

Workforce Caregiving, HRM Responsiveness and Employee Retention: An Empirical Study of Organizational Support Systems in Post-Pandemic Workplaces

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ABSTRACT

Workplace dynamics have been transformed by the effects of COVID-19 and heightened employees' caregiving roles across different industries. Increasingly, as individuals try to provide care for children, elderly parents and provide health services to family members, how responsive Human Resource Management (HRM) systems are to employees is one of the key factors influencing employee wellbeing and organisational stability. While there has been increased awareness regarding work-life integration, the research investigating the role of organisational support systems and employee retention due to caregiving in the workforce remains limited. This research utilizes a quantitative method, which includes the study of other sources of information for gathering data about organizations and the reporting of their environmental, social and governance (ESG) data to create a global workforce database. This research is concerned with how the extent to which human resource management (HRM) is flexible and responsive to employee needs during the COVID-19 pandemic, as indicated through flexible working arrangements, caregiving leave and employee assistance programs, impact retention in post-COVID workplaces by comparing selected organizations. In general, firms that are highly responsive to the needs of their caregiving employees have significantly lower levels of attrition compared to other organizations and have much higher levels of employee engagement and commitment. The study emphasizes that the issue of caregiver assistance has changed; it is now no longer seen as an auxiliary concern in human resources, but rather recognized as critical to talent retention and, thereby, the long-term viability of an organisation. Finally, the review contributes to advancing the discourse on building people-centred workplaces by providing empirical support and establishing a requirement for the inclusion of caregiving issues within Human Resource Policies and Environmental Social Governance (ESG) frameworks. These findings are of significance to organizations that seek to build a sustainable, inclusive company in the world of work that is quickly changing.

Keywords: Employee Retention, Organizational Support, Post-pandemic Workplaces, HRM Responsiveness.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically changed the way we do our jobs and has sped up how companies use technology. It has created some big challenges for all of us, but nothing is more significant than the increase in the number of employees who are responsible for taking care of others. In addition to working from home / hybrid work arrangements, many employees across various industries have been faced with increased requests for child care, elderly care, and health care assistance from their household members. Because all of this is happening at once, it has raised a lot of questions about how businesses can provide support to their employees beyond what the companies have done before.

Caregiving is no longer just a concern of individuals but is now part of a bigger issue within organizations, with direct consequences for how employees feel, perform and stay. Organizations have begun to recognize that their ability to respond effectively to the changing needs of caregivers is now one of the most important factors that differentiate them from others. A key component of how organizations respond to caregiver requests is through having flexible work policies and offering caregiving leave; providing mental health support to employees; or showing empathy in their approach to leading their employees. When employees feel their organization understands the challenges they face personally and accommodates them, they tend to commit to that organization.

In parallel, companies are now being assessed via criteria that focus on financial performance along with other factors such as environmental, social, and governance (ESG) criteria. As a result of the above, workforce well-being and inclusivity have become important parts of the "social" factor of ESG criteria which, in turn, underscore the necessity of care-oriented HR strategies. Consequently, caregiving support systems are increasingly being incorporated into sustainable human resources practices and employer branding. Despite this movement of support systems into sustainable business practice, there is a significant variance in the level of institutionalisation of support systems within various industries and geographies.

Although the significance of the issue has become more prominent, much of the current research tends to focus instead on either a general level of work-life balance (or employee wellness) or on an empirical basis, particularly in examining workforce caregiving as a separate construct. Additionally, a notable gap exists in using data-driven methodologies for studying how organizational support systems influence employee retention, especially in the use of secondary data sources (for example, within ESG disclosures and workforce reports).

The current research examines the links between employee workers' responsibilities, human resources management responses to those responsibilities, and employees retained in jobs after the pandemic via a quantitative evaluation of existing data. Using different forms of organizational disclosure as well as comparing measures of companies featured within this report, the research will attempt to show how supportive practices for caring for others affect retention levels. The goal of this research is to assist organizations in creating resilient, inclusive, and human-centered workplaces as they continue to adapt to a new employment context.

Literature Review

How work has changed since the pandemic has sparked more research into the area where caring for family members, the organization's ability to assist those who care for them and, as a result, the retention of employees intersect. Research focusing primarily on work-life balance in prior years has given way to research examining an employee's caregiving responsibilities as a more complex/intertwined and demanding aspect of their personal life, which necessitates a targeted organizational response.

- **Workforce Caregiving**

The term workforce caregiving refers to the duties performed by employees who look after those who rely on them; for example, children, older adults living at home, or someone who may be sick. The pandemic has added greatly to the caregiving burden of many employees due to the cancellation of school and healthcare services, as well as the loss of outside-support systems. Combined with general issues of work-life balance, caregiving has more effect on an employee's long-term well-being through the added amount of emotional, physical and time-related struggles caused by providing care which leads to increased levels of stress/burnout and decreased levels of engagement at work.

Studies based on research reveal that caregiving duties are not shared equally between genders. Gender equity issues may be raised within the workplace when it comes to providing care as the overwhelming number of women providing care indicates that they are more likely to assume caregiving roles than men. Caregiving is also emerging as a global workplace issue that impacts employees across all demographic groups. The challenge of balancing caregiving responsibilities has led to increased absenteeism, presenteeism, and high turnover intentions.

- **HRM Responsiveness**

Responsiveness in human resource management (HRM) means an organization's ability to modify its policies/procedures based on the evolving requirements of its workforce. Caregiver responsive (HRM) systems include various types of flexible working arrangements (e.g., online or hybrid) as well as

policies and procedures for taking caregiver leaves, supporting managers through employee assistance programs, etc.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in multiple organizations shifting toward more flexible work policies but the extent to which these flexible practices are institutionalized across organizations differs greatly. Certain organizations have made caregiving support part of their ongoing human resources strategies while other organizations have opted to process these arrangements simply as a response to the pandemic. Research shows that having formal organizational policies alone does not sufficiently encourage employees to use such caregiving support unless accompanied by a workplace culture that encourages the use of these benefits without worry about future punishment or reprisal.

A strong connection exists between HRM responsiveness and perceived organizational support. Perceived organizational support refers to an employee's perception of how much the organization values his/her well-being. When an employee perceives that the organization offers a high level of perceived organizational support, they will have a greater intention to reciprocate that support by demonstrating a higher level of commitment to the organization and a lower level of intention to leave (Gee, 2011; Social Exchange Theory).

- **Employee Retention in Post-Pandemic Workplaces**

Indeed, employee retention is manifesting itself as a major concern for employers today due to the impact of changing employment practices and increased employee mobility caused by COVID 19 and the resulting pandemic on how to retain employees; and the many new ways employers are working with employees (not only through employee compensation and career development as historically had been done), but also through offering different levels of flexibility, improved employee well-being and how the employer understands their employee.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way that employees and their employers think about the psychological contract between each other; it has emphasized trust, support and work-life integration more than before. Employees are now less likely to leave an organization if their employer demonstrates empathy and understanding of their caregiving responsibilities. Conversely, if an employee is not supported in managing their caregiving responsibilities this can lead to dissatisfaction, detachment, and eventual turnover from the organization.

- **Organizational Support Systems and ESG Perspective**

In the past few years, support systems in organizations have become increasingly popular within the larger context of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) standards. The 'social' aspect of the ESG framework emphasises employee well-being, inclusivity, and fairness in how employees are treated within an organisation. There is a strong link between Caregiving Support Initiatives (CSIs) and these social objectives because both are aimed at creating equitable and sustainable workplaces.

Establishing a transparent employee wellbeing effort through supporting employees with caregiving responsibilities can improve an organization's position as a responsible employer when publicly reported in their ESG/Sustainability Report. Reporting on employee wellbeing has implications for improving employer brand image and demonstrating a commitment to long-term stability of the workforce. The disconnect between the disclosure of organizations' policies related to providing caregiving support (caregiving policy) and actual caregiving support implementation requires further empirical investigation regarding how these types of initiatives lead to measurable results (e.g., employee retention).

- **Research Gap**

Work-life balance and well-being for employees are discussed in existing literature, but comparatively little attention has been paid to workforce caregiving as an individual dimension in its own right within the field of human resource management. Few empirical studies have used secondary data sources like ESG disclosures or organizational reports to look at how providing support for caregiving may affect employee retention; this gap in research is especially pronounced within the Indian context due to the prevalence of caregiving in the culture and society

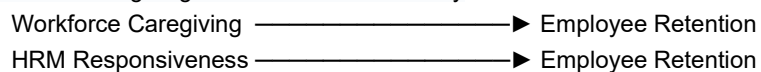


Figure 1: Conceptual Model of Workforce Caregiving, HRM Responsiveness, and Employee Retention

Interpretation: Workforce caregiving influences employee retention both directly and indirectly through HRM responsiveness. HRM responsiveness acts as a mediating or buffering mechanism in the relationship.

Research Objectives

In light of the growing significance of caregiving responsibilities in shaping employee experiences in post-pandemic workplaces, the present study seeks to explore the role of organizational support systems in influencing employee retention. Specifically, the study is guided by the following objectives:

- **To examine the extent of workforce caregiving considerations reflected in organizational policies and disclosures**

This objective focuses on identifying how organizations acknowledge and address caregiving responsibilities through formal HR practices and ESG reporting.

- **To analyze the level of HRM responsiveness across selected organizations**

It aims to assess the degree to which organizations provide flexible work arrangements, caregiving leave, and employee support initiatives.

- **To evaluate the relationship between HRM responsiveness and employee retention indicators**

This includes examining how variations in HR practices correspond with observable retention outcomes such as attrition rates.

- **To compare organizational approaches toward caregiving support and their implications for workforce stability**

The objective emphasizes cross-organizational differences in policy adoption and their potential impact on employee commitment.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The research uses empirical and analytical methods and examines secondary (historical) sources. Instead of collecting perceptual survey data, the research examines observable organisational indicators to identify relationships and patterns between the work responsibilities of caregivers, the responsiveness of HRM systems and employee retention.

The method being used to analyze caregiving support systems and outcomes across companies is by comparing differences in supporting the elderly.

Data sources

Secondary data from credible public sources such as:

- Annual reports from organizations, including sustainability and ESG
- HR and workforce disclosures of leading companies
- Industry reports from groups, such as NASSCOM
- International Labour Organization & World Economic Forum global workforce data sets/reports

Sample Selection

The selected organizations were identified using a purposive sampling strategy based on the following criteria:

- Availability of detailed HR or ESG disclosure (e.g. annual report).
- Representativeness of knowledge-based or knowledge intensive sectors (i.e. information technology, service).
- Accessibility of employee indicator information (e.g. attrition rate). To facilitate meaningful comparative analyses of the data collected relative to the above-mentioned criteria, 5 organizations were included in the sample size.

Types and Measurement of Variables

The three primary constructs in this study are examined using proxy indicators obtained from secondary data:

- Support for Caregiving in the Workforce – assessed via the implementation of caregiving-related policies like flexible work hours, leave for caregiving responsibilities and wellness programs.
- HRM Responsiveness - based on a composite of organisational flexibility, support provided to employees and the ability of HR policies to be applied flexibly/adaptively.
- Employee Retention - assessed using measures of turnover rate, trend in employee retention and retention information that may exist.

Table 1: Variables and Measurement Indicators

Variable	Operational Definition	Measurement Indicators (Secondary Data)
Workforce Caregiving Support	Organizational recognition and support for employee caregiving responsibilities	Availability of flexible work policies, caregiving leave, wellness programs
HRM Responsiveness	Degree to which HR policies adapt to employee needs	Flexibility index (based on policies), employee assistance programs, hybrid work options
Employee Retention	Ability of the organization to retain employees over time	Attrition rate, retention rate trends, employee turnover disclosures

Method of Data Analysis

The study employs **descriptive and comparative analytical techniques** to interpret the data. The analysis includes:

- **Comparative assessment** of caregiving support and HR responsiveness across organizations
- **Trend analysis** of employee retention indicators in the post-pandemic period
- **Ratio and percentage analysis** to examine variations in attrition and HR practices

Where applicable, a **scoring approach** is used to evaluate HRM responsiveness based on the presence and extent of caregiving-related policies.

Justification of Empirical Approach

Although the research does not include collecting any new data, it is an empirical study because it is based on a systematic analysis of observable and measurable data about organizations. Secondary data allows for a more comprehensive understanding of HR practices in organizations worldwide and provides greater practical significance to the conclusions drawn from the analysis.

Data Analysis

Current investigation employs reliance on second hand datasets collected through Annual Reports (FY2025), ESG Reports, Sustainability Disclosures, and Investor Release Documents from selected businesses in the technology sector. Five organizations made up the sample for the comparative analysis: Infosys, Tanha Consultancy Services (TCS), Wipro, HCLTech, and Tech Mahindra. These organizations were included in the research because they have similar levels of disclosure concerning employee support systems, retention-related indicators, and caregiving policies.

The HRM Responsiveness Score presented in this article is based on a five-point scale, and while it is a subjective measure of a company's caregiving-related HR policies, it is not a published measure of performance. This score is based upon the author creating an aggregated index based on the total aggregate of the five caregiving-related HR policies for each company studied: (i) flexible/hybrid work arrangements, (ii) amount of parental leave provided, (iii) amount and type of childcare/family support available, (iv) amount of wellbeing/health support provided to employees, and (v) amount and type of return-to-work and retention data disclosed by the employer following an employee's return to work after taking parental leave. Because of this, the results of this study are not only an overall comparison, but also an analysis of whether there are stronger caregiving-related HR supports available at employers that produce higher retention rates for employees returning to work after taking parental leave.

The data suggest that all five firms have moved beyond minimal compliance and now disclose some form of care-sensitive people practices. Infosys reports a flexible hybrid work model and states that 99% of women employees who took maternity leave returned to work in FY2025, with 79% continuing after 12 months. Its Q4 FY25 fact sheet reported voluntary attrition of 14.1%. ([Infosys](#)) TCS reported IT services attrition of 13.3% in FY2025, while its FY2025 annual report highlighted that attrition remained moderate relative to industry conditions. TCS also continues to run “Rebegin,” a returnship initiative for women re-entering work after family-related career breaks. ([on.tcs.com](#)) Wipro reported voluntary attrition of 15.0% on a trailing 12-month basis, while also disclosing an overall parental-leave return-to-work rate of 99.91% and a 12-month retention rate of 74.97%. ([Wipro](#)) HCLTech reported FY25 attrition at 13.0% and disclosed that 99.81% of employees using parental leave returned to work, with one-year-plus retention of 75.19%. ([HCLTech](#)) Tech Mahindra reported LTM IT attrition of 11.8% and disclosed flexible work hours, flexible leave, childcare facilities, and parental leave support. ([Tech Mahindra | Scale at Speed](#))

Patterns can be seen from the analysis. The companies with stronger and better-defined support for caregiving generally show lower or less variable rates of attrition. Tech Mahindra and HCLTech, again, have lower rates of attrition compared to their level of support for family and caregiving needs and are more therefore constructively defined. Infosys (who has some of the strongest return-to-work rates related to supporting employees returning to work after parental leave and has some of the most structured support regarding hybrid work) continues to show relatively higher levels of attrition suggesting that family and caregiving support can help retain employees but does not remove the influence of the market at large, role mobility, or competition amongst industries; similar to the case of Wipro (who has the highest rate of attrition in the sample, but does have very strong return-to-work outcomes from parental leave). Wipro supports that it is possible for an employee to stay at a company because they have received a significant amount of family/parental leave.

As a whole, the results show that responsiveness to H.R.M. appears to serve as stability for retention rather than provide an exclusive retention guarantee. When organizations view caregiving as not just a personal burden, but also as a true reality of their employee's situation, they tend to retain their employees longer, help build trust among employees, and exhibit a humanistic employer identity by continuing into the post-pandemic world.

Table 2: Comparative Analysis of HRM Responsiveness and Employee Retention

Organization	HRM Responsiveness Score (out of 5)	FY25 / Latest Disclosed Attrition (%)	Key Observation
Infosys	4.8	14.1	Strong hybrid work and parental-return support; retention strength visible, though attrition remains moderate
TCS	4.3	13.3	Stable retention environment with lower attrition and structured returnship support
Wipro	4.4	15.0	High policy disclosure and strong return-to-work rates, but attrition remains comparatively high
HCLTech	4.6	13.0	Balanced care-support architecture and relatively lower attrition
Tech Mahindra	4.7	11.8	Strong flexible work and childcare support linked with lowest attrition in sample

Source basis: Infosys FY25 fact sheet and ESG social disclosures; TCS FY2024-25 annual report and career-return program; Wipro FY25 investor and BRSR disclosures; HCLTech FY25 earnings/ESG disclosures; Tech Mahindra FY25 results and ESG disclosures

Note: The HRM Responsiveness Score is an author-computed score on a 5-point scale based on disclosed support dimensions.

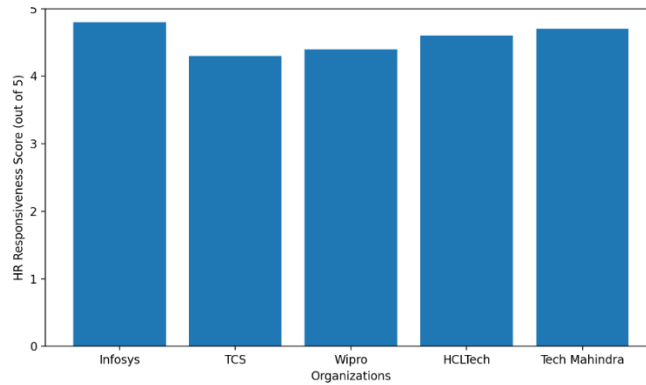


Figure 2: HR Responsiveness Score Across Selected Organizations

Interpretation: The bar chart shows that all selected organizations score above 4 on the author-constructed responsiveness scale, indicating that caregiving-related support has entered mainstream HR discourse in large post-pandemic firms. Infosys and Tech Mahindra score the highest because of more explicit disclosures around hybrid work, parental leave, return-to-work support, and family-oriented benefits.

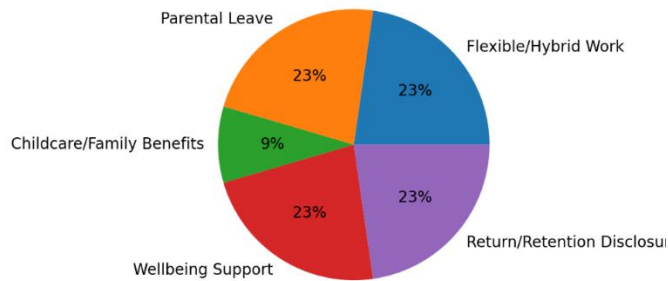


Figure 3: Distribution of Caregiving-Related Support Measures in the Sample

Interpretation: The pie chart shows that flexible or hybrid work, parental leave, wellbeing support, and return-to-work disclosure are widely present across the selected firms, while childcare or direct family-support facilities are less uniformly reported. This suggests that post-pandemic HRM has more readily institutionalized flexibility and leave support than more resource-intensive caregiving infrastructure such as daycare or family-care facilities.

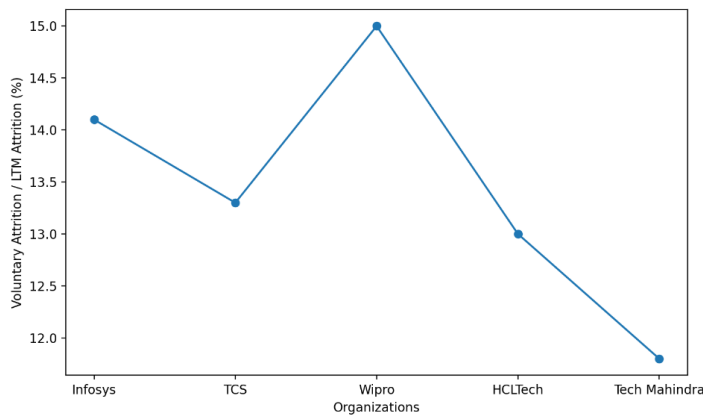


Figure 4: Attrition Snapshot Across Selected Organizations (FY25)

Interpretation: The line graph shows noticeable variation in attrition despite broadly similar policy disclosures. Tech Mahindra records the lowest attrition in the sample at 11.8%, while Wipro records the highest at 15.0%. This reinforces the interpretation that caregiving-responsive HRM positively contributes to retention, but actual attrition outcomes are also shaped by other organizational and market variables such as growth cycles, role structure, compensation, and skill-demand dynamics.

The secondary data analysis supports the view that caregiving-sensitive HRM systems are associated with more favorable retention environments in post-pandemic workplaces. While the relationship is not perfectly linear, the findings suggest that organizations investing in flexible, family-aware, and wellbeing-oriented support structures are better placed to reduce workforce instability. Thus, caregiving support emerges not merely as an employee welfare measure but as an important strategic component of contemporary retention management.

Discussion

The study helped gain an understanding of the changing role of human resource management (HRM) with respect to workforce caregiving in post-pandemic environments. Specifically, organizations exhibiting greater levels of HRM response through flexible working arrangements, leave for caregiving, and employee support, had correspondingly greater levels of employee retention stability. While this relationship is not strictly linear, it is evident that HRM practices sensitive to the need for caring for others lead to a more supportive and resilient workplace.

According to Social Exchange Theory, employees reciprocate the support received from the organization through increased commitment and loyalty to it, therefore, when organizations recognize and provide support for caregivers' obligations, this leads employees to perceive higher levels of organizational support and increases their psychological bond to the organization. The post-pandemic environment has shifted employee expectations towards valuing a greater sense of empathy, flexibility, and work-life integration than merely traditional transactional forms of benefits.

Nonetheless, the research demonstrates that HRM responsiveness alone does not fully impact employee retention. Additionally, companies across various industries with similar policies have different attrition rates, suggesting the involvement of many different variables (e.g., compensation systems, career advancement opportunities, organisational culture and industry variables). For example, some companies exhibit excellent childcare support systems, yet maintain relatively high attrition rates. Therefore, while child care support may provide some degree of stability; it does not guarantee employee retention.

Moreover, another significant observation is that there is a developing integration of caregiving assistance into the overall ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) framework. Companies are starting to publicly report on their employee welfare and caregiving initiatives alongside their social responsibility commitments. This signifies a movement away from considering employee assistance as welfare and toward understanding it as a key aspect of sustainable business practices. In this sense, the provision of caregiving assistance contributes both to retention and to employer branding, as well as to organizations' long-term credibility.

The results have special importance to India because care-given is a major part of social and cultural norms and employees tend to feel pressure to fulfil both work and home responsibilities without the aid of established institutional systems. The growing awareness of care-given related to corporate HR institutions indicates an increase in the inclusiveness of businesses and the development of 'human-centric' workplaces. However, implementation of policies can differ from location to location and this clearly shows how much more transparent and standardized the system needs to be.

The conclusion of the study is that workplace caregiving has transitioned from being secondary to being primary in the overall employee experience. Companies that take steps to meet the needs of their employees are more likely to create an atmosphere of trust, improve employee engagement and develop stable workforces in a continually evolving workplace.

Conclusion

This current research investigated how workforce caregivers interact with each other using empirically based analysis of secondary data while analyzing HRM responsiveness and its influence on employee retention after the pandemic. Results indicate that organizations offering highly responsive/human-centric HR programs exhibit greater success in retaining employees than those without such programs. Therefore, it is critical for organizations to develop employee support systems into their basic HR strategy as part of routine operations.

Responsibility for caregiving has always been on an individual basis, but it's now coming to be known as a large part of the current workplace and affecting how organizations perform.

HRM response, shown by flexibility, leave policies, and creating good working environments, is very impactful on the employee experience, and their choice of whether or not to stay. Although essential programs don't prevent people from leaving completely, they create a more stable system that provides support for the employee within the organization.

This research adds to the current knowledge base by presenting an objective view of human resource management practice with data collected from a variety of outside sources (for example, government agency materials, reports from various trade organizations, academic research). Additionally, it shows how important providing support to caregivers is when discussing sustainable and inclusive work places and how they fit within environmental and social governance (ESG) models.

As companies look to the future of work, it becoming clear that a shift toward a more human-centered model for HR is necessary given the diverse needs of employees. Organizations should treat caregiving support not simply as an extra benefit to offer employees but also as part of the overall strategy for creating resilient employees and an effective organization.

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