Impact of Organizational and Supervisory Support Perceptions on the Turnover Intentions of Working Mothers-to-Be:
A Study of the Indian IT Sector

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the paper is to examine the various factors that influence turnover intentions of working women at the threshold of motherhood. The impact and interrelationships of variables like organisational and supervisory support perceptions, flexible-work-options, work-family conflict, job and family satisfaction, and their effect on turnover intentions are examined. A questionnaire survey of 203 working women of three categories—women undergoing infertility treatment, pregnant women, and new mothers of the Indian IT sector—was conducted and hypotheses tested through structural equation modelling. Results validated the model developed and confirmed the causal relationships whereby employees working in family-supportive work environments experienced lower levels of work-family conflict, and reduced work-family conflict thereby led to greater job and family satisfaction followed by lesser turnover intentions. The study reiterates the need for organisations to offer specific policies that allow working-women to continue their careers as they go through motherhood.

KEYWORDS

Family Satisfaction, IT Sector, Job Satisfaction, Turnover Intentions, Work-Family Conflict

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Changing social structures, with increasing number of families of dual income couples and single parent households along with growing care responsibilities of both children and elders has led to increased interest and research on how work and family responsibilities can be effectively balanced by employees (Neal and Hammer, 2007). Work-family conflict has long since been recognised as a major concern affecting both employees and employers (Lapierre et al, 2008). Several theorical frameworks have been used to study the complex and causal interrelationships of work and family along with studies focusing on the moderating influences categorised as person-specific, occupation-

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specific, organisation-specific and culture-specific (Bellavia and Frone, 2005; Poelmans, 2005) that affect work and family balance. Flexible work options have been one of the organisation-specific moderators and the relevance of alternative work arrangements such as telecommuting and flexible work options in reducing work-family conflict has been studied vastly in the western contexts (Allen 2001). Macik-Frey, Quick, Quick and Nelson (2009) studied the positive impact that flexible work options had on job decision latitude that helped reduce work-family conflict. There is a vast body of research that has studied the role of the supervisor and organisational policies in providing a family-supportive organisational environment that is crucial to reducing the work-family conflict (Thomas and Gangster, 1995, Friedman and Johnson, 1997). There are also theoretical and empirical reasons that explain as to how a family-supportive work environment reduces work-family conflict and thereby enhances career and life outcomes such as job satisfaction, family satisfaction and organisational commitment (Lapierre et al, 2008).

On the contrary, in emerging economies such as India, the importance of family-friendly benefits and the need to reduce work-family conflict by providing family-supportive work environment and organisational policies have not been studied as rigorously as in the west. One of the main reasons attributed to this is the still prevalent gendered distribution of work and family roles (Bhalla and Kaur, 2011) despite the increasing economic role of women in the Indian context. So research in the Indian context has primarily been based on career role salience of women and men's role at crossroads and the requirement of sharing the family responsibilities for men such as in Parikh and Shah's, (1994). With the advent of information technology and enabled services (IT & ITES) in India, many organisations began providing non-work domain services such as gymnasiums, day care facilities, laundry facilities, canteen facilities etc in an attempt to adopt the western organisational practices (Devi, 2002). The IT sector still remains the front runner and possibly the only sector that offers family-friendly benefits such as flexible work options to its employees (Rajadhyaksha, 2012). There are theoretical and empirical evidences, that a family-friendly work environment that provides flexible work options reduces work-family conflict and results in favourable career outcomes such as job and family satisfaction and less turnover intentions, therefore a continuous career for women in the IT workforce. Despite the availability of family-supportive benefits in the IT sector, studies such as that of Rajesh and Ekambaram (2013), state that, childbirth and pregnancy were found to be two of the most important obstacles that led to women taking a career break many a times never to come back to full-time employment. A survey of 55 IT firms in India by NASSCOM in 2017 has reported an alarming decline and exit of women employees in the IT companies for these reasons (NASSCOM, 2017).

It is in this context, that in this study the researchers have investigated the interrelationships between family-supportive organisational perceptions, supervisory support perceptions and work-family conflict on the one hand and the causal effect therefore of work-family conflict on job and family satisfaction leading to lesser or greater turnover intentions with a special group of women from the IT sector which include women undergoing fertility treatment, pregnant women and women who had just given birth at the time of study. Figure 1 gives the graphic representation of the proposed model showing the interrelationships between the various variables under study.

The research paper has been organised as follows, section 1 of this paper presents the hypotheses of the study with existing literature on the various variables such as perceptions of supervisory and organisational support, work-family conflict, job and family satisfaction and turnover intentions. The next section explains the research methodology, analysis using structural equation modelling (SEM) using AMOS and the results of the study followed by the discussion, limitations and the implications for theoretical, societal and future research.

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