Where is the Justice? Examining Work-Family Backlash in New Zealand: The Potential for Employee Resentment

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This study examines the phenomenon of work-family backlash. Building on a study by Rothausen, Gonzalez, Clarke & O'Dell, (1998), the authors examined the relationship between employee non-utilization of work-family practices and attitudes towards satisfaction, turnover, commitment, and support. This study considered not just a singular work-family practice, but also a range of work-family practices. Findings suggested mixed evidence of a work-family backlash. Attitudes targeting purported benefits of work-family programmes, satisfaction with organizational work-family aspects and benefits were all negatively correlated with non-use, indicating a strong backlash against work-family specific attitudes. However, there was no relationship between non-use of work-family practices and job satisfaction, organizational commitment or turnover intention. The growth in work-family practices has been significant, but it has been suggested that these practices have both beneficial and detrimental effects on different employees (Rothausen, Gonzalez, Clarke, & O'Dell, 1998). "Dissenting views questioning the value of family-friendly policies and benefits have emerged in the business presses" (Rothausen et al., 1998: 686). These detrimental effects and dissenting views have been termed a "family-friendly backlash" (Jenner, 1994; Harris, 1997; Rothausen et al., 1998), where childless workers and older employees become resentful about family related benefits. Kirkpatrick (1997) suggests as companies set up flexible schedules, childcare or paid parental leave, childless workers are increasingly asking what is available to them. One example of this work-family backlash is the Childfree Network, which offers support and education for childless adult employees, and has enjoyed membership growth (Jenner, 1994; Harris, 1997). Additionally, the Internet has a growing number of web sites focusing upon childless employee parents, which discuss among other themes taxation disadvantages.

This study seeks to build on previous work on work-family practices in two ways. First, multiple work-family practices are considered in the study since employees are typically faced with a regimen of such practices in the workplace. A scale for non-utilization of work-family practices is developed, and tested against employee attitudes about the practices specifically, and global employee attitudes such as job satisfaction and commitment. Secondly, this study was set in New Zealand, a country under represented in work-family research. Guthrie (2001) suggests that competitive advantage, barely acknowledged in New Zealand a few short years ago, has become an imperative for survival. New Zealand has been criticized as lacking innovation and sophistication in its human resource policies (Crocombe, Enright & Porter, 1991; Boxall, 1993). As such, New Zealand becomes an

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attractive subject for examining work-family policies, which are often characterised as progressive and important (Tenbrunsel, Brett, Maoz, Stroh, & Reilly, 1995; Osterman, 1995; Edwards & Rothbard, 2000).

Organizational justice theories

Organizational justice refers to employee perceptions of fairness in organizations (Greenberg, 1987). Tepper (2000) states, "according to justice theory, individual's evaluative assessments of fairness draw on perceptions of distributive justice (fairness of outcome allocation), procedural justice (fairness of the procedures used to make allocation decisions), and interactional justice (fairness of the interpersonal treatment individuals receive during the enactment of procedures)" (p. 179). Justice theories have been useful in examining work-family practices to determine work-family backlash (Rothausen et al., 1998), fairness of parental leave (Grover, 1991) and family-responsive benefits (Grover & Cooker, 1995). Greenberg (1990) suggests social justice theories predict that employees will have more positive attitudes towards organizations that they perceive as treating their employees fairly. Studies on downsizing have found that if employees believe the layoff victims were treated fairly, they will have greater organizational commitment (Brockner, DeWitt, Grover, & Reed, 1990). Consequently, employees excluded from work-family practices through not being a parent or with children who have already left home, may feel they are being treated unfairly by their organization.

Within distributive justice, Grover (1991) suggests that while equity theory has lead justice research, one of its central limitations concerns its reliance on proportional equity as the standard by which fairness is evaluated under all conditions (Lerner, 1977; Leventhal, 1976; Schwinger, 1980). As such, two additional theories have been found to be useful as they identify additional distribution principles that may be regarded as fair under certain circumstances (Grover, 1991). Rothausen et al. (1998) suggest, "that individuals have certain values or norms regarding how employee rewards should be allocated" (p. 686). These three principles are:

1. Equity-based allocation.

   The allocation of reward is based on employee inputs for example effort or performance (Adams, 1963; Leventhal, 1976). It is best used when the goal is focused upon productivity (Leventhal, 1976; Lerner, 1977). Under this principle, individuals regard reward allocation as being linked to their outputs, and those employees with the greatest outputs will expect to receive the greatest rewards. For example top performing employees (greatest input) would expect the greatest access to work-family policies (output), and consequently those policies that are unavailable to top performers (for example if they are non-parents) may produce an injustice. Grover (1991) suggests there is a considerable body of empirical evidence supporting equity theory.

2.   Equality-based allocation.

Equality-based allocation maintains all employees should receive rewards of equal value (Deutsch, 1975; Lerner, 1977). Leventhal (1976) and Lerner (1977) suggest that when the goal is team building and good social relationships, equality-based allocation principles are used. The equality principle involves equal distribution of resources, regardless of the individual efforts (Grover, 1991). In an organization with work-family policies using equality-based allocation, we'd expect employees irrespective of output, to receive access and utility of these policies, otherwise they may perceive some distributive injustice. Therefore work-family policies that are targeted at specific groups (for example mothers) may illicit perceptions of injustice by those employees who are excluded.

3.   Need-based allocation.

Need-based allocation maintains that rewards are allocated according to need (Deutsch, 1975; Greenberg, 1987; Schwinger, 1986). Leventhal (1976) and Lerner (1977) suggest that when there is a sense of social responsibility, need-based allocation is perceived as being fair. Under this principle, rewards are targeted towards those employees that need them the most (Deutsch, 1975; Greenberg, 1987; Schwinger, 1986; Grover, 1991). For example, we would expect mothers to be eligible for work-family policies such as paid parental leave, flexible work practices and childcare support. If employees feel they are not receiving the support they deserve (because their need is great), there will be a perceived injustice. An example of this could be an organization that offers work-family policies targeting children only. It would be expected that employees with eldercare concerns would therefore register an injustice because they may perceive their needs are as great as those with young dependents but are neglected by the organization.

Rothausen et al. (1998) assert that with for-profit organizations, productivity is the stated goal, with social responsibility not viewed as a primary goal. Consequently, violations from equity-based and equality-based allocations are viewed as unjust in economic and business exchange situations. We argue that this also applies to non-profit and public sector organizations, where productivity must also be a concern. Under the equality-based principle, firms that fail to offer their work-family policies to all employees may also invoke a justice violation among those employees who do not have access to them. Grover & Crooker (1995) state "social justice researchers have documented the egocentric bias, which leads the beneficiaries of actions to judge those actions or procedures as more fair as compared to people who do not benefit" (p. 275). For example, Grover (1991) found that employees who stood to benefit from a parental leave policy rated that policy as fairer than excluded employees, for example, non-parents. Consequently, those employees who do not benefit from work-family policies are more likely to view them as unfair and demonstrate resentment.

Hypotheses

We wanted to examine whether employees who are non-users of work-family benefits have less favorable attitudes towards such benefits. Additionally, we wanted to know whether the lack of utilization impacts on global attitudes towards the organization including turnover intention, job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Rothausen et al. (1998) suggest that employees who do not receive work-family benefits (equity-based), or do not receive benefits of equal value (equality-based), may experience resentment manifested in less positive attitudes about the work-family benefits and the organization. In testing employee attitudes towards work-family practices, it is important to examine reactions of users/non-users in order to understand the effect of such practices on an organization (Rothausen et al., 1998). We have developed hypotheses into two sub sections: specific attitudes and global attitudes.

Specific Attitudes

The recruitment and retention benefit associated with work-family policies is well documented in the work-family literature (Osterman, 1995; Sailors & Sylvestre, 1994; Lawlor, 1996). Rothausen et al (1998) found a correlation between employee utilization of an on-site child care centre (past, present users or those anticipating future use) and attitudes towards recruitment and retention effects of the centre. Similarly, the advantages associated with loyalty and morale is also well noted (Hall & Parker, 1993; Leonard, 1998; McNerney, 1994; Tenbrunsel, Brett, Maoz, Stroh, & Reilly, 1995). We suggest that non-users of work-family practices will react negatively to both the recruitment/retention benefits associated with work-family programmes as well as the loyalty/morale benefits.

Hypothesis 1: The perceived recruitment and retention effects of work-family practices will correlate negatively with non-utilization of work-family practices.

Hypothesis 2: The perceived loyalty and morale effects of work-family practices will correlate negatively with non-utilization of work-family practices.

Rothausen et al. (1998) suggests those employees using work-family practices should have higher levels of satisfaction with benefits as well as more positive perceptions of organizational support for work and family roles. Perceived violations of justice by those employees who are ineligible for rewards, such as those excluded from work-family policies, can lead to dissatisfaction (Leventhal, 1976; Lerner, 1977; Grover & Crooker, 1995). We would expect employees who fail to utilize work-family practices to perceive less satisfaction with work-family role support and practices, as well as less satisfaction with organizational benefits overall.

Hypothesis 3: Satisfaction with organizational work-family aspects will correlate negatively with non-utilization of work-family practices.

Hypothesis 4: Satisfaction with organizational benefits will correlate negatively with non-utilization of work-family practices.

Global Attitudes

Perceived justice violations, for example employees ineligible work-family programmes, can lead to reduced commitment (Leventhal, 1976; Lerner, 1977; Grover & Crooker, 1995). Grover & Crooker (1995) found that availability of childcare assistance was not related to organizational commitment. Despite this, the work-family literature implies that organizational commitment is often associated with work-family practices (Vincola & Farren, 1999; Scandura & Lankau, 1997). From a justice theory perspective, employees who are non-users of work-family practices may feel their organization does not cater for their needs, therefore producing a reduction in their commitment to the organization. Therefore, we expect employees who are non-users of work-family practices to have reduced organizational commitment.

Hypothesis 5: Organizational commitment will correlate negatively with non-utilization of work-family practices.

Rothausen et al. (1998) testifies that "justice theories explicitly state that violations of justice will result in more negative attitudes for those who do not benefit" (p.688), and therefore will lead to less favorable attitudes from those not utilizing the work-family practices, such as reduced job satisfaction. It has been cautioned that other factors contribute to general attitudes, and many facets of the work itself may impact on job satisfaction (Locke, 1976; Rothausen, 1994). However, there is much assertion in the work-family literature for a positive influence on job satisfaction through work-family practice use (Judge, Boudreau, & Bretz Jr., 1994; Overman, 1999; Mason, 1993), and therefore we expect non-users to report reduced levels of job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 6: Global job satisfaction will correlate negatively with non-utilization of work-family practices.

Adams (1963) suggests a response to violations of justice may be withdrawal from the situation. In the extreme, withdrawal might entail leaving the organization if an alternative, seen as more just, is available. Worker withdrawal from the organization has been associated with injustice perceptions (Leventhal, 1976; Lerner, 1977; Grover & Crooker, 1995). Alternatively, there is much for work-family policies helping retain employees (Lobel, Googins, & Bankert, 1999; Hall & Parker, 1993; Bhagat, McQuaid, Lindholm, & Segovis, 1985). This is supported by studies that have found work-family policies such as job-sharing have reduced employee turnover rates (Sailors & Sylvestre, 1994; Lawlor, 1996; Flynn, 1997). Given that the presence of work-family policy may be seen to non-users as such a violation of justice, it is expected that turnover intention will be higher among employees who are non-users of work-family practices.

Hypothesis 7: Turnover intention will correlate positively with non-utilization of work-family practices.

Method

Data was collected from a New Zealand local government organization, in a rural region, with 445 employees. The organization offers seven work-family practices: unpaid parental leave, paid parental leave, domestic leave, bereavement leave, an employment assistant programme, flexible working hours and a before and after-school room. Since the organization offers unpaid leave in accordance with New Zealand legislation (unpaid for up to 52 weeks), we chose to exclude this practice from the study. While both domestic leave and bereavement leave are also legislated for, these policies are built upon the legislated minimum, and therefore we have included these practices in the study. A total of 206 employees with access to the organizations intranet were email the surveys, with data collection executed at two distinct times to reduce potential for common method variance. Survey one contained the independent variables, and survey two contained the dependent variables. A total of 114 responses were collected in person by one of the authors. Later in the same month, survey two was emailed out to all respondents who had completed survey one. A total of 100 survey two responses were collected, for a response rate of 48.5 percent. The average age of these respondents was 41.7 years (SD = 9.85), with the majority married (77%) and female (69%). Of the 39 study variables, 13 had at least one missing value. None of the variables had more than three cases of missing values (3% of total cases). Since none of the variables had more than 10 percent of the cases missing, the methods of missing value replacement is not critical (Roth, 1994), and therefore mean substitution was used for missing values.

Measures

Perceived recruitment and retention effects of work-family practices were measured by asking employees to rate their agreement to the following statements (5-point scale, 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree): "Work-family programmes help retain employees" and "Work-family programmes help attract employees". These were adapted from earlier measures (Kossek & Nichol, 1992; Rothausen et al., 1998) that focused specifically upon childcare centres. This scale had a reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of .78. Perceived loyalty and morale effects of work-family practices were measured by asking, "Work-family programmes improve employee loyalty" and "Work-family programmes increase employee morale" (5-point scale, 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). This scale had a reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of .87.

Satisfaction with work-family aspects was measured using a 2-item scale (5-point scale, 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree): "Overall, how would you rate your satisfaction with the amount of support provided for employees' work and family roles by the organization?" and "Overall, how would you rate your satisfaction with work-family initiatives offered by your organisation?" This scale had a reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of .85. Satisfaction with organisational benefits was measured with a single item (5-point scale, 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree): "Overall, how would you rate your satisfaction with benefits offered by your organisation?"

Organizational commitment was measured using the 15 items from Mowday, Porter, & Steers (1982) Organizational Commitment Questionnaire. Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro (1990) describe the OQC as the seminal work for assessing affective attachment, and Meyer & Allen (1984) state it "has been widely used in research, and has been shown to have acceptable psychometric properties" (p.375). Questions included "I talk up this organisation to my friends as a great organisation to work for" and "I find that my values and the organisation's values are very similar". This scale had a reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of .88. Job satisfaction was measured using a 7-item scale similar to that used by Lounsbury & Hoopes (1986), and coded 1 = extremely dissatisfied and 7 = extremely satisfied. Questions asked employees about aspects of their job and included questions about co-workers, pay and fringe benefits and worksite physical surroundings. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .83. Turnover intention was measured using a single item scale "I am confident that I will get a new job with another employer in the next 12 months" (Grover & Crooker, 1995). This was a five-point Likert scale with anchors 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree.

The need for controlling for the potential effects in work-family research has been noted (Miller, 1984; Goff, Mount & Jamison, 1990; Kossek & Nichol, 1992; Rothausen et al., 1998). In this study we controlled for gender, education and salary. Gender was measured 1 = female, 0 = male. Education was measured with one item with seven categories where 1 = high school degree, 4 = college degree, 6 = graduate degree. Salary was measured with one item with eight categories coded 1 = under $15,000 per annum, 8 = over $75,000 per annum, with the six categories in between spread in $10,000 lots, for example 5 = between $45,001 and $55,000 per annum.

The scale of work-family non-utilization was measured similar to Rothausen et al. (1998), with a five item scale, 1 = past use, 2 = present use, 3 = anticipated use, 4 = never used, 5 = unaware. These were then coded 0 = past/present/anticipated users, 1 = non-users (never used or unaware). Non-use for each of the six work-family practices (paid parental leave, domestic leave, bereavement leave, employee assistance programmes, flexible work practices and after school room) were totalled, where 6 = non-use of all work-family practices, and 1 = only non-use of one practice.

Analysis

A hierarchical regression analysis was done to test the hypotheses. Control variables (gender, education and salary) were entered as one block. The second block consisted of the scale of work-family non-utilization. In all, seven regression models resulted, one for each dependent variable (four for specific attitudes and three for global attitudes).

Results

Frequencies regarding the utilization on of the work-family practices are: bereavement leave (74%), flexible work (60%), domestic leave (36%), employee assistance programme (30%), paid parental leave (19%), and after schoolroom (14%). This indicates that paid

parental lave and the after schoolroom are the least utilized work-family practices followed by employee assistance programmes. Only flexible leave and bereavement leave are practices utilized by the majority of respondents. Descriptive Statistics for all the study variables are shown in Table 1

Table 1. Correlations and Descriptive Statistics of the Study Variables

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Gender	.69	.46	—										
2. Salary	4.1	1.5	-.58**	—									
3. Education	2.7	1.6	-.14	.43**	—								
4. Recruitment & Retention	3.8	.87	.26**	-.14	-.01	—							
5. Loyalty & Morale	4.0	.89	.34**	-.10	.03	.74**	—						
6. Satisfaction with Work Family Aspects	4.8	1.0	.01	.11	-.14	.02	.21*	—					
7. Satisfaction with Org. Benefits	4.6	1.2	.05	.12	-.12	.09	.33**	.78**	—				
8. Organizational Commitment	4.6	.83	.06	.12	.000	.04	.21*	.50**	.44**	—			
9. Global Job Satisfaction	4.6	.92	-.19	.28**	.14	-.01	.09	.38**	.36**	.60**	—		
10. Turnover Intention	2.2	1.3	.03	.01	.12	.17	.12	-.09	-.11	-.30**	-.35**	—	
11. Scale of Work-Family Non-Use	3.7	1.5	.07	-.21*	-.24*	-.20*	-.25*	-.19	-.32**	-.01	.09	-.14	—

$N = 100$. All significance tests are two-tailed. $*p < .05$, $**p < .01$

Results of the regressions of the specific attitude hypotheses (recruitment and retention, loyalty and morale, satisfaction with work-family aspects and satisfaction with organizational benefits) are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Independent Variables	Recruitment & Retention	Loyalty & Morale	Satisfaction with work-family aspects	Satisfaction with org. benefits
Control Block:				
Gender	.480 (.224)*	.756 (.219)**	.323 (.261)	.521 (.289)+
Salary	-.018 (.078)	.045 (.076)	.195 (.091)*	.238 (.101)*
Education	-.006 (.060)	-.004 (.059)	-.183 (.070)*	-.219 (.078)**
R^2 for Control Block	.068	.126	.072	.081
F Change	2.351+	4.617**	2.499+	2.833*
Scale of Work-Family Non-Use	-.134 (.059)*	-.160 (.058)**	-.142 (.069)*	-.270 (.076)**
R^2 for Non-Use	.116	.191	.112	.188
F Change	3.117*	5.600***	2.994*	5.494**
Total R^2	.184	.317	.184	.269

$+p < .1$, $*p < .05$, $**p < .01$. Unstandardized regression coefficients; standard errors in parentheses. All significance tests were two-tailed. All coefficients are done after block 2 was entered.

Overall, there is strong support for specific attitudes causing a work-family backlash. There is a significant negative correlation (p < .05) between non-utilization of work-family practices and the perceived higher recruitment and retention effects of work-family practices, providing support for hypothesis 1. Therefore, those employees who use less work-family practices not only fail to recognize the recruitment and retention benefits associated with recruitment and retention, but in fact register these as disadvantages. Additionally, there was a significant correlation (p < .05) between recruitment and retention effects of work-family practices and gender, indicating that female employees believe more strongly in the recruitment and retention effects of work-family practices. There is also significant negative correlation (p < .01) between non-utilization of work-family practices and the perceived loyalty and morale advantages of work-family practices, supporting hypothesis 2. As with recruitment and retention benefits above, less use of work-family practices means they foresee negative loyalty and morale benefits. Similarly, there is a significant correlation (p < .01) with gender, indicating female employees believe strongly in the loyalty and morale advantages of work-family practices.

There are also significant correlations between non-use and satisfaction with work-family aspects (p < .05) and satisfaction with organizational benefits (p < .01). These both support hypotheses 3 and 4 and indicate non-use is associated with a backlash towards benefits satisfaction and satisfaction with the work-family policies and support. Of the control variables, salary was positively and significantly correlated to both satisfaction variables (both p < .05), indicating greater pay leads to greater satisfaction with benefits and work-family aspects. Surprisingly, education was significantly correlated but negatively to both work-family aspects (p < .05) and organizational benefits (p < .01), indicating employees with low education are more inclined to be satisfied with benefits and work-family support and practices.

Results of the regressions of the global attitude hypotheses (organizational commitment, global job satisfaction and turnover intention) are shown in Table 3.*

Table 3

Independent Variables	Organizational Commitment	Global Job Satisfaction	Turnover Intention
Control Block:			
Gender	.376 (.222)+	-.072 (.238)	.075 (.340)
Salary	.162 (.077)*	.164 (.083)+	-.045 (.119)
Education	-.047 (.060)	.034 (.064)	.092 (.092)
R² for Control Block	.047	.078	.017
F Change	1.593	2.700+	.553
Scale of Work-Family Non-Use	.007 (.059)	.101 (.063)	-.104 (.090)
R² for Non-Use	.048	.102	.031
F Change	1.186	2.702*	.750
Total R²	.095	.180	.048

+p<.1, *p<.05, **p<.01. Unstandardized regression coefficients; standard errors in parentheses. All significance tests were two-tailed. All coefficients are done after block 2 was entered.

Overall, there is no evidence of an employee work-family backlash against global attitudes. There was no statistically significant link between organizational commitment, global job satisfaction and turnover intention, providing no support for hypotheses 5, 6 and 7. There was only a significant correlation ($p < .01$) between salary and organizational commitment, indicating higher paid individuals are more committed to the organization.

Discussion

While there has been much written about the positive impact on employees of work-family practices, what is less well known is the potential backlash that employees with no use for these programmes may experience. The purpose of this study was to improve our understanding of the relationships between employee attitudes and the extent of work-family practice utilization. Rothausen et al. (1998) found an employee backlash against recruitment and retention effects of work-family policies and satisfaction with organizational support for the care of family members. We also found a work-family backlash effect towards perceived recruitment and retention benefits and loyalty and morale benefits of work-family practices. This indicates that those employees who utilize work-family practices less, or not at all, are more likely to perceive recruitment, retention, loyalty and morale disadvantages associated with work-family practices, therefore providing a backlash against these specific benefits. We also found support for a backlash against satisfaction with work-family aspects and organizational benefits, indicating work-family practice non-users have stronger negative attitudes towards organizational support and benefits offered to employees. This supports the concept that non-users perceive they acquire no support and no benefits of worth from their organization, possibly because they have been excluded through the work-family programmes. Overall there is a very strong work-family backlash against attitudes that specifically target work-family benefits and satisfaction.

A major finding of this study is the failure to find support for any significant link between non-utilization of work-family practices and global attitudes. It appears that non-users of work-family practices harbour strong negative beliefs towards specific aspects of the organization, and work-family practices in particular, such as organizational benefits, and the support and the work-family initiatives themselves. Despite this, the negative attitudes do not lead to a backlash against more global attitudes towards the organization, such as organizational commitment, job satisfaction and turnover intention, as none of these three measures linked with utilization of work-family practices. It appears work-family practice non-utilization is not strong enough to draw a significant link towards the global attitudes we measured. This is similar to other studies that have failed to link work-family practices with global attitudes, for example organizational commitment (Grover & Crooker, 1995) and job satisfaction and turnover (Rothausen et al., 1998). It appears that non-users of work-family practices are less satisfied with some aspects and perceive the advantages of work-family practices as over-rated, but despite these negative 'complaints' they do not feel sufficient injustice to have strong negative feelings towards their organization or their jobs. The failure of job satisfaction is not surprising, given that job satisfaction is a very complicated attitude to examine (Locke, 1976; Rothausen, 1994; Straw & Barsade, 1993).

This study's findings supports those of Rothausen et al. (1998), which found no relationship between work-family practice use and general attitudes towards the organization, stating "results suggest that any resentment or backlash which would be manifested either less positive or negative attitudes does not extend to general and behavioural reactions in this sample" (p. 699). Similarly, we find that non-utilization of work-family practices does not link with global attitudes, indicating a distinct lack of the work-family backlash at the global attitude level. It may be that these measures are more complex and sophisticated to be significantly influenced by non-utilization of work-family practices. Rothausen et al. (1998) suggests work-family backlash has a more limited effect on employee attitudes and behaviours than critics would suggest, and thus may be more a media-sensationalized issue than a real one. By focusing upon multiple work-family practices, we hoped to determine whether a collection of work-family practices would significantly affect employee's attitudes. The significance of these findings is that it appears that among local government organizations offering multiple work-family practices, there is limited validation to the notion that a work-family backlash effect exists among non-users. It maybe those non-users are dissatisfied and feel an injustice towards specific aspects of work-family practices but this does not lead to greater feels of job dissatisfaction, non-commitment and a desire to leave the organization. An additional importance of this study was the setting of New Zealand, where organizations have only within the last decade started to adopt work-family practices (Callister, 1996).

The value of this study is the examination of the "backlash" effect within a new environment, where work-family practices are still uncommon and original. Also the examination of specific and global attitudes is also a worthy division. A longitudinal examination of this topic may be useful for improving our understanding of the phenomenon of work-family backlash, to consider whether this backlash develops over time.

Limitations

There are some limitations inherent in the sample and methodology that suggest caution when interpreting these results. Among these would be the low number of respondents, the single organization sample, and the use of self-reported data. The time delay between data collection (survey 1 and 2) was also not optimal, and the industry setting of a local government organization limits the generalisability of the findings. A larger sample may reveal more significant relationships. Another limitation of this study is the under-whelming R squares. As in all studies, unmeasured variables, such as context of the establishment, the culture of the organization, and other factors may account for much of the variance in attitudes as well as macro economic factors, and therefore provide an additional caution when interpreting these results. Finally, many other work places offer a wider array of work-family offerings than considered here that would provide a broader range of practices to consider.

Conclusion

This paper set out to explore the relationship between users and non-users of multiple work-family practices and the effects on employee attitudes. Prior research had generally focused upon singular work-family practices. The value added by this paper is through the examination of a range of employee attitudes (specific and global) within a range of work-family benefits, as well as being set in New Zealand. The results here imply that work-family backlash have their strongest connection with attitudes about the benefits offered by the organization, and not general employee attitudes such as job satisfaction and commitment. Perhaps employees who have little use for work-family practices do not register strong negative organizational attitudes because they consider their organization is attempting to provide a societal good through work-family practices, and this may in turn reduce their negative attitudes. Overall, it appears the sensationalism over work-family backlash is over rated, and is not significant enough to modify employees' global attitudes.

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