

## **WORK ADJUSTMENT FOR THE REENTRANT WOMEN**

*Melien Wu, Department of Business Administration, National Chiayi University, 580, Sinmin Rd., Chiayi City, Taiwan, 60054, +886-5-273-2846, melien@mail.ncyu.edu.tw*  
*Chao-Chih Hung, Boarke Machine Co., Ltd., 279, Tung Chou Rd., Shen Kang District, Taiwan, 429, +886-4-2522-1792, billhung8888@yahoo.com.tw*  
*Hsiu-Mei Yu, Department of Business Administration, National Chiayi University, 580, Sinmin Rd., Chiayi City, Taiwan, 60054, +886-5-273-2846, N/A*

### **ABSTRACT**

The reentrant women, defined as those whose career were breached due to family responsibilities but returned to work later, was a major source of labor. The study examined the relationships among personal characteristics, perceived organizational support and work adjustment for the reentrant women. Analytical results from 201 reentrant women were summarized as follows: While core self-evaluation (CSE) was found to be positively related to interpersonal relationships adjustment, it was negatively related to the gender barriers and job pressure adjustments. Those women who had more children reported higher degree of interpersonal relationships adjustment. Finally, women who perceived higher degree of organizational support reported lower degree of job pressure adjustment and higher degree of interpersonal relationships adjustment. The practical and research implications of these findings were discussed in terms of providing a family-friendly work environment and work-family conflict consultation for the reentrant women.

**Keywords:** Reentrant Women, Core Self-Evaluation, Perceived Organizational Support,  
Work Adjustment

### **INTRODUCTION**

The issue of increasing female labor participation has attracted many attentions from both the business and academia. Although the rate of Taiwanese female labor participation has increased from 45.4% to 49.6% in the last decade 【1】, it is still lower than most of the economic developed countries, such as the United States of America or Japan. Chien (2004) maintained that the major reason for low female labor participation in Taiwan being that most women's career development was breached when married. Women were still expected to perform the traditional female roles in Taiwan as well as in many countries. Other studies have also posited that woman's career development was confined by her family life stage 【2】【3】【4】. As such, women compromised their career with the traditional roles-expectation of "housewife" or "mother."

The reentrant women, defined as those whose career were breached due to family responsibilities and returned to workplace later, was a major source of female labor. According to the Taiwanese official statistics, for women whose ages were between 15 to 64 years old and whose career were interrupted because of marriage and family, the rate of job reentrant was 56.4% and the average year of job interruption was 7.3 years [1]. In other words, a large percentage of women reenter job market after the burden of their family roles being lessened.

Most previous studies on the reentrant women focused on the determinants of female's decision to reenter career jobs [4][5][6]. These researches identified human capital, family, social norms, and labor market as key factors for women's decision to work again. However, when the reentrant women went back to the workplace, they faced difficulties to adjust work environment including task or interpersonal requirements, which were different, sometimes conflicted, with their family environment and responsibilities. To study how well the reentrant women adjust their new work life may increase our understanding about women at work. In view of this, this study examined work adjustment for reentrant women from the perspective of human resource management. Specifically, this study examined the relative impact of personal characteristics including core self-evaluation personality traits, education, and number of children, and perceived organizational support on work adjustment for the reentrant women.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES**

Lin (2005) indicated that comparing with younger women, older women reported higher degree of overall work adjustment and its three dimensions: interpersonal relationship, job pressure, and job satisfaction. In other words, older women gained more work experiences and related resources because of seniority; therefore, they adjust better than the younger women. Furthermore, previous studies also found the positive relationship between education and reentrant decision [4][5][7]. Education prepared women with better skills and qualification. Women who have higher education regard themselves as more professional and experienced, and also evaluate themselves more positively. As such, this study hypothesized that women who are older or with higher education adjust work better than those who are younger or lower educated.

The past research found that women who did not have child-care responsibility were more likely to return to the labor force. The literature of work and family balance also concluded that the number of children at home was positively related to the degree of work-family conflict [8][9]. Having more children refers to facing more family demands. Hence, this study infers that those women who have more children at home would report higher degree of difficulty to adjust new work life.

The concept of CSE dispositional trait defines how humans evaluate themselves and their relationships with the environment [10]. In their series of studies, Judge and his colleagues [11][12][13] found

the positive relationships of core self-evaluation (CSE), as well as its dimensions: Self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability, with job performance and job satisfaction. Many Taiwanese studies supported Judge's findings【14】【9】. This study postulated that women with higher CSE would be more satisfy with their work environment, and hence adjust their work better.

Based on the above discussion, this research developed the first hypothesis as follows:

***H1 : Personal characteristics (age, education, number of children, CSE) will be related to work adjustment.***

Perceived organizational support (POS) is based on the employee's general perception concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being 【15】. Employees develop these global beliefs or perceptions based on day-to-day experiences and observations regarding how an organization treats its employees 【16】. Rhoades et al.【17】maintained that if employees recognized being respected, they reported higher degree of affective commitment. The study by Hochwarter and colleagues 【18】 echoed the findings of the positive relationship between perceived organizational support and job performance. In their study, Wang & Cheng 【19】concluded that when employees perceived respect and assistance from their organizations, they would strive to perform better to match their perceptions. Chen 【20】 also found that employees who perceived higher degree of organizational support reported higher degree of positive affectivity and lower degree of job stress. Based on the literature review, this study proposed the second hypothesis:

***H2 : The reentrant women who perceive higher degree of organizational support will report higher degree of work adjustment.***

## METHOD

*Sample.* In this study, we defined "reentrant women" as women who left work because of their marriage or family responsibility at least for three years and have recently returned to work for either business or public organizations less than one year. The sample was drawn from a convenient method. The present researcher asked EMBA students of the university where she worked to identify the targeted participants. A stamped, return envelope and cover letter were attached to each questionnaire. The cover letter explained the objective of the study and guaranteed respondent anonymity and confidentiality. Two questions on the questionnaire were designed to select our target sample, that is, woman who has left work because of her marriage or family for at least three years, and have recently returned to work.

Excluding those surveys containing missing data, the final sample was 201 responses. The mean age of the 201 respondents was 36.93 (S.D. =9.34), ranging from 31 to 45 years of age. The respondents report an average of 1 child at home (ranging from 0 to 5 children). Of the 201 participants, 116 (57.70%) had obtained at least a 4-year college degree; average organization tenure was 13.3 years (SD=8.14). Thirty-nine (19.50%) referred themselves as lower to middle managers, 167 (80.5%) as

regular employees.

### *Instruments.*

*Work Adjustment.* Work adjustment was operationalized as the degree of fit between the reentrant woman's ability/skills and work content and environment [21]. Wu [22] modified Herschensohn's scale into three dimensions: interpersonal relationship (12 items), gender barrier (10 items), and job stress (12 items). Respondents rate each item on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The higher score of interpersonal relationship dimension meant better adjustment. Gender barrier and job stress were scored reversely which the higher score meant more difficult to adjust. Wu [22] obtained a satisfactory internal consistency of items with Cronbach's  $\alpha$  above 0.80 for each dimension.

*CSE.* CSE was measured using modification scale with 12-item from Judge, et al. [10], which was meant to assess the intersection of the four straits: Self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability. Participants indicated their degree of agreement with statements such as "I am confident I get the success I deserve in life", "sometimes I feel depressed", "when I try, I generally succeed" and "sometimes when I fail I fell worthless".

*Job Satisfaction.* The 20-item short form of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) was used to assess overall job satisfaction [23]. Response categories ranged from 1=very dissatisfied to 5=very satisfied. The Cronbach's reliability was 0.82.

*Perceived Organizational Support (POS).* POS was measured using selected eight items from Eisenberger et al. [15]. Respondents indicated the extent of their agreement with each item on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1=strongly disagree, 6= strongly agree).

## **RESULTS**

Table 1 shows the intercorrelations among the measures used in the study. Thirteen of the resulting 28 correlations (46.4%) were significantly different from zero ( $=0.05$ ). Age and education were significantly correlated with number of children. While older women reported having more children, the more educated women had fewer children at home. CSE was positively correlated to POS and interpersonal relationship adjustment, but negatively correlated with gender barrier and job stress adjustment. In other words, women with higher CSE adjust interpersonal relationship better, but experienced more difficulty to adjust gender barrier and job stress. Finally, POS was positively correlated with interpersonal relationship adjustment and negatively related with job stress adjustment.

Table 1 Inter-correlation coefficients among measures used in the study

	age	No. of children	education	CSE	POS	Interpersonal Relationship	Gender Barrier	Job Stress
Age	-							
No. of children	.58**	-						
Education	-.13	-.22**	-					
CSE	.09	.12	.03	(0.79)				
POS	.08	.05	.05	.17*	(0.82)			
Interpersonal Relationship	.15*	.22**	-.01	.45**	.21**	(0.64)		
Gender Barrier	.07	.07	-.04	-.23**	.04	-.42**	(0.79)	
Job Stress	-.04	.04	-.04	-.17*	-.24**	-.31**	.28**	(0.84)

Note : n=201 ; \* \*p<0.05 , \*p<0.01 ; education : 1= 12 years or under, 2= high school , 3= college or above;

Number in parenthesis is Cronbach's  $\alpha$ .

Hypotheses were tested using multiple regression analysis to examine the relationship between personal characteristics (age, education, number of children, CSE), POS and three work adjustment dimensions. The results were shown in table 2.

Table 2 Multiple Regression Analysis of Personal Characteristics and POS on Work Adjustment

Independent Variables	Work Adjustment		
	InterpersonalR relationship	Gender Barriers	Job Stress
Personal Characteristics			
age	.01	.06	-.07
education	.01	-.02	-.01
number of children	.15*	.06	.11
CSE	.41***	-.25***	-.14*
POS	.13*	.06	-.22***
R <sup>2</sup>	.25	.07	.08
Adj-R <sup>2</sup>	.23	.05	.06
F	12.71***	2.90**	3.49**

note : n=201 ; \*p<0.05 , \*\*p<0.01 , \*\*\*p<0.001 ; education was recoded as 0=high school or under, 1=college or above

Among personal characteristics, CSE was the strongest predictor of work adjustment. Women with higher CSE reported positive adjustment of interpersonal relationship ( $\beta=0.41$ ), but negative adjustment of gender barrier ( $\beta=-0.25$ ) and job stress ( $\beta=-0.14$ ). Number of children predicted interpersonal adjustment only ( $\beta=0.15$ ). Controlling for personal characteristics, POS positively predicted interpersonal adjustment ( $\beta=.013$ ), but negatively predicted job stress adjustment ( $\beta=-0.22$ ). To conclude, both two hypotheses were partially supported in the current study.

## DISCUSSION

The unique contribution of this study is to investigate work adjustment for the reentrant women in Taiwan. While core self-evaluation (CSE) was found to be positively related with interpersonal relationships adjustment, it was negatively related with the gender barriers and job pressure. Women who had more children reported higher degree of interpersonal relationships adjustment. Finally, women who perceived higher degree of organizational support reported lower degree of job pressure and higher degree of interpersonal relationships adjustment. The practical and research implications of these findings were discussed in terms of providing a family-friendly work environment and work-family conflict consultation for the reentrant women.

## REFERENCES