



Gender differences in the family-relatedness of relocation decisions

Jan Ullrich^{a,*}, Helen Pluut^b, Marion Büttgen^a

^a Department for Corporate Management, University of Hohenheim, Schloss Osthof/Ost, 70593 Stuttgart, Germany

^b Department of Organisation Studies, Tilburg University, Warandelaan 2, 5000 LE Tilburg, The Netherlands

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 24 April 2015
Received in revised form 15 June 2015
Accepted 16 June 2015
Available online 20 June 2015

Keywords:

Relocation
Career
Family-relatedness of work decisions
Spouse
Gender

ABSTRACT

Using a dyadic study design, the present study draws on research into the family-relatedness of work decisions to examine the impact of the spouse's characteristics on an employee's willingness to engage in job-related relocation. With a sample of 1234 employees, the results show that spousal willingness to relocate mediates (a) the negative effect of the spouse's community ties and (b) the positive effect of the spouse's job alternatives on an employee's willingness to relocate. The indirect effect of the spouse's job alternatives was stronger among female than among male employees. To validate employees' perceptions, this study uses matched data from a subsample of 207 employees and their spouses to test a multi-source model, which revealed several notable inconsistencies. Our exploration of discrepancies between employee and spousal ratings helps explain these differences between single-source and multi-source models. Overall, findings suggest that employees consider various spousal factors in their career decision-making, and the family-relatedness of relocation decisions is particularly strong among female employees.

© 2015 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

People's careers rarely unfold in a single employment setting anymore. Oftentimes careers are boundaryless, thus featuring substantial interorganizational mobility (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). Today's workforce is faced with the challenge to exhibit occupational mobility and flexibility in the work domain, yet such organizational demands are not easily reconcilable with employees' needs and their spouses' wishes and aspirations. The latter is particularly salient in the context of women's increased labor force participation, as it is not uncommon for both adult partners in a household to have career ambitions. Western societies have witnessed a steady increase in dual-earner households and non-traditional gender roles in recent decades (e.g., Haddock, Zimmerman, Lyness, & Ziemba, 2006; Marks, 2006; Masterson & Hoobler, 2015), and as the traditional single-wage earner model fades, decision-making in the work domain increasingly is affected by family factors. We therefore believe that the shift toward dual-earner families has important implications for the study of work decisions. As Greenhaus and Powell (2012) note, the "family-relatedness of work decisions is a general phenomenon that applies to a variety of work-related decisions" (p. 246).

One of those decisions involves relocation, or the decision to accept a job transfer that requires a change of location. With the shift toward boundaryless careers, employees must make relocation decisions at various stages throughout their careers. The decision to relocate constitutes a role entry decision (Powell & Greenhaus, 2010) that is central for career planning but may have important implications for the (members of the) family domain. The costs associated with moving are particularly high for dual-earner couples because the spouse must quit his or her job and leave a familiar social environment behind. Thus, an employee's decision to relocate could harm the spouse's well-being. In such situations, we argue, the decision-making process depends strongly on the characteristics of the affected spouse.

* Corresponding author at: Department for Corporate Management, University of Hohenheim, Schloss Osthof/Ost, 70593 Stuttgart, Germany.
E-mail addresses: J.Ullrich@uni-hohenheim.de (J. Ullrich), H.Pl uut@tilburguniversity.edu (H. Pluut), M.Buettgen@uni-hohenheim.de (M. Büttgen).

The present study tests a mediational model of relocation willingness that is based on the reasoning of the family-relatedness of work decisions (FRWD) framework (Greenhaus & Powell, 2012). As “gender differences ... are essential to consider to fully understand the work–family interface” (Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005, p. 181), our main goal here is to examine whether men and women equally consider their spouses' needs in deciding on relocation. A recent review on the role of gender in work–family decisions (Powell & Greenhaus, 2010) suggested that gender moderates the influence of family-related factors on work-domain factors. Hence, we set out to provide an in-depth examination of gender in the family-relatedness of relocation decisions.

2. Contributions of the present study

Despite abundant research on relocation and its impact on employees and their spouses, we still lack understanding about how and when the spouse's attributes are taken into account during relocation decision-making. This study aims to make a three-fold contribution to theory on work and family in general and to research on relocation decision-making more specifically. First, we examine which factors affect people's willingness to make a so-called joint move when one spouse has received a relocation offer. Numerous studies have investigated determinants of the willingness to relocate among employees, proposing and finding that the spouse's willingness to follow the employee is a key factor in influencing the employee's intentions. We intend to build on this stream of research by examining determinants of a spouse's willingness to move with the focal employee. Specifically, we put forward and test a model of relocation willingness that conceptualizes spousal willingness as a mediating construct between spouse attributes and employee willingness.

Second, we pursue a contribution to research on relocation decision-making by incorporating the perspective of the spouse through the use of a dyadic study design. Most studies regarding relocation decisions are characterized by an exclusive focus on the employee's perspective, thus relying on employee perceptions of spouse attributes (for an exception, see Eby & Russell, 2000). Although decisions ultimately are based on employees' perceptions of their spouses, it is imperative to validate perceptual self-reports and investigate the correspondence between employee perceptions and spousal ratings. With a dyadic survey design, we sample both employees and their spouses, which helps to address the criticism that previous research has adopted a one-sided perspective. We set out to test our proposed model not only based on employee perceptions but also based on multi-source data (i.e., from both employees and their spouses).

Third, and this perhaps constitutes our most important contribution, we aim to provide an in-depth examination of gender differences in the relocation decision-making process. We will examine whether men and women differ in the degree to which they consider their spouses while making this work-related decision. To further capitalize on the dyadic nature of the data, we intend to explore potential differences in perceptual biases between men and women when it comes to evaluating their spouses' characteristics. We believe that through the examination of both employees' and spouses' perceptions, the present study provides unique insights into the family-relatedness of work decisions and relevant gender differences therein.

3. Theoretical framework

Career decisions are influenced by various personal and family factors, resulting in so-called customized careers (Valcour, Bailyn, & Quijada, 2007). Customized careers involve a series of choices through which the employee attempts to construct a professional identity and creates arrangements that allow him or her to have a satisfying family life. Scholars thus need to look “at careers not only as the evolving sequence of paid work but also including how the employment cycle intersects with the family cycle and, in general, how it fits into a person's life experience” (Valcour et al., 2007, p. 194).

The influence of family factors on career decisions has attracted considerable scientific interest (Powell & Greenhaus, 2010, 2012; Tharenou, 2008). Especially for relocation decisions, family structure and the spouse's characteristics have fundamental roles (Baldrige, Eddleston, & Veiga, 2006; Bielby & Bielby, 1992). In building our conceptual model (see Fig. 1), we therefore draw on a framework proposed by Greenhaus and Powell (2012) that emphasizes the family-relatedness of work decisions (FRWD). In this framework, work-related decisions are influenced by the family situation, which is defined as “a bundle of family-related pressures, demands, responsibilities, or needs that call for the attention of a focal individual and have potential implications for the well-being of the individual's family” (Greenhaus & Powell, 2012, p. 248).

The decision to relocate is an impactful decision that affects the well-being of other family members, in particular the spouse. Relocation poses a threat to the social needs of accompanying spouses and interferes with their job or career aspirations. Indeed, spouse loss of social ties and problems with spouse employment are prominent stressors for relocating families (Eby et al., 2005). In this context, we expect that feelings of responsibility for their spouses' well-being shape employees' decision-making process, such that they will consider their spouses' needs in order to benefit the family or at least prevent harm to it. As such, the FRWD framework informs our focus on spousal factors as determinants of an employee's relocation willingness.

When it comes to spouse-related variables that could influence an individual to accept a relocation offer, spousal attitudes toward relocation are a critical factor for employees to consider, and such attitudes strongly depend on the expected costs of moving. Relocation is associated with two inevitable consequences for the accompanying spouse, at least on the short term. First, relocation typically involves a career interruption for the spouse who accompanies his or her partner in a job-related move (Eby, 2001). That is, relocation constitutes a role *entry* decision for one person (i.e., to accept a job that entails a change of geographic location) yet a role *exit* decision for the other person (i.e., to quit one's current job). Second, an accompanying spouse (and other family members) is confronted with having to leave the social environment behind (Rodgers & Rodgers, 2000). We expect these consequences to be

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/886713>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/886713>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)