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Women-Centric Amenities in Collective Bargaining Agreements in Selected Unionized Firms: Their Impact Among Women in Promoting Gender Equality and Quality of Work Life

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Abstract

In a world of work dominated by men, women, like men, can contribute to building a flourishing organization where they can be heard, respected, engaged, and developed as people. Hence, in a unionized firm, bargaining for gender equality is vital because women's issues are undervalued and must be addressed to have decent work and contribute to the organization's sustainability. We described the women-centric amenities stipulated in the CBAs of 29 selected unionized establishments based on the Gender Equality Bargaining model of the ILO. This model focuses on the issues of working conditions, maternity and family responsibilities, defending the rights of non-permanent and vulnerable workers, dignity at the workplace to combat discrimination and victimization, and giving women a voice. We subsequently determined the impact of these amenities in promoting gender equality and quality of work life among women employees in the unionized firms. Our results confirmed the proposition that many amenities in the CBAs are beneficial to women. The top amenities given only to women employees by all firms are maternity leave as provided by law, and maternity benefits covered by the SSS. Among the women-centric amenities, women highly value maternity and family responsibilities. The impact on promoting gender equality is ending all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere. It also ensures women's full and effective participation and equal

opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in their political, economic, and public life. These amenities positively affected their quality of work life since they enhanced their job satisfaction, reduced their stress, and increased their loyalty and commitment. Only a few respondents encountered challenges, such as organizational culture and gender biases, in promoting gender equality in their workplace. We proposed that unions prioritize bargaining issues that women highly value in promoting gender equality and quality of work-life.

Keywords: gender equality bargaining, gender equality, work-life balance, collective bargaining, decent work

Introduction

“Women's issues are union issues and union issues are women's issues.” (ILO, 2002)

Women and men play significant roles in their social, cultural, political, and economic spheres of life within the family, community, workplace, and society. They perform various functions that may be different but equally necessary for peace, stability, and prosperity. Hence, women and men, girls and boys, must be considered equal partners and collaborators to fulfill these goals.

Gender equality is a fundamental human right that promotes equality between women and men in the workplace and is essential to achieving the global goals of decent work and a life of dignity for all (ILO, 2022b). It is a foundation for living with dignity, peace, and a sustainable world. In conjunction with ILO's principle, the UN Sustainable Development Goal #5 is aimed to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” or attain gender equality by ending all forms of discrimination, violence, and harmful practices as well as ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership, universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, and reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources (UN Sustainable Development Goals, 2024).

In the Philippines, the Magna Carta of Women, known as the Republic Act No. 9710, is the legislative framework for promoting women's human rights and eliminating gender-based discrimination (Philippine Commission on Women, n.d.). This law establishes a well-rounded definition of discrimination against women that encompasses gender-based differences, exclusions, or limitations that lessen women's ability to exercise human rights and benefits, as well as the intersectional discrimination that combines gender with other elements such as ethnicity, age, economic status, or religious affiliation (Philippine Commission on Women, n.d.).

In a world of work dominated by men, women, like men, can contribute to building a flourishing organization where they can be heard, respected, productive, happy, and lead purposefully over the years. In the past decades, employers have recognized that women have more opportunities to advance and make the workplace more equitable (Women in the Workplace, 2024). Toward this end, management has taken steps to support the advancement of women, including providing training and development, equal employment opportunities, career advancement, and support for maternity and family-related concerns.

Quality of work life (QWL) has become important in achieving organizational goals and sustainability among all industry sectors. Attrition, employee commitment, productivity, etc., depend upon the quality of work life

dimensions, i.e., job satisfaction, organizational commitment, reward and recognition, work-life balance, welfare facilities, work environment, etc. (Yadav & Khanna, 2014). Quality of work life is the interface and corroboration between the employees and their organization. It improves family life, including the work-life of the individual (Yadav & Khanna, 2014). Afroz's (2017) study revealed 27 broad factors of QWL. These include adequate and fair compensation, opportunity for growth, safe and healthy working conditions, work and total life space, social integration, supervision, human capabilities, constitutionalism, reward and recognition, job security, autonomy & control, participation in decision-making, and communication.

One concrete progress is that today, almost all surveyed companies provide critical support for employees who are parents, caregivers, or managing health challenges—benefits that link to higher rates of happiness and employee retention. Benefits such as these are especially valuable to women, who are more likely than men to have caregiving responsibilities (Women in the Workplace, 2024).

Similarly, the findings of Corradini, Lagos, & Sharma (2022) showed that the priorities of those who set workplace policies can create female-friendly jobs. They narrated that starting in 2015, Brazil's largest trade union federation made women central to its bargaining agenda. They found that bargaining for women improves female-centric amenities in collective bargaining agreements, which are reflected in practice, such as more female managers, longer maternity leaves, and longer job protection. Employers have realized that women can be equally valuable to men. This can happen when a safe working environment and women-friendly jobs are established for them.

On the other hand, despite various efforts at increasing women's inclusion, participation, advancement, and opportunities in the workplace, globally, women occupy only about 37 percent of leadership roles (World Economic Forum, 2022). The pay gap is approximately 20 percent (ILO, 2022), and women remain concentrated in low-status, low-paid jobs (UN Women, 2022). In Asia and the Pacific, despite the impressive economic growth rates and increasing female labor force participation rates in many countries of the region over the past decade, gender inequalities, in terms of unequal opportunity and treatment between men and women in employment, the gender pay gap, inadequate maternity protection, and discrimination of women workers because of their family responsibilities remain pervasive and persistent (ILO, 2022b).

Moreover, regardless of the highly argued worth of gender equality in the workplace, numerous women across the countries surveyed (Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Germany, India, Japan, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States), a clear trend emerges that they are experiencing similar challenges,

like escalating pressures at work and in their personal lives (Women in the Workplace, 2024). The survey also revealed that companies report declines in career development, mentorship, and sponsorship programs geared toward women, alongside recruiting and internship programs focused on women. There are many women's concerns they encounter in the workplace that are not substantially addressed by management and/or the union, if it exists in the organization. Some of these issues are pregnancy discrimination, sexual harassment, gender pay gap, racial discrimination, career advancement, work-life imbalance, lack of childcare support, being talked over, exclusion in male-dominated fields, and gender bias and discrimination in interviews (<https://www.careeraddict.com/women-workplace>, 2022).

Furthermore, as cited in Hebl and King (2019), Frear, Paustian-Underdahl, Halbesleben, and French (2019) implicitly emphasized that the gendered pattern of dealing with work-family balance may lead to greater gendered workplace inequities. Women's participation in the workplace is hindered by increased caregiving responsibilities, underscoring the need for equitable care systems and parental leave. World Bank research has found that increased paternal leave results in higher female labor force participation (<https://www.weforum.org/stories/2024/06/women-work-gender-gap-2024/>).

To build stronger and more equitable workplaces, employees at all levels must be empowered to be part of the solution. This empowerment of employees can be done through the union. The union's right to collectively bargain with management for decent work for both men and women in the workplace. Despite the external environment leading to the decentralization and weakening of bargaining in many countries worldwide, in recent years, bargaining has become more gender-focused (Pillinger & Wintour, 2023). They argued that the bargaining agenda has been extended to include new issues that reflect the intersection of the private area of family/home and the public area of work, thus extending the scope of the employment relationship. Specifically, domestic violence is a new workplace bargaining issue that "widens the reach of the employment relationship by recognizing the intersection of the private and work domains and represents a qualitatively new step" (Pillinger, Schmidt & Wintour, 2016, as cited in Pillinger & Wintour, 2023).

Collective bargaining has played a role in closing the gender pay gap, and it generally positively impacts gender pay inequalities that can be attributed to factors such as women working in the public sector, membership in a trade union, and working in a large firm (Pillinger & Wintour, 2023). by Frear, Paustian-Underdahl, Halbesleben, and French (2019) implicitly emphasized that the gendered pattern of dealing with work-family balance may lead to greater gendered workplace inequities. The success of bargaining strategies is contingent on various factors, including the level of union commitment to the issue and the proportion of women in a sector (Pillinger & Wintour, 2023).

Globally, the workforce, particularly women, has appreciated the significance of becoming union members, achieving higher wages, better benefits, good working conditions, protection against discrimination, and the power to enforce their rights, which can change and improve their lives. The collective power and concerted effort of the union leaders and members have vigorously fought many of these issues through bargaining negotiations. Undoubtedly, unions have leverage on the strength of collective bargaining, a powerful tool to ensure decent work so that women and men live in happiness and dignity in our common home (Edralin & Pastrana, 2024).

Research Problem and Objectives

Anchored in the Gender Equality Bargaining model of the ILO (2002), we answered the question: *“What are the women-centric amenities in the Collective Bargaining Agreements of selected unionized firms and their impact among women in promoting gender equality and quality of work life?*

More specifically, we aimed to:

1. Determine women-centric CBA amenities and those that are given to women employees only, that are related to:
 - 1.1 Working conditions,
 - 1.2 Maternity and family responsibilities,
 - 1.3 Defending the rights of non-permanent and vulnerable workers,
 - 1.4 Dignity at the workplace to combat discrimination and victimization, and
 - 1.5 Giving women a voice.
2. Identify the CBA women-centric amenities highly valued by women employees.
3. Analyze the effects of women-centric provisions on promoting gender equality and quality of work-life.
4. Examine the challenges women employees encountered in promoting gender equality in their workplace.
5. Propose courses of action in preparing, negotiating, and implementing workplace women-centric initiatives in unionized firms through their CBAs.

Limitations

Our data were limited to the CBAs that were provided by the federation, labor center, and unions that were willing to participate and give us a copy of their existing CBA. Practically, these unionized organizations from the universities, hospitals, hotels, manufacturing, telecommunication, and commercial sectors are large enterprises and mostly found in Metro Manila. We did not consider that size and geographic distribution were important for this study.

Union members are only regular employees who benefit from the provisions of their CBA. Hence, the sample size that we got was limited to those women union members who were beneficiaries and willing to participate in the study. We did not categorize the respondents' employment status as supervisory or rank-and-file since we did not include this as a variable for our study.

These specific demographic data about union leadership and membership composition were not collected in our study. While we found that 16 CBAs included provisions for women union officers, we did not gather data on the actual percentage of women in union leadership positions or their representation in total union membership across companies. This union governance element was noted as a limitation of our study.

Conceptual Frameworks

Discrimination Theory

Discrimination manifests itself in many ways. It ranges from overt and intentional to subtle and ambiguous, from personal to institutional, whether through statistical discrimination and profiling or organizational processes (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2004). In whatever form it takes, discrimination can establish barriers to equal treatment and opportunity and can have adverse effects on various outcomes (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2004).

According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2016), discrimination is assumed to be morally wrong and, in many cases, must be legally prohibited. It works in combination with relative deprivations built around the way of thinking and the structure. Deprivations are erroneous because they treat persons as having dishonored moral status and tend to make members of the group vulnerable to domination and oppression at the hands of those who occupy positions of relative power (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2016).

Gender Equality Model

Gender equality is the equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of women, men, girls, and boys. But equality does not denote similarity; nevertheless, the rights of women and men will not rely on the gender they were born with. It indicates that the interests, needs, and priorities of all genders are considered while acknowledging the mixture of various groups. Gender equality is not only the concern of women but of all genders, while distinguishing that neither all men nor all women are a homogenous group (as cited in UN Women, 2022, from Gender

Equality Glossary. <https://wrw.unwomen.org/practice/resources/gender-equality-glossary>).

Gender equality is an essential pillar for a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world. Advancing gender equality is critical to all areas of a healthy society, from reducing poverty to promoting the health, education, protection, and well-being of girls and boys. However, gender inequality persists everywhere and stagnates social progress. These are manifested in sexual violence and exploitation, the unequal division of unpaid care and domestic work, discrimination in public office, and employment in the labor market (<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/>). It is not only a pressing moral and social issue but also a critical economic challenge. Gender inequality also indirectly impacts investment and population growth. (<https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/universal-values/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment>).

Gender Equality Bargaining Model

Collective bargaining is the negotiation process between workers and their employers and their representatives concerning any issue related to terms and conditions of employment or any other matter of mutual interest to the workers and employer (ILO, 2002a). Moreover, collective bargaining is a means of social dialogue and a mechanism at the firm, industry, and national levels to address workplace issues affecting the social, economic, and political lives of the workforce. It is a formidable tool for working people to ensure that decent work practices are institutionalized by stipulating them in the CBA. Its process demands that the employer and the union bargain in “good faith” and work out their disagreements peacefully and expeditiously (Edralin, 2016).

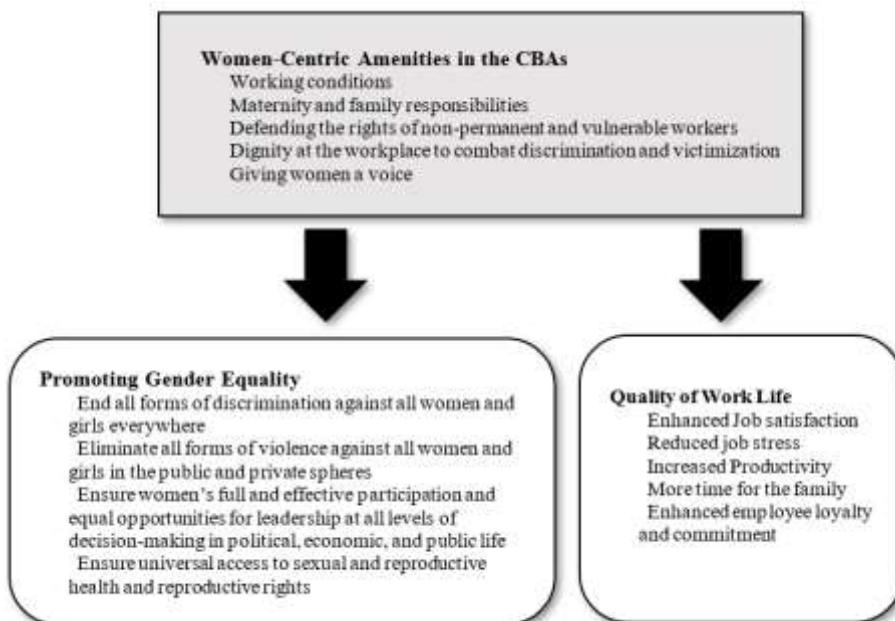
More specifically, gender equality bargaining is emerging as an important governance mechanism in the workplace. It is imperative in numerous ways because women's contributions at work have been undervalued. Moreover, women are making up an increasing proportion of the paid workforce, which is vital in changing attitudes towards women in employment. It can address many of the persisting deep-seated misconceptions about the role of women in employment, and women's issues are union issues (ILO, 2002a). In promoting gender equality through collective bargaining, the five focal issues of concern are: (1) working conditions, (2) maternity and family responsibilities, (3) defending the rights of non-permanent and vulnerable workers, (4) dignity at the workplace to combat discrimination and victimization, and (5) giving women a voice (ILO, 2002a).

Furthermore, as a governance method, collective bargaining aids in guaranteeing that the execution of the decent work pillars in the workplace leads

to securing better conditions of employment, improving social protection, strengthening unions' voice in the workplace, fostering harmonious labor relations, and workers having a chance at a life of human dignity (Edralin & Pastrana, 2024).

Figure 1.

Operational Framework of the Study



Collective bargaining is considered a fundamental right at work and an important mechanism for eliminating all forms of inequalities and discrimination against women and improving their working conditions (ILO, 2004). Gender equality bargaining is important because women's issues are union issues, and women's contributions at work have been undervalued. Collective bargaining has played a role in closing the gender pay gap and generally positively impacts gender pay inequalities.

Our operational framework, as shown in Figure 1, illustrates that the women-centric amenities in the CBAs, based on the ILO's (2004) Gender Equality Bargaining classification of issues, are posited to have a positive impact on promoting gender equality and the quality of work life of women employees.

Propositions of the Study

We answered this proposition qualitatively: There are women-centric amenities incorporated in the CBA that respond to these gender equality issues in the workplace: (1) working conditions; (2) maternity and family responsibilities; (3) defending rights of non-permanent and vulnerable workers; (4) dignity at the workplace to combat discrimination and victimization; and (5) giving women a voice; and from these broad issues, there are specific amenities given only to women.

Methodology

Research Design

We adopted a descriptive research design to determine the women-centric amenities stipulated in the CBAs of 24 selected unionized establishments based on the gender equality model of ILO (2004) that focuses on the issues of: working conditions; maternity and family responsibilities; defending the rights of non-permanent and vulnerable workers; dignity at the workplace to combat discrimination and victimization; and giving women a voice. We subsequently determined the impact of these amenities in promoting gender equality and quality of work life among women employees in the unionized firms.

From the CBAs referenced in our study, we can see that they span various time periods. For example, some agreements run from 2019-2024, others from 2024-2026, and some extend to 2027-2029. However, we did not systematically analyze the time periods or provide aggregate data about the currency of all agreements. This temporal analysis would be valuable for understanding trends in women-centric provisions over time and will be noted as a limitation requiring future research attention.

Research Approaches

We used a qualitative research approach to develop a substantial and deeper understanding of these women-centric amenities highlighted in SDG#5 as our pragmatist research lens on promoting gender equality and work-life balance (Creswell and Poth 2018). The qualitative approach investigated evolving patterns across CBA provisions with women-centric amenities in the 29 unionized organizations.

Data Collections and Sources of Data

We employed the archival research method by gathering 29 CBAs from different unions of companies and institutions from the education, commercial center, hospital, electric power, telecommunication, manufacturing, hotel, and resort sectors. We secured a copy of the CBAs either from the Internet, the Labor Federation/Center where they are affiliated, or from a member of the union who has a copy of the CBA. The names of each union included are found in the Reference list. Forty-two supervisory and rank-and-file women union members were purposively selected and gave their consent as respondents to the Google online survey. The questions delved into the impact of the women-centric CBA amenities on gender equality and the quality of work-life as they enjoyed these benefits for about 11-15 years.

The 29 CBAs were selected through convenience sampling, considering their accessibility and availability. We secured copies either from the Internet, Labor Federation/Center affiliations, or directly from union members who had copies of their CBAs. The CBAs have different effectiveness periods but represent current agreements from various sectors. The sample CBAs include: 6 from manufacturing, 7 from the hotels, 8 from schools, 5 from hospitals, and 1 each from telecommunications, electric cooperative, and commercial center sectors. This distribution reflects the diverse nature of unionized establishments in the Philippines.

The 42 supervisory and rank-and-file women union members were also conveniently selected from the unionized firms whose CBAs were analyzed. Willing respondents participated through a Google online survey with their informed consent. These respondents had enjoyed their CBA benefits for about 11-15 years of their company service. Other demographic data, like age and educational attainment, were not asked due to data privacy and because they are not considered to be an important part of the study.

Research Ethics Approaches

We primarily depend on the CBAs that are accessible to the public, either printed or online. However, the informed consent of the women employee respondents from the unionized firms was obtained before the start of the online survey. We also declare no conflict of interest in undertaking this study.

Data Analysis

We used content analysis to determine the women-centric amenities written in the CBAs and the qualitative responses of the respondents based on the five ILO (2004) gender equality category issues for bargaining. We found key themes and patterns as responses to our research objectives and confirmation of

our proposition (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2014). We also conducted a content analysis of women's experienced outcomes and challenges in promoting gender equality and quality of work-life in their organizations.

Results and Discussion

Our results revealed that the 29 CBAs articulate many significant women-centric amenities beneficial to women. Six CBAs are from the manufacturing sector, seven are from the Hotel industry, eight are from schools, five are from hospitals, and one is from the Telecommunications, Electric Cooperative, and Commercial Center sectors. The negotiated provisions confirmed the five main themes based on the Gender Equality Bargaining Model of ILO (2004) that focuses on the issues of: working conditions; maternity and family responsibilities; defending the rights of non-permanent and vulnerable workers; dignity at the workplace to combat discrimination and victimization; and giving women a voice. Figures 2 to 6 present the women-centric amenities embedded in their CBAs.

Women-centric amenities that are embedded in the CBAs:

1. CBA women-centric amenities that address working conditions

Figure 2.

Summary of the CBA women-centric amenities related to working conditions

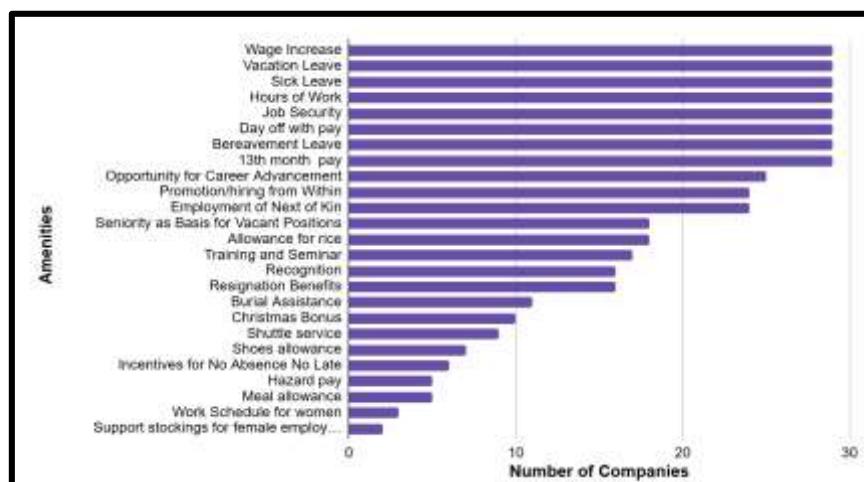


Figure 2 presents an overview of the working condition benefits incorporated in the CBAs. Twenty-five sub-themes emerged related to wages, leaves, other benefits, work schedule, opportunities for advancement, and support stockings for female employees.

All 29 companies provided the above CBA amenities for women employees. The amenities are wage increase, vacation leave, sick leave, work hours, job security, a day off with pay, bereavement leave, and 13th month. These are consistent with the provisions of the law. The Labor Code of the Philippines sets the standard working conditions for private employees, including minimum wage, hours of work, rest periods, premium pay for overtime, night work, and holidays. Therefore, these are fundamental benefits that have become standard content in CBAs. These findings are similar to Corradini, Lagos, and Sharma's study (2022), which stated that "bargaining for women improves female-centric amenities in collective bargaining agreements." Our results also address what ILO (2004) identifies as vital working conditions elements within the Gender Equality Bargaining model. These amenities ensure safe working conditions, equal pay for equal work, and productive work conditions for women.

The amenities extended to women employees by their employer confirm the belief that they exceed the requirements of the Labor Code and even provide other amenities voluntarily beneficial to women. This is likewise a manifestation of the union's and employer's concern for women's unique needs to be addressed and become productive and engaged in the workplace. This includes providing equal opportunities for women, helping them to avoid discrimination, reducing poverty, and living with dignity. Unions have played a significant role in advocating for better wages, improved working conditions, benefits, a safe and healthy work environment, and job security for members through collective bargaining (Edralin & Pastrana, 2024). The union's efforts to bargain for provisions that benefit women reflect the strength and commitment of their leadership to women's issues. It also validates the employer's commitment to considering the needs of its women workers and creating a decent work environment, going beyond the interests of shareholders (Edralin & Pastrana, 2024).

2. CBA women-centric amenities that address maternity and family responsibilities

Figure 3.

Summary of the CBA women-centric amenities regarding maternity and family responsibilities

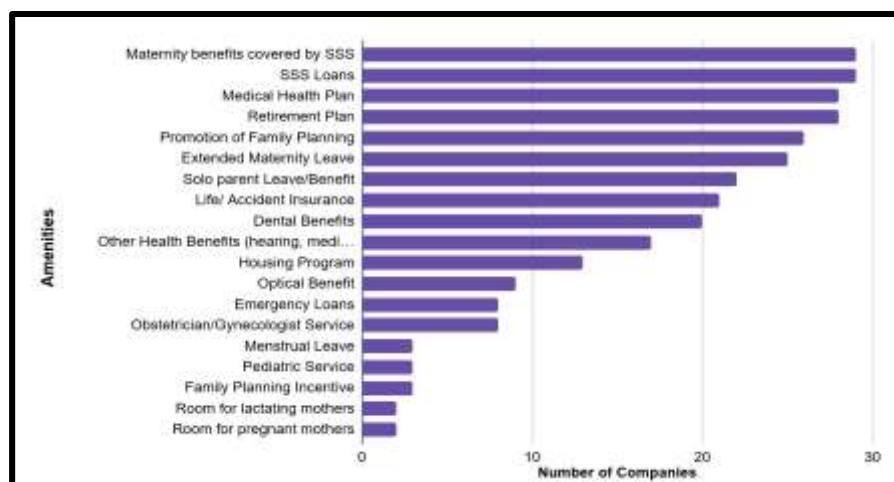


Figure 3 summarizes the amenities related to maternity and family responsibilities found in the CBAs. Nineteen sub-themes have arisen, such as maternity benefits, other social security benefits, family planning, solo parent leave, extended financial assistance and loan benefits, medical/health care programs, and room for lactating mothers.

All 29 companies provided benefits to women employees. These benefits are maternity benefits covered by SSS and SSS loans. This is followed by 28 CBAs with a medical health plan and retirement plan. There are also 27 CBAs with provisions on promoting family planning.

These benefits directly address the unique needs of women employees about the ‘maternity and family responsibilities’ component of the ILO’s Gender Equality Bargaining model. This is additionally in response to R.A. 7322 - an Act increasing maternity benefits in favor of women workers in the private sector. Furthermore, these amenities comply with R.A. 11223 - the Universal Health Care Act of the Philippines, as well as with the Universal Health Coverage (UHC). The UHC means that “all people have access to the full range of quality health services they need, when and where they need them, without financial hardship. It covers the full continuum of essential health services, from health promotion to prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and palliative care” (https://www.who.int/health-topics/universal-health-coverage#tab=tab_1). This is

a concrete illustration of advocating a women-responsive CBA provision. This and other women-friendly provisions will ease the burden of female workers with children to remain working, be converted into active union members or officers, seek personal growth, and share their talents and resources in nation-building. Maternity benefits bestow many advantages for women, including improved health and well-being, better financial stability, enhanced job security, and the opportunity to bond with their newborns. This is reflected in the high value women attribute to these benefits, as shown in Figure 8, which confirms Pillinger and Wintour's (2023) observation that bargaining has become more gender-focused by exploring how family life and professional work affect each other. These provisions further reflect the compliance with the Philippines' Labor Laws, founded on the ratified ILO conventions. Our findings also support the World Economic Forum (2022) and Women in the Workplace (2024) research, which asserted that 'benefits such as these are especially valuable to women, who have more caregiving responsibilities than men.'

3. CBA women-centric amenities that address defending the rights of non-permanent and vulnerable workers

Figure 4.

Summary of the CBA women-centric amenities on defending the rights of non-permanent and vulnerable workers

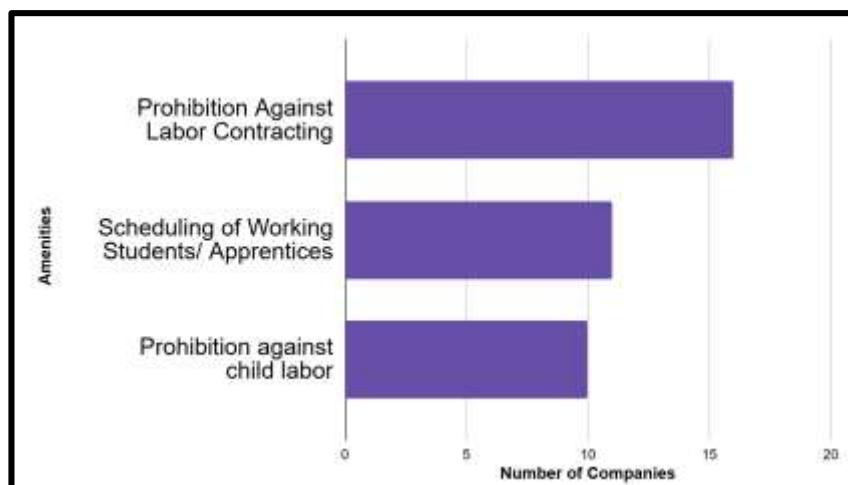


Figure 4 presents an overview of the amenities related to defending the rights of non-permanent and vulnerable workers' provisions stipulated in the CBAs. The analysis of these Agreements has identified three key sub-themes that address areas of labor contracting, the schedule of students/apprentices, and child labor.

There are 16 CBAs with provisions on the prohibition against labor contracting, 11 CBAs containing agreements on the scheduling of working students/apprentices, and 10 CBAs with articles on the prohibition against child labor.

Putting an end to the company's contracting out of jobs is a socially responsible action since it poses several challenges and risks, particularly for women and marginalized workers. This gesture complies with the Philippine Labor Code's prohibition on labor-only contracting. Protecting women workers from labor contracting ensures they receive fair wages, benefits, and legal protections, which can lead to improved economic and family life. The prohibition against child labor is another concrete affirmative action in protecting young girls and boys who work under 18 years of age from risky occupations, exploitation, and discrimination. However, the findings of our study indicate that fewer companies are extending these amenities to their employees. This is an important issue where union bargaining negotiations could be strengthened to better protect women and children from precarious working conditions, inadequate wages, and discriminatory practices. Compelling the employer to provide explicit protections is crucial in creating a safer environment and promoting social justice where everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

4. CBA women-centric amenities that address dignity at the workplace to combat discrimination and victimization

Figure 5.

Summary of the CBA women-centric amenities related to dignity at the workplace to combat discrimination and victimization

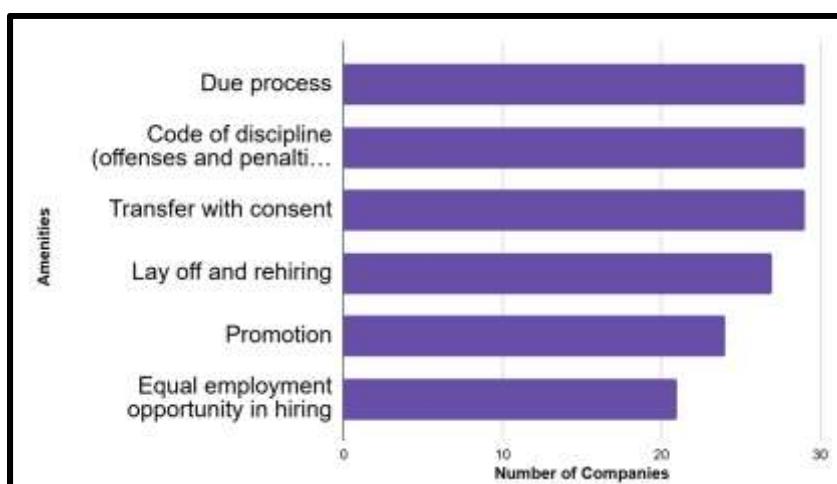


Figure 5 summarizes the company amenities related to dignity at the workplace to combat discrimination and victimization provisions specified in the CBAs. Six key sub-themes emerged: due process, code of discipline with offenses and penalties, transfer with consent, layoff and rehiring, promotion, and equal employment opportunity in hiring.

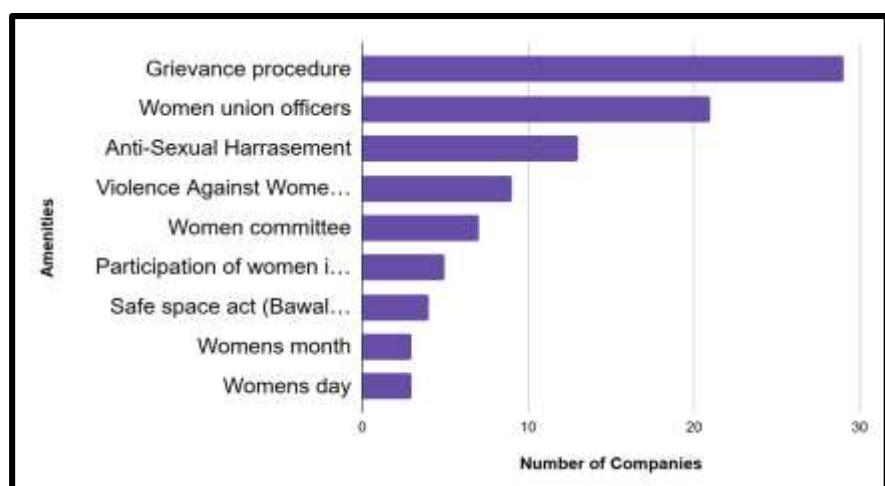
All 29 companies have provisions for dignity at the workplace to combat discrimination and victimization. These provisions are due process, code of discipline with offenses and penalties, and transfer with consent.

The literature reveals that “dignity at work encompasses earned and inherent dignity; the capacity for autonomous action; the affirmation of diversity; access to decent and humane work conditions; freedom to organize and resist; and opportunities for contribution, meaningfulness, and achievement” (Blustein & Allan, 2024). The above provisions address the issue of dignity at the workplace to combat discrimination and victimization as specified in the ILO’s Gender Equality Bargaining Model. The observance of these dignity provisions at the workplace indicates recognition of their significance in creating just and safe workplaces. Our findings emphasize the Discrimination Theory framework, reiterating that discrimination creates obstacles to equal treatment and can affect different outcomes. Our results further support the provision in Book V of the Labor Code of the Philippines (2017), highlighting workers' participation in decision-making processes affecting the rights and welfare of workers.

5. CBA women-centric amenities that address giving women a voice

Figure 6.

Summary of the CBA women-centric amenities about giving women a voice



The summary provided in Figure 6 outlines the amenities associated with giving women a voice identified in the CBAs. These practices revolve around nine sub-themes about grievance handling, protection of women against harassment and violence, and women's participation in the union and the workplace.

All 29 unionized firms have agreed to include a provision in their CBAs that stipulates the procedure for grievance handling to give importance and mutual respect to women's complaints or dissatisfaction against management. The other provisions on giving women a voice are on having women union officers (16 CBAs), anti-sexual harassment (9 CBAs), protection from violence against women and children (8 CBAs), establishment of women's committee (7 CBAs), participation of women in gender training/seminar (5 CBAs), Safe Space Act/Bawal ang Bastos (4 CBAs), women's month (3 CBAs), and women's day (3 CBAs).

The various amenities related to "giving women a voice" found in the CBAs are manifestations of accelerating action for gender equality by amplifying women's voices in the workplace. Women's participation in the union, like becoming union officers and intensifying their voices to empower and hear their views on career development, working conditions, maternity leaves, and leadership roles, among other concerns, can make the organization a better workplace. Our findings also support the ILO (2006) data that 'women's membership is increasing as a share of total membership in many countries' and that 'empowerment of women in terms of decision-making bodies is the key for promoting gender equality. Our results also reflect the ILO (2024) position that 'giving women a voice' is a vital element of gender equality bargaining. The implementation of these provisions in these unionized companies is likewise consistent with SDG #5 targets, particularly "to ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making." The other important aspect in gender equality bargaining is the inclusion of women against sexual harassment and protection from violence, which is also in line with the SDG#5 target to "eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres..."'

Amenities were given only to women employees:

Figure 7.

Summary of the amenities that were given only to women employees

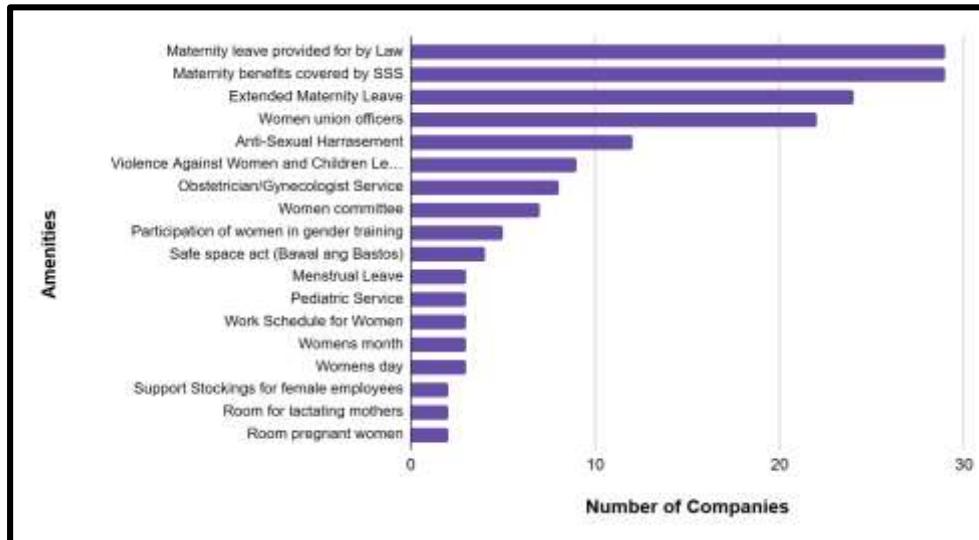


Figure 7 summarizes the amenities given only to women employees as embedded in the CBAs. There are maternity leave as provided by law, maternity benefits covered by SSS, extended maternity leave, women union officers, anti-sexual harassment, VAWC leave, establishment of a Women's Committee, participation of women in gender training/seminar, Safe Space Act/Bawal ang Bastos, Obstetrician/Gynecologist services, menstrual leave, pediatric service, women's month, women's day, work schedule for women, support stockings, room for lactating mothers, and room for pregnant women.

These women-specific benefits negotiated by the union, included in their CBA, show that there are unique needs and concerns of women addressed by employers. Most provisions comply with the Philippine labor laws based on the ILO Conventions ratified by the government. Similarly, some provisions were voluntarily given by the employer, like menstrual leave, Obstetrician/Gynecologist services, and support stockings. The range of benefits in the CBAs indicates how gender-responsive provisions can be customized to specific organizational nature and context while safeguarding women's rights and needs as individuals and as a group in the workplace and society

Highly valued Women-centric amenities by women employees

Figure 8.

Ranking of highly valued Women-centric amenities by women employees

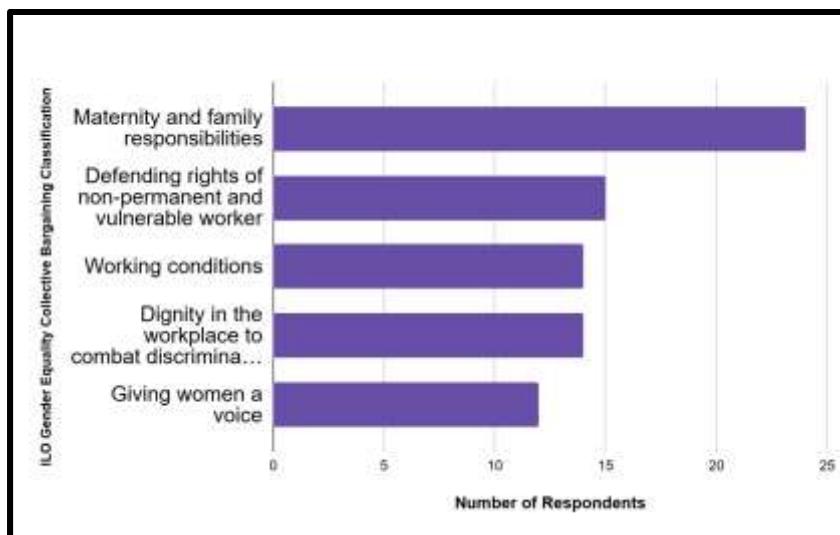


Figure 8 reveals that among the women-centric initiatives classified in five major issues in CBA gender bargaining, the 42 women respondents highly value most the maternity and family responsibilities amenities they enjoy, followed by defending the rights of non-permanent and vulnerable workers, 3rd on working conditions, 4th on dignity at the workplace to combat discrimination and victimization, and lastly giving women a voice.

The women respondents overwhelmingly attributed a very high value to maternity and family responsibility amenities compared to the other major issues. The need for maternity benefits is a confirmation of the unique role of women in society, which is that of childbearing. Women's proper childbearing may foster self-actualization, promote maternal role attainment, improve their relationship with significant others, and enrich their family perspective. Moreover, this highlights the significance of the support given to women employees during pregnancy and early childcare periods for women's workplace satisfaction and retention. Our findings acknowledge the Women in the Workplace (2024) statement that 'benefits such as these are especially valuable to women, since they have more caregiving responsibilities. The preference for maternity and family benefits backs the study of Afroz (2017), specifically 'work and total life space' as a key element of quality of work life. The finding suggests that the unions should prioritize the amenities according to importance in their future CBA negotiations

Impact on promoting gender equality among women employees

Table 1.

Impact on promoting gender equality among women employees

Impact	Frequency	Percentage
End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere	33	79%
Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life	32	76%
Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women	26	62%
Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure, and social protection policies, and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate	26	62%
Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels	26	62%
Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance, and natural resources, under national laws	26	62%
Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation	25	60%
Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights	24	57%
Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early, and forced marriage, and female genital mutilation	15	36%

Table 1 presents the impact of the gender-focused amenities on promoting gender equality by the 42 women respondents. These are: to end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere (79%), to ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life (76%), and to enhance

the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women (62%).

The results are in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goal # 5. The findings also support the operational framework proposition that ‘women-centric amenities in the CBAs based on the ILO (2004) Gender Equality Bargaining can promote gender equality of work life of women employees’. The observed impacts show Pillinger and Wintour’s (2023) contention that collective bargaining has played a role in closing gender gaps and positively impacting gender inequalities.

Several CBA provisions go beyond the Labor Code requirements, specifically: menstrual leave, obstetrician/ gynecologist services, support stockings for female employees, extended maternity leave beyond the legal minimum, rooms for pregnant women, pediatric services, and enhanced family planning programs. For example, while the Labor Code provides basic maternity leave, some CBAs offer extended maternity leave periods and additional maternity benefits beyond SSS coverage.

Impact on the quality of work-life of women employees

Table 2.

Impact on the quality of work-life of women employees

Impact	Frequency	Percentage
Enhanced job satisfaction	30	71%
Reduced job stress	26	62%
Enhanced employee loyalty and commitment	26	62%
Increased individual and company productivity	25	60%
Improved physical and mental health	25	60%
More time for the family	23	55%
More time for self-care	22	52%
More time with the community	18	43%
Reduced employee turnover (people resigning)	15	36%
Enhanced reputation of the company	15	36%
Reduced absenteeism	10	24%
Enabled organizations to attract and retain job applicants	8	19%

Table 2 reveals that the gender-focused amenities have had a specific impact on the quality of work life of women employees. They have enhanced their job satisfaction (71%), reduced their job stress (62%), and enhanced their loyalty and commitment (62%). Some expressed that it increased their individual and company productivity (60%) and improved their physical and mental health (60%).

Our findings assert that women-centric CBA provisions positively impact multiple dimensions of quality of work life, as pinpointed by the Yadav and Khanna (2014) model. The amenities they enjoy positively affect personal well-being (reduced job stress and improved health) and organizational outcomes (productivity, loyalty, and reduced turnover). The interplay of work and personal life epitomizes a compelling, precarious struggle to maintain equilibrium for employees, particularly for working women. Our lowest percentage result on “enabled organization to attract and retain job applicants” suggests an opportunity for employers to leverage their women-friendly policies on recruitment. Our results likewise validate Afroz's (2017) quality of work life factors, specifically those related to work environment, reward and recognition, and work-life balance.

Challenges women employees encountered in promoting gender equality in their workplace

Table 3.

Challenges women employees encountered in promoting gender equality in their workplace

Categories of Challenges	Frequency (n=18)	Percentage
Organizational culture	7	17%
Gender biases	7	17%
Lack of career advancement	2	5%
Lack of leadership opportunities	1	2%
Family responsibilities	1	2%

Table 3 shows that only 18 out of 42 respondents encountered challenges in promoting gender equality in their workplace. The low reporting of challenges (only 18 out of 42 respondents, or 43%) may reflect both the actual absence of challenges and the respondents do not want to appear ungrateful for the existing benefits they are enjoying from their CBA. These challenges are related to organizational culture (17%), gender biases (17%),

lack of career advancement (5%), lack of leadership opportunities (2%), and family responsibilities (2%).

Our results reveal an interesting pattern - only a few women employees encountered challenges in promoting gender equality in their workplace. Organizational culture is a barrier to gender equality seen in organizational structures, processes, and practices performed within human resources practices related to hiring, training, promotion, and pay. initiatives. Furthermore, organizational decision makers' prejudice on gender can affect their likelihood of making gender discrimination decisions and/or behaving in a sexist manner in their day-to-day interactions. The biases, whether conscious or unconscious, are most harmful and perpetuate discrimination against women. Our results prove the Discrimination Theory, which asserts that discrimination can establish barriers to equal treatment and opportunity and has profound effects on different outcomes.

Our findings on the lack of career advancement and leadership opportunities as challenges demonstrate the deeply rooted biases that continue to restrict women's opportunities for career growth and development, like a glass ceiling. These barriers remain a key factor in women's employee attrition, contribute to emotional and mental exhaustion, and lead to frustration and disengagement. These become obstacles in achieving the goal articulated in the UN SDG#5, specifically 5.5, on ensuring women's full and effective participation and their opportunity for leadership in all areas of decision-making, like in political, economic, and public life (UN Sustainable Development Goals, 2024). Our findings agree with Pillinger and Wintour's (2023) study that stresses the role that collective bargaining can play in closing gender gaps in company leadership positions.

Conclusion

Our findings revealed the capacity and commitment of unions to secure considerable CBA women-centric amenities that significantly contributed to promoting gender equality and improving the quality of work-life of women employees. They showed that unionized companies across various industries have provided women-friendly work amenities based on the ILO's (2004) Gender Equality Bargaining Model. The range of benefits in the CBAs indicates how gender-responsive provisions can be customized to specific organizational nature and context while safeguarding women's rights and needs as individuals and as a group in the workplace and society. It confirms that collective bargaining can be a leverage and a powerful mechanism to advance women's welfare.

The amenities extended to women employees by their employer confirm the belief that they exceed the requirements of the Labor Code and even provide

other amenities voluntarily beneficial to women. This is likewise a manifestation of the union's and employer's concern for women's unique needs to be addressed and become productive and engaged in the workplace. Women, like men, are afforded equal opportunities, protected from discrimination, and respected for living with dignity. Unions have played a significant role in advocating for better wages, improved working conditions, benefits, a safe and healthy work environment, and job security for women and men through collective bargaining. The union's resolve to bargain for provisions that benefit women reflects the strength and commitment of its leadership to women's issues because women's issues are the union's concerns.

The firms have long realized that their women employees are equally important stakeholders in making a better workplace where people would like to stay and that their business must also advance the pursuit of the UN Sustainable Development Goals such as Gender Equality and Decent Work so that the structure, processes, and practices of the organizations can move toward a sustainable future for the common good of working people like those women.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the study, we suggest the following courses of action to strengthen and continue the flourishing of women-centric benefits in unionized firms through their collective bargaining power: (1) The employer, to show its genuine concern for women's welfare and for the union to fight for women's equality in the workplace must enhance their CBA provisions to address substantially the issues of pregnancy discrimination, sexual harassment, career advancement, and childcare support; (2) The union composed of men and women officers must prepare the priority women-centric amenity proposals related to maternity and family responsibilities (e.g. work-from-home arrangements, parental leave, mental well-being, and holistic recreation); (3) that the women workers consider to be of high value for gender equality and work-life balance; (4) The employer and the union must ensure women's universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed under the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action; and (5) Both the employer and the union must enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology to promote the empowerment of women and provide women more training to improve their technical and behavioral competencies to engage more in various decision-making opportunities in the workplace.

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