WORK-FAMILY PROGRAMS AND NON-WORK NETWORKS:
WITHIN-GROUP INEQUALITY, NETWORK ACTIVATION, AND LABOR MARKET ATTACHMENT*

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ABSTRACT

Organizations increasingly offer work-family programs to assist employees with balancing the competing demands of work and family life. Existing scholarship indicates that the consequences of work-family programs are heterogeneous across different socio-demographic groups, but limited research examines when and why workers within the same group may benefit differently from such programs. Understanding these differences may illuminate important mechanisms driving the effectiveness of work-family policies. We theorize that one key driver of within-group variation in the effectiveness of work-family programs is the extent to which workers’ non-work social networks activate resources to support them. Specifically, we argue that workers whose non-work networks are less likely to activate supportive resources will benefit more from organizational programs. We further posit that the status characteristics of workers’ dependents may shape the activation of resources among non-work networks. Drawing on novel data from an Indian garment factory and a quasi-experimental research design, we examine how a work-family program, employer-sponsored childcare, affects the daily work attendance of a socio-demographically homogenous group of working mothers. We find that women whose non-work networks are less likely to activate informal childcare support—specifically, women with daughters—benefit more from employer-sponsored childcare. Supplemental interview data supports our theoretical claims. We conclude by discussing the contributions of our argument to scholarship on work-family policies and social networks.

Keywords: work-family policy, gender, organizations, inequality, social support

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WORK-FAMILY PROGRAMS AND NON-WORK NETWORKS:
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Over the past decades, many workplace organizations have implemented an important suite of
work-family programs that aim to support workers in balancing the often competing demands of work
and family life (Osterman 1995; Rothbard, Phillips, and Dumas 2005; Reid 2015; Greenhaus and Powell
2006; Lapierre et al. 2018; Fernandez-Mateo and Kaplan 2018; Sherman 2018). These programs include
parental leave, schedule control and flexible scheduling options, childcare subsidies, and on-site childcare
(for a review, see Kelly et al. 2008). While well-intentioned, the consequences of these work-family
programs are mixed: sometimes they help workers and other times they do not (see Briscoe and Kellogg
2011; Glass and Estes 1997; Eby et al. 2005). What’s more, research has shown that these programs have
heterogeneous effects across different groups of workers. For instance, men and women often experience
work-family programs differently: sometimes women benefit while men do not (Scandura and Lankau
1997; Noonan, Estes, and Glass 2007).

Limited research, however, has explored how work-family programs may have varied effects for
workers who are part of the same socio-demographic group. Understanding this type of within-group
heterogeneity is important because it can uncover complex inequalities, identify subgroups of workers
who may be in need of targeted workplace interventions, and shed light on the mechanisms—including
mechanisms outside of the workplace—that drive the effectiveness of organizational programs.
Additionally, it may attenuate estimates of the average effects of these programs, which can result in
understating their importance in promoting opportunities for workers. In this paper, we examine a highly
homogenous group of workers and ask whether an organizational work-family program, employer-
sponsored childcare, has varied consequences even within this demographically similar group. We aim to
investigate the conditions under which work-family programs may differentially affect members of a
demographically homogenous group and ask why this might be the case.

We contribute to the literatures on work-family programs and social networks in multiple ways.
First, we examine whether a specific work-family policy—employer-sponsored childcare—directly
impacts labor market attachment for a socio-demographically similar and economically disadvantaged
group of workers. Here, we define labor market attachment as the accumulation of actual labor market experience, measured in our study as daily workplace attendance (Neumark and McLennan 1995; Alon, Donahoe, and Tienda 2001). Second, we develop a theory of the role of non-work social networks in driving within-group differences in the effectiveness of work-family programs. Specifically, we argue that there is an important interplay between organizational and non-organizational sources of support for managing the demands of work and family life. To date, the literatures on organizational work-family policies and informal social support from non-work sources have remained largely distinct. Third, we distinguish between the availability of non-work networks and the willingness of those networks to activate resources, and argue that workers who are less likely to have their non-work networks activate resources will benefit more from formal work-family programs. Finally, we highlight how the status characteristics of workers’ dependents, such as the gender of their child, can shape the activation of resources among non-work networks. In this way, paying attention to a worker’s non-work life—and the complex ways that support is and is not offered by social networks—becomes important to understanding the effectiveness of organizational work-family programs in promoting workers’ labor market attachment.

To gain empirical traction on these arguments, we draw on a quasi-experimental research design and longitudinal data from a garment factory in India. The factory we study offers free, on-site childcare to the women who work there. However, the availability of spots in the childcare center is limited. Thus, women who need childcare put themselves on a waitlist and obtain access to the center at staggered and random times. Drawing on administrative records and supplemental survey data, we are able to track women’s daily attendance at work before and after they obtain access to the childcare center. Because workers are paid a daily wage at this factory, attendance is a key driver of women’s overall earnings and, thus, their economic wellbeing. We are also able to examine heterogeneity in the effects of accessing the childcare center among a group of similarly situated workers: they are all Indian, all economically disadvantaged women, all mothers, all have limited education, and all work at the same factory in India. We supplement our quantitative analyses with qualitative interviews conducted with women who work at the factory and utilized the childcare center as well as members of their families. The interview data
provides additional insights into the mechanisms underlying the patterns we observe in our quantitative analyses.

The article proceeds as follows. First, we discuss the existing literature on organizational work-family policies that are intended to support workers with balancing the complexities of work and family life. We then develop a theory of non-work network activation that predicts which workers will benefit most from employer-sponsored childcare. Next, we introduce the case we will utilize to study these issues and discuss our data and methods, and then present our quantitative and qualitative findings. We conclude with a discussion of implications for scholarship on gender, work, and family, as well as social networks.

**WORK-FAMILY PROGRAMS AND LABOR MARKET ATTACHMENT**

An important suite of organizational policies attempt to tackle the challenge of balancing paid employment and family life for working parents (Blair-Loy and Wharton 2002; Hipp, Morrissey, and Warner 2017; Kossek et al. 2011; Powell and Greenhaus 2010; Rothbard 2001). Indeed, work-family policies, including paid parental leave, subsidized childcare, and flexible scheduling, can have positive consequences for parents’ abilities to deal with the competing demands of work and caregiving (Pettit and Hook 2005; Gornick and Meyers 2003; Thébaud 2015). In particular, work-family policies can promote job satisfaction, reduce work-family stress, and even increase overall well-being by reducing conflict between work and family life (Lyness et al. 2012; Moen et al. 2016; Kelly et al. 2014). In fact, scholars have documented the ways that workers with higher levels of work-family conflict or strain between work and non-work roles are more attracted to organizations with supportive work-family policies (Rau and Hyland 2002; Bretz and Judge 1994).¹

There is also reason to believe that work-family interventions could be particularly beneficial to disadvantaged, working-class women who often experience employment interruptions due to issues with their informal care networks or a lack of reliable formal childcare (Gordon, Kaestner and Korenman

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¹ While the positive consequences of work-family policies and programs have been documented, there is also some evidence of null effects in this literature (for examples related to childcare policies, see Goff, Mount, and Jamison 1990; Kossek and Nichol 1992).
Additionally, for low-wage women, childcare expenses represent a higher proportion of their incomes than they do for higher-wage, professional women (Demaske 2011), thus they may be particularly responsive to childcare subsidies and other forms of childcare support. Furthermore, non-professional workers may feel less pressure to live up to an “ideal worker” norm of complete commitment to their work (Kelly et al. 2010; Munsch 2016), making these workers less susceptible to penalties or backlash for utilizing work-family policies.

Indeed, scholarship on governmental policies, rather than organizational policies, suggests that women who face social disadvantages may be particularly responsive to subsidized childcare interventions in terms of their labor market attachment (see Bainbridge, Meyers, and Waldfogel 2003; Cascio 2009; Nollenberger and Rodriguez-Planas 2011; Kimmel 1995; Byker 2016). For example, Berger and Black (1992) find that childcare subsidies had a strong positive effect on the probability of employment for low-income single mothers in Kentucky. Drawing on evidence from a policy change in Quebec that provided universal access to subsidized childcare, Lefebvre et al. (2009) find the policy increased female labor force participation, particularly among women with lower levels of education. Additionally, drawing on data from a randomized study of largely disadvantaged women in a slum area of Nairobi, Kenya, Clark et al. (2017) find evidence that there are strong positive effects of subsidized early childcare on women’s employment.

Our analysis focuses on the consequences of employer-provided childcare for low-wage female garment factory workers in India, many of whom “earn so little that an entire month’s wages would not buy a single item they produce” (Chamberlain 2012, p. 1). Indeed, the women in our study have limited education and face social and economic barriers to advancement. In other words, they are disadvantaged workers and, thus, in line with the scholarship discussed above, they may be particularly responsive to supportive childcare policies. Thus, we offer our first hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 1 (H1):** Among disadvantaged workers, organizational work-family programs will have a positive effect on labor market attachment.

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2 Given that our data are limited to low-wage female workers, we are not able to empirically investigate whether there are differences in the effects of employer-provided childcare among women who are more and less advantaged in terms of skill, education, or occupation.
Heterogeneous Effects of Work-Family Programs: Between- and Within-Group Differences

Not surprisingly, work-family interventions do not affect all workers uniformly. One prominent difference in outcomes appears between men and women (Barbulescu and Bidwell 2013). Scandura and Lankau (1997) find that perceptions of flexible hours, a likely correlate of supportive work-family policies, is more strongly related to organizational commitment and job satisfaction for women than for men. Kelly et al. (2014) find that an experimental intervention designed to promote work-life balance was particularly useful for mothers in increasing their reported likelihood of having enough time for family. Clark et al. (2017) demonstrate gender-differentiated consequences of supervisor work-family support for multiple outcomes. And, Noonan, Estes, and Glass (2007) find that the use of schedule flexibility policies is associated with fewer weekly hours of housework for mothers, but fathers’ use of such policies has no association with their weekly hours of housework. There is also evidence that using work-family policies can bring particularly strong stigma for certain groups. In a controlled vignette-based survey experiment, for example, Munsch (2016) finds that men who make flexplace requests due to childcare needs are perceived more positively than women who made flexplace requests for childcare purposes. Other scholars, by contrast, find that men are deeply stigmatized and face serious biases when it comes to requesting family leave (Rudman and Mescher 2013), seeking flexible work arrangements (Vandello et al. 2013), or working part-time (Pedulla 2016).

While existing research points to important variation in the effectiveness of organizational work-family policies between different groups, within each of these socio-demographic groups there is also likely to be variation in how effective work-family programs and policies are at promoting opportunity. Workers, even if they are part of the same socio-demographic group, have many other aspects of their lives affect whether they benefit from organizational policies. Paying attention to this type of within-group inequality is important because it can provide new insights into the mechanisms driving the effectiveness of work-family policies. Additionally, exploring within-group heterogeneity has the potential to shed light on whether between-group variation in the effectiveness of work-family programs reflects deep differences between groups or whether it may reflect within-group mechanisms that are
more or less common in different groups. Further, when within-group variation in the effectiveness of work-family policies is ignored, it may appear as if work-family policies have no effect, even though they are highly impactful for a subset of workers. In the following section, we advance our theoretical argument about a key driver of within-group variation in workers’ responses to work-family programs.

**NETWORKS AND WITHIN-GROUP EFFECTIVENESS OF WORK-FAMILY PROGRAMS**

When and why might workers from a socio-demographically homogenous group benefit differently from organizational work-family policies? We argue that workers’ non-work social networks are likely to play an important role in shaping within-group heterogeneity in the effect of work-family programs. This insight highlights the importance of how supportive organizational work-family policies and non-work social support intersect with one another. To date, the interrelationship and interaction between these two types of support has remained underexplored. Specifically, we propose a general process—variation in network activation—that can drive inequality within groups of socio-demographically homogenous workers based on dependents’ status characteristics. Our central theoretical proposition is that formal organizational work-family programs can compensate for the unwillingness of workers’ non-work social networks to provide support.

**Work Versus Non-Work Networks**

Individuals develop social networks through their organizational affiliations (Small 2009), including workplaces. And those networks can be valuable to workers. Indeed, the importance of supervisors in shaping the effectiveness of work-family policies has been suggested in existing scholarship, even if that research was not framed around networks. Briscoe and Kellogg (2011), for example, find compelling evidence that workers who used a “reduced hours” work-family program at a large law firm had much better career outcomes if they had a powerful supervisor when they started at the firm. Kelly et al. (2014) too find that supervisors matter. The authors examine the impact of a program that trains supervisors to value the personal lives of their employees and helps workers to consider when and where they work. They find evidence that this intervention increased schedule control for workers, improved perceptions of supervisor support for family and personal life, and reduced work-family conflict.
(Kelly et al. 2014; see also Moen et al. 2016). A key component of the intervention in this study was the training of supervisors, which gave employees a connection to someone with authority who was more likely to be sympathetic to their personal lives and needs.

In this paper, we argue networks outside of the workplace can matter as well. We thus expand the purview of these network arguments to consider non-work networks. We conceptualize non-work social networks as the set of relationships that a worker has with family members and friends outside of their employment. We posit that these non-work networks can serve as valuable resources for workers (e.g., by providing childcare) and can thus shape the effectiveness of work-family programs.

**Non-Work Networks: Structure versus Activation**

Evidence suggests that having access to non-work networks can help workers more seamlessly navigate work and family domains. For example, Dodson (2009) provides examples of the use of non-work networks, including neighbors and grandparents, to manage work-family conflict in the absence of organizational support (see also Clawson and Gerstel 2014). Yet, the benefits that accrue through social networks are far from universal. Indeed, simply because one has access to a person with resources in their social network does not mean that resources will be activated by that person, often referred to as an “alter.” In other words, simply being in a structural position where one has access to non-work social networks is often insufficient to reap benefits. Activation is also necessary. Scholars of social networks have paid close attention to this distinction between network structure and network activation in order to better understand the ways that network-based social resources impact various outcomes (Smith 2005; Marin 2012; Abraham 2019; Gulati and Srivastava 2014; Kwon and Adler 2014).

Much of scholarship in this area has focused on the role that social networks play in the job search process. Conditional on having access to social network resources, network members can either increase job seekers’ likelihood of positive outcomes through their helpful behavior or constrain a job seekers’ opportunities by withholding key resources.³ In the case of informal childcare assistance, the

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³ For example, a network alter may be concerned about putting in a good word with their employer for an individual because this act may put them in a difficult position with their employer if the person they refer is hired and then does not turn out to be a good employee. Indeed, there is evidence in the U.S. context that black job seekers are less
distinction between being in a structural position where one has access to social networks (e.g., family) and whether those networks will activate to provide support is similarly important. Simply having family members nearby is unlikely to have an impact on how a worker responds to work-family policies at their workplace. It is the activation of those networks that really matters.

Specifically, we argue that formal work-family programs and policies can be particularly useful for workers whose non-work networks do not activate resources on their behalf. Take flexible scheduling and schedule control policies, for example, which provide workers with the ability to alter their start and stop times at work as long as their workplace commitments are met (Weeden 2005; Kelly, Moen, and Tranby 2011). These policies can be useful for workers with obligations outside of the workplace, such as picking up young children from daycare or taking elderly parents to medical appointments. Conditional on workers having social networks in their geographic area, a formal workplace schedule control policy is likely to be more beneficial for workers whose network alters are less likely to provide informal support. When one is not able to rely on one’s social network to pick children up from daycare—even when those network alters are present—having an organizational policy that makes it possible to do that pick-up becomes much more important. This leads to our second hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Among disadvantaged workers, organizational work-family programs will be more effective in promoting labor market attachment among workers whose non-work network alters are less likely to activate resources on their behalf.

When Non-Work Networks May Not Activate: The Status Characteristics of Dependents

The next step is identifying when networks are more and less likely to activate. We posit that socio-demographically similar workers might have dependents with different status characteristics who might elicit different support from workers’ non-work networks. For example, among children, some might have physical disabilities, some might have behavioral disorders, and some others might be “gifted.” We posit that such attributes can serve as status characteristics (Berger et al. 1977, Ridgeway 1991; Correll and Ridgeway 2003) that may affect the desirability of these dependents in the eyes of likely than similar white job seekers to have their networks activate resources on their behalf during the job search process (Royster 2003).
workers’ network alters and the likelihood of their offering childcare support. For example, “gifted”
children might be seen as higher status and therefore, might elicit greater support from grandparents. In
contrast, children with disabilities might be seen as lower status and, therefore, may elicit lower support
from extended family. Other social characteristics of dependents, such as their gender or race, might also
play in role in shaping how network alters respond to a workers’ dependents. These status characteristics
of dependents may make it more or less likely for non-work networks to activate resources.

Much of the existing scholarship on the intersection of work and family life collects data on
workers’ dependents by asking workers whether they have children under 18 living with them at home
(for example, see Scandura and Lankau 1997). Some papers go one step further and consider the number
and age of the workers’ dependents (for example, Rau and Hyland 2002; Bretz and Judge 1994). Kelly et
al. (2014) draw a further distinction between caring for children and caring for adult dependents. The
existing research, however, largely does not delve into attributes of a worker’s dependents and the
implications of having different kinds of dependents for the activation of non-work network resources.
All dependents are not the same. Therefore, beyond the distinctions made in the extant literature, we posit
that even among workers with roughly the same number and age profile of dependents, there can be
variation in the status characteristics of these dependents that can affect whether non-work networks
activate informal childcare support.

**OUR CASE OF EMPLOYER-SPONSORED CHILDCARE**

Our analysis focuses on one key work-family policy: free, on-site, employer-sponsored childcare. We examine the effects of this policy on women’s daily work attendance, a key indicator of labor market attachment. For non-salaried workers, such as the women in our study, being able to show up for work is central to their economic well-being and may have important consequences for promotions and career advancement. It also affects employer productivity (Baker-McClearn et al. 2010; Allen 1983; Miller, Murnane, and Willett 2008; Nicholson et al. 2006). Thus, understanding how organizational programs can support daily attendance provides important insights into a key outcome for both workers and organizations. Our case provides the opportunity to directly examine the consequences of employer-
provided childcare for a socio-demographically homogenous and economically disadvantaged group: low-skilled female garment factory workers in India.

**Family-Based Networks and Informal Childcare**

Family-based networks—a key form of non-work networks—have been shown to be valuable assets in enabling women’s economic activity in India (Oh 2018; Venkatesh et al. 2017). In our case, we posit that family-based network activation of informal childcare may vary with the status-based preferences of the individuals in a woman’s network (Ghysels 2011; Aassve, Arpino, and Goisis 2012). Our study is focused on women who are already working and, thus, must have childcare arrangements that enable them to participate in the labor force. Yet, even when women have childcare arrangements, those services may be unavailable on certain days (Gordon et al. 2008), requiring women to figure out alternative childcare arrangements. Many of the women in our study use informal, neighborhood-based childcare centers before gaining access to the employer-provided childcare center. However, these other centers can be unreliable. Additionally, when a child is sick, they may not be able to go to their neighborhood-based childcare facility. In these cases, as well as others, women may need to rely on their family-based networks for childcare support. Insofar as the people within those networks are less willing to care for particular types of children, women will be differentially able to attend work depending on the characteristics of their child.

By contrast, employer-sponsored childcare centers do not discriminate in whom they care for. As long as the child is qualified to participate in the program, the attributes of the child will not impact whether they can attend the childcare center. And, in our case, women are able to bring their children to the employer-based childcare center even if the child is sick, in part due to the availability of on-site healthcare services. Additionally, employer-provided childcare may be more reliable than informal neighborhood-based care because the employer is likely to lose money if its workers are unable to come to work due to childcare center issues. Thus, women’s attendance at work may be more positively impacted by employer-sponsored childcare in cases where women’s social networks are less likely to
activate. We focus on one specific status characteristic that may limit a woman’s social network’s willingness to provide informal childcare support: the gender of her child.

**When Family Networks May Not Activate: Child Gender**

Having a daughter rather than a son may limit the willingness of a woman’s family-based social network to provide informal childcare support in India, where there is a well-documented “son preference” (Arnold, Choe, and Roy 1998; Clark 2000; Das Gupta et al. 2003; Pande and Astone 2007). Evidence for “son preferences” is found in a broad array of empirical literature. For example, Jayachandran and Pande (2017) write, “The Indian firstborn height advantage [a key marker of nutritional investments] only exists for sons, and the drop-off varies with siblings’ gender … in ways consistent with the hope for a male heir determining Indian parents’ fertility decisions and their allocation of resources among their children” (p. 1). There is also evidence that boys receive more childcare time from parents than girls (Barcellos, Carvalho, and Lleras-Muney 2014) and even that child mortality rates for girls significantly exceed child mortality rates for boys (Arnold et al. 1998). These status dynamics that exist around the gender of a child may lead to additional challenges for women who have daughters compared to women who have sons, because of the preferences and biases that exist in their family-based networks.

These “son preferences” are likely to intersect in important ways with how family-based networks activate to provide childcare support, making them more likely to provide informal childcare for sons than for daughters. As a result, mothers with sons may still be able to attend work when their regular childcare arrangement is unavailable whereas mothers with daughters may not. Thus, women with daughters may benefit more from employer-provided childcare than women with sons.

**Empirical Predictions**

Applying our theoretical argument to our particular case produces a set of empirical predictions that we are able to test with our data. First, we expect to see a positive relationship between access to employer-provided childcare and women’s daily attendance. Second, we posit that there will be within-group variation in the effects of employer-sponsored childcare by non-work network activation, not structure. We predict that – among the demographically homogenous group of disadvantaged workers in
our data – access to employer-sponsored childcare will have similar effects for individuals who do and do not have access to family networks. However, we predict that access to employer-sponsored childcare will more positively affect the daily attendance of women whose networks do not activate supportive resources, which in our context is captured by women with daughters.

DATA AND METHODS

To evaluate the empirical predictions developed in the previous section, we obtained access to a large garment factory in India employing over 1,800 women in low-skill jobs. The factory we studied was established in 2001 and is located in the outskirts of the southern Indian city of Bangalore. The factory specializes in producing menswear, primarily trousers and jackets, and produces on average 100,000 trousers and 50,000 jackets per month. The factory we study provides employer-sponsored childcare to its women workers through an on-site childcare facility. Such childcare service is not uncommon in India, as the Factories Act of 1948, a key piece of legislation in India’s employment law, mandates that manufacturing facilities employing more than 30 women provide “a suitable room or rooms for the use of children under the age of six years” (Factories Act, 1960).

The childcare center in the factory we study is housed in an administrative building on the factory premises, a short walk away from the shop floor. Mothers are allowed to visit their children during their work breaks. The childcare center is run by two women trained in the care of children and infants. The brightly painted and mural-decorated childcare center consists of two rooms and a washroom. The first, a “sleeping” room, stocks a row of cots and cradles for the children, while the second, a “learning and play” room, has a blackboard, some educational material, and toys. The factory also provides for the children’s food and health needs: the factory canteen prepares breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack for the children in the childcare center. Additionally, the factory’s resident nurse treats children when they become sick and also conducts regular health checkups of all the children in the childcare center. The childcare center, including meals and healthcare, is free of charge for the workers.

Our interview data with working mothers at the factory indicate that they are pleased with the quality of care in the childcare center. However, women at the factory do not receive immediate access to
the on-site childcare facility because the childcare center can accommodate a maximum of one hundred children at a time. Therefore, working mothers desiring childcare services put their names on a waitlist maintained by the factory’s human resources department. When a vacancy in the childcare center opens, the worker at the top of the waitlist is offered the opportunity to enroll her child in the childcare center. The timing of such vacancies is hard to anticipate given the generally high level of satisfaction with the quality of childcare.

**Quantitative Data and Identification Strategy**

We obtained access to three sources of quantitative data maintained by the factory in order to investigate our key research question about the conditions under which a socio-demographically homogenous group of working mothers might benefit differently from employer-sponsored childcare. The sources of information include: 1) the factory’s childcare center records, 2) data on the daily attendance of each worker, and 3) data on workers’ demographic and family characteristics. Using these sources, we constructed a dataset at the worker-date level tracking the daily attendance of 160 working mothers between April 2012 and January 2016, where every worker in the sample used the childcare center for some amount of time in our observation period. This sample of 160 women, while a small proportion of the factory’s worker population, represented the full universe of women who used the childcare facility during our observation window. All of the workers we study are employed in full-time positions.

The factory’s childcare center records allowed us to construct our sample of 160 workers by providing us details on when workers received access to the childcare center as well as basic descriptive characteristics of the children in the childcare center. The attendance records tracked whether a given worker was present on a particular date, which serves as our dependent variable. Finally, we obtained data on some worker characteristics, such as their marital status and household composition, which we merged into our dataset to facilitate an investigation of our proposed network process explaining within-group heterogeneity in the effectiveness of work-family programs. These data on worker characteristics were collected by the factory through a survey conducted at the time women entered the organization. However, the survey was administered unevenly by officers at the factory, resulting in some missing
We supplemented this survey data by contacting workers in our sample whose phone numbers we had access to in July 2018 in an effort to fill in missing data. This exercise provided us with some additional data on worker characteristics. Because we were still not able to obtain all data for all women in our sample, some analyses are limited to a subsample for whom we were able to obtain the relevant data.

We begin our analyses by examining the direct effect of employer-sponsored childcare on working mothers’ daily attendance. In order to identify this effect, we exploit two key features of our setting and data. First, working mothers in the factory gain access to the on-site childcare center at different points in time, and this timing is quasi-exogenous since it depends on vacancies at the childcare center. Importantly, given that a worker does not know when a vacancy will open up, she is unlikely to change her attendance behavior in anticipation of getting access to the childcare center. Second, the vast majority of the women in our sample get access to the childcare center during our observation period, allowing us to track their attendance both before and after they start using the childcare center.

Using these two features, we employ a within-person analytic approach as our identification strategy. We compare the daily attendance patterns of the same woman before and after receiving access to the childcare center. This analytic strategy reduces concerns about time-invariant differences in observed and unobserved individual worker characteristics, and is therefore superior to an alternative strategy of comparing women who use the employer-sponsored childcare to a different set of women with young children who do not use the employer-sponsored childcare. We are thus able to estimate models with worker-specific fixed effects as well as time fixed effects to approximate a causal relationship between employer-sponsored childcare and working mothers’ daily attendance.5 Note that an alternative research design would have entailed comparing workers who received access to childcare to those on the waitlist for the program. While this design has been shown to be powerful in estimating the effects of

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4 We note that the women in our sample who were surveyed do not seem to be systematically different from the women who were not surveyed along demographic characteristics available for both groups. Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for women in our sample (n=160) and Appendix A presents descriptive statistics for the women who were surveyed (n=59).
5 In Appendix B, we show that our results are also robust to using random effects models.
work-family programs by constructing a credible “control” group (Kossek and Nichol 1992), we do not have access to the waitlist.

Having estimated the direct relationship between employer-sponsored childcare and working mothers’ daily attendance, we are then able to approximate a causal estimate of the differential effect of employer-sponsored childcare for mothers enrolling girls versus mothers enrolling boys in the childcare center, exploiting the fact that whether a mother has a boy or girl is random.⁶ We also estimate how these effects vary depending on whether a worker’s spouse or parents (i.e., the child’s grandparents) are present in the household.

**Key Variables and Statistical Methods**

The main dependent variable in our analysis is daily attendance at the factory for our sample of working mothers. Daily attendance is a dichotomous variable that takes the value of 1 when a worker was present at work on a given date and 0 when she was absent. When a worker is recorded as being present for half the workday, we code these observations as absences since the worker was unable to fully participate in work on that day.⁷ Given this dichotomous dependent variable, we employ logistic regression techniques for analyzing daily attendance.

Our first independent variable is a categorical variable called Post Childcare that is defined at the individual worker level. Post Childcare takes the value of 1 on dates on or after the date the worker’s child began attending the employer childcare center and 0 on dates that preceded this date. This allows us to conduct a within-worker comparison of how childcare center access shapes daily attendance at work. Additionally, we analyze the differential effect of employer-sponsored childcare for women enrolling sons versus daughters in the childcare center. We measure this differential impact using an interaction term Post Childcare x Daughter, where Daughter is a binary variable that takes the value of 1 when the child being enrolled in the childcare center is a girl and 0 when the child is a boy.

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⁶ The exception to this is if there is a high rate of sex-selective abortion. While there may be some sex-selective abortions in India, we do not believe that it is a large enough phenomenon to be a significant threat to the validity of our findings, in part because sex-selective abortion is less common in the state of Karnataka, where our data were collected, than in other parts of India (Shetty and Shetty 2014).

⁷ All our results are robust to coding half-days as the worker being present (see Appendix C).
Finally, in order to test whether non-work network activation underlie our child gender results, we exploit variation in family characteristics among our sample of working mothers. In particular, we split our overall sample by (1) whether the worker’s spouse is present in the household and (2) whether at least one of her parents or in-laws is present in the household. We then rerun our analyses examining the moderating role of child gender on the consequences of childcare access for women’s daily attendance separately for households with and without workers’ spouses and parents. We also analyze the differential effect of employer-sponsored childcare for women with and without spouses and parents in their households using the interaction terms Post Childcare x Spouse Present and Post Childcare x Parent Present, to test the importance of network structure on workers’ responsiveness to work-family programs.\(^8\)

**Qualitative Data and Methods**

To triangulate our argument that the activation of women’s non-work network depends on their dependents’ status characteristics, we conducted 22 semi-structured interviews with 20 interviewees (two interviewees were interviewed twice) in Bangalore, India, the city where our factory is located, in addition to engaging in numerous informal conversations. These interviews were conducted in-person in July and August 2018 by a research assistant. The interview subjects included 11 working mothers and 9 family members (6 spouses, 2 mothers-in-law, and 1 mother). All of the working mothers were employed at the factory that we are studying and had sent at least one of their children to the on-site childcare facility.\(^9\) Note that there is 60% overlap between the working mothers in the interview sample and the quantitative analysis sample. We could not achieve 100% overlap due to the time lag between our quantitative and qualitative data collection efforts, making it difficult to track workers in the original

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\(^8\) We conducted all statistical analyses using Stata.

\(^9\) From the factory, we obtained phone numbers of 47 working mothers who had used the childcare facility. While we attempted to contact all 47 women, only 12 phone numbers were viable leads. Individuals in this setting do not have stable phone numbers because they are often not able to make their monthly phone payments; further, the factory does not keep up-to-date records. As such, when we called the 35 other phone numbers provided to us, our calls were not picked up by the working mothers in question or alternatively, our calls were met with “this number does not exist” messages. Out of the 12 mothers we were able to establish contact with, 11 agreed to be interviewed. We asked each of these 11 interviewees, at the end of our interview with them, to put us in touch with an adult family member in their household. While all 11 interviewees referred us to either a spouse, parent, or parent-in-law, we were able to conduct interviews with only nine family members; the remaining two family members canceled initial interviews scheduled with them and did not respond to our subsequent requests to reschedule.
sample. We do not consider this to be a problem, though, as the different samples give us additional data with which to examine our theoretical argument.\(^{10}\)

The interviews lasted an average of 46 minutes, and were conducted in Kannada, the local language, with the assistance of a translator. We used a semi-structured interview format. In these interviews, we asked about the interviewee’s relationship with each of the children in the household, how much they and other members of their family helped take care of the children, as well as experiences with and opinions of the employer and the employer-provided childcare facility. The interviews were conducted at the interviewees’ homes on weekends or in the evenings, after work hours. The interviews were conducted in private, ensuring that no one but the interviewer and translator could hear the interviewee’s responses, even if there were other family members present at home and even if we also interviewed some of these family members. The interviews were all recorded, translated, and transcribed in English. We analyzed the transcribed interviews using the Atlas.ti qualitative software package, which facilitates attaching labels or codes to portions of text to track patterned activities and issues across the transcripts (Spradley 1979, Charmaz 2006).

**RESULTS**

We begin our analysis by examining the sample of factory workers and children receiving access to childcare in our observation period. Table 1 presents descriptive statistics on the working mothers in Panel A and on the children in Panel B. All 160 workers in our sample were female and the workers had 1.8 children on average.\(^{11}\) Working mothers in our sample had a mean tenure of 4 months at this factory and were, on average, 25 years old at the time of receiving childcare access. About 10% of these working mothers were single and about 30% lived with their parents. The working mothers earned a mean starting wage of Rs. 275 per day (translating to roughly $4.25 per day) and, on average, they were present 89% of working days. Their likelihood of turnover between April 2012 and January 2016 was 27.5%. With respect to the children entering the childcare center in our observation period, about 48% of the children

\(^{10}\) See Appendix D for more details about the interview sample.

\(^{11}\) Our results are robust to keeping only women with one child in our dataset, as shown in Appendix E.
were female, they were on average 1.9 years old (the youngest was 0.7 years old and the oldest was 6.6 years old) and had 0.8 siblings. Importantly, only 1.2% of them had siblings in the same childcare facility. Therefore, for simplicity, we only keep in our dataset the first child who received access to the childcare facility in a given family.

[Table 1 About Here]

**Main Effects of Employer-Sponsored Childcare**

**Quantitative Data.** Next, we examine the consequences of receiving access to childcare on the likelihood of attending work. Table 2 presents estimates from a logistic regression of daily attendance on the *Post Childcare* variable. Models (1) and (3) do not include month and year fixed effects, while models (2) and (4) include them. Models (3) and (4) include worker fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by worker in all models. The coefficients vary slightly in size after controlling for worker and month/year fixed effects. We will interpret the results in model (4), our most stringent specification, for brevity. The positive and statistically significant coefficient for *Post Childcare* indicates that, when women received access to employer-sponsored childcare, their odds of being present at work were 1.71 times higher (exp[0.536]=1.71) than when they did not have access to such childcare provisions, after controlling for worker and month/year fixed effects. This amounts to a roughly 5.5 percentage point increase in women’s attendance after receiving access to childcare. Specifically, women’s attendance rises from 84.6%, on average, before receiving access to 90.1%, on average, after receiving access. This suggests that employer-sponsored childcare has a large, positive, and meaningful effect on working mothers’ labor market attachment among economically disadvantaged women workers in India.

[Table 2 About Here]

**Qualitative Data.** Our qualitative data support the quantitative findings. The mothers we spoke with indicated that their attendance as well as other work outcomes improved after they received access to their employer's childcare center. One mother said, “So last week my child fell sick, but I didn’t take leave because it was a light fever” (#W10). She continued, “Compared to before, I take less leave [now] because I have childcare next to my working place. My output has also increased.” Her spouse agreed,
saying, “Since the childcare center is next to them, … she [my wife] takes much less leave and can also work more” (#S5). Another working mother said, “If the factory did not have such [childcare] facilities, I might not go to work. Since they have it within the factory, that’s why I’m going there” (#W12). Her mother-in-law added, “It’s good to have such facilities so that women can concentrate on their job” (#P3).

Thus, the qualitative reports from workers and their family members are in line with our quantitative findings.

**Variation in Non-Work Network Activation by Child Gender**

**Quantitative Data.** Now that we have an estimate of the main effect of gaining access to childcare on working mothers’ daily attendance, we next explore how the effect varies, first, depending on a working mother’s non-work network structure, and second, based on whether or not a working mother’s non-work networks activate to provide informal childcare support. Table 3 explores whether having access to network alters affects workers’ responsiveness to employer-sponsored childcare, the network structure argument. Specifically, Table 3 estimates whether the effect of receiving access to childcare varies based on whether the worker’s spouse or parents are present in the household. Table 3 presents estimates from a logistic regression of daily attendance on the interaction term Post Childcare x Spouse Present in Models (1) and (2), and the interaction term Post Childcare x Parent Present in Models (3) and (4). Models (1) and (3) do not include month/year and worker fixed effects, while models (2) and (4) include them. Standard errors are clustered by worker in all models.\(^\text{12}\) The interaction term in each model indicates that the benefit of access to childcare for working mothers whose spouses or parents are absent is not significantly greater than the benefit for working mothers whose spouses or parents are present. In other words, network structure alone, or having access to network alters, does not affect workers’ responsiveness to employer-sponsored childcare.

\(^\text{12}\) Given potential concerns about interpreting the statistical significance for interaction terms in logistic regression models (Allison 1999; Ai and Norton 2003), we also estimated the models in Table 3 (and later in Table 4) using linear probability models. The findings, presented in Appendix F, are consistent with this alternative specification. In some cases, statistical significance levels are altered, but remain below the .10 threshold in all instances.
However, as discussed before, the presence of a network may not itself be sufficient. For women workers in India, having a girl rather than a boy may limit the willingness of their family-based network to activate childcare support. Therefore, in our analyses, we next investigate the differential effect of obtaining access to the childcare center on working mothers’ daily attendance by their child’s gender. Table 4 presents these results. The estimates are from a logistic regression including variables for Post Childcare, Daughter, and the interaction term Post Childcare x Daughter. The categorical variable Daughter takes a value of 1 when the child in the childcare center is a girl and 0 when the child is a boy. Again, Model (1) includes no fixed effects, which enables us to estimate the relationship between having a daughter and working mothers’ attendance. Model (2) includes month/year fixed effects, Model (3) includes only worker fixed effects (no month/year fixed effects), and Model (4) includes both sets of fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by the worker in all models.

In Models (1) and (2), we see that the coefficient for Daughter is large, negative, and statistically significant, suggesting that women with daughters have lower odds of being present at work than women with sons before gaining access to the childcare center. In Models (3) and (4), when we add worker-fixed effects, the coefficient for Daughter cannot be estimated because Daughter does not vary across observations for the same worker. Across the models, we see that the coefficient for Post Childcare x Daughter is large, positive, and statistically significant. Moreover, the coefficient for Post Childcare is not statistically significant, suggesting that receiving access to childcare was not statistically meaningful for working mothers with sons. Additional calculations indicate that the attendance of women with daughters went up by 7.5 percentage points in response to receiving access to childcare, whereas the attendance of women with sons went up by 2.5 percentage points. Overall, this indicates that getting access to childcare matters significantly more for women with daughters than for women with sons.

[Table 4 About Here]

To test our hypothesis that non-work network activation depends on the child's gender, we next split our overall sample by whether the worker’s spouse or parents are present in the household and rerun our analyses examining the moderating role of child gender on the consequences of childcare access for
women’s daily attendance. All models include worker and month/year fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by the worker in all models. For ease of interpretation, we visually depict our key regression coefficients using the various subsamples for Post Childcare x Daughter in Figure 1.13

In Figure 1, the first bar represents the overall estimated effect of childcare access on the log odds of being present at work for working mothers with daughters as compared to sons using the full sample. Note that the depicted value in this first bar, 0.59, is the same as the Post Childcare x Daughter coefficient from Model (4) of Table 4. The next four bars represent the estimated effect of childcare access on the log odds of being present at work for working mothers with daughters as compared to sons when a) the woman’s spouse is present, b) the woman’s spouse is absent, c) the woman’s parent is present, and d) the woman’s parent is absent. The bar chart indicates that the additional benefits of access to childcare for working mothers with daughters are concentrated among the group of working mothers whose spouse or parent is present (and that these differential benefits by child gender are indistinguishable from zero when the spouse and parent are absent). In other words, when network alters are present, access to childcare is particularly beneficial for women with daughters. Figure 1 provides more direct evidence for our proposed mechanism of family-based network activation by highlighting that those women with family-based networks at home are likely to benefit from employer-sponsored childcare when they have children whose characteristics are less likely to draw support from these networks. Thus, non-work network activation is necessary to understand variation in the consequences of work-family programs.

[Figure 1 About Here]

We further tested the statistical significance of the difference in regression coefficients between the two sets of subsamples (second bar versus third bar, and fourth bar versus fifth bar) using a Chow test (Chow 1960). The large and significant values of the Chow test (63.33 for spouse present versus absent and 193.17 for parent present versus absent) indicate that the regression coefficients in the spouse present subsample are statistically significantly different from the regression coefficients in the spouse absent

13 The full regression table is included in Appendix G.
subsample, and similarly that the regression coefficients in the parent present versus parent absent subsamples are different.\textsuperscript{14} We additionally estimated a logistic regression model of daily attendance on the three-way interaction between (a) \textit{Post Childcare, Daughter, and Spouse Present}, and (b) \textit{Post Childcare, Daughter, and Parent Present}. The findings from this analysis demonstrate that \textit{Post Childcare x Daughter} varies significantly (in a statistical sense) based on whether a working mother’s spouse or parent is present versus absent.\textsuperscript{15} Put together, the Chow test and the three-way interactions offer some evidence that the differential benefits of access to childcare by child gender are more prevalent among the group of working mothers whose spouse or parent is present than for the group of working mothers whose spouse or parent is absent. Overall, our quantitative data offer support for our proposition that one key reason why women with daughters as compared to women with sons might benefit differentially from access to childcare is because of differential non-work network activation.

\textbf{Qualitative Data.} Apart from the quantitative evidence presented above, we utilize our interview data with working mothers, their spouses, and their parents to provide additional support for our network-based argument about why organizational programs might be differentially effective for a group of socio-demographically homogenous women. Our qualitative data provide direct evidence that family-based network alters make choices about when and how to offer support, resulting in more support for sons than for daughters.

In response to the question, “Do you have any support in taking care of your children?” one working mother with a son and daughter described how she had more support for her son. She said, “I have an aunt in the neighborhood, my mother’s sister, [who] lives nearby. So she usually helps to pick up

\textsuperscript{14} We also ran the Chow test using models without worker and month/year fixed effects. The Chow test statistic remains robust with this alternative specification, giving us confidence that the fixed effects are not producing the large and significant values of the Chow test. These results are presented in Appendix H.

\textsuperscript{15} Appendix I presents the results. Models 1 and 3 include the entire sample of working mothers whom we have spouse and grandparent data for, respectively, while Models 2 and 4 use a slightly smaller, more conservative sample constructed by dropping attendance data for women before the birth of their focal child (in the pre-childcare access period), as women were yet to experience increased childcare responsibilities. The regression table demonstrates that the three-way interaction between Post Childcare, Daughter, and Spouse Present is statistically significant at the .10 level in Model 2 with the slightly reduced sample, and the three-way interaction between Post Childcare, Daughter and Parent Present is statistically significant at the .10 level in both Models 3 and 4. In Appendix J, we re-ran our key regressions with the reduced sample constructed by dropping attendance data for women before the birth of their focal child (in the pre-childcare access period) and note that our regressions are robust to this specification and in fact, our key coefficients become larger.
[my son] and he spends around 2 hours in the aunt’s house and then she brings him back home. By that time, he finishes all his homework” (#W4). Asked if this aunt helps take care of the daughter also, the working mother said, “No, the daughter spends all the time at home itself, and she rarely goes to the aunt’s house” (#W4). Another working mother who also had both a son and daughter said, “Actually my parents don’t have kids, I’m the one and only kid for them, they were feeling very alone, so that’s why they offered to take care of my son” (#W7). Upon asking why they do not take care of her daughter, she reflected, “Actually, my daughter is better than my son ... she follows and understands better and listens [to instructions]. ... When we compare both of them, I find she is better, but my parents help my son only” (#W7). She added, “One of my uncles lives near my parents, and he also helps to take care of my son after the school hours and getting him ready and other stuff. ... He also doesn’t help my daughter” (#W7).” Yet another working mother, who also had a daughter, said, “My mother ... prefers to take care of her grandson ... she helps her grandson get ready for school, like taking a bath or feeding him food ... she takes him to the playground so that he will play with other kids ... she’ll get food or snacks for him, if he wants” (#W14).” A working mother’s spouse whom we interviewed also admitted, “I spend half an hour to two hours every day with [my son] only. I take care of him”(#S6). The interviewer then asked, “How about your other children?” referring to his two daughters. The spouse responded, “No, I don’t spend much time with them, I’m always with my son only, whenever I get free time” (#S6).

Our interviews revealed that family networks activated for male children but withheld informal childcare support to female children as a result of bias against the girl child or preferential treatment for the boy child. For example, one working mother explained that her aunt who takes care of her son “doesn’t take care of [her daughter]” (#W4). Upon probing why this aunt takes care of her son only, the working mother said, “My aunt who is living here, she has a lot of ... too much attachment towards the boy child, that’s why she bonds with him and takes care [of him only]” (#W4). Another working mother, describing her spouse’s activation behavior said, “So actually he’s more attached to our son than our daughter....since [our son] was born, [my husband] takes care of him more and [my husband] spends a lot
of time with him [because] he’s very attached to [our son]” (#W3). Another working mother explained why her mother-in-law only takes care of her son. She said:

When [my second daughter] was born, that time itself my mother-in-law felt like you already had one girl, it would be … if you had a boy child, that would be nice. We had planned only for two kids, but since we didn’t have a boy, [my mother-in-law] forced us to have one more kid and then [my son] was born … And when [my son] was born, she was very happy. Like finally they had a boy baby … my mother-in-law likes my son. And for this third child, she is always there to take care … She came to help out only when he was born, not for the other children. She stayed back here for months together, like 4 months, 5 months. She was helping in all sorts of ways, like taking care, bathing, feeding food (#W10).

The qualitative evidence is clear on one point: boys are more likely than girls to be cared for by individuals in their mother’s family-based social network. The interviews provide additional evidence that it is as a result of family members’ lower willingness to take care of girls that organizational resources matter more to mothers with daughters. A working mother’s mother-in-law whom we interviewed said, “[the childcare center] is more important for the girl children … In the home, there would be one or the other family members who prefers to take care of boy children rather than girl children” (#P3). A working mother corroborated, “For the girl child, it [the childcare center] is more important” (#W7). She continued, “My parents are not taking care of [my daughter], they are not even letting [my daughter] into [their] house. That’s why I think [my factory] is the best place because they have a crèche there to take care, that’s why” (#W7).

The interview data presented above thus provides evidence in support of our theoretical argument: working mothers with sons seem to receive more support from their non-work social networks and as such, organizational work-family resources matter more for women with daughters.

**Ruling out Alternative Mechanisms**

We next address three alternatives to our proposed mechanism of network activation underlying the differential effectiveness of employer-sponsored childcare. First, could it be that working mothers do not trust their family networks to take care of their daughters? Upon asking one working mother this, she said, “My in-laws or my parents are equal to me in taking care. I trust them…it’s not that I know how to do a better job of taking care of my daughter…they can treat [kids] very well and they know how to take care of the children…[the problem is convincing them] to spend more time with the daughters (#W6).”
Thus, the issue appears to be with the willingness of network members to provide care, rather than differential trust among mothers with sons versus daughters.

Second, could it be that women’s family members are constrained in their ability to take care of daughters, perhaps because of a correlation between women with daughters and whether or not their family members are employed themselves? While in our interviews, we did come across some variation in the extent to which family members were employed, this variation seemed to stem from economic need rather than being driven by any characteristics of the children. Further, these employment decisions seemed to predate the birth of the working mother’s children. For example, one working mother explained: “… earlier, when my parents were in their native village, they were not working … but when they shifted here to Bangalore, then they started working … (#W5).” She explained that the cost of living in Bangalore was much higher and they needed to work. In this way, family networks’ decisions to work seemed unrelated to the characteristics of the working mothers’ children.

Finally, could our findings be driven by working mothers wanting to keep their daughters close to them, but not having that preference for their sons? Our findings in Figure 1 provide evidence against the potential counter-argument that women’s own preferences – rather than the preferences of their family-based social networks – produce the differential consequences of childcare access for women with daughters. If women’s own preferences were driving the child gender results, we would expect to see no differences in childcare benefits across women with and without access to family-based network support.

**Broader Economic and Career Implications of Childcare Access**

In many settings, including the factory that we study, daily attendance is directly linked to workers’ monetary compensation and, therefore, it is useful to consider how childcare access might influence the money that a working mother takes home to support her family. Individual workers’ wage rates remain unchanged during our observation period, but because the earning of daily wages is contingent on showing up to work, working mothers earn more by showing up to work on a more regular basis. We quantify the change in working mothers’ take-home earnings once they receive access to employer childcare. We find that when women receive access to childcare, they earn approximately 10%
more, on average, than when they did not have access to such childcare provisions, after controlling for worker and month/year fixed effects. Further, we find that the monetary gains of receiving childcare access are magnified for working mothers with daughters, whose family-based networks are less likely to offer informal childcare support. Thus, receiving access to employer-sponsored childcare has real and tangible consequences on the economic livelihoods of low-skilled working mothers in India.

We also investigate the effect of access to employer-sponsored childcare on working mothers’ turnover from this factory. Losing their job can place an economic burden on individuals and also negates the possibility of advancing within the organization. In order to conduct this analysis, we constructed a comparison sample of 271 working mothers employed at the factory who had a child six years old or younger, but who did not use the on-site childcare facility during our observation period. We then compared attrition rates for mothers in this sample with the attrition rates in our previous sample of 160 mothers who used the employer childcare. We find that working mothers who received access to the employer childcare had 35% lower odds (exp[-0.417]=0.65) of quitting by the end of our observation window than working mothers who did not receive access to childcare. This relationship is stronger for women with daughters.\(^\text{16}\)

We recognize limitations in both these analyses. With the wages analysis, the results are a function of the attendance patterns. In the turnover analyses, there might be many differences—observable and unobservable—between the group of women who received access to the childcare center and those who did not receive access. These limitations notwithstanding, our analyses suggest that beyond affecting attendance, access to employer-sponsored childcare has broader economic and career implications, affecting take-home pay and turnover rates.

**DISCUSSION**

Our findings shed new light on the interplay between organizational work-family programs and non-work social networks in shaping the outcomes of a socio-demographically homogenous and economically disadvantaged group of workers. First, data from our quasi-experimental research design

\(^{16}\) The regression tables for both the wages and the turnover analyses are presented in Appendix K.
demonstrates a direct, positive effect of gaining access to employer-sponsored childcare on disadvantaged women’s daily attendance at work. We therefore find support for Hypothesis 1.

Second, we demonstrate that the effect of this organizational program does not vary based on whether or not workers have family-based networks present. However, we find that the effect of this organizational program does vary by an important status characteristic of workers’ dependents, namely child gender. Specifically, the effect of access to employer-sponsored childcare on workers’ daily attendance is driven entirely by women with daughters. There is no effect for women with sons. Two types of evidence provide support for this claim. First, the differential effects of child gender emerge among workers who have family-based networks present. Second, our interview data indicates that women’s social networks tend to prefer caring for their sons rather than their daughters. Together, our results provide support for Hypothesis 2.

Below, we outline the ways that our findings contribute to the gender, work, and family literature, and research on social networks.

**Contributions to Research on Gender, Work, and Family**

First, scholarship on gender, work, and family has tended to focus on the independent effects of organizational childcare policies and family-based network support for workers’ outcomes (Glass 2004; Kelly et al. 2014). For example, some work has shown that organizational childcare policies can be beneficial for women (Hipp et al. 2017). Other work has shown the use of non-work networks to manage work-family conflict in the absence of organizational support (Dodson 2009). Yet, the ways that non-work social networks intersect with organizational programs to influence the effectiveness of those programs has been underexplored. We highlight the importance of this type of intersection between non-work networks and organizational work-family programs.

Future scholarship will be well served by looking at other types of work-family policies that may interact with social networks outside of the workplace. For example, in the academic context, “stop the clock” policies for new parents on the tenure track could be an interesting case (see Manchester, Leslie, and Kramer 2010). These policies enable new parents to pause their tenure clock, providing them time to
care for their new child without worrying that their tenure clock is ticking down. These policies may be particularly valuable for new parents who have social networks that provide limited childcare support during this period. Thus, we document that in order to increase the effectiveness of work-family programs, organizations would benefit from developing a deeper understanding of the domestic sphere of workers’ lives (where possible), something that organizations have historically shied away from. Here, organizations face a difficult tradeoff between offering the same work-family benefits to all employees (in the interest of equity) and offering employees different work-family benefits depending on the differential constraints that employees face outside the workplace.

Second, understanding the domestic sphere of workers’ lives also means understanding cultural norms that influence which workers may be particularly disadvantaged when it comes to social network activation. In this paper, we show that the gender of a woman’s child can affect her responsiveness to employer-sponsored childcare in a garment factory in India because of the “son preference” norm. Outside of the Indian context, there is some evidence that child gender has important consequences as well. For example, Kaushal and Muchomba (2018) demonstrate that mothers of East and South Asian origin living in the United States spent more “quality time” with their young sons than with young daughters (see Das Gupta et al. 2003 for a discussion of the son preference in East Asia). Similarly, Crowley et al. (2001) find that parents were three times more likely to explain science to boys than to girls while using interactive science exhibits in a museum. These data suggest that outside of the Indian context, we might also find heterogeneity in women’s responsiveness to work-family programs because of their own preferences to allocate their time differently with boy versus girl children. More broadly, apart from child gender, other status characteristics of a woman’s dependents could also affect her responsiveness to work-family programs. For example, there is some evidence that grandparents activate little support for families who have children with disabilities (Hornby and Ashworth 1994).

Third, scholarship to date has focused on between-group variation in the effects of organizational work-family policies and programs for various worker outcomes (for example, Munsch 2016). For instance, are the effects of a particular policy different for men and women? We argue, by contrast, that
there is significant *within*-group variation in whether workers benefit from work-family policies. Specifically, we argue that workers’ non-work social networks intersect with the work-family programs offered within their workplace to produce divergent effects. Thus, variation in program responses can exist even for a group of socio-demographically homogenous workers. Analyzing and untangling these types of variation is important for understanding the most effective ways for organizations to support workers. Indeed, it may point to strategies for organizations to advance opportunity for workers who are currently not benefitting from particular policies. At the same time, within-group variation in the response to organizational programs may attenuate average effects of these types of organizational interventions. If some individuals in a group are benefitting from a program while others are not, the program may be found to have little or no effect, on average, even though a subset of workers within that group are benefitting in important ways from the organizational intervention.

Beyond the aforementioned theoretical contributions, our work also expands the empirical purview of work-family scholarship. While balancing work and family obligations is challenging for women in the Global South (Rajadhyaksha 2012), this population has received less attention from scholars of work-family policy, who generally focus on advanced industrialized countries (c.f., Berlinksi and Galiani 2007) and the experiences of professional women (c.f., Damaske 2011; c.f. Clark, Laszlo, Kabiru, and Muthuri 2017). Yet, work-family conflict is an important issue that many women and families are grappling with in the Global South and indeed, work-family solutions likely look different in this context (Poster and Prasad 2005; Walia 2013). With increasing female labor force participation in many parts of the world, additional scholarly attention to the policy supports necessary to ensure quality employment for working mothers outside of the United States and Western Europe is warranted (Ranganathan 2018). Our findings offer a generally positive view on this point: organizational policies can improve employment outcomes for disadvantaged women in the Global South. Thus, these findings have important implications for scholarship focused on improving gender equality and economic security for women and their families in the Global South.
Finally, our quasi-experimental research design enables us to generate estimates of the relationship between employer-provided childcare and attendance that have higher internal validity than many studies in this area. This is important because it enables us to address issues of selection bias that can hamper studies that simply compare individuals who do and do not use employer-sponsored childcare. The use of and access to employer-provided childcare options (instead of alternative childcare arrangements, such as private childcare centers or publicly funded options) may be correlated with economic position and, thus, any correlations between childcare use and workers’ outcomes may conflate the financial standing of the worker with use of or access to employer-provided childcare.

**Contributions to Research on Social Networks**

Our theoretical contribution and empirical findings also make important contributions to scholarship on social networks. We develop a novel argument about the role of social networks outside of the workplace in shaping organizational program effectiveness. The insight that family-based and other non-work networks can influence how effective organizational programs are suggests an important avenue for future scholarship. For example, how might the quality and size of a worker’s social network outside of the workplace influence the ways that they benefit from networking and mentoring programs within the organization? Indeed, these types of organizational programs may be particularly useful for individuals whose non-work networks are less likely to advocate for them or activate resources on their behalf. Relatedly, future work could consider the ways that individuals with smaller non-work social networks may benefit more from organizational policies. These individuals may be less likely to receive support because they have fewer network alters to draw support from.

We also distinguish between the influence of non-work network structure and activation on workers’ responsiveness to work-family programs. We find that whether or not a worker has social networks in their geographic area, such as a sibling who lives nearby, is likely insufficient in understanding the effectiveness of work-family policies. What really matters is whether or not the people in one’s network are willing to activate resources to provide support. Scholars focused on the role that social networks play in the job search process have made this distinction between network structure and
activation. We extend this idea to the work-family domain by positing that among workers with access to social networks, work-family policies will be more useful for those whose network alters do not activate resources. We find a similar pattern of lack of activation among women’s husbands and parents, but we additionally note that it could be interesting for future research to examine how the social characteristics of the alters in one’s network shape – or do not shape – their willingness to activate resources.

Limitations

While our argument and findings contribute new insights to scholarship on gender, work, and family, and social networks, this article is not without limitations. First, while we believe our theoretical argument has broad consequences, our empirical case is limited to one garment factory in India. Thus, future work will be necessary to determine how these findings generalize to other contexts. Second, our quantitative data on social networks is somewhat limited. Our data on spousal and parental presence in the household come from different sources and has missing values. It would be useful, for example, to have measures of how many close contacts a woman has in the proximate geographic area, such as sisters, aunts, and close friends, as well as how active those individuals are in providing various types of support. One could also imagine that paying attention to the differential effects of support from parents versus parents-in-law could yield interesting findings. To address this limitation, we supplement our quantitative analyses with qualitative data. Yet, future quantitative work with additional network-based measures would be valuable. These limitations notwithstanding, we believe that our findings offer compelling insights for various bodies of scholarship.

Conclusion

Workplace organizations are powerful actors in helping or hindering workers in balancing the competing demands of work and family life. In this article, we theoretically develop and empirically test an underexamined process by which work-family programs can promote labor market attachment for workers. Specifically, we show that an organizational work-family program—employer-sponsored, on-site childcare—can have varied consequences, even among a socio-demographically homogenous group of workers. We then show how the activation of workers’ social networks outside of the workplace based
on status characteristics such as their child’s gender can play an important role in shaping how they benefit from employer-sponsored childcare. Thus, we offer new theoretical insights to scholarship on the work-family interface and social networks, and we set the stage for future scholarship to advance our understanding of the ways that organizations can intervene to enhance opportunities for their workers.
REFERENCES


Kelly, Erin L., Ellen Ernst Kossek, Leslie B. Hammer, Mary Durham, Jeremy Bray, Kelly Chermack, Laurent A. Murphy, and Dan Kaskubar. 2008. “Getting There from Here: Research on the Effects of Work-


## Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Factory Workers and Children Receiving Childcare

### (a) Factory Workers Receiving Childcare Access in Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>mean</th>
<th>sd</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proportion female workers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children(^2)</td>
<td>1.780</td>
<td>0.696</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factory tenure at time of receiving childcare access (in months)</td>
<td>4.429</td>
<td>9.799</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s age at time of receiving childcare access (in years)</td>
<td>25.181</td>
<td>3.462</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion single</td>
<td>0.102</td>
<td>0.304</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion with parents present</td>
<td>0.305</td>
<td>0.464</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wage at time of entering factory (in Rupees)</td>
<td>274.648</td>
<td>30.318</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance (proportion of days present)(^3)</td>
<td>0.894</td>
<td>0.079</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood of turnover between April 2012 and January 2016</td>
<td>0.275</td>
<td>0.448</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### (b) Children Receiving Childcare Access in Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>mean</th>
<th>sd</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proportion female children</td>
<td>0.481</td>
<td>0.501</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child age at time of receiving childcare access (in years)</td>
<td>1.920</td>
<td>0.889</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of siblings</td>
<td>0.780</td>
<td>0.696</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion with siblings in same childcare(^4)</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>0.111</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) Descriptive data not available for all women or children; summary statistics calculated based on maximum available data

\(^2\) While all women in our data had at least one child, whether they had additional children is known for only a subset of women

\(^3\) This represents the average of the average attendance per worker

\(^4\) For these few instances, only the first child to receive childcare access in the family is kept in our dataset
### Table 2: Effect of Childcare Access on Daily Attendance of Female Factory Workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daily Attendance</th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>(4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post Childcare</td>
<td>0.512**</td>
<td>0.520**</td>
<td>0.389*</td>
<td>0.536*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.171)</td>
<td>(0.199)</td>
<td>(0.167)</td>
<td>(0.273)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>59064</td>
<td>59064</td>
<td>58605</td>
<td>58605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clusters</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo R²</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>0.063</td>
<td>0.073</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month/Year Fixed Effects</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worker Fixed Effects</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Worker-date level observations
All estimates are from logit models; log odds presented
Daily Attendance: 0/1 = 1 if worker is present on given day
Post Childcare: 0/1 = 1 after access to childcare received
Sample size reduces in Models 3 and 4 because 8 women in the sample are never absent
* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001 (two-tailed tests)
Table 3: Differential Effect of Childcare Access on Daily Attendance of Female Factory Workers by Family-Based Network Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Daily Attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Childcare</td>
<td>0.763*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.321)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse Present</td>
<td>-0.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.353)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Childcare x Spouse Present</td>
<td>-0.207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.374)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Present</td>
<td>-0.563</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.459)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Childcare x Parent Present</td>
<td>0.324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.475)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>53384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clusters</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo R²</td>
<td>0.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month/Year Fixed Effects</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worker Fixed Effects</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Worker-date level observations

All estimates are from logit models; log odds presented
Daily Attendance: 0/1 = 1 if worker is present on given day
Post Childcare: 0/1 = 1 after access to childcare received
Daughter: 0/1 = 1 if child is a girl
Spouse present: 0/1 = 1 if worker is married
Parent present: 0/1 = 1 if at least one of the worker’s parents or in-laws lives in the same household
Worker spouse data missing for 30% of the sample
Child grandparent data missing for 60% of the sample
Standard errors clustered by worker are in parentheses

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001 (two-tailed tests)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Daily Attendance</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Childcare</td>
<td>-0.006</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td>0.041</td>
<td>0.225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.196)</td>
<td>(0.211)</td>
<td>(0.177)</td>
<td>(0.253)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>-0.734**</td>
<td>-0.689**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.269)</td>
<td>(0.262)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Childcare x Daughter</td>
<td>0.875**</td>
<td>0.819**</td>
<td>0.668*</td>
<td>0.586*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.284)</td>
<td>(0.278)</td>
<td>(0.277)</td>
<td>(0.278)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>59064</td>
<td>59064</td>
<td>58605</td>
<td>58605</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clusters</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo R²</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td>0.021</td>
<td>0.064</td>
<td>0.074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month/Year Fixed Effects</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worker Fixed Effects</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Worker-date level observations
All estimates are from logit models; log odds presented
Daily Attendance: 0/1 =1 if worker is present on given day
Post Childcare: 0/1 =1 after access to childcare received
Daughter: 0/1 =1 if child is a girl
Standard errors clustered by worker are in parentheses
Sample size reduces in Models 3 and 4 because 8 women in the sample are never absent
* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001 (two-tailed tests)
All estimates are from logit models with worker and month/year fixed effects; log odds presented
Standard errors are in parentheses below the estimates
Sample size represents number of worker-date observations, rather than number of workers
Spouse present = 1 if worker is married
Parent present = 1 if at least one of the worker’s parents or in-laws lives in the same household
Marital status data missing for approximately 30% of our sample
Grandparent data missing for approximately 60% of our sample
Chow test: is difference in regression coefficients between two subsamples statistically significant
* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001 (two-tailed tests)