**WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND CHILDCARE: A TEASER FOR POLICY DISCUSSION ON INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT FOR BREASTFEEDING AND CHILDCARE IN GHANA**

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**Abstract**

**Background**

Female empowerment has dominated the global policy agenda in the last four decades. Ghana has made some strides in female enrollment in tertiary institutions and participation in the labor market and continue to do so. Yet, these efforts to promote gender equality is not holistic in its approach because it is not accompanied by childcare support policies. Childcare support policies are vital in ensuring that breastfeeding and childcare which are deemed important in all societies do not become a stumbling block to women empowerment. In this study we argue that tertiary institutions and formal organizations in Ghana do not provide workplace support for breastfeeding and child care due to the absence of a national policy in this regard. On this basis, we set out to assess institutional support for breastfeeding and childcare in selected public Universities in Ghana. The objectives of the study were to explore public universities’ support for breastfeeding and childcare among employee and student mothers, University Managements’ views on maternity leave extension and workplace support for breastfeeding and childcare.

**Methods**

The study employed a case study design and a qualitative research method. A sample of three public universities offering different modules of admissions were selected at random to participate in the study and in-depth interviews were used to collect data over a period of four months. Data was analyzed using general content analysis.

**Results**

The three universities neither had policies on breastfeeding and childcare or breastfeeding facilities and programs for both staff and students. University management only adhered to maternity protection provisions in the conditions of work of public universities. Decision of childcare support and breastfeeding are at the discretion of university management and are likely to be inspired by the personality of the Vice-Chancellors. A national policy framework on breastfeeding and childcare support is required to encourage uniformed and standardized support for women in all sectors of employment and tertiary institution.