remedy since she was unable to bear a second child. The kid born to the surrogate mother was eventually adopted by the petitioner. Prior to the child's birth, the petitioner—the surrogate mother—requested and was denied maternity leave. The petitioner requested maternity leave to care for the surrogate child, but the respondent denied the request, stating that maternity leave for a surrogate child is not permitted under the Leave Rules or the policy governing the Rules. Consequently, the issue of a surrogate mother's eligibility for maternity leave has emerged. The High Court relied on the ruling of the same court in *Dr. Mrs. Hema Vijay Menon vs. State of Maharashtra*, without going into the merits of the case. In this ruling, the High Court examined the concepts of pregnancy and motherhood. The High Court in this decision held that maternity is defined as the time during which a woman is pregnant and the period immediately following the birth of a child. Maternity leave is intended to preserve the honour of motherhood and to provide care for the mother's and child's health as well as their connection.

The goal of maternity leave is to promote social fairness for moms and their kids. It would be insulting to the womanhood and motherhood of the woman who want to raise a surrogacy child in the same manner as she would a biological child to draw a line between mothers who have biological children and mothers who have children through surrogacy. The Indian Constitution's Article 21 defines the right to life, which includes the right to motherhood and the right for every child to reach their full potential. It is hard to understand why a mother who gives birth to a child through surrogacy cannot get maternity leave from the government if maternity leave is granted to an adoptive mother.

The Court decided that the parents who donated the sperm and eggs had the right to leave even in the event that a child delivered through surrogacy. The woman is entitled to maternity leave, while the father is entitled to paternity leave.

⁸² WRIT PETITION NO. 1665 OF 2015

- State of Uttar Pradesh and Others v. Anshu Rani⁸³

Petitioner Anshu Rani requested maternity leave in 2018 through the Bijnor District Basic Education Officer. Instead of the 180 days she had asked, she was granted 90 days of paid maternity leave, which ran from October 1, 2018, to December 29, 2018. The reason her leave period was halved was not explained to her. The petitioner complained to the Allahabad High Court after becoming dissatisfied with what seemed to be a lack of response.

Avadesh Pratap Singh, the petitioner's knowledgeable attorney, cited the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, which underwent revisions in 2017 (the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017). The petitioner is permitted to utilise the 26-week maternity leave, which was extended from 8 weeks to 26 weeks in accordance with the 2017 amendment's provisions. The Court concluded after considering the reasons made by both parties that maternity leave constitutes social insurance. The purpose of the maternity leave is family support and the health of the mother and child. Additionally, the Allahabad High Court declared, "Parliament has made the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 in accordance with the provisions of Article 42."

The legality of an executive or administrative action that denies maternity benefit must be evaluated in light of Article 42, which expressly mentions "just and humane conditions of work" and "maternity relief."

- Rasitha C.H. vs. Kerala State & Anr.⁸⁴

The Kerala High Court ruled that women workers are entitled to maternity leave whether or not their employment is contractual. In accepting a petition filed by Rasitha, 35, who was refused maternity leave by Calicut University on the grounds that the terms of her contract did not envision the grant of such leave, Justice A Muhamed Mustaq ruled, "The maternity benefit is neither only a statutory benefit nor a benefit growing out of an agreement." It was decided that a woman employee cannot be denied maternity benefits only because her job status is contractual, since this court has regularly recognised that it is connected to a woman's dignity. Therefore, regardless of anything stated in the contract, the University must offer these advantages. Taking these factors into account, the Court allowed Rasitha's petition and mandated that Calicut University provide her with the same maternity benefits as other employees of the university within a two-month period.

- Neera Mathur v LIC⁸⁵

Mrs. Neera Mathur submitted an application for a job with the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), passing a number of tests and exams along the way, including a medical assessment to confirm her suitability for the role. She was placed on probation after finishing her training, and then she requested and was granted maternity leave. But when she came

⁸³ 2019 (5) ALJ 286

⁸⁴ WRIT PETITION (C) 5507 OF 2018

⁸⁵ AIR 1992 SC 392

back, her company fired her, saying she hadn't performed up to par and hadn't disclosed any personal information on her declaration form. Mrs. Mathur filed an appeal with the Supreme Court, claiming that Article 14 of the Indian Constitution had been violated in relation to her right to equality. After a unanimous decision, the Supreme Court ordered Mrs. Mathur's reinstatement.

The Court emphasised that the only reason for her firing was her refusal to provide personal information that the employer was not needed to know, and it found no indication of subpar performance. The statement underscored the importance of organisations such as LIC aligning themselves with constitutional guarantees of equal rights for women and suggested that superfluous restrictions be eliminated from declaration forms. The Court also issued a warning, implying that such acts may be challenged constitutionally, against utilising such rules to subtly avoid offering maternity leave and benefits.

- Union of India v. Asiya Begum⁸⁶

Asiya Begum works as a Sub-Inspector with the Central Industrial Security Force and is not covered by the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 (often known as "the Act"). In this instance, the Central Civil Services (Leave) Rules, 1972 (sometimes known as "the Leave Rules") are relevant. The Union of India has filed a writ appeal under Clause 15 of the Letters Patent against the contested judgement of June 18, 2019, rendered by the Madras High Court's Hon. Single Justice V. Parthipan. Asiya Begum was granted maternity benefits under the contested judgement, which included 180 days of paid leave between February 13, 2017, and February 28, 2017, for all reasons.

An appeal was filed, and the Division Bench, which included Justices A. P. Sahi and Subramonium Prasad, the Honourable Chief Justice of the Madras High Court, accepted it. The Hon'ble Court refused Asiya Begum's request for maternity leave, arguing that the second birth is for the third child and that the mathematical precision of two surviving children in the Rules cannot be disregarded. When twins are born, the two newborns will be regarded as two deliveries because of the difference in their ages. The Court further decided that the leave may be regarded as a medical leave and expressed the opinion that the Appropriate Authority has the authority to waive the regulations in certain cases.

- Municipal Corporation of Delhi V. Female Workers (Muster Roll) and another⁸⁷

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi refused to grant maternity leave to female muster roll workers who requested it in the same manner as regular employees, citing their non-regularized status. Their lawsuit was aided by the Delhi Municipal Workers Union, which resulted in an industrial tribunal decision. On April 2, 1996, the tribunal rendered a decision in support of the female employees, ordering the company to offer maternity benefits in

⁸⁶ W.P. NO. 20797 OF 2018

⁸⁷ AIR 2000 SC 1274

accordance with the Maternity Benefit Act. The corporation filed an appeal with the Delhi High Court; however, further challenges in the Supreme Court resulted with the removal of the solitary judge on January 7, 1997.

The Division Bench of the Supreme Court highlighted the significance of the case while rejecting the appeal for being too late. Judges S. Saghir Ahmad and D.P. Wadhwa emphasised Article 14, which states that all labour sectors are equal under the law. They cited Article 39, which highlights the salary and livelihood equality of men and women. The topics of equitable working conditions, maternity leave, and living wages were covered in Articles 42 and 43. Working women were acknowledged to get decent facilities thanks to the Maternity Benefit Act of 1961. The bench also emphasised the state's obligation to abolish gender-based job discrimination by citing Article 11 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

- Mini KT. V Divisional Manager, LIC ⁸⁸

Because of her child's slight autism, the female employee petitioner was subject to disciplinary action by the LIC for overstaying without authorised leave. She had first requested a transfer to Chennai for her child's medical care, and she had been granted leave without pay (LWA) till April 30, 2008. After that, her spouse received a work offer overseas, so she applied for an extension of her leave, a no-objection certificate, and the cancellation of the transfer so she could follow him. She was told to report for duty after her plea for an extension of her leave was denied. Despite providing an explanation of her situation and stressing the necessity of caring for her kid in Bahrain, she was removed from work after disciplinary actions were taken.

Despite noting the petitioner's situation's sympathetic aspects, the appeal authority supported the disciplinary judgement on the grounds of organisational interests. LIC's lack of consideration for the petitioner's request for her child's care was called into question by the court, which also emphasised the dearth of safeguards available to working moms in similar circumstances. The ruling highlighted the tension that exists between a mother's identity, organisational goals, and parenthood, and it called for the creation of laws that would grant these kinds of demands. The court emphasised the significance of the state's consideration of child care concerns by citing the Central Civil Services (Leave) Rules, 1972, which contain a provision for child care leave. The petitioner's request for extraordinary leave was taken into account in light of her child's illness and the absence of laws pertaining to such circumstances.

⁸⁸ WP (C) NO. 22007 OF 2012 (A)

Critical analysis

An important piece of law, the Maternity Benefits Act, 1961, aims to give Indian women workers maternity-related benefits and protections. A critical evaluation of the Act entails a review of its advantages, disadvantages, and effects on women employed in the labour.

Positive Features:

- Maternity Leave Duration: The Act sets down a fair amount of time for mothers to take off after giving birth and respond to their newborn's early needs.
- Maternity Benefit Payment: By guaranteeing women's financial assistance during their maternity leave, maternity benefits contribute to their financial security at this crucial juncture.
- Prohibition of Dismissal: The Act protects women's employment by making it illegal to fire them while they are on maternity leave and forbids discrimination based on pregnancy.
- Creche Facilities: Enforcing the provision of creche facilities for businesses employing a particular number of people is a good first step in assisting working moms.
- Health and Safety Measures: Recognising the value of a supportive work environment, the Act requires employers to protect the health and safety of expectant mothers and nursing mothers.

Issues and Restrictions:

- Application: The Act's scope is restricted to certain establishments; small enterprises and the unorganised sector are not included. As a result, a sizable segment of the female labour is left without access to these advantages.
- Probation Period Exclusion: Refusing to provide maternity benefits to women who are on probation might result in unfair treatment and exploitation of them while they are at their most vulnerable.
- Absence of Paternity Leave: While maternity benefits are the main emphasis of the Act, paternity leave is also necessary to encourage shared parental duties.
- Restricted Adoption Coverage: Although adoption is recognised under the Act, adoptive moms' maternity leave lasts for a lesser period of time than that of biological mothers.
- Unaddressed Informal Sector: Women working in the unorganised sector, where job security is a concern and maternity benefits are not widely known, have requirements that are not sufficiently met by the Act.
- Medical Bonus: The amount allotted for a medical bonus might not be enough to pay for the true costs of pregnancy- and childbirth-related medical care.

Overall Evaluation:

Although the Maternity Benefits Act of 1961 represents a noteworthy advancement in the acknowledgement of women's rights throughout pregnancy, it is imperative to tackle the constraints and deficiencies in its scope. It could need to be amended to ensure that it applies to a wider range of employers, advance gender equality, and take into account how modern families are changing. For maternity benefits law to remain relevant and successful, a more inclusive approach that acknowledges the unique needs of women in different work situations and tackles new issues is imperative.

Suggestions

Women must be made completely aware of the Maternity Benefits Act in order for them to be able to use their rights throughout pregnancy and fully comprehend their rights. Here are some recommendations:

- Campaigns for Education: Start focused awareness efforts on social media, radio, and television, among other media outlets. Create interesting and educational materials, such as infographics, films, and pamphlets, outlining the main points of the Maternity Benefits Act.
- Workshops at Work: Provide training sessions and workshops in the workplace to inform female staff members on their rights under the Act. Engage human resources departments in the process of answering questions and providing information on maternity benefits.
- Working along with women's groups and NGOs: Collaborate with women's organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to plan awareness campaigns and seminars in your neighbourhood. Use these organisations' power and reach to spread the word about maternity benefits.
- Role of Healthcare Providers: During prenatal checkups, work with healthcare professionals to offer pregnant women with informative materials. In clinics, hospitals, and maternity wards, put up flyers or booklets on maternity benefits.
- Online Resources: Establish a special area with complete information on the Maternity Benefits Act on official websites and other pertinent venues. Make use of social media channels to provide FAQs, live sessions, and frequent updates in order to answer questions.
- Clinics for Legal Aid: Provide legal aid clinics or hotlines where women may get information on the Maternity Benefits Act and advice on their rights. Collaborate with legal experts to offer underprivileged women pro bono assistance.
- Programmes for Community Engagement: Plan interactive workshops and community-level activities to remove any obstacles to comprehending the Act that

may arise on a regional or cultural level. Urge elders, community influencers, and local leaders to support and spread awareness.

- Include in Curricula for Education: Encourage the integration of maternity benefits information in courses at universities and schools. To promote an aware society, teach young females about their rights from an early age.
- Employer Involvement: Encourage companies to provide female employees with informational seminars and briefings on a regular basis. Ask businesses to publicly post information on maternity benefits in areas where people congregate.
- Smartphone Applications: Provide readily navigable mobile applications that offer information on maternity benefits. Incorporate functions such as push alerts for significant dates and changes.
- Celebrity Approvals: Work together with well-known individuals and celebrities to support initiatives raising awareness of maternity benefits. Use your influence to spread the word about the cause and attract more attention.
- Mechanism of Feedback: Provide a feedback system so that women can discuss their maternity benefits-related experiences and difficulties. Utilise this input to improve awareness efforts and deal with any emerging difficulties.

By putting these recommendations into practice, a thorough and multifaceted campaign to promote awareness of the Maternity Benefits Act may be launched, providing women with the information they need to make informed decisions about their rights during the vital maternity phase.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Maternity Benefits Act of 1961 is an important piece of law created to protect women's rights and welfare during the critical time of pregnancy. Even while the Act has admirable measures like job security, medical benefits, and maternity leave, it is important to recognise its shortcomings and potential areas for reform. As the contemporary workforce changes, the Act should adapt to ensure equity and inclusion across a range of industries.

For the Maternity Benefits Act to be implemented effectively, women's rights must be effectively communicated to them. Information may be widely disseminated through the use of internet platforms, workplace training, partnerships with NGOs, and educational initiatives.

Furthermore, educating healthcare professionals, integrating knowledge into curriculum, and promoting employer engagement may help create a workforce of women who are better aware and more capable. Periodic evaluations and changes are necessary to improve the Act's impact and ensure that it keeps up with changing social and economic environments. It is important to give consideration to paternity benefits, a more comprehensive view of work-life balance, and inclusion of women in the unorganised sector.

The Maternity Benefits Act may really function as a strong framework for supporting the well-being of women and their families during the crucial maternity time by addressing these factors and encouraging a culture of knowledge and compliance. Government agencies, businesses, non-governmental organisations, and the community must work together to ensure that the Act is relevant and effective in promoting workplace equity for women. For the Act to be successful over time, cooperation between governmental organisations, employers, non-governmental organisations, and the community is essential. The Maternity Benefits Act has the potential to provide a strong basis for improving the health of women and their families during the crucial maternity phase by developing an inclusive, compliant, and conscious society. The Act may make a substantial contribution to the advancement of workplace equity and gender equality in the constantly changing socioeconomic environment via ongoing discussion, adaptation, and collaboration.
