

Determinants of Employee Participation in Organizations' Family-friendly Programs: A Multi-level Approach

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Abstract Many organizations have become more “family-friendly” by initiating programs to help employees meet their family needs. In return, family-friendly organizations are said to benefit from the positive attitudes and behavior of appreciative employees. However, long-term positive outcomes may not emerge if employees are reluctant to participate in work–family programs because they are concerned that their organization or manager does not support their participation. We propose two parallel conceptual models of the complex, multi-level mechanisms behind employees' decisions to participate in their organization's family-friendly programs.

Keywords Work–family programs · Family-friendly · Multi-level

The relationship between work and family for employees in the global economy has evolved considerably in recent years due to increased proportions of working women, dual-earner couples, households headed by an employed single parent, and employees responsible for the care of an elder family member (Bianchi & Raley, 2003; Bond, Thompson, Galinsky, & Prottas, 2002; Carnoy, 2001;

Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000; Jacobs & Gerson, 2001; Merrill, 1997; Vannoy & Dubeck, 1998). Following these changes in labor force demographics, many organizations have made efforts to appear more “family-friendly” or family-supportive by initiating programs to help their workers with family responsibilities (Baughman, DiNardi, & Holtz-Eakin, 2003; Galinsky & Bond, 2000; Grosswald, Ragland, & Fisher, 2001; Lewis & Lewis, 1996; Nord, Fox, Phoenix, & Viano, 2002; Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 1997). Such family-friendly programs include assistance with dependent care, flexibility in work arrangements, and paid leaves of absence (Frankel, 1998; Galinsky & Bond, 2000; Lobel, 1999; Rodgers & Rodgers, 1989; Zedeck, 1992). Because large organizations are often legally mandated to offer employees unpaid leaves to care for newborn children or seriously ill family members (Sedmak & Vidak, 1994), we use the term *family-friendly programs* to describe programs that go beyond those required by the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and similar laws in other countries such as the United Kingdom (Brannen & Lewis, 2000) and Australia (Squirchuk & Bourke, 2000).

As demonstrated by the popular media, organizations that are seen as family-friendly receive external benefits such as good publicity (e.g., Catalyst, 2003; Working Mother, 2003). Family-friendly organizations are assumed to receive internal benefits from employees who appreciate the concern demonstrated for their family and personal life. These internal benefits include decreased turnover intention, increased commitment (Grover & Crooker, 1995; Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness, 1999), and increased job satisfaction (Allen, 2001). The provision of a range of family-friendly programs would seem to convey a message to employees that communicates organizational value and respect for employees and their personal lives (Goodstein, 1994; Morgan & Milliken, 1993).

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According to the norm of reciprocity, people feel an obligation to help those who have helped them (Berkowitz & Daniels, 1963; Gouldner, 1960). Specifically, this norm suggests that if an organization visibly demonstrates that it values its employees, employees will reciprocate by committing to the organization and its goals. Evidence supports the existence of such a reciprocal relationship (Cohen, 1997; Grover & Crooker, 1995; Orthner & Pittman, 1986). For example, at DuPont, employees who participated in the company’s family-friendly programs were 45% more likely to report that they would “go the extra mile” on behalf of the company (Landauer, 1997). At Hoeschst Celanese, 60% of employees stated that being able to balance their work and family responsibilities was an important factor in their enduring relationship with the company (Landauer, 1997). Overall, organizations that offer more extensive family-friendly programs and their employees often report greater performance and increased productivity (Duxbury, Higgins, & Neufeld, 1998; Hill, Miller, Weiner, & Colihan, 1998; Perry-Smith & Blum, 2000).

Before organizations or their employees can attain all of the long-term positive outcomes of family-friendly practices, employees should feel comfortable accepting or anticipating acceptance of the help that their organization offers. Researchers have noted that availability of family-friendly programs does not immediately translate to the utilization of such programs (Blair-Loy &

Wharton, 2002; Butler, Gasser, & Smart, 2004; Roberts, Gianakis, McCue, & Wand, 2004). Despite employee belief in the benefits of family-friendly programs, overall utilization rates remain low (Employee Benefit Plan Review, 1998; Hochschild, 1997; Judiesch & Lyness, 1999; Newman & Matthews, 1999; Thompson et al., 1999), especially for men (Butler et al., 2004; Pleck, 1993; Powell, 1997). Reluctance to take advantage of work–family programs may reflect employee concern that their organization or manager does not have their best interest in mind and that participation does not fit with their gender role.

Therefore, the purpose of this article is to propose two parallel conceptual models of the complex, multi-level mechanisms behind employees’ decisions to participate in their organization’s family-friendly programs. Our first model incorporates constructs that pertain to both *organizations* and employees and appears in Fig. 1. Corresponding to our first model, our second model incorporates constructs that pertain to *managers* and employees and appears in Fig. 2. Both models fit the description of multi-level models provided by and Kozlowski and Klein (2000), as these models link phenomena at one level with phenomena at another level through both bottom-up processes (e.g., the influence of employee family needs on organizational responsiveness to work–family issues) as well as top-down processes (e.g., the

Fig. 1 Organizational determinants of employee participation in organizations’ family-friendly programs

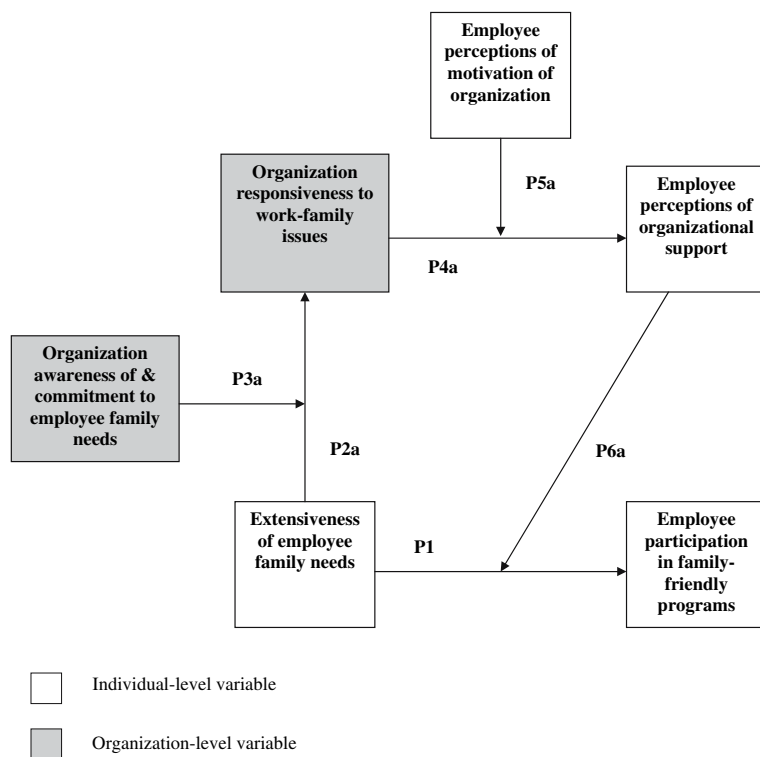
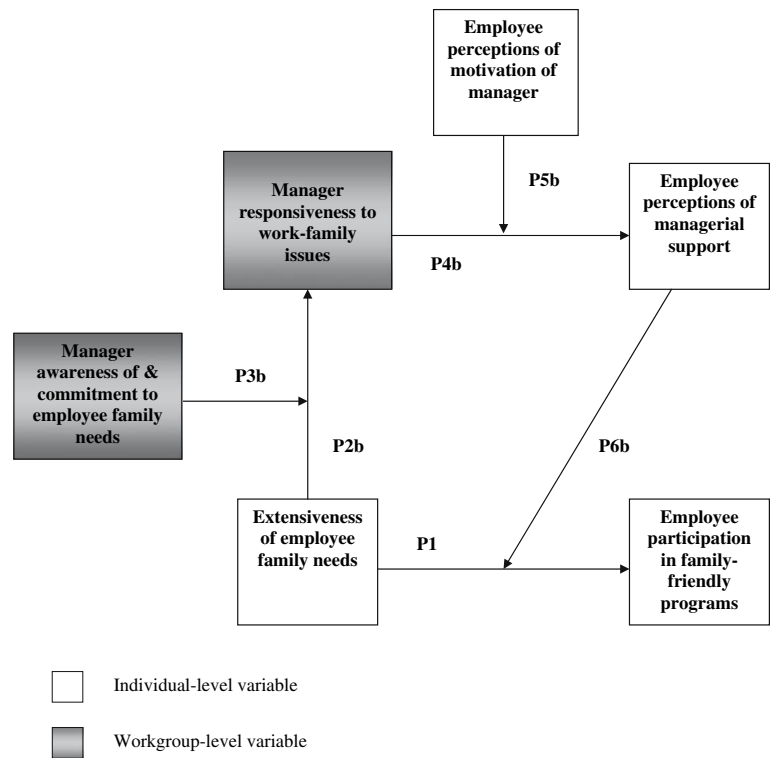


Fig. 2 Managerial determinants of employee participation in organizations’ family-friendly programs



influence of organizational responsiveness to work–family issues on perceived organizational support).

Theory

Family Needs

Employees are expected to participate in their organization’s work–family programs when they have more extensive family needs to address. Employees’ family needs are influenced by the structure of their families, which can be quite complex. Schneer and Reitman (1993) offered a three-dimensional typology of family structure based on marital status (married or single), parental status (children or no children), and employment status of the spouse if married (employed or not employed). Additional variations of marital status include being divorced, separated, widowed, and remarried. Single employees may have an opposite-sex or same-sex significant other who is just as important in their life as a spouse would be. There are also variations in the income contributed to the household and the time and energy devoted to family roles by spouses and significant others. Younger children require different care than older children, and the rearing of multiple children is more demanding than that of a sole child. Moreover, because of increased life spans, middle-aged employees often have to care for both their children and

their elderly parents. Elder care may be complicated by distance if the adult dependent is not a member of the employee’s household. Thus, various family members may play important roles in employees’ lives as household members, dependents, and/or providers of dependent care.

Because of differences in family structure and the roles played by family members in employees’ lives, employees’ family needs that might be addressed by corporate work–family programs vary widely. Employees who are single and childless without responsibility for other family members have less extensive family needs to be met by such programs than employees with more complex family structures. The extent of needs of employees with complex family structures, in turn, depends on the type and intensity of care that various family members require and the ability and willingness of some family members to care for others. Thus, we put forth our first proposition as a starting point for both of our models.

Proposition 1 (P1) *Employees with more extensive family needs are more likely to participate in their organization’s family-friendly programs.*

Factors at different levels may influence the strength of the relationship between employees’ family needs and their participation in their organization’s family-friendly programs. In the sections that follow, we will consider the influence of two such factors: responsiveness to work–family issues and employee perceptions of support for

participation in such programs. We conceptualize responsiveness to work–family issues on two levels, such that an organization’s responsiveness to work–family issues is differentiated from a manager’s responsive to work–family issues. Employee perceptions of support and family needs are conceptualized as individual-level constructs.

Responsiveness to Work–family Issues

Organizations and their managers may respond to employee family needs in many different ways. Throughout the next few paragraphs, we will give examples of the various ways organizations can support the family needs of their employees. Organizations are more responsive to work–family issues when they offer (1) a greater variety of work–family programs and (2) more extensive benefits to employees within a particular program.

Organizations may offer employees valuable assistance with care of dependents. For example, in support of employee child care needs, organizations may provide information about existing child care providers, offer assistance in making arrangements, offer financial assistance toward child care costs, sponsor child care programs run by schools and community organizations, and operate centers that provide all-day, after-school, and summer care for employees’ children (Rodgers & Rodgers, 1989). In support of employee elder care needs, organizations may refer employees to existing elder care providers, assist them with making arrangements, grant employees financial assistance toward the costs of elder care, provide information about government programs that address the needs of the aging, offer support to outside elder care centers, and operate an elder care center for employees’ parents and elderly relatives (Merrill, 1997). Organizations that only provide information about dependent care, the cheapest type of dependent care program, are considered less responsive to work–family issues than organizations that provide financial assistance or operate dependent care centers themselves (Merrill, 1997).

Flexibility in work arrangements makes it possible for many employees to combine work and dependent care. Organizations may offer employees a wide array of options for alternative work arrangements, including flextime, telecommuting, part-time work, paid leaves and sabbaticals, unpaid leaves beyond what is legally mandated, job sharing, phased-in work schedules following leaves, and phased-in retirement (Lobel, 1999; Pierce, Newstrom, Dunham, & Barber, 1989). The most popular type of alternative work arrangement is flextime, which allows planned variations from normal work hours (Baltes, Briggs, Huff, Wright, & Neuman, 1999; U.S. Department of Labor, 2002). A recent survey of human resources professionals

found that 57% reported offering flextime, which may consist of changes to the starting and ending times of the workday within established limits (SHRM 2004 Benefits Survey Report, 2004). Flextime may also allow variation in the work schedule from one workday to the next, but does not include part-time work. Similar to flextime, a compressed workweek offers fewer, but longer work days (e.g., four 10-h days instead of five 8-h days). Telecommuting, which is being paid to do some or all of one’s work away from the work site, gives employees flexibility in location by allowing them to work with electronic tools out of a “virtual office” (Hill et al., 1998; Mariani, 2000; Riley & McCloskey, 1997). Organizations that are more responsive to work–family issues offer employees more options for work arrangements.

Organizations vary considerably in responsiveness to work–family issues (Ingram & Simons, 1995; Konrad & Mangel, 2000; Lobel, 1999; Milliken, Martins, & Morgan, 1998; Perry-Smith & Blum, 2000). For example, organizations that have a large number of employees are more likely to offer specific family-friendly programs than organizations with fewer employees, perhaps because of greater demand and cost-effectiveness (SHRM 2004 Benefits Survey Report, 2004). Less expensive programs such as referral services are offered to employees significantly more often than expensive programs such as on-site childcare (SHRM 2004 Benefits Survey Report, 2004). To assist employees with their family concerns so that they will be more focused and better able to perform, we would expect that organizations would adopt family-friendly programs that were responsive to their employees’ actual family needs. Thus,

Proposition 2a (P2a) *The extensiveness of employees’ family needs is associated with their organization’s responsiveness to work–family issues.*

Along with family-friendly programs (reviewed earlier), family-friendly managers are a major component of family-friendly organizations (Thomas & Ganster, 1995). Family-friendly managers understand and encourage employees’ desires to balance work and family responsibilities. For example, these managers may accommodate an employee’s flexible schedule, tolerate short phone calls after school lets out, offer kind words when babysitting arrangements fall through, and understand family emergencies (Thomas & Ganster, 1995).

Not all managers are family-friendly. Much like organizational responsiveness to work–family issues, managers vary in their responsiveness to employees’ work–family issues. Managers are key in conveying information about organizational work–family programs and even approving direct report participation in some work–family programs (e.g., telework). A manager who encourages participation

in organizational work–family programs, provides program information to direct reports, and approves direct reports' requests to participate in work–family programs is seen as more responsive than a manager who discourages direct reports involvement in work–family programs.

Similar to the relationship between employees' family needs and organizational responsiveness to those needs, a manager would be expected to be more responsive when the manager's direct reports have more extensive family needs. In this sense, the manager's responsiveness represents a workgroup-level construct because the manager's responsiveness extends to his/her other direct reports in the workgroup. To assist direct reports with their family concerns to enhance focus and performance, we propose that managers demonstrate greater encouragement and facilitation of participation in family-friendly programs in response to their employees' family needs. Stated formally:

Proposition 2b (P2b) *The extensiveness of employees' family needs is associated with their manager's responsiveness to work–family issues.*

The relationship between employees' family needs and organizational responsiveness may be moderated by the organization's awareness of employees' family needs and commitment to employees. Organizations' awareness of employees' family needs will increase the likelihood that they will offer a range of programs to meet these needs. Organizational practices that gather information on employee needs increase managerial understanding of how organizational actions (or inaction) influence employee attitudes and behavior (Goodstein, 1995; Kossek, 1990; Milliken, Dutton, & Beyer, 1990; Milliken et al., 1998). Examples of such practices include exit interviews, organizational surveys, and focus groups that are designed to ascertain employee needs that are and are not being satisfied. Organizations' family-friendly programs will be more likely to be consistent with employees' family needs when they are based on complete and accurate information gained through such practices (Catalyst, 1998; Roberts et al., 2004).

Such practices may be necessary to inform upper-level managers who lack personal experience in dealing with family issues of what lower-level employees have to deal with in their family lives. Organizations are more likely to offer family-friendly programs when top managers firmly believe that the organization's performance and productivity will decrease without organizational responsiveness to work–family issues (Crouter, 1984; Milliken et al., 1998). However, men with wives who are full-time homemakers, i.e., “corporate wives,” occupy most top management positions (Burke, 1997), which is an exceptional family structure (Hayghe, 1990). Having a corporate wife who attends to all non-work related tasks (e.g., child

care, elder care, household responsibilities) enables executive men to devote most of their attention to work activities. As a result, they are unlikely to experience work–family conflict or recognize how family-friendly programs may alleviate such conflict. Executive women are less sheltered from such experiences because “corporate husbands” are far less prevalent (Crawford & Unger, 2000). Therefore, greater organizational awareness of employees' family needs will highlight the potential value of offering programs that respond to these needs (Kossek, 1990).

Organizations' commitment to employees will also influence their responsiveness to such needs. Organizations that pay lip service to the importance of family and claim to be family-friendly primarily for the public relations value (Powell, 1998) may offer only a restricted range of programs that they believe will result in positive press. In contrast, organizations that are committed to assisting employees in meeting their family needs may offer a greater variety of work–family programs with more extensive benefits to employees. Organizations' interests in meeting employees' needs may be influenced by their diversity climate (Kossek & Zonia, 1993). A positive diversity climate accepts the individual differences of employees, such as differences in family needs. Lobel (1999) established a strong linkage between diversity initiatives and work–life initiatives in organizations. Organizations with a more positive diversity climate that recognizes and appreciates the wide range of employees' skills, interests, and values (Cox, 1993) will make greater efforts to accommodate individual differences in the work environment; accordingly, such organizations are likely to be more concerned with meeting the diverse family needs of employees. However, organizations with a climate that is less inclined to recognize or appreciate diversity may be less concerned about accommodating individual differences and therefore, are less likely to meet the full range of employees' family needs.

Proposition 3a (P3a) *The relationship between the extensiveness of employees' family needs and their organization's responsiveness to work–family issues is moderated by the organization's awareness of and commitment to addressing employees' family needs, such that the relationship is stronger when the organization is more aware of and committed to addressing the extent of employees' family needs.*

Parallel to the moderation described above, the relationship between employees' family needs and managerial responsiveness may be moderated by the manager's awareness of employees' family needs and commitment to employees. Managers who are aware of employees' family needs are more likely to encourage direct reports to

consider and participate in the work–family programs to meet these particular needs. In addition, managers' *commitment* to direct reports will also influence their responsiveness to such needs. The more committed a manager is to the well-being of his/her direct reports, the more likely the manager is to suggest work–family programs that will allow direct reports to maintain or enhance their well-being.

Proposition 3b (P3b) *The relationship between the extensiveness of employees' family needs and their manager's responsiveness to work–family issues is moderated by the manager's awareness of and commitment to addressing employees' family needs, such that the relationship is stronger when the manager is more aware of and committed to addressing the extent of employees' family needs.*

Perceived Support

Both corporate programs and direct managers are likely to influence employees' perceptions of support for their meeting family needs. Perceived organizational support refers to the global beliefs of employees "concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being" (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986, p. 501). Perceived organizational support results from the exchange relationship that occurs between an employee and organization (Blau, 1964; Eisenberger et al., 1986). This social exchange reflects the norm of reciprocity (Berkowitz & Daniels, 1963; Gouldner, 1960). High levels of perceived organizational support encourage employees to reciprocate their organization's commitment by exhibiting behaviors that support organizational goals (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Settoon, Bennett, & Liden, 1996; Tsui, Pearce, Porter, & Tripoli, 1997; Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997).

Family-friendly programs may be interpreted as expressions of how much an organization supports the well-being of its employees. Offering family-friendly programs may symbolize concern for the needs of employees, especially in the eyes of those who are current, past, or potential beneficiaries of the programs (Grover & Crooker, 1995; Rothausen, Gonzalez, Clarke, & O'Dell, 1998). If the presence of family-friendly programs encourages employees to regard organizations as supportive, then the variety of programs and the extensiveness of benefits offered within each program would likely provide even further encouragement. An organization that adopts a greater variety of family-friendly programs with more extensive benefits makes a more visible statement of its dedication to addressing the diverse needs of employees.

Such an organization may be seen as more supportive because it displays deeper concern for a broader group of employees rather than minimal concern for employees with the most common family needs.

Proposition 4a (P4a) *An organization's responsiveness to work–family issues is associated with employees' perceptions of greater organizational support.*

Akin to perceived organizational support, perceived managerial support (or perceived supervisor support) is the overall belief of employees that their manager holds their contributions in positive regard and cares for their well-being (Kottke & Sharafinski, 1988). Managers demonstrate greater support of direct reports when they respond to employee needs, such as the need to address work–family issues. For example, when a manager encourages his/her direct reports to consider and participate in the work–family programs, the manager is likely to be viewed by employees as being supportive of their well-being and their need to balance work and family demands. Stated formally:

Proposition 4b (P4b) *A manager's responsiveness to work–family issues is associated with employees' perceptions of greater managerial support.*

The relationship between responsiveness and perceived support may be moderated by perceived motivation for organizational and managerial responsiveness to work–family issues. Specifically, the relationship between organizational responsiveness and perceived organizational support is expected to be moderated by employees' perceptions of their organization's motivation for adopting and implementing family-friendly programs. Perceived motivation is defined as the interaction of two perceptual components, discretion and intention (Hambrick & Finkelstein, 1987). Discretion refers to whether an organization is viewed by employees as volunteering to provide family-friendly programs. Intention refers to the perceived goals of the organization in enacting family-friendly programs.

In terms of discretion, researchers have argued that discretionary actions to help employees enhance perceptions of organizational support. In a sample of 361 employees of various organizations, Eisenberger et al. (1986) measured perceived organizational support through employee evaluations of their organization's discretionary actions, such that more positive discretionary actions indicated greater perceived organizational support. Shore and Shore (1995) agreed with Eisenberger et al. (1986) that it is the voluntary aspect of these actions that communicates the value of an employee to the organization. In terms of intention, employees may feel that the organization aims to improve employee circumstances through family-friendly programs as opposed to using the programs to

attain economic benefits or enhance the organization's reputation (e.g., the positive public image stemming from a feature article in a popular business magazine). Employee-considerate intentions are more likely to promote perceived organizational support.

Proposition 5a (P5a) *The relationship between the organization's responsiveness to work–family issues and employees' perceptions of organizational support is moderated by employees' perceptions of the motivation of the organization, such that the relationship is stronger when employees perceive that the organization is acting with greater discretion and with greater intention to help employees.*

Similarly, the relationship between manager responsiveness to work–family issues and perceived managerial support may be moderated by perceived motivation of the manager. Responsiveness is more likely to be viewed as supportive when the manager is seen by employees as embracing and enhancing the family-friendly programs established by the organization. Managers convey their motivation regarding such programs through their attitudes and behavior (Thomas & Ganster, 1995). If employees believe that their manager along with family-friendly programs only because top management mandates it and that he/she is actually skeptical about the merits of such programs, employees may feel less supported than if they believe that their manager exercises discretion in decisions related to the direct reports' involvement in family-friendly programs and personally approves of the programs. Thus, the perceived motivation behind the manager's responsiveness to work–family issues influences the interpretation of responsiveness as managerial support in the minds of employees.

Proposition 5b (P5b) *The relationship between a manager's responsiveness to work–family issues and employees' perceptions of managerial support is moderated by employees' perceptions of the motivation of the manager, such that the relationship is stronger when employees perceive that the manager is acting with greater discretion and with greater intention to help employees.*

As mentioned earlier, employees' participation in family-friendly programs may be influenced by how comfortable they feel in taking advantage of such programs (Catalyst, 1997). The perceived level of organizational support suggested by family-friendly programs may reinforce or deter employees' decisions to participate in family-friendly programs (Thomas & Ganster, 1995). If employees feel truly valued and supported by the organization, they may feel more secure about participating in programs that address their particular family needs. Perceptions of support from the organization may reduce

ambiguity surrounding the consequences of participating in family-friendly programs (Anderson, Coffey, & Byerly, 2002; Barker & Camarata, 1998).

Conversely, if employees feel that organizational support is low, they may be concerned that other organizational members will view them as not fully committed to the job, which may lead to disrespect, lowered status, being passed over for promotions, advancement opportunities, and other rewards, and overall negative career impact if they take advantage of family-friendly programs (Employee Benefit Plan Review, 1998; Perlow, 1995). This assertion may seem counter-intuitive because family-friendly programs are assumed to be established by organizations to help employees, but programs may also be established for the public relations value or employees may be concerned about the reactions of colleagues. The existence of employee perceptions of negative consequences of family-friendly program participation was empirically supported by a recent study, in which employees' negative work outcome expectancies were significantly associated with decreased involvement in family-friendly programs (Butler et al., 2004). Specifically, Butler et al. (2004) surveyed 188 working parents and found that those who judged the participation in family-friendly programs as likely resulting in negative work and career consequences (e.g., "Using family-friendly programs would hurt my career progress") were less likely to participate in family-friendly programs than employees who saw family-friendly programs as improving their work and career consequences.

Proposition 6a (P6a) *The relationship between the extensiveness of employees' family needs and participation in their organization's family-friendly programs is moderated by employees' perceptions of organizational support, such that the relationship is stronger when employees perceive a higher level of organizational support.*

In a similar fashion, the perceived level of managerial support suggested by family-friendly programs can reinforce an employee's decision to participate in family-friendly programs. If employees feel supported by their manager, they may feel more confident participating in family-friendly programs because their manager can be expected to help facilitate or encourage participation. Therefore,

Proposition 6b (P6b) *The relationship between the extensiveness of employees' family needs and participation in their organization's family-friendly programs is moderated by employees' perceptions of managerial support, such that the relationship is stronger when employees perceive a higher level of managerial support.*

Discussion

We have proposed two parallel multi-level models of the relationship between employees' family needs, organizational and managerial responsiveness to these needs, and employees' participation in their organization's family-friendly programs. The purpose of these models is to provide a framework for understanding the multi-level determinants of employee participation in family-friendly programs. The models comprise constructs at several levels of analysis, including the individual employee (extensiveness of family needs, participation decisions, perceived organizational and managerial support, perceived motivation of organization and manager, employees of a particular workgroup (managerial responsiveness to work-family issues, managerial awareness of and commitment to employees' family needs), and the organization (organizational responsiveness to work-family issues, organizational awareness of and commitment to employees' family needs).

Empirical Examination of the Model

Data Collection

When conducting individual-level research, researchers are encouraged to seek between-individual variability to avoid range restriction. Applying this rationale to studies with multi-level constructs, data gathering should seek variability at all levels in the model (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000). Because our conceptual model examines organization-level constructs such as organizational responsiveness to work-family issues and organizational awareness and commitment to employee family needs, multiple organizations of varying size would need to be included in the study, otherwise, the researchers would risk range restriction. Because our conceptual model examines constructs related to workgroups nested within organizations such as managerial responsiveness to work-family issues and managerial awareness and commitment to employee family needs, multiple units within the sampled organizations would need to be included in the study to further avoid range restriction. Within each participating organization, individual-level information would need to be gathered from a sample of male and female employees about their family needs and their perceptions of their organization and direct manager. Organizational representatives could be surveyed on behalf of their organizations regarding the extent of family-friendly programs offered.

In addition to variability in organizations, a fair test of our models requires within-organization homogeneity of some constructs and within-workgroup homogeneity in

others. For example, constructs that assume shared perceptions among employees such as managerial responsiveness to work-family needs should share some variance among other workgroup members. This way, researchers would be justified in aggregating individual perceptions to the workgroup level. Tenure of employees in an organization and working with a particular manager may affect homogeneity of variables, such that new employees have not fully been exposed to the organization or the manager. The researcher may choose to set a minimum tenure for participation in the study.

Because the proposed models integrate micro and macro perspectives to enhance researchers' understanding of employees' decisions to participate in family-friendly programs, a research program that collects several types of data at multiple levels would be necessary to test them. Unfortunately, the collection of multi-level data can be a difficult endeavor that requires much time and energy. Given the complexity of multi-level data collection, the models represent a minimum of two separate studies. The model of managerial determinants would likely be the first study because it would be more feasible to collect the required data from a single organization rather than 20 organizations. As an added incentive to collecting data at multiple organizations, the managerial determinant model could be cross-validated within a second organization.

Analysis

Assuming the availability of multi-level data, we recommend use of hierarchical linear modeling as an appropriate analysis (Hofmann, 1997; Hofmann, Griffin, & Gavin, 2000) to test the proposed models. Hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) is a linear mixed-model technique that is capable of testing organization-level variables as both mediators (Krull & MacKinnon, 2001) and moderators (Gavin & Hofmann, 2002). By accounting for different sources of variance, this technique will allow researchers to gain a better understanding of the employee-level, workgroup-level, and organization-level influences on employees' decisions. To test the hypotheses of either model, the HLM process would entail running a series of analyses just as researchers would with individual-level regression analyses.

Next Steps

Our proposed models capture a single period of time, but reflect on-going individual and organizational processes. To fully understand the temporal nature of these processes, a longitudinal approach is recommended because the

ultimate effects of changes in employees' family needs and organizations' responsiveness to work–family issues cannot be determined with cross-sectional data. The length of time a family-friendly program has been maintained in an organization may influence employees' awareness of it; new programs may gain greater exposure than existing programs if family-friendly programs are highly publicized only upon implementation. In addition, an individual employee's perceptions of their manager and organization with regard to work–family programs may change across the family life cycle, such that the addition of family roles increases the employee's expectations of responsiveness to work–family issues (e.g., before children and after children). Also, managers themselves may change in their responsiveness to employees' family needs as their own family needs evolve.

To examine these ideas, HLM is capable of handling the analysis of longitudinal data. For example, to examine the influence of family life stage on a particular hypothesized relationship, family life stage should be captured as a categorical variable and included in the HLM analyses as a Level 2 variable. Typically, personal variables are included as Level 1 variables, but can be included as Level 2 variables when captured over time. HLM also allows researchers to examine change over time by nesting repeated measures within the individuals, such that an individual's perceptions could be examined over time (e.g., changes in perceived organizational and managerial support).

Distinction between Managerial and Organizational Perceptions

In our model, we distinguish between managerial and organization awareness/commitment and responsiveness to employees' family needs. However, it is important to question whether employees can distinguish in their own perceptions between the motivation of their direct manager and the motivation of the organization or can distinguish between support from their manager versus support from the organization. Because managers can be viewed as direct links between organizations and employees, it is feasible that these distinctions could become blurred together in the minds of employees. For example, perceived managerial support has been found to predict temporal changes in perceived organizational support, which suggests that employees view managerial support as indicative of organizational support (Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2002). In our conceptual models, the distinctions between managers and organizations that we proposed may exist, but the

perceptions of employees become their realities and therefore must be empirically tested.

Additional Considerations

Our purpose in this article was to increase understanding of the factors that influence individual employees' decisions about family-friendly program participation from a psychosocial perspective. Additional factors not included in the proposed model may also directly or indirectly influence employees' decisions. One such factor is the nature of work in the organization's industry and the employee's occupation, which may influence the extent to which flexible work schedules are made available to and used by employees. For example, nurses in a hospital that is staffed around the clock may be more able to trade shifts or work around childcare schedules than nurses employed in private care (Thomas & Ganster, 1995).

A second factor may be external and internal pressures to adopt family-friendly programs, which may vary across organizations. External pressures from regulators, media, and the public, which are particularly strong for large organizations, and competitors' family-friendly programs may influence organizations' decisions about what family-friendly programs to make available to employees (Goodstein, 1994; Ingram & Simons, 1995). Internal pressures from key constituent groups such as female employees and professional employees also may influence organizations' decisions about family-friendly programs (Goodstein, 1994; Ingram & Simons, 1995; Konrad & Mangel, 2000). Further, organizations also may be influenced by the potential benefits versus costs. Thus far, we have focused on the potential benefits to organizations from helping employees meet their family needs (Grover & Crooker, 1995; Landauer, 1997; Lobel, 1999; Thomas & Ganster, 1995). However, there may be a point at which the costs of providing such help exceed the benefits, making it less feasible for the organization to offer the help (Kossek, 1990).

The clarity of organizations' family-friendly programs and employees' awareness of the programs may influence employees' participation decisions. To be implemented successfully, a family-friendly program would need to be readily communicated and easily understood by employees. In one study, only 45% of organizations surveyed thought their family-friendly programs were clearly communicated (Catalyst, 1997).

Personal characteristics of employees other than family needs may also influence their participation decisions. For example, male employees may be less inclined to participate in their organization's family-friendly programs than

female employees, even when they have comparable needs and expectations (Butler et al., 2004; Pleck, 1993; Powell, 1997, Thompson et al., 1999) because gender roles that suggest that men should place a greater emphasis on work and less emphasis on family than women do (Eagly, Wood, & Diekmann, 2000). Also, employees' socioeconomic status or compensation may influence the extent to which they leverage organizational assistance with childcare or elder care needs. Employees who are less able to afford the cost of high-quality dependent care may be more dependent themselves on their organization's dependent care subsidies or on-site facilities.

Conclusion

In practice, both organizations and employees may benefit from family-friendly programs. However, as the proposed models suggests, these benefits will not be fully realized unless organizations adopt work–family programs that address employees' diverse family needs, encourage managers to be supportive, and make employees feel comfortable participating in the programs. When organizations help employees in this manner and provide such assurances, organizations may find that employees are more likely to participate in family-friendly programs.

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