

## Attracting and Retaining Women Talent in the Global Labor Market: A Review

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### Abstract

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Global competition, the dynamics of cultural diversity, and demographic realities make it necessary for more participation and retention of women in the global workforce. Baby boomers are retiring at rates faster and higher than their replacement rates. Companies with human resources strategies geared toward attracting, retaining and motivating child-rearing mothers will find themselves at a competitive advantage over their competitors. This paper examines samples of family-friendly strategies in the United States and selected countries in Europe, Asia and South/Central America with respect to their effects on the participation, retention and persistence of child-bearing women in the workforce. The paper concludes that investments in such strategies do not only attract and retain such women but are also a positive corporate success factor for such companies.

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**Keywords:** maternity leave, daycare services, incentives, flexible schedules, worksite daycare, women retention, labor force participation

### 1. Introduction

In spite of recent increases in the rates of female representation in the general labor force, women still account for a much lower rate of participation, particularly in the senior management and leadership positions. Upward career mobility has been excruciatingly slow for women (*Institute of Leadership & Management*, 2011). Recent estimates show that there are 865 million women worldwide outside of the labor force who have the potential to contribute to their national economies, and 93% of them live in emerging or developing countries that sorely need their contributions for national development (Aguirre et al. 2012) Other studies suggest that in Latin American countries alone, there is a 33% labor force participation gender gap which translates to an income loss of 17% for the region (Cuberes and Teignier, 2012).

Global, cultural and demographic dynamics are creating a compelling need for organizations to come up with strategies to attract and retain women, particularly new mothers, in the workplace. Women have been making significant contributions to the workforce since the 1860's and continue to do so to the present. More of their talents and contributions are needed in this technology age more than ever before. However, women of child-bearing age are confronted with the choice of foregoing the pursuit of upward career mobility or postponing having and rearing children to a later date. Either option carries irreparable negative consequences that can be ameliorated through family-friendly human resources corporate incentives and strategies. This paper looks at samples of such strategies and incentives in selected countries of North America, the U.S. in particular, and in selected countries of Europe, Asia, South America and Central America, and concludes that there are current strategies in place that can enable nursing mothers to “have their cake and eat it too” in the workplace, and that these incentives need to be implemented and sustained for a more prosperous global economy.

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### 3. Methodology:

This is an exploratory investigation, which synthesized data from secondary sources in the general media, published journals, and government records, such as the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), U.S. Census Bureau, and their foreign equivalents. The paper examined these pieces of information to determine positive, negative, and neutral effects on attraction and retention of new mothers in the workplace and to determine if there are any best practices that can be used as a template by companies and agencies considering such policies. Tables and figures are also used to show the extent of such practices, costs and benefits accruing from them.

### 4. Review of Literature

Several factors contribute to the underrepresentation of women in the workforce and to the fact that the careers of many women who work do not follow the smooth linear trajectory that men experience. For one thing, women face other demands on their time and attention. Balancing personal and family responsibilities with demands of the workplace has been identified as one of the major reasons (Gresser, 2011).

This trend is more noticeable within the ranks of women of child-bearing age as buttressed by analysis of some companies which illustrates the magnitude of the problem. "Proportionately, there is probably a 25 per cent greater attrition rate among women compared with men in the 30-35 age group in the labor force" (Gresser, 2011). A McKinsey survey found that "57 per cent of women point to the double burden of balancing work and domestic responsibilities as the biggest barrier to increasing gender diversity in the top management of companies. The study suggests that significant changes in corporate culture and sensitivity to domestic responsibilities of women, are more likely to attract, retain and motivate women to seek top management positions (Gresser, 2011). In a contemporaneous study by the Institute of Leadership & Management, "17 % of women believe that raising or caring for children has presented barriers to career development, compared to 7% of men" (*Institute of Leadership & Management, 2011*).

For similar reasons, women leave in disproportionate numbers in mid-career, what one researcher has called a "leaking pipeline" which he believes partly explains the low representation of women on the UK Financial Times Stock Exchange Group (FTSE) 100 Boards at just 12.5 per cent (Will in Vinnicombe et al.).

The approach-approach conflict decision theory explains the stress and emotional discomfort faced by these nursing mothers who must decide to return to work or take time off to attend to their babies. The approach-approach theory deals with an emotionally conflicted situation involving a choice between two equally desirable but incompatible goals (N., Pam M.S., in *PsychologyDictionary.org*, April 7, 2013). This incompatibility of goals can be ameliorated through a win-win mediation process.

Women, like every other worker, want job tenure with career advancement. They also want to give maternal care to their new born up to a reasonable length of time without suffering negative career consequences. These two situations seem incompatible unless employers intervene with family-friendly incentive programs and policies. These policies can begin by addressing the issue of maternal bias that expresses itself in assumptions that nursing mothers who take maternity leave to attend to their babies have less commitment to their careers and consequently are denied equal opportunities to higher leadership positions. (Keogh, 2018). In addition to the need to juggle family responsibilities with work duties, there's the issue of workplace discrimination and stereotypes based on the assumption that "women lack confidence relative to men; are more cautious about applying for jobs; and are less clear about where their careers are heading" (*The Irish Times*, Jun 8, 2018). These negative assumptions and stereotypes tend to create a self-evaluation dissonance in working women that causes them to sometimes make choices and preferences that militate against what are traditionally considered to be normative indicators of and catalysts for upward career progression. For instance, one study finds that more women than men rank a number of career priorities, such as flexible work arrangements, collaboration, and ability to make a contribution, ahead of monetary compensation, political visibility and acquisition and wielding of organization power and influence (Pinker, 2009). A study by The United States Center for Work-Life Policy corroborates the findings and adds that women also find power, for its own sake, unappealing (Walsh, 2013).

Several other studies have found that women, particularly the highly educated, "on average, find social aspects of the job, such as flexibility and working with people they respect, more important than men, whereas men find pay and advancement the big carrots" (Hewlett and Buck Luce, 2010). Does this mean that women don't care about pay or that men don't value the social aspects of work and career? Not at all. It's just that the "weight men and women tend to attach to each factor differs".

And the root causes of such differences need to be examined for their effects in attracting and retaining women in the workplace. It is clear that the greatest of these barriers to women moving up the corporate ladder has been the double burden of balancing work and domestic responsibilities, which makes it very difficult for women to fulfill the workplace expectation that employees be available anywhere, anytime (Woetzel et al, April 2018).

## **5. The Findings**

### **5.1 Corporate Culture Accommodation**

By the time many women are done with raising a family, they are in their late 40's or early 50's. Companies need to rethink the traditional corporate mindset that makes youth (usually age 35) a deadline beyond which success in corporate leadership is considered unattainable. These companies need to become open to the idea that one can still be promoted to the VP slot or higher in his/her 50s or beyond and still make it. This will ameliorate the fear and stress felt by women re-entering the workplace after child rearing. One author explained the situation thus: "when women enter their 50s, they [begin] to worry that companies haven't changed and that if they take time off, they may be discounted" (Barsh, June 2013).

Similarly, there is need for changes in corporate women assimilation practices to deal with "how to help women navigate their return to work after maternity leave and how to negotiate a corporate culture and informal networks [that require] an understanding of the rules of engagement – the unwritten rules-- that may not feel natural to them" (Barsh, June 2013). As a result of social and political pressure, some of these changes are beginning to take hold, more so in some companies and countries than in others.

In Norway, 44 per cent and in Australia 27 per cent respectively of board directors are now women (Pinker, 2009). To attain a broad-based and sustainable inclusion and retention of women in the workforce, more cultural and corporate policy changes that include worksite daycare, flexible schedules, paid and unpaid paternity leaves, teleworking infrastructure and peer networking, are necessary. So, what is happening in this regard on a global basis and with what effects?

As baby boomers are retiring, women play an important role in workforce talent replenishment. Many of the industrialized countries now understand that in order to keep their economies afloat, all citizens able and willing to work, men and women, should contribute. Unfortunately, several factors, some already referenced, impede many women's participation and continuance in the workplace. Cost and time for child care is chief among them. Organizational responses to these issues include worksite daycare, flexible schedules, and paid and unpaid paternity leave. There is evidence that such incentives are working.

### **5.2 Overview & Rationale for Retention Strategies**

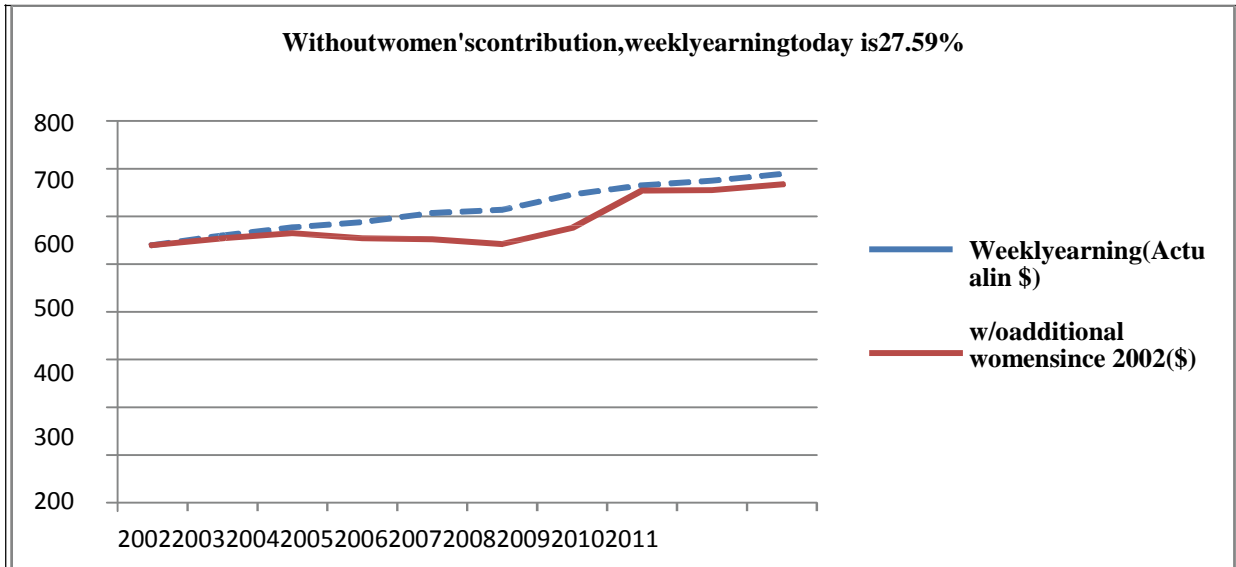
The demographic dynamics of the workforce which show large deficits in retirements and their replacements now confront many organizations with talent shortages (Taneja et al, 2012). At the same time, organizations are seeing a decline of women talent due to the aforementioned conflicts between professional and family responsibilities (Taneja et al., 2012). Studies also show significant correlation between the percentage of women in a company's top management team and the organization's profit margins (Cabrera, 2009). For organizations to remain competitive, therefore, incentive strategies to retain women in the workplace are imperative.

### **5.3. Women's Contribution to the Workforce (1861 to present)**

There's no debate as to the ability or willingness of women to contribute. Women's contributions to the workforce have been significant and date back to the American civil war when women volunteered their services to both the Union and the Confederate armies as seamstresses, nurses, hospital administrators and even as spies (Netzley, 2004). In World War II (1939-1945), vacancies in industries on the home front, resulting from deployment of men to the battle front, were filled by women who joined the workforce to maintain the production of materials needed for wartime mission (Mandel and Sinclair, 2002). They worked in industrial plants, as telegraph operators and other positions that needed to be filled.

The World War II experiment also proved that women could be anything they wanted to be and since then, women have continued to contribute to the workforce with great benefit to the national economy (Lockhart, 2001. Mandel & Sinclair, 2002). Figure 1 below displays the increase in national weekly earnings from 2002 to 2011 when women make contributions to society compared to when they do not (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011).

**Figure1. Women’s Weekly Earnings contribution**



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2011. *The Employment Situation - August 2011*. U.S: Department of Labor.

Unfortunately since the 1970s, the labor force participation rate of women in the United States has been on the decline, particularly with reference to new mothers returning to the workforce after childbirth (Still, 2006). US Census Bureau in 2003, showed the decline from 46% to 41% between the years 1998 to 2002 (Still, 2006). Factors contributing to this decline have been identified to include: 1) male-based rather than gender neutral work policies; 2) traditional and enduring bias against women in the workplace; 3) lack of accommodations to pregnant women and women of child-bearing age, and 4) unwillingness to recognize the impact of child care on women’s work performance and persistence in the workplace (Still, 2006).

In view of the foregoing, let us review the efforts being made by organizations to retain women in the workforce in North America, Asia, Europe, and South America.

**5.4. Retention strategies for Women in North America**

A major factor for a mother in deciding to drop off from the labor force is childcare and in the United States, quality childcare is very expensive. (US 2018 State Fact Sheets). Although there are federal and State programs that provide subsidies for childcare, these are few and usually available only to low income families in contrast to some other nations where such programs are available to all parents. In fact, when measured by family income, the United States falls within the bottom five of the 36 member-nations of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), in terms of child care affordability (Fraga, 2018).

Child care costs vary from state to state. In the Northeast region of the U.S., parents can pay over \$22,049 in childcare cost per year (2013) while in the Southeast Regions, the cost can run over \$15,200 on the average per year (Fraga, 2018).

On-site childcare services implemented by companies in these regions have helped mothers tremendously to balance work and family life. Companies like Lotus and Stride Rite, for instance, have used them successfully to attract and keep talented employees (MCintyre, 2000). Admittedly, not every employer can afford to pay for such services.

It is estimated that the initial cost to set up a childcare center caring for 65 children, ranges from \$1.5 to 2.5 million dollars per year. In addition to the initial cost for centers, operating costs per child can cost up to \$13,000 each year (MCintyre, 2000).

Although not all eligible working mothers can be served due to limited slots available, statistics show that within the ten years of introduction, companies with on-site day-care services experienced significantly less turnover rates than those without such incentives (MCintyre, 2000).

Union bank in Monterrey California saw a seven percent decrease in turnover for the employees who utilized the worksite daycare (established in 1987) compared to their counterparts (MCintyre, 2000). While worksite daycare is considered and appreciated, many employed mothers rely more on other childcare arrangements as Table 4 shows. Nevertheless, overall, daycare is an incentive to retain women in the workforce.

Center-based care (child care center, preschool, Head Start)	35%
Grandparent	32%
Other relative (not including fathers)	10%
Family child care homes	8%
Care in the child's home	5%
Care in friend or neighbor's home	5%

(MCintyre, 2000, p. 27).

#### 5.4. 1. United States Flexible Scheduling Incentives

Flextime work scheduling is another attractive incentive to help maintain talent within the organization. In a survey of over 1,500 job seekers, 74% gave flexible work schedule as their number one preference for the work-life balance it affords; health and exercise and family reasons came in second at 52 percent each. Time savings and reduced commute stress were also mentioned by 47 percent of respondents and cost savings came in at 43 percent (Sutton, 2014).

#### 5.5. Canadian Incentives for Women Retention

Compared to the United States, Canada seems to be more open and welcoming to the talent women bring to the workforce. Canada offers, as additional incentives to new mothers, unpaid maternity leave and flexible scheduling options. This means that Canadian companies allow women to take as much time off as needed or to work part-time or flexible hours until they can return to full time schedule. This allows nursing mothers to continue to make contributions to the workforce while rearing their children, and to keep abreast of company life during this period (Ray, 2007).

#### 5. 6. Asian Daycare Incentives

Many Asian countries value workplace competition. Consequently, women delay child bearing for some time to remain competitive in the workforce. As a result, in Japan, Malaysia, and Taiwan, there is now also concern about recent lower fertility/birth rates compared to previous years (Funakoshi, 2013). For female workers that do have babies, on-site daycare is not readily available. However, parents receive government subsidies for daycare. In Japan, the Government subsidizes 80% of operating costs for public daycare and 76% for private daycare centers (Funakoshi, 2013). Compared to the average cost of \$972.00 for daycare in the United States, Japanese parents pay \$200 dollars per month for daycare services. The issue Japan faces is the need for more daycare centers.

In 2012, it was estimated that 850,000 children were on the waiting list to receive childcare services (Funakoshi, 2013). Hitherto, the government had not deemed it necessary to engage in additional daycare center incentives beyond the financial subsidies given to parents. However, because of the acute shortages of daycare facilities and the large number of children on the waiting list for daycare services, there is a public demand for government to do more relative to establishment of more daycare facilities. The lack of daycare facilities forces parents to make a decision on who will become the stay at home parent; and usually it is the woman who leaves work to attend to the children (Funakoshi, 2013). Despite Japan's subsidy programs developed to provide affordable daycare to working women, higher turnover rates among working mothers persist. The government continues to seek ways to address the shortage of public and private daycare centers in the country.

**5. 7. Other Asian Incentives to Retain Women in the Workforce**

Due to low birth rates in some Asian countries, Governments and organizations are implementing other incentives to keep women in the work force and at the same time maintain a stable population size (Strait Times, 2013). In Taiwan, mothers are receiving additional money to their base salaries for every new born. Furthermore, women who choose to leave work to build families receive a monthly allowance per child (Strait Times, 2013). In South Korea, organizations have implemented flexible work arrangements for women to attend to family concerns. The methods of incentivizing women in the labor force in Asia, may differ from country to country but there is general realization that attracting and retaining women talent in the workplace is crucial for attaining global competitiveness.

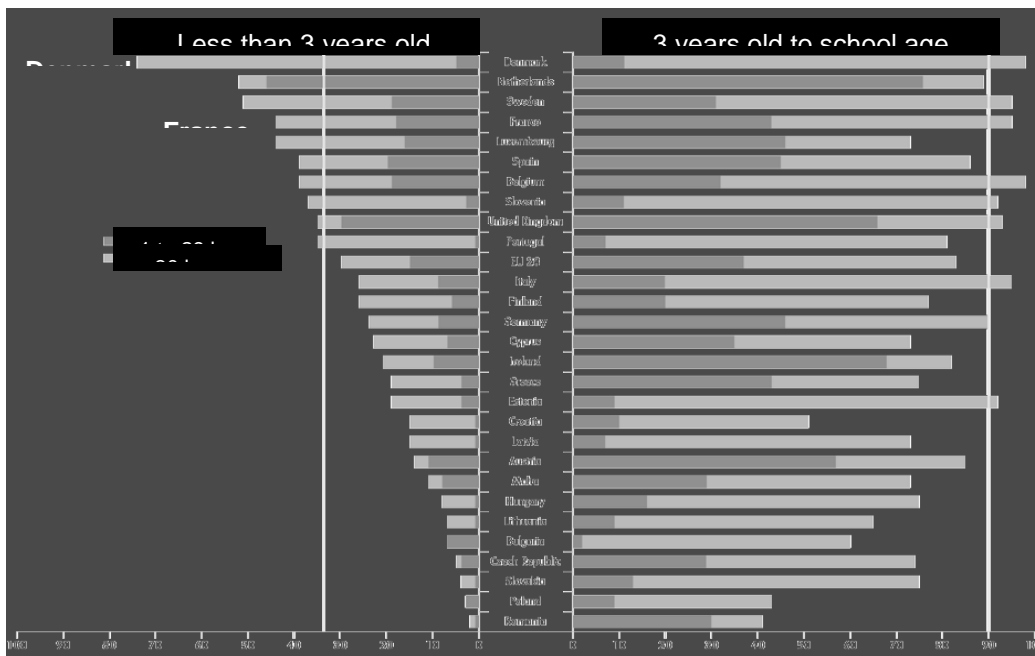
**5. 8. Daycare Incentives in Europe**

In Europe, as in the United States, policy development reflects societal changes and sentiments regarding working parents and childcare. It is highly desired and expected that: mothers should return to the workforce after giving birth, that fathers should have a more active role in caring for children, and that children should receive adequate and professional daycare. Therefore, the European Platform for Investing in Children (EPIC) was set up by the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion to explore challenges in the EU from a child and family-focused perspective. Its purpose is to share policies and best practices for children and their families, and to foster cooperation and mutual learning in this field (Janta, 2014).

**5. 9. Daycare Incentives in Denmark**

The country of Denmark seems to have a system most favorable for working parents. As indicated in Figure 2 below, Denmark has the greatest number of children enrolled in daycare for 30 hours or more a week for two age groups, namely, the less-than-three year old group; and the three-year-to-school age group. Britain is looking at Denmark as a model for her policies and ways to improve women retention in the workplace. The cultural norm in Denmark is to return to work as soon as possible after child birth (Rock, 2012, p.2). An important and effective dimension in Denmark’s policy is the extension of parental leave to both parents-- maternity and paternity leaves-- for childcare. Families pay only 25% of daycare costs and the government makes up the difference. Low income families or single parents pay between nothing and 25% of the cost of daycare. There are also discounts for families with multiple children (Rock, 2012). As a result of this family-friendly government system, “97% of children aged three to five and 92% aged one to two” receive daycare in Denmark (Rock, 2012).

**Figure 2. Percentage of child up to 3 years of age and from 3 years of age to mandatory school age cared for by formal**



Arrangements (Rock, 2012, p.4)

### **5.10. Daycare Incentives in France**

France ranks fourth on the chart for number of children in daycare and in family-friendly employment policies and child care services. France's policies are primarily geared towards maintaining a stable and healthy population growth. "Families in France receive numerous supports and subsidies the more children they have" (Lundberg, 2013). Their incentives include monthly stipends depending on the number of children they have, discounted rate on admissions and transportation, a subsidy for mothers who choose not to go back to work and even a medal from the government for having four children (Lundberg, 2013). The French government's primary focus does not seem to be on enabling women to return to the workplace, but is more centered on the government's interest in increasing the country's birthrate. Therefore, the incentive in place for encouraging women to have children does not contribute much to promote or protect women returning to the workforce. Affordability of daycare does not seem to be the issue determining whether or not a woman will return to work after childbirth, but whether or not she will maintain a worthwhile career. If a woman was employed prior to having a child, French law requires companies to hold the job for her.

However, there is no guarantee that she will have the same career opportunities as before. Additionally, if a woman is looking for employment after having a child or children, there are no laws to prevent employers from asking personal questions about their family status although the law prohibits employment discrimination based on that information. Although the primary aim of the French approach is population management, its derivative effect has proven beneficial in helping career-minded women to return and stay in the workplace after child birth without unreasonable injury to their careers.

### **5. 11. Daycare Incentives in Germany**

Germany provides subsidized daycare, but availability is limited. Germany falls in the middle of the European countries as far as number of children enrolled in daycare, with half of those enrolled falling into the less-than-30 hour a week group. It is challenging to find daycare facilities that can accommodate a demanding job in Germany. Part of the problem is cultural. Many Germans still believe that "the responsibility of the woman is 'Kinder, Küche, und Kirche'" i.e. children, kitchen and church (Falling Behind, 2007). There is a strong belief that the "majority of Germans would like to raise their children at home" but cannot afford to stay home (Pauls, 2013). Although, many choose to take advantage of the opportunity to stay at home for the first year of their child's life, it is difficult to return to the workforce until the child turns three years old, when more daycare facilities are available.

### **5. 12. Other Incentives for Working Parents in Europe**

Many European countries offer other generous incentives in addition to daycare services. Chief among these are generous leave grants. Not only are mothers and fathers allowed maternity and paternity leaves respectively to care for their new born, but there is also the additional "parental leave" time granted to both parents to enable them to take care of the newborn after maternity and paternity leave. The duration of the leave varies among the countries throughout Europe. Countries that suffer from limited availability of subsidized daycare facilities compensate by allowing the longest parental leaves (Robila, 2010). "For instance, in the Czech Republic, women are provided with 28 weeks of maternity leave, compensated at a level of 69 percent of their salary and up to 4 years of parental leave" (Rock, 2012). Consequently, the Czech Republic has the lowest daycare enrollment rates for ages three and under, which correlates to their parental leave policies. The Nordic countries of Sweden, Norway and Denmark grant mothers up to 40, 38, and 18 weeks of paid leave respectively, corresponding to the fact that those three countries have the world's highest percentages of mothers in the workforce (Schoenberger, 2013).

### **5. 13. Daycare and other Incentives in South America**

Countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have experienced tremendous growth in female employment over the recent decades with attendant increases in women's contributions to household incomes (Diaz, 2013). Contributions by women to household incomes ranged from about 28 percent in Guatemala to 41.3 percent in Nicaragua, and 44.3 percent in Uruguay. It is also estimated that women's labor market participation rate in the region rose by 15 percent from 2000 to 2010 and that female labor income reduced extreme poverty by 30 percent in the same period (World Bank, 2012). In spite of these general positive trends, there remain, within the region, persistent gender gaps in wages, and in women's vulnerability to unemployment because of constraints to labor market participation by mothers with young children.

Availability of reliable and affordable childcare is an important inducement for their participation. Government subsidies for childcare services provide considerable help to these families here as has been the case in many other countries and regions of the world (Diaz, 2013). Furthermore, greater participation of women in the workforce has had enormous positive effects on the social fabric of Latin American countries, reducing dependency on social assistance programs and strengthening their social security systems. But more needs to be done. The debate now is not whether child care services have positive impact on female employment. Rather the question is what types of childcare programs and how can they be developed, implemented and sustained at the least possible cost for favorable labor outcomes. For the answer to this issue, Latin America should be open to examine features of childcare programs and interventions whose effects on women's labor participation have been studied.

#### **5. 14. Daycare Incentives in Mexico**

Mexico accepts the evidence that providing subsidized childcare increases enrollment in daycare centers and allows mothers to look for employment. In 2007, the Ministry of Social Development in Mexico initiated a "Day-Care Centers Program" with the main goal of alleviating household poverty by enabling mothers with children between one and three years old to seek employment (World Bank Development Report, 2008).

The program established safe places for children of working parents. These initiatives involved a monthly stipend paid directly to a day care provider for each child of a working parent. The program also provided funds to eligible individuals to establish a daycare center or to improve already established day care centers and also included training for the daycare providers and monitoring to ensure the program's policies were being met. The Day-Care Centers Program not only met the intended goals for the year, but exceeded them by approximately fifty percent (World Bank, 2008). Not only does the program allow working mothers and single parents to seek and secure employment, but providing funds for individuals to establish daycare centers also provides employment opportunities and promotes a new cadre of entrepreneurs as well.

#### **5. 15. Daycare Incentives in Brazil**

Brazil ranks at the top in the region relative to improvements in the rate of women in the work force over the past decades. This is largely due, again, to the availability of child care. In Brazil, access to public child care is a constitutional right, where the government is responsible for ensuring that child care is available for children up to the age of six. A 2011 study summed up the situation thus: "we find that access to free publicly provided child care services led to a very large increase in the use of care (from 51 to 94 percent), a considerable increase in mothers' employment (from 36 to 46 percent), and an almost doubling in the employment of mothers who were not working before the lottery took place (from 9 to 17 percent)" (Paes des Barros, 2011).

#### **6. Consideration for Fathers**

So far attention has been focused on mothers and appropriately so because usually it is women who give up their jobs to attend to family issues more so than men (Still, 2006). However, with the increasing gender equalization of access to education and skill acquisition in various fields of endeavor, women are becoming the primary or coequal breadwinners in many households. In such situations, men can and do become the "house husbands" or home maker who stays at home while the wife works, in which case, paternity incentives become as important as maternity considerations after child birth. Therefore, companies and governments must plan ahead to include incentives for men in such eventualities, and everything which has been suggested and proposed for attracting and retaining mothers with young children should then be extended to working fathers in similar situations. Otherwise, when you rob Peter to pay Paul, the result may be that Peter is impoverished without enriching Paul, to the detriment of both.

#### **7. Discussion and Summary**

Our discussions of research findings supra establish that only a fraction of the estimated 865 million women worldwide who have the potential to contribute to their national economies are actually engaged in making such contributions. This has wrought enormous economic hardship on developing countries which make up 93% of these women. The negative economic consequences have also been pointed out, particularly in the case of the Latin American region where the 33% labor force participation gender gap has resulted in a national income loss of 17%. (Cuberes and Teignier, 2012). One consolation factor is the near unanimous realization among the countries and regions of the world that daycare and generous leave grants are an important factor for retaining women in the workforce. France, Denmark, Canada, Malaysia, Mexico and Brazil have aggressive initiatives in in this regard.



Japan and the U.S. need to do more in the area of availability of daycare to increase the rate of women returning to the workforce after childbirth. Another common trend among regions is the mothers' desire to return to work after child birth. Europe is ahead of other regions in reference to providing what women need to balance work and personal life. It is not a surprise, therefore, that Europe has been able to increase women retention in the workforce more than any other region. It, therefore, bears repeating and reemphasizing that these incentives identified by researchers and discussed earlier (daycare, parental leave, flextime work schedule, shorter work week, teleworking infrastructure etc.) are powerful motivators that have been shown to lure mothers to return to work and stay in the labor force without significant interruption in their careers

## Conclusion

The evidence is clear, particularly from Europe, that where governments support the cost of childcare, countries have higher rates of participation by working mothers (Schoenberger, 2013). The Nordic countries stand out as a model on incentives for working mothers, who receive state-provided childcare as well as paid family leave. As a result, "roughly three of every four mothers in those countries work" (Schoenberger, 2013). There is a direct relationship between childcare and maternal labor force participation, and many studies "support the hypothesis that the availability of childcare is intimately linked to greater women labor market participation. (Paes des Barros, 2011). Women play a vital role in the workforce and governments must acknowledge that programs supporting working parents play a critical role in the labor force. I completely agree with Carolyn Buck Luce (2010) that "as traditional business models characterized by hierarchical order slowly evolve to become more inclusive meritocratic structures, women will undoubtedly be an important asset". The challenge now is for more companies and governments to come aboard and develop more inclusive strategies to attract, retain and fully utilize women talent and experience in the workplace. Imagine how better the global economy would fare if only 50% of the 865 million women outside the labor force worldwide could be lured back to the workplace, and the impact on reducing global migration caused by economic hardship.

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