ABSTRACT

A considerable body of research has found that work-life benefits are associated with a number of key employee outcomes. However, there has not been a study that investigates and compares the effectiveness of diverse work-life benefits. The current study contributes to this line of research by identifying the work-life benefits that are more relevant in influencing employee outcomes. The result shows that there appears to be no best work-life benefit, implying a need for strategic human resource perspective when constructing work-life benefit package. Implications and limitations are also discussed.

KEYWORDS: Work-life benefit, Employee outcome, Affective commitment, Absenteeism, Job performance

INTRODUCTION

The last few decades have witnessed a substantial demographic and sociological shift in the U.S. workforce. The traditional male-dominated work force has gradually been replaced by a more balanced one, with more females contributing to the economy. Women comprise almost half of the total workforce (47% as opposed to 53% as men; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010a). The percentage of dual-earner households is also on a rising track (Baltes, Briggs, Huff, Wright, & Neuman, 1999). Also, more than one third of children are living with single mothers (Galinsky, Aumann, & Bond, 2009). Also, the composition of the workforce has seen an increasing share of Generation Y and X employees, who place high priority on time for non-work activities (Hewlett, Sherbin & Sumberg, 2009).

These workforce changes have created significant challenges for both employers and employees. Case in point, it is estimated that U.S. employers assume a total annual loss of $4 billion from absenteeism caused by child care (Gurschiek, 2007). Furthermore, employees who acknowledge interference of non-work activities at work are 11 percent more likely to make
errors at work than those who have better work-life balance (Johnson, 1999). Hewlett and Luce (2005) surveyed a large sample of female professionals and found that about 43 percent of them actually opted out due to family responsibilities. Recently, U.S. employees have faced more stringent demands on time spent at work; those employees who work over 50 hours each week increased from 24 percent to 37 percent. And U.S. work week jumped to 47 hours from 43 hours (Robbins & Judge, 2013).

In consideration of these societal and demographic influences, some organizations choose to develop and offer policies that seek to aid their employees to balance work and non-work obligations. These policies are largely volunteered by organizations and exceed legal requirements (Swody & Powell, 2007). In a study surveying 182 companies based in U.S. and Canada, Culpepper and Associates (2010) found that 90 percent of surveyed companies offer their employees one or multiple forms of flexible work options. Based on a sample of large organizations, Galinsky, Bond and Sakai (2008) reported that, among those surveyed organizations, 35 percent offer their employees child care resources and referrals and 9 percent had established on-site child care facilities.

The increasing adoption of employer sponsored work-life benefits is partly due to the amounting societal pressure for employers to respond to workers’ personal needs (Den Dulk, 2005). It is also driven by employers’ mandate to build a highly committed and engaged workforce (Casio & Boudreau, 2010). In brief, it is the corporate goal of building “high performance work systems” that makes the implementation of work-life benefits necessary (Osterman, 1995).

Most empirical studies on work-life benefits have found support for their organizational implementation. The literature suggests that providing flexible work schedule to employees is associated with reduced work-family conflict (Hammer, Allen & Grigsby, 1997), increased job satisfaction (Thomas & Ganster, 1995; Holtzman & Glass, 1999), and reduced absenteeism (Christensen & Staines, 1990). The positive relationship between flexible work schedule and worker job satisfaction was also corroborated by the meta-analysis conducted by Baltes et al. (1999). Also, Lobel (1999) concluded that on-site child care is positively related to a series of attitudinal outcomes. The meta-analysis recently conducted by Butts, Casper and Yang (2013) corroborated that the provision of work-life benefits was positively and significantly related to a number of relevant employee outcomes such as job satisfaction, affective commitment, and intention to stay.

Studies on work-life benefits typically focus on evaluating the relationship between a single (e.g. Bohem & Viveros-Long, 1981; Grover & Crooker, 1995), or a bundle of work-life initiatives (e.g. Saltzstein, Ting, & Saltzstein, 2001; Boswell & Olson-Buchanan, 2007), and key employee outcomes. Despite the contributions, this line of research has largely neglected comparison of the links between numerous work-life benefits and vital organizational outcomes (with notable exceptions by Lee and Hong 2011 and Caillier 2013). To date, many researchers agree that a specific work-life initiative provides varying degrees of supportiveness and usefulness to employee outcomes (Lambert, 2000; Perry-Smith & Blum, 2000). Yet the gap in understanding the comparative and differential relationships between work-life programs and individual employee affects and behaviors impairs researchers’ abilities to provide managerial guidance and to evaluate estimated values. Therefore, it is relevant to both research and practice to investigate and compare the effect sizes of the rapports between diverse work-life benefits and salient employee outcomes.
In this study we aim to achieve three goals. First, we examine the comparative links between a wide range of work-life benefits and job satisfaction, absenteeism, affective commitment, intention to turnover, and job performance. Second, we construct theoretical foundations for these relationships between work-life benefits and key employee outcomes. Third, the results could serve as a gauge for current employer practice since the readers can learn which programs are more frequently offered and effective.

We structure the rest of this paper the following way: we give a brief overview of work-life benefits, literature and relevant theory along with our exploratory hypothesis in next section. Then, we present the methodology and the tests for the proposed hypotheses. A discussion follows which includes findings, implications for research and practice, study limitations and recommendations for future researches.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Work-Life Benefits Research

Unfortunately, the extant literature gives few answers as to which work-life policies are more strongly related to specific employee attitude and behaviors. Caillier (2013) noted the absence of comparison among different work-life benefits by stating that such “comparisons were not found in the literature” (p. 347). In an attempt to investigate the differential effects of four types work-life benefits (paid family leave, flexible work arrangement, child care subsidies, and telecommuting), Lee and Hong (2011) found that only child care subsidies were effective in reducing turnover. However, since their analysis was conducted on the organizational level in the public sector, the generalizability of their findings is limited. Caillier (2013) asserted that flexible work schedules and the use of telecommunication may have more impact on employees’ organizational commitment and job involvement, but failed to those hypotheses. In response, a recent meta-analysis (Butts et al., 2013) called for future studies that contrast commonly included policies to find out which policy is more beneficial.

Another striking characteristic of work-life literature is the absence of an orthodox theoretical framework that can be used for understanding the various effects of different work-life benefits (Allen, 2001). The way work-life benefits affect employee attitudes has been investigated from the perspectives of a number of theories, including role theory (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985), and social exchange theory (Kossek & Nichol, 1992). The work-life literature has documented only a limited number of attempts that employ the Conservation of Resource (COR) theory. In fact, there have been recent calls for explaining work-life benefits from the lens of COR theory (Butts et al., 2013; Noe, Clarke, & Klein, 2014). Already, COR theory has been widely used to explain several health-related problems caused by work stress such as burnout. Since work-life benefits are designed to alleviate such problems, the influence of work-life benefits on employee attitudes and behaviors may also be understood through the lens of COR theory. Therefore, in this study, we draw upon role, COR, and social exchange theory to link work-life benefits to relevant outcome variables such as absenteeism.

Theoretical Foundations and Hypotheses

Role theory has emerged as one of the predominant theoretical frameworks used to understand work-life issues (Allen, 2001). According to the role theory, demands of incompatible roles can lead to two potential stressors. First, the obligations of multiple roles are expected to add to overall workload and progress to overload in diverse domains (Szalai, 1972). For example, with
the increasing share of female employees in work force, working women are facing such scenarios partly due to their continued roles as the primary family caregivers (Brines, 1994; Pleck, 1985; Higgins et al., 1992). On the other hand, with the growth of dual career households, males are also confronted with new interrole stress due to greater responsibilities at home (Higgins et al., 1992).

The second stressor comes from interrole conflict. In light of Khan, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, and Rosenthal (1964), interrole conflict develops when the role pressure from the membership in one group is not reconcilable with the role pressure from the memberships in other groups. That is, fulfilling the requirements of one role limits one’s ability to fulfill the requirements of the other. Building on the notion of interrole conflict, Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) conceptualize work-family conflict as a unique type of interrole conflict that is due to the incompatible expectations of family and work roles. They further suggested three main ways through which work-family conflict may result: 1) the demands from either work or family threaten to dominate employee time and limit their ability to fulfill the expectation of the competing role; 2) the strain derived one domain may have spillover effect on the other; 3) the expected patterns of behaviors are diverse and incompatible across work and family domains (i.e. at work, employees are expected to exhibit aggressiveness and objectivity; whereas, they are expected to be empathetic at home).

Work-life literature suggests that the interrole conflict can be examined beyond the scope of work and family. Indeed, any alternative personal responsibilities can influence an employee’s work (Muse, Harris, Giles & Field, 2008).

As interventions for such conflict, work-life benefits are believed to improve an employee’s ability to better balance work and life so that he/she will be more satisfied with a job (Judge, Boudreau & Bretz, 1994). The implementation of work-life benefits protects employees from the stress caused by interrole conflict, which is detrimental to the employees’ attitudes toward their work. As a result, employees granted work-life benefits are more likely to have higher job satisfaction.

A number of specific work-life benefits are found to increase employee’s job satisfaction. These include: flex-time (Baltes et al., 1999), flexible work arrangements (Thomas & Ganster, 1995), child-care assistance (Kossek & Nichol, 1992), and telecommuting (Major, Verive, & Joice, 2008). A meta-analysis by Kossek and Ozeki (1998) confirmed that the implementation of work-life policies are positively related to job satisfaction. In line with these prior studies, we propose the following:

**Hypothesis 1:** Work-life balance programs are positively and significantly associated with employee job satisfaction.

Conservation of Resources (COR) theory is complementary to role theory in explaining the relationships between work-life conflicts and multiple outcomes (Grandey and Cropanzano, 1999). COR theory highlights the importance of necessary resources that can be used to combat stress by suggesting that people tend to gain and preserve these coping resources (Hobfoll, 1989). The coping resources include a wide range of attributes such as energy, personal characteristics, and demographic (i.e. marital status). Stress arises whenever there is a potential loss of resources, actual loss, or unexpected no-gain of resources. Furthermore, COR theory posits that interrole conflict may induce the experience of stress because resources are dissipated, not only when fulfilling the demands of each competing role, but also in the process of evaluating these incompatible expectations (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999). Resultantly, the simultaneous existence of multiple personal responsibilities, which require
different role fulfillments, may lead to the experience of stress. Given that work-life benefits are designed to address the conflicting demands between work and non-work activities, they can therefore be considered as a type of coping resources in that they enable employees to balance various conflicting demands of different roles (Allen, 2001).

Thus, one advantage of implementing work-life benefits is to reduce absenteeism. This is can be achieved because employees benefiting from these policies are better able to arrange their work and non-work activities. For example, offering childcare referral information can greatly reduce an employee’s need to miss work time for children (Kossek & Nichol, 1992). Also, empowering employees through flexible work arrangements decreases the likelihood that non-work activities interfere with work schedules (Thomas & Ganster, 1995). From the perspective of the COR theory, employees who have work-life benefits possess more coping resources with a diminished willingness to miss work and actual absenteeism. Moreover, since work-life benefits partially take care of employee’s non-work responsibilities, the employee is spared the necessity of constantly evaluating opposing roles, and thereby, may lower the resource losses. Empirical studies also support a positive relationship between work-life benefits and absenteeism (Marks, Mirvis, Hackett & Grady, 1986).

As discussed above, we expect a negative relationship between the provision of work-life benefits and absenteeism.

*Hypothesis 2: The existence of work-life benefits is negatively and significantly related to absenteeism.*

Social exchange theory is primarily concerned with the mutual “transaction”, or exchange, between people or entities. The core assumption of social exchange theory is the norm of reciprocity, which states that people may feel obliged to engage in reciprocal behaviors when they receive benefits from other parties (Blau, 1964; Gould, 1979). In business settings, social exchange theory implies that employees tend to repay their employers for the rewards or benefits they received in such forms as pay, promotion, recognition and support. In return, employees reciprocate their employers with valuable inputs such as loyalty, knowledge, skills, and capabilities to help achieve organizational goals.

The exchange process between employees and organizations has been conceptualized as a strong predictor for job attitudes, especially for affective organizational commitment, which is defined as “emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization” (Allen & Meyer, 1990, p.1). As suggested by Knippenberg and Sleebos (2006), social exchange theory assumes that employees treat self and organizations as two different entities psychologically, and the perceived equality of the exchange relationship between employees and organizations will determine an employee’s organizational commitment. The authors concluded that organizational commitment is strongly related to the exchange relationship between employees and organizations. This is consistent with Gouldner (1960)’s statement that an employee’s attitude toward company is shaped by his/her interaction with the company based on the norm of reciprocity. Given that the existence of employer-sponsored work-life benefits reflects an employer’s concerns about employee’s well-being, employees who are provided with those benefits, compared with those who are not, are more likely to perceive their interaction with organizations as a fair exchange, which elicit the obligations to repay organizations with efforts and loyalty (Kossek & Nichol, 1992). As such, the offering of work-life benefits is believed to have a positive association with affective commitment.
Along with the social exchange reasoning of commitment, there has been ample evidence demonstrating that provision of work-life benefits is positively related to employee affective commitment. On-site childcare has been cited as one of the most effective work-life benefits to favorably alter employee’s affective commitment (Kossek & Nichol, 1992). The study by Grover and Crooker (1995) showed that child care referral information provided by the employers significantly, positively affects employee affective commitment. Studies also found that flexible work arrangement is associated with enhanced affective commitment (Baltes et al., 1999; Kelliher & Anderson, 2009). Examining a broad array of work-life initiatives, Thompson, Beauvais, and Lyness (1999) linked the provision of work-life benefits and improved affective commitment. Based on the preceding analysis, we believe that providing work-life benefits, in general, would be associated with greater affective commitment.

**Hypothesis 3:** The provision of work-life benefits is positively and significantly associated with employee affective organizational commitment.

The social exchange logic discussed above also applies to the relationship between work-life benefits and turnover intention. The investments made by the organizations to offer work-life benefits signify an employer’s commitment to support an employee’s welfare. Employees tend to repay the organizations with greater loyalty and effort.

Also, the offer of work-life benefits may be more highly valued by employees because of the lingering effects of the recent economic recession. Sweet, Besen, Pitt-Catsouphes, and McNamara (2014) linked economic context to organizational adoption of flexible work arrangement. Basing their analysis on two surveys of U.S. organizations, they found that organizations offered fewer options for flexible work arrangements and discouraged the use of such benefits in 2009 as compared to 2006, partly because of the uncertainty associated with the economic recession. Consequently, employees are less likely to be provided with access to work-life benefits when facing economic uncertainty. Thus, in a societal context where such programs are scarce, it is conceivable that employees who do receive them are more appreciative, and less likely to quit.

In addition, past studies have generally supported a negative relationship between a few work-life benefits and turnover intention. Child care referral information provided by the organizations was found to be negatively associated with turnover intention (Grover & Crooker, 1995). The availability of flexible work arrangement has also been shown to have a negative relationship with turnover intention (Allen, 2001). In short, work-life benefits are expected to be negatively related to turnover intention.

**Hypothesis 4:** The existence of work-life benefits is negatively and significantly associated with turnover intention.

Social exchange theory has also been employed to explain the rapport between work-life benefits and job performance. Researchers who focused on the subtleties of social exchange theory noted that the targets of an employee’s reciprocal efforts may vary depending upon the benefactor (Becker, 1992). That is, employee’s reciprocal efforts are more likely to be directed toward the entities that elicit such obligations. As for the work-life benefits, organizations are more likely to be the reciprocal target simply because work-life benefits are generally considered as organizational policies. As a result of employee’s appreciation for organizational policies, it is predicted that employees will exert more discretionary effort to fulfill their job requirement as a return for such policies.
As for the turnover intention, the impact of economic context may also be evident in this case. Konrad and Mangel (2000) posited that, when job security was reduced, employees who choose to stay in the organizations that provided more work-life benefits were likely to perform at maximum levels. Consistent with this social exchange logic, there has been ample evidence that support the positive link between work-life benefits and job performance (Konrad & Mangel, 2000; Beauregard & Henry, 2009).

Hypothesis 5: Work-life benefits are positively and significantly associated with job performance.

Research Question

Most researchers concur that specific work-life initiatives provide varying degree of supportiveness and usefulness to employees. Moreover, the effectiveness of work-life benefits may vary across different outcome variables. Different work-life benefits affect employee attitudes and behaviors in idiosyncratic fashion. This is partially because many of the work-life programs are tailored to meet specific needs. Some work-life benefits, such as on-site child care center, are applicable only to a subset of total employees. In this regard, the extent to which a given work-life benefits is deemed supportive and useful depends on an employee’s own personal needs. Lambert (2000) suggests that employees also perceive the same benefit temporally because their personal needs may change over different stages of employment.

Assessing the effect size of many types of work-life benefits on a large sample promises to reveal benefits that are more salient in influencing an employee’s work attitudes and behaviors. Such assessment, unlike traditional approaches used in most studies, requires treating each work-life benefit as an independent construct and comparing the magnitude of each program by looking at the expected increase in a dependent variable if a work-life initiative is implemented. Unfortunately, such “comparisons were not found in the literature” (Caillier, 2013, pg 347). A lack of understanding on the differential relationship between commonly studied work-life programs and major employee attitudes and behaviors limits the researcher’s ability to provide well-supported guidance for managers who seek to build complementary and effective work-life benefit packages.

Given the exploratory nature of this inquiry, we propose the following research question: Research question: Which work-life program(s) is/are more salient in influencing relevant job related outcomes -- job satisfaction, affective organizational commitment, absenteeism, turnover intention, and job performance?

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Study participants were recruited from the Mechanical Turk web site. This site can be used to post work tasks that will be completed by a heterogeneous workforce for a payment set by the researcher. This site is a useful method for recruiting psychological survey and experiment participants. The demographics of USA Mechanical Turk workers were tested by Huff and Tingley (2014), and they found that the workers’ demographic characteristics were very similar to the United States as a whole. Another study by Buhrmester and colleagues (2011) also found
that responses from Mechanical Turk respondents are generalizable to the population as a whole. Finally, Peer and colleagues (2014) tested how conscientious and truthful workers were in their responses. These researchers found that the Mechanical Turk’s worker reputation mechanism provided respondents with a strong motivation to provide accurate answers.

To recruit respondents, a solicitation was posted for workers in the USA willing to complete a survey on their workplace environment. A monetary incentive of US$0.50 was provided for survey completion. Completion time took an average of 21 minutes (this study was part of a larger investigation of the workplace environment). The recruitment and completion process took place over eight days, from 13 March 2015 to 21 March 2015. The solicitation was for 400 respondents, however 427 people completed at least some portion of the survey (some participants who completed the survey did not submit a request for compensation).

A slightly higher proportion of respondents were female (53%) than male (47%). Most respondents had some education beyond high school (20% with an associate’s degree, 38% with a college degree, 18% with a graduate degree, and 24% with a high school degree). Median respondent age was 32, with lower and upper quartile ages being 27 and 42 respectively. The vast majority of respondents were native born USA citizens (96%), with non-US born workers having spent a median of 15.5 years in the US.

Respondents had median 11.5 years of overall full-time work experience, with a median of four years of work experience with their current employer, and a median of three years of work experience in their current position and with their current boss. For their current work situation, 87% self-classified as full-time workers, and 13% self-classified as part-time workers. Respondents were evenly divided on the size of the organization they worked for, with 33% working in small (less than 100 employees), 36% in medium (100 to 1,000 employees), and 30% working in large (more than 1,000 employees) organizations. The greatest number of respondents self-classified as having highly skilled/professional jobs (46%), with 39% selecting skilled labor, and 14% selecting unskilled labor as their job type.

Respondents came from a wide variety of industry sectors, with industrials (production of goods used in construction and manufacturing) representing the largest single sector at 15%. Information technology and government were the next largest sectors at 13% each, with health care being represented by 12% of the respondents, and utilities making up 10% of the respondents. No other sector accounted for more than 10% of the subject pool. Within these sectors, 21% of respondents classified themselves as professional workers, 19% as managers, 14% as office and administrative support, and no other category representing more than 10% of the respondents.

**Materials and Procedures**

Respondents were asked to answer questions relating to the work-life balance aspect of their work environment and selected workplace outcomes. Specifically, they were asked to answer yes or no to 14 items related to work-life balance and 4 items concerned about work environment (these items are presented in Appendix 1 and denoted as WL and WE, respectively), respondents were also requested to complete scales on their performance, intent-to-turnover, absenteeism, job satisfaction, and affective job commitment. The work-life balance items were created for this study, and drawn from extant literature on this subject (as detailed in this manuscript’s literature review section). Each item was treated as a separate measure of work-life benefits in an organization. As such, these measures do not lend themselves to
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reliability analysis. The outcome variables are taken from existing, tested and validated measures.

The performance measure is an adaptation (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2006; Mayfield & Mayfield, 2009) of Mott’s team performance measure (Mott, 1972), which has been shown to have a high correspondence with multiple measures of performance. In this study, the measure’s Cronbach’s alpha score was 0.94 with a 95% confidence interval of 0.92 to 0.95. The turnover intentions measure (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2007) had a good reliability score of 0.89 with a confidence interval range of 0.87 to 0.91. For the absenteeism measure, respondents were asked how many work days they had missed in the past month. No reliability measure is available for this item, but other studies have examined this measure and found it to have adequate validity for measuring the intended construct (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2009; Mayfield & Mayfield, 2011). The Hoppock job satisfaction measure (Hoppock, 1935) was used to measure job satisfaction, and had a reliability of 0.89 in this study, with a confidence interval range of 0.86 to 0.91. Affective job commitment was measured using the affective portion of Meyer and colleagues’ (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002) three component model of organizational commitment. In this study, the affective portion of the scale had a reliability of 0.89, and a confidence interval range of 0.87 to 0.91.

Statistics and Data Analysis

The dependent variables were created by averaging responses for a given dependent variable. (The exception was days of worked missed which was a single item variable.) If responses were missing for a given dependent variable item, the completed items were used to calculate the average. Since there were very few missing items across respondents, this method for dealing with data incompleteness seems appropriate and in-line with current methods (Graham, 2009). Once the dependent variables were calculated, respondents with missing data were removed from the sample. After respondents were removed, there remained 351 complete response sets. Table 1 presents summary statistics for the independent data set, and table 2 presents a summary for the dependent data set.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics-Dependent Data Set

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Percentage Answering Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My organization allows me to choose the times that I work during a day.</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. My organization will provide me with paid time off if I have a child.</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. My organization has an onsite or nearby gym I can use for free.</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. My organization lets me have paid time-off for personal matters (in addition to vacation time).</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. My organization gives me paid holidays.</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. My organization gives me paid sick leave.</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. My organization regularly sponsors social events for workers and their families.</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. My organization lets me bring a pet to work.</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09. My organization will let me work longer hours and fewer days if I want to.</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. My organization will help an employee’s spouse in finding work. 15%
11. My organization allows me to work from home at times. 36%
12. My organization lets me take equal time off when I have to work outside of normal work times. 39%
13. My organization will provide me with professional counseling if I need help for personal problems. 46%
14. My organization provides day care. 10%
15. During most work weeks, my organization expects me to work more than 50 hours. 83%
16. At least once a month, my organization expects me to work six or seven days a week. 71%
17. My organization only gives me a half-hour or less for lunch. 63%
18. My organization often requires me to work overtime. 64%

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics-Independent Data Set

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intent-to-Turnover</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Days Absent</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>1.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective Commitment</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to test the study hypotheses, we employed stepwise regression to examine the relationship between the provision of work-life balance benefits and focal employee outcomes. Stepwise regression was used to aid results understandability (by reducing the number of independent variables to be considered to only the most important benefits), minimize potential spurious relationships that could occur if all variables were examined at once, and to reduce the chance of multicolinearity among the twenty variables. The analysis was performed using the `step` function of the R statistical package.

Statistical results showed that each dependent variable was statistically predicted at the 0.05 p-value level by at least one work-life benefit. Variance accounted for in dependent variables by their attendant independent variable set ranged from an adjusted $R^2$ of 0.03 (for performance) to 0.27 (for intent-to-turnover). Therefore, the effects ranged from small to moderate in terms of accounting for dependent variable variance.
In addition to examining how much variance is accounted for by variables, it is also important to look at the expected magnitude of effects on dependent variables by the independent variables. This magnitude was examined by looking at the expected increase in a dependent variable if a work-life benefit is implemented (as compared to implementing no relevant work-life benefits). This analysis was accomplished by dividing the appropriate independent variable coefficient by the formula’s intercept value. The magnitude effects ranged from a 7% difference (for performance) to an 18% difference (for days absent).

Table 3: Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Performance</th>
<th>Intent-to-Turnover</th>
<th>Days Absent</th>
<th>Job Satisfaction</th>
<th>Affective Commitment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WL01</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WL02</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WL03</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WL04</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WL05</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WL06</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WL07</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>-.24</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WL08</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WL09</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WL10</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WL11</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WL12</td>
<td>NA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Change</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
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* Significant at the 0.05 level
** Significant at the 0.01 level
*** Significant at the 0.001 level
NS – not significant
NI – not included in the stepwise regression selection
RESULTS

Table 1 presents the adoption of each type of work-life benefits. Paid holidays and sick leaves are the most commonly reported work-life benefits, with adoption rates of 72 percent and 66 percent, respectively. About half of the respondents reported that their employers offer such benefits as paid maternity/paternity leave, paid personal leave, and Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs; 45%, 51%, 46% respectively). Day care is the least common work-life benefit with an adoption rate of 10 percent, followed by the permission to bring a pet to work (12%). The full regression results are presented in table 3. Hypothesis 1 was supported. Four work-life benefits in question were positively and significantly associated with job satisfaction: flextime ($\beta=0.44$, $P<0.001$), paid maternity/paternity leave ($\beta=0.39$, $P<0.01$), paid sick leave ($\beta=0.42$, $P<0.01$), comp time ($\beta=0.36$, $P<0.01$). Contrary to the hypothesis 2, offering compressed work week was positively related to absenteeism. Supporting hypothesis 3, four benefits were found to be positively and significantly related to affective organizational commitment: paid maternity/paternity leave ($\beta=0.25$, $P<0.05$), family social events ($\beta=0.32$, $P<0.01$), comp time ($\beta=0.28$, $P<0.01$), and EAP ($\beta=0.31$, $P<0.01$). Rejecting hypothesis 4, a number of work-life benefits showed positively association with employee turnover intention. Finally, the provision of paid maternity/paternity leave was positively and significantly related to job performance ($\beta=0.24$, $P<0.05$).

DISCUSSION

The primary goal of the present study is to assess and contrast the effectiveness of various work-life benefits in improving key employee attitudes and behaviors. To achieve this goal, we conducted step-wise regression analysis to pay more attention to those work-life benefits that show substantial importance. This is a relevant contribution because the absence of such a comparison has made it more difficult for practitioners to determine which work-life benefits are the most desired by employees (Butts et al., 2013). The results suggested that different work-life programs have varying impacts on work attitude and behaviors. In particular, the results showed that flextime, paid maternity/paternity leave, paid sick leave, and comp time have the strongest positive relationship with employee job satisfaction. For affective organizational commitment, paid maternity/paternity leave, family social events, comp time and EAP demonstrated more substantial rapport. Also, paid maternity/paternity leave was the only positive significant link with job performance.

Our results shed important light on the scholarly progress made on work-life benefits. First, based our analysis on a broad cross-organizational demographic sample, we found that there is no best work-life benefit that improves all the outcomes in question. This finding supports the “bundling” view which holds that organizations should offer work-life benefits that are complementary and mutually reinforcing in order to obtain the maximum benefits (Ingram and Simons, 1995). Also, among those work-life benefits that are found to have significant relationship with job attitudes and behaviors, the effect sizes are moderate. This is consistent with meta-analytic findings in Butts et al. (2013). Given that managers are more concerned about the cost-effectiveness of work-life policies (Christensen, 1998; Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 2002), those benefits that have significant impacts on multiple outcome variables would be preferred. By this standard, paid maternity/paternity leave could be a sound choice given its positive and statistically significant links with three outcome variables—job satisfaction, affective organizational commitment and job performance. Thus, based on the results of our analysis, it appears that including paid maternity/paternity leave in a work-life benefits package would make good business sense.
Second, providing day care for childbearing employees has been cited as one of the most effective work-life benefits to favorably alter employee’s job attitudes (Kossek & Nichol, 1992; Lobel, 1999). However, to our surprise, day care failed to significantly relate to employee job attitude and behaviors when other benefits are accounted for. This finding is consistent with that of Saltzstein, Ting, and Saltzstein (2001). In their study, the authors failed to find statistically significant influence of child care policies on job satisfaction. One possible explanation is that most work-life benefits are designed to help a smaller group of employees. For example, only employees having children may benefit from day care. When tested on a large, diverse sample, day care ceased to play a pivotal role in influencing an employee’s job attitudes and behaviors. This finding also highlights the need for more careful examinations of the effect of day care given its burdensome financial cost and legal ramifications.

Third, some researchers are skeptical about the effects of compressed work week and flexible work arrangement. Implementation of flex work arrangements may not be welcomed by managers who are likely to find it more difficult to coordinate employees’ work schedules when employees are working on different schedules (Coltrin and Barendse, 1981). An employee’s performance may also be affected by communication problems caused by different inter-departmental work schedules (Nollen, 1981). Consistent with these criticisms, the present study found that offering flextime has limited impact on employee work attitude and behaviors, except for job satisfaction. Likewise, a compressed work week did not significantly improve job satisfaction, organizational commitment, or job performance. Instead, employees who are offered compressed work weeks reported higher turnover intention ($\beta=0.29$, $P<0.05$). This is possibly caused by the negative psychological impact such benefits may cause. In a more recent study, Kelliher and Anderson (2009) found that, flexible employees may suffer from increased job intensification, which is characterized by intensive mental and physical input.

Another objective of the current study is to investigate the effects of work-life benefits through the angle of the COR theory. This is important in that the COR theory provides unique insights for understanding the consequences of job stress (Hobfoll, 1989). Recent studies also call for more attempts that employ the COR theory to explain the impacts of work-life benefits (Butts, Casper & Yang, 2013; Noe, Clarke, & Klein, 2014). To achieve this objective, we attempted to link work-life benefits to employee absenteeism from the perspective of the COR theory. We argued that work-life benefits provide employees with more coping resources that can be used to combat against stress caused by both work and non-work activities. Unfortunately, we were not able to support this hypothesis.

**Limitations and Directions for Future Studies**

The current preliminary study is not free of limitations. First, we are exclusively focused on the direct relationship between work-life benefits and job attitudes and behaviors. No mediators or moderators were examined. Therefore, it is difficult to make more subtle inferences from the results with respect to how work-life benefits affect key employee outcomes and when these relationships may vary. Second, our reliance on a U.S.-based sample restricts the range of the respondents. Thus, the findings of the current study cannot be generalized to other nations and cultures. Moreover, given that this study is based on cross-sectional analysis, no causal effects should be inferred from the results.

In light of these limitations, potentially fruitful directions for future researches are: 1) investigations that include mediators to uncover the underlying process through which work-life
benefits affect key employee outcomes; 2) relatedly, studies that analyze possible moderating effects can help answer when work-life benefits are more effective; 3) similar research that is based on multinational samples can test the relationship between work-life balance programs and key employee outcomes in cross-cultural settings; 4) studies can be based on longitudinal designs to look at the relationship between work-life benefits and results; 5) likewise, quasi experimental research with a design that examines causality between work-life benefits and their impacts

CONCLUSION

This study contributes to the human resource literature that investigates which work-life benefits are more influential than others. The pivotal finding is that there appears to be no best work-life benefit that is significantly related to many key employee outcomes. As a result, we recommend adoption of a strategic human resource management perspective when selecting organizational work-life packages, in sum, such benefits must be congruent with the unique organizational strategy, culture, and extant work-life benefits.

APPENDIX 1

Work-Life Balance

For the following statements, please indicate Yes if the statement describes your organization or No if the statement does not describe your organization.

1. My organization allows me to choose the times that I work during a day.
   No [  ]   Yes [  ]

2. My organization will provide me with paid time off if I have a child.
   No [  ]   Yes [  ]

3. My organization has an onsite or nearby gym I can use for free.
   No [  ]   Yes [  ]

4. My organization lets me have paid time-off for personal matters (in addition to vacation time).
   No [  ]   Yes [  ]

5. My organization gives me paid holidays.
   No [  ]   Yes [  ]

6. My organization gives me paid sick leave.
   No [  ]   Yes [  ]

7. During most work weeks, my organization expects me to work more than 50 hours.
   No [  ]   Yes [  ]

8. My organization regularly sponsors social events for workers and their families.
   No [  ]   Yes [  ]

9. My organization lets me bring a pet to work.
   No [  ]   Yes [  ]

10. My organization will let me work longer hours and fewer days if I want to.
    No [  ]   Yes [  ]

11. At least once a month, my organization expects me to work six or seven days a week.
    No [  ]   Yes [  ]

12. My organization will help an employee’s spouse in finding work.
    No [  ]   Yes [  ]

13. My organization allows two people to share a single professional position.
    No [  ]   Yes [  ]
14. My organization allows me to work from home at times.

15. My organization lets me take equal time off when I have to work outside of normal work times.

16. My organization will provide me with professional counseling if I need help for personal problems.

17. My organization only gives me a half-hour or less for lunch.

18. My organization expects me to respond to work e-mails or voice mails that are sent to me outside of normal work hours.

19. My organization often requires me to work overtime.

20. My organization provides day care.

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**REFERENCES**


