

## **An Exploratory Study On The Maternity Leave Policy and Normative Discrimination in The Greater Male' Region**

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### **Abstract**

Literature on the discourse regarding discrimination against working mothers in the workplace has been contemplated from a variety of angles. Although some contemporary studies consider the implications of maternity-related policies, particularly that maternity policy interventions could backfire by motivating normative discrimination, this has not been studied on a local level. The objective of this study is to identify if and how working mothers in the Maldives face normative discrimination due to the prevailing maternity leave policy, the motherhood penalties which ensue, and its contribution to the maternal wall. Hence, patriarchal ideologies and gender roles shall be considered to better understand what motivates discrimination, thereby triggering the cycle. To discern and evaluate whether or how the maternity leave policy impact normative discrimination, motherhood penalties and consequently the maternal wall, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with working mothers between the ages of 25 to 40, who have had at least one child after the maternity leave policy for civil servants was revised in 2019. A thematic analysis was conducted to analyse and evaluate the impact of the maternity leave policy for civil servants, and to understand the interplay between the implementation of the policy, normative discrimination, maternal wall, and motherhood penalties. The findings of this study conclude that the current maternity leave policy motivates normative discrimination, which contributes to the imposition of motherhood penalties, which in turn cement the maternal wall.

**Keywords:** gender stereotypes, maternal wall, motherhood penalty, normative discrimination, patriarchy