

Women Organization Commitment: Role of the Second Career & Their Leadership Styles

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The paper focuses on two issues of career women. First, the challenges of the second career which is often filled with uncertainty and stagnation. Second the perception that leadership style is based on gender. The paper is based on two short studies each addressing one of the problems mentioned above. In the first study, the perceived organization support is the independent variable and organization commitment is the dependent variable. Results show that women who opted for the second career and got the support of the organization also showed organization commitment. In the second study, leadership style was the independent variable and commitment was the dependent variable. The results showed that gender did not influence leadership style pointing at the androgynous leadership style of women.

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Introduction

The workplace gender gap in India is reinforced by the extremely low participation of women in the economy and low wages for those who work (136th ranking for estimated earned income). On average, 66 percent of women's work in India is unpaid, compared to 12 percent of men's. World Economic Forum (WEF) report 2017¹

Women in the workplace may face four issues: get-in, get-on, get-out and get-back to work. 'Opting out', which is a voluntary decision to discontinue one's career, is the result of various hurdles that women face at work

¹ PREDICAMENT OF RETURNING MOTHERS: A qualitative study on lived experiences of maternity and career. Purple Audacity Research & Innovation Pvt. Ltd. <http://gcwl-ashoka.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Final-Report-PREDICAMENT-OF-RETURNING-MOTHERS.pdf> accessed 31/8/2018.

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and is one of the major causes for the dearth of women in corporate executive bodies. There were 4.4 lakh women in India who 'opted out' and want to return after a hiatus, as per The India Skills report 2014 – Peoplestrong, CII, Wheebox. This is a huge pool of talented and skilled workforce that is underutilized. Professional women taking a career break and later facing difficulties in career re-entry is a significant problem in India. Women who are re-entering face career punishments even for short timeout periods; long time-out periods increase the risk of a downward move and reduce the chances of an upward move. The condition world over is not very promising either. The New York Times in 2003, mentioned a study at Harvard Business School that showed that out of the 93% of women who took career breaks and intended to get back to work, only 74% managed to do so and only 38% found full-time work. Therefore organizations need to equip themselves with policies, initiatives and facilities that facilitate an easier transition for women who return to work after a career break. Organizations have started making efforts to rein the problem. Deloitte, for example, made efforts to retain women professionals and brought about a cultural change with focused initiatives for women in Deloitte. This led to a 7% drop in the firm's annual turnover rate, helped save USD 250 million in hiring and training and provided impetus to its huge growth in the industry (McCracken, 2000).

Another related issue is women and their leadership styles. Women account for 49.6 percent (World Bank, 2014) of the population and 39.6 percent of the labour force (World Bank, 2014), but their representation at more senior corporate levels is significantly negligible in comparison. While leadership is a key ingredient for corporate success, one must be seen as a leader for achieving more senior positions. For this, the person must have and must be seen to have the potential for leadership, irrespective of gender. Studies performed in recent years have shown that women face more obstacles than men when they try to occupy positions of responsibility in organizations (Bass, 1990). It has been observed that men usually tend to have a higher social status and hence a greater access to power and resources as compared to women and consequently are accorded greater privilege (Ridgeway, 1992). The present study focuses on two research questions. First, are organizations perceived as supportive to women who opt for second careers thus leading to organizational commitment from women? Second, does the leadership of women lead to their organization commitment? To address these question two independent studies were carried out. The study I focused on the issue of career break and experience of perceived organization support by women who joined back and their organization commitment as an outcome. Study II focused on leadership styles of women and their commitment to the workplace.

Women & Second Careers

The theoretical support for addressing the issue of the second career is few.

The probable reason is that career counseling theories evolved at a time when the typical career client was young, male, white, able-bodied, publicly heterosexual, and ethnically homogenous individual population (Cook, Heppner & O'Brian, 2002). Some of the common assumptions about male population and work were that work was central to men and their identity, paid role was more important than other life roles like care of the family, and career development is progressive, rational and linear. According to Crozier (1999) and Cook et al. (2002), these assumptions about work did not address the challenges of women and career since women's career development is often non-linear, both complemented and frustrated by multiple-role fulfillment and shaped by the structure of opportunity.

Digging the issue a little deeper one realizes that the problem of the second career is a gendered problem and that gender is a multidimensional and multi-level phenomenon with many different facets (Korabik, 1999). These dimensions include intra-psychic aspects such as gender schemas and stereotypes, gender-role identity, and gender-role traits, attitudes, and values (Bem, 1993). They also include the manner in which men and women interact with one another (Deaux & Major, 1987) and the social roles they are expected to enact in a society (Eagly, 1987).

Research shows that women who interrupt their careers experience downward mobility in salary and status. This is a function of employer discontinuity;

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career redirection towards lower status, lower paid sectors of the economy and part-time work and skill obsolescence (Lovejoy & Pamela Stone, 2012). Many employers hold negative and stereotyped beliefs about married women or women with children (Hewlett, Luce, Shiller & Southwell, 2005). Therefore the second careers of women should be seen in the larger individual and environmental contexts and organizations need to mitigate the challenges and create avenues for women to join work again as second careers. This approach is also in line with Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (1979). Ecological interventions help in understanding and affirming women's life options, in managing multiple roles, in obtaining quality childcare, in creating healthy working environments, in improving access to role models and mentors, and equalizing salaries (Cook, et al, 2002). In this study, the organizational inclusion of women opting for second careers is measured through the construct of Perceived Organizational support (POS).

Perceived Organization Support

Perceived Organizational Support (POS) refers to employees' perception concerning the extent to which the organization values their contribution and cares about their well-being. POS has been found to have important consequences on employee performance and well-being.

Research on POS began with the observation that if managers are concerned with their employees' commitment to the organization, then employees are focused on the organization's commitment to them (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson & Sowa, 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Shore & Shore, 1995). According to organizational support theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Shore & Shore, 1995), employees who receive valued resources (e.g. pay raises, developmental training opportunities) develop their POS and feel obligated, based on the reciprocity norm (Gouldner, 1960), to strive to repay the organization by helping it reach its objectives. Since this is an expression of commitment, we took organization commitment as the outcome variable.

Organizational Commitment

Organization commitment is the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization (Mowday, Steers & Porter, 1979). It entails three factors: 1) a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, 2) a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization and 3) a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization (Mowday, Steers & Porter, 1979). Meyer and Allen (1991) defined organizational commitment as reflecting three broad themes: Affective, Continuance, and Normative. Thus, commitment is viewed as reflecting an affective orientation to-

ward the organization, recognition of the costs associated with leaving the organization, and a moral obligation to remain with the organization. Common to all conceptualizations, they argued was the belief that commitment binds an individual to an organization and thereby reduce the likelihood of turnover. The key difference is in the mind-set presumed to characterize the commitment. The mindset reflected three distinguishable themes: Affective attachment to the organization, labeled Affective commitment, the perceived cost of leaving, labeled Continuance commitment and obligation to remain at the organization, labeled Normative commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Employees with high POS have been found to reciprocate with increased in-role and extra-role performance (Eisenberger et al., 2001). Since POS incorporates the belief that the organization is concerned with one's well-being and values one's contributions, we expect that employees with high POS may trust the organization and show commitment. Therefore we hypothesized that:

H_{1a}: Perceived organizational support leads to the experience of organization commitment among women opting for second careers.

H_{1b}: Perceived organization leads to the experience of Affective, Normative and Continuance dimensions of organization commitment.

Leadership Styles & Gender

Leadership style is defined as relatively stable patterns of behavior that are

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manifested by leaders (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001) or the alternative ways that leaders pattern their interactive behavior to fulfill their role as leaders (Bass, 1990). Leadership leads to higher subordinate performance and satisfaction (Dumdum, Lowe, Avolio & Yammarino, 2002; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Lowe, Kroeck & Sivasubramaniam, 1996). This can therefore also increase the commitment of the leaders. Therefore it is hypothesized that:

H_{2a}: Leadership style leads to the experience of organization commitment by leaders

H_{2b}: Leadership style leads to the experience of affective, normative and continuance commitment by the leaders.

Since the 1970s, the need to differentiate between genders was brought to light by researchers (Bem, 1974; Spence, Helmreich & Stapp, 1975). These researchers have defined gender (that is, whether someone is a man or a woman) as pertaining to the psychosocial ramifications of biological sex (that is, whether they are male or female, Unger, 1979). Gender, however, consists of much more than just the biological attributes.

Linking Gender and Leadership:

It is observed that stereotypical mascu-

line behaviors are still considered important for leadership. This is one of the reasons for the under-representation of women in leadership roles in organizations. This can possibly lead to male and female leaders using different leadership styles (Cuadrado, Morales & Recio, 2008; Eagly & Carli, 2003a, 2003b; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Wood & Eagly, 2010). Studies carried out with the MLQ (Dumdum, Lowe, & Avolio, 2002; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Lowe, Kroeck & Sivasubramaniam, 1996) have consistently shown that transformational leadership leads to higher subordinate performance and satisfaction levels than transactional leadership. Transactional leaders also produce positive effects on these variables, but such effects are always lower than those achieved by transformational leaders (Molero, Cuadrado, Navas & Morales, 2007). The dimension of consideration, leading democratically, and being interpersonally oriented are often referred to as feminine leadership styles, whereas being instrumental, task-oriented, and autocratic are considered masculine leadership styles (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Gardiner & Tiggemann, 1999; Klenke, 1996). The meta-analytical results (Eagly et al., 2003; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; van Engen & Willemssen, 2004) show that women adopt democratic and transformational leadership styles to a greater extent than men. This points at the androgynous approach to leadership styles. Although masculinity still appears to have a significant relationship with leader emergence, a possible relationship between androgyny and leader emergence indicates that the pos-

session of feminine characteristics, in balance with masculine ones, also may be important in perceptions of leadership (Kolb, 1997). According to Kent and Moss, (1994) contrary to previous findings that identify “female deficiencies” as a reason why few women have made it to the top, the emergence of androgynous leaders suggests that the possession of feminine characteristics does not decrease an individual’s chances of emerging as a leader as long as the individual also possesses masculine characteristics. If women are more likely to be androgynous, they may have a better chance of rising to leadership status.

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Therefore it is hypothesized that:

H₃: Leadership style of women is not different from men in organizations

H₄: There is no difference in the experience of organization commitment and its sub-dimension among women and men leaders.

To test the above hypotheses we conducted two separate studies. These are mentioned below followed by a discussion linking together the outcome of both the studies.

Study I

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of perceived orga-

nizational support on organizational commitment among women with second careers. The study was conducted on women who had taken career breaks due to reasons like marriage, maternity, care for children or dependent parents, and higher studies. The age ranged from 25 to 40 years and the break in service varied from 3 months to 5 plus years. Most of the respondents were graduates though there were some post-graduates also. Perceived organizational support was measured through the abridged Perceived Organizational Support scale (Eisenberger et al., 1986). A seven-point Likert scale (1-strongly disagree, 7- strongly agree) was used to rate the responses. Organization commitment was measured through the Organizational Commitment Scale (Allen & Meyer, 1990) and the responses were obtained on a 7 point Likert scale. The questionnaire was sent out to a sample of 100 women and 54 filled responses were received. Data were analyzed using the SPSS (version 21).

Results

The results were tabulated in the following tables 1-3.

Organization commitment is correlated significantly with its sub-dimensions (Affective commitment $r=0.74^*$, Continuance commitment $r=0.66^{**}$, Normative commitment $r=0.70^{**}$) and also with perceived organization support ($r=0.45^{**}$). Perceived organization support is not correlated with continuance and normative commitment.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Values of Perceived Organization Support and Organization Commitment and Its Sub-dimensions

	Descriptive Statistics			correlation				
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Organization commitment	Affective commitment	Continuance commitment	Normative commitment	Perceived organization support
Organization commitment	4.24	0.64	54	1				
Affective commitment	4.66	1.10	54	.74**	1			
Continuance commitment	3.88	0.89	54	.66**	.13	1		
Normative commitment	4.19	0.75	54	.70**	.28*	.33*	1	
Perceived organization support	5.13	1.13	54	.45**	.62**	.16	.06	1

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Table 2 Regression Results

DV	IV	Standardized beta value	R ²
Organizational commitment	Perceived organizational support	.45***	0.19***
Affective organizational commitment	Perceived organizational support	.62***	.37***

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level

Table 3 t-Test for Reasons for Opting for a Career Break and Experience of Organizational Commitment & Perceived Organization Support

	Mean score		t-test
	Career break for marriage and maternity	Career break for higher study	
Organizational commitment	4.27	4.17	0.43**
Perceived organization support	4.76	5.16	1.15*

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

The regression results show that 19% of perceived organization support explains organization commitment and 37% of affective commitment among women opting for second careers. Continuance and normative commitment did not explain commitment.

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The t-test compares the organization commitment and perceived organization support experience among women classified on the basis of the reasons for taking the career break. Higher commitment is experienced when the break in a career is for marriage and maternity reasons (Mean = 4.27) than for study break and sabbatical (mean = 4.17). At the same time perceived organization support is experienced more when the break is for

study and sabbatical (mean = 5.16) than for marriage and maternity (mean = 4.76).

Study II

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of leadership styles on organizational commitment in women and men. The age of the respondents ranged from 30 to 60 years. Most of them were graduates though there were some post-graduates also.

Leadership style was measured through the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Bas, 1985). Organization commitment was measured through the Organizational Commitment Scale (Allen & Meyer, 1990) and the responses were obtained on a 7 point Likert scale. The questionnaire was sent out to a sample of 100 respondents and 93 filled responses were received. Data were analyzed using the SPSS (version 21).

The results are tabulated in tables 4-6

Table 4 Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Values of Organization Commitment and Its Sub-dimension & Leadership Style

	Descriptive Statistics			Correlations				
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Leadership	Organization Commitment	Affective Commitment	Continuance Commitment	Normative Commitment
Leadership	3.32	.801	93	1				
Organization Commitment	3.12	.572	93	.29**	1			
Affective Commitment	3.42	.783	93	.39**	.71**	1		
Continuance Commitment	2.96	.804	93	-.11	.61**	.02	1	
Normative Commitment	2.99	.806	93	.34**	.83**	.52**	.27**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Organization commitment is correlated significantly with its sub-dimensions (Affective commitment $r=0.71^{**}$, Continuance commitment $r=0.61^{**}$, Normative commitment $r=0.83^{**}$) and also with perceived organization support ($r=0.45^{**}$). Leadership is not correlated with continuance commitment.

Table 5 Regression Results

DV	IV	Standardized beta value	R ²
Organizational commitment	Leadership style	0.29***	0.07***
Affective commitment		0.39***	0.14***
Normative commitment		0.34***	0.11***

Continuance commitment not significant
 ***. Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level

The regression results show that Leadership style explains 29% of organization commitment, 14% of affective commitment and 34% of Normative commitment. Continuance commitment values were not significant.

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Table 6 t-Test for Mean Difference between Gender for Leadership Style and Organization Commitment & Its Sub-dimensions

Gender		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t value	significance
Leadership	Women	74	3.33	.812	.094	.260	0.80
	Men	19	3.28	.777	.178		
Organization commitment	Women	74	3.12	.610	.071	-.053	0.96
	Men	19	3.13	.400	.092		
Affective commitment	Women	74	3.45	.848	.099	.688	0.49
	Men	19	3.31	.445	.102		
Continuance commitment	Women	74	2.95	.825	.096	-.249	0.80
	Men	19	3.00	.735	.169		
Normative commitment	Women	74	2.97	.826	.096	-.531	0.60
	Men	19	3.08	.740	.170		

t-test to understand the mean difference between gender for leadership style and organization commitment and its sub-dimensions did not show any significant results.

Discussion

The study was aimed at understanding the challenges of women in the work-

place. The study focused on two broad challenges. The first was whether organizations encourage re-entry of women to active worklife after a break in career. This was studied through the experience of perceived organization support by the women who returned to active career (re-join work again). The outcome variable was measured through organi-

zation commitment and its sub-dimensions.

The results show that perceived organizational support leads to the experience of organization commitment among women opting for second careers thus supporting the hypothesis 1_a. At the same time from the sub-dimensions of organization commitment only affective commitment was explained by perceived organization support thus the hypothesis 1_b was partially supported. The results also showed that though the experience of perceived organization support among women opting for career break due to family reasons (marriage and maternity) was low but their commitment was higher than those opting for study and sabbatical break. It also showed that organizations were treating career breaks differentially when it was for family reasons than for a study break. This also showed that organizations need to go a long way in making the workplace more inclusive for women aiming to create a work-life balance by opting for a career break.

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The second challenge was to understand whether leadership style led to an experience of organization commitment and if gender played a role in explaining the leadership styles of men and women. The result showed that leadership style explained organization commitment

Leadership style is influenced by the role expectation and not gender differences.

(thus hypothesis 2_a was supported). Leadership explained affective commitment and not normative and continuance commitment. Therefore hypothesis 2_b was partially supported. The result showed that the leadership style of women did not differ from men thus hypothesis H₃ was supported. This showed that leadership style is influenced by the role expectation and not gender differences. It also points at the androgynous leadership style (Kolb, 1997). The study also showed that commitment to an organization does not differ based on gender (thus hypothesis H₄ was supported).

Theoretical Implication

The implications from the study I is relevant for it lends support to the career counseling theories pointing at non-linear career needs of women (Cook, Heppner & O'Brian, 2002). The study is also in line with Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (1979) in affirming women's life options in managing multiple roles. It explains the interconnected and reciprocally influencing the nature of women's personal, academic, and career needs. The implications of study II strengthen the androgynous approach to leadership as a potent approach to understand feminine leadership. It breaks the myth of gender differences in leadership styles.

Managerial implication

The study I is relevant to the organizations because it provides an explanation to the policy makers and interventionists why women do not reach the senior rungs of the organizational hierarchy. It also shows that organizations view career breaks for higher studies more positively than that for family and childcare. This means that organizations should make efforts at making the place more gender neutral. Study II has strengthened the belief in the androgynous leadership style. This will remove the inhibitions in making childcare available and affordable in organizations.

Limitations & Future Direction

The study has some important limitations. First, the sample size is very small and therefore it can be seen only as a dipstick study of the issues examined. With such a small sample size it will be difficult to draw conclusions for the population at large. Second, the study is limited as the data is collected from only one state in India and therefore is not representing the trend on a country-wide scale. Third, cross-sectional self-reported data are prone to methodological bias, consequently, future investigations should incorporate other research methodologies, such as interview and repeated cross-section designs. Despite these limitations, the study opens doors for examining contemporary issue like second careers and androgynous leadership styles as it will go a long way in enabling organizations design inclusive policies and

strategies to manage diversity in the workplace.

Conclusion

The findings are beneficial not only for theory, practitioners and businesses but also for broader policy-making concerning diversity management. This will also pave the way for future investigations in to further examining gender issues in the workplace.

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