

Literature Review and Future Outlook of Professional Women's Opting Out

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Keywords: Opting Out; Professional Women; Career Quit

Abstract. Opting out refers to the professional women leave their work and exit the career in a certain time, opting out will not only make the working women difficult to achieve personal value in the workplace, and also make the enterprise lose quite a number of high quality female employees, thus reducing the female labor force participation on the society as a whole. This paper introduces the reasons of professional women opting out and their later home. In addition, the impact of opting out on individuals, businesses and social aspects are also concluded. On the basis of analyzing the insufficient of existing researches, the direction for the future research are prospected.

Introduction

The phenomenon women quitting from career to become a full-time housewife caused a lot of media attention [1]. Faludi firstly noticed this group and put out that women are gradually giving up the contemporary working mother role with economic independence, self-reliance, self-actualization, and go back to the more traditional role, that is, economic dependence of full-time mother [2]. After a short time, this view is put forward by famous commercial publishers Barron's predictions for the "revolution of women out of jobs" and "departure tide", which means that women getting separated of career position [3]. Ten years later, this departure tide was published on the *New York Times* columnist labeled as "opting out" [4]. One year later, the mainstream news weekly magazine *Times* published a cover story titled "To stay at home: Why do more and more young mother in the fierce competition opting out" [5]. Opting out became a hot topic of media and television shows. Thus, professional women quit work and choose family has quickly become a kind of typical cultural phenomenon and has attracted the attention of many feminism experts [6].

Although opting out has an important effect on women's career development and enterprises brain drain, there are only a few management experts and sociologists contribute to researching on it. The *Harvard Business Review* in 2014 included opting out in new proposition listing of management academia, it is hoped to recommend the outstanding social phenomenon "opting out" to the global management scholars.

There are few domestic scholars researching on opting out at present. Existing literatures explore the factors affecting women's career development from several aspects such as career women's work-family conflict [7], women suffer from workplace gender discrimination [8] and so on, but rarely refer to professional women opting out. Based on foreign top journal literature about opting out, this article describe and evaluate opting out from aspects including the concept of the definition, influence factors, and then analyzed the defects of existing research, finally the direction of future research are provided.

Definition of Opting Out

In 2003 the *New York times* defined the problem American companies faced that high education, vocational skills outstanding women quit work and become a mother as "Opting out Revolution" This phenomenon has aroused the media and public's attention. The definition of the *New York Times* "opting out" led to the "enterprise of confusion, the joy of social conservatives and feminist

anger" [9]. Feminists censured this trend while religious believers and social conservatives is quite agree with it.

Some scholars will also call professional women's "opting out" as "career exit". Volpe and Murphy defined the career exit as separate from paid work out completely, and it is divided into permanent exit and temporary exit----- When women turned into "manager of the family " and hope this will be her pursuit of career in the rest of life , career exit is out for a long time, and when the women's professional identity stagnate but has improved in a short time, career exit would be a temporary action [10].

There are differences between the concept of opting out and departure. Mobley would be narrowly defining departure as "a person leave from the enterprise to receive a monetary reward interruption as a corporate membership process" [11], March and Simon pointed out that departure is people want to leave the present job, look for other jobs [12]. In a word, departure emphasizes employment relationship disrupted between staff and organization, and opting out means the interruption or end of one's personal career. In addition, the object of departure includes all employees leaving the company, and opting out refers to the elite women who choose to leave work and have children stay at home, especially including the women with higher education and key skills.

Reasons for Women Opting Out

The views of general public and media reports tend to believe that the female exit career due to family reasons, thinking a lot of women give up work solely for their children [13]. Women attaches great importance to the relationship with others, often sacrifice their needs for others [14]. Therefore, women often choose to leave work for family reasons.

Although the children is the basic cause of women to opt out, there also exist other reasons [15]. Stone and Lovejoy found that many women think work is the cause of the exit, not the traditional sense think of children, families and spouses [16]. Workplace embeddedness, focus change in different career stage and company management policies are included.

Workplace embeddedness is defined as employees are embedded in the work and work relationship with others, life fitness and departure cost contact form reticular structure. It explains the part of opting out reasons besides working attitudes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment [17]. Embedded network transmission role in promoting a clear identity formation, this is because people who do not have stable identity tends to consolidate the identity or leave the network [18]. So women who have low embeddedness in the workplace are more likely to quit her career.

Mainiero and Sullivan's "Kaleidoscope Career Model" describes the male and female career changes over time on the needs and interests [19]. The model contains three parameters affecting career decision-making: Authenticity, Balance and Challenge. Authenticity refers to the real to the person that make people to find work consistent with their own values; Balance refers to the successful coordination between work and non-work life; Challenge is all sense of self value through career development needs. Cabrera (2006) found that professional women focus on balance and authenticity over time, so as to make opting out decision [20].

Still points out that the enterprise improper management to the female may also affect the professional women quit, improper management of enterprise is mainly in three aspects: (1) think that men and women are the same; (2) think managers have prejudice; (3) the symbolic embrace [21]. First, thinking that female values the same as male make enterprise entirely on incentive way for men when determining employee rewards and benefits. Such enterprises cannot retain female staffs. Second, don't think managers' bias will develop the distribution system's job to employees managers who hold bias on female. Finally, allowing companies to voluntarily meet the needs of employees family would result in a system of procedures and superficial.

Future Research Prospect

As an important part of the labor market, professional women's career decisions have great influence on economic and social development. Although the existing researches on opting out have explore based on career or work - family perspective, there still have a lot of problems that have not been fully explained. This article summarizes the shortcomings of existing research from the following several aspects, and puts forward the future research direction or solutions, laying a good foundation for the further study on opting out.

First, professional women's opting out has not got enough attention among scholars. Scholars have been researching about female workplace embeddedness, the change of women in different stages of her career concerns, children and spouse factors, social environment and traditional idea and enterprise system management and so on to explore the reason for their opting out, future research can be combined it with modern professional women s birth and growth of the background to explore the shaping of environment on women's personal values and the effect of selective exit decision, at the same time scholars can study different professional women view of opting out if there is a difference.

Second, researches can focus on the contact between media reports and academic research. The media tend to believe women out of work for family reasons, while more and more scholars expressed doubt, holding the viewpoint that very few women driven by family reason, and is usually affected by the work identity conflict, including the alienation and dissatisfaction at work [22]. Scholars can explore whether the main reason media reported for opting out is consistent with the reality.

Finally, lack of research on enterprise strategy. For enterprises, the practical significance for opting out study is to find feasible strategies to reduce staff turnover and to keep high quality of the elite women, but such studies are rare. Hewlett (2002) and other scholars put forward a new way of working, which allows the entry and exit of work (on and off ramps) [23], thereby helping employees at different life stages effectively balance the relationship between work and family.

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