


Leadership Excellence and Gender in Organizations

Post-maternity leave work re-entry: A couples perspective

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ABSTRACT

Post-maternity leave re-entry into the workplace can be an intense psychological and physical experience for a mother. Re-entry can create home stress as her increased work demands may result in the threat of or actual loss of resources (e.g., time, energy) to care for her new child. While mothers are the primary actors in the experience of maternity leave and workplace re-entry, women in dual-earner couples share this experience with a significant other (SO) who can also experience home stress. We suggest that two sources of social support will be particularly important during this time—perceived significant other support (PSOS) and organizational support (POS). Integrating conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 2001) and theory and research describing the relative contribution of team members (Mathieu, Tannenbaum, Donsbach, & Alliger, 2014), we hypothesize that a mother's perceptions of social support will not only shape her experiences but also her SO's experiences of home stress which, in turn, will affect their behaviors both within their home and their organizations. Using a multi-stage dual-earner couples study, we empirically tested the effects of PSOS and POS on both mothers' and their SOs' interpersonal deviant behaviors at home and at work driven by home stress.