

Examining the Impact of Working from Home on a Working Mother's Organizational Commitment: The Mediating Role of Occupational Stress and Job Satisfaction

Yemisi Awotoye
Gonzaga University

Golshan Javadian
Morgan State University

Israel Kpekpena
Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration

Considering the unique challenges that women experience following childbirth, we examined the impact of working from home (WFH) on their post-delivery organizational commitment. Drawing on the norm of reciprocity, we hypothesized a direct relationship between WFH and organizational commitment, and indirect relationships through the mediating roles of occupational stress and job satisfaction. Results showed that WFH positively impacts a working mother's post-delivery continuous and value commitment to the organization. Job satisfaction was found to mediate the relationship between WFH and continuous and value commitment, while occupational stress mediated the relationship between WFH and value commitment.

Keywords: working from home, organizational commitment, occupational stress, job satisfaction, working mother

INTRODUCTION

Women experience several challenges as they return to the workplace after the birth of a child. In fact, the two years following the birth of a child are a period of intense emotional and physical demands on the new mother (Leibowitz, Klerman, & Waite, 1992). Breastfeeding issues, sleep deprivation, lack of education about newborn care, and postpartum depression are some of the challenges many women face (Kanotra, D'Angelo, Phares, Morrow, Barfield, & Lansky, 2007). Mothers who decide to return to work after maternity leave must also juggle the competing demands of work and family, which can be a struggle for those who are emotionally and physically worn down. Among organizational policies, flexible work arrangements have been shown to have positive implications for working mothers in general. Flexible work arrangements refer to "the ability of workers to make choices influencing when, where, and for how long they engage in work-related tasks" (Hill et al., 2008, p.152). The increasing availability and adoption of information and communication technology has led to more flexible working

options for employees (Alexander, Dijst, & Ettema, 2010; Allen, Golden, & Shockley, 2015; Golden, Bulger, & Hoffman, 2016). Various types of flexible work arrangements include compressed work weeks, job sharing, part-time work, flextime, and flexplace, with the most prevalent and applied workplace flexibility practices being flexplace and flextime (Baltes, Briggs, Huff, Wright, & Neuman, 1999; Coenen & Kok, 2014; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). When flextime or flexibility in work hours occurs, it can help working mothers accommodate family demands and deal with unpredictable family circumstances without incurring penalties for absenteeism (Anderson, Binder, & Krause, 2003; Damaske, Ecklund, Lincoln, & White, 2014). Flexplace or flexibility in the location of work, such as the option to work from home, facilitates combining employment with mothering by reducing commute times and more efficiently integrating work and childcare (Fuller & Hirsh, 2019). Research suggests that mothers who use flextime or flexplace (also known as telework or telecommuting) are less likely to leave their jobs or reduce their working hours after childbirth (Chung & Van der Horst, 2018). Nevertheless, even though research has examined the impact of flexible work arrangements on working mother's behavioral work-related outcomes such as turnover and absenteeism, our understanding of how such arrangements shape a working mother's overall attitudes towards organizations is limited. This leaves a gap in the literature given that our understanding of the impact of flexible work arrangements on working mothers is limited to behaviors and not the other aspects of attitudes. Attitudes (known as the individual's response to stimuli) include cognitions and affect in addition to behavior (Breckler, 1984). Cognitions and affect refer to perceptual and emotional responses, while behavior refers to explicit actions (Breckler, 1984). Given the crucial impact of affect and cognition on an individual's behavior (Ratner & Herbst, 2005), it is important for all aspects of attitude to be understood. While we know flexible work arrangements impact women's intentions to return to work after childbirth and stay employed but we also need to understand how these arrangements shape their attitude towards the organization as they continue to work for the organization. Our objective in this study is to address the gap in the literature with regards to the effects of flexible work arrangements on a working mother's attitudes towards the organization upon their return to work after childbirth. We do so by examining how such arrangements impact a working mother's commitment to their organization. Our focus is on the impact of flexible work arrangements after childbirth since the transition to motherhood is such a critical life event for women's work-related outcomes (Arntz, Dlugosz, & Wilke, 2017). Given several unique issues that come with being a new mother such as postpartum depression, infant care responsibilities and changing sleep patterns (Nelson, Kushlev, & Lyubomirsky, 2014), new mothers appear to be a unique population deserving of study with regards to their attitudes and decisions. Researchers have examined the resulting work-related effects of the aforementioned unique issues. For example, postpartum depression has been associated with higher psychological demands, lower schedule autonomy, and lower perceived control over work (Dagher et al., 2009). Accordingly, women who return to work after childbirth experience unique challenges and it is important for organizations to have a better understanding of how workplace policies impact their attitudes. In this study, we intend to look at telework as a form of flex work that shapes a mother's attitude towards the organization upon their return to work after childbirth. Telework is "work performed by individuals who are employed by an organization but who work at home or at a telecenter for some portion of their working time during regular business hours" (Duxbury and Higgins, 2002, p. 157). We are specifically focused on "working from home" given that it is the reasonable form of teleworking for a working woman who has a newborn. Drawing on Gouldner's (1960) norm of reciprocity, which states that people who have received a favor of some sort are more likely to return the favor when the opportunity arises, we contend that working from home improves a working mother's commitment to their organization upon their return after childbirth. We also argue that this relationship is mediated by occupational stress and job satisfaction both independently and serially. Specifically, we argue that working from home decreases the working mother's occupational stress and that this reduced stress improves her commitment to the organization. We also suggest that working from home improves job satisfaction and that this improved satisfaction is expected to increase the working mother's commitment to the organization upon their return after childbirth. Furthermore, we argue that working from home reduces occupational stress, which in turn improves the working mother's job satisfaction. In this way,

improved job satisfaction resulting from lowered occupational stress enhances the working mother's commitment to the organization after childbirth. By exploring the relationship between working from home and a working mother's commitment to the organization upon their return after childbirth and by highlighting the possible mediators, this research attempts to offer a better understanding of *how* working from home can shape a working mother's attitude toward the organization after childbirth. A working mother's attitude towards working organization such as her organizational commitment is likely to not only improve the likeliness of her remaining in the organization but will also help improve other work-related outcomes such as attendance, performance, organization citizenship behavior and work-family conflict (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002). It must be considered that working from home may have a similar impact on all individuals within the organization. However, given the unique challenges working women face after childbirth, it is important to understand the impact of organizational policies specifically on working mother's commitment to the organization.

HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Working from Home and Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is considered a major factor in employee-organization relations (Kim, Eisenberger, & Baik, 2016; Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982), which has been examined through several different viewpoints. Among such viewpoints, is one, which examines commitment from the perspective of participation (continuance commitment) and production (value commitment) (Dhar, 2015; Mayer & Schooram, 1992). Based on the participation perspective, commitment is known as the desire to remain in the organization as a result of individual-organizational transactions over time (Hrebiniak & Alutto, 1972; Mayer & Schooram, 1992). Specifically, from this perspective, commitment is known as the process through which the goals of the individuals and the organization become congruent (Hall, Schneider & Nygren, 1970). Based on the production perspective, commitment is known as the willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization and the belief in and acceptance of its goals and values (Mayer & Schooram, 1992; Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian; 1974). Moreover, value commitment is known to reduce withdrawal behaviors such as lateness and turnover (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Research has identified several factors such as personal characteristics (Chughtai & Zafar, 2006; Steers, 1977); perceived organizational support (Kim, Eisenberger, & Baik, 2016); engagement (Albdour & Altarawneh, 2014); role states such as role conflict and role ambiguity; job characteristics such as task autonomy and challenge; organizational characteristics such as size and centralization; and group-leader relations such as leader consideration and leader initiating structure (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990) as the antecedents of organizational commitment. Organizational policies are also known to influence the individual's organizational commitment (Eaton, 2003). Overall, it is evident that perceived organizational support is known to enhance an individual's commitment to the organization (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Kurtessis et. al, 2017). Workplace flexibility policies and family-supportive policies, in particular, are known to increase organizational commitment (Allen, 2001; Eaton, 2003). According to Leslie, Manchester, Park, and Mehng (2012), flexible work practices have the potential to benefit employees. Prior research has shown that work from home arrangements offer potential relief to employees who have to juggle work and personal responsibilities (Bailyn, 1989; Tolbert & Simons, 1994). Working from home has also been found to result in higher positive attitudes, higher job satisfaction, and less work exhaustion (Bloom, Liang, Roberts, & Ying, 2014). Gajendran and Harrison (2007) also found that being able to work from home resulted in a lower incidence of work-family conflicts. Organizational benefits such as less employee attrition and the ability to attract and retain the best talents have also been linked to working from home (Blair-Loy & Wharton, 2002; Bloom et al., 2014). Wang and Walumbwa (2007) found a positive relationship between family-friendly programs and organizational commitment, moderated by transformational leadership. In a sample of managers and professionals in a global firm, Blair-Loy and Wharton (2004) found that those with the heaviest job demands and least supportive work groups tended not to use flexible work policies and were consequently reported lower commitment to the organization. Onken-Menke, Nüesch, and Kröll (2018) also provided meta-analytic evidence showing that

flexible work schedules and sabbaticals result in increased organizational commitment. However, they pointed out that telecommuting did not have the same effect on commitment. Although the aforementioned studies included research on both men and women, we believe that working from home benefits women and especially working mothers in a unique manner. The relationship between working from home and organizational commitment has not been examined for working mothers, specifically for those who have recently had a child. Given the challenges working women face after childbirth, it is very likely for their commitment to the organization to diminish if they do not perceive the organization as one that accommodates them. The relationship between working from home and a working mother's organizational commitment can be explained through the implications of the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960). Based on this theory, individuals who have received a favor feel some sense of obligation to return the favor when there is an opportunity to do so, and if they have been treated unfairly, people also tend to retaliate. Consequently, once an individual receives benefits from an organization, a balanced, positive attitude toward the organization is expected (Grover and Crooker, 1995). A working mother who has recently returned to work and has the option to work from home benefits from an organizational policy that allows her to have more flexibility to balance the demands of a newborn and employment. She perceives the organization as one that treats its employees well and is prompted to respond positively to such favorable policies. To balance the behavior (benefiting from working from home) with a favorable response, she forms positive attitudes toward the organization and is expected to show increased commitment toward the organization. This commitment is expected to exist both in the form of participation and production. A working mother who has recently returned to work and has been offered the flexibility to work from home is likely to remain in the organization as the result of this type of favorable individual-organizational transaction. Thus, working from home positively influences her continuance commitment. The organization will expect her to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization as a response to a policy that allows her to manage the demands of motherhood and employment more effectively. Thus, working from home positively influences her value commitment. Accordingly, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 1a: Working from home positively impacts a working mother's continuance commitment to the organization. ***Hypothesis 1b:*** Working from home positively impacts a working mother's value commitment to the organization.

The Mediating Role of Occupational Stress

Whereas working from home is expected to have a direct influence on organizational commitment, we argue that working from home may also indirectly improve organizational commitment through the mediating effects of occupational stress. Stress is known as an "unpleasant emotional experience associated with elements of fear, dread, anxiety, irritation, annoyance, anger, sadness, grief, and depression" (Motowidlo, Pachard & Manning, 1986: pp. 618). Occupational stress, which is caused by specific events that happen at work, is known to influence several work-related outcomes including job performance (Adriaenssens, De Gucht, & Maes, 2013). Working from home is negatively associated with occupational stress. Research has shown that working from home reduces stress (see Gajendran and Harrison, 2007 for a review). Specifically, working from home can reduce the stress of getting ready and commuting to work (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Pierce & Newstrom, 1980; Richardsen, Traavik, & Burke 2016.) For a woman who has to attend to the needs of a baby, getting ready and commuting to work is a considerable cause of stress. Working from home will reduce stress because she will have more time to attend to her child(ren) before starting her workday and will not have to worry about being late to work, which itself causes distress due to the negative reputational consequences of lateness (Pierce & Newstrom, 1980). Although Lozano, Hamplová, and Le Bourdais (2016) posit that flexibility does not appear to have any special advantage for the mothers they sampled, they also found that for the same group of women, having a non-standard schedule is associated with a significantly lower risk of experiencing stress. Therefore, we argue that the flexibility of working from home may also save the working mother time throughout the workday. For example, a working mother who is breastfeeding

would not have to spend time on pumping and can breastfeed her baby instead, which is less time-consuming. Working from home may also reduce the separation anxiety that the working mother may experience as the result of having to leave her infant. The peace of mind that comes from being close to her baby helps reduce her personal stress, which may by extension reduce occupational stress. In addition, research has identified several outcomes for occupational stress, including its impact on organizational commitment. Occupational stress is known to reduce an individual's commitment to the organization (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Among a sample of hospital nurses, Alipour and Monfared (2015) found that there is a significant inverse relationship between occupational stress and organizational commitment. For a working mother who is dealing with the personal stress of a new baby, the increase in occupational stress may exacerbate her declining continuous and value commitment to the organization. However, a working mother who has recently returned to work and has the option to work from home experiences less occupational stress, which can enhance her commitment to the organization. She will be more likely to remain committed to the organization and also more likely to exert effort on behalf of the organization. Accordingly, we argue that occupational stress mediates the relationship between working from home and organizational commitment of a working mother in terms of continuance commitment and value commitment. Working from home reduces her occupational stress, and the reduced stress enhances her commitment to the organization. Thus, we hypothesize:

***Hypothesis 2a:** Occupational stress mediates the relationship between working from home and a working mother's continuance commitment to the organization.*

***Hypothesis 2b:** Occupational stress mediates the relationship between working from home and a working mother's value commitment to the organization.*

The Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction

We also expect job satisfaction to mediate the relationship between working from home and the organizational commitment of a working mother. Job satisfaction has been defined as a pleasurable or positive emotional state which results from a person's appraisal of their job or their experiences in the job (Locke, 1976; Zablah, Carlson, Donovan, Maxham III, & Brown, 2016). Several individual and organizational factors have been identified as predictors and outcomes of job satisfaction. Among those factors are working from home and organizational commitment. Prior studies have found a positive relationship between flexible working and job satisfaction (Michel & Michel, 2015). Working from home increases job satisfaction (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007) and organizational commitment is known to increase as a result of job satisfaction (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Tarigan & Ariani, 2015). According to Tarigan & Ariani (2015), even though some scholars have likened the relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment to the case of the chicken and the egg, job satisfaction predicts each of the three dimensions of organizational commitment. Consistent with the assumptions of the norm of reciprocity, working from home is expected to increase a working mother's job satisfaction. A working mother who has recently returned to work and has the option to work from home will have more flexibility to balance the demands of motherhood and employment. She perceives the organization as one that treats its employees well and is prompted to respond positively to such favorable policies. To balance the behavior (benefiting from working from home) with a favorable response, she forms positive attitudes toward the organization and is expected to show increased job satisfaction toward the organization. As such, we expect working from home to have a positive influence on her job satisfaction. The increased satisfaction with the job is also expected to increase her commitment to the organization. A working mother who has recently returned to work and is satisfied with her job finds it less stressful to manage the work and family demands given the positive attitude she has toward her job. Such positive attitudes can increase her commitment to the organization. She will be more likely to remain committed to the organization and more likely to exert effort on behalf of the organization. Consequently, we argue that job satisfaction mediates the relationship between working from home and organizational commitment of a woman in terms of continuance commitment and value commitment. Working from

home increases her job satisfaction and the increased satisfaction enhances her continuous and value commitment to the organization. Thus, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 3a: *Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between working from home and a working mother's continuance commitment to the organization.*

Hypothesis 3b: *Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between working from home and a working mother's value commitment to the organization.*

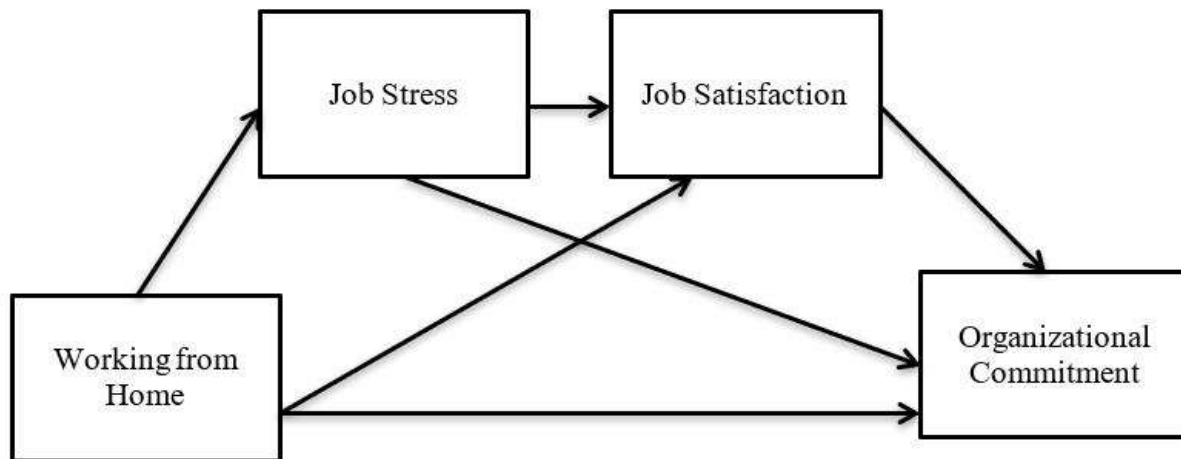
The Serial Effect of Occupational Stress and Job Satisfaction

As discussed above, occupational stress and job satisfaction are both mediators in the relationship between working from home and a working mother's organizational commitment upon her return to work after childbirth. At the same time, occupational stress is known to influence job satisfaction (Burke, 1988; Leong, Furnham, & Cooper, 1996; Sullivan & Bhagat, 1992). This relationship is expected to extend to working mothers who return to work after childbirth. Reduced occupational stress increases her job satisfaction by enabling her. More specifically, the reduced stress levels that result from working from home enable the working mother to be more content with her job, given that she has the flexibility to manage her work demands more effectively. The enhanced job satisfaction will, in turn, improve her continuous and value commitment to the organization. As a result, we argue that occupational stress and job satisfaction serially mediate the effects of working from home and a working mother's organizational commitment in terms of continuance commitment and value commitment. In other words, a working mother's organizational commitment is enhanced by working from home through the effects of reduced occupational stress and increased job satisfaction. Working from home decreases her occupational stress, which results in increased job satisfaction, which in turn improves the value commitment and continuance commitment. Thus, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 4a: *The relationship between working from home and a working mother's continuance commitment is sequentially mediated by occupational stress and job satisfaction.*

Hypothesis 4b: *The relationship between working from home and a working mother's value commitment is sequentially mediated by occupational stress and job satisfaction. Figure 1 shows the conceptual model illustrating the hypotheses presented above.*

FIGURE 1
THEORETICAL MODEL DEPICTING POTENTIAL MEDIATING RELATIONSHIPS



METHODOLOGY

In our study, we pursued initial evidence that working from home improves the organizational commitment of working mothers in terms of continuous and value commitment and that job stress and job satisfaction mediate this relationship. We argued that job stress and job satisfaction independently and serially mediate the relationship between working from home and organizational commitment.

Data Collection and Sample

A web-based, cross-sectional survey was developed and distributed to a random sample of working new mothers in the United States (US), Australia and the United Kingdom (UK). We chose these countries in order to ensure variety in our sample in terms of the time and the conditions under which mothers return to work. These three countries have varying maternity leave policies in terms of pay and length of leave. In the United States, maternity leave is not explicitly offered as a national labor policy but is housed within the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), which was enacted in February 1993 (US Department of Labor, n.d). Although several amendments have been made to the original FMLA Act of 1993, a core feature of the Act is that employers are mandated by law to protect an employee's job while he or she is on FMLA leave, which typically lasts for about 12 weeks in the US and is generally unpaid (Lenhoff & Withers, 1994; Mayer, 2012). Although the FMLA is in effect all over the United States, it does not apply to every organization. In particular, the FMLA does not apply to organizations with fewer than 50 employees (Gault, Hartmann, Hegewisch, Milli, & Reichlin, 2014). It is important to note however that some states like California, New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island offer paid maternity leave laws, and Washington State is set to offer it from January 2020. However, the majority of states do not offer paid maternity leave. In Australia, employees are entitled to 12 months of unpaid leave, and 18 weeks of paid maternity leave paid at the national minimum wage rate from the Parental Leave Pay scheme (Federal Register of Legislation, n.d.). This scheme is in addition to any other leave pay the woman would normally get from her employer and can be taken simultaneously (Australian Government, 2017). Maternity leave in the UK typically lasts 52 weeks, 39 of which are paid. Of these 39 weeks, 6 are paid at 90% of the average before-tax weekly earnings, while the rest is paid at the lower of £138.18 or 90% of the employee's average weekly earnings (UK Government, n.d.). Obviously, mothers in the US return to work sooner than those in Australia and the UK, and they are more likely not to be paid during their leave. Given that our focus was on new mothers, and in keeping with previous research (e.g. Klerman & Leibowitz, 1999), we targeted working women in the US who had a baby in the previous 24 weeks, working women in Australia who had a baby in the previous 30 weeks, and working women in the UK who had a baby in the previous 64 weeks. In other words, we reached out to working mothers 12 weeks after their maximum allowed leave ended. Data collection was conducted through a contract with Qualtrics®, a third-party online survey company that maintains "panels" of potential research participants. The contract specified the 3 countries and the 12-week mark after the maximum allowed leave. All panel members had expressed interest in being recruited for online research and had provided their email to Qualtrics® to allow invitations to participate in specific studies. Qualtrics® sent out email solicitations for the current study to 1,348 individuals. 186 qualified individuals completed the survey, which translates into a response rate of 13.8 percent. 33 respondents were removed because they did not properly respond to attention seeker questions, leaving us with a final sample size of 153. 55 (35.9%) of the respondents were from the US, 55 (35.9%) from Australia and 43 (28.2%) from the UK. New mothers held several different occupations and had different educational backgrounds (see Table 1 for respondents' characteristics). The mean maternity leave length for US mothers in the sample was 2.24 months, for the UK it was 3.96 months, and for Australia, it was 7.65 months.

TABLE 1
RESPONDENTS CHARACTERISTICS

| Age | Number of Respondents | Percentage |
|---|------------------------------|-------------------|
| Less than 25 | 20 | 13.1 |
| 25 – 29 | 43 | 28.1 |
| 30 – 34 | 52 | 34 |
| 35 – 39 | 33 | 21.6 |
| 40 – 44 | 2 | 1.3 |
| More than 45 | 3 | 2 |
| Occupation | | |
| Management, professional, and related | 64 | 47 |
| Service | 11 | 7 |
| Sales & office | 17 | 11 |
| Production, transportation, and maintenance | 4 | 3 |
| Government | 12 | 8 |
| Other | 45 | 29 |
| Highest Level of Education | | |
| High school | 13 | 8 |
| Some college | 27 | 18 |
| 2-year college degree | 16 | 10 |
| 4-year college degree | 55 | 36 |
| Masters' degree | 27 | 18 |
| Doctoral degree | 7 | 5 |
| Professional degree | 8 | 5 |
| Country of Residence | | |
| United States | 55 | 35.9 |
| United Kingdom | 55 | 35.9 |
| Australia | 43 | 28.2 |
| Marital Status | | |
| Married | 109 | 71.2 |
| Single | 24 | 13.7 |
| Divorced | 4 | 2.6 |
| Separated | 3 | 2 |
| Never married | 16 | 10.5 |
| Income (in US dollars) | | |
| Less than 20,000 | 6 | 3.9 |
| 20,000 – 39,999 | 34 | 22.2 |
| 40,000 – 59,999 | 40 | 26.1 |
| 60,000 – 79,999 | 26 | 17 |
| 80,000 – 99,000 | 17 | 11.1 |
| 100,000 or more | 30 | 19.6 |

Measures

Work from Home was measured on a 1 item scale. We asked, “how often do you work from home?” and the response was anchored on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (never) to 5 (always). Job Stress was measured as subjective stress with three items (Motowidlo, Packard, & Manning, 1986). For example: “I feel a great deal of stress because of my job.” We scored the items on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). We measured Job Satisfaction using the manual developed by Bacharach, Bamberger, & Conley (1991). We anchored the four items retained in on the scale on a 7-point Likert scale. For example, “Which one of the following shows how much of the time you feel satisfied with your job,” which was scored from 1 (never) to 7 (all the time). We adopted the two-dimensional scale of organizational commitment from Mayer and Schoorman (1992). The first dimension is the continuance commitment, which has ten items. For example: “the longer I stay with this organization, the harder it is to leave.” The second dimension is value commitment, and consists of items such as “for me, this is one of the best of all organizations for which to work.” We scored all items on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). We initially included three control variables—the respondents’ tenure with the organization before maternity leave, the country of residence, and the length of the maternity leave—in our model. However, where a control variable shows no significance, we did not include it in our main analyses.

Analyses and Results

We conducted all of our analyses using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences Software (SPSS). In Table 2, we report descriptive statistics, zero-order correlations, and the reliability scores for the variables of interest with multiple measures: Work from Home (WFH), Job Stress (JSt), Job Satisfaction (JSa), and Organizational Commitment (OCC).

Reliability of Measures

All of the reliability scores show the scales are reliable because all of the Cronbach alphas are greater than 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978). The tenure of the respondent with the company before maternity leave (TBML) is the only control variable maintained in our analysis due to its significant correlation with organizational commitment.

TABLE 2
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND CORRELATIONS FOR STUDY VARIABLES

| | Mean | SD | WFH | JSt | JSa | OCC_con | OCC_val | TBML |
|---------|-------|-------|---------|--------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|------|
| WFH | 1.679 | 0.927 | - | | | | | |
| JSt | 3.51 | 0.908 | -0.185* | 0.789 | | | | |
| JSa | 3.67 | 0.839 | 0.172* | -0.235** | 0.81 | | | |
| OCC_con | 4.116 | 1.312 | 0.193* | 0.15 | 0.299** | 0.806 | | |
| OCC_val | 4.919 | 1.179 | 0.214** | -0.295* | 0.640** | 0.410* | 0.935 | |
| TBML | 4.684 | 1.02 | 0.016 | 0.039 | 0.121 | 0.165* | 0.128 | - |

Note: WFH = Working From Home, JSt = Job Stress, JSa = Job Satisfaction, OCC_con = Continuous Organizational Commitment, OCC_val = Value Organizational Commitment

The diagonals represent the reliability scores.

^a*n* = 153.

* *p* = 0.05 level, ** *p* = 0.01 level.

Validity and Construct Reliability

Before conducting our major analysis to test the hypotheses, we again followed Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion to assess the discriminant and convergent validity of the measures. The criterion is premised on the belief that the construct should explain more variance of the items measuring it compared to the variance of other constructs. Table 3 shows the cross-correlation matrix in which the average variance extracted (AVE) is compared with the square of the correlations between the construct and all other constructs. The results supported discriminant validity because the AVE for each construct is greater than the square of the correlations between the construct and other variables in the model (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2009). The discriminant validity observed between the value and continuous dimensions of organizational commitment supports our conceptualization of the dimensions in separate hypotheses.

In addition, the convergent validity of the constructs was supported because all the AVE values are greater than 0.5 and the composite reliabilities are greater than 0.7 (Hair et al., 2009). Moreover, there are no cross-loadings of the final items included in the model. Given that these criteria have all been satisfied, the measures can move on to hypothesis testing.

TABLE 3
VALIDITY, CONSTRUCT RELIABILITY & SQUARE OF CORRELATIONS

| | CR | AVE | OCC_cont | OCC_val | JSt | JSa |
|----------|-------|-------|----------|---------|--------|-----|
| OCC_cont | 0.846 | 0.526 | | | | |
| OCC_val | 0.922 | 0.568 | 0.1681 | | | |
| JSt | 0.858 | 0.669 | 0.0002 | 0.087 | | |
| JSa | 0.804 | 0.507 | 0.0894 | 0.4096 | 0.0552 | |

Note: JSt = Job Stress, JSa = Job Satisfaction, OCC_cont = organizational commitment (continuance dimension), OCC_val = organizational commitment (value dimension)

Common Method Variance and Multicollinearity

To control for confounding effects on our results, we checked for possible bias due to common method variance. According to (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012), common method bias leads to misleading conclusions. Hence, we conducted Harman's one-factor test (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986) to statistically detect any problem. Our results indicated the presence of model factors, and the greatest covariance explained by one factor was 38.92%, indicating that the presence of common method bias is unlikely. At the methodology stage, we mixed up the items in the questionnaire with other items of constructs not included in this model in our bid to reduce respondents' tendency to guess our conceptual model. This was also done to reduce undue influence from common method variance. We also checked for possible multicollinearity by computing the variance inflation factors (VIFs) of the variables. The highest recorded VIF among the variables was 1.078, which is lower than the cutoff point of 10 as recommended by Hair et al. (2009). Therefore, the multicollinearity assumption is upheld.

Testing of Hypotheses

To test hypothesis 1a, we conducted regression analysis with continuous organizational commitment as the dependent variable, working from home (WFH) as the independent variable, and tenure with the organization before maternity leave (TBML) as a control variable. The general regression model was a good fit with $F(1, 150) = 5.082$ and $p = 0.007$. The good fit indication means that the coefficients (standardized and unstandardized in Table 4) are meaningful and can be interpreted. The result shows that working from home and the respondents' tenure with the organization before maternity leave account for approximately 8.6% of the variance of the respondents' organizational commitment ($R^2 = 0.086$, Adjusted

$R^2 = 0.074$). More specifically, the analysis supports the positive relationship between working from home ($\beta = 0.270$, $SE = 0.112$, $p = 0.017$) and continuous organization commitment after controlling for the respondents' tenure with the organization before maternity leave ($\beta = 0.067$, $SE = 0.033$, $p = 0.043$). Hence, hypothesis 1a is supported.

TABLE 4
RESULTS FROM REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF WORKING FROM HOME (WFH) ON CONTINUOUS ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT (OCC_CON)

| Model | Variables in the model | <i>B(SE)</i> | Beta | t | Sig. |
|-------|------------------------|--------------|-------|--------|-------|
| 1 | (Constant) | 3.864(0.162) | | 34.527 | 0 |
| | TBML | 0.067(0.033) | 0.165 | 2.088 | 0.042 |
| 2 | (Constant) | 3.416(0.245) | | 20.741 | 0 |
| | TBML | 0.067(0.033) | 0.164 | 2.096 | 0.043 |
| | WFH | 0.270(0.112) | 0.191 | 3.078 | 0.017 |

Dependent variable was continuous organizational commitment. $R^2 = 0.086$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.074$

We conducted the same analysis as in 1a to test hypothesis 1b. The general regression model was a good fit with $F(1, 150) = 7.221$ and $p = 0.008$. The good fit indication means that the coefficients (standardized and unstandardized in Table 5) are meaningful and can be interpreted. The result shows that working from home and the respondents' tenure with the organization before maternity leave accounts for approximately 6.2% of the variance of the respondents' organizational commitment ($R^2 = 0.062$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.049$). Specifically, the analysis supports the positive relationship between working from home ($\beta = 0.270$, $SE = 0.101$, $p = 0.008$) and value organization commitment. The control variable (tenure with the organization before maternity leave) was not significant ($\beta = 0.046$, $SE = 0.029$, $p = 0.116$). Hypothesis 1b is therefore supported.

TABLE 5
RESULTS OF REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF WORKING FROM HOME (WFH) ON VALUE ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

| Model | Variables in the model | <i>B(SE)</i> | Beta | t | Sig. |
|-------|------------------------|--------------|-------|--------|-------|
| 1 | (Constant) | 4.743(0.146) | | 32.469 | 0 |
| | TBML | 0.047(0.030) | 0.128 | 1.591 | 0.114 |
| 2 | (Constant) | 4.294(0.220) | | 19.509 | 0 |
| | TBML | 0.046(0.029) | 0.125 | 1.58 | 0.116 |
| | WFH | 0.270(0.101) | 0.212 | 2.685 | 0.008 |

Dependent variable was value organizational commitment. $R^2 = 0.062$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.049$

For hypothesis 2a, we conducted a regression analysis to test the mediation effects of job stress between working from home and continuance organizational commitment using the PROCESS macro designed by Hayes (Hayes, 2012). The results showed that working from home was a significant negative predictor of job stress ($B = -0.182, SE = 0.079, p = 0.022$), but that job stress had no significant relationship with continuance organizational commitment ($B = 0.066, SE = 0.117, p = 0.574$). Because one of the paths was not significant, a mediation effect was not expected. That notwithstanding, we tested the indirect effect using a percentile bootstrap estimation approach with 5000 samples implemented with the PROCESS macro version 3.2 (Hayes, 2018). The results confirmed that the indirect effect was not significant ($B = -0.012, SE = 0.026, 95\% C.I = -0.680, 0.041$), which is consistent with the insignificant result above. Only the direct effect of working from home on continuous organizational commitment holds, which explains about 6.35 percent of the variance. Therefore, hypothesis 2a is not supported. The results are shown in Table 6.

TABLE 6
RESULTS OF MEDIATION ANALYSIS OF INVESTIGATING JOB STRESS (JST) AS A MEDIATOR

| Paths | Coeff. | Normal Theory Test | | | | LLCI | ULCI |
|---|--------|--------------------|---------------------|--------|----------|----------|-------|
| | | SE | t | P | | | |
| WFH → JSt | -0.182 | 0.079 | -2.319 | 0.022 | -0.337 | 0.027 | |
| JSt → OCC_con | -0.066 | 0.117 | 0.563 | 0.574 | -0.165 | 0.296 | |
| WFH → OCC_con | 0.2817 | 0.114 | 2.47 | 0.015 | 0.056 | 0.507 | |
| Bootstrap results for the indirect effect | | | | | | | |
| | | | Effect | BootSE | BootLLCI | BootULCI | |
| | | | WFH → JSt → OCC_con | -0.012 | 0.026 | -0.68 | 0.041 |

Note: Coeff.: coefficients; SE: standard error; LLCI: lower level of 95% confidence interval; ULLI = upper level of 95% confidence interval

$R^2 = 0.0635$

Following the same process as above, we tested hypothesis 2b: the mediation effect of job stress between working from home and value organizational commitment. The results indicated that working from home was significant and negatively related to job stress ($B = -0.182, SE = 0.079, p = 0.022$) and that job stress was significant and negatively related to value organizational commitment ($B = -0.350, SE = 0.101, p < 0.001$). These results are indicative of the mediational role of job stress. Also, working from home remained a significant predictor of value organizational commitment after controlling for the mediational role of job stress ($B = 0.2064, SE = 0.099, p = 0.039$). The results showed the existence of both the direct and indirect path of working from home to value organizational commitment. The predictors together explained approximately 13.17 percent of the variance of organizational commitment. The indirect effect was tested using the percentile estimation approach with 5000 samples implemented with PROCESS macro version 3.2. These results indicated the indirect effect coefficient ($B = 0.638, SE = 0.039, 95\% CI = 0.002, 0.154$) was significant. As such, hypothesis 2b is supported. Table 7 captures these results.

TABLE 7
RESULTS OF MEDIATION ANALYSIS OF INVESTIGATING JOB STRESS (JST) AS A
MEDIATOR BETWEEN WORKING FROM HOME (WFH) AND VALUE
ORGANIZATION COMMITMENT (OCC_VAL)

| Normal Theory Test | | | | | | |
|---|--------|-------|--------|---------------|----------|----------|
| Paths | Coeff. | SE | t | <i>p</i> | LLCI | ULCI |
| WFH → JSt | -0.182 | 0.079 | -2.319 | 0.022 | -0.337 | -0.027 |
| JSt → OCC_val | -0.35 | 0.101 | -3.469 | 0 | -0.55 | -0.151 |
| WFH → OCC_val | 0.206 | 0.099 | 2.088 | 0.039 | 0.011 | 0.402 |
| Bootstrap results for the indirect effect | | | | | | |
| | | | Effect | <i>BootSE</i> | BootLLCI | BootULCI |
| WFH → JSt → OCC_val | | | 0.638 | 0.039 | 0.002 | 0.154 |

Note: Coeff.: coefficients; SE: standard error; LLCI: lower level of 95% confidence interval; ULLI = upper level of 95% confidence interval

$$R^2 = 0.1317$$

We also tested hypotheses 3a and 3b following the same process specified above. For 3a, working from home was positive and significantly related to job satisfaction ($B = 0.154$, $SE = 0.072$, $p = 0.035$) and job satisfaction was significantly related to continuance commitment ($B = 0.403$, $SE = 0.122$, $p = 0.001$). These results support the mediational role of job satisfaction between working from home and continuous organizational commitment. The relationship between working from home and continuous commitment was no longer significant ($B = 0.208$, $SE = 0.110$, $p = 0.061$) after controlling for the mediational role of job satisfaction, which is consistent with full mediation. The predictors explained approximately 12.69 percent of the variance. We then tested the indirect effect following the same procedure outlined above. The results showed that the indirect coefficient ($B = 0.062$, $SE = 0.037$, 95% $CI = 0.005, 0.148$) was significant. Therefore, hypothesis 3a is supported. Table 8 includes tabulated results.

TABLE 8
RESULTS OF MEDIATION ANALYSIS OF JOB SATISFACTION (JSA) AS A MEDIATOR
BETWEEN WORKING FROM HOME (WFH) AND CONTINUOUS ORGANISATION
COMMITMENT (OCC_CON)

| Normal Theory Test | | | | | | |
|---|--------|-------|--------|---------------|----------|----------|
| Paths | Coeff. | SE | t | <i>p</i> | LLCI | ULCI |
| WFH → JSa | 0.154 | 0.072 | 2.129 | 0.035 | 0.011 | 0.297 |
| JSa → OCC_con | 0.403 | 0.122 | 3.2890 | 0.001 | 0.1607 | 0.644 |
| WFH → OCC_con | 0.208 | 0.110 | 1.890 | 0.061 | -0.010 | 0.425 |
| Bootstrap results for the indirect effect | | | | | | |
| | | | Effect | <i>BootSE</i> | BootLLCI | BootULCI |
| WFH → JSa → OCC_con | | | 0.062 | 0.37 | 0.005 | 0.148 |

Note: Coeff.: coefficients; SE: standard error; LLCI: lower level of 95% confidence interval; ULLI = upper level of 95% confidence interval

$$R^2 = 0.1269$$

For 3b, working from home was positive and significantly related to job satisfaction ($B = 0.154$, $SE = 0.072$, $p = 0.035$) and job satisfaction was significantly related to value organization commitment ($B = 0.865$, $SE = 0.089$, $p < 0.001$). These results support the mediational role of job satisfaction between working from home and value organizational commitment. Working from home was not significant ($B = 0.137$, $SE = 0.080$, $p = 0.090$) after controlling for the mediational role of job satisfaction, which is consistent with full mediation. The predictors explained approximately 42.35 percent of the variance. We tested the indirect effect by following the same procedure described above. The results showed that the indirect coefficient ($B = 0.133$, $SE = 0.056$, 95% $CI = 0.247, 0.252$) was significant. As such, hypothesis 3b is supported. The results are captured in Table 9.

TABLE 9
RESULTS OF MEDIATION ANALYSIS OF JOB SATISFACTION (JSA) AS A MEDIATOR
BETWEEN WORKING FROM HOME (WFH) AND VALUE ORGANIZATION
COMMITMENT (OCC_VAL)

| Paths | Normal Theory Test | | | | | |
|---|--------------------|-------|--------|---------------|----------|----------|
| | Coeff. | SE | t | <i>p</i> | LLCI | ULCI |
| WFH → JSa | 0.154 | 0.072 | 2.129 | 0.035 | 0.011 | 0.297 |
| JSa → OCC_val | 0.865 | 0.089 | 9.672 | 0.000 | 0.688 | 1.041 |
| WFH → OCC_val | 0.137 | 0.080 | 1.708 | 0.090 | -0.025 | 0.296 |
| Bootstrap results for the indirect effect | | | | | | |
| | | | Effect | <i>BootSE</i> | BootLLCI | BootULCI |
| WFH → JSa → OCC_val | | | 0.133 | 0.056 | 0.247 | 0.252 |

Note: Coeff.: coefficients; SE: standard error; LLCI: lower level of 95% confidence interval; ULLI = upper level of 95% confidence interval
 $R^2 = 0.4235$

For hypotheses 4a and 4b, we tested the serial mediation effect role of both job stress and job satisfaction between working from home and continuous and value organizational commitment respectively. We used the Hayes PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2012) model 6, in which we specified job stress and job satisfaction as first and second mediator variables respectively. For hypothesis 4a, results indicated that working from home was significant and negatively related to job stress ($B = -0.182$, $SE = 0.079$, $p = 0.022$); job stress was significant and negatively related to job satisfaction ($B = -0.120$, $SE = 0.074$, $p = 0.007$); and job satisfaction was significant and positively related to continuous organizational commitment ($B = 0.4387$, $SE = 0.125$, $p < 0.001$). The predictors explained approximately 3.72 of the variances. Because all three paths were significant, we conducted serial mediational analysis using the percentile bootstrapping estimation approach with 5000 samples implemented by PROCESS macro version 3.2 (Hayes, 2018). The result indicated that the coefficient of the indirect effect was not significant ($B = 0.012$, $SE = 0.009$, 95% $CI = -0.0002, 0.034$), demonstrating no support for a serial mediation effect. Therefore, hypothesis 4a is not supported. Full results are provided in Table 10.

TABLE 10
RESULTS OF SERIAL MEDIATION ANALYSIS OF INVESTIGATING JOB STRESS (JST)
AND JOB SATISFACTION (JSA) AS MEDIATORS BETWEEN WORKING FROM HOME
(WFH) AND CONTINUOUS ORGANIZATION COMMITMENT (OCC_CON)

| Paths | Normal Theory Test | | | | | |
|---|--------------------|-------|--------|---------------|----------|----------|
| | Coeff. | SE | t | <i>p</i> | LLCI | ULCI |
| WFH → JSt | -0.182 | 0.079 | -2.319 | 0.022 | -0.337 | -0.027 |
| | Normal Theory Test | | | | | |
| JSt → JSa | -0.12 | 0.074 | -2.715 | 0.007 | -0.345 | -0.054 |
| JSa → OCC_con | 0.4387 | 0.125 | 3.508 | 0 | 0.192 | 0.686 |
| WFH → OCC_con | 0.23 | 0.111 | 2.074 | 0.04 | 0.011 | 0.45 |
| Bootstrap results for the indirect effect | | | | | | |
| | | | Effect | <i>BootSE</i> | BootLLCI | BootULCI |
| WFH → JSt → OCC_con | | | -0.021 | 0.021 | -0.07 | 0.012 |
| WFH → JSa → OCC_con | | | 0.039 | 0.026 | -0.003 | 0.098 |
| WFH → JSt → JSa → OCC_con | | | 0.012 | 0.009 | -0.0002 | 0.034 |

Note: Coeff.: coefficients; SE: standard error; LLCI: lower level of 95% confidence interval; ULLI = upper level of 95% confidence interval

$R^2 = 0.1372$

For hypothesis 4b, results indicated that working from home was significant and negatively related to job stress ($B = -0.182$, $SE = 0.079$, $p = 0.022$); job stress was significant and negatively related to job satisfaction ($B = -0.120$, $SE = 0.074$, $p = 0.007$); and job satisfaction was significant and positively related to value organizational commitment ($B = 0.821$, $SE = 0.090$, $p < 0.001$). The predictors explained approximately 44.24 percent of the variance in value organization commitment. We then tested the serial mediational analysis following the same process used for 4a. The results indicated that the coefficient of the indirect effect was significant ($B = 0.030$, $SE = 0.020$, 95% $CI = 0.001, 0.076$), supporting the serial mediation effect we had hypothesized. Hypothesis 4b is therefore supported. We captured the results in Table 11.

TABLE 11
RESULTS OF SERIAL MEDIATION ANALYSIS OF INVESTIGATING JOB STRESS (JST)
AND JOB SATISFACTION (JSA) AS MEDIATORS BETWEEN WORKING FROM HOME
(WFH) AND VALUE ORGANIZATION COMMITMENT (OCC_VAL)

| Paths | Normal Theory Test | | | | | |
|---|--------------------|-------|--------|---------------|----------|----------|
| | Coeff. | SE | T | <i>p</i> | LLCI | ULCI |
| WFH → JSt | -0.182 | 0.079 | -2.319 | 0.022 | -0.337 | 0.0270 |
| JSt → JSa | -0.120 | 0.074 | -2.715 | 0.007 | -0.345 | -0.054 |
| JSa → OCC_val | 0.821 | 0.090 | 9.081 | 0.000 | 0.642 | 0.999 |
| WFH → OCC_val | 0.110 | 0.080 | 1.372 | 0.1721 | -0.048 | 0.268 |
| Bootstrap results for the indirect effect | | | | | | |
| | | | Effect | <i>BootSE</i> | BootLLCI | BootULCI |
| WFH → JSt → OCC_con | | | 0.034 | 0.025 | -0.001 | 0.096 |
| WFH → JSa → OCC_con | | | 0.096 | 0.051 | -0.001 | 0.196 |
| WFH → JSt → JSa → OCC_val | | | 0.030 | 0.020 | 0.001 | 0.076 |

Note: Coeff.: coefficients; SE: standard error; LLCI: lower level of 95% confidence interval; ULLI = upper level of 95% confidence interval

$R^2 = 0.4424$

DISCUSSION

The period after childbirth marks a watershed moment in the professional lives of most women. While on maternity leave, women are separated from their familiar professional environment and routines and adopt a new role as mothers. While still in the process of adapting to motherhood, those who return to work also have to take on an additional role: that of “a mother in gainful work” (Spiteri & Xuereb, 2012, p.212). Our study suggests that organizational policies can help women during this challenging transition. The results of our study show that working from home, as an organizational policy, helps reduce working mother’s occupational stress and enhances their job satisfaction. Our study also suggests that such policies are beneficial for the organization because of their positive influence on the working mother’s organizational commitment. Working from home increases the likelihood that a woman will remain committed to the organization and that she will exert effort on behalf of the organization. Although the study shows that occupational stress and job satisfaction mediate the relationship between working from home and value commitment, only job satisfaction was found to mediate the relationship between working from home and continuance commitment. This suggests that the increased job satisfaction that results from working from home improves the likelihood that a working mother will stay committed to the organization and will also act in ways that will benefit the organization. However, reduced occupational stress only increases the new mother’s willingness to exert considerable efforts on behalf of the organization; it does not influence her desire to remain with the organization. Perhaps this is because the working mother is willing to act for the organization as a positive response to the work-family policy, but the reduced stress that results from working from home does not necessarily improve her desire to stay with the organization. However, the increased job satisfaction that results from working from home not only increases the working mother’s willingness to act for the organization but also increases her desire to stay with the organization. Future research is needed to identify the possible factors that influence this mediation process. For example, the reduced stress that results from working from home may increase the continuance commitment for women with high person-organizational fit. Additionally, serial mediation was supported for the value commitment but not for the continuance commitment. This suggests that the increased job satisfaction that arises from the decreased occupational stress that results from working from home improves the working mother’s willingness to act for the organization but does not necessarily improve her desire to stay with the organization. Future research is needed to examine

other factors that may influence the serial mediation process. For example, the organizational culture may interact with organizational policies to shape a working mother's commitment to the organization. Among the limitations of our study is the one item measure for working from home.

While previous studies have used a similar scale where multiple levels of telecommuting were measured from zero telecommuting to full-time telecommuting (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007), future studies should perhaps consider developing a multidimensional measure that captures different aspects of working from home. Another limitation of our research concerns the cross-sectional nature of this study. It is important to examine how mothers' organizational commitment evolves over time as a result of working from home while their child(ren) grow up. Additionally, given the cross-sectional nature of the data, we were unable to determine alternative causal orderings. Despite these limitations, our study has important practical implications. Working mothers face a number of challenges as they return to work. Based on our study, organizations can implement flexible work policies such as working from home to help them manage the demands of employment and motherhood more effectively. Such policies will have several positive outcomes, including reduced occupational stress, increased job satisfaction, and improved commitment to the organization, which will benefit women as well as their employers.

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