

## **Maternity Leave Decisions and Flexibility in Israel**

**Dr. Shlomit Hon Snir , Sharon Teitler Regev**

*Yezreel Valley College, Israel*

### **Abstract**

Maternity leave policy is a central component of family and labor market policy, with implications for maternal and child well-being, gender equality, and women's labor market outcomes. In Israel, women who worked for more than one year are entitled to 26 weeks of maternity leave, yet wage replacement is provided only for the first 15 weeks. This gap creates tensions between mothers' preferences, household economic constraints, and organizational expectations. This research examines the determinants of maternity leave duration in Israel and explores mothers' attitudes toward flexible maternity leave. The study combines a literature review with original quantitative evidence from a survey of 886 women who gave birth between 2018 and July 2024. Findings show that 27.4% of mothers return to work immediately after the paid period ends, while a substantial share extend leave beyond 26 weeks, indicating that leave duration is not anchored to the statutory entitlement once leave becomes unpaid. Multivariate survival analysis reveals that longer leave is associated with workplace norms supporting extended leave and longer commuting time, whereas earlier return is linked to higher relative income contribution, greater organizational commitment, higher happiness, family support, and the availability of remote work. The results also show a general positive attitude toward flexible maternity leave options, particularly among women who returned to work earlier, with stronger preferences for reduced workload or working days rather than shorter daily hours. Overall, the findings highlight the central role of paid leave, workplace norms, and flexible arrangements in shaping maternity leave behavior in Israel.

**Keywords:** Paid leave; Return to work; Workplace norms; Women; Flexible work