

Pregnant Women's Experiences in the Workplace: Thematic Analysis and

Recommendations for Improvement

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By

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Abstract

The purpose of this work was to compare, characterize and develop recommendations regarding the experiences, from disclosure to maternity leave, of employees working at a higher education organization while pregnant. There is limited research regarding the impact policies and benefits have on pregnant employees working in higher education, as well as their general pregnancy experiences with colleagues and supervisors. This research presented three studies to address these gaps. Study 1 compared existing pregnancy-related policies of three comparable higher education organizations. Study 2 collected interviews with 15 pregnant or recently pregnant employees and they were analyzed to identify themes and opportunities for improvement. Study 3 used a SWOT analysis to evaluate the findings from Studies 1 and 2 to discern the plausibility of implementing recommendations. Study 1 results revealed that the primary organization has strengths to its policies and benefits but compared to other organizations, there is room for improvement as to how some benefits are implemented, for instance, locations for lactation. Study 2 results revealed that although participants criticized their workplace and described areas for improvement (easier access to policies and benefits documents), they still describe their overall experience as positive. Study 3 results generated recommendations to improve the primary organization, such as developing one central location for all work-family related documents and information. Findings emphasize the importance of including both staff and faculty in higher education research and the impacts work-family related policies and benefits have on employee perceptions of their workplace.

Executive Summary

Previous research has found that disclosure is a key point in the workplace pregnancy experience that influences pregnant women's decisions to remain in the workplace. Keeping that in mind, organizations who do not comply with pregnancy policies negatively impact pregnant women and increase their likelihood of not returning to their position after maternity leave. Specifically, in higher education, organizations should adequately support the work-life balance for all of its employees. Although prior research has looked at employees in higher education, few studies have researched the role pregnancy policies and benefits play in workplace pregnancy experiences. The purpose of this project was to compare, characterize and develop recommendations regarding the experiences, from disclosure to maternity leave, of employees working at a higher education organization while pregnant. This work was done across three studies using a mixed methods approach.

Study 1 used a situational analysis to examine the existing policies and benefits at three comparable higher education organizations. Results from this study revealed that each organization offers optional additional maternity leave, but the amount of leave varies across organizations and the same can be applied to the number and type of lactation areas offered to employees at the organizations.

Study 2 examined the attitudes women have towards their workplace during pregnancy and how the application policies impact the work-life balance. Results revealed that features of disclosure and the work environment impact how participants feel about the workplace and that there is a disconnect between existing policies offered to employees versus what employees perceive to be available to them.

Study 3 synthesized results from Study 1 and Study 2 to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats regarding the pregnancy experience for women at a higher education organization. Results revealed that although the primary organization has strengths in its existing policies, there are still weaknesses in the current layout and threats imposed on them, revealing opportunities to improve the pregnancy policies and benefits offered to employees. Overall, findings emphasize the importance of including staff and faculty in higher education research and the impacts work-family related policies and benefits have on employee perceptions of the workplace.

From the information gathered across the three studies, recommendations were developed to improve the experiences of pregnant employees at a higher education organization.

- 1. Develop training and resources for supervisors to utilize in order to understand the pregnancy policies and benefits offered at the organization.**

Study 2 revealed that participants wished supervisors played a larger role in assisting navigating their pregnancy in the workplace, but supervisors didn't have enough knowledge to do so; having training would make supervisors a better resource for their pregnant employees.

- 2. Develop a centralized digital repository for all work-family related documents and information, including a section dedicated to pregnancy. Regularly maintain documents and information.**

Information and documents for pregnancy policies are hard to find in its current state and having a centralized digital repository for the policies would decrease the chances of work-life issues for the employee occurring later.

- 3. Evaluate the plausibility of developing parking accommodations for pregnant employees. If plausible, include verbiage in policies and benefits handbook(s) outlining parking accommodations.**

The organization does not explicitly offer parking accommodations for pregnant employees and issues have occurred as a result; including verbiage for parking would allow pregnant employees to conveniently and safely travel across the workplace.

4. Evaluate the plausibility of modifying the maternity leave offered to reflect pay in additional maternity leave.

Other organizations offer more supportive maternity leave packages to employees; modifying the package at this organization would benefit employees and positively impact their perceptions of the priority their workplace places on the work-life balance.

5. Evaluate how the organization can support all possible pregnancy endings and include verbiage in its policies and benefits handbook(s) outlining how employees can navigate the work-life balance if an alternative outcome occurs.

At this organization, there are currently no policies outlining how to support alternative outcomes of pregnancy; having verbiage including this possibility would positively impact how supported employees feel in the workplace and increase employee satisfaction.

6. Evaluate existing lactation accommodations and consider providing equitable spaces across campus and/or equipment necessary to convert any space to accommodate the lactation period.

In Study 2, participants recounted the inconvenience of traveling across campus to use the lactation spaces; modifying spaces or including more lactation areas would allow employees to conveniently use lactation spaces and help them separate their workplace and maternal roles.

The policies, benefits, and experiences evaluated in this project illustrate that the existing supportive practices for employees at this organization need to be modified.

Pregnant Women's Experiences in the Workplace: Thematic Analysis and Recommendations for Improvement

Several features in the work environment play an important role in influencing a pregnant woman's decision to leave their job (Fox & Quinn, 2015). In previous research, when recounting the work environment during their pregnancy, women reported feeling as if they were seen as more vulnerable or in need of assistance and being venerated for their maternal (as opposed to worker) role (Jones, et al., 2019). In fact, previous research suggests that the most common discriminatory experiences women reported were that they felt they were being perceived as more emotional (Fox & Quinn, 2015). These perceptions of their work environment impact the self-efficacy of pregnant women and how they perceive their work environment as a whole (Fox & Quinn, 2015). However, the disclosure process, specifically, is a key point that influences a pregnant woman's decision to remain in the workforce (King & Botsford, 2009). Women who are less satisfied with their disclosure process are more likely to leave their workplace (King & Botsford, 2009). As a result, women were less committed to their jobs and felt more likely to quit their jobs after giving birth (Fox & Quinn, 2015). If women have a more positive disclosure experience and feel supported throughout their pregnancy, then turnover rates would likely decrease (King & Botsford, 2009).

After the disclosure process, negative work environments and unsupportive supervisors may drive women from the workforce by discouraging them from taking advantage of the policies that were put in place to discourage them from leaving (Fox & Quinn, 2015). However, when women work in workplaces that are supportive of the work-family balance, they experience less discrimination in response to their pregnancy, translating to higher job satisfaction and lower turnover rates (Fox & Quinn, 2015). Yet, in order to develop these new

environments, resources and policies need to be clearly outlined to ensure that all the needs of pregnant employees are met. In this work, I looked at how the applications of resources and policies impact pregnant women's perceptions and experiences in their workplace.

Resources During Pregnancy

According to Merriam-Webster, resources are considered a form of support or supply in a situation (Merriam-Webster, 2021). Resources during a pregnancy can either be offered formally through an organization or informally through a pregnant woman's co-workers (Clair, et al., 2016). These types of resources depend on closeness of the connections women have within their work environment. Studies suggest that women are appreciative of physical and practical help in the workplace (i.e., reaching for an object that they cannot reach), but are less enthusiastic about co-workers protecting them (Clair, et al., 2016). Work enabling is when one makes another person more capable of tasks by giving them the means or ability to make the task easier (Jones, et al., 2019). Other studies suggest that work enabling is not as harmful to a woman's self-efficacy because it sends signals that the organization still trusts that a pregnant woman can complete her professional tasks as normal (Jones, et al., 2019). Research finds that it is important for organizations to provide adequate support for its employees through determining where the line between protecting its pregnant employees and work-enabling is (Clair, et al., 2016; Jones, et al., 2019).

Pregnancy-Related Legislation

There are multiple U.S. policies in place to protect pregnant women and recent parents. For instance, nationally, pregnant women and recent parents are protected by the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978 and the Family Medical Leave Act. These policies ensure that all applicable parties are to be treated the same for all employment related purposes and are entitled

to job protected leave for the birth of a child or caring for a new child within one year of birth (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2019; Wage & Hour Division, 2020). States may also have policies related to pregnancy in addition to the U.S. national policies, which employers can offer to their employees as well. For instance, in Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Parental Leave Act offers parents eight weeks of unpaid leave for the birth of a child or placement of a child under 18 years (Mass.gov, 2021). In addition to federal and state policies, each organization can develop its own internal policies for pregnancy resources and benefits.

Past research shows that organizations who do not comply with internal pregnancy policies negatively impact pregnant women and increase the likelihood of her not returning to the workforce postpartum (Kitroeff & Silver-Greenberg, 2019). However, turnover rates for employees postpartum are decreased when the organization provides adequate information of the policies offered and complies with the policies outlined in their region (Kitroeff & Silver-Greenberg, 2019).

Pregnancy in Higher Education

For the purpose of this work, the term employee refers to all types of roles in higher education (including faculty and staff). In this work, staff are defined as either exempt/non-exempt employees that work at least 37.5 hours a week. Faculty are defined as exempt employees that have different written and unwritten responsibilities than staff and, therefore, could have different benefits to reflect their role.

Female employees working in higher education can experience being pregnant and working at some point during their career, regardless of the type of position they hold. However,

specific experiences an employee can have during pregnancy may depend on whether they hold a faculty or staff position in the organization.

Women who work in higher education hold many roles, including employee, wife, mother, etc. and have to balance these roles daily (Wright, 2014). In U.S. higher education, employees who are mothers face a “pregnancy penalty”, in that they are perceived as shortchanging their children or their professional competence or both (Givens, 2019; Waxman & Ispa-Landa, 2016). Past research shows that as a result of this “pregnancy penalty”, female employees are more apprehensive in starting a family before they establish their careers in higher education (Givens, 2019). This apprehension is tied to the experiences that women in faculty positions have experienced. Those who do start their family before their career is established (especially those on the tenure-track), are perceived negatively by their peers because they prioritized family over their professional development (Givens, 2019). In response, women feel unsupported in their work environment and, in turn, are more likely to exit the workforce (Fox & Quinn, 2015). Organizations that accommodate the work-family balance foster a more positive work environment and decrease turnover rates for its employees postpartum (Fox & Quinn, 2015). Unfortunately, past research primarily focuses on faculty and suggests that there is a lack of support for the work and life balance of female staff in higher education (Wright, 2014).

Aims of Present Work

Although there has been research on employees working in higher education while pregnant, few studies have researched the role pregnancy policies and benefits play through pregnancy disclosure to maternity leave (Washbrook, et al., 2011). Therefore, the current work aimed to compare, characterize and develop recommendations regarding the experiences, from disclosure to maternity leave, of employees working at a higher education organization while

pregnant. Study 1 compared existing pregnancy-related policies and benefits at three higher education organizations. Study 2 characterized employee attitudes towards the workplace during pregnancy and how policies impacted their work-life balance. Study 3 synthesized the results from Studies 1 and 2 in a SWOT analysis to identify areas of improvement in the pregnancy policies and benefits at the primary organization.

Study 1: Existing Policies and Benefits

In order to understand the existing policies and benefits that some higher education organizations have in place, Study 1 used situational analysis to examine the existing policies and benefits for pregnant faculty and staff at a Northeastern U.S. higher education organization. A situational analysis is an analysis of the internal and external factors of an organization, accounting for the customers of the organization as well (Lake, 2020). To understand how the existing policies compared to other peer organizations, Study 1 also compared the existing policies and benefits at the primary organization to two peer organizations.

Method

Design & Procedure

A situational analysis was used to examine the existing pregnancy-related policies and benefits among three comparable organizations. I manually reviewed the pregnancy-related policies and benefits outlined in the organizations' handbooks. In this comparison, I evaluated all aspects of the organizations' pregnancy policies and benefits: maternity leave, policies, and benefits for all employees. Policies differ from benefits because the organization is required, by state or federal law, to offer various policies to their employees, however, organizations can choose to offer additional benefits to its employees. I completed this analysis by noting all pregnancy policies outlined in the handbooks: additional maternity leave offered outside of

FMLA, tenure clock stoppage offered for faculty, and lactation accommodations offered to all employees. As I collated the information into a chart, similarities and differences in the policies and benefits were identified. A list of the findings was created shortly after and the documentation was supported with supplemental explanation.

Results

As seen in Table 1, the comparison across the three organizations revealed that all three offer the same pregnancy benefits, but the execution of them varies from one organization to the next (see Table 1).

TABLE 1 Benefits Across Multiple Organizations from Employee Handbooks

| Benefits | Primary Organization | Peer Organization 1 | Peer Organization 2 |
|--------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Staff Maternity Leave | *FMLA *Offered additional 4 weeks unpaid leave | *FMLA *Offered additional 8 weeks unpaid leave | *FMLA *Offered 12 weeks paid leave (20 days at full pay, rest at half pay) |
| Faculty Maternity Leave | *FMLA *Offered additional 4 weeks unpaid leave | *FMLA *Offered additional 2 weeks leave at full pay; offered additional 14 weeks leave at half pay | *FMLA *Offered additional 2 weeks leave at full pay |
| Tenure Clock Stoppage | *Policy in place to extend probationary period (Tenure-Track Faculty) | *Policy in place to extend probationary period (Tenure-Track Faculty) | *Policy in place to extend probationary period (Tenure-Track Faculty) |
| Lactation Areas | *One central lactation location | *Request locations w/ HR, assigned available room near office | *Multiple lactation locations *Provides info and resources to modify any qualifying room as temporary lactation room |

Evaluations of three comparable organizations’ pregnancy-related policies and benefits concluded that they all offer the nationally mandated FMLA maternity leave. Each organization offers a form of additional leave that can be taken at the discretion of the employee. However, due to the nature of their position requirements, faculty and staff are offered different amounts of

additional maternity leave time. For instance, the primary organization allows its staff to take an additional four weeks of unpaid maternity leave; however, peer organization one allows its staff to take an additional eight weeks of unpaid leave.

All three organizations offer the same benefits regarding faculty stopping their tenure clock due to pregnancy (i.e., the evaluation period for tenure will be extended for one year from when it is stopped). Additionally, the three organizations offer areas employees can access for lactation purposes, however, the availability of these locations vary. For instance, the primary organization offers one designated space for lactation, yet peer organization two offers multiple lactation areas across campus.

Study 2: Participant Interviews

While Study 1 compared existing policies and benefits across three organizations, Study 2 examined the attitudes women have towards their place of employment during pregnancy and how the application of these policies impact their work-life balance. Few studies evaluated the experiences, including the social experiences, of pregnant women working in higher education and their perceptions of workplace pregnancy policies and resources to improve the social climate surrounding pregnancy in the workplace (Washbrook, et al., 2011; Wright, 2014). Therefore, Study 2 extended this limited past work by conducting semi-structured interviews with employees to understand their experiences surrounding disclosure, resources, and policies of women working in higher education while pregnant.

Method

Participants

Fifteen individuals from a private institution in the Northeast participated in this study. Participants were paid \$20.00 for their time. All participants were currently or recently pregnant

women, and they were recruited by word of mouth from their peers (snowball sampling). Fourteen out of 15 participants had given birth within 36 months prior to this study, with one being 30 weeks pregnant at the time of this study. All participants gave verbal informed consent before completing the study.

Prior to starting the interviews, I conducted practice interviews with eleven volunteers to improve my interviewing skills and identify if additional themes or probes should be addressed to the script. Five out of the 11 volunteers were mothers who had pregnancies while working in higher education, but these pregnancies were more than 3 years in the past and were, consequently, outside of the scope of this project.

Design & Materials

I conducted semi-structured interviews to examine the workplace experiences of recent and/or expectant mothers surrounding their pregnancy. The variables I used to distinguish the participants during analysis were the type of position they held, how long they have worked at their workplace and the gender of their supervisor. During the interview, participants recounted their experiences of working while pregnant and, in describing those experiences, shared their perceptions about workplace pregnancy policies and resources. In the interviews, I asked broad questions about the participants' pregnancy, followed by probing follow up questions relating to three main categories: experience, resources, and policies.

Workplace Experience Throughout Pregnancy

Previous research shows that the disclosure process is a key influencer on women's decision to leave the workforce postpartum (King & Botsford, 2009). Women who are less satisfied with their disclosure process are more likely to leave their workplace (King & Botsford, 2009). Previous research also shows that when pregnant women have unsupportive work

environments it increases their likelihood of not returning to the workforce postpartum (Fox & Quinn, 2015). Therefore, I wanted to better understand what women's experiences with their colleagues and supervisor were like throughout their pregnancies. To do this, participants answered questions related to the perceived support structures available during pregnancy. For instance, "What were your colleagues' / supervisors' reactions [to finding out you were pregnant]?", or "Can you tell me about what being pregnant in your workplace was like after you disclosed your pregnancy?". To see the complete list of the questions asked to the participants, see Appendix A.

Resources Made Available / Received Throughout Pregnancy

Past research shows that when pregnant women lack the knowledge and/or access to pregnancy-related resources it increases their likelihood of not returning to the workforce postpartum (Clair, et. al., 2016). Therefore, I wanted to better understand what workplace pregnancy resources were made available to women and which of those they used during their pregnancies. To do this, participants answered questions related to the perceived access to workplace pregnancy resources during pregnancy. For instance, "Did you know of any pregnancy-related resources offered in your workplace before you became pregnant?" or "Was there anything else you wished you had received during your pregnancy?". To see the complete list of the questions asked to participants, see Appendix A.

Policies Made Available / Used Throughout Pregnancy

Past research shows that organizations who do not comply with pregnancy policies negatively impact pregnant women and increase the likelihood of her not returning to the workforce postpartum (Kitroeff & Silver-Greenberg, 2019). Therefore, I wanted to better understand what pregnancy policies pregnant women were aware of, made aware of by their

organization, and actively used throughout their pregnancies. For instance, participants answer questions such as “Did you research any pregnancy-related policies before you disclosed that you were pregnant?” or “Were you informed of any pregnancy policies when you disclosed your pregnancy? If so, what policies did you learn about?”. To see the complete list of the questions asked to the participants see Appendix A.

Procedure

I recruited participants through word of mouth from peers who knew they were pregnant or had recently been pregnant and I contacted them, via email, in advance to confirm their inclusion in the study. Once their inclusion was confirmed, I emailed participants a Zoom link for the interview. I verbally read the participant informed consent and they verbally consented to conduct the interview. In addition, I asked each participant if I could audio record the interview for transcription purposes. Once the participant consented to audio recording, I audio recorded the interviews using Apple’s Voice Memos software.

Participants learned that the study was about the perceived availability of various organizational pregnancy-related resources and perceived workplace supportiveness surrounding pregnant employees. The interviews lasted, on average, 30 minutes. The interviews began with me asking a general question about the participants’ pregnancy, then I asked probing follow up questions regarding their general experience and the role policies and resources had during their pregnancy. If participants had little-to-no knowledge of existing pregnancy policies or principles, I asked if they would be interested in receiving a handout explaining the existing national, state and institution-specific policies/principles, shown in Appendix B. If the participant expressed interest, I sent them a follow up email with the handout. To see the complete list of the questions

asked to the participants, see Appendix A. After all the interviews concluded, I manually transcribed the audio for each interview into text for analysis.

Data Analysis

I analyzed transcripts of the interviews using an interpretive phenomenological approach (Smith & Osborn, 2015). An interpretive phenomenological analysis is a qualitative research method that deeply examines a person's lived experience (Smith & Osborn, 2015). I manually carried out the analysis using a transcript coding software called Nvivo. The analysis included the following five stages. First, it involved familiarization, whereby I simultaneously read and re-read the transcript with the corresponding audio recording. Then, I used Nvivo to independently identify emerging themes from the transcripts through line-by-line analysis of the text. I tagged emerging themes as sentences or statements through the individual transcripts which aim to document the primary themes of the data. As I identified connections and patterns through the transcript, similar themes were categorized together. As I further interpreted the data, emerging themes were developed and reworked to highlight the essential points of the data. A list of parent and child themes were created shortly after. Finally, a summary table noting each participant's contribution to the themes were developed and the documentation was supported by excerpts from the transcripts.

Results

A thematic analysis of the interviews resulted in three main themes and multiple sub-level themes emerging as well. As seen in Table 2, the three superordinate themes were: Disclosure Experience, Work Environment, and Resources, Policies, and Benefits. Within each of these themes, the analyses of the interviews found several subordinate themes (see Table 2).

TABLE 2 Superordinate and Subordinate Themes

| Superordinate Theme | Subordinate Theme |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Disclosure Experience | Timing First Disclosure Information Received |
| Work Environment | Uncomfortable Interactions Treated Differently Uniqueness of Experience |
| Resources, Policies, & Benefits | Knowledge & Lack Thereof Challenges Participant Recommendations |

Disclosure Experience Superordinate Theme

The Disclosure Experience superordinate theme entails participants' discussions regarding their experience disclosing their pregnancy in the workplace. Within this theme, three subordinate themes emerged: timing, first disclosure, and information received. The Timing subordinate theme highlights the point in their pregnancy where the participants informed their workplace that they were pregnant and why they disclosed at that time. The First Disclosure subordinate theme discusses who in their workplace participants first told their pregnancy to and why they chose that person to disclose their pregnancy. Lastly, the Information Received subordinate theme discusses what information the participant had received when disclosing their pregnancy to their supervisor regarding what steps needed to be completed in the workplace to prepare for their leave and eventual return to work.

Timing

Findings indicate that all participants disclosed their pregnancy during the recommended 12-week period (Pevzner, 2018). While participants typically disclosed around the same time frame, three out of 15 strategically planned the timing of their disclosures surrounding unrelated workplace circumstances.

I waited strategically... I was going to tell [them], I'm ready to take on this interim position. But you also have to know, I'm pregnant... So I did kind of wait until it felt like the right time. Instead of just saying like, Oh, I'm 12 weeks, 14 weeks, like, woohoo, I'm going to tell everybody. I did wait, probably until about 20 weeks to say, Well, I think when I told [them], I was probably about 14 weeks. But then I still waited even longer to tell the rest of my team.

(Participant 6)

Each participant recounted similar experiences as compared to their peers, in that the relationship they had with their supervisor and/or colleagues influenced the decision. Participants noted that the quality of their relationship with their supervisor and/or colleagues influenced when they disclosed their pregnancy. More specifically, participants were more likely to disclose earlier in the pregnancy if they had a closer relationship with their supervisor or colleagues.

But I also told my boss very early on just because I trust [them] as an individual. And I respect [them]... I was like eight or 10 weeks pregnant at that point.

(Participant 9)

First Disclosure

Participants decided who to first disclose their pregnancy to in their workplace based on their relationship with the individuals in their professional community. For instance, most participants first disclosed their pregnancy to the person in their workplace they had the closest relationship with. For all participants, except for one, they first disclosed their pregnancy to either a colleague or their supervisor; then, they disclosed to other professional colleagues shortly after.

So I first disclosed to my [supervisor], I kind of went into [their] office and just told [them], we have a very good relationship. And so it was pretty easy to just go in there and be open and honest with [them].

(Participant 14)

When recounting the experience, 11 out of 15 participants noted experiencing positive reactions during their disclosure. Analyses also revealed that participants who experienced a more positive reaction during their disclosure tended to explain the reaction in more detail, as compared to those who experienced a more neutral reaction.

Positive Reaction:

And [they were] just so excited and genuinely happy for me as a person. I know [they] put me as a person first. Work is like a distant second, and work never even came up once... like when you tell someone, it was like telling your parents, you know, it was very close, and they don't care about logistics. They just are happy for you.

(Participant 12)

Neutral Reaction:

So [they] knew the whole process. And [they] gave me really good feedback and advice and guidance on this process.

(Participant 4)

Information Received

Before disclosure, ten out of 15 participants recounted having little to limited knowledge regarding what information was needed to navigate their workplace throughout their pregnancy. Of that ten, seven participants recounted being informed about what information was available to them by their supervisor at disclosure.

My supervisor and the admin - they were like super clear on exactly the policy, maternity policy.

(Participant 1)

Work Environment Superordinate Theme

The Work Environment superordinate theme entails participants' discussions regarding their experiences after disclosing their pregnancy in the workplace. Within this theme, three subordinate themes emerged: uncomfortable interactions, treated differently, and uniqueness of experience. The Uncomfortable Interactions subordinate theme highlights interactions participants experienced with colleagues during their pregnancy that left them feeling uncomfortable. The Treated Differently subordinate theme recounts instances where participants recounted experiencing different treatment due to their pregnancy as compared to how they were treated prior to pregnancy. Lastly, the Uniqueness of Experience subordinate theme describes how the participants perceived their overall pregnancy experience in relation to their peers in the organization.

Uncomfortable Interactions

Six out of 15 participants noted that they experienced interactions with colleagues, particularly male faculty from other departments, who asked probing questions regarding their pregnancy. When recalling the experience, participants expressed feelings of aggravation and unsettlement due to the "invasion of their privacy".

Definitely had a few awkward interactions with male professors who were not my colleagues per say; who were not in my department, but were in other departments.

(Participant 1)

There's always these potential awkward interactions, like it was some faculty that I interacted with, particularly men. The way that people will either ask, like, are you expecting... And their reaction was like, oh I didn't know if you just put on some weight.

(Participant 6)

Treated Differently

Three out of 15 participants noted interactions with their supervisor and/or colleagues where they were treated more delicately than they were treated before they became pregnant.

Everyone kind of treated me like a little bit more on like a pedestal, like, you know, making sure I wasn't like getting up on any chairs or stools in the office.

(Participant 7)

Uniqueness of Experience

When reflecting on their overall pregnancy experience, seven out of 15 participants described their experience as being unique compared to peer pregnancies at their workplace. Other participants either were not able to identify if their experience was unique or expressed feelings of it being unique to their specific pregnancy, but shared overall commonalities with their peers from different departments. Those who felt their pregnancy experience was more unique contributed it to those who they work with daily.

I don't think the type of department that I'm working in has had an effect on the experience. I truly believe it's just the people themselves.

(Participant 8)

Resources, Policies, & Benefits Superordinate Theme

The Resources, Policies, and Benefits superordinate theme entails participants' discussions regarding their experiences with accessing and obtaining the organization's policies

and benefits throughout their pregnancy. Within this theme, three subordinate themes emerged: knowledge & lack thereof, challenges, and participant recommendations. The Knowledge and Lack Thereof subordinate theme highlights what pertinent policies and resources participants had knowledge of prior to their pregnancy, what they still didn't know, and information they found themselves. The Challenges subordinate theme outlines difficulties participants faced when accessing the location of the policies and receiving accommodations during their pregnancy. Lastly, the Participant Recommendations subordinate theme describes how participants felt about their workplaces' implementation of its policies and benefits and discusses recommendations participants made to improve the application of these policies and benefits.

Knowledge & Lack Thereof

Four out of 15 participants described having limited knowledge about available pregnancy policies, as well as having little to no knowledge about available pregnancy resources in their workplace. When recounting the policies they did have knowledge of, eight out of 15 participants only noted the national Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and their workplace's maternity leave policy.

I mean, I know a little bit about like FMLA, but workplace specific, I guess I don't really know much.

(Participant 4)

I figured we got maternity leave. And I know that was a benefit that was highlighted in the human resources onboarding stuff.

(Participant 8)

When recounting resources they did have knowledge of, two out of 15 participants noted that, in researching on their own, they learned they had access to a lactation room in their organization.

Access to the nursing room in the library, and then being able to take a leave of absence.

That was just, those I sort of just figured out on my own.

(Participant 5)

Thirteen out of 15 participants recounted either completely researching the information they needed on their own or conducted supplemental research after their disclosure. The amount of information received at disclosure impacted how participants perceived their supervisor's role in their pregnancy; with six out of 15 participants deducing their supervisor had a minimal role to play throughout the experience.

Nobody said anything about that. I just assumed, because it's my body, my pregnancy, my maternity leave, it's up to me. So I went through HR and did my research.

(Participant 8)

No, so not my boss, [they] wouldn't know. So I just had to look into that myself...I had a meeting with HR. So someone in HR handles benefits.

(Participant 11)

Interestingly, one participant noted that they had researched the organization's pregnancy policies prior to accepting a position at the organization. They noted that based on those policies outlined, they accepted the position with hopes of a fair work-family balance.

Challenges

Ten out of 15 participants recounted challenges when they were researching workplace policies available to them. Participants discussed struggles with discovering where their workplaces' policies are stored and then navigating their workplaces' online policy handouts.

But I had to do a lot of digging to find out what I needed to do to go on maternity leave, once I had the baby. And even then I had to have a phone call with HR. And there were like, probably 20 emails back and forth.

(Participant 9)

Six out of 15 participants also recounted challenges when they were trying to arrange parking accommodations. Participants noted it was unclear who handled this accommodation: Human Resources or the Police, and neither seemed to believe they were the owners of this accommodation. This struggle impacted how participants perceive the supportiveness of their workplaces' existing systems and accommodations for its employees.

So I really wanted to be able to park closest to the building... I asked if I could have a permit that would let me park in right next to my building. I asked HR and like, they weren't willing to give this... I'm like, how do we, how do we get the support when the system doesn't support it?

(Participant 3)

Participant Recommendations

As the interviews were concluding, participants recounted their thoughts regarding if their workplace adhered to the policies its handbooks outline. Fourteen out of 15 participants felt their workplace adhered to the policies that are outlined; however, of those 15, eight participants felt their workplace adhered to the policies outlined but they also discussed how the existing

policies could be improved. For instance, these eight participants indicated that they found the phrasing of the policies to be vague and ambiguous which meant it was then up to their supervisor's interpretation on how the policy should be implemented for that particular employee. So, they felt that the phrasing of the policies in the handbook should be more specific and leave less room for interpretation.

I guess, but only because they basically don't exist? ... I guess they adhered to them in the sense that they barely existed.

(Participant 3)

Yeah, um, everything happened exactly as outlined in the handbook.

(Participant 10)

Additionally, participants concluded their interviews by recounting resources they wished they had received and/or made recommendations as to how their workplace can better accommodate its pregnant employees. Ten out of 15 participants discussed how they wished there was a centralized location that housed work-family resources and outlined the policies available for the employees who are expanding their families.

I guess probably just like one place that I can go to for all the information I will need, like about insurance, about like, policy information. So then it will be easier, especially for my first pregnancy, I really knew nothing. I don't know how to add my new newborn baby to my insurance. Like all the new information is just, I have to think of it and it's just too much.

(Participant 13)

I think having a designated space for expecting parents because that would have been very helpful, you know, to have even a section of human resources website... because so much of the maternity stuff is very different than health insurance, you know, health insurance is often negative, because it's always when you're sick or when you need it. But with this it could be a really nice opportunity to make parents feel very welcome.

(Participant 12)

Two out of 15 participants also briefly discussed their returns to the workplace once they were postpartum. These participants noted ways to improve the current policies and accommodations for women who are postpartum (i.e., improving lactation spaces).

Study 2 Discussion

These findings suggest that the work environment during pregnant employees' overall experiences impact how they perceive the organization as a whole. For instance, participants recounted having positive attitudes towards their workplace when they felt they were treated fairly during their pregnancy. The disclosure process, specifically, plays a unique and important role in impacting how employees perceive the role supervisors and colleagues play in navigating their pregnancy. For instance, some participants discussed how they primarily navigated their pregnancy in the workplace and the paperwork that was required to be filled out because they felt their supervisor provided minimal guidance at disclosure. Additionally, the application of pregnancy policies and benefits impacted how employees perceive the support of their workplace, systematically, during their pregnancy. For instance, those who experience more convenience in accessing the policies feel their workplace is more supportive of the work-life balance.

The interviews also offered clues as to other topics that could be key follow-ups for future research. While the interviews did not specifically ask about the return from work, some participants did briefly discuss their return from leave as well. Aspects of employee recruitment, also, were not discussed in this study, however, one participant did note that the existing pregnancy policies at this organization influenced their decision in choosing a position at their organization. Although these findings were not reported by the majority of the sample, it is important to note that other aspects of the work-family balance were discussed in this study.

Study 3: SWOT Analysis

Study 3 synthesized the results from Study 1 and Study 2 in order to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats regarding pregnancy for employees at a higher education organization. A SWOT analysis is used by organizations to build a strategic plan to improve operations of the business and meet the goals set forth by the organization (White, 2018). Results from a SWOT analysis help organizations determine whether objectives, goals, and services are a strategic fit (White, 2018). Results from my SWOT analysis yielded a set of recommendations to improve the pregnancy experience for employees at the primary higher education organization but also, more broadly, to other higher education organizations.

Method

Design & Procedure

In conducting my SWOT analysis, I first reviewed the results from Study 1 followed by those from Study 2. In reviewing these results, I identified various strengths and weaknesses based on how the policy impacted employees and the participants' response to the policy. For instance, if the policy positively impacted an employee's work-life balance, it was categorized as a strength (i.e., flexible work-life arrangements) and if it negatively impacted an employee's

balance, it was categorized as a weakness (i.e., vague phrasing of policies). From those weaknesses identified, opportunities to improve the existing policies and benefits were identified (i.e., develop parking accommodations). Additionally, from the weaknesses, threats were identified based on how the existing policy potentially impacts turnover rates and employee satisfaction (i.e., legal ramifications if an employee is injured because there are no set parking accommodations). The results from reviewing Study 1 and Study 2 were then collated in a table and further conclusions were reported.

Results

The SWOT analysis revealed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats imposed on the organization’s pregnancy policies and benefits regarding meeting the needs of its employees (see Table 3).

TABLE 3 SWOT Analysis

| | |
|--|---|
| <p><i>Strengths</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Option to take extended maternity leave ● Flexible work-life arrangements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Modifying work schedule during pregnancy ○ Negotiating longer maternity leave | <p><i>Weaknesses</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lack of awareness of policies ● Difficult accessibility of policies ● Some employees find phrasing of policies to be vague ● No formal parking accommodations ● No paid leave extension ● One lactation area |
| <p><i>Opportunities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Host information sessions on policies and benefits info ● Develop a centralized digital repository for resources ● Expand policies to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Parking Accommodations ○ All pregnancy possibilities (i.e., negative outcomes) ● Parental Leave ● Lactation Accommodations | <p><i>Threats</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Legal ramifications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Unintentional non-compliance due to improper implementation of policies ○ Employee injury due to lack of safe parking accommodations ● Employee job dissatisfaction |

Strengths

In addition to the eight-week paid maternity leave the primary organization offers employees, the organization offers employees the option to take an additional four-weeks of unpaid maternity leave. At this organization, employees also can make arrangements with their supervisor for an extended leave, outside of the offered maternity leave, in order to increase bonding time with their child. This extra time off would be outside of the mandated eight weeks FMLA employers offer and, therefore, employees would need to request any additional leave. These opportunities to extend their leave are a strength because it improves employees' work-life balance. It is important to provide this time off for employees in order to avoid employee burnout. When employees feel burnt out, a toxic work environment occurs (Fuhl, 2018). For instance, when employees feel burnt out, productivity can be decreased, workforce turnover can be impacted, and negative effects to employees' mental and physical health can occur (Fuhl, 2018). Participants, from Study 2, recounted that supervisors are typically accommodating of these alternative arrangements, however, they noted there can be other workplace circumstances (i.e., short staffed) that result in their supervisor declining the request.

Weaknesses

Although the primary organization's policies and benefits were viewed in a more positive light, findings revealed several shortcomings. All participants, to varying degrees, recounted have little knowledge about their organization's pregnancy policies and benefits, only referencing FMLA and the maternity leave policy. About two-thirds of participants noted that the information they obtained regarding policies and benefits at disclosure was not enough and, therefore, had to conduct their own supplemental research to navigate the intricacies of family planning benefits. Participants also noted that when researching about the available policies and

benefits, they experienced great difficulty in finding the documents outlining what their organization abided by. For instance, one participant recounted searching for hours on HR's website for the documents and eventually found some to fill out, only to be informed that they were incorrect and outdated information. Additionally, in my research during Study 1, I experienced great difficulty in locating the pregnancy policy information and documents for this primary organization.

Although participants expressed feelings of appreciation for the flexibility that occurs due to the vague phrasing in the policies and benefits, they also expressed feelings of discontentment because the phrasing leaves room for misunderstanding or error when trying to access accommodations. About one-third of participants recounted having issues in obtaining parking accommodations and accounted for it, in part, occurring because there is no language in the handbooks outlining parking accommodations for pregnant employees.

Compared to the two peer organizations, the primary organization has limitations in its length of payment during maternity leave; the only option of additional leave an employee can take is unpaid leave. More specifically, the primary organization offers only an additional four weeks of unpaid maternity leave for all employees. However, the other peer organizations offer either more time off or paid leave options (including half-pay). For instance, peer organization two, for staff, offers an additional four weeks of maternity leave as well but provides half pay and, for faculty, an additional two weeks of leave at full pay. Peer organization one, for staff, offers an additional eight weeks of unpaid maternity leave and, for faculty, an additional two weeks at full pay and additional 14 weeks at half pay.

Another weakness in the primary organization's existing policies is its lactation accommodations. The two peer organizations offer lactation accommodations that allow

employees to make use of multiple locations, as compared to the primary organization's one central lactation location. For instance, peer organization two offers over ten locations designated for lactation across their campus, allowing employees to utilize the area closest to their workspace.

Opportunities

Given the strengths and weaknesses in the primary organization's policies and benefits, there are opportunity areas. Based on findings from the interviews with participants, the organization can implement a new system to ensure that supervisors have knowledge and access to the proper tools in guiding their employees through the pregnancy policies and benefits. The primary organization also can create a centralized digital repository that houses all work-family related documents and information, with a section dedicated to pregnancy.

There are also opportunities for improvement to the employee handbook. The primary organization also has the opportunity to develop explicit parking accommodations for pregnant employees to avoid the back and forth in obtaining closer parking, like participants in Study 2 discussed. Also, not all pregnancies result in the parents successfully birthing and bringing home a child. The organization can include verbiage in its handbooks to include information guiding employees on what to do in the workplace for all possible pregnancy outcomes (i.e., miscarriage).

There are also opportunities for modifications to the existing policies in the employee handbook. The primary organization can evaluate what they currently offer for maternity leave and discern if any modifications can be made to reflect what peer organizations offer. Lastly, based on the findings regarding existing lactation locations, the organization can evaluate its existing lactation accommodations to make them more convenient for employees.

Threats

Given the weaknesses identified, there are two primary threats regarding the current pregnancy policies and benefits at this organization: legal ramifications and employee job dissatisfaction. First, since participants recounted that their supervisors are not as aware of the policies as they would have liked, there are opportunities for unintentional non-compliance to occur by the supervisor. Additionally, since there are no explicit policies outlining parking accommodations for pregnant employees, the organization is at a higher risk for employee injury. Both of these threats put the organization at risk for lawsuits pursuant to workplace injury and employee discrimination. The second threat that the primary organization is vulnerable to is having employee job dissatisfaction. Based on the criticisms and recommendations participants made in Study 2, employees are not happy with the current pregnancy policies and benefits. With dissatisfied employees, an organization is exposed to other issues (i.e., decreased performance and higher turnover rates) (Fuhl, 2018).

General Discussion

Main Findings

Findings from these three studies revealed that the pregnancy experience extends from disclosure to the return from maternity leave, not just until the beginning of maternity leave, and includes components that can be considered outside the “typical pregnancy experience”.

Study 1 revealed that pregnancy policies offered across organizations encompass occurrences after maternity leave has begun and shows that organizations are unique in the implementation of these policies outlined. For instance, findings from Study 1 indicate that the organization being evaluated offers the same pregnancy policies as peer organizations (i.e.,

maternity leave, tenure stoppage for faculty, and lactation accommodations), but the amounts offered, except for tenure stoppage, differ.

Study 2 revealed that multiple workplace factors influence pregnant employee perceptions of their workplace. Three superordinate themes relating to pregnancy experiences in the workplace were identified: disclosure experience, work environment, and resources, policies, and benefits. These three superordinate themes included multiple subordinate themes that further discussed the participants' pregnancy experiences and perceptions of their workplace.

Study 2 also revealed that some participants conflated the duration of their pregnancy experience: discussing from disclosure to their return from maternity leave. No questions were asked regarding experiences post-return from maternity leave; however, some participants did discuss their return from leave and made recommendations to improve the existing lactation accommodations. Study 2 also revealed that few participants were considering alternative pregnancy outcomes when using the policies and the role policies and benefits have in recruiting employees. For instance, one participant discussed that there are no existing policies for parents who experience a negative pregnancy outcome. Additionally, one participant noted that the existing pregnancy policies at this organization influenced their decision in choosing a position at their organization.

Study 3 revealed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the primary organization's existing supportive practices for pregnant employees. For instance, Study 3 discussed how having flexible work-life arrangements is a strength at this organization, but also discussed how employees feel the policies are vague in its phrasing is a weakness. Study 3 also discussed that there is an opportunity for this organization to develop formal parking

accommodations for its pregnant employees because the lack of this accommodation, formally, poses a threat on the organization, as it allows opportunities for employee injuries to occur.

Recommendations

From the information gathered and evaluated from, specifically, the opportunities and threats components of the SWOT analysis, the following recommendations were developed to improve the experiences of pregnant employees at a higher education organization. The recommendations are categorized by the following two superordinate themes: Increasing Awareness of Policies and Modifying Policies in Handbook.

Increase Awareness of Policies

- 1. Develop training and resources for supervisors to utilize in order to understand the pregnancy policies and benefits offered at the organization.**

Findings suggest supervisors at the organization do not know enough about the pregnancy policies offered to employees and, as a result, they are unable to adequately assist their employees in navigating their pregnancy at work. Participants recounted that they wished their supervisors had played a larger role in assisting them navigate this work-life balance. Supervisors are a resource for employees. When a supervisor cannot help the employee overcome that obstacle, then a key resource for that employee is lost. Including training and resources for supervisors about the pregnancy policies at the organization will not only help them be a better employee, but also allow them to help other employees be the best they can be.

- 2. Develop a centralized digital repository for all work-family related documents and information, including a section dedicated to pregnancy. Regularly maintain documents and information.**

Once this repository is developed, it can be maintained by HR, who is already tasked with managing employee benefits and ensuring that all information is up to date. In addition to this central repository, the organization can delegate an employee in HR, who already manages employee benefits, as a specialist regarding pregnancy policies, answering any questions the policy documentation cannot.

Overall findings suggest that the information and documents regarding the pregnancy policies offered at the organization are, in its current state, difficult to find. Convenient access to the information outlining the pregnancy policies offered to employees is important because it allows them to properly prepare for the experience. When employees already know their workplace responsibilities in preparing for when they are postpartum, it minimizes the chance for work-family issues to arise later in the pregnancy, or even when they are postpartum. Having a centralized digital repository for all work-family documents and information will help employees be more aware and have a better work-life balance.

Modifying Policies in Handbook

- 1. Evaluate the plausibility of developing parking accommodations for pregnant employees. If plausible, include verbiage in policies and benefits handbook(s) outlining parking accommodations.**

Findings suggest the organization currently does not explicitly offer any parking accommodations to its pregnant employees and, as a result, issues have arisen due to this lack of verbiage. In later stages of pregnancy, women can experience difficulties in traveling, especially walking long distances across the various inclines at the primary organization. To minimize this risk, employees would need closer parking accommodations to their building to decrease the distance travelled and the risks of injury, especially during later stages of pregnancy and during

the winter months. Including verbiage outlining parking accommodations for pregnant employees would allow employees to conveniently and safely travel across the workplace.

2. Evaluate the plausibility of modifying the maternity leave offered to reflect pay in additional maternity leave.

Overall findings suggest although the organization offers additional leave time to its employees, other organizations offer more supportive maternity leave packages to its employees. This can be improved by not including time for unpaid leave but, instead, modifying those additional four weeks of leave to be, at least, at half pay. Additionally, it was revealed that employees would appreciate more time spent with their newborn during those early moments in their child's life. Potentially providing the opportunity for more paid maternity leave would benefit employees and positively impact their perceptions of the priority their workplace puts on the work-family balance.

3. Evaluate how the organization can support all possible pregnancy endings and include verbiage in its policies and benefits handbook(s) outlining how employees can navigate the work-life balance if an alternative outcome occurs.

Findings suggest the organization currently does not have any policies outlining how it can support employees if a negative outcome occurs at the end of pregnancy. Not every pregnancy concludes with a live infant and primary caretaking responsibilities; employees still need support from their workplace if that occurs. Having a policy outlining how the organization supports all pregnancy possibilities will positively impact how supported employees feel in their workplace and increase employee satisfaction.

4. Evaluate existing lactation accommodations and consider providing equitable spaces across campus and/or equipment necessary to convert any space to accommodate the lactation period.

In Study 2, participants recounted how inconvenient it is to travel across campus, to the library, in order to use the lactation space for pumping. Participants who are in faculty positions at the organization recounted that they just pumped in their office because they did not want to walk the distance to the library. However, most staff at the organization do not have a fully enclosed office or work in an open space and would need convenient access to a lactation room. Modifying the lactation accommodations would allow all employees to conveniently use the space and help separate their workplace and maternal roles.

Limitations

For Study 1, the pregnancy policies among three organizations were compared, however, these organizations were regionally comparable and all pregnancy policies outlined in the handbooks were evaluated, which makes these useful comparators. For Study 2, the sample was limited because it required participants who had worked at a specific organization and were pregnant in the past three years. Therefore, the target population was quite limited to begin with. Given these limitations in the first two studies, Study 3 was limited to the scope of Studies 1 and 2. Thus, the conclusions drawn from this work limits the generalizability across other organizations because many aspects of the results are specific to this primary organization.

Future Research

This work primarily focused on the experiences of women working in higher education while pregnant and the impact policies and benefits have from disclosure to maternity leave. There are still multiple avenues related to this work that can be explored. Future work should

focus on the experiences of women working while pregnant and how policies and benefits impact their perceptions of their workplace's supportive systems regarding pregnancy, but in fields outside of higher education. Although this work briefly discusses the lack of policies for all pregnancy outcomes, future work should focus on the policy applications negative pregnancy outcomes (i.e., providing maternity leave when a miscarriage occurs). Further, more research is needed that is inclusive of how existing policies impact the different pathways to parenthood (i.e., adoption, surrogacy, fertility assistance).

Overall Conclusion

The findings of this work highlight the experiences of women working in higher education while pregnant and the impact policies and benefits have from disclosure to maternity leave. These findings have implications for the role disclosure, the work environment, and policies and benefits play throughout pregnancy. The policies and benefits evaluated, as well as the participants interviewed, illustrate that the existing supportive practices for employees at this organization need to be modified. The needs of pregnant employees highlight the importance of supportive workplace policies and benefits for the work-life balance, including after maternity leave. This work can immediately be considered at the primary organization but also has broader impacts across higher education and the workforce in promoting the larger goal of achieving equality in the maternal workforce.

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Appendix A: Faculty / Staff Pregnancy Experience Interview Questions

| Experience / Support | Resources | Policies |
|--|---|--|
| | <p>Pre Pregnant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you know of any pregnancy resources offered in your workplace before you became pregnant? If so, can you tell me about some of the resources? | <p>Pre Pregnant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before you became pregnant, what did you know about existing national pregnancy policies? State? WPI? |
| <p>Pre Disclosure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you tell me about what being pregnant in your workplace was like before you disclosed your pregnancy? | <p>Pre Disclosure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you research or know of any pregnancy-related resources before you disclosed you were pregnant? | <p>Pre Disclosure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you know about or research any pregnancy-related policies before you disclosed you were pregnant? |
| <p>Disclosure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you don't mind talking about it, who in your workplace did you first disclose your pregnancy to? • How did you disclose your pregnancy? • What were your colleagues' / supervisors' / department heads' reactions? | <p>Disclosure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were you informed of any workplace resources when you disclosed your pregnancy? If so, what were you told about? | <p>Disclosure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were you informed of any pregnancy policies when you disclosed your pregnancy? If so, what policies did you learn about? |
| <p>Post Disclosure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you tell me about what being pregnant in your workplace was like after you disclosed your pregnancy? • What went well at work after you disclosed your pregnancy? What didn't? • Do you feel your overall experience is unique to your department or job title? | <p>Post Disclosure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you receive any workplace resources while you were pregnant? | <p>Post Disclosure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you know about available national, state or workplace pregnancy policies since disclosing your pregnancy? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Would you be interested in me sending WPI's pregnancy policies in a follow up email? |
| <p>General</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you encountered other pregnant faculty / staff since being employed at your workplace before you became pregnant? After? | <p>General</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was there anything else you wished you had received during your pregnancy? | <p>General</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you feel your workplace adequately adhered to these policies during your pregnancy? |

Thank you for your time. Your responses are very helpful to my work, which is looking at the experiences of pregnant women working at secondary education institutions. Although lots of research has been conducted recounting the workplace experiences of pregnant women, this research has not been collated into one accessible format.

- Is this a topic you think is relevant to a lot of pregnant/postpartum women?
- Do you think your peers would be interested in recommendations to help make the workplace a more positive space regarding pregnancy?
- Could I follow up with you in an email about taking a survey regarding these recommendations?
 - If so, keep name to contact with survey link
- Do you have any recommendations of people who might be willing to participate in this interview and/or survey?

Would you like me to send you a copy of the debrief explaining what we are expecting from these interviews? Also, would you like me to send you a copy of the transcript of your interview for you to review?

Appendix B: National, State and WPI Pregnancy Policies



U.S.

PREGNANCY DISCRIMINATION ACT OF 1978

- Women who are pregnant or recently mothers shall be treated the same for all employment-related purposes, etc. (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission)

<https://www.eeoc.gov/statutes/pregnancy-discrimination-act-1978>

U.S.

FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE ACT

- Covered employees entitled to take 12-workweeks unpaid, job-protected leave for birth of a child or care for a new child within one year of birth, etc. (Wage & Hour Division)

<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/fmla>

MA

MASSACHUSETTS PARENTAL LEAVE ACT

- Employers provide 8 weeks unpaid leave for giving birth or placement of child under 18 yrs (23 yrs if child disabled) for adoption, etc.
- Both men & women eligible for parental leave (Mass.gov)

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/parental-leave-in-massachusetts>

WPI

TENURE-TRACK FACULTY

- Tenure-track faculty who undertake significant childcare responsibilities due to arrival of biological or adopted child during probationary appointment entitled to stop tenure clock for one year, etc. (WPI Faculty Handbook)

https://web.wpi.edu/Images/CMS/FacultyGov/Faculty_Handbook.pdf

WPI

FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE ACT OF 1993

- covered employees provide up to 12 weeks unpaid, benefits, & job-protected leave for incapacity due to pregnancy, paternal medical care, or childbirth; to care for employee's child after birth, etc. (WPI Employee Benefits & Policies Manual)

<https://www.wpi.edu/sites/default/files/FinalEmployeeHandbook.pdf>

WPI

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR PREGNANCY & LACTATION

- WPI complies with Pregnant Workers Fairness Act
- designated private spaces on campus for nursing & expressing breast milk (i.e. Gordon Library) can be reserved on library's space & room reservation page, etc. (WPI Employee Benefits & Policies Manual)

<https://www.wpi.edu/sites/default/files/FinalEmployeeHandbook.pdf>