COMPREHENSIVE REPORT ON

Enhancing Family-Friendly Workplace Policies in Pakistan









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ENHANCING FAMILY-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE POLICIES IN PAKISTAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report examines the critical role of family-friendly policies and workplace childcare in Pakistan, emphasizing their impact on economic growth, gender equality, and workforce retention. It identifies significant gaps in existing policy frameworks and childcare infrastructure that hinder the full participation of working parents—particularly women—in the labor market. Drawing upon both quantitative data and qualitative insights, the analysis reveals that cultural norms and a lack of structured childcare services create substantial challenges for parents who need tot balance both their professional and caregiving responsibilities.

Key findings indicate that legislative reforms, including the introduction of mandatory paternity leave and the enforcement of childcare facility requirements under existing laws, are essential in mitigating these challenges. Additionally, the report highlights the importance of public—private partnerships and sector-specific strategies—such as on-site childcare, subsidized allowances, and flexible work arrangements—to enhance childcare accessibility and quality. Investment in managerial training and the adoption of data-driven approaches are also critical to ensuring that family-friendly policies are effectively implemented and sustained across industries.

The recommendations presented target all key stakeholders:



parents are urged to engage proactively in advocacy and utilize available resources;



the **government** is called upon to develop and enforce a comprehensive legislative framework;



corporates and **schools** are encouraged to invest in child-care infrastructure and flexible work models;



and **NGOs**, alongside **community-based initiatives**, are advised to lead in standardizing care quality and driving public awareness campaigns.

By addressing these areas collectively, the report argues that Pakistan can foster a more inclusive and resilient labor market, ultimately supporting broader socio-economic development.

Key findings:



64-70%

High awareness of family-friendly policies



20-25%

but **low** utilization due to operational, cultural, and managerial barriers.



Flexible work arrangements are critical for employee retention and satisfaction.



Childcare support is **inconsistent**, with concerns over cost, accessibility, and quality.



Gender norms and **managerial attitudes** significantly impact the uptake of childcare benefits.

Sectoral and regional variations affect policy effectiveness, with manufacturing having the highest policy utilization (\approx 33%) and Islamabad reporting the highest satisfaction (\approx 75%).

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INTRODUCTION

Family-friendly policies and workplace childcare are critical to Pakistan's economic growth, gender equality, and workforce retention.

The lack of accessible childcare solutions—including after-school care—creates significant challenges for working parents, particularly women in leadership roles, by impacting productivity, career progression, and workforce stability while also impacting child health, nutrition, and development. In the local cultural context, the need for childcare extends beyond early childhood development. With many schools closing by 1 PM, parents require after-school care for children at least up to age 12 to align with their work schedules. Although some companies have introduced family-friendly initiatives, broader legislative support remains limited. Existing labor laws have traditionally focused on maternity leave, offering minimal assistance for fathers or caregivers, and suffer from weak enforcement.

Childcare enterprises—such as daycares, after-school programs, and early education centers—play a pivotal role in supporting working parents and boosting workforce participation and productivity through corporate-childcare partnerships. The childcare landscape in Pakistan is further complicated by socio-economic disparities, cultural norms, and an over reliance on informal solutions, which together pose challenges in providing affordable and quality services. These issues disproportionately affect women, who bear the majority of caregiving responsibilities, thereby restricting their labor force participation and career advancement.

Drawing on regional examples from India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, best practices including on-site childcare, flexible work policies, and robust corporate-childcare partnerships offer culturally relevant and economically viable strategies. By adapting these strategies, Pakistan can foster inclusive, family-friendly workplaces that not only enhance employee retention and workplace inclusivity but also contribute to the broader socio-economic development and empowerment of working parents and children.

Research Objectives



Evaluate Best Practices:

Assess existing family-friendly workplace policies in Pakistan's corporate sector, focusing on childcare solutions.



Analyze Childcare Options:

Review various childcare solutions available to working parents in the private sector.



Conduct Case Study Analysis:

Explore costs, risks, and benefits of different childcare models from both parents' and employers' perspectives.



Develop Scalable Recommendations:

Formulate sustainable childcare models suitable for Pakistan.

Scope and Limitations

SCOPE

The research focuses on the childcare landscape in Pakistan, covering urban areas to provide a comprehensive analysis. The study examines:



Availability and accessibility of formal and informal childcare facilities.



Key stakeholders, including parents, schools, childcare providers, government agencies, and NGOs.



Policies and initiatives at the national and provincial levels aimed at supporting childcare and early childhood education.



Comparative analysis with childcare systems in similar regional and global contexts.

LIMITATIONS



Sector Scope: This research focuses solely on the formal sector and does not address challenges in the informal sector, which employs 70% of the female workforce.



Data Availability: Limited access to updated and comprehensive datasets on childcare facilities.



Geographical Scope: Primarily centered on Karachi, with minimal exploration of Lahore and Islamabad. Rural areas are excluded, limiting insights into non-urban childcare challenges.



Cultural Sensitivities: Discussions on childcare, particularly regarding gender roles and institutional childcare, may face resistance or bias during data collection.



Sample Representation: The reliance on voluntary participation for surveys and interviews may lead to non-representative sampling, particularly excluding marginalized communities.



Self-Reporting Bias: Survey and interview responses may reflect socially desirable answers rather than actual practices or preferences

This research acknowledges these limitations and strives to mitigate their impact through triangulation of data and robust methodological practices.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employs a **mixed-methods research design**, integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches to explore the child-care landscape in Pakistan. This design ensures a holistic understanding by combining statistical data with insights from stakeholders, such as parents, childcare providers, and policymakers.

In addition to surveys, focus group discussions (FGDs), and in-depth interviews (IDIs), the study includes **in-person visits to childcare centers and schools** to observe operational practices, infrastructure, and service delivery quality. These visits provide first-hand insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by formal and informal childcare providers, further enriching the findings.

The methodology is structured to triangulate findings from primary and secondary sources, ensuring reliability and validity through cross-verification of diverse data inputs.

The research components include:



Qualitative Methods:

Focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews (IDIs) to uncover detailed and context-specific insights.



Quantitative Methods:

Surveys to collect data from a broader audience, capturing trends and patterns.



Secondary Research:

A review of existing reports, academic articles, and government data to contextualize findings and align them with national and global trends.

Data Collection Methods

PRIMARY DATA SOURCES

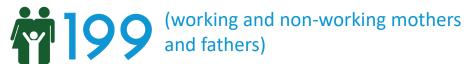
a. Surveys

Structured questionnaires distributed to parents and corporates to collect quantitative data on affordability, accessibility, and quality of childcare.

Purpose: To capture quantitative data on childcare preferences, accessibility, affordability, and satisfaction.

Sample Size: A total of **243 respondents**, distributed as follows:

Parents



Corporate Representatives



(HR and DEI professionals from diverse industries)

Distribution: Surveys were conducted online in Karachi, Lahore, and **Islamabad**, focusing on urban perspectives.

> Parents form the largest group to reflect the demand side of childcare services. Stratifying the sample across working and non-working parents ensures representation of diverse childcare needs and experiences.

> Corporate Representatives represent employers who influence supply-side childcare policies.

b. In-Depth Interviews (IDIs)

Semi-structured interviews with policymakers, corporate HR leaders, NGO representatives, and school administrators to gather qualitative insights.

Purpose: To gather detailed, context-specific insights from key

stakeholders.

Participants: A total of 22 IDIs were conducted:

Parents



• Corporate Representatives



5 (HR managers and executives)

NGO and Government Officials:



(representatives involved in childcare policy and advocacy)

c. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Discussions with parents (urban and rural), corporate representatives, childcare providers, and school administrators to explore cultural attitudes and preferences regarding childcare services, including daycare and after-school programs.

Purpose: To explore collective attitudes, cultural norms, and shared challenges related to childcare.

Participants: Conducted with groups of 6–10 participants, including parents, corporate employees, childcare providers, school administrators, and community members.

No. of FGDs: A total of 6 FGDs were conducted.

×2 with working and non-working parents.

x² with corporate HR and D&I representatives

with school representatives offering daycare or after-school care services.

with Government officials and NGOs

d. In-person Visits

Observational visits were conducted at childcare centers and schools, irrespective of their provision of daycare or after-school care services, to examine operational practices, infrastructure, and the quality of service delivery.

Purpose: In-person visits to childcare centers to observe operational practices, infrastructure, and service delivery quality.

No. of visits: • Childcare Providers



(formal daycare operators)

Schools



SECONDARY DATA SOURCES

Purpose: To contextualize primary findings and align them with existing knowledge.

Sources:

Government Reports:

Analysis of policy documents, such as the National Education Policy, and statistical data from the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics

Academic Articles:

Review of research papers on childcare trends, challenges, and socio-economic impacts in Pakistan and similar contexts.

NGO Reports:

Evaluation of project reports from organizations like UNICEF, ILO, and IFC addressing childcare in Pakistan.

Data Analysis Techniques

Quantitative Analysis:

- Descriptive statistics to analyze survey data, including percentage distributions.
- Cross-tabulation to examine relationships between variablessuch as industry and family friendly policies' uptake.

Qualitative Analysis:

- Thematic coding of interview and focus group transcripts to identify recurring themes and insights.
- Content analysis of secondary data to evaluate policy frame works and program outcomes.
- Key themes covered the availability, affordability, policy gaps, and cultural barriers affecting the adoption of high-quality formal childcare.

This methodological framework ensures that the research provides a robust, evidence-based understanding of childcare in Pakistan, addressing its multifaceted dimensions.

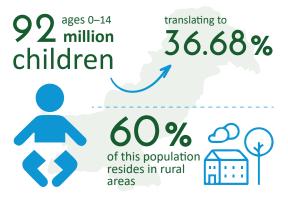
PAKISTAN DEMOGRAPHICS: AN OVERVIEW TO UNDERSTANDING CHILDCARE LANDSCAPE IN PAKISTAN

This overview examines Pakistan's evolving childcare landscape. With over 37% of the population aged 0–14 (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2024; World Bank, 2024), there is a pressing need for robust childcare systems to support families and foster the development of future generations.

Current Demographics and Socioeconomic Context

CHILD POPULATION STATISTICS

As of 2024, Pakistan's population is approximately 251 million, with 36.68% classified as the young population (ages 0–14), translating to over 92 million children. This demographic is significantly skewed toward rural areas, where about 60% of the population resides (Statistics Times, 2024; Worldometer, 2024). Urbanization trends are steadily increasing, leading to greater demand for formal childcare services in cities, driven by rising female workforce participation and the prevalence of nuclear family structures (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2024).



TRENDS IN POPULATION GROWTH

The population growth rate in Pakistan stands at 1.55%, reflecting a slow decline over recent years. The dependency ratio—currently at 69.4%—highlights a substantial proportion of the population being non-working age, emphasizing the critical need for adequate child-care solutions (Statistics Times, 2024; Worldometer, 2024).

IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILDCARE DEMAND

The sustained growth of the young population creates a growing demand for accessible, quality childcare services, particularly in urban centers. With rising female workforce participation and shifts toward nuclear family structures, the demand for formal childcare services has become more pronounced. Conversely, rural areas face unique challenges, such as limited access to formal childcare and reliance on informal caregiving systems (Worldometer, 2024; Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2024).

ECONOMIC INDICATORS



Household Income Levels and Affordability

Corporate Pakistan represents a segment of the formal economy with higher income levels compared to the national average. Employees in industries like banking, technology, and manufacturing typically fall within the middle to upper-middle income brackets. However, the high cost of formal childcare services remains a challenge, and the limited adoption of childcare benefits by employers underscores a gap in corporate-driven childcare initiatives (OICCI, 2024; World Bank, 2024).



• Women's Labor Force Participation and Correlation with Childcare Needs

In Pakistan's corporate sector, women's participation in the work-force is steadily rising, particularly in urban centers such as Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad. This trend is driven by the increasing necessity for both parents to work amid high inflation. Moreover, companies across industries—including manufacturing, IT, healthcare, and banking—are implementing diversity and inclusion policies. Notably, organizations that offer childcare support are experiencing enhanced productivity and improved employee retention, underscoring the critical link between corporate success and robust childcare policies (OICCI, 2024; World Bank, 2024).



• Urbanization Trends and Their Effect on Childcare Infrastructure

Urbanization has significantly amplified the need for structured childcare solutions in cities. Corporate clusters in urban centers attract dual-income families, where the absence of extended family networks creates dependency on formal childcare services. Despite these demands, most workplaces lack dedicated childcare facilities, and adoption of such services remains inconsistent across industries (OICCI, 2024; Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2024).

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS

• Literacy Rates (especially Among women) and Its Link to Childcare **Preferences**

Literacy rate in Pakistan stands at approximately 59.13%, with male literacy at 70.8% and female literacy lagging at 48.3% (GIDS, 2024). Urban centers demonstrate higher female literacy rates due to better access to education and employment opportunities. Educated mothers are more likely to prioritize formal childcare services, such as early education and daycare centers, as part of their parenting approach (World Bank, 2024; GIDS, 2024).





• Employment Trends Among Parents, with a Focus on Dual-Income Households

Employment trends indicate an increasing prevalence of dual-income households, particularly in urban areas. Approximately 23% of women participate in the workforce, a figure gradually rising due to improved educational access and corporate diversity initiatives. These trends correlate with a growing reliance on formal childcare services, as working parents seek dependable options to balance their professional and personal responsibilities (Trading Economics, 2024; OICCI, 2024).





Cultural and Social Norms around Childcare

FAMILY STRUCTURE AND ROLE OF EXTENDED FAMILIES

The joint family system remains a dominant cultural model in rural and semi-urban Pakistan. In these settings, grandparents and extended family members traditionally play an integral role in child-care, often providing informal care and emotional support. This arrangement is deeply rooted in cultural norms, where childcare is viewed as a collective family responsibility rather than an individual task. It reduces reliance on formal childcare services, particularly in lower-income or rural households (Qureshi et al., 2023; World Bank, 2024).

SHIFTS TOWARD NUCLEAR FAMILY STRUCTURES IN URBAN AREAS

Urbanization and modernization have led to an increasing prevalence of nuclear family structures, especially in cities like Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad. Nuclear families, often comprising working parents and their children, face unique childcare challenges, including limited access to extended family support. This shift has created a growing reliance on formal childcare options, as dual-income households seek professional services to balance work and parenting responsibilities. The absence of traditional support networks places added financial and logistical burdens on urban families (IFC, 2024; Population Pyramid, 2024).

This evolving landscape reflects a tension between traditional reliance on family-based childcare and emerging needs for formal childcare services in urban contexts.

GENDER ROLES AND CHILDCARE EXPECTATIONS

• Traditional Expectations of Women as Primary Caregivers

In Pakistan, cultural norms historically position women as the primary caregivers within families, reflecting deep-rooted patriarchal values. Even among working mothers, societal expectations often demand that they manage both professional responsibilities and childcare duties. This dual burden can discourage women from entering or remaining in the workforce, particularly in the absence of affordable and accessible childcare solutions (IFC, 2024; Qureshi & Bhatti, 2023).

• Perceptions of Fathers' Involvement in Childcare

Traditionally, fathers in Pakistan have been seen primarily as financial providers, with limited involvement in childcare responsibilities. While a gradual cultural shift is emerging in urban, educated households, paternal participation in childrearing remains uncommon. This limited engagement is further reinforced by the absence of paternity leave policies and workplace flexibility for fathers (World Bank, 2024; Population Council, 2023). As a result, the responsibility of childcare continues to fall disproportionately on women, creating a double burden where they are expected to balance both professional and caregiving roles without institutional support.

INFORMAL CHILDCARE PRACTICES

Role of Informal Childcare Setups Within Neighborhoods

In many rural and semi-urban areas, informal childcare arrangements within communities serve as a critical support system. These setups often involve neighbors or acquaintances watching over children while parents work. While cost-effective, these arrangements lack formal oversight and do not ensure structured developmental activities, leaving gaps in childcare quality (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2023; Ahmed et al., 2023).

• Reliance on Domestic Helpers and Their Limitations

Urban families frequently depend on domestic helpers for childcare, particularly in middle- and upper-income households. While this arrangement is convenient, helpers are rarely trained in childcare or early childhood education, leading to concerns about safety and developmental outcomes. The absence of professional standards in this practice highlights the limitations of relying solely on domestic workers for childcare (IFC, 2024; Qureshi & Bhatti, 2023). Moreover, the lack of standardization and compliance has resulted in instances where some caregivers are underage children themselves.

STIGMAS AND ATTITUDES TOWARD INSTITUTIONAL CHILDCARE

Societal Acceptance or Resistance to Daycare Centers and Preschools

Institutional childcare, including daycare centers and preschools, is often met with skepticism in Pakistan. Many families, especially in rural areas, view formal childcare services as unnecessary, believing that young children are better cared for at home. This resistance is partly rooted in cultural norms that prioritize family-based care over institutional alternatives (World Bank, 2024; Population Council, 2023).

Misconceptions About the Quality or Necessity of Formal Childcare Services

There is a widespread misconception that formal childcare services do not provide adequate care or that they are merely profit-driven enterprises with little regard for child development. These perceptions deter many families from exploring institutional childcare options, limiting market demand and the growth of quality service providers (Ahmed et al., 2023; IFC, 2024).

Overview of Government Policies and Initiatives

POLICY FRAMEWORK AND CHILDCARE LEGISLATION

Overview of Key Laws Related to Childcare

The Government of Pakistan has introduced various laws to address childcare and child protection needs. These include:

Analysis and Comparison: Pakistan and Regional

JURISDICTION

FEDERAL

PUNJAB

SINDH

KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA

BALOCHISTAN



MATERNITY LEAVE

Fully paid leave: 180 days (1st child), 120 days (2nd), 90 days (3rd).

90 days of paid leave.

16 weeks paid maternity leave (Sindh Act, 2018).

12 weeks paid maternity leave (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Act, 2013).

12 weeks paid maternity leave (Balochistan Act, 2022).



PATERNITY LEAVE

Up to 30 days of fully paid leave for the first three children.

One week of paternity leave for up to two children.

No statutory provision for private sector.

No statutory provision.

No statutory provision.



PROVISION OF DAYCARE

Establishments (70+ employees) must provide daycare; non-compliance penalty: up to PKR 100,000.

Punjab Daycare Fund subsidizes employer-sponsored daycare and mandates crèches for establishments with 70+ women (Factories Act).

Organizations with 10%+ female employees must provide on-site daycare with CCTV monitoring.

Crèche facilities required for eligible factories employing 70+ female workers under the Factories Act provisions.

Crèche facilities under the Factories Act (1934)

Requires factories employing 70+ women to provide crèche facilities for children under six years of age.

There is a lack of consistency between the regulations in the federal capital and those in various provinces. To address this discrepancy, it is recommended to establish a centralized legislative body responsible for developing and monitoring these laws and regulations.

Although Regional countries demonstrate several exemplary practices, Pakistan's federal regulations remain comprehensive and highly competitive relative to regional best practices.

Despite these frameworks, gaps persist in integrating childcare-specific provisions into broader labor and social policies. For example, there are no mandatory requirements for employers to provide on-site childcare or subsidies for working parents (IFC, 2024; UNICEF, 2024).

Role of Private Sector and NGOs

PRIVATE SECTOR INVOLVEMENT

Growth of Private Daycare Centers in Urban Areas

Private daycare centers in Pakistan have seen significant growth, primarily in urban hubs like Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad. These facilities cater to middle- and upper-income families and offer structured programs for early childhood care and development. However, the concentration of such centers in urban areas leaves rural regions underserved, highlighting geographical disparities in access (IFC, 2024; Population Council, 2023).

Employer-Sponsored Childcare Initiatives

Some progressive companies in Pakistan, particularly in the corporate sector, have introduced employer-sponsored childcare programs. For example:



On-Site Daycare Facilities:

Companies in banking, IT, and multinational organizations are increasingly adopting on-site childcare services as part of family-friendly workplace policies.



Subsidized Childcare:

A few employers offer financial support or partnerships with local daycare providers to assist working parents.

These initiatives have been shown to improve employee productivity, retention, and morale, but their adoption remains limited across industries (IFC, 2024).

Analysis of Cost, Quality, and Accessibility

Private childcare options tend to offer higher-quality services compared to public facilities, including better infrastructure, trained staff, and structured early education programs. However:



Cost:

Fees are often high, making these centers inaccessible to low- and middle-income families.



Quality Variations:

The absence of standardized regulations leads to significant variability in service quality.



Accessibility:

Private centers are primarily located in affluent urban areas, leaving many families in rural or less developed regions without viable options (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2023; World Bank, 2024).

NGO CONTRIBUTIONS

Affordable or Free Childcare Services for Marginalized Communities NGOs play a crucial role in filling gaps in childcare accessibility, particularly for marginalized communities. Examples include:



Aahung Foundation: Focuses on training caregivers in early child-hood development.



Aurat Foundation: Provides community-based childcare centers in rural and underserved urban areas.



Save the Children: Operates early childhood development (ECD) centers in multiple provinces, focusing on holistic child development and parental education.



CARE Foundation: Works with local communities to establish low-cost preschools and daycare centers, ensuring access to quality childcare for low-income families (UNICEF, 2024).

Efforts to Raise Awareness

NGOs like Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi and Plan International Pakistan lead campaigns to educate communities about the importance of early childhood development. These campaigns emphasize the long-term benefits of structured childcare on cognitive and emotional development.

Community Engagement Initiatives

Programs like UNICEF's *Parenting for Lifelong Health* train parents and caregivers in best practices for early childhood care. Community outreach programs also aim to reduce stigmas around institutional childcare and promote the adoption of formal childcare services (UNICEF, 2024).

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships between the government, private sector, and NGOs have led to innovative childcare solutions. For example:

- Punjab Early Learning Partnership: A collaborative initiative to establish affordable ECD centers in rural areas.
- Sindh Education Foundation: Works with NGOs and private entities to expand early education and childcare programs in underserved communities.

Pilot programs, such as public-private partnerships in ECD, have demonstrated success in improving access and quality. These models show potential for scalability but often face challenges in securing consistent funding and regulatory support (World Bank, 2024).

CHILDCARE MODELS

To address the growing childcare needs of working parents in Pakistan's corporate sector, five potential models are explored. These models cater to diverse workforce demographics, including parents of younger and school-going children, and aim to support both mothers and fathers in balancing professional and family obligations. Each model is assessed for feasibility, scalability, and alignment with Pakistan's socio-economic context, drawing comparisons with successful initiatives from neighboring countries.

This section evaluates childcare models tailored for adaptation in Pakistan's corporate sector. Each model is analyzed for its feasibility, scalability, and relevance to the country's socio-economic environment, with references to successful implementations in neighboring countries. The analysis considers the needs of working parents with younger and school-going children, while factoring in corporate employers' and childcare service providers' roles in implementing these solutions.

Bricks-and-Mortar Childcare Facilities

On-site or near-site childcare facilities directly managed or subsidized by employers. These centers offer professional care for employees' children.

KEY FEATURES

Fully operational centers staffed by trained professionals.

Can be managed by employers or third-party providers.



Comprehensive childcare solution for employees.

Childcare centers located within or near the employer's premises.

Managed by the organization (self-managed) or outsourced to a childcare provider.

CASE STUDY

The Mothers@Work initiative in Bangladesh is a national program designed to enhance maternity rights and support breastfeeding among working mothers, particularly in the Ready-Made Garment (RMG) sector. Launched in 2017, this program is a collaborative effort involving UNICEF, the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), and the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA) (Mothers@Work, A Qualitative Assessment, ILO, IFC).

KEY COMPONENTS OF THE PROGRAM:

• Breastfeeding Support:

Establishing dedicated breastfeeding spaces and providing breaks to facilitate nursing mothers.

• Childcare Facilities:

Implementing on-site childcare centers to assist working parents.

• Maternity Leave and Benefits:

Advocating for paid maternity leave and cash benefits to ensure financial stability for new mothers.

• Health Services:

Providing antenatal and postnatal healthcare services to promote maternal and child health.

• Employment Protection:

Ensuring a safe work environment and protection against discrimination for pregnant women and new mothers.

IMPACT AND REACH:

Since its inception, the program has expanded significantly:



Factory Participation:

Initially piloted in two garment factories, the initiative expanded to 80 factories by 2019. As of 2022, it has been implemented in 103 partner factories.



The program has benefited approximately 130,000 women and provided enhanced nutrition services and daycare facilities for 8,000 children.

BUSINESS BENEFITS:

Participating factories have observed several positive outcomes:



Employee Satisfaction:

Increased job satisfaction among workers.



Reduced Absenteeism:

Lower rates of absenteeism.



Staff Retention:

Decreased staff turnover rates.

By addressing the challenges faced by working mothers, the Mothers@Work program fosters a more inclusive and supportive workplace culture, benefiting both employees and employers in Bangladesh's garment industry.

FEASIBILITY IN PAKISTAN

A similar program could be highly effective in Pakistan, particularly within large corporations and multinationals operating in urban hubs like Karachi, Islamabad, and Lahore. However, high setup and maintenance costs may pose challenges for smaller enterprises.

Additionally, Bangladesh's workforce demographics provide an important parallel to Pakistan. Studies indicate that higher levels of female education in Bangladesh have contributed to reduced fertility rates, impacting workforce participation trends. Similarly, in Pakistan, data from the Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (PDHS) 2017-18 shows that women with higher education tend to have fewer children, reinforcing the link between education, employment, and reduced birth rates.

ADVANTAGES OF IMPLEMENTING A SIMILAR MODEL IN PAKISTAN

Participating factories have observed several positive outcomes:



High-quality, reliable childcare:

Addresses parents' concerns about safety and well-being.



Boosts employee retention and satisfaction:

Reduces turnover and absenteeism.



Strengthens corporate branding:

Positions companies as employee-friendly and socially responsible.

CHALLENGES



Cost-intensive to establish and maintain:

Requires significant investment.



Requires ongoing operational management:

Needs dedicated resources for sustainability.

While Bangladesh has made significant progress in integrating family-friendly policies within the corporate sector, Pakistan's corporate landscape lags behind in terms of structured childcare solutions. Expanding access to workplace childcare and family-supportive policies could help improve women's workforce participation and create a more inclusive labor market.

Employer-Sponsored Childcare Allowance

This model involves companies providing financial assistance to parents through two distinct mechanisms: stipends and subsidies. The stipend component consists of fixed, regular payments made directly to employees, enabling them to cover after-school childcare costs. In contrast, the subsidy component is a direct contribution toward external childcare expenses, reducing the overall financial burden. Together, these forms of aid allow parents to arrange care with their preferred providers, whether that be in-home care, daycare centers, or after-school programs.

KEY FEATURES



Stipends:

- Employers offer regular, fixed payments directly to employees, which can be adjusted according to salary levels or job roles.
- o These payments provide parents with a consistent source of financial support for childcare expenses.

Subsidies:

- Employers contribute a portion of the childcare costs directly to external providers, helping to lower the cost burden on parents.
- o Subsidy programs may involve negotiated rates with selected childcare facilities to ensure quality and affordability.

This model avoids the need for employers to establish and maintain on-site childcare facilities, ensures flexibility, allowing parents to select the most appropriate childcare solution while sharing the overall cost.

CASE STUDY

India's Corporate Stipend Approach: Companies like Infosys offer childcare stipends that allow employees to choose childcare services that meet their specific needs. This approach has contributed to higher employee retention and satisfaction, particularly among working mothers. In some instances, companies have also introduced subsidy programs by partnering with local childcare providers to negotiate discounted rates, further alleviating financial pressures on employees.

FEASIBILITY IN PAKISTAN

This financial aid model is well-suited for urban centers, where a variety of private childcare providers are available. Employers in these areas can support their workforce effectively by combining stipends with subsidies, offering a cost-efficient alternative to developing on-site childcare facilities.

ADVANTAGES



Stipends:

- Provide a reliable and predictable financial resource for childcare expenses.
- Empower parents with the flexibility to choose the care arrangements that best suit their needs.



Subsidies:

- Directly reduce the cost of childcare services by offsetting fees paid to external providers.
- Can be tailored based on market conditions and negotiated service agreements.

Overall, the model is relatively low-cost for employers and accommodates diverse childcare preferences.

CHALLENGES



Limited oversight of external childcare providers leads to inconsistent quality of care.



Financial assistance may fall short in covering childcare expenses in high-cost urban areas.



Administering childcare stipends or subsidies can heighten administrative complexity and demand enhanced HR coordination.



The market is largely unregulated, leaving corporates uncertain about whether caregivers receive the mini-The market is largely unlegulated, leaving to provide mum wage and ensuring that child labour is not involved.

Flexible Work Arrangements

This model emphasizes work flexibility, allowing parents to balance work and family responsibilities through options such as remote work, staggered hours, or compressed workweeks.

KEY FEATURES



Work-from-home or hybrid arrangements.

Adjusted work hours tailored to parents' needs.

Reduces dependency on full-time childcare.

CASE STUDY

India's Flexible Work Policies: Indian technology companies, such as Wipro, have pioneered flexible work arrangements to support working parents. Wipro had over 234,000 employees globally. The company operates in multiple regions, with approximately 193,000 employees based in India and around 41,000 employees in other parts of the world. Wipro offers hybrid work options, flexible schedules, and extended parental leave policies, allowing employees—especially mothers—to balance professional responsibilities with childcare. The company has also introduced structured return-to-work programs for new mothers, providing mentorship, reskilling opportunities, and phased reintegration into the workforce.

Additionally, Wipro encourages paternity leave and work-from-home options for fathers, promoting shared caregiving responsibilities. These policies have resulted in increased employee retention, higher job satisfaction, and improved gender diversity in leadership positions. By fostering a family-friendly workplace culture, Wipro has set an industry benchmark for supporting working parents while maintaining productivity and business performance (Diversity and Inclusion: Key to Improve Productivity - A Case Study on WIPRO, September 2020 International Journal of Case Studies in Business IT and Education).

FEASIBILITY IN PAKISTAN

Flexible work arrangements are increasingly adopted in corporate sectors like IT and finance. They provide greater work-life balance for employees, enabling better integration of professional and caregiving responsibilities without the need for additional infrastructure.

ADVANTAGES



Reduces reliance on formal childcare.



← Enhances employee work-life balance.



Low-cost implementation for employers.

CHALLENGES



This approach is not feasible for industries that require physical presence or for shift-based roles.



Potential for reduced collaboration and team cohesion.

The choice of model depends on corporate size, resources, and employee demographics, but all offer pathways to enhance employee productivity, retention, and gender equality.

Community-Based Childcare

Community-based childcare centers are established and managed by community members, with financial or logistical support from corporate employers. These centers cater to parents within a specific locality, offering an affordable childcare solution.

KEY FEATURES Operated collaboratively by parents or community members.

Employers provide subsidies or administrative support, while communities manage operations.

Effective in areas lacking formal childcare infrastructure.

CASE STUDY

Bangladesh's Community Childcare Initiative: In the garment sector, community childcare centers funded by employers and managed by local leaders have improved workforce morale and reduced absenteeism.

FEASIBILITY IN PAKISTAN

This model aligns well with Pakistan's cultural emphasis on community cooperation and is particularly viable in rural and industrial zones where formal childcare is scarce.

ADVANTAGES



Empowers local communities.



Reduces logistical burdens for employers.



 O_{-}^{\triangleright} Adaptable for underserved areas.

CHALLENGES



Requires active community participation.



Quality control and caregiver training may be inconsistent.

School-Based Childcare

Corporate employers partner with schools to offer after-school childcare programs on school premises.

KEY FEATURES



Extended hours of care provided in schools.

Employers subsidize costs or negotiate discounted rates for employees.

Focus on academic support and recreational activities.

CASE STUDY

India's After-School Care Programs: India has successfully implemented after-school care programs through public-private partnerships, employer-led initiatives, and collaborations with private schools, addressing the childcare needs of working parents. These programs have helped improve workforce participation, particularly for women, by providing structured childcare solutions beyond school hours.

KEY FEATURES OF INDIA'S AFTER-SCHOOL CARE MODEL

1. Employer-School Partnerships

- Several corporate employers partner with private schools to offer structured after-school programs, ensuring that employees' children have a safe, engaging, and supervised environment until the end of the workday.
- o Companies either subsidize enrollment costs or directly fund these programs as part of their employee benfits packages.

2. Structured After-School Activities

- Programs typically include academic support, such as homework assistance and tutoring, as well as extracurricular activities like sports, music, and arts to provide a holistic learning environment.
- O Some schools also integrate life skills training, coding workshops, and STEM-focused activities to enhance children's development.

3. Extended Childcare Hours

- O Recognizing that most schools in India close between 12:00pm 2:00 pm, after-school programs extend care hours until 6 PM or later, aligning with corporate work schedules.
- o This model is particularly beneficial in metropolitan areas like Mumbai, Delhi, and Bangalore, where long commute times often delay parents from picking up their children.

4. Financial Models & Sustainability

- Programs are funded through a mix of employer contributions, school fees, and government incentives.
- O Some states in India provide tax benefits to companies that invest in childcare solutions, encouraging more employers to participate.

5. Policy Support & Corporate Adoption

- The Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017 mandated that companies with 50 or more employees must provide creche facilities. While primarily focused on early childhood care, many employers expanded their programs to include after-school care for older children.
- Large corporations such as Infosys, Wipro, and Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) have integrated after-school childcare solutions within their corporate campuses or through third-party partnerships.

LESSONS FOR PAKISTAN

- Feasibility in Urban Areas: Like India, Pakistan's urban centers (Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad) have private schools with the capacity to extend their services, making after-school care a viable option.
- Employer-Led Initiatives: The Indian model highlights the importance of corporate sponsorship, demonstrating that businesses benefit from investing in childcare by improving employee retention and productivity.
- Policy Considerations: Pakistan can adopt similar regulatory frameworks to incentivize employer-supported childcare programs, encouraging companies to collaborate with private schools.

FEASIBILITY IN PAKISTAN

Building on India's success, Pakistan's corporate sector can adopt after-school care partnerships as a scalable childcare solution. This approach would enable working parents to better balance their professional and caregiving responsibilities while promoting a more gender-inclusive workforce.

This model is particularly viable in urban areas where private schools have the infrastructure to extend their services. It offers a practical alternative for companies that may not have the resources to establish on-site childcare facilities but are willing to support employees with school-going children.

ADVANTAGES



Utilizes existing infrastructure.



Focuses on academic support valued by parents.



Reduced employer logistical responsibilities.

CHALLENGES



Limited to school-going children.



Dependent on schools' willingness to participate.

Gender-Sensitive After-School Programs

Gender-sensitive after-school programs provide secure, structured environments where adolescent girls can continue learning, receive life skills training, and access mentorship opportunities after school hours. These programs are designed to address gender-specific barriers such as mobility constraints, early marriage, and limited access to public and educational spaces.

KEY FEATURES

Safe, girl-friendly spaces with adequate infrastructure and menstrual hygiene facilities.

> Life skills, vocational training, and academic support tailored to adolescent girls.

Engagement of female mentors and gender-sensitive staff.

Community outreach and parent sensitization to promote acceptance and participation.

Partnerships with NGOs, education departments, and local governments.

CASE STUDY

"Kishori Clubs" in Nepal: Nepal's Ministry of Education, with support from UNICEF, established "Kishori Clubs"—after-school groups targeting adolescent girls. These clubs provide life skills training, awareness on child marriage, sexual and reproductive health, and leadership development. Operated within school premises, the clubs are facilitated by trained female teachers and local mentors. The program has led to increased school retention, reduced early marriage rates, and greater community acceptance of girls' education.

FEASIBILITY IN PAKISTAN

This model is adaptable to Pakistan's urban, peri-urban, and rural contexts. Existing school infrastructure can be leveraged after school hours, and partnerships with local NGOs and community groups can ensure sustainability. Integration into provincial education plans, especially in areas with high dropout rates, would support institutionalization.

ADVANTAGES

Enhances girls' educational continuity and prevents early marriage.

Builds skills for future employability and personal agency.

Eases childcare responsibilities for working mothers.

Strengthens community trust in girls' public participation.

CHALLENGES

Cultural resistance to adolescent girls' participation in public or mixed-gender spaces.

Limited availability of gender-sensitive staff and trained facilitators.

Risk of program discontinuity without sustained funding or institutional ownership.

Security concerns in certain regions may limit implementation.

By developing inclusive, protective after-school programs for girls, Pakistan can improve educational outcomes, expand workforce readiness, and support broader gender equity objectives.

Informal Childcare Networks

- Unstructured care arrangements involving family members, neighbors, or community members.
- Common in cultural contexts with strong familial ties but lacks formal regulation or consistency.

Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Models

- Shared childcare facilities funded and operated collaboratively by the government and private employers.
- Combines government support (e.g., subsidies, infrastructure) with private sector management.

Consortium Daycare Model

- A collaborative approach where multiple organizations jointly establish and operate a single childcare facility. This model pools resources from participating companies, making it a cost-effectivesolution for small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that might not have the capacity to run individual daycare facilities.
- Typically located in shared office complexes, industrial zones, or community hubs, serving employees from all participating organizations.

Mobile Childcare Units

- Portable childcare facilities delivered via specially designed vehicles or temporary setups.
- Ideal for employees working in remote or underserved areas, such as industrial zones or construction sites.

Each of these models offers distinct advantages, challenges, and costs, allowing organizations to tailor their childcare solutions based on their size, resources, and workforce needs.

CURRENT LANDSCAPE OF CORPORATE FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES IN PAKISTAN

Family-friendly policies support employees with caregiving responsibilities. Key initiatives include parental leave, childcare facilities, subsidies, transport safety, wellness, and flexible work arrangements.

a. Parental Leave

Parental leave is a period of job-protected absence granted to employees following the birth or adoption of a child. It enables parents to care for their new child while maintaining their employment status.

CORPORATE PRACTICES:

Leading food and manufacturing companies offer six months of maternity leave, with paternity leave ranging from 15 days to one month, supporting parental involvement in early childcare. Multinational consumer goods firms have adopted progressive policies, providing six months of maternity leave and three weeks of paternity leave to promote gender-inclusive caregiving. In contrast, large financial institutions grant 120 days of maternity leave but offer minimal paternity leave, sometimes as little as two days, limiting fathers' participation in caregiving. Meanwhile, a prominent retail and fashion company has implemented a flexible leave policy, allowing extended career breaks of up to one year to accommodate diverse parental needs.

IMPACT:

- Improved retention rates for women taking maternity leave due to comprehensive return-to-work support. NFL reported a 100% retention rate for women returning from maternity leave during (years). Gender equity was further strengthened through paternity leave policies, helping to normalize caregiving responsibilities across both parents.
- Employee well-being improves, increasing loyalty and satisfaction.

- Limited private-sector coverage Standardize maternity and paternity leave across provinces.
- Weak enforcement Introduce compliance monitoring.
- No provisions for adoptive/surrogate parents Expand policy scope.
- Lack of employer incentives Introduce tax breaks for family-friendly policies.

b. On-Site Childcare Facilities

On-site daycare supports working parents with safe childcare.

MODELS:

- Outsourced: Managed by professional childcare providers.
- In-House: Fully employer-managed.
- Basic Facility: Space provided; employees arrange caregivers.

CORPORATE PRACTICES:

A major textile player has invested in a top-tier, employer-managed daycare facility, setting a benchmark for workplace childcare standards. Similarly, leading corporations in the energy and manufacturing sectors have established high-quality daycare centers, ensuring reliable childcare support for employees.

IMPACT:

- **Retention:** Interloop Limited reports 91% retention of employees.
- **Increased productivity:** Employees work stress-free, knowing children are nearby.

- Limited SME access Introduce government subsidies.
- Weak enforcement of daycare law Strengthen monitoring.
- Lack of nutrition programs Encourage meal provisions.

c. Childcare Subsidies & Stipends

Financial assistance for external childcare, reducing the burden on working parents.

CORPORATE PRACTICES:

A leading food manufacturing company provides employees who cannot be accommodated in its in-house daycare with a stipend equivalent to the per-child cost of the service provider, ensuring equitable childcare support.

Banks and MNCs offer varying monthly childcare allowances, reflecting diverse corporate approaches to supporting working parents. These allowances are intended to supplement childcare costs; however, more often than not, they fall short, leaving employees to bear a significant financial burden. This gap can undermine the intended impact of such benefits, limiting their effectiveness in supporting working parents and promoting workplace retention.

IMPACT:

- Cost savings for employees.
- **Greater flexibility** in choosing childcare providers.

- Inadequate subsidies or stipends Meager childcare stipends strain employee finances.
- Complex reimbursement processes Administrative burdens discourage employees from utilizing available benefits.
- Low awareness Lack of awareness requires targeted childcare support campaigns.

d. Flexible Work Arrangements

Includes remote work, staggered hours, part-time roles, and sabbaticals.

CORPORATE PRACTICES:

Global healthcare and technology firms have introduced remote work options, enabling employees to balance professional and personal responsibilities more effectively. Leading banks, retail brands, and financial institutions have implemented flexible work schedules to accommodate diverse workforce needs. In the manufacturing sector, some companies have launched structured sabbatical programs, allowing employees to take extended career breaks without jeopardizing their long-term career progression.

IMPACT:

- **Higher productivity** due to reduced absenteeism.
- **Enhanced inclusion** of working mothers.

- Cultural resistance: Promote awareness of benefits.
- Inconsistent policies: Develop standardized guidelines.

e. Transport & Safety Provisions

Safe transportation supports workforce participation, especially for women.

CORPORATE PRACTICES:

Some large manufacturing and financial sector employers provide secure transportation options to ensure employee safety, while others offer targeted mobility support, such as scooter allowances for female employees, to enhance workplace accessibility.

IMPACT:

- Improved accessibility for female employees.
- **Diversity & inclusion** in male-dominated industries.

f. Wellness & Caregiver Support

Programs addressing mental health, work-life balance, and childcare support.

CORPORATE PRACTICES:

In the textile industry, larger players have introduced mental health support, stress management programs, and caregiver subsidies to enhance employee well-being. Similarly, major food processing and chemical manufacturing companies have adopted similar initiatives to support their workforce. Diversified conglomerates are investing in in-house medical clinics and psychological safety programs to provide comprehensive healthcare support. Meanwhile, leading financial institutions are integrating wellness initiatives, such as yoga and mindfulness training, to foster a healthier and more resilient work environment.

IMPACT:

- Improved well-being reduces absenteeism.
- Higher retention rates due to caregiver support.

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

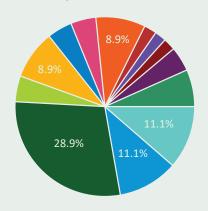
Corporates Perspectives on Childcare and Family-Friendly Policies

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS FROM SURVEY

a. Demographic Profile

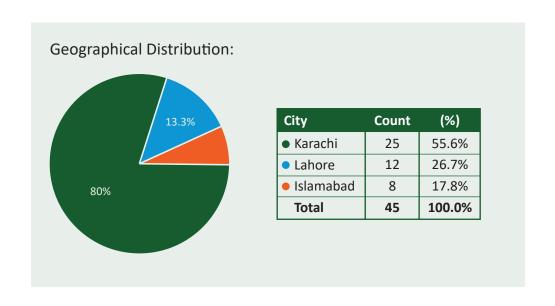
Total Responses: 45

Industry Breakdown:



- Finance & Banking
- Technology & IT Services
- Manufacturing & Production
- Healthcare & Pharmaceuticals
- Retail & Consumer Goods
- Education & Training
- Telecommunications
- Energy & Utilities

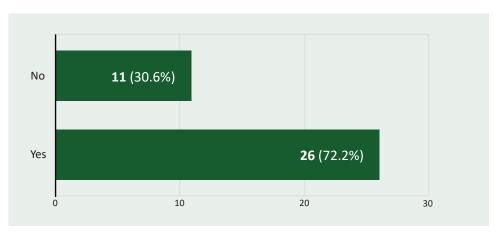
Sector	Count	Percentage (%)
Manufacturing & Production	13	38.2%
Finance & Banking	5	14.7%
Technology & IT Services	5	14.7%
Retail & Consumer Goods	4	11.8%
Energy & Utilities	4	11.8%
Other	3	8.8%
Total	34	100.0%



b. Awareness and Implementation

Does your organization offer any family-friendly policies?

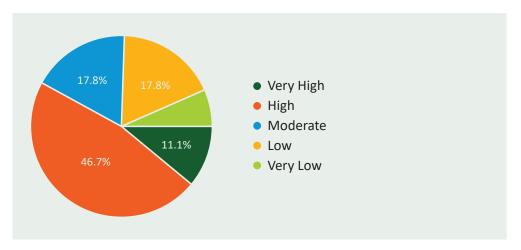




Family-Friendly Policy Awareness

How would you rate your organization's awareness of family-friendly policies?



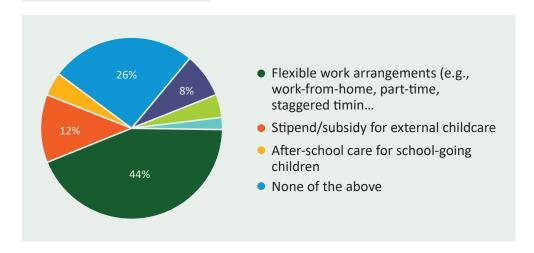


Insight:

The dataset of 45 responses shows that 46.7% of respondents reported high awareness and 17.8% very high awareness of family-friendly policies, indicating that nearly two-thirds of organizations demonstrate robust internal communication on these policies. In contrast, 17.8% of respondents indicated moderate awareness, while 11.1% reported low and 6.7% very low awareness, revealing a significant portion of organizations where family-friendly practices may not be consistently communicated or integrated. This range highlights a broad spectrum of organizational readiness and commitment to supporting work–life balance, with some organizations clearly emphasizing these policies and others still emerging in their approach.

Policy Implementation

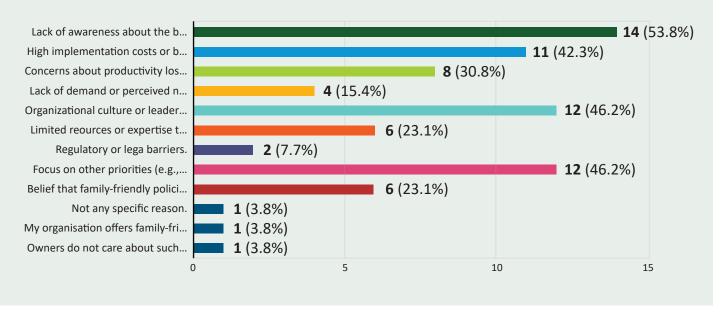
Which of the following family-friendly policies does your organization currently offer?



Lack of Family Friendly Policies

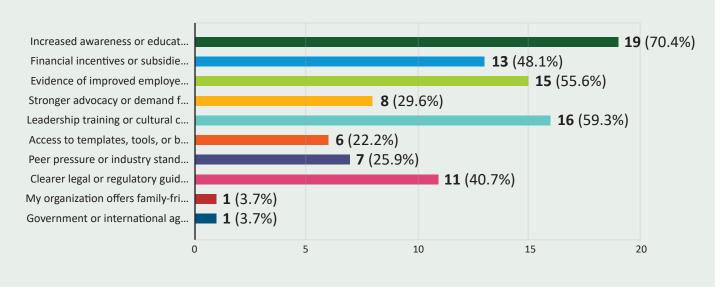
Reasons for Not Offering Family-Friendly Policies (Please select all that apply):

- Lack of awareness about the benefits of family-friendly policies.
- High implementation costs or budget constraints.
- Concerns about productivity loss or operational disruptions.
- Lack of demand or perceived need from employees.
- Organizational culture or leadership resistance to change.
- Limited resources or expertise to design and implement such policies.
- Regulatory or legal barriers.
- Focus on other priorities (e.g., business growth, profitability).
- Belief that family-friendly policies are not relevant to our industry.



What Would It Take to Change This? (Please check all that apply.)

- Increased awareness or education about the benefits of family-friendly policies.
- Financial incentives or subsidies from the government or external organizations.
- Evidence of improved employee retention or productivity from such policies.
- Stronger advocacy or demand from employees.
- Leadership training or cultural change initiatives.
- Access to templates, tools, or best practices for implementation.
- Peer pressure or industry standards promoting family-friendly policies.
- Clearer legal or regulatory guidelines.



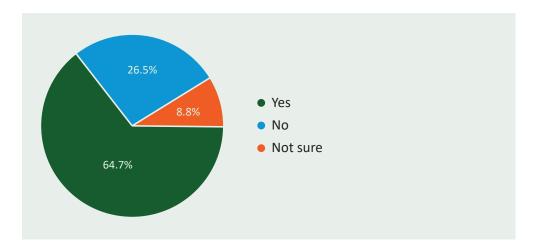
Insight:

The responses indicate that a multifaceted strategy is essential to drive change in the adoption of family-friendly policies. Stakeholders believe that increasing awareness about the benefits and providing clear evidence of enhanced employee retention and productivity can create internal demand. At the same time, external supports—such as financial incentives, clearer legal guidelines, and access to practical implementation tools—are seen as critical to overcoming current barriers. Additionally, initiatives focused on leadership training and cultural change, as well as peer pressure through industry standards, could collectively foster an environment where family-friendly policies become the norm rather than the exception.

Employee Feedback

Have employees ever expressed a need for family-friendly policies?

Total Responses: 34



Insight:

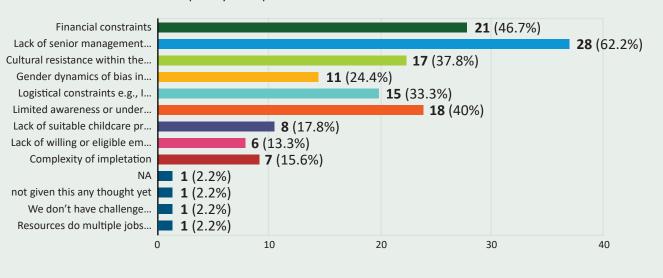
The feedback from employees, based on 34 responses, underscores a clear and expressed need for family-friendly policies in the workplace. This collective sentiment highlights that employees are actively seeking initiatives that support better work-life balance, including flexible work arrangements and enhanced childcare solutions. The expressed need reinforces the urgency for employers to implement and promote comprehensive family-friendly practices, which could, in turn, improve overall employee satisfaction, retention, and productivity.

c. Challenges and Barriers

Implementation Challenges

Which of the following challenges do you consider the most significant in implementing family-friendly policies? (Select all that apply)

- Financial constraints
- Lack of senior management buy-in
- Lack of senior management buy-in
- Gender dynamics or bias in policy decision-making
- Gender dynamics or bias in policy decision-making
- Limited awareness or understanding of the benefits
- Lack of suitable childcare providers
- Lack of willing or eligible employees to utilize these policies
- Complexity of implementation

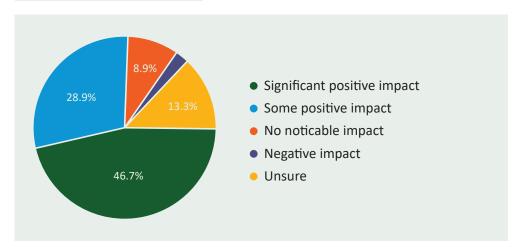


d. Measurement and Evaluation

Impact on Company Performance

What impact have family-friendly policies had on your company's overall performance and productivity?





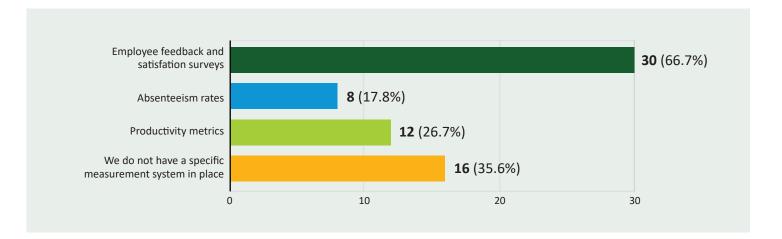
Insight:

Based on 45 responses, employers generally report that family-friendly policies have positively influenced overall company performance and productivity. Respondents highlighted improvements in employee retention, reduced absenteeism, and enhanced workforce morale as key benefits. These policies appear to foster a more engaged and satisfied workforce, which contributes to smoother operational performance and higher productivity levels. However, several respondents also noted the need for more robust and systematic measurement practices to quantitatively validate these positive impacts over time.

Effectiveness of Family-Friendly Policies

How does your organization measure the effectiveness of its family-friendly policies? (Select all that apply)

Total Responses: 45



Insight:

Despite 66.7% of respondents indicating they rely on employee feedback and satisfaction surveys to measure the effectiveness of their family-friendly policies, the qualitative findings from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) suggest that few, if any, are actually collecting systematic data or maintaining clear metrics. This discrepancy implies that while organizations may recognize the importance of measurement, their current approaches are largely informal or ad hoc. Moreover, 35.6% of respondents report having no specific measurement system in place, underscoring a broader lack of structured methods for evaluating policy impact. Ultimately, the chart highlights an awareness of the need for measurement but also reveals that

most companies have yet to establish rigorous, data-driven evaluation processes.

While detailed public disclosures on this practice in Pakistan remain limited, there are indications that a few progressive corporates are beginning to adopt data-driven HR analytics to measure the financial benefits of talent retention. For example, conglomerates like Engro Corporation have started integrating predictive HR models aimed at quantifying cost savings from reduced turnover, while banks such as Habib Bank Limited (HBL) are reportedly investing in HR analytics to evaluate the economic impact of their retention strategies (Khan, 2019; Pakistan Institute of Corporate Governance, 2020). These early initiatives suggest that, although still emerging, there is a growing trend among leading Pakistani companies to use rigorous, data-driven approaches for assessing the return on investment of talent retention programs.

e. Cross-Tabulations

Industry vs. Challenges (Financial & Operational)

Industry	Total (n)	Citing High Costs (n)	Percentage (%)
Manufacturing	12	6	50.0%
Technology	10	4	40.0%
Banking & Finance	8	3	37.5%
Other	15	7	46.7%

Interpretation:

The data indicate that cost-related challenges vary by industry. In the manufacturing sector, 50.0% of respondents identify high implementation costs as a significant challenge, which is the highest among all sectors. In comparison, only 37.5% of respondents from Banking & Finance cite high costs as an issue. The Technology sector category reports intermediate challenges at 40.0%. This suggests that while financial constraints are a common concern across industries, manufacturing faces the greatest burden, indicating a potential need for targeted financial support or cost-reduction strategies in this sector.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Thematic Insights

Using Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, the following themes emerged from the elaborative responses provided by corporate respondents:

Theme 1: Strategic Importance of Family-Friendly Policies

Corporate respondents emphasized that family-friendly policies play a strategic role in enhancing organizational performance. They highlighted that such policies can reduce absenteeism and improve employee retention by allowing staff to balance personal and professional responsibilities more effectively. Notably, while the benefits of these initiatives are recognized, many companies are not currently collecting metrics to measure their impact. This gap suggests that despite a strong belief in the value of family-friendly policies, there is an opportunity to implement data-driven approaches that can further validate and refine these strategies for even greater organizational success.

Theme 2: Cultural Barriers and Operational Hurdles

Corporate respondents highlighted that rigid work schedules and traditional management mindsets pose significant barriers to the adoption of family-friendly policies. Resistance from middle management frequently delays the implementation of flexible work arrangements, underscoring the impact of internal cultural norms on policy execution. In addition, financial constraints remain a critical challenge; some respondents reported that high implementation costs can consume approximately 40% of their budget, illustrating the substantial resource investment required.

Theme 3: Childcare Support

On-site Facilities vs. Allowances:

While on-site daycare centers are generally more practical in urban headquarters, they encounter significant logistical hurdles in remote or factory settings. In these instances, companies tend to provide childcare allowances—ranging from Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 37,000 per child—which offer some support but also have inherent limitations.

Theme 4: Cultural and Managerial Barriers

Managerial Influence:

40% of respondents noted that mid-level managers play a critical role in the success of family-friendly initiatives. Without supervisor support, employees struggle to utilize these benefits effectively.

Theme 5: Measurement and Continuous Improvement

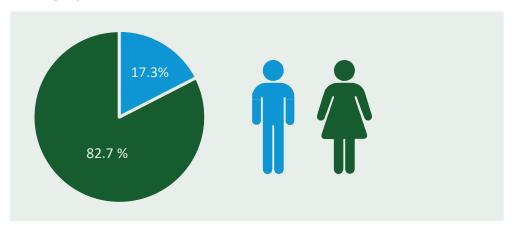
Data-Driven Evaluation:

30% of respondents emphasized the need for robust metrics, such as leave usage, return-to-work rates, and productivity shifts, to build a compelling business case for these policies. However, most organizations rely on basic metrics like turnover rates. Regular employee feedback is crucial for refining policy design.

Parents' Perspectives on Childcare and Family-Friendly Policies

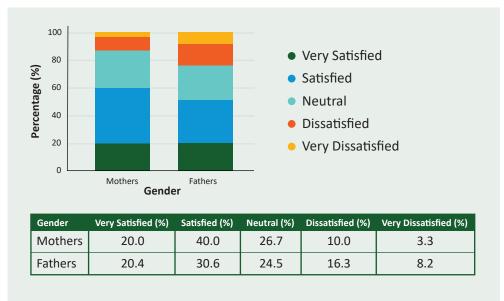
QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS FROM SURVEY

Demographics



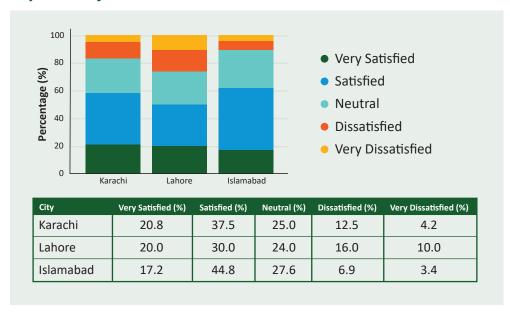
The survey respondents consisted of 82.7% mothers and 17.3% fathers. This distribution may reflect the outreach and targeting of the survey rather than an inherent difference in parental engagement with childcare discussions. The higher representation of mothers could be due to the survey being more widely distributed among women or greater willingness among mothers to participate. However, the lower response rate from fathers highlights the need for broader inclusion in discussions around workplace childcare policies and support systems.

Gender vs. Satisfaction with Policies



Insight:

While both mothers and fathers exhibit comparable levels of satisfaction in the most positive categories, a higher proportion of fathers express dissatisfaction with overall family-friendly policies at the workplace (24.5% for fathers versus 13.5% for mothers). This suggests that current policies may not be adequately addressing the diverse needs of both genders, highlighting a potential gap in support mechanisms that extend beyond paternity leave to encompass broader family-friendly measures.



City vs. Satisfaction with Policies

Islamabad has the highest satisfaction (62%), while Lahore shows the highest dissatisfaction (26%).

Influence of Lack of Childcare Options on Employment Decisions Responses by Employment Status

What impact have family-friendly policies had on your company's overall performance and productivity?

Response	Employed (n=120)	Unemployed (n=79)
Yes	40 (33.3%)	60 (76.0%)
No	60 (50.0%)	15 (19.0%)
Not Sure/Missing	20 (16.7%)	4 (5.0%)
Total	120 (100%)	79 (100%)

Insight:

The data reveal a marked disparity between employed and unemployed parents regarding the influence of childcare options on their employment decisions. Only one-third (33.3%) of employed parents view inadequate childcare as a barrier, suggesting that many working parents have managed to find solutions or workarounds that allow them to remain in the workforce. In contrast, a substantial 76.0% of unemployed parents identify the lack of childcare as a key factor affecting their ability to secure or return to employment. This significant gap indicates that insufficient childcare support disproportionately impacts unemployed parents, acting as a major deterrent to workforce participation. Enhancing access to affordable, high-quality childcare services could therefore play a critical role in enabling more parents to join or re-enter the formal labor market, ultimately contributing to greater economic stability and family well-being.

Consideration of Workforce Re-entry if Childcare Solutions Were Provided

Table 2.1. Responses by Employment Status

Response	Employed (n=120)	Unemployed (n=79)
Yes	70 (58.3%)	70 (88.6%)
No	40 (33.3%)	8 (10.1%)
Not Sure/Missing	10 (8.4%)	1 (1.3%)
Total	120 (100%)	79 (100%)

Insight:

A striking 88.6% of unemployed parents indicate they would consider re-entering the workforce if improved childcare solutions were provided, compared to 58.3% of currently employed parents. This considerable difference suggests that inadequate childcare options are a major barrier preventing unemployed parents from joining or returning to the labor market. The data imply that targeted interventions to enhance the availability, affordability, and quality of childcare could substantially boost workforce participation, particularly among unemployed parents, thereby contributing to improved economic stability for families and the broader labor market.

Specific Childcare Challenges Faced Table 3.1. Childcare Challenges by Employment Status

(Note: Respondents could select more than one option; percentages are based on the total responses within each subgroup.)

Childcare Challenge	Employed (n=120)	Unemployed (n=79)
Inflexible childcare hours	35 (29.2%)	45 (57.0%)
Poor quality childcare services	20 (16.7%)	30 (38.0%)
Limited after-school care	15 (12.5%)	25 (31.6%)
No childcare challenges reported	50 (41.6%)	4 (5.1%)

Insight:

The data illustrate that a substantially higher proportion of unemployed parents encounter childcare challenges compared to employed parents. In particular, 57.0% of unemployed parents report inflexible childcare hours as a barrier, and 38.0% cite poor quality childcare services—figures that are significantly higher than the 29.2% and 16.7% reported by employed parents, respectively. Moreover, 31.6% of unemployed parents face limited after-school care options, while only 12.5% of employed parents experience this issue. In contrast, 41.6% of employed parents report having no childcare challenges, compared to only 5.1% of unemployed parents. These disparities underscore the critical need for targeted interventions aimed at improving the flexibility, quality, and accessibility of childcare services, particularly for parents who are currently out of the workforce. Enhanced childcare support could reduce these barriers and potentially facilitate higher rates of employment among parents facing these challenges.

Preferred Childcare Support Options by Employment Status

Support Option	Employed (n=120)	Unemployed (n=79)
Flexible work schedules	50 (41.7%)	40 (50.6%)
On-site childcare	40 (33.3%)	30 (38.0%)
After-school care	20 (16.7%)	20 (25.3%)
Remote work opportunities	10 (8.3%)	5 (6.3%)

Insight:

Both employed and unemployed parents recognize the importance of flexible work schedules and on-site childcare, underscoring these as key support options. Notably, unemployed parents demonstrate a slightly higher preference for flexible work schedules (50.6% versus 41.7%) and after-school care (25.3% versus 16.7%), suggesting that these measures could be particularly instrumental in facilitating their re-entry into the workforce. While on-site childcare is similarly valued by both groups, the elevated demand for flexible scheduling and after-school programs among unemployed parents indicates a pressing need to address their unique challenges in balancing caregiving with potential employment opportunities.

Discussion

Employed Parents

Among employed parents, one-third (33.3%) perceive the lack of childcare options as a barrier to securing stable or formal employment. Interest in enhanced childcare support is moderate, with approximately 58% stating that improved childcare solutions would encourage them to re-enter the workforce or transition to more formal roles. While their overall challenges appear less severe, a notable 41.6% reported facing no current childcare difficulties. Despite this, there is a strong preference for flexible work arrangements and access to on-site childcare facilities.

Unemployed Parents

In contrast, nearly 76% of unemployed parents cite the lack of childcare as a key reason for not working in the formal sector. A striking 88.6% state they would consider entering or returning to the workforce if improved childcare or family-friendly policies were available. The data further show that most unemployed respondents face multiple childcare challenges, particularly regarding inflexible hours and poor quality services. Their support preferences are slightly more intense, with higher percentages indicating a need for flexible scheduling and after-school care.

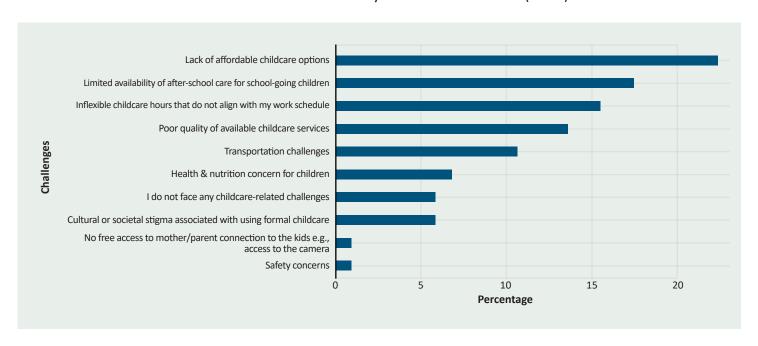
CROSS-ANALYSIS OF KEY FACTORS

Employment-Based Analysis

Working Parents

Top Challenges:

- Poor quality of available childcare services (10.6%)
 - Lack of affordable childcare options (10.0%)
 - Limited availability of after-school care (8.7%)



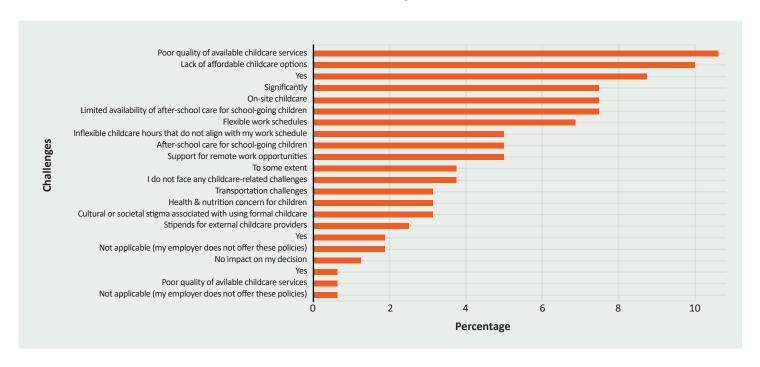
Insight:

Working parents face significant challenges related to both accessibility and quality of childcare. Many find that existing childcare services fail to meet their expectations, leaving them with limited suitable alternatives. This gap highlights the need for higher standards, better regulation, and more diverse childcare options to support working families effectively.

Non-Working Parents

Top Challenges:

- Lack of affordable childcare options (12.3%)
 - Limited availability of after-school care (11.2%)
 - Cultural or societal stigma associated with formal care (9.8%)



Insight:

Non-working parents often face affordability concerns and societal barriers to using formal childcare. This suggests that better financial support and awareness programs may encourage childcare utilization.

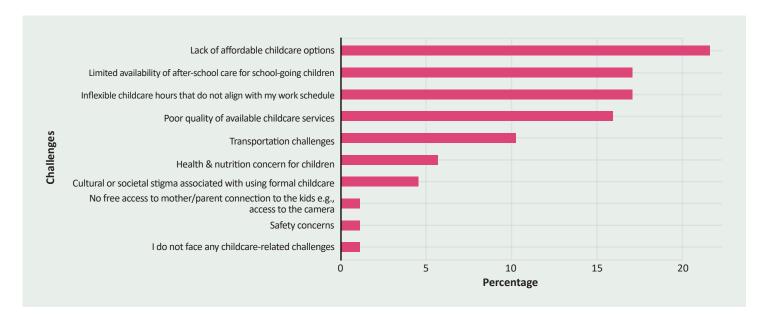
Gender-Based Analysis

Working Mothers

Top Challenges:

Lack of affordable childcare options (14.3%)

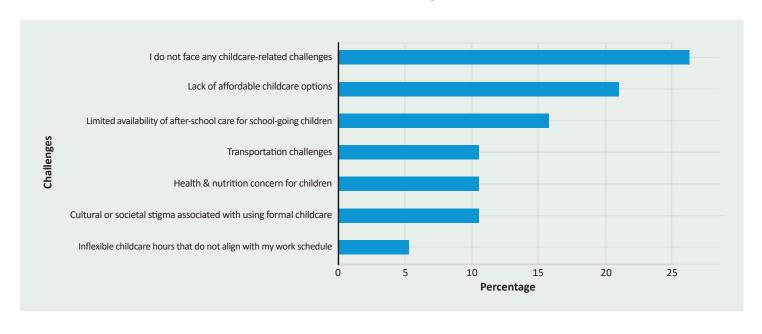
- o Poor quality of available childcare services (12.4%)
 - o Limited availability of after-school care (10.5%)



Working Fathers

Top Challenges:

- o Limited availability of after-school care (11.7%)
 - o Poor quality of available childcare services (10.8%)
 - Work-life balance challenges (9.2%)childcare (9.8%)



Insight:

While both working mothers and fathers report concerns regarding quality and availability, fathers tend to focus more on work-life balance, whereas mothers prioritize affordability.

As one Islamabad-based father, a banking professional, shared:

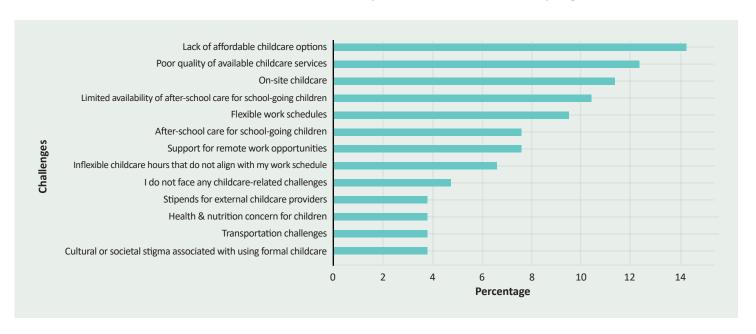


I used flexible work arrangements once, but it completely disrupted my work-life balance. I had to come in on Saturday and work late to catch up. Although the work environment is very supportive, there is no assistance in managing workload when working shorter hours—I had to handle everything on my own. Covering what I missed was a significant challenge.

Non-Working Mothers

Top Challenges:

- o Cultural or societal stigma associated with formal childcare (12.8%)
 - Lack of affordable childcare options (11.5%)
 - Limited availability of structured childcare programs (10.2%)

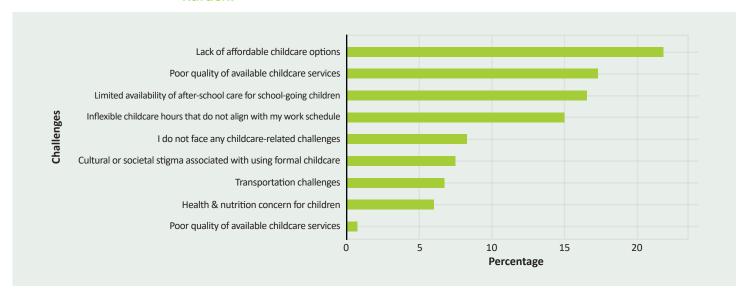


Insight:

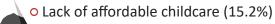
Societal expectations influence non-working mothers' childcare decisions. Raising awareness and reducing stigma could encourage greater participation in structured childcare programs.

City-Based Analysis

Karachi



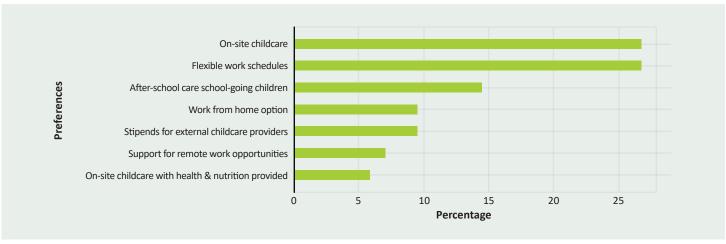
Top Challenges:



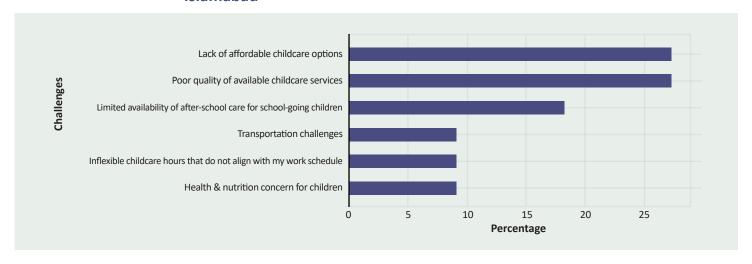
Limited availability of structured programs (13.6%)

Support Preferences:

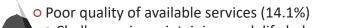
On-site childcare (18.7%)
Stipends for external childcare (14.9%)



Islamabad

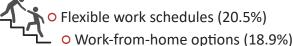


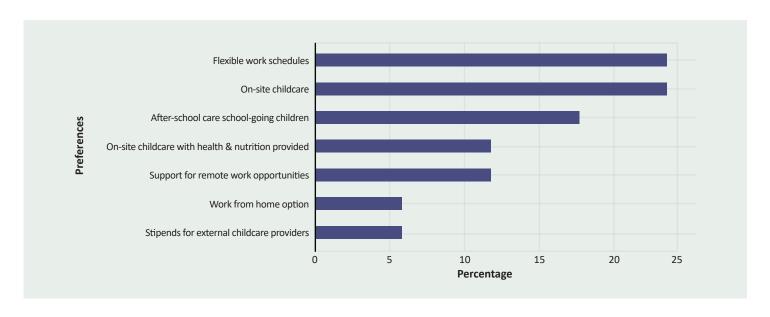
Top Challenges:



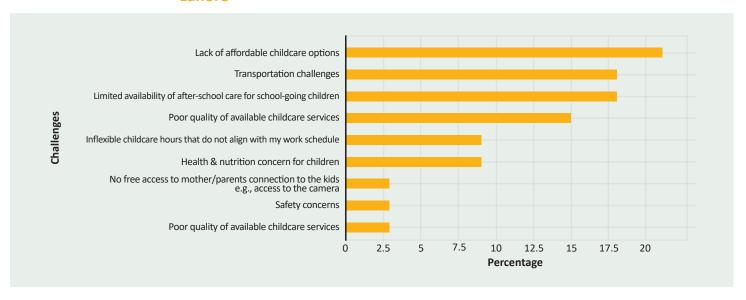
O Challenges in maintaining work-life balance (12.8%)

Support Preferences:





Lahore



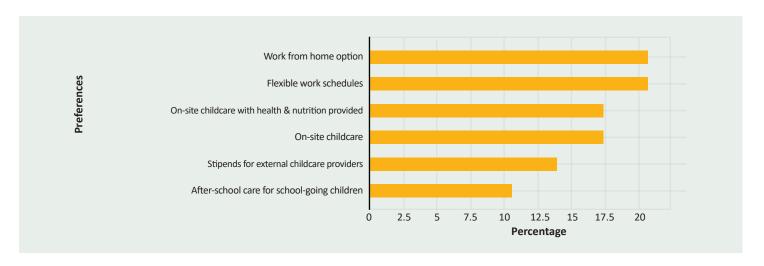
Top Challenges:

Limited after-school care (13.7%)Affordability concerns (12.4%)

Support Preferences:

Stipends for external childcare (15.2%)

Structured daycare programs (14.5%)



Insight:

• Karachi:

Parents prioritize affordability and structured childcare programs.

• Islamabad:

Work flexibility is a bigger issue due to limited childcare availability.

• Lahore:

Parents prefer financial support over physical childcare facilities.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS: THEMATIC INSIGHTS

Core Themes from FGDs and IDIs

Theme 4: Work-Life Balance and Flexibility:

Balancing work demands with childcare responsibilities remains a central concern. While flexible work options are seen as essential, they are not uniformly available across organizations. The discussion also highlighted the importance and need of childcare support that enables parents to address homework and after-school needs, underscoring the need for policies that promote work-life balance.

Childcare Support

Challenges and Daycare Concerns:

Parents face difficulties in finding affordable, high-quality daycare centers, with concerns about supervision, nutrition, and academic support. Limitations such as age restrictions and capacity issues further exacerbate these challenges.

On-site Facilities vs. Allowances:

On-site daycare facilities are more feasible in urban headquarters, where high population density and logistical advantages support centralized childcare services. However, in remote or factory locations, logistical challenges often necessitate the use of childcare allowances. These allowances, which range from Rs. 5,000 to 37,000 per child and vary by grade, are frequently limited to specific daycare centres, restricting families' options. Such limitations highlight the need for more flexible and comprehensive childcare support systems that can adapt to the diverse contexts and requirements of employees.

Extended Support Beyond Early Years:

While many daycares cater to children up to 6–8 years, parents highlighted the need for continued support, such as after-school programs, for older children to assist with homework, extracurricular activities, and emotional development.

• Transportation and Safety Concerns:

Parents relying on external daycare services face significant transportation and safety challenges, as they must coordinate between home, school, and daycare. This adds to their daily burden, requiring extra time and effort while also raising concerns about extended travel. As a working mother in the healthcare industry with two children shared, "Daycare facilities should be accessible to everyone. Drop-off and pick-up are a major challenge—I currently have to take my children to my mother's house, pump milk, and handle everything on my own." Her experience highlights the need for more accessible daycare options and integrated childcare solutions that reduce logistical stress for working parents.

Flexible Work as a Priority

Nearly all respondents emphasized the importance of flexible work arrangements, particularly highlighting remote work and hybrid models as essential components of modern employment. This consensus underscores the need for organizations to prioritize flexibility in work policies, enabling employees to better balance their professional responsibilities with personal and family demands.

Cultural and Family Dynamics

Traditional gender roles continue to place the primary responsibility for childcare on mothers, often leading to feelings of pressure and guilt. As families transition from joint to nuclear structures, working parents face an increased childcare burden, intensifying the conflict between societal expectations and the growing need for shared caregiving responsibilities. However, as one mother in the banking sector shared,

There is societal and workplace stigma at my workplace, and using flexible work arrangements or working from home is not viewed positively. During COVID, it was accepted, but now it feels like a favor rather than a right.

This reflects how workplace cultures often fail to adapt to the evolving needs of working parents, reinforcing rigid gender norms and making it harder to balance professional and caregiving responsibilities.

Workplace Challenges and Gender Inequality

Fathers tend to avoid taking paternity leave because of pervasive workplace stigma, which discourages them from accessing benefits designed to promote work-life balance. In contrast, mothers often experience career stagnation as the substantial demands of childcare limit their professional growth and advancement opportunities. Single mothers, however, face the greatest challenges due to an acute lack of support, both from institutional frameworks and familial networks, further exacerbating their struggles in balancing work and parenting responsibilities. As the HR Head of an FMCG company shared,

> *Initially, men were hesitant to use the* one-month paternity leave we offered. Some only took a few days. However, we eventually required one male employee to fully utilize his leave, and it worked out very well—he returned feeling highly satisfied."

This highlights the need for cultural shifts within organizations to normalize paternity leave and encourage shared caregiving responsibilities.

Affordability and Financial Constraints

High-quality childcare is often prohibitively expensive, leaving many families without access to reliable services. Daycare affordability and quality remain significant challenges; on-site childcare is rare and childcare allowances are frequently insufficient, forcing many to rely on family members or informal caregivers—a situation that can adversely affect child development.

Managerial Influence

The success of family-friendly policies largely depends on managerial support. Employees' ability to benefit from these policies is shaped by their supervisors—those with supportive managers can effectively utilize flexible options, while rigid management practices often create barriers that discourage employees from taking advantage of available benefits.

Daycare Operators Perspective on Childcare and Family-Friendly Policies

- Self-Managed Daycares: These are independent daycare businesses that operate for the general public, offering childcare services on a commercial basis.
- Service Providers: These do not run their own daycare centers for public enrollment. Instead, they provide on-site or near-site daycare management exclusively for corporate clients. They set up and operate daycare facilities within corporate environments but do not support other daycare businesses.

OVERVIEW OF KEY FINDINGS

- Self-Managed Daycares operate as standalone businesses serving the general public. These vary in terms of quality, caregiver training, safety measures, and operational sustainability.
- Service Providers (e.g., Ubuntu, Jelly Beans) do not run independent daycare centers for the general public but operate corporate daycare facilities onsite or near corporate offices.
- Self-managed daycares range from small, community-based setups (e.g., Dawood Centre, AMI Montessori) to larger structured businesses (e.g., Dr. Sofia's Daycare).
- Service Providers follow structured models and international standards but work exclusively with corporate clients.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: SELF-MANAGED VS. SERVICE PROVIDER DAYCARES

FACTOR	SELF-MANAGED DAYCARES	SERVICE PROVIDERS (E.G., UBUNTU, JELLY BEANS, ETC.)
Nature of Operation	Operate open enrollment daycare businesses for the general public.	Run corporate daycare centers onsite or near corporate facilities but do not operate their own public daycare centers.
Quality of Childcare	Childcare facilities vary in their educational approaches; some implement structured learning models, while others may lack standardization, leading to inconsistencies in educational quality.	Follow structured childcare models, ensuring standardization, safety, and compliance within corporate daycare environments.
Staff Training & Development	Some daycares invest in continuous training while others provide in-house training with varying quality.	Employ trained caregivers and ensure staff follows corporate daycare standards but do not offer training to other daycare businesses.
Compliance & Safety Standards	Compliance varies; some meet child safety standards, while others are inconsistent.	Follow corporate-mandated safety and compliance regulations but only within corporate daycare centers
Food & Nutrition Policies	Some provide structured meal plans, while others require parents to send food.	Dependent on corporate policy—some provide meals, others require parents to send food.
Parental Trust & Satisfaction	Varies depending on daycare quality—structured setups earn higher trust than loosely managed centers.	Generally higher parental trust as these operate under corporate oversight with strict regulations.
Digital Integration	Mostly limited—some have manual progress tracking or CCTV access, but structured reporting is rare.	Dependent on corporate requirements—some offer digital monitoring and reporting tools for corporate employees.
Flexibility & Scalability	Some daycares offer flexible packages (hourly, half-day, full-day options), but expansion is resource-intensive.	Scale based on corporate demand—operate daycare centers exclusively for corporate clients and their employees.
Financial Sustainability	Some struggle with profitability, especially those charging lower fees. E.g., DHA Islamabad daycare closed due to unaffordability.	Financially viable as these operate under corporate contracts, ensuring stable revenue.

KEY CHALLENGES

1. LACK OF GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT IN SELF-MANAGED DAYCARES

- No federal regulations enforcing training, caregiver-child ratios, or nutrition standards leading to variability in quality.
- Punjab Daycare Act mandates space but lacks implementation guidelines.

According to one Daycare Centre administrator in Karachi:

We operate our daycare as per international standards; however, if we didn't, it would not matter as there are no checks and balances for daycare centers in Pakistan (Yahaan par koi pakar nahi hai).

2. PARENTAL EXPECTATIONS VS. AFFORDABILITY IN SELF-MANAGED DAYCARES

- Many parents want high-quality care but cannot afford market rates (~PKR 23,000+ per month).
- Daycare businesses struggle to balance affordability with high-quality services.
- Misconceptions about institutional childcare limit its cultural acceptance (Population Council, 2023).

Schools and daycare providers highlight the need for government support through subsidies, tax incentives, and infrastructure provisions to make childcare more affordable.

We acknowledge that our fees may seem high, but the operational costs of running a facility like this are substantial, leaving us with no choice but to charge our students accordingly. We would want government support in the form of rent subsidies, designated land allocations for schools and daycares, tax incentives, and rebates on utility expenses.

School with Daycare facility - Karachi

3. FOOD & NUTRITION STANDARDS

• While some daycares provide structured meals, many rely on parents, leading to inconsistency in children's nutrition.

A father heading the legal department in a mid-sized local organization shared his perspective:

Married men, particularly those with low incomes, should receive financial concessions to better support their families. A transparent, corruption-free state-level financial support system, similar to social security, should be established, with a

focus on low-income groups, as they constitute the majority.

Support could be provided through reduced work hours, improved salary packages, or the flexibility to pursue additional sources of income, enabling them to ensure proper nourishment for their children. We need to allocate larger budgets to support lower-income groups, ensuring access to quality state healthcare and adequate nutrition for their families."

GOVERNMENT AND NGOS PERSPECTIVES ON CHILDCARE AND FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES

Existing Policies and Practices

Parental Leave:

- Maternity leave is provided (4 months, paid).
- Some departments offer limited paternity leave (1–3 weeks), although its uptake remains low.

• Childcare Support:

- Some on-site daycare facilities exist (e.g., at the Women Development Department, Karachi University, Mehran University Jamshoro, and a centre in Sukkur) primarily for public sector employees.
- Emergency leave is offered for family emergencies such as sick children.

Identified Gaps and Challenges

Availability & Affordability:

- On-site daycare centres are scarce and often costly in the private sector.
- o Limited quality options and affordability issues impede access, especially for lower-income employees.

• Legal and Regulatory Framework:

- o Although some laws exist (e.g., Maternity Benefits Ordinance, Sindh Employees Social Security Act), there are gaps in implementation and enforcement.
- o Post-18th amendment, provinces need to adopt or draft comprehensive rules; there is no mandatory federal law on daycare centres.

Cultural and Organizational Barriers:

- Traditional gender roles mean that women continue to shoulder most caregiving responsibilities, often facing stigma when trying to take parental leave.
- Lack of supportive workplace culture and executive backing hinders broader uptake of family-friendly policies.

Data and Monitoring:

 Few organizations maintain systematic data on policy utilization, making it difficult to build a strong business case for expanding such policies.

International Lessons

- Models from Nordic countries, the EU, Singapore, Japan, Iceland, and Canada illustrate the benefits of comprehensive, integrated approaches to family-friendly policies.
- Key takeaways include flexible policy design, clear goals, strong stakeholder engagement, pilot testing, and rigorous monitoring and evaluation.

Regional Comparisons (Childcare in Neighboring or Similar Countries)

India:

Strong government support for early childhood education through the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) program, which provides subsidized childcare in rural and urban areas.

Bangladesh:

Partnership models between NGOs and the government have resulted in accessible childcare for low-income families.

Sri Lanka:

Partnership models between NGOs and the government have resulted in accessible childcare for low-income families.

Lessons from Global Best Practices



EMPLOYER-SPONSORED MODELS:

Countries like Japan and Germany have policies encouraging employer-provided childcare to support working parents.



PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS:

Sweden's successful childcare system integrates government funding with private sector operations, ensuring affordability and high quality. **India** and **Bangladesh** have improved access to childcare in rural areas.



NATIONAL STANDARDS:

Countries like Australia and Canada enforce strict regulatory frameworks for childcare providers, ensuring uniformity in quality (UNICEF, 2024; IFC, 2024).



ROBUST FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES:

Sweden and **Norway** have high workforce participation and child development outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Pakistan's childcare infrastructure remains inadequate, hindering working parents, particularly women, and reducing overall workforce productivity. Addressing this issue requires a coordinated, multi-stakeholder approach involving government agencies, private sector employers, NGOs, and international organizations. Implementing a range of strategies, including flexible daycare models, public-private partnerships, NGO collaborations, and sustainable financing, can significantly enhance childcare services across the country. This report presents detailed recommendations, supported by global case studies, analysis of implications for Pakistan, and implementation guidelines to create a scalable, high-quality childcare ecosystem.

For Parents

ENGAGEMENT AND ADVOCACY

Case Study: Sweden's Parent Advocacy System

Sweden has one of the most comprehensive childcare systems in the world, largely due to active parental engagement in policy development. The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) acts as a bridge between parents, local governments, and childcare providers. Founded in 2007, SALAR represents 290 municipalities and 21 county councils, ensuring local governments prioritize high-quality childcare services. Parents participate in regular policy discussions, influencing regulations and funding allocation to daycare centers.

Implications for Pakistan

Pakistan lacks an organized parental advocacy system, leaving childcare policy fragmented and underfunded. Without structured engagement, daycare accessibility, affordability, and quality remain unaddressed, forcing many working mothers to exit the workforce. Businesses face little pressure to provide workplace childcare support, and policymakers remain disconnected from parental needs.

A formalized parent representation body, similar to Sweden's SALAR, could drive policy improvements, ensuring better childcare services and workplace support. Digital advocacy platforms can amplify parental voices, fostering nationwide awareness and pushing for reforms such as daycare mandates, subsidies, and tax incentives.

Implementation Guidelines

In Pakistan, a lack of organized parental advocacy results in fragmented efforts to improve childcare services. To replicate Sweden's success:

Establish Local Parent Advocacy Groups:

These groups can be formed at the neighborhood, city, and provincial levels, giving parents a platform to voice their concerns. They should collaborate with local schools and daycare providers to advocate for policy improvements.

National-Level Parent Representation:

A Pakistan
Parent-Childcare
Alliance (PPCA) can be
established as a liaison
body between parents,
businesses, and the
government, similar to
SALAR in Sweden. This
would ensure parental
representation in childcare policy discussions.

Use Digital Platforms:

Parent-run social media pages and apps can be used to share childcare recommendations, daycare reviews, and government policy updates.

Advocacy for Policy Changes:

Just like parents in the UK successfully lobbied for increased funding for early childhood education, Pakistani parents can collectively demand government subsidies, workplace daycare mandates, and tax relief for childcare expenses.

FEEDBACK AND COMMUNICATION

Case Study: Singapore's Parent Feedback System

Singapore has a robust parental feedback system for childcare services. The Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA), established in 2013, manages the government's preschool initiatives and enforces high-quality standards. Each year, ECDA conducts nationwide parent satisfaction surveys and integrates feedback into policy adjustments. Singapore's approach ensures that early childhood centers consistently meet the expectations of working parents.

Implications for Pakistan

Pakistan lacks a structured parental feedback system for childcare services, leading to inconsistent quality, poor regulation, and limited accountability. Without a formal mechanism to voice concerns, parents struggle to ensure safe, high-quality childcare options. This gap discourages working mothers from re-entering the workforce and reduces trust in existing daycare facilities. Establishing a transparent feedback system will enhance service standards, increase parental confidence, and drive policy improvements based on real user experiences.

Implementation Guidelines

To improve childcare quality and accountability, Pakistan should establish a government-led online feedback portal, managed by the Ministry of Human Rights and the Ministry of IT & Telecommunication, where parents can rate daycare centers and report concerns. The Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training should mandate bi-annual parent satisfaction surveys in workplace daycare centers and private nurseries to assess service standards. Additionally, the Ministry of Social Welfare should introduce a national childcare helpline to provide guidance on childcare rights and address complaints efficiently. By integrating structured feedback mechanisms, Pakistan can enhance childcare services, promote transparency, and support working parents.

For the Regulators

IMPLEMENT MANDATORY PARENTAL LEAVE

Case Study: Norway's Comprehensive Parental Leave Policy

Norway has established one of the most progressive parental leave policies in the world, ensuring both maternal and paternal involvement in early childcare. The country mandates 18 weeks (approximately 4 months) of maternity leave for mothers and a dedicated 15-day paid paternity leave for fathers, administered through the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV). These policies are part of a broader family support system that includes subsidized childcare, flexible work arrangements, and financial incentives for businesses that implement family-friendly workplace policies.

Norway's parental leave framework has led to significant improvements in workforce participation and child development outcomes. Studies indicate that a structured and legally enforced maternity leave period enhances maternal health and well-being, leading to lower postnatal complications and higher retention of women in the workforce. Additionally, the inclusion of paternity leave has normalized fatherly involvement in childcare, reducing the burden on mothers and promoting a balanced family structure. Employers also benefit from reduced turnover rates and higher productivity, as employees experience greater job satisfaction and stability.

Implications for Pakistan

Mandating four months of maternity leave and ten days of paternity leave in Pakistan would provide critical support for working mothers, ensuring their physical and mental well-being while fostering a more inclusive labor market. A standardized maternity leave policy would reduce career disruptions for women, increasing female workforce retention and economic participation. Additionally, introducing paternity leave would encourage fathers to take an active role in childcare, addressing cultural barriers that place the burden of caregiving solely on women. This shift would contribute to improved child development outcomes, stronger family bonds, and more equitable workforce dynamics. Aligning with global labor standards would also enhance Pakistan's economic competitiveness, attracting foreign investment and encouraging businesses to adopt family-friendly policies, ultimately leading to higher employee satisfaction and organizational stability.

Implementation Guidelines

A nationwide parental leave policy requires a coordinated effort between legislative bodies, labor authorities, and corporate stakeholders. The Ministry of Human Resource Development and Ministry of Law and Justice should amend labor laws to mandate four months of paid maternity leave and ten days of paternity leave across all sectors, ensuring strict enforcement with penalties for non-compliance. The Ministry of Labour and Manpower, along with Provincial Labour Departments, should oversee implementation, conducting audits and monitoring adherence within both public and private enterprises. The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and Ministry of Finance should introduce tax rebates and wage subsidies for companies that exceed the mandatory leave provisions, promoting a business-friendly approach to parental leave policies. Additionally, the Pakistan Business Council (PBC) and Chambers of Commerce should drive corporate compliance through recognition programs that reward organizations implementing best practices in parental leave. The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) should support SMEs in integrating paid parental leave without financial strain by offering government-backed assistance programs. Lastly, awareness campaigns led by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting should educate the public and employers on the long-term benefits of parental leave, challenging traditional gender norms and fostering a cultural shift toward shared caregiving responsibilities.

By integrating legal reforms, corporate incentives, and public awareness efforts, Pakistan can establish a robust parental leave framework that strengthens workforce participation, enhances child development, and fosters economic growth.

MANDATING WORKPLACE CHILDCARE FACILITIES

Case Study: India's Factory Act and Tamil Nadu Guidelines

India's Factories Act (1948) mandates crèche facilities in establishments employing more than 30 women. Tamil Nadu has gone a step further by issuing detailed model rules, outlining standards for space, staffing, safety, and parental access. This regulatory clarity has encouraged greater compliance and resulted in more consistent childcare provision in industrial zones, especially in the textile and manufacturing sectors. It has also led to better retention of female workers post-childbirth, improved employee morale, and safer early learning environments for children. The presence of well-regulated childcare has enabled working mothers to return to their jobs more confidently, thereby enhancing workforce participation.

Implications for Pakistan

While Pakistan has legal provisions mandating workplace childcare for establishments with 50 or more female employees, enforcement remains weak and fragmented. Moreover, there is no uniform mandate across provinces or clarity on operational standards. Expanding the mandate nationally and including organizations with either 50 women or 100+ total employees—regardless of sector—would help create equitable access to childcare, improve female workforce retention, and reduce informal caregiving reliance. Aligning national labor laws with these provisions would foster a more inclusive and family-supportive work environment.

Implementation Guidelines

The Ministry of Labour and Manpower, in collaboration with Provincial Labour Departments, should enforce existing legislation and expand its scope to cover all provinces and sectors. This includes mandating the provision of a daycare centre in a facility with 50+ women or 100+ total employees on site. The Ministry of Law and Justice should ensure harmonization of labor laws across provinces. To support implementation, the Ministry of Human Rights and the Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA) should develop model operational guidelines for in-house and consortium-based daycare centers. These should include staffing standards, health and safety protocols, and child development benchmarks. The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) should offer tax incentives to compliant organizations. Financial penalties should be introduced for non-compliance, while model employers can be publicly recognized through an employer certification system managed by the Pakistan Business Council and the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW).

ESTABLISH CENTRALIZED OVERSIGHT FOR UNIFORM POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

One of the key challenges in implementing family-friendly workplace policies in Pakistan is the regulatory inconsistency between the federal government and provincial administrations. Labor laws governing maternity and paternity leave vary across provinces, leading to unequal access to parental benefits.

Case Study: South Korea's Parental Leave Reform

South Korea faced significant challenges in implementing parental leave due to regulatory fragmentation between national and provincial labor policies, resulting in inconsistent benefits for employees. To address this, the government established a centralized labor commission to standardize parental leave policies nationwide, ensuring equitable access for all workers. This reform led to a 23% increase in paternity leave uptake within five years, as more fathers were encouraged to participate in childcare. Additionally, female workforce participation improved, as returning mothers faced fewer career disruptions due to a more supportive leave structure. The initiative also contributed to South Korea's improved ranking in the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index, reflecting progress in gender equality within the labor market. By adopting a similar approach, Pakistan can create a well-regulated, gender-neutral parental leave system that reduces implementation disparities and promotes shared caregiving responsibilities.

Implications for Pakistan

The lack of a standardized parental leave policy in Pakistan results in unequal access to benefits, particularly due to variations in provincial labor laws. A gender-neutral parental leave framework with centralized oversight would address these inconsistencies, ensuring equal access for all parents across industries. Standardization would encourage higher paternal participation in childcare, reduce career disruptions for women, and promote a more inclusive labor market. Additionally, aligning Pakistan's policies with global best practices would improve its standing in gender equity rankings, enhance workforce productivity, and attract multinational investments by fostering a family-friendly work environment.

Implementation Guidelines

To establish a uniform gender-neutral parental leave system, Pakistan should create a National Commission on Family Affairs under the Ministry of Labour and Manpower in collaboration with Provincial Labour Departments. This commission should develop standardized parental leave policies applicable nationwide, ensuring equitable access regardless of employment type. The Ministry of Law and Justice should oversee legislative amendments to align provincial and federal labor laws, preventing disparities in leave entitlements. The National Commission on Human Rights (NCHR) can ensure compliance by monitoring implementation across public and private sectors, while the Pakistan Business Council and Chambers of Commerce should facilitate corporate adoption of gender-neutral leave policies. Additionally, the Ministry of Planning should integrate parental leave reforms into broader labor market strategies, ensuring long-term sustainability.

EXPANDING GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR WORKING MOTHERS IN PAKISTAN

a. Employer-Supported Childcare Grants

Case Study: India's Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act (2017)

- O India mandates that companies with more than 50 employees provide workplace creche (daycare) facilities.
- O The government offers financial incentives to companies that comply, making it easier for businesses to establish childcare support for employees.

Case Study: Bangladesh's Mothers@Work Initiative

- A public-private partnership providing workplace childcare in garment factories.
- Employers receive government and international funding to establish and run daycare facilities, benefiting over 130,000 women.

b. Childcare Subsidies for Parents

Case Study: Malaysia's Childcare Subsidy Program

- O Direct financial aid is provided to working mothers to help cover childcare costs.
- The program targets middle- and low-income families, ensuring that childcare remains accessible.

Case Study: Germany's Parental Allowance (Elterngeld)

o Working mothers returning from maternity leave receive temporary financial relief, reducing the income gap and incentivizing them to re-enter the workforce.

c. Tax Rebates for Working Mothers and Employers

Case Study: Singapore's Working Mother Child Relief (WMCR)

- O Tax rebates for working mothers, encouraging them to remain in the workforce.
- The rebate is proportional to the mother's income, ensuring targeted support.

Case Study: Japan's Corporate Childcare Tax Benefits

- O Companies investing in in-house daycare facilities receive tax deductions, reducing operational costs.
- This encourages businesses to take an active role in providing childcare support.

Implementation Guidelines

a. Employer-Supported Childcare Grants

- O Pakistan's corporate sector, particularly large enterprises in Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad, could be incentivized to set up on-site childcare.
- The textile and banking sectors, with high female employment, would particularly benefit from such schemes.

b. Childcare Subsidies for Parents

- The rising cost of daycare in urban areas means that low- and middle-income families struggle to afford quality childcare.
- A direct subsidy program for working parents would increase women's participation in the workforce, particularly in formal employment.

c. Tax Rebates and Incentives

- Providing tax deductions for childcare expenses would help working mothers manage costs, encouraging them to continue working.
- Corporate tax incentives would encourage businesses to invest in workplace childcare solutions.

Implementation Guidelines

Recommendation	Key Stakeholders	Implementation Steps
Employer- Supported Childcare Grants	 Ministry of Labour and Human Resource Development Corporate sector (banks, textile factories, IT firms) Chambers of Commerce 	 Develop a policy mandating childcare facilities for business with over 50 employees. Offer financial grants or tax breaks to businesses that set up in-house daycare centers. Establish a regulatory body to monitor compliance.
Childcare Subsidies for Parents	 Ministry of Finance Social Welfare Departments Provincial Governments 	 Intoduce a means-tested childcare subsidy program for working parents. Prioritize support for lowand middle-income families. Partner with private daycare providers to ensure quality and accessibility.
Tax Rebates for Working Mothers	 Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) Ministry of Finance Employers 	 Allow working mothers to claim childcare expenses as a tax deduction. Provide a temporary tax break for mothers returning to work after maternity leave. Offer tax relief to companies investing in workplace daycare facilities.

INCENTIVES FOR BUSINESSES AND CORPORATE ENGAGEMENT

Case Study: Sweden's Parental Leave Incentives for Businesses

Sweden has one of the world's most progressive parental leave policies, supported by government incentives that encourage businesses to implement family-friendly workplace practices. The Swedish government provides a parental leave wage subsidy, covering a significant portion of salaries for employees on leave, reducing the financial burden on employers. Companies that go beyond the legal requirements—such as extending paid leave or offering flexible work arrangements—receive corporate tax deductions and are eligible for government grants.

Additionally, Sweden recognizes businesses that excel in work-life balance initiatives through the "Family-Friendly Workplace" certification program. Companies that actively support parental leave and work-life balance are awarded public recognition, increasing their attractiveness to skilled workers. This initiative has led to:

- Higher workforce retention rates, as employees feel more supported in balancing career and family life.
- Increased female labor force participation, as women are not forced to choose between work and family responsibilities.
- Enhanced corporate reputation, making businesses more competitive in attracting and retaining top talent.

Implications for Pakistan

Implementing similar corporate incentives in Pakistan could significantly improve employee retention, gender equality in the workforce, and business competitiveness. Higher parental leave uptake, particularly for fathers, would help reduce the burden on working mothers, increasing female labor participation. Additionally, public recognition and tax benefits would encourage private-sector engagement, fostering a cultural shift towards family-friendly workplace policies. However, challenges such as informal employment, limited fiscal space for subsidies, and corporate resistance must be addressed. To overcome these, the government could introduce phased implementation, starting with tax incentives for large firms before expanding to SMEs, and establish compliance mechanisms through labor inspections and industry reporting.

Implementation Guidelines

To incentivize businesses in Pakistan to adopt family-friendly policies, the government should introduce a multi-tiered incentive framework combining financial benefits, public recognition, industry engagement, and government collaboration.

a. Financial Incentives and Tax Benefits

Offer corporate tax rebates and wage subsidies to businesses exceeding minimum parental leave to promote family-friendly workplaces. SMEDA and employer groups could create a Parental Leave Support Fund for temporary contribution relief to ease the financial burden on SMEs.

b. Public Recognition and Certification Programs

Implement a government certification program, like Singapore's Tripartite Standards, could recognize businesses with excellent parental leave policies. The Ministry of Commerce and Pakistan Business Council could introduce a "Parental Leave Excellence Award" and public rankings based on workplace flexibility, childcare, and parental support. This would highlight preferred employers and encourage wider adoption.

c. Industry Engagement and Voluntary Compliance

Establish a public-private dialogue platform with government, businesses, and employees to tackle policy implementation issues. The Ministry of Labour and SMEDA should offer SMEs special incentives like subsidized parental leave funds to ensure they can support working parents.

d. Government-Private Sector Collaboration

Create a public-private dialogue platform (government, businesses, employees) to solve policy implementation challenges. The Labour Ministry and SMEDA should offer SMEs incentives like subsidized parental leave funds to enable their support for working parents.

By adopting these measures, Pakistan can foster a corporate culture that supports working parents, improves workforce participation, and enhances business sustainability, ultimately driving economic and social progress.

SUPPORTING INFORMAL WOMEN WORKERS

Implementing family-friendly policies for workers in the informal economy is crucial for enhancing child development, promoting gender equality, and fostering economic growth. Given that a significant portion of women are employed in informal sectors, such as domestic work and home-based enterprises, tailored strategies are essential to support these workers effectively.

Case Study: India's Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)

The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India exemplifies successful integration of family-friendly policies within the informal economy. Established in 1972, SEWA is a trade union representing over 1.5 million informal women workers across various sectors. The organization focuses on achieving full employment and self-reliance for its members by providing access to social security, including childcare services.

Key Initiatives:

Childcare Services:

SEWA operates childcare centers offering affordable, quality care, enabling mothers to work without compromising their children's well-being. These centers have contributed to increased earnings and productivity among women workers.

Healthcare and Insurance:

SEWA provides health services and insurance schemes, safeguarding workers against health-related financial shocks.

• Capacity Building:

The organization offers training programs to enhance skills, promoting better income opportunities and empowerment.

Outcomes:

• Economic Empowerment:

Members have reported increased incomes and improved financial stability.

Social Recognition:

The initiatives have elevated the social status of informal women workers, fostering greater inclusion.

Child Development:

Access to quality childcare has positivel impacted children's health and educational outcomes.

Implications for Pakistan

In Pakistan, where a substantial number of women engage in informal employment, adopting similar approaches could yield significant benefits. Organizations like the Home-Based Women's Workers Federation (HBWWF) have already made strides in this area by advocating for the rights of home-based workers and facilitating access to social services.

Implementation Guidelines

To effectively support informal women workers, the following strategies are recommended:

- 1. Recognize Informal Workers: Official recognition of informal workers is a critical steptoward extending legal protections and social benefits.
- 2. Develop Community-Based Childcare Services: Establish affordable, quality childcare centers within communities to alleviate the caregiving burden on working mothers.
- 3. Provide Health and Social Protection: Implement health insurance and social security schemes tailored to the needs of informal workers, ensuring their well-being and economic security.
- 4. Facilitate Skill Development: Offer training programs to enhance skills, enabling workers to access better income opportunities and achieve self-reliance.

Challenges in Capturing Data on Informal Sector Workers:

- Lack of Formal Recognition: Many informal workers operate outside legal and regulatory frameworks, leading to their exclusion from official labor statistics.
- Diverse and Dispersed Work Environments: Informal work often occurs in private homes or unregistered settings, complicating data collection efforts.
- Variable Work Arrangements: The informal sector encompasses a wide range of occupations and employment terms, making standardized data collection challenging.

Strategies for Inclusive Data Collection:

- Integrate Informal Sector Modules into Existing Surveys: Enhancing labor force surveys with specific modules can capture data on informal employment. The "1-2" survey methodology, for instance, uses labor force surveys to identify informal workers and follows up with detailed enterprise surveys.
- Conduct Specialized Surveys: Targeted surveys focusing on informal workers can provide in-depth insights. While resource-intensive, they yield detailed data on employment conditions and challenges faced by informal workers. ResearchGate
- Utilize Adaptive Sampling Techniques: Methods like Adaptive Cluster Sampling (ACS) are effective for studying clustered populations, such as informal businesses, by expanding the sample in areas where these businesses are found. World Bank Blogs+1enterprisesurveys.org+
- Engage Community Organizations: Collaborating with local organizations familiar with informal workers can facilitate access and trust, enhancing data accuracy and response rates.
- Leverage Administrative Records: Analyzing records from social programs or local authorities can supplement survey data, offering insights into segments of the informal workforce.

Policy Recommendations:

- Extend Social Protections: Implement family-friendly policies, such as paid parental leave and childcare support, tailored to the needs of informal workers to improve their well-being and economic security.
- Facilitate Transition to Formal Employment: Provide pathways for informal workers to enter the formal economy, granting them access to labor protections and benefits.
- Promote Gender Equality: Address social and legal barriers that hinder women's access to formal employment and support structures that recognize their contributions in the informal sector.

By adopting these measures, Pakistan can improve the livelihoods of informal women workers, promote gender equality, and stimulate economic development.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY AND SUPPORT FOR SMES

Case Study: Finland's Kela System

Finland's Kela system reimburses SMEs for up to 90% of salaries during parental leave, reducing hiring biases and improving female workforce retention. This policy has also encouraged fathers to take leave, promoting gender equity in caregiving. By eliminating financial concerns, Finland has created a more inclusive and balanced workforce while strengthening its economy.

Implications for Pakistan

With SMEs making up 90% of businesses and contributing 40% of GDP, Pakistan's lack of financial support for paid parental leave hinders female workforce participation. At just 22%, Pakistan's female labor force participation lags behind Bangladesh's 52%, as many women leave jobs due to job insecurity post-childbirth. Without financial mechanisms to support SMEs, gender-based hiring biases and workforce attrition will persist, weakening economic growth.

Implementation Guidelines

Pakistan should establish a Parental Leave Reimbursement Fund, modeled after Finland's Kela system, to compensate SMEs for salaries paid during parental leave. Managed by the Ministry of Human Resource Development and SMEDA, this fund would encourage businesses to retain female employees without financial strain.

Tax incentives should be introduced, allowing SMEs to deduct parental leave expenses from taxable income. Additionally, public-private partnerships with industry associations, Chambers of Commerce, and SMEDA can drive voluntary adoption before legal mandates.

To ensure widespread adoption, awareness campaigns should educate business owners on the economic benefits of retaining female employees. A structured parental leave system will improve workforce retention, reduce hiring discrimination, and build a more inclusive labor market.

INTEGRATION OF CHILDCARE PROVISIONS IN LABOR AND SOCIAL POLICIES

Case Study: Japan's Childcare Revolution

Japan faced declining birth rates and workforce shortages due to inadequate childcare support. To address this, the government mandated workplace daycare facilities for companies with over 100 employees and offered subsidies to businesses investing in childcare infrastructure. Additionally, public childcare centers were expanded, reducing daycare waiting lists by 70%. These reforms led to a 72% increase in female workforce participation, demonstrating the impact of childcare support on employment retention. By adopting similar policies, Pakistan can enhance female workforce participation and promote economic growth through a more inclusive labor market.

Implications for Pakistan

A major barrier to female workforce retention in Pakistan is the lack of accessible and affordable childcare. Many working mothers leave their jobs due to caregiving responsibilities, leading to reduced female labor force participation and business productivity losses. Integrating childcare provisions into labor and social policies can mitigate these challenges by ensuring parents do not have to choose between career and family. Mandating on-site childcare in large corporations and government institutions, introducing childcare subsidies, and fostering public-private partnerships will enhance childcare accessibility, support working parents, and contribute to economic and social stability.

Implementation Guidelines

The Ministry of Human Rights, Ministry of Labour and Manpower, and Ministry of Social Welfare should spearhead childcare policy development. Large corporations and government institutions with over 100 employees should be required to establish on-site daycare facilities, with tax incentives provided to businesses investing in these services. This approach, successfully implemented in countries like France and Japan, has led to higher female labor participation and improved workplace productivity.

To reduce the financial burden on families, the Ministry of Human Resource Development and Ministry of Social Welfare should introduce childcare subsidies, prioritizing low-income households. Financial assistance will ensure greater access to quality early childhood education and prevent affordability barriers from limiting workforce participation.

For SMEs, the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) and Chambers of Commerce and Industry should facilitate shared childcare funding models. SME clusters can pool resources to establish shared daycare centers in industrial zones, IT parks, and business districts. Inspired by Brazil's Programa Creche Para Todos, which subsidizes employer-led childcare initiatives, this model would make childcare more cost-effective while supporting workforce retention. By implementing these measures, Pakistan can create a more family-friendly labor market, driving both social and economic progress.

TECHNOLOGY-DRIVEN INNOVATIONS TO EMPOWER ADOLESCENT GIRLS

Case Study: Technovation Girls – A Global EdTech Initiative

Technovation Girls is a global nonprofit initiative that empowers adolescent girls through hands-on training in mobile app development, artificial intelligence, and entrepreneurship. Operating in over 100 countries, the program combines online and in-person learning with mentorship from women professionals in STEM. Participants identify community problems and design tech-based solutions, fostering innovation and leadership. In regions such as sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, this initiative has significantly improved girls' confidence, digital literacy, and career aspirations—especially among those with limited access to formal education or career guidance.

Implications for Pakistan

- **Bridging the Digital Gender Divide:** Digital learning and mentorship platforms can bridge Pakistan's gender gap in education and technology access, particularly in underserved regions.
- Expanding the Scope of Family-Friendly Policies: Corporate support for such initiatives—through funding, digital tools, and employee volunteerism—can embed adolescent empowerment within broader family-friendly frameworks.
- Reducing Early Dropouts and Improving Employability: Exposure to career pathways and life skills can delay early marriage, reduce dropout rates, and prepare girls for workforce participation.
- Positioning Businesses as Champions of Inclusion: Companies that integrate adoles-
- cent-focused programs into their CSR and marketing strategies can enhance brand equity while contributing to social impact.

Implementation Guidelines

- **Technology-Enabled Learning Platforms:** Companies can partner with edtech firms to offer online courses or certifications, enhancing girls' skills and employability as part of FFP.
- Personalized Learning Paths Using AI: Use artificial intelligence to create tailored educational content based on girls' abilities and interests.
- Virtual Reality Career Exploration: Provide virtual reality experiences to expose girls to career options, broadening their horizons and building the trust that due to FFP, they will be enabled for employability.
- **Mobile Applications for Empowerment:** Develop mobile apps offering information on reproductive health, safety, and empowerment as part of FFP.
- **Blockchain for Transparent Scholarships:** Use blockchain to ensure transparency in distributing scholarships or financial aid for girls' education; companies can play an instrumental role in this.
- Mentorship Through Digital Tools: Connect girls with successful women professionals via video conferencing for guidance.
- Social Media for Awareness and Community Building: Leverage social media to raise awareness about girls' rights and build supportive communities. Companies can also make this part of their marketing strategy.
- **Data-Driven Policy Making:** Implement data analytics to understand girls' needs and tailor company policies accordingly.
- Enhanced After-School Care with Digital Content: Enhance after-school care to include leadership training, vocational skills, and health education for girls.
- Company-Sponsored Initiatives for Girls' Education: Support STEM clubs or coding classes to promote girls' education and empowerment.

By integrating emerging technologies into family-friendly policies, Pakistan can create scalable and inclusive solutions that empower adolescent girls and prepare them for participation in a future-ready economy.

Family-Friendly Workplace Policies in Pakistan I Recommendations 100

CULTURAL BARRIERS TO PARENTAL LEAVE ADOPTION

Case Study: Finland's Cultural Shift in Parental Leave Adoption

Finland has successfully transformed its parental leave system by challenging traditional gender roles and normalizing shared childcare responsibilities. Historically, caregiving was seen as solely a mother's duty, but through policy reforms, national awareness campaigns, and workplace initiatives, Finland reshaped societal attitudes. Legislative changes introduced equal parental leave quotas, ensuring that fathers had dedicated, non-transferable leave days, which encouraged more men to take time off. Media campaigns featuring male role models, along with strong employer policies, further reduced stigma around paternal caregiving. As a result, Finland has experienced higher female workforce retention, improved child development outcomes, and greater gender equality. The country's approach demonstrates that legislative measures alone are insufficient unless complemented by cultural transformation efforts that actively promote shared childcare responsibilities.

Implications for Pakistan

Pakistan's deeply ingrained cultural norms discourage men from taking paternity leave, reinforcing workplace discrimination against women and limiting their workforce participation. A cultural shift, alongside policy reforms, is essential to normalize shared caregiving, reduce stigma around paternity leave, and increase women's economic contributions. Encouraging men to take parental leave will improve female workforce retention, boost economic productivity, and enhance child development outcomes. Additionally, aligning with global best practices on parental leave will improve Pakistan's ranking in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index and attract foreign investment by signaling a commitment to workforce welfare and gender equality.

Implementation Guidelines

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) should launch a national media campaign showcasing real-life stories of fathers on parental leave, leveraging television, radio, and social media to challenge gender norms. The Ministry of Religious Affairs should engage scholars and community leaders to promote paternal involvement through mosque sermons, workshops, and faith-based materials.

At the workplace level, the Ministry of Labor and Manpower should advocate for mandatory paternity leave, with the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) providing tax incentives for family-friendly policies. HR departments should implement awareness programs and recognition initiatives. To ensure policy effectiveness, the Ministry of Human Rights and the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics should track paternity leave adoption and recommend labor law amendments, including for informal sector workers.

By integrating media influence, religious endorsement, workplace reforms, and legislative changes, Pakistan can normalize shared caregiving, benefiting families, businesses, and the economy.

ENCOURAGE FLEXIBLE PARENTAL LEAVE FOR CAREER CONTINUITY

Traditional rigid maternity leave structures often force women to take extended career breaks, making workforce reintegration difficult. A more flexible parental leave framework—where leave can be shared between parents—would create greater gender balance in childcare responsibilities while improving female workforce retention.

Case Study: Sweden's Shared Parental Leave Model

Sweden's parental leave policy promotes gender equality by allowing parents to share 480 days (16 months) of paid leave, with 90 non-transferable days reserved for fathers. This "daddy quota" ensures paternal involvement, leading to over 90% of fathers taking leave and reducing the stigma around men as caregivers. Parents can take leave in full or in blocks until the child turns eight, with 80% salary coverage for the first 390 days and a flat rate for the remaining 90 days, preventing financial strain.

This policy has led to one of Europe's highest female workforce participation rates (over 80%), reduced hiring biases, and narrowed the gender pay gap. It has also improved child development outcomes and boosted Sweden's GDP through increased female employment and labor productivity. Implementing similar reforms in Pakistan—such as shared parental leave, flexible work arrangements, and financial incentives—can foster an inclusive workforce, enhance women's economic participation, and challenge traditional childcare norms.

Implications for Pakistan

Pakistan's parental leave policies remain rigid and disproportionately focused on women, reinforcing traditional caregiving roles and limiting workforce participation. Due to the lack of structured flexibility, many women face career stagnation after childbirth, while fathers remain largely absent from caregiving responsibilities. Implementing a more flexible parental leave system could significantly benefit Pakistan's labor market and social fabric. By enabling women to return to work sooner, workforce participation rates among women would increase, reducing the economic losses associated with career breaks. Encouraging fathers to take on caregiving duties would help redistribute childcare responsibilities, easing the burden on women and fostering a more balanced family structure. Additionally, businesses would benefit from higher employee retention rates, as more parents would be able to balance work and family responsibilities without being forced out of the workforce. Research also indicates that greater parental involvement leads to stronger parent-child bonds and improved child development outcomes, ensuring long-term societal benefits.

Implementation Guidelines

• Introduce Transferable Parental Leave

Pakistan should implement a system allowing mothers to transfer a portion of their maternity leave to fathers, encouraging equal caregiving responsibilities and enabling women to return to work earlier. A legal mandate should be introduced to ensure that a minimum portion of leave is reserved for fathers—similar to Sweden's "daddy quota"—to promote paternal involvement.

Establish Phased Return-to-Work Options

New parents should have the opportunity to transition back to full-time employment gradually through structured return-to-work programs. Employers should offer part-time work options or reduced working hours to support this transition. The government can further incentivize businesses to adopt phased return policies through tax benefits or financial support.

• Promote Corporate Engagement and Compliance

To encourage the private sector's participation, the government should introduce a national parental leave compliance framework, ensuring that both public and private employers adhere to progressive leave policies. Companies with exemplary parental leave programs should be recognized through government awards and certifications, encouraging others to follow suit. Collaboration with industry associations, such as the Pakistan Business Council and Chambers of Commerce, will be essential in driving voluntary adoption and ensuring widespread implementation.

By integrating transferable leave, phased return-to-work models, and workplace flexibility laws, Pakistan can foster a more inclusive labor market, support working parents, and create a societal shift toward shared caregiving responsibilities.

ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILDCARE AND COMPLIANCE MONITORING

Case Study: Singapore's Digital Childcare Compliance System

Singapore has successfully implemented a digital monitoring system to track childcare quality across all licensed providers. This system has led to a 98% compliance rate among daycare centers, real-time reporting mechanisms for parents and regulators, and standardized early childhood education and safety protocols. By adopting a national childcare framework with digital compliance monitoring, Pakistan can ensure standardized, high-quality childcare services across the country.

Implications for Pakistan

The absence of standardized childcare regulations has resulted in significant disparities in quality between public and private providers. Without a proper compliance mechanism, there is no accountability to ensure child safety, proper nutrition, and early childhood development programs. A national framework would bridge these gaps, enhance service quality, and build parental trust in daycare services, ultimately supporting working families and improving early childhood outcomes.

Implementation Guidelines

To establish a robust national childcare framework, the Ministry of Human Resource Development and the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training should develop a unified policy framework for childcare centers. This should include national quality benchmarks for early childhood education, safety protocols, and nutrition standards. Licensing requirements should be made mandatory for all daycare providers, including informal childcare setups, to ensure consistency and accountability.

Professional training for childcare providers should be a priority. The National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTC) should introduce mandatory certification programs covering child safety, early childhood development, nutrition, and emergency response protocols. Additionally, the Higher Education Commission (HEC) should integrate early childhood education modules into teacher training programs to enhance the quality of childcare services.

A digital monitoring and compliance system is crucial for ensuring adherence to regulations. The Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication should develop a centralized online portal to track compliance across childcare centers. Al-driven inspections and geo-tagged monitoring systems can be used to maintain safety and quality standards. Parents should also have access to a transparent rating system, allowing them to review daycare centers and report concerns.

By implementing standardized regulations, professional training programs, and digital compliance systems, Pakistan can build a strong, reliable childcare ecosystem that benefits children, working parents, and the economy.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND AWARENESS INITIATIVES

Case Study: The Sure Start Program in the United Kingdom

The Sure Start program in the United Kingdom was developed to raise parental awareness of the importance of structured childcare. This initiative provided workshops, school-based education programs, and direct community engagement to inform parents about the benefits of regulated daycare centers. Additionally, the program certified informal caregivers, ensuring they met national quality and safety standards. The initiative successfully increased parental confidence in formal childcare services, leading to higher enrollment rates and improved childhood learning outcomes.

Implications for Pakistan

Pakistan faces a significant gap in parental awareness about the advantages of formal childcare. Many families continue to rely on untrained domestic workers or informal caregivers due to concerns over daycare affordability and safety. This negatively impacts child development and limits women's participation in the workforce. A nationwide campaign similar to the Sure Start program could help reshape perceptions of formal childcare services and increase trust in regulated daycare centers.

Implementation Guidelines

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, in partnership with the Ministry of Education, should launch mass media campaigns highlighting the benefits of structured childcare. Schools and local community centers should conduct awareness sessions for parents, incorporating evidence-based data on early childhood education benefits. NGOs, such as Shirkatgah and the Aurat Foundation, can support these initiatives by training informal caregivers and advocating for standardized daycare regulations. Private daycare operators should collaborate with the government to offer community workshops and open-house sessions to showcase their facilities and build parental trust.

SCALING WORKPLACE DAYCARE TO BOOST FEMALE WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION

Case Study: Bangladesh's Workplace Daycare Expansion

Bangladesh introduced government-supported workplace daycare facilities to address low female workforce retention rates. Participating companies experienced a 50% increase in female workforce retention, along with higher employee satisfaction and productivity. The initiative was scaled across multiple provinces, strengthening Bangladesh's national childcare infrastructure and promoting economic inclusion.

Implications for Pakistan

A significant proportion of Pakistani women leave the workforce due to childcare responsibilities. Implementing a workplace daycare policy similar to Bangladesh's would enable women to remain active in the economy, increase gender diversity in the workforce, and boost overall productivity. Ensuring that companies provide childcare support would make employment more accessible for mothers and enhance job retention rates for skilled female professionals.

Implementation Guidelines

The Ministry of Labour & Manpower, in coordination with Provincial Labour Departments, should introduce a mandatory workplace daycare policy for companies with 50 or more employees. Businesses should be required to establish on-site childcare centers or offer childcare stipends to working parents. The government should provide financial grants to corporations that proactively set up workplace daycare centers, particularly in sectors with high female employment, such as textiles, healthcare, education, and banking. A compliance monitoring system should be introduced to ensure corporate adherence to childcare policies.

IMPLEMENTING A NATIONAL DIGITAL CHILDCARE COMPLIANCE SYSTEM

Case Study: Singapore's Digital Childcare Compliance System

Singapore has developed a nationally integrated digital monitoring system to ensure high-quality childcare services across all licensed daycare centers. This system includes real-time reporting mechanisms, allowing both parents and regulators to monitor compliance levels, safety protocols, and curriculum adherence. As a result, Singapore has achieved a 98% compliance rate across its childcare facilities, ensuring standardized early childhood education nationwide.

Implications for Pakistan

Pakistan's lack of a centralized childcare monitoring system results in uneven quality standards, unregulated daycare centers, and safety risks for children. A digital compliance framework would enhance transparency, enforce national childcare regulations, and provide real-time oversight to ensure consistent quality across all daycare facilities. Additionally, parents would have access to real-time ratings and compliance updates, empowering them to make informed decisions about childcare services.

Implementation Guidelines

To establish a national digital childcare compliance system, the Ministry of Information Technology & Telecommunication should collaborate with the Ministry of Human Resource Development and Provincial Education Departments to develop a centralized childcare registry. All daycare centers should be digitally registered, with mandatory compliance reporting integrated into the system. Advanced Al-driven monitoring tools should be deployed to track operational standards, staffing ratios, and child safety measures. Additionally, a mobile application should be introduced for parents to access real-time compliance data, submit feedback, and report violations. The National Database & Registration Authority (NADRA) can assist in securing digital records and ensuring data integrity.

For the Private Sector (Corporates)

INVESTMENT IN INFRASTRUCTURE

Case Study: Australia's Consortium Childcare Model

Australia has successfully implemented consortium-based childcare centers, where multiple companies within a business district co-fund and share childcare facilities. These centers operate as cost-effective solutions, reducing the financial burden on individual companies while ensuring high-quality early childhood care. The model has led to higher female workforce retention, improved employee satisfaction, and increased productivity across participating organizations.

Implications for Pakistan

In Pakistan, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and businesses within industrial zones often lack the resources to establish standalone childcare facilities. A consortium model, where multiple businesses co-fund and share a centrally located daycare, can provide a sustainable and affordable solution. This approach can increase female workforce participation, particularly in IT, textile, and banking sectors, while promoting inclusive workplace policies.

Implementation Guidelines

The Ministry of Commerce and Pakistan Business Council (PBC) should develop incentive programs for businesses to form childcare consortiums within major commercial hubs such as Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad. The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) should offer tax incentives to encourage private-sector participation. The Ministry of Labor and Manpower, in collaboration with the Pakistan Chamber of Commerce, should establish regulatory guidelines to ensure quality standards and equitable cost-sharing mechanisms among participating companies. Additionally, private developers and real estate firms constructing office complexes should be encouraged to integrate shared childcare spaces into their projects, making childcare infrastructure a standard corporate facility.

POLICY ENHANCEMENTS

Case Study: Germany's Flexible Work Policies

Germany has been a pioneer in implementing family-friendly workplace policies, including hybrid work models, adjusted shift patterns, and remote work options. Under the Part-Time and Fixed-Term Employment Act, employees can request flexible working arrangements to accommodate childcare needs. This policy has led to higher workforce retention, reduced absenteeism, and improved productivity, particularly among working parents.

Implications for Pakistan

In Pakistan, rigid work schedules often create barriers for working parents, particularly mothers, leading to career disruptions and lower workforce participation. Implementing hybrid models, flexible hours, and remote work policies can help retain skilled employees, increase workplace inclusivity, and boost overall productivity.

Implementation Guidelines

The Ministry of Labor and Manpower, in collaboration with the Pakistan Business Council (PBC) and industry associations, should draft legal frameworks encouraging flexible work arrangements. Employers should be incentivized through tax benefits provided by the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to adopt family-friendly policies. The Ministry of IT and Telecommunications should facilitate technological infrastructure development, ensuring remote work feasibility for businesses across various sectors.

POLICY AWARENESS AND WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY

Case Study: Unilever's Parental Leave Transparency Initiative

Unilever introduced a policy transparency framework ensuring all employees had easy access to parental leave policies, flexible work options, and post-maternity returnship programs. This resulted in higher utilization rates of benefits and improved retention of working mothers.

Implications for Pakistan

In Pakistan, many employees—particularly women—are unaware of their parental leave entitlements, leading to underutilization of benefits and higher post-maternity attrition rates. A lack of clear communication fosters uncertainty, discouraging women from remaining in the workforce after childbirth.

Implementation Guidelines

Companies should integrate parental leave policies into employee handbooks, onboarding programs, and HR portals. Regular awareness sessions, webinars, and one-on-one consultations with HR teams should be conducted to ensure employees fully understand their rights. A dedicated Parental Leave Helpdesk should be established to address employee concerns and guide them through the leave application process. Corporations should also explore gradual return-to-work models, offering part-time schedules or remote work options for new parents.

ADDRESSING WORKFORCE ATTRITION: RETURNSHIP AND RETENTION POST-CHILDBIRTH

Case Study: Deloitte's Returnship Program

Deloitte introduced structured returnship programs providing phased work re-entry, mentorship, and upskilling opportunities for employees returning after parental leave. This resulted in an 80% retention rate for women post-maternity.

Implications for Pakistan

Pakistani corporations experience high attrition rates among women post-childbirth, primarily due to lack of structured reintegration programs and limited workplace flexibility. This not only results in talent loss but also discourages younger women from pursuing long-term careers.

Implementation Guidelines

Companies should introduce returnship programs that provide phased reintegration, skill refreshers, and dedicated mentors for employees re-entering the workforce post-maternity. Performance metrics should be established to measure retention rates one year after child-birth, ensuring the effectiveness of these initiatives. HR teams should implement "Stay Interviews" during maternity leave to understand concerns and facilitate a smoother return. Additionally, businesses should incentivize managers to support returnees by incorporating diversity and retention KPIs into leadership performance evaluations.

REVISING STIPEND RATES FOR CHILDCARE IN CORPORATES

Case Study: Unilever India's Enhanced Childcare Support

Unilever India recognized that inadequate childcare stipends discouraged parents—especially women—from returning to work. In response, the company increased childcare allowances to align with the actual cost of quality daycare services, ensuring affordability for employees and discouraging reliance on informal or underage caregivers. This led to higher workforce retention, improved productivity, and greater gender diversity in leadership roles.

Implications for Pakistan

In Pakistan, corporate childcare stipends currently range between PKR 5,000 to PKR 20,000, which is below the national minimum wage. This financial gap forces many families to opt for cheaper, informal childcare options, often employing underage workers or untrained caregivers. The result is not only child labor exploitation but also substandard childcare, discouraging working parents—particularly mothers—from returning to the workforce after childbirth. Without competitive childcare stipends, female workforce participation will continue to suffer, further widening gender disparities in employment.

Implementation Guidelines

Corporations should revise childcare stipends to reflect the real cost of quality daycare services, ensuring they align with the minimum wage set by the Government of Pakistan. A structured tiered stipend system can be introduced, where support varies based on employee salary brackets, ensuring equitable access to childcare benefits.

Businesses should also partner with high-quality daycare providers to negotiate corporate discount rates, ensuring employees receive subsidized childcare without resorting to underage or unqualified caregivers. Companies can work with the Ministry of Human Rights, the Ministry of Labour and Manpower, and SMEDA to ensure stipend policies prevent child labor and promote ethical childcare employment.

Additionally, corporations should explore tax incentives for childcare stipends, allowing businesses to offset costs while ensuring fair wages for childcare providers. By increasing childcare stipends to realistic levels, companies can reduce child labor, improve employee retention, and foster a more inclusive, gender-equitable workforce.

SWEDEN'S INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE PROGRAMS

Case Study: Unilever India's Enhanced Childcare Support

Sweden mandates managerial training programs focused on unconscious bias, gender equity, and family-friendly workplace practices. These initiatives have successfully normalized parental leave, increased managerial support for working parents, and fostered an inclusive corporate culture.

Implications for Pakistan

Many Pakistani workplaces still operate with traditional mindsets that discourage family-friendly policies. Without managerial buy-in, efforts to implement parental leave or flexible work policies remain ineffective. A structured training and accountability system can drive cultural change, ensuring that policies are actively supported and enforced.

Implementation Guidelines

The Ministry of Human Rights, in collaboration with the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) and HR associations such as the Pakistan Society of Human Resource Management (PSHRM), should develop mandatory managerial training programs on workplace inclusivity and parental support policies. Organizations should establish clear KPIs for tracking policy adoption, ensuring managers are held accountable for fostering an inclusive workplace environment.

DATA TRACKING AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Case Study: UK's HR Analytics for Policy Optimization

The UK leverages HR analytics systems to monitor parental leave uptake, employee retention, absenteeism, and workplace satisfaction. Insights from this data have enabled businesses to refine family-friendly policies and enhance employee engagement.

Implications for Pakistan

In Pakistan, most companies lack structured data tracking mechanisms, leading to poor policy evaluation and low adoption rates. Implementing HR analytics can help organizations assess the impact of childcare policies, ensuring continuous improvement and better workforce planning.

Implementation Guidelines

The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, in collaboration with the Ministry of Labor and Manpower, should mandate data collection on parental leave and flexible work policy adoption. Organizations should integrate HR analytics platforms to track policy effectiveness and employee feedback. The Pakistan Software Export Board (PSEB) and leading HR technology firms should develop localized HR analytics solutions, enabling companies to measure and optimize workplace policies effectively.

CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY: CORPORATE-LED VACCINATION DRIVES

Case Study: Tata Group's Workplace Vaccination Programs (India)

Tata Group partnered with local health agencies to provide on-site vaccination drives for employees and their families, offering flexible schedules, digital reminders, and workplace-based immunization sessions. This increased vaccine uptake, reduced absenteeism due to illness, and improved overall workforce health.

Implications for Pakistan

Many working parents in Pakistan struggle to access routine immunizations for their children due to rigid healthcare timings and long travel distances. By facilitating workplace vaccination drives, corporations can reduce disease outbreaks, enhance employee well-being, and improve overall productivity.

Implementation Guidelines

Corporations should collaborate with the Ministry of National Health Services and private healthcare providers to set up on-site vaccination camps at offices, factories, and industrial zones. Flexible scheduling, such as weekend or evening slots, should be introduced to accommodate shift workers. Digital platforms can be leveraged to send automated vaccination reminders to employees, ensuring follow-ups for booster shots. By incorporating workplace vaccination programs into employee wellness initiatives, businesses can enhance workforce health while demonstrating corporate social responsibility.

For Schools

AFTER-SCHOOL CARE AND NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Case Study: Singapore's MOE Kindergartens

Singapore's Ministry of Education (MOE) Kindergartens, established in 2014, provide affordable early education and after-school care services, ensuring children receive structured learning, homework assistance, recreational activities, and nutritious meals. These programs support working parents by offering extended childcare hours while promoting children's cognitive and physical development.

Implications for Pakistan

Pakistan can benefit from structured after-school care and nutrition programs to support working parents and enhance child well-being. Many low-income and middle-class families lack access to safe, supervised environments for children after school hours. Integrating homework assistance, recreational activities, and nutrition programs into after-school care can improve student outcomes and provide relief for working parents.

Implementation Guidelines

The Ministry of Education, in collaboration with private schools and corporate sponsors, should establish school-based aftercare programs offering structured educational and recreational activities. The Pakistan Business Council (PBC) can encourage corporate sponsorships for after-school initiatives, particularly in low-income areas. To ensure nutrition integration, NGOs such as Akhuwat and Saylani should partner with schools to provide nutritious meal programs within these services. The Higher Education Commission (HEC) can involve universities in developing volunteer-led after-school programs, where students mentor and support schoolchildren.

For Childcare Providers

ADDRESSING STUNTING AND NUTRITION IN DAYCARE CENTERS

Case Study: Hindustan Unilever's Annapurna Program

Hindustan Unilever launched the Annapurna Nutrition Program to combat child malnutrition by providing fortified meals in workplace daycare centers. The company collaborated with nutritionists and government health bodies to develop meal plans rich in essential vitamins and minerals. This initiative improved child health outcomes, reduced absenteeism among working parents, and enhanced employee satisfaction.

Implications for Pakistan

With over 40% of Pakistani children suffering from stunting, corporate daycare centers often lack proper nutritional programs due to cost constraints and weak regulations. Poor childhood nutrition leads to long-term cognitive and physical development issues, which ultimately reduce future workforce productivity. If corporate daycare centers do not address this challenge, they risk perpetuating malnutrition cycles and failing to support working parents effectively.

Implementation Guidelines

Daycare Centres should implement standardized meal plans, developed in consultation with the Ministry of Health, the National Nutrition Program, and leading pediatric nutritionists. Meals should include fortified foods to ensure adequate intake of iron, protein, and essential micronutrients.

Businesses can partner with reputable food suppliers to provide subsidized, nutritionally balanced meals for children in corporate daycare services. Additionally, companies should conduct regular health check-ups and growth monitoring in collaboration with health authorities and NGOs like the Pakistan Pediatric Association.

To promote long-term impact, corporates should integrate nutrition awareness sessions for employees, educating working parents on childhood dietary needs. By prioritizing nutrition in daycare centers, businesses can enhance employee well-being, improve child health outcomes, and contribute to a more productive workforce.

Alternative Childcare Models for Underserved Regions CONSORTIUM DAYCARES: EMPLOYER-SUPPORTED CHILDCARE

Case Study: Canada's Consortium Daycare Model

In Canada, consortium daycares are employer-supported childcare centers jointly funded by multiple businesses within the same industrial or commercial zone. These daycares provide cost-effective childcare solutions for employees, reducing financial burdens on individual employers while ensuring high-quality childcare services. This model has been particularly successful in manufacturing hubs and business districts, allowing working parents to access childcare near their workplaces.

Implications for Pakistan

Consortium daycares can be a viable solution for Pakistan's industrial zones and commercial hubs, particularly in cities like Karachi, Lahore, and Faisalabad, where textile and manufacturing industries employ large numbers of female workers. By sharing operational costs, businesses can provide affordable childcare without bearing the full financial burden individually. This model can enhance female workforce retention and productivity, particularly in export-driven industries.

Implementation Guidelines

The Ministry of Industries & Production, in collaboration with the Pakistan Business Council (PBC) and provincial labour departments, should introduce incentives for consortium daycare development in industrial zones. Employers participating in consortium daycare models should receive tax incentives from the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR). The Chambers of Commerce and industrial associations should facilitate partnerships between businesses to co-fund and operate childcare centers, ensuring affordability and quality standards through centralized training programs.

MOBILE CHILDCARE UNITS: BRINGING CHILDCARE TO REMOTE AREAS

Case Study: Mobile Childcare Units in South Africa

South Africa's SmartStart program includes mobile childcare units, which bring early childhood education and daycare services to remote areas. These units are equipped with trained caregivers, educational materials, and basic healthcare services. The mobility of these centers ensures that children in rural and informal settlements receive essential early learning opportunities despite infrastructure limitations.

Implications for Pakistan

Mobile childcare units can be highly effective in Pakistan's rural regions, disaster-prone areas, and informal settlements where access to formal childcare facilities is limited. These units can serve as an interim solution in regions with high seasonal labor migration, ensuring children receive continuous care and early education.

Implementation Guidelines

The Ministry of Education and provincial social welfare departments should collaborate with NGOs and donor agencies to establish mobile childcare programs in underserved regions. The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) can integrate mobile childcare units into relief efforts in disaster-hit areas. To ensure sustainability, the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) and international donors such as UNICEF and the World Bank should provide financial support and operational expertise. Partnerships with local transport services should be explored to develop cost-effective mobile units, with periodic monitoring to ensure quality care and child safety.

COMMUNITY-BASED CHILDCARE CENTERS: LOCALIZED, AFFORDABLE SOLUTIONS

Case Study: Community-Based Childcare Centers in Nepal

Nepal's Early Childhood Development (ECD) Centers are community-based childcare facilities managed by local women's groups, NGOs, and municipal governments. These centers provide low-cost childcare services, particularly in rural areas where formal daycare options are scarce. Community involvement ensures cultural relevance, local ownership, and financial sustainability through shared contributions.

Implications for Pakistan

Community-based childcare centers can provide an affordable and scalable solution for Pakistan's rural and peri-urban areas, where formal daycare services are limited. These centers can be integrated into existing Basic Health Units (BHUs) or community centers, ensuring accessibility for working mothers and promoting early childhood education.

Implementation Guidelines

The Ministry of Social Welfare and local government bodies should facilitate the establishment of community-based childcare centers by providing regulatory support and seed funding. The Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) can introduce subsidies for low-income families using these services. Local NGOs and women's cooperatives should be encouraged to manage operations, ensuring culturally sensitive and sustainable childcare solutions. Additionally, corporate CSR programs and international donors such as the World Bank and UNICEF should be engaged to fund training and infrastructure development, ensuring quality service provision.

EXPANDING PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS (PPPS) FOR AFFORDABLE CHILDCARE

Case Study: Kenya's Kidogo Social Franchise Model

Kenya's Kidogo initiative utilizes a hybrid model, combining public-private partnerships (PPPs), NGO support, and social franchising to expand access to quality childcare. The government provides regulatory oversight and funding, while private enterprises and NGOs deliver training and operational expertise. The model ensures affordability while maintaining service quality, particularly in low-income urban areas.

Implications for Pakistan

A hybrid childcare model in Pakistan can leverage PPPs, NGO collaborations, and social franchising to ensure affordable and high-quality daycare services. This multi-stakeholder approach can be particularly beneficial in peri-urban and rural regions, where a lack of formal childcare facilities hinders women's workforce participation. By combining government funding, private sector efficiency, and NGO-led training programs, Pakistan can create a sustainable childcare ecosystem.

Implementation Guidelines

The Ministry of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives and the Board of Investment should establish regulatory frameworks and funding mechanisms to encourage hybrid child-care models. The Public-Private Partnership Authority and provincial governments should develop PPP agreements with NGOs and private childcare providers to ensure financial viability and operational efficiency. International organizations like the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Bank should provide technical support and financial assistance for capacity-building programs. The Pakistan Business Council and corporate sector CSR initiatives should be encouraged to invest in hybrid childcare models as part of their employee welfare and community development strategies. By integrating government support, private sector investment, and NGO expertise, Pakistan can create a robust childcare system that enhances women's workforce participation and supports child development.

LEVERAGING PPP MODELS TO SCALE CHILDCARE ACCESSIBILITY IN PAKISTAN

Case Study: Brazil's Programa Creche Para Todos (Daycare for All Program)

Brazil's Programa Creche Para Todos is a successful PPP initiative that funds private daycare centers to provide low-cost childcare services for working-class families. Supported by municipal governments and private institutions, the program has significantly expanded affordable childcare slots, increasing access to early childhood education for low-income families across urban and rural areas.

Implications for Pakistan

Pakistan's Punjab Daycare Fund has demonstrated potential but remains limited in scale. Expanding this model into a national PPP initiative would enable the government and private sector to co-finance daycare centers, ensuring financial sustainability and affordability. The success of Brazil's PPP model suggests that private-sector investment, when coupled with government subsidies, can significantly increase the number of childcare facilities and improve early childhood learning outcomes.

Implementation Guidelines

The Ministry of Planning, Development & Reform should develop policies that provide financial incentives, such as tax exemptions and grants, for businesses that establish workplace daycare centers. The private sector, particularly multinational corporations and large employers, should be encouraged to co-invest in childcare infrastructure through CSR initiatives. The government should subsidize operational costs for private daycare providers in the initial years, while businesses should invest in childcare infrastructure. Regulatory bodies, such as the Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA), should enforce quality assurance standards in PPP-led daycare centers. Development finance institutions, such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, can provide funding support for pilot projects and long-term childcare expansion initiatives.

The Ministry of Commerce, in collaboration with the FBR and the Ministry of Planning, Development & Reform, should establish a public-private cost-sharing model. Additionally, NGOs specializing in early childhood education should be encouraged to operate government-subsidized daycare centers in low-income and underserved areas. A formal PPP framework should be introduced to ensure long-term sustainability and efficient resource allocation.

NGO AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISE COLLABORATION

Case Study: Bangladesh's BRAC Early Childhood Development Program

BRAC, one of the world's largest NGOs, has successfully implemented early childhood development (ECD) initiatives in Bangladesh by partnering with local social enterprises. Through its Play Labs program, BRAC provides affordable, community-based childcare services, integrating play-based learning to improve cognitive and emotional development. The initiative collaborates with international organizations like UNICEF and UN Women, securing funding and ensuring service quality through standardized training and monitoring mechanisms. By leveraging partnerships with private enterprises and international donors, BRAC has expanded access to quality childcare services in low-income communities.

Implications for Pakistan

Pakistan can replicate BRAC's model by encouraging NGOs to collaborate with social enterprises in developing community-based childcare centers. This approach can enhance access to affordable, high-quality childcare for low-income families, particularly in urban slums and rural areas where formal daycare options are limited. By integrating best practices from international organizations like UNICEF, NGOs can enhance service quality, while partnerships with private entities can secure funding and ensure long-term sustainability.

Implementation Guidelines

The Ministry of Social Welfare and the Ministry of Education should develop policies that support NGO-led childcare initiatives, integrating them into national early childhood development programs. The Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy and provincial social welfare departments should facilitate partnerships between NGOs and social enterprises to ensure standardized training, funding support, and service quality. Additionally, international donor agencies such as UNICEF, UN Women, and the World Bank should provide grants and technical assistance to NGOs implementing childcare initiatives. To further incentivize private sector involvement, the Pakistan Business Council and corporate CSR initiatives should encourage corporate sponsorships and employer-supported childcare programs, ensuring sustainable funding and long-term impact.

FRANCHISING AND COOPERATIVE MODELS

Case Study: Brazil's Criança Feliz Program & Mondragon Cooperative Model, Spain

Brazil's Criança Feliz program integrates a franchise-like approach to early childhood services, using a network of trained home visitors to provide consistent and high-quality childcare support. The program operates through structured training modules and standardized service delivery, ensuring uniform quality across different regions.

In contrast, Spain's Mondragon Cooperative Corporation has successfully developed cooperative childcare centers where providers share resources, training, and decision-making. This reduces operational costs while maintaining high service standards. These cooperative models empower childcare providers by creating economies of scale, enhancing professional development, and ensuring long-term sustainability.

Implications for Pakistan

Franchise-based childcare centers in Pakistan can standardize service quality while allowing local entrepreneurs to expand childcare facilities under a trusted brand. Cooperative models can empower small-scale childcare providers by pooling resources, offering professional training, and ensuring financial sustainability. These approaches can help address Pakistan's childcare deficit, particularly in areas where private sector investment in childcare remains low.

Implementation Guidelines

The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) and the Ministry of Commerce should develop business models and financial incentives to encourage childcare franchising and cooperative models. The provincial labour departments should create accreditation programs to ensure uniform training and service standards across franchise-based childcare centers. To support entrepreneurs, the Pakistan Microfinance Network and commercial banks should offer subsidized loans and grants for establishing childcare cooperatives. The Pakistan Franchise Association and Chambers of Commerce should promote childcare franchising as an investment opportunity by providing advisory services, marketing support, and centralized training programs to ensure consistency in service quali-

Integrated Strategies Across All Stakeholders



Institutional Collaboration

- Foster coordinated efforts among government, corporates, educational institutions, daycare centres, and NGOs.
- Conduct regular childcare landscape analyses to monitor progress and evolving needs.

Data-Driven Approaches

- Use evidence-based methods, including regular surveys and social dialogues, to shape and evaluate family-friendly policies.
- Develop standardized HR analytics systems to track policy impact, employee retention, and overall productivity.

Awareness and Communication

- Initiate campaigns and share success stories that highlight the benefits of family-friendly policies, reinforcing their economic and social value.
- Organize workshops and seminars featuring case studies from leading organizations to guide the adoption of best practices.

Sustainable Financial Models

- Leverage public-private partnerships to secure tax incentives, subsidies, and other financial resources to support ongoing childcare initiatives.
- Institutionalize measurement frameworks to monitor return on investment (ROI) through improved retention and productivity metrics.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this report underscores the critical importance of family-friendly policies and workplace childcare in fostering economic growth, enhancing gender equality, and improving workforce retention in Pakistan. The analysis has revealed significant gaps in current policy frameworks and childcare infrastructure, while also highlighting the impact of cultural norms on caregiving responsibilities. Key insights point to the need for a comprehensive, multi-stakeholder approach that includes legislative reforms, robust public—private partnerships, and targeted investments in both infrastructure and managerial training.

By expanding access to quality childcare—through on-site facilities, subsidized programs, and standardized care practices—policymakers and industry leaders can not only support the immediate needs of working parents but also drive long-term socio-economic benefits. Enhanced regulatory oversight, coupled with data-driven strategies and continuous feedback mechanisms, will be vital in ensuring that these interventions are both effective and sustainable.

Ultimately, the successful implementation of these recommendations depends on coordinated efforts among all stakeholders: parents, corporates, schools, government agencies, and NGOs. By embracing these strategies, Pakistan can create a more inclusive and resilient labor market that empowers individuals, supports families, and contributes to overall national development (International Labour Organization, 2022; UN Women, 2021).

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Regional Legislations and their Impact

Country	Legislation/Program	Requirements for Corporate Daycare	Impact/Best Practices
India	Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017	Employers with 50+ employees must provide on-site crèche facilities or arrange for nearby facilities.	The act has improved women's workforce participation in major cities, but rural areas face implementation issues.
Bangladesh	Labor Law Amendment (2013)	Mandates on-site crèche facilities for factories employing 40+ women. The Ready-Made Garment (RMG) sector has led the way, establishing crèches in partnership with donors and NGOs like UNICEF.	Decreased absenteeism by over 25% and improved productivity in factories.
Sri Lanka	National Daycare Centre Policy (2016)	Government-subsidized crèches and employer-supported daycare programs encouraged, particularly in the garment industry.	Successful implementation in urban manufacturing hubs like Colombo, but rural expansion remains limited.
Malaysia	Childcare Centre Act (1984)	Large employers (100+ employees) must either provide on-site childcare or partner with external daycare providers.	Companies like Petronas have integrated family-friendly policies, including subsidized daycare.
Vietnam	Labor Law (2020)	Companies employing 100+ workers must provide access to childcare services or financial support for off-site daycare.	Large multinational companies, such as Samsung, have adopted comprehensive childcare services, reducing employee turnover.
Indonesia	Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED) Law	Employers are encouraged, but not mandated, to establish daycare centers.	Few mandates result in limited corporate compliance. NGOs often fill the gaps, particularly in rural regions.
Turkey	Regulation on Workplace Childcare (2013)	Companies with 150+ female employees must provide on-site or near-site daycare facilities.	Corporate daycare facilities have improved workforce retention and reduced absenteeism among female employees, particularly in Istanbul and other urban centers.

Appendix 2a: Survey for Currently Employed Parents

> WHAT IS YOUR GENDER?

o Male

o Female

o Other	○ No○ Maybe, depending on the cost
> WHAT CITY DO YOU LIVE IN?	and the second s
o Karachi	> ARE YOU USING THE AFTER-SCHOOL CHILDCARE
o Lahore	PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL?
o Islamabad	o Yes
o Other	○ No
	o Sometimes
> HOW MANY CHILDREN DO YOU HAVE?	
01	> HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE AFTER-SCHOOL
0 2	CHILDCARE SERVICE?
0 3+	 Very satisfied
	 Somewhat satisfied
> WHAT IS THE AGE RANGE OF YOUR CHILDREN?	○ Neutral
○ 0-1 years	 Dissatisfied
o 2-3 years	 Very dissatisfied
o 4-5 years	.
o 6-7 years	> WHAT WOULD YOU PREFER TO INCLUDE IN
o 8-9 years	AFTER-SCHOOL CARE? (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)?
o 10-11 years	o Lunch
o 12+ years	Transport
> DIFACE DDG///DF TUF 1/44/5/6 OF TUF	 Useful activities
> PLEASE PROVIDE THE NAME/S OF THE	○ Time for rest
SCHOOL/S YOUR CHILDREN CURRENTLY	 Time for homework
ATTEND	A DE VOU CURRENTIVENDU OVER EUL TIME IN
	> ARE YOU CURRENTLY EMPLOYED FULL TIME IN
	THE FORMAL SECTOR (ALL THOSE TYPES OF
	EMPLOYMENT WHICH OFFER REGULAR WAGES
	AND HOURS, WHICH CARRY WITH THEM
> DOES YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL OFFER ANY	EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS, AND ON WHICH INCOME
AFTER-SCHOOL CARE OPTIONS?	TAX IS PAID)?
o Yes	o Yes
o No	o No
O INO	O INO

> WOULD YOU AVAIL OF AFTER-SCHOOL CHILDCARE

IF IT WAS PROVIDED AT AN EXTRA COST?

SECTION A: PARENTS NOT EMPLOYED IN THE FORMAL SECTOR

> WHAT IS YOUR PRIMARY OCCUPATION? (SELECT ONE)

- o Freelancer
- o Small Business Owner
- Homemaker
- o Other

> WHAT ARE YOUR MAIN REASONS FOR CHOOSING THIS? (SELECT UP TO THREE)

- Cultural or family expectations to remain at home!
- o I feel it is important for me to spend these formative years with my child
- Lack of affordable or quality childcare options
- No family support network
- Transportation or commuting challenges
- Flexibility to manage family and caregiving responsibilities
- o Limited access to formal sector jobs
- o Prefer to work independently or be my own boss
- Higher income potential compared to formal employment
- o Other

> IS YOUR DECISION INFLUENCED BY THE LACK OF CHILDCARE OPTIONS?

- Yes, the lack of childcare options is the primary reason I am not employed
- The lack of childcare options is one of the reasons I am not employed
- O No, my decision is not related to childcare options.

> IF PROPER CHILDCARE FACILITIES OR FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES WERE AVAILABLE, WOULD YOU CONSIDER ENTERING OR RETURNING TO THE WORKFORCE?

- O Yes, I would definitely consider it
- O Unsure, it depends on other factors
- O No, my decision is not related to childcare options
- Remote work options
- Stipend for childcare

> WHAT FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES WOULD HELP YOU BETTER MANAGE BOTH WORK AND FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES? (SELECT UP TO THREE)

- On-site or subsidized childcare options
- o Flexible working hours or part-time roles
- Remote work options
- Stipend for childcare
- o Other

SECTION B. PARENTS CURRENTLY EMPLOYED IN THE FORMAL SECTOR

> WHICH SECTOR/INDUSTRY DO YOU WORK IN?

> WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT EMPLOYMENT STATUS?

- o Full time
- o Part time
- o WFH/Remote

> ARE THERE ANY CHILDCARE FACILITIES AVAILABLE TO YOU?

- On-Site Workplace Childcare
- o Subsidized Off-Site Childcare
- O Company Partnership with Local Childcare Centers
- o After-School Programs at School
- On-Site After-School Programs at Workplace
- o Flexible Work Hours for Childcare Needs
- Childcare Stipend or Allowance
- None of the Above, but Other Childcare Arrangements (Please specify)

> IF YOU ARE UTILIZING ANY CHILDCARE SUPPORT, PLEASE SPECIFY THE TYPE OF CARE (PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY):

- On-Site Workplace Childcare
- O Subsidized Off-Site Childcare
- O After-School Program at School
- After-School Care Facility at Workplace
- o Flexible Work Hours to Accommodate Childcare Needs
- o Childcare Stipend or Allowance
- O Support from Older Children in Family
- o Care Provided by Parents/In-Laws
- Other Arrangements (Please specify)

> IF YOU ARE USING EXTERNAL CHILDCARE SERVICES, HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE FOLLOWING ASPECTS:

Timings 1 2 3 4 5 Care Staff 1 2 3 4 5 Nutrition and Meals 1 2 3 4 5

- Learning Activities and Curriculum
- Safety and Cleanliness1 2 3 4 5

> HOW HAS ACCESS TO WORKPLACE CHILDCARE OR AFTER-SCHOOL CARE IMPACTED YOUR ABILITY TO REMAIN EMPLOYED OR RETURN TO WORK?

- Significantly increased my ability to remain employed
- Somewhat improved my ability to stay in the workforce
- No impact on my employment decisions
- Made it more challenging to balance work and family responsibilities
- O I do not have access to these childcare solutions

> WHAT SPECIFIC CHILDCARE CHALLENGES DO YOU FACE? (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)

- Lack of affordable childcare options
- Inflexible childcare hours that do not align with my work schedule
- Limited availability of after-school care for school-going children
- o Poor quality of available childcare services
- Cultural or societal stigma associated with using formal childcare
- O Health and nutrition concern for children
- Transportation challenges
- O I do not face any childcare-related challenges

> WHAT TYPE OF CHILDCARE SUPPORT WOULD BE MOST BENEFICIAL FOR YOUR FAMILY SITUATION? (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)

- o On-site childcare
- o On-site childcare with health and nutrition provided
- Stipends for external childcare providers
- o After-school care for school-going children
- Flexible work schedules
- WFH option

> HOW WOULD BETTER CHILDCARE SOLUTIONS INFLUENCE YOUR DECISION TO STAY WITH YOUR CURRENT EMPLOYER?

- o I would definitely stay longer with my current employer
- I might consider staying longer if the solutions meet my needs
- It would not impact my decision to stay with or leave my employer
- O I am unsure how it would affect my decision

Appendix 2b: Survey for Currently Un-employed Parents

> WHAT IS YOUR GENDER?

- o Male
- o Female
- o Other

> WHAT CITY DO YOU LIVE IN?

- o Karachi
- o Lahore
- o Islamabad
- o Other

> HOW MANY CHILDREN DO YOU HAVE?

- 01
- 02
- 03+

> WHAT IS THE AGE RANGE OF YOUR CHILDREN?

- o 0-2 years
- o 3-5 years
- o 6-12 years
- o 13-18 years

> PLEASE PROVIDE THE NAME/S OF THE SCHOOL/S YOUR CHILDREN CURRENTLY ATTEND

> DOES YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL OFFER ANY AFTER-SCHOOL CARE OPTIONS?

- o Yes
- o No

> ARE YOU USING THE AFTER-SCHOOL CHILDCARE PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL?

- o Yes
- o No
- Sometimes

> HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE AFTER-SCHOOL CHILDCARE SERVICE?

- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Neutral
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

> WHAT WOULD YOU PREFER TO INCLUDE IN AFTER-SCHOOL CARE? (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)?

- o Lunch
- Transport
- Useful activities
- o Time for rest
- O Time for homework

> WOULD YOU AVAIL OF AFTER-SCHOOL CHILDCARE IF IT WAS PROVIDED AT AN EXTRA COST?

- o Yes
- o No
- Maybe, depending on the cost

> WOULD YOU AVAIL OF AFTER-SCHOOL CHILDCARE IF IT WAS PROVIDED AT AN EXTRA COST?

- o Freelance (e.g., writing, graphic design, consulting, etc.
- Own small business (e.g., selling products or services from home)
- o Homemaker

> WHAT ARE YOUR MAIN REASONS FOR CHOOSING THIS? (SELECT UP TO THREE)

- o Cultural or family expectations to remain at homel
- o I feel it is important for me to spend these formative years with my child
- Lack of affordable or quality childcare options
- No family support network
- Transportation or commuting challenges
- Flexibility to manage family and caregiving responsibilities
- Limited access to formal sector jobs
- o Prefer to work independently or be my own boss
- Higher income potential compared to formal employment
- Other

➤ IS YOUR DECISION INFLUENCED BY THE LACK OF CHILDCARE OPTIONS?

- Yes, the lack of childcare options is the primary reason I am not employed
- The lack of childcare options is one of the reasons I am not employed
- O No, my decision is not related to childcare options.

> WHAT FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES WOULD HELP YOU BETTER MANAGE BOTH WORK AND FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES? (SELECT UP TO THREE)

- On-site or subsidized childcare options
- o Flexible working hours or part-time roles
- o Remote work options
- o Stipend for childcare
- o Other

> IF PROPER CHILDCARE FACILITIES OR FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES WERE AVAILABLE WOULD YOU CONSIDER ENTERING OR RETURNING TO THE WORKFORCE?

- O Yes, I would definitely consider it
- Yes, I might consider it depending on the quality of childcare facilities
- O No, I prefer freelancing or working from home
- No, I am not interested in traditional employment at this time
- O Unsure, it depends on other factors

Appendix 3: Corporate Employers Family-Friendly Policies and Childcare Services Questionnaire

> GENDER

- o Male
- o Female
- o Prefer not to say

> CITY

- o Karachi
- o Lahore
- o Islamabad

> IN WHICH INDUSTRY DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION OPERATE?

- Finance & Banking
- Technology & IT Services
- Manufacturing & Production
- o Healthcare & Pharmaceuticals
- o Retail & Consumer Goods
- Education & Training
- o Telecommunications
- o Energy & Utilities
- Hospitality & Tourism
- Media & Entertainment
- o Government & Public Services
- Agriculture & Food ServicesReal Estate & Construction
- o Transportation & Logistics
- o Legal Services
- Nonprofit & NGOs
- Consulting & Professional Services
- o Other

SECTION 1: UNDERSTANDING FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES

> DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION OFFER ANY FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES?

- o Yes
- o No

> HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR ORGANIZATION'S AWARENESS OF FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES?

- o Very High
- o High
- o Moderate
- o Low
- o Very Low

> WHICH FAMILY-FRIENDLY BENEFITS DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION OFFER? (CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY)

- Flexible work arrangements (e.g., work-from-home, part-time, staggered timings, etc.)
- Stipend/subsidy for external childcare
- O After-school care for school-going children
- O None of the above

> REASONS FOR NOT OFFERING FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES (PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)

- Lack of awareness about the benefits of family-friendly policies.
- High implementation costs or budget constraints.
- Concerns about productivity loss or operational disruptions.
- O Lack of demand or perceived need from employees.
- Organizational culture or leadership resistance to change.
- Limited resources or expertise to design and implement such policies.
- Regulatory or legal barriers.
- Focus on other priorities (e.g., business growth, profitability).
- Belief that family-friendly policies are not relevant to our industry.
- o Other

> WHAT WOULD IT TAKE TO CHANGE THIS? (PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

- Increased awareness or education about the benefits of family-friendly policies.
- Financial incentives or subsidies from the government or external organizations.
- Evidence of improved employee retention or productivity from such policies.
- O Stronger advocacy or demand from employees.
- O Leadership training or cultural change initiatives.
- Access to templates, tools, or best practices for implementation.
- Peer pressure or industry standards promoting family-friendly policies.
- o Clearer legal or regulatory guidelines.
- o Other

- > DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION CURRENTLY OFFER ANY INFORMAL SUPPORT FOR EMPLOYEES WITH FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES (E.G., FLEXIBLE HOURS BY REQUEST)?
 - o Yes
 - o No
 - Not sure
- > HAVE EMPLOYEES EVER EXPRESSED A NEED FOR FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES?
 - o Yes
 - o No
 - o Not sure
- > HAS THE ABSENCE OF FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES IMPACTED YOUR ORGANIZATION NEGATIVELY?
 - Minimal impact on employee retention or job satisfaction
 - No impact whatsoever
 - Negative cultural because of lack of any supportive policies
 - Higher attrition post maternity due to no family friendly policies
 - Candidates hesitant to join because of lack of family friendly policies
 - o Other

SECTION 2: IMPLEMENTATION AND OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES

- > WHAT ARE THE MAIN CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES? (CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY)
 - Financial constraints
 - O Lack of senior management buy-in
 - o Cultural resistance within the organization
 - o Gender dynamics or bias iin policy making
 - Logistical constraints (e.g., lack of space or resources)
 - o Limited awareness or understanding of the benefits
 - O Lack of suitable childcare providers
 - Lack of willing or eligible employees to utilize these policies
 - o Complexity of implementation
 - o Other

Perceived Cultural and Gender Barriers

- > WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING CULTURAL AND GENDER BARRIERS DO YOU BELIEVE ARE MOST SIGNIFICANT IN PREVENTING THE ADOPTION OF FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES IN YOUR ORGANIZATION? (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)
 - Traditional views on gender roles in caregiving (e.g., women as primary caregivers)Stigma attached to using flexible work arrangements, particularly for fathers
 - o Perception of excessive policies favoring women
 - Fear of reduced productivity among employees, particularly womenConcerns about fairness in employee benefits
 - O Lack of awareness about the benefits of these policies

SECTION 5: IMPACT OF FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES ON EMPLOYEES

- > WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBES HOW FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES HAVE INFLUENCED EMPLOYEE RETENTION AND OVERALL JOB SATISFACTION IN YOUR ORGANIZATION? (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)
 - o Increased employee retention due to greater work-life balance
 - Higher job satisfaction among employees using flexible work arrangements
 - Reduced turnover among working parents with access to childcare facilities
 - Enhanced employer brand and attractiveness to top talent
 - Minimal impact on employee retention or job satisfaction
 - No impact whatsoever

SECTION 6: MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION

- > WHAT IMPACT HAVE FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES HAD ON YOUR COMPANY'S OVERALL PERFORMANCE AND PRODUCTIVITY?
 - o Significant positive impact
 - Some positive impact
 - O No noticeable impact
 - Negative impact
 - o Unsure

Effectiveness of Family-Friendly Policies

- > HOW DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION MEASURE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ITS FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES? (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)
 - o Employee feedback and satisfaction surveys.
 - Absenteeism rates
 - o Productivity metrics
 - We do not have a specific measurement system in place
 - We do not have a specific measurement system in place

SECTION 7: SUPPORT AND INCENTIVES

Preferred Forms of Government and NGO Support

- > WHAT TYPE OF GOVERNMENT/NGO SUPPORT WOULD MOST ENCOURAGE YOUR ORGANIZATION TO IMPLEMENT MORE FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES? (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)
 - Financial incentives (e.g., tax breaks)
 - Legal mandates or regulations
 - Public recognition and awards
 - o Training and development resources for employees
 - o Partnership opportunities with childcare providers
 - Awareness campaigns to promote the importance of family-friendly policies
 - Access to research and data on the benefits of family-friendly practices
 - o Other

SECTION 8: CULTURAL SHIFTS AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

Level of Support from Senior Management

- > HOW SUPPORTIVE IS SENIOR MANAGEMENT IN YOUR ORGANIZATION TOWARDS IMPLEMENTING FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES?
 - o Extremely supportive
 - Supportive
 - o Neutral
 - Unsupportive
 - Actively resistant

Change Readiness

- > HOW READY IS YOUR ORGANIZATION TO EMBRACE CHANGES IN POLICIES THAT SUPPORT A MORE FAMILY-FRIENDLY WORK ENVIRONMENT?
 - Very ready and proactive
 - Moderately ready, but with some hesitations
 - O Neutral, open to the idea but not taking action
 - o Slightly resistant to change
 - Very opposed to change

SECTION 9: CHILDCARE PROVIDER PARTNERSHIPS

Partnership with Childcare Providers

> DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION CURRENTLY PARTNER WITH ANY EXTERNAL CHILDCARE PROVIDERS TO SUPPORT EMPLOYEES?

- Yes, we have formal partnerships in place
- Yes, but they are informal or ad-hoc partnerships
- O No, we do not have any partnerships
- We are considering it in the future
- o Challenges in Partnering with Childcare Providers

> WHAT ARE THE MAIN CHALLENGES YOUR ORGANIZATION FACES IN PARTNERING WITH CHILDCARE PROVIDERS? (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)

- High costs of partnerships
- o Limited availability of reliable providers
- Lack of provider flexibility in accommodating corporate needs
- o Concerns about the quality of care provided
- Administrative complexities and legal considerations

SECTION 10: CORPORATE POLICY STRATEGY

> DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION HAVE PLANS TO ENHANCE ITS FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES IN THE NEAR FUTURE?

- O Yes, we plan to enhance significantly
- Yes, but only minor enhancements are planned
- O No, we have no plans to enhance currently
- o Unsure

Appendix 4: Parents IDI

OBJECTIVES OF THE INTERVIEW

 Understand the Demand for and Accessibility of Childcare Services:

Explore the types of childcare services you use and why you chose them (e.g., after-school care, full-day care, etc.).

Examine the Impact of Childcare on Workforce Participation:

Understand how having access to child-care services influences your ability to stay employed or return to work after child-birth.

Discuss the Role of Family-Friendly Policies in Supporting Work-Life Balance:

Investigate how flexible work arrangements, family-friendly policies, or employer-supported childcare influence your career decisions.

• Assess the Financial Impact of Childcare Services:

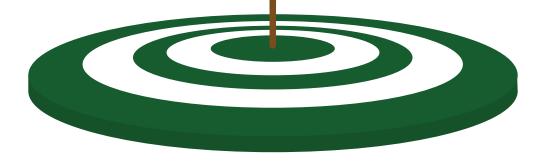
Explore how the cost of childcare services affects your decisions and your ability to access the services you need.

5. Examine Health and Nutrition Concerns:

Understand how health and nutrition programs in childcare influence your decision to use them and your child's well-being.

Explore Re-Entry into the Workforce:

Investigate whether access to adequate childcare or family-friendly policies would influence your decision to re-enter the workforce if you are currently not working.



KEY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Understanding of Family-Friendly Policies and Support

- How familiar are you with the family-friendly policies provided by your employer, such as parental leave, flexible work arrangements, or childcare support? Do you feel that your employer's family-friendly policies meet your needs as a working parent? Why or why not?
- How accessible do you find family-related benefits, such as paid parental leave, subsidized childcare, or flexible work schedules?

2. Work-Life Balance and Family Support

- How do you manage your work responsibilities alongside your family commitments? What strategies or support systems have helped you achieve a balance?
- What challenges do you face in maintaining work-life balance as a working parent?
- How does your employer support you in balancing your work and family responsibilities? Do you feel these
 measures are sufficient?
- Do you feel your family-related responsibilities impact your career advancement? If so, how?

3. Access to Childcare and Related Support

- What childcare options do you currently use (e.g., daycare, nannies, family members), and how accessible and affordable are they?
- Do you feel that your current childcare arrangements are sufficient for your family's needs? Are there gaps in the available childcare services in your community
- What challenges have you faced in finding quality, affordable childcare, especially during work hours?
- How does your employer's support, if any, address the challenges you face in securing or paying for childcare?

4. Utilization of Family-Friendly Policies

- Have you utilized parental leave or flexible work arrangements provided by your employer? If so, what was your experience in terms of ease of access and impact on your work-life balance?
- Were there any barriers that prevented you from using the family-related benefits offered by your employer (e.g., societal stigma, work culture, lack of awareness)?
- Do you feel that the workplace environment supports or hinders your ability to use family-related benefits like parental leave or flexible working hours?
- How would you rate the overall effectiveness of the family-friendly policies in improving your work-life balance and wellbeing as a parent?

5. Gender Equality and Parental Involvement

- Do you feel that both mothers and fathers are encouraged to take equal advantage of parental leave or childcare benefits?
- What cultural or societal barriers, if any, do you feel exist that limit fathers from engaging more in childcare or taking parental leave?
- How have gender roles in society affected your ability to use family-friendly benefits or participate equally in caregiving duties?
- What would help shift the cultural perception of men taking on equal responsibility for childcare and family duties?

6. Challenges in Accessing Family-Friendly Benefits

- What specific challenges have you faced in accessing family-friendly policies or childcare support?
- How do you feel that family-related policies in the workplace or government programs could be improved to better support you as a working parent?
- Have you ever felt that taking family-related benefits might negatively affect your career progression or professional reputation? How so?
- What are the most significant barriers to utilizing family-friendly benefits in your organization, and how can they be addressed?

7. Impact of Family-Friendly Policies on Career and Family Life

- How has your employer's family-friendly policies impacted your career progression and overall satisfaction with your work-life balance?
- Do you feel that the use of family-friendly policies, such as parental leave or flexible work arrangements, has affected your professional image or relationships with colleagues?
- How do you perceive the impact of family-related benefits on your mental and physical well-being, both as a parent and an employee?
- Have you faced challenges in maintaining a career while also managing family commitments? How could workplace policies be improved to better support working parents like you?

8. Support for Non-Traditional Family Structures

- How well do you think current family-friendly policies support different types of families, such as single parents, same-sex couples, or parents caring for elderly relatives?
- What improvements could be made to ensure that all family structures have equal access to childcare support and family-related benefits?
- Do you feel that there is sufficient support for caregivers of elderly relatives or individuals with disabilities within the family-friendly policies offered by your employer or government programs?

9. Cultural Norms and Societal Attitudes

- How do cultural attitudes toward gender roles, childcare, and caregiving influence your decisions to use family-friendly policies?
- Have you encountered societal pressure or judgment when using family-friendly benefits, particularly for fathers?
- What role do you think the government, society, and workplaces can play in challenging and changing perceptions of caregiving responsibilities in Pakistan?
- What cultural shifts would you like to see to make it easier for working parents to take advantage of family-friendly benefits without stigma?

10. Long-Term Needs and Expectations

- What long-term improvements would you like to see in family-friendly policies and childcare support, both in your workplace and within Pakistan's overall policy framework?
- What do you think are the most important changes needed to make work-life balance more achievable for parents in Pakistan?
- How do you think family-friendly policies can evolve to better support future generations of parents in the workforce?
- What type of childcare support do you think would benefit working parents the most in the coming years, especially as the country's demographics and work culture evolve?

11. Feedback on Employer's Family-Friendly Policies

- What feedback would you provide to your employer or the government about family-friendly policies or childcare support that would help improve your experience as a working parent?
- What additional family-related benefits would make a significant difference in your ability to balance work and family commitments more effectively?
- How can the government and employers work together to improve awareness, access, and utilization of family-friendly policies and childcare support?
- Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with childcare services and how they have impacted your ability to balance your work and caregiving responsibilities?

Appendix 5: Corporate IDI

OBJECTIVES OF THE INTERVIEW

Understand the Current Family-Friendly
Policies in Place:

Explore the childcare-related policies and benefits offered by your company, particularly those aimed at supporting working parents.

Examine the Impact of Childcare Support on Workforce Participation:

Investigate how these policies have influenced employee decisions to join, stay, or return to the workforce, particularly among mothers.

Discuss the Role of Family-Friendly Policies
in Employee Retention:

Understand how family-friendly policies help reduce turnover, improve employee satisfaction, and support long-term retention. Explore the Impact of Childcare Services on Gender Equality:

Assess how childcare support helps promote gender equality by enabling both mothers and fathers to share caregiving responsibilities.

Identify Barriers to Implementing Fami
• ly-Friendly Policies:

Explore any challenges your company faces in offering childcare support and family-friendly policies, and how these barriers can be addressed.

Assess the Role of Health and Nutrition Programs in Childcare Services:

Explore how health and nutrition programs integrated into childcare services contribute to workforce participation and productivity.



KEY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Understanding Family-Friendly Policies in Corporate Pakistan

- How would you describe your organization's approach to family-friendly policies, particularly those related to working parents and childcare support?
- What family-friendly benefits (e.g., parental leave, childcare facilities, flexible work arrangements) does your organization offer to employees, and how have these been received?
- How does your organization ensure that these benefits are accessible to all employees, regardless of gender or role?

2. Implementation and Operational Challenges

- What are the primary challenges your organization faces when it comes to implementing family-friendly policies, such as parental leave or subsidized childcare?
- Are there logistical or financial barriers to providing childcare support (e.g., on-site childcare, subsidies, or partnerships with external providers)?
- What operational difficulties do you face when integrating flexible working arrangements or work-from-home policies into your organizational structure?
- How do you balance the business needs and objectives of your organization with the need to offer family-friendly policies to your employees?

3. Societal and Cultural Barriers

- To what extent do societal and cultural norms around gender roles and childcare impact the effectiveness and uptake of family-friendly policies within your organization?
- How do you address traditional perceptions that view caregiving as primarily a woman's responsibility and challenge the stigma around men utilizing paternity leave or other family benefits?
- What cultural barriers have you encountered when promoting family-friendly policies in your workplace, and how have you worked to overcome them?
- How does your organization ensure that both male and female employees feel equally supported in utilizing family-related benefits, and what measures have you taken to encourage more men to take parental leave?

4. Gender Equality and Inclusivity

- How do your organization's family-friendly policies address gender equality, especially in terms of caregiving and parental leave?
- What challenges do you face in ensuring gender-neutral policies are implemented effectively in your organization? Are there disparities in how male and female employees use family-related benefits?
- How does your organization promote equal opportunities for men and women to participate in caregiving responsibilities without facing career penalties or bias?

5. Employee Awareness and Engagement

- What challenges do you face in raising awareness of the family-friendly benefits available to employees, and how do you ensure that employees fully understand the policies in place?
- How do you communicate family-related policies to employees, and what barriers have you encountered in ensuring that employees feel comfortable utilizing these benefits?
- How does your organization encourage employees to use family-friendly benefits, especially those who might feel reluctant to take leave or flexible working arrangements for fear of professional repercussions?

6. Organizational Culture and Policy Effectiveness

- How does the overall corporate culture impact the implementation of family-friendly policies? Are there any internal cultural norms that undermine these policies?
- What resistance have you encountered within your organization when implementing family-friendly policies, particularly from senior leadership or departments where work demands are high?
- How do you measure the success and effectiveness of your family-friendly policies in terms of employee satisfaction, retention, and overall work-life balance?
- What specific outcomes have you observed (e.g., improved employee retention, increased productivity, reduced absenteeism) as a result of family-friendly policies?

7. Balancing Flexibility with Business Needs

- What challenges do you face in maintaining business productivity and meeting organizational goals while offering flexible work arrangements or paid parental leave?
- How does your organization manage the potential perception that employees who use family-related benefits might be less committed or less productive?
- What steps have you taken to ensure that flexible work arrangements (e.g., remote work, flexible hours) do not negatively affect collaboration, team dynamics, or the achievement of business targets?

8. Financial and Logistical Barriers

- What financial challenges do you face in expanding family-friendly policies, such as providing paid parental leave, offering childcare support, or implementing flexible work arrangements?
- How does your organization ensure the sustainability of childcare support programs, such as on-site child care, subsidized childcare, or partnerships with third-party childcare providers?
- What difficulties do you face when allocating budgets for family-friendly initiatives, and how do you prioritize these programs over other financial needs or objectives?

9. Policy Adaptation and Local Context

- How does your organization adapt global or international family-friendly policies to the local context of corporate Pakistan, where cultural and socio-economic factors may differ?
- What challenges have you encountered in tailoring family-friendly policies to meet the specific needs of employees in various regions or sectors within Pakistan?
- How does your organization address the unique challenges faced by employees from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, such as low-income workers or those working in rural areas, who may have limited access to childcare?

10. Measuring Impact and Gathering Feedback

- How does your organization track the success and impact of family-friendly policies on employee satisfaction, productivity, and retention?
- What metrics or key performance indicators (KPIs) do you use to measure the effectiveness of your family support programs, and how do you use this data to refine policies?
- What methods do you use to collect feedback from employees regarding the accessibility and impact of family-related benefits, and how do you address concerns or issues raised?

11. Collaboration with External Stakeholders

- How does your organization collaborate with external organizations, such as NGOs, government agencies, or other corporations, to strengthen or improve family-friendly policies and childcare support?
- What role do public-private partnerships play in enhancing childcare and family support systems, and how can these partnerships be expanded or improved in corporate Pakistan?
- How can international organizations (such as UNICEF or UN Women) help corporate Pakistan strengthen their family support programs and policies?

12. Long-Term Strategy and Commitment

- What is your organization's long-term vision for supporting working parents and creating a more family-friendly corporate environment?
- What further steps do you think corporate Pakistan should take to improve family support programs in terms of accessibility, affordability, and diversity of offerings?
- How do you envision the evolution of family-friendly policies over the next 5-10 years in your company, and how do you plan to keep these policies relevant and effective for future generations of employees?

Closing Question:

• Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with implementing family-friendly policies, particularly childcare support, and how they have impacted workforce participation, employee retention, and gender equality?

Appendix 4: IDI with Government Officials

SECTION 1: EXISTING FINANCIAL INCENTIVES AND SUPPORT

- 1. What financial incentives or tax benefits currently exist for businesses that provide parental leave and child-care support?
- 2. How effective have these incentives been in encouraging businesses to adopt family-friendly policies?
- 3. Are there any corporate tax rebates or wage subsidy programs in place to help businesses offer extended parental leave?
- 4. Have SMEs been able to benefit from existing financial support measures for parental leave and childcare? Why or why not?

SECTION 2: POLICY GAPS AND CHALLENGES

- 1. What are the main financial barriers preventing businesses from offering paid parental leave and childcare support?
- 2. How does the lack of financial support for working parents impact women's workforce participation and career progression?
- 3. What challenges do businesses face in accessing tax incentives or financial support programs for parental leave?
- 4. Are there any regulatory constraints that prevent the government from offering more comprehensive financial incentives?

SECTION 3: LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

- 1. How well do current tax policies align with the government's goals for gender equality and workforce participation?
- 2. What reforms could be introduced to encourage businesses to provide better parental leave benefits and childcare support?
- 3. How does the government collaborate with the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), Ministry of Finance, and Board of Investment (BOI) to structure tax incentives for businesses?
- 4. Are there any upcoming policy changes to expand financial support for working parents?

SECTION 4: GOVERNMENT-PRIVATE SECTOR COLLABORATION

- 1. How can the government better partner with the Pakistan Business Council, Chambers of Commerce, and multinational corporations to design effective financial incentives?
- 2. What role can the Ministry of Labour and Manpower play in ensuring that financial incentives reach both large corporations and SMEs?
- 3. How can public-private partnerships help businesses implement cost-effective family-friendly policies?
- 4. Are there any successful case studies of businesses that have benefited from government incentives for family-friendly policies?

SECTION 5: TAX REBATES AND DIRECT SUPPORT FOR WORKING PARENTS

- Would the government consider introducing direct tax rebates for working mothers to offset childcare costs?
- 2. How could a wage subsidy program for working parents improve female labor force participation?
- 3. In what ways can tax deductions for childcare expenses be structured to ensure affordability for low- and middle-income families?
- 4. Could the government introduce an employer contribution relief scheme for businesses supporting working parents?

SECTION 6: MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND IMPACT

- 1. How does the government currently track the effectiveness of financial incentives in increasing workforce participation?
- 2. What key indicators are used to measure the success of family-friendly tax policies?
- 3. How can the **Board of Investment (BOI)** help attract foreign businesses by promoting Pakistan's financial incentives for family-friendly workplaces?
- 4. How can cross-sector data sharing improve financial policy design for working parents?

SECTION 7: INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICES AND FUTURE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Have international models, such as Germany's parental leave tax benefits or Sweden's wage subsidy programs, been considered for adaptation in Pakistan?
- 2. What lessons can Pakistan learn from countries like Canada, Japan, and Brazil in implementing financial incentives for parental support?
- 3. What specific financial policy reforms would you propose to make Pakistan's corporate sector more family-friendly?

Appendix 5: IDI with School Administrators

1. FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES AND WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION

Core Research Question: How do family-friendly policies impact workforce participation rates for working parents, particularly mothers, in the corporate sector?

- How do you view the relationship between providing after-school care and workforce participation for working parents, especially mothers?
 - o Follow-up: Do you think access to reliable childcare can enable more mothers to join or stay in the work-force?
- How do you think family-friendly policies, such as after-school care services or flexible school hours, could support working parents and encourage more women to enter the formal workforce?
 - o Follow-up: What role do you think schools play in relieving the childcare burden on parents?
- To what extent do you collaborate with corporate employers or other organizations to offer after-school care or childcare support for working parents?
 - o Follow-up: How do these partnerships benefit both schools and working parents?

2. DO YOU PROVIDE ANY AFTER-SCHOOL CARE FOR YOUR STUDENTS?

- What feedback have you received from parents regarding health and nutrition services in after-school care, and how do these programs affect their decision to stay in the workforce?
 - Follow-up: Do parents feel that your school's after-school care services contribute to their ability to remain in or return to the workforce?
- How do you ensure that health and nutrition needs are met in your after-school care services?
 - Follow-up: How do you think meeting children's nutritional and health needs in after-school care contributes to their overall well-being and academic performance?
- Do you think that offering nutritious snacks or meals in after-school care programs helps children perform better in school or stay engaged in activities?
 - Follow-up: How does this impact parents' ability to focus on work without worrying about their children's well-being?

3. CHALLENGES IN OFFERING AFTER-SCHOOL CARE FOR WORKING PARENTS

Core Research Question: What specific challenges do you face in offering childcare solutions that meet the needs of working parents?

- What are the main challenges your school faces in providing after-school care or childcare services for working parents?
 - o Follow-up: Are these challenges related to resources (e.g., space, funding, staff) or regulatory issues?
- How do you currently measure the demand for after-school care services at your school, and do you think there is unmet demand?
 - o Follow-up: Have you conducted surveys or received feedback from parents about the need for such services?
- How can the school or community better support working parents by improving access to childcare services?
 - o Follow-up: What external partnerships or resources (government, corporate partnerships, NGOs) would help address these challenges?

4. IMPACT OF FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES

Core Research Question: How do family-friendly policies impact employee retention and reduce turnover in companies?

- How do you believe offering after-school care or other childcare services at your school might improve the retention of working parents, especially women?
 - o Follow-up: Do you think parents who have access to these services are more likely to remain involved in the workforce or stay at the school?
- Have you observed that the availability of after-school care helps parents maintain a healthy work-life balance?
 - O Follow-up: Follow-up: How do you think this balance influences retention and job satisfaction among parents?
- Do you think that the availability of after-school care increases parents' overall job satisfaction and commitment to the school community?
 - o Follow-up: How do you assess the impact of these services on the overall school culture?

5. GENDER EQUALITY AND FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES

Core Research Question: How do family-friendly policies and childcare solutions contribute to gender equality in the workforce?

- How do you think providing after-school care or other childcare services can help promote gender equality, particularly by reducing the childcare burden on mothers?
 - Follow-up: What impact do you think this has on fathers' involvement in childcare and caregiving responsibilities?
- Do you observe differences in how mothers and fathers utilize childcare services (e.g., after-school care) at your school?
 - o Follow-up: How do you think gender roles in caregiving impact parents' participation in the workforce?
- What role do you think schools could play in encouraging both parents to share caregiving responsibilities more equitably?
 - o Follow-up: Do you think policies like flexible hours or after-school care contribute to gender equality within the family?

6. FUTURE PLANS FOR AFTER-SCHOOL CARE EXPANSION

- Do you plan to expand your after-school care services in the future?
 - Follow-up: Follow-up: What improvements or new services would you like to see added to support working parents?
- What kind of support would be necessary for you to expand or improve your after-school care program?
 - Follow-up: Do you think increased government funding or corporate partnerships could make this possible?

Closing Question:

• In your opinion, what is the most important thing schools can do to support working parents and promote greater participation of women in the workforce?

Appendix 6: Guide for Focus Group Discussion with Corporates

TOPIC 1: WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION

Key Question:

"To what extent have family-friendly policies, such as on-site childcare, stipends, or after-school care, been implemented in your company? What impact have these policies had on workforce participation?"

Key Question:

"How do you measure the effectiveness of these policies in retaining parents, particularly mothers, in the workforce after childbirth or during child-rearing years?"

Key Question:

"What differences, if any, have you observed in the workforce participation rates of mothers and fathers? How do family-friendly policies help close these gaps?"

TOPIC 2: RETENTION AND TURNOVER

Key Question:

"How have family-friendly policies, such as flexible work arrangements or childcare support, impacted employee retention rates in your organization?"

Key Question:

"What are the main reasons parents choose to stay or leave your organization after having children? How do family-friendly policies influence their decisions?"

Probing Prompts:

- "Which of these policies has had the most noticeable effect, especially for mothers?"
- "Are these policies equally accessible across all employees? Why or why not?"
- "What barriers have you faced in implementing these policies?"

Probing Prompts:

- "What metrics or data do you use to evaluate their success?"
- "Can you share any specific examples or success stories?"
- "Where do you think these policies are falling short?"

Probing Prompts:

- "Have you noticed trends or patterns in participation rates for mothers versus fathers?"
- "Do you think fathers are encouraged to use family-friendly policies? Why or why not?"
- "What changes could make these policies more equitable for all parents?"

Probing Prompts:

- "Have you tracked retention rates among employees who use these policies versus those who don't?"
- "Which specific policies seem to make the biggest difference in retaining employees?"
- "Are there particular roles or departments where these policies have been more effective?"

Probing Prompts:

- "What feedback have you received from exit interviews or surveys?"
- "Are there unmet needs that cause parents to leave despite these policies?"
- "What additional support do you think parents might need?"

Key Question:

"Have you observed differences in turnover rates between employees who use family-friendly policies and those who don't?"

Probing Prompts:

- "Do you think these policies reduce turnover? If so, how?"
- "How do you address concerns of resentment or inequality among employees regarding these policies?"
- "What percentage of women leave due to family-related reasons, and how do you aim to address this?"

TOPIC 3: PRODUCTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE

Key Question:

"How do you measure the impact of family-friendly policies, including childcare support, on employee productivity and performance?"

Probing Prompts:

- "What tools or metrics do you use to evaluate changes in productivity or absenteeism?"
- "Have you noticed improvements in performance among employees who use childcare solutions or flexible work arrangements?"
- "What evidence do you have that policies like childcare stipends are worth the investment?"

Key Question:

"What challenges do you face in providing or managing childcare solutions for employees? How do these challenges impact the effectiveness of your policies?"

Probing Prompts:

- "Are logistical or financial constraints the main barriers, or are there other issues?"
- "How do you assess whether your childcare solutions meet employee needs?"
- "Have you partnered with any external providers to improve childcare support?"

TOPIC 4: GENDER EQUALITY

Key Question:

"How do family-friendly policies, such as paternity leave and flexible work options, contribute to gender equality in your organization?"

Probing Prompts:

- "Do fathers in your organization take advantage of these policies as much as mothers? Why or why not?"
- "What organizational factors support or hinder fathers' participation in caregiving roles?"
- "Have you noticed any changes in leadership diversity as a result of these policies?"

Key Question:

"Do you see differences in how mothers and fathers use family-friendly policies, and how does this affect caregiving responsibilities at work and home?"

Probing Prompts:

- "How does your organization encourage fathers to take caregiving roles?"
- "Do current policies reinforce or challenge traditional caregiving roles?"
- "What changes would make these policies more equitable for all parents?"

TOPIC 5: BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTATION

Key Question:

"What are the main barriers your company faces in implementing family-friendly policies, such as costs, cultural attitudes, or resistance from management?"

Key Question:

"How could government incentives or partnerships with NGOs or childcare enterprises help overcome these barriers?"

Probing Prompts:

"How do financial constraints influence your ability to provide these policies?"

"What resistance have you encountered from management or employees?"

"Do employees perceive these policies as fair and accessible to everyone? Why or why not?"

Probing Prompts:

"Have you explored any partnerships to reduce costs or improve accessibility?"

"What kind of government support would be most helpful?"

"How could collaboration with external stakeholders make these policies more effective?"

CLOSING THE DISCUSSION

Summary

• "What do you think is the most critical area for improvement in family-friendly policies?"

Final Thoughts:

• "Is there anything else you'd like to share that we haven't discussed?"

Appendix 7: Guide for Focus Group Discussion with Parents

GENERAL AWARENESS:

• "What comes to mind when you hear the term 'family-friendly policies'?"

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE:

"Does your employer currently offer family-friendly policies? If so, which ones do you find most valuable?"

KEY QUESTIONS

1. Impact of Childcare Solutions on Workforce Participation

- "How do specific childcare options, such as on-site childcare, stipends, or after-school care, influence your ability to remain employed or return to work after having children?"
- "How accessible are these childcare solutions to you, and how do they impact your career decisions?"

2. Role of Flexible Work Arrangements

- "Are flexible work arrangements like remote work or part-time options offered by your employer? How useful are they in helping you balance work and caregiving responsibilities?"
- "What additional flexibility would make the most difference for you as a working parent?"

3. Challenges in Balancing Work and Family Life

- "What are the biggest challenges you face in balancing your job and caregiving responsibilities?"
- "How do family-friendly policies, or the lack of them, affect your decision to stay with or leave your job?"

FOLLOW-UP PROMPTS FOR DEEPER INSIGHTS

1. For Childcare Solutions:

- "Can you describe a specific situation where a childcare solution significantly impacted your ability to work effectively?"
- "If on-site childcare or stipends are not available to you, how do you currently manage caregiving responsibilities? What would help improve your situation?"
- "Are there specific age groups (e.g., infants vs. school-going children) for which you feel more support is needed?"

2. For Flexible Work Arrangements:

- "What challenges, if any, have you faced in using flexible work arrangements? Are they genuinely flexible, or do you feel limitations?"
- "Have you ever hesitated to use flexible work policies due to fear of judgment or negative consequences at work? If so, why?"
- "How does your employer ensure fairness in access to flexible work policies across different teams or roles?"

3. For Work-Life Balance Challenges:

- "Can you share an example of a time when balancing work and family responsibilities felt particularly challenging? What would have helped you in that moment?"
- "Do you think family-friendly policies are designed with your specific needs in mind? Why or why not?"
- "If you were to suggest one improvement to your employer, what would it be to help balance work and family life?"

CLOSING THE DISCUSSION

Summary

• "What do you think is the most critical area for improvement in family-friendly policies?"

Final Thoughts:

• "Is there anything else you'd like to share that we haven't discussed?"

Appendix 8: Guide for Focus Group Discussion with Government and NGO Representatives

OBJECTIVES OF THE DISCUSSION

- 1. To explore existing government and NGO efforts to support childcare and family-friendly policies.
- 2. To identify gaps in current policies and programs.
- 3. To assess opportunities for collaboration between stakeholders.
- 4. To recommend actionable strategies to strengthen childcare infrastructure and policy advocacy.

KEY QUESTIONS

1. Current Role in Childcare and Policy Advocacy

- What are the key initiatives or policies your organization (or department) is currently leading to support childcare in Pakistan?
 - o Follow-up: How do these initiatives address the needs of working parents?
 - Follow-up: Are there specific successes you can highlight?
- What role does your organization play in advocating for family-friendly policies, and how do you engage with other stakeholders (e.g., corporates, communities)?
 - o Follow-up: How effective are these advocacy efforts in influencing policy changes?

2. Gaps in Childcare Policy and Infrastructure

- What are the biggest gaps in current childcare policies and infrastructure?
 - o Follow-up: Are there specific populations (e.g., rural families, low-income groups) that are underserved?
- What challenges do you face in implementing or scaling childcare solutions?
 - o Follow-up: Are these challenges primarily related to funding, awareness, cultural norms, or other factors?

3. Collaboration with Other Stakeholders

- How can government agencies and NGOs collaborate more effectively with corporate stakeholders to expand childcare solutions?
 - o Follow-up: Are there examples of successful public-private partnerships in this area?
- What role do community-based childcare solutions play, and how can these be supported or scaled?
 Follow-up: How do you engage local communities in childcare initiatives?

3. Collaboration with Other Stakeholders

- How can government agencies and NGOs collaborate more effectively with corporate stakeholders to expand childcare solutions?
 - o Follow-up: Are there examples of successful public-private partnerships in this area?
- What role do community-based childcare solutions play, and how can these be supported or scaled?
 Follow-up: How do you engage local communities in childcare initiatives?

4. Funding and Resource Allocation

- How adequate is the current funding for childcare-related initiatives?
 Follow-up: What additional resources or incentives are needed to strengthen childcare infrastructure?
- What role do donor organizations or international partners play in supporting childcare and family-friendly policies?

5. Gender Equality and Workforce Participation

- How do childcare solutions impact women's participation in the workforce?
 Follow-up: What role can family-friendly policies play in reducing the gender gap in employment?
- What policies or programs have been most effective in promoting shared caregiving responsibilities between mothers and fathers?

6. Monitoring and Quality Assurance

- What mechanisms are currently in place to monitor and ensure the quality of childcare services?
 Follow-up: What are the main challenges in maintaining these standards?
- How can NGOs and government work together to enforce regulations and improve service delivery?

7. Recommendations and Future Plans

- What specific actions would you recommend to improve childcare accessibility and affordability in Pakistan?
 - o Follow-up: Are there specific policy changes or programs that could make the biggest impact?
- What opportunities do you see for future collaboration between government, NGOs, and other stakeholders?

CLOSING QUESTIONS

- What do you think is the most critical area to focus on to improve childcare and family-friendly policies in Pakistan?
- Is there anything else you'd like to share that we haven't discussed?



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