

Which to quit? Another angel or the only job?

Women find themselves discriminated at workplace after the two-child policy.

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A slightest glimpse



“Pamela” Jin (pseudo name) plays with her 2-year-old daughter “Coco” at her home on the morning of June 21, 2017. The little girl cries at her mom’s leaving home. Pamela decides to stay for a while before going to work. However, she recently resigned from the Chunxi Investment Company that she dedicated most of her efforts to in the past four years.

Pamela has been seeking legal aid at Nanjing Women’s Federation since she quitted her job in late June.

“Forced, actually,” said the woman when asked about the reason why she had it quitted.

“Inequity is really driving me crazy.”

She ascribed the inequity to the discrimination on women employees who have plans to give birth to babies.

“After two-child policy was carried out, it got even worse.”

Any women at their fertile age, with one child or without, were suspected by their bosses to have greater possibility to get pregnant than ever.

The People’s Congress officially passed the legislation that allows all couples to have two children in October 2015. It is known as the two-child policy, which is carried out to mitigate aging problem. The problem gets more severe than ever, as the percentage of people whose age is above 60 years old has reached 13.26% according to the latest

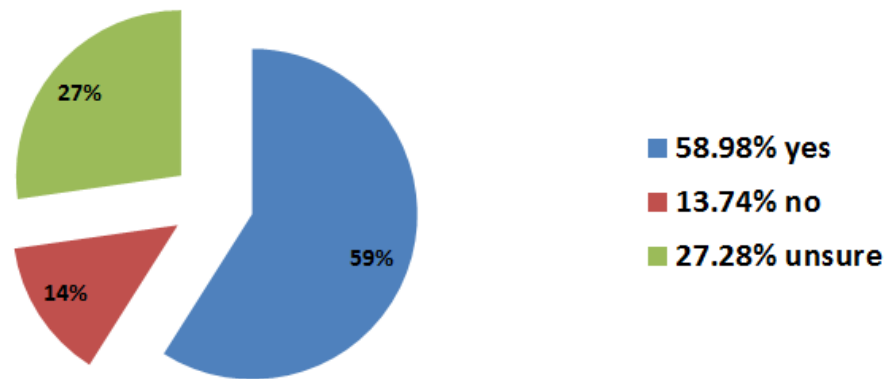
census held in 2010.

However, there were heated discussions by Internet users and deputies to the People's Congress pointing out that the policy is doing harm to women at workplace.

An online survey was conducted by Team 4 to collect people's experience and opinions on the following two issues: gender discrimination at their workplace, whether and how the two-child policy is related to gender discrimination.

The data of this survey responded by 997 people indicates that 58.98% of them think that the full two-child policy has a negative effect on the career of women at fertile age.

Do you think that the full two-child policy is negatively affecting the career of women at their fertile age?



Source: www.sojump.com

When asked whether she plans to have a second child right after the policy was announced, Pamela nodded.

“I thought it would be great to have another baby. Coco loves the idea, too. But some of my colleagues were complaining about the critics from their supervisors when they mentioned a little bit about the baby plan. They got grumpy. ”

“It seemed that we just couldn't afford to have another baby under current working environment. It will be a big challenge for my job at my company,” added she.

50.55% of the surveyed people considered the written claims prohibiting women from pregnancy as gender discrimination. However, Pamela mentioned that there were no written regulations like this. They are actually against the law.

If companies fail to treat male and female workers equally or infringe any of the women's legal rights-dismiss female workers for the excuses of their marriage, pregnancy, maternity leave or nursing for instance, the labor administrative department in charge shall issue a warning, command a correction or impose a fine as the administrative disciplinary.

*Article III, Chapter VIII of
The Assurance Law of Women's Rights and Interest of PRC*

As shown above, the law is too weak to punish all the illicit acts. There are totally 22,579,475 registered companies according to China's National Bureau of Statistics by the end of June 2015 that requires supervision. A giant blank area is left behind by simply mention "a warning, a correction or a fine".

Underlying discriminations can remain unknown to the public, even not against the law.

Pamela mentioned her unpleasant experience when she was pregnant with her first kid.

"For nearly two years, I was the only one in my department without any promotion no matter how hard I worked. I literally missed every opportunity according to my boss. Less performed female colleagues who promised the boss that they won't plan for a baby in recent years, were promoted to senior positions. Male coworkers get promotions regardless whether they have children or not."

Pamela is not alone. According to the survey, 28% of the female respondents experienced gender discrimination at workplace, another 70% responded that their positions were lowered or even eliminated during pregnancy, only 30% responded that their job opportunities remained uninfluenced or became better after the pregnancy.

"My family wants to have another baby. I talked to my supervisor about my plans for I thought that she would understand for she is also a working mom. But clearly it did not turn out as I expected."

According to Pamela, if she chose to continue with her job, her employer would pay the minimum salary during her maternity leave. But her position can't be guaranteed to rise upon ever after returning from the leave.

Pamela is stressed out this time.

In the end, the hard-working woman with four-year superior performance quitted her job in late June.

“The minimum salary wouldn’t help provide another child with a better living condition. Since one of the parents will spend most of the time looking after the babies, quitting my job is the best option,” according to Pamela.

A deeper observation

Pamela’s experience isn’t unique according to Ying Ding, the functionary of the Departments for Women’s Rights and Interest in Nanjing Women’s Federation.

The department deals with complaints of gender discrimination at workplace by providing relatively inexpensive legal aids. It has the most comprehensive documents recording such kind of issues.

When asked whether and how the two-child policy affects female employees, she answered with worry, “Even before the two-child policy, women, especially expecting moms, are treated with discriminating practices.”

She said that the federation hotline receives complaints specifically on employment discrimination related to two-child policy almost every day.

“For example, there is a woman working as a waitress in a restaurant, when her manager found out that she is expecting another baby, the manager told her that she was ‘too tired to work as a waitress’, and promised to assign her another position.”

“But there is no suitable position for a heavily pregnant woman in the restaurant.”

As the investigation went deeper, the journalists decided to interview employers to find out their concerns.

Zhan Li is a manager of a private-operated media company in Nanjing.

‘There is only one out of the eleven employers is female who remains single and is unwilling to have a baby in the future,’ said Zhan, ‘Those young women who plan to have babies are never taken into consideration while we employ staffs.’

When questioned whether she is aware of the fact that the situation above reflects gender discrimination, Zhan told us her own concerns.

‘We never want to encourage gender discrimination. Our company doesn’t want miss some talented staffs among the female applicants in this way as well. Additionally, as a female myself, I am really willing to offer the young girls with the same working opportunities,’ said Zhan.

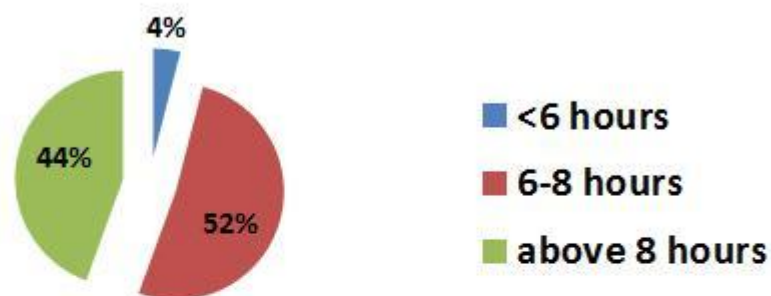
‘But as the manager, the benefit of the company should always come first. We, employers are afraid of losing productivity from working moms.’

So, what is the connection between having a baby and productivity?

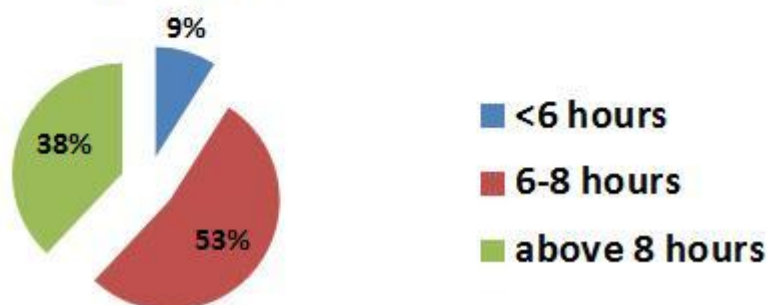
According to the survey, after giving birth to the first child, only 38% of the surveyed two-child mother could afford to spend above 8 hours working, 53% of them from six to eight hours, and 9% of them below six hours, comparing with 45%, 51%, and 4% before pregnancy.

How much time do you spent on working?

Before pregnancy



After giving birth to the first child



Source: www.sojump.com

‘As a mother myself, I know so well about how much time will be taken from a woman’s career when she is raising a child,’ said Zhan.

‘Taking myself as an example, I was not able to go on a long business trip during at least first 5 years I had my baby, at least not willing to. It was really hard for me to leave the baby at home and go on a business trip. I kept worrying about her all the time, ended up lower the efficiency for work,’ she explained.

A faithful outlook

The several cases we studied and the investigation results are hardly flattering to the public for the severe problems it reveals seem difficult to be solved. But there might be some approaches worth a shot.

Prolonging the maternity leave is nowadays an adapted solution, but it is definitely not an effective way to help women gain equal treatment during job hunting for the companies might even get more preserved when recruiting female applicants, and therefore worsen the situation.

Along with the two-child policy, Ms. Ding suggested that there should be more specific policies and regulations guaranteeing women's rights. Because the process of obtaining evidence is long and the cost of litigation afterwards is rather high, the regulations should focus more on rights safeguarding in advance. For instance, laws should prohibit companies from asking the applicants about their fertility plans.

The other possible solution is to establish a more comprehensive social security system, providing opportunity for women to go back to the work and face competitions equally with others. Here, Ms. Ding introduced a concept to us that people should get paid for house chores.

Coco is happy right now to have her mother home and is ready to welcome her baby sister.