

Leadership Excellence and Gender in Organizations

An examination of the relationship between perceived organizational support for family flexibility, supervisor support for family flexibility, and the use of family friendly benefits

Ellen Smith
smithelf@iupui.edu

Margaret S. Stockdale
pstockda@iupui.edu

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An Examination of the Relationship Between Perceived Organizational Support for Family Flexibility, Supervisor Support for Family Flexibility, and the Use of Family Friendly Benefits

“Family-friendly” benefits and policies help employees navigate the demands of work and family life, and research has shown that these policies benefit both the employee and the organization (Saltzstein, Ting, & Saltzstein, 2001). However, there is evidence that employees are not taking advantage of these benefits for fear of being stigmatized (Williams et al., 2013). Thus, use of flexibility benefits entail an assessment of both its benefits and its risks.

The current study explores two possible configurations of the interplay between perceptions of organizational support for flexibility (FSOP) and supervisor support for flexibility on female employees’ requests to utilize FWAs. We hypothesized that FSOP mediates the relationship between supervisor support for family flexibility and benefit use. Additionally, we hypothesized that supervisor support moderates the relationship between FSOP and benefit use, such that positive supervisor support magnifies the positive impact of organizational support, whereas negative supervisor support suppresses the impact of organizational support on employees’ decisions to utilize FWAs.

These hypotheses were tested on a sample of 431 working women in the Indianapolis area who were members of a non-profit women’s organization. Support was found for both hypotheses. Results emphasize the importance of supervisor support in both triggering flexible organizational support perceptions as well as magnifying those perceptions, which, in turn, increase use of FWAs.