

Family-Supportive Work Environments: The Role of Organizational Perceptions

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The present study examines global employee perceptions regarding the extent their work organization is family-supportive (FSOP). Data gathered from 522 participants employed in a variety of occupations and organizations indicated that FSOP responses related significantly to the number of family-friendly benefits offered by the organization, benefit usage, and perceived family support from supervisors. FSOP responses also explained a significant amount of unique variance associated with work–family conflict, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions above and beyond the variance explained by the number of family-friendly benefits available by the organization and supervisor support. Results indicated that FSOP mediates the relationship between family-friendly benefits available and the dependent variables of work–family conflict, affective commitment, and job satisfaction. FSOP also mediated the relationship between supervisor support and work–family conflict. The results underscore the important role that perceptions of the overall work environment play in determining employee reactions to family-friendly benefit policies. © 2001 Academic Press

Sweeping changes in the composition of families and the workforce, such as more dual-career couples and working mothers with young children, have increased the likelihood that both male and female employees have substantial household responsibilities in addition to their work responsibilities (Bond, Galinsky, & Swanberg, 1998; Gilbert, Hallett, & Eldridge, 1994). In response to these changes, many organizations have implemented programs or policies designed to help accommodate the needs of today's diverse workforce (Lobel & Kossek, 1996). These policies are commonly referred to as "family-friendly benefits" and include interventions such as flexible work schedules, child-care referrals, and leaves of absence. For the organization, work/family benefits are a means for maintaining

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a competitive advantage, raising morale, and attracting and retaining a dedicated workforce within today's turbulent work environment. For the employee, these benefits are designed to alleviate the difficulty inherent in coordinating and managing multiple life roles.

Although the implementation of family-friendly benefits can help employees manage multiple work and nonwork responsibilities, the availability of these benefits alone does not address fundamental aspects of the organization that can inhibit employees from successfully balancing career and family. For example, family-friendly programs often do not affect organizational norms and values that dissuade employees from using benefits such as lack of informal support from supervisors (Kofodimos, 1995; Shellenbarger, 1992). Likewise, individuals who take advantage of these options, and thus visibly demonstrate interest in family and personal life, may face negative judgments regarding their lack of commitment to the organization (Allen & Russell, 1999; Fletcher & Bailyn, 1996). Lobel and Kossek (1996) contend that offering family-friendly benefits does not go far enough to address employee concerns unless these benefit offerings are also accompanied by a change in organizational norms and values regarding the appropriate interaction between work and family life. Likewise, Galinsky and Stein (1990) contend the environment of the company is crucial to the success of policy implementation. Indeed, within the United States, anecdotal reports continue to suggest that the use of family-friendly benefits is not enthusiastically embraced by line management and that employees worry that taking advantage of these benefits will jeopardize their career (Fierman, 1994; Maitland, 1998; Morris, 1997). In sum, despite the efforts of organizations to attain a competitive advantage and aid employees by offering family-friendly benefits, employees frequently do not believe that the organization's environment changes to facilitate these efforts. Often employees perceive that the organization encourages workers to devote themselves to their work at the expense of other life domains (Lobel & Kossek, 1996). This is a critical point, as the implementation of family-friendly benefits may not have the effect intended if employees do not perceive the environment of the organization as hospitable to their efforts to seek balance between their work and nonwork lives.

Despite the acknowledgment that the workplace environment is critical for balancing work and personal life (Friedman & Johnson, 1997), surprisingly little empirical research has been directed toward examining employee perceptions regarding the extent that a work environment is family-supportive. Most studies have examined the direct relationship between the *availability* of family-friendly benefits with outcomes of interest such as organizational commitment or job satisfaction. Several notable exceptions have recently appeared in the literature. Thomas and Ganster (1995) posed that family-supportive work environments were composed of two major components: family-supportive policies and family-supportive supervisors. Both components exemplify organizational efforts to support employee needs to balance work and family responsibilities. More recently, Thompson, Beauvais, and Lyness (1999) developed a measure designed

to assess work–family culture (i.e., “the shared assumptions, beliefs, and values regarding the extent to which an organization supports and values the integration of employees’ work and family lives,” p. 392).

The purpose of the present study was to extend the line of recent inquiry focusing on family-supportive work environments. It is contended that in addition to family-supportive policies and family-supportive supervisors, it is critical to examine the global perceptions that employees form regarding the extent the organization is family-supportive. These perceptions are hereafter referred to as family-supportive organization perceptions (FSOP). It is believed that these organization-based perceptions are unique from the perceptions that employees form regarding the family-supportiveness of their supervisor. Support for a distinction of this type can be drawn from the perceived organizational support (POS) literature. Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, and Sowa (1986) specified POS as employee “global beliefs concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being” (p. 501). POS describes an attitudinal response to the organization as a whole that is distinct from the attitudinal response that an employee may form regarding his or her direct supervisor. In the present study, of interest is a specific attitudinal response toward the organization: that concerning the family-supportiveness of the organization. The present study is similar, but unique from the recent work of Thompson et al. (1999).

Although the Thompson et al. (1999) study represents an important contribution to the literature, the present study addresses some issues left unanswered by Thompson et al. Specifically, Thompson et al. identified three factors associated with what they termed as work–family culture. The first factor was defined as the managerial support factor and was purported to represent “the extent to which managers were supportive and sensitive to employees’ family responsibilities” (p. 401). However, based on item wording it appears that this dimension is confounded with the global perceptions of organizational support that are of interest in the present study. Specifically, 5 of the 11 items use managers or management as the referent (e.g., “In the event of a conflict, managers are understanding when employees have to put their family first”), while the other 6 items use the organization as the referent (e.g., “In this organization it is generally okay to talk about one’s family at work”). The organization referent items demonstrated noticeably lower factor loadings ($M = .57$) than did the manager referent items ($M = .73$). The authors build rationale for the existence of this dimension by citing the importance of supervisor support (p. 395). It seems important to disentangle perceptions of managerial support from perceptions of organizational support. For example, an employee might perceive that his or her supervisor is family-supportive despite perceiving that the organization as whole is not and vice versa. Accordingly, in the present study the role of perceptions of both family-supportive supervisors and family-supportive organizations is investigated. An established measure of family-supportive supervisors used in previous research is employed (Thomas & Ganster, 1995) as well as a study-developed measure of FSOP for which data were collected concurrent to publication of Thompson et al.

The important and unique role of family-supportive benefits, family-supportive supervisors, and FSOP will be examined by investigating how these perceptions relate with other variables in the work and family domain and with job attitudes. Another major purpose of this study is to extend a more precise explanation of how the components of a family-supportive work environment influence employee job attitudes and behaviors. More specifically, FSOP is examined as a mediator of the relationship between the number of family-supportive benefits available in the organization and outcomes of interest and between family-supportive supervisors and outcomes. This should help provide a greater understanding of the process by which family-supportive benefits and supervisors are linked to outcomes. The specific outcomes included in the study, work–family conflict, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions, were selected because they have been associated with family-supportive benefits in previous research (e.g., Grover & Crooker, 1995; Thomas & Ganster, 1995).

Present Research

Although the work–family literature lacks an overall comprehensive theory to guide research, several theoretical approaches exist that suggest the importance of a family-supportive work environment. One of the most popular theoretical perspectives to work and family is that of role theory. Role theory predicts that multiple life roles result in interrole conflict as individuals experience difficulty performing each role successfully because of conflicting demands (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964; Kelly & Voydanoff, 1995). Work–family role strain is the result of the combined influence of demands and coping resources derived from individual, family, and work-related sources. According to the theory, whereas the cumulative demands of multiple roles can result in role strain, available resources may prevent or reduce role strain by enabling individuals to cope with these demands. More recently, Grandey and Cropanzano (1999) suggested that the Conservation of Resources (COR) model might offer a theoretical guide to understanding the work–family literature. The model was developed on the basis of several stress theories and proposes that individuals are motivated to acquire and maintain resources (Hobfoll, 1989). In line with both of these theoretical perspectives, it seems reasonable to view a family-supportive work environment as a coping resource for individuals to deal with balancing work and nonwork roles. Family supportive benefits, supervisors, and the overall work environment should serve as employee resources.

As noted previously, Thomas and Ganster (1995) described two family-supportive elements of the workplace: family-supportive policies and family-supportive supervisors. Family-supportive policies are services such as flextime and child care that help make the management of everyday family responsibilities easier. The family-supportive supervisor is one who is sympathetic to the employee's desire to seek balance between work and family and who engages in efforts to help the employee accommodate his or her work and family responsibilities. Thompson et al. described a dimension of the family-friendly culture referred

to as managerial support that included both specific management behaviors and general organizational perceptions. In the present study, all three elements of a family supportive workplace environment are measured: family-supportive policies, family-supportive supervisor, and family-supportive organization. It is expected that the three relate to each other as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Favorable FSOP scores will positively correlate with the number of family-friendly benefits offered in the organization.

Hypothesis 2: Favorable FSOP scores will positively correlate with perceptions of supervisor family support.

Hypothesis 3: Number of family-friendly benefits available in the organization will positively correlate with perceptions of supervisor family support.

Employees who believe that the work environment is not family-supportive may fear that the use of benefits will have a deleterious effect on their future career prospects within the organization. Thus, employees who perceive the organization and their supervisor as family supportive should feel more comfortable utilizing available benefits. Thompson et al. (1999) found some empirical support for this view. Specifically, the authors found that managerial support related to benefit utilization.

Hypothesis 4: Favorable FSOP scores will positively correlate with number of family-friendly benefits used by the employee.

Hypothesis 5: Perceptions of supervisor family support will positively correlate with number of family-friendly benefits used by the employee.

Family-supportive benefits and supervisors have been suggested as a means to reduce employee work–family conflict and enhance employee job attitudes and behaviors (Thomas & Ganster, 1995). It is hypothesized that FSOP contributes uniquely to reduced work–family conflict and favorable job attitudes and behaviors beyond family-supportive benefits and supervisors. Support for the unique contribution of FSOP can be found by demonstrating that it accounts for a significant amount of incremental variance associated with work–family conflict, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions beyond that of supervisor support and the number of family-friendly benefits available. This is a key point since support for these hypotheses will demonstrate the distinct role of FSOP and the importance of considering more than supportive benefits and supervisors as components of the environment.

Hypotheses 6a, 6b, 6c, and 6d: FSOP will account for unique variance associated with WFC, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions above and beyond the variance contributed by the number of family-friendly benefits available and supervisor support.

FSOP as a Mediator

An alternative perspective with which to view the relationships between the variables of interest is that FSOP mediates the relationship between benefit availability and outcomes and between supervisor support and outcomes. Most research to date

has focused on establishing a direct relationship between family-friendly benefits and employee job-related attitudes and behaviors. For example, Milkovich and Gomez (1976) found that having employer-sponsored child care available reduced employee absenteeism; however, Goff, Mount, and Jamison (1990) and Kossek and Nichol (1992) found no relationship between the two. A number of studies have found that flextime is related to variables such as absenteeism, turnover, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and somatic health complaints (Narayanan & Nath, 1982; Pierce & Newstrom, 1983; Scandura & Lankau, 1997; Thomas & Ganster, 1995). On the other hand, Christensen and Staines (1990) reported that flextime was not associated with organizational effectiveness or organizational commitment. A recent meta-analysis determined that flextime was associated with employee productivity, job satisfaction, satisfaction with work schedule, and employee absenteeism, with the largest effect found for absenteeism (Baltes, Briggs, Huff, Wright, & Neuman, 1999). The authors also found that compressed work-week schedules related positively to job satisfaction and satisfaction with work schedule. Concerning the effects of supervisor support, Thomas and Ganster found that supervisor support had positive direct effects on job satisfaction and health outcomes. Likewise, Thompson et al. (1999) found that their dimension of culture referred to as managerial support related to turnover intentions and work-family conflict in expected directions.

Several studies have suggested that the effect of family-supportive benefits may be indirect. For example, Thomas and Ganster (1995) found that perceived control served as a mediating mechanism by which family-supportive policies influenced work-family conflict and health outcomes. Grover and Crooker (1995) implied that the availability of family-friendly benefits may signify to employees that the organization cares about employees, which in turn fosters greater affective attachment to the organization. This also suggests that there is a mediating mechanism through which family-friendly benefits affect organizational outcomes. As noted by James and colleagues, individual perceptions of support are meaningful to study because it is the employee's individual evaluation of the environment rather than the environment itself that mediates attitudinal and behavioral responses (James, Hater, Gent, & Bruni, 1978; James & Jones, 1974; James & McIntyre, 1996). In the present study it is proposed that the presence of family-supportive benefits and supervisors may influence employee perceptions concerning the degree of family support provided by the organization in general. Thus, cognitions concerning the organization may serve as a mediator in transmitting the effect of family-supportive benefits and supervisors on work-family conflict and job attitudes.

Hypotheses 7a, 7b, 7c, and 7d: FSOP will mediate the relationship between family-friendly benefits available and work-family conflict, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions.

Hypotheses 8a, 8b, 8c, and 8d: FSOP will mediate the relationship between supervisor support and work-family conflict, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions.

METHOD

Participants

The participants were 522 individuals employed in a variety of settings. The sample included employees of a technology firm, employees of a utility company, and members of a women's professional business association. Of those who responded to the demographic questions, the overall sample consisted of 382 females and 138 males, average age was 39.88 years ($SD = 8.85$), 89.1% were Caucasian/White, and median education level was a 4-year college degree. Average organizational tenure was 9.32 years ($SD = 7.92$) and average job tenure was 4.49 years ($SD = 4.70$). A total of 436 were married or living with a partner and 410 had one or more children. Demographics by sample source are available upon request.

Procedures

The sample from the technology firm consisted of individuals employed in a variety of white-collar positions (e.g., senior sales representative and network systems analyst). Surveys were mailed to a human resource representative within the organization, who distributed the surveys to 166 employees within a specific business unit of the organization. Completed surveys were returned to the author via postage-paid business reply envelopes. Eighty-two completed surveys were received for a response rate of 49%. With regard to the utility firm, the names and mailing addresses of a cross-section of 600 white-collar (e.g., marketing representative) and blue-collar (e.g., maintenance mechanic) employees were provided to the researchers by a company representative. Surveys, a cover letter, and a postage-paid business reply envelope were mailed directly to employees and completed surveys were returned directly to the researchers. A total of 162 completed surveys were received (1 survey was returned as undeliverable by the post office) for a response rate of 27%. The remaining 278 participants in the study were members of a professional women's business association who were employed in accounting-related occupations. The majority of respondents were employed as accountants (including staff accountants, chief financial officers, controllers, etc.), but other job titles (e.g., bursar, bookkeeper, and payroll) were also represented. A membership mailing list was obtained from the association. Surveys were mailed directly to the business address of 800 members from across all regions of the United States. Completed surveys were returned to the author via postage-paid business reply envelopes. Seven surveys were returned as undeliverable by the post office for a final response rate of 35%. The study was described to participants as research designed to examine their views regarding balancing work and nonwork life.

Measures

FSOP. A total of 20 items were initially generated to assess FSOP. To ensure content validity, literature and theory on work and family were reviewed. Items were theoretically derived to assess employees' perceptions regarding the extent

that the work environment was family-supportive. Specific ideas for item content came from articles by Friedman (1990), Friedman and Galinsky (1992), Kofodimos (1993, 1995), Lobel and Kossek (1996), Magid (1986), and Perlow (1995). Items were reflective of individual perceptions regarding assumptions and experiences within the organization pertaining to the nature of work and family interactions.

The initial pool of 20 items was pilot-tested with a sample of 71 employees attending classes at a large southeastern university. This pretest was used to select items for the major study. All participants worked a minimum of 30 h/week. The items were preceded by the following instructions: "To what extent do you agree that each of the following statements represent the philosophy or beliefs of your organization (*remember, these are not your own personal beliefs, but pertain to what you believe is the philosophy of your organization*)." The items were rated on a 5-point response scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. Higher scores indicated more favorable perceptions. In addition to the FSOP items, the pilot survey contained measures of supervisor support, benefit availability and use, and work-family conflict (these measures are described below). Based on internal (item-total correlations) and external (item validity) evaluation criteria (Hinkin, 1995), a total of 14 items were retained for the major study.

Work-family conflict. Work-family conflict was measured using the eight-item scale developed by Kopelman, Greenhaus, and Connolly (1983) to measure interrole conflict (e.g., "My work schedule often conflicts with my family life"). The items were rated on a 5-point response scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. Higher scores indicated a greater degree of work-family conflict. In their research, Thomas and Ganster (1995) reported a coefficient α of .87. Coefficient α in the present study was .89.

Supervisor support. Supervisor support was assessed using the nine-item scale originally developed by Shinn, Wong, Simko, and Ortiz-Torres (1989) as reported and used by Thomas and Ganster (1995), who obtained a coefficient α of .83. Participants reported how often in the past 2 months their supervisor had engaged in supportive behaviors such as "Juggled tasks or duties to accommodate your family responsibilities." The items were rated on a 5-point response scale ranging from 1 = *never* to 5 = *very often*. Higher scores indicated a greater degree of supervisor support. Coefficient α in the present study was .80.

Benefit availability and use. Participants were given a list of 10 family-supportive benefits commonly offered by organizations. This list was grouped into two categories of benefits: (a) flexible work arrangements (FWA) (flextime, compressed work week, telecommuting, and part-time work) and (b) dependent care supports (DCS) (on-site child care center, subsidized local child care, child care information/referral services, paid maternity leave, paid paternity leave, and elder care). Participants were presented with the list of benefits and asked to place a checkmark next to each benefit offered by their organization and another checkmark next to each benefit offered by the organization that they currently use or had used in the past. Benefits that were not available or not used were coded as 0 and benefits that were available or were used were coded as 1. A total benefits

availability score was computed by summing the number of benefits checked by the participant so that higher scores indicated a greater number of benefits available. The same procedure was conducted to compute a total benefits used score. Additionally, a benefit availability score and benefit usage score for each of the two categories of benefits was computed.

Job satisfaction. Job satisfaction was measured with the three-item Overall Job Satisfaction scale from the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, & Klesh, 1979) (e.g., "All in all, I am satisfied with my job"). Coefficient α was .88. The items were rated on a 5-point response scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. Higher scores indicated a greater degree of job satisfaction.

Organizational commitment. Organizational commitment was measured with the eight-item Affective Commitment Scale developed by Meyer and Allen (1984) (e.g., "This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me"). Coefficient α was .88. The items were rated on a 5-point response scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. Higher scores indicated a greater degree of organizational commitment.

Intent to turnover. Intent to turnover was measured with three items (e.g., "I am seriously thinking about quitting my job."). Coefficient α was .91. The items were rated on a 5-point response scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. Higher scores indicated greater intentions to leave the organization.

Control Variables

Gender, age, race, education, marital status, organizational tenure, family responsibility, and current salary were included as control variables in the regression equations because of their potential relationships with the dependent variables. Gender was coded as a dummy variable (*male* = 0 and *female* = 1). Age was reported in years. Race was measured with one item with six categories; however, because of the small number of minorities, Caucasian/Whites were coded "0" and all others were coded "1." Education was measured with one item with eight categories ranging from 1 = *some high school* to 8 = *graduate work*. Marital status was coded as a dummy variable (*not married* = 0 and *not married but living with partner or married* = 1). Organizational tenure was reported in years and months. Level of family responsibility was measured by adapting the responsibility for dependents (RFD) measure developed by Rothausen (1999). The RFD assesses the dependent responsibility that an individual has by weighting the number of dependents of varying ages and with different living arrangements differently (e.g., children under the age of 1 are weighted more heavily than are children ages 15–18). Moreover, adults that may be living with the participant that require care-giving responsibility (e.g., elderly parents and handicapped adults) are factored into the RFD measure. Higher scores indicated a greater degree of family responsibility. Finally, current salary was reported in dollars based on annual salary.

RESULTS

Item and Exploratory Factor Analyses

The 14 FSOP items and their means, standard deviations, and corrected item–total correlations are presented in Table 1. The internal consistency of the 14 items was strong (coefficient $\alpha = .91$). Corrected item–total correlations were all greater than .50, with a mean corrected item–total correlation of .63. To further support the unidimensionality of the measure, an exploratory principle axis factor analysis was conducted. Only one factor with an eigenvalue greater than 1 was extracted (6.23). The items were then subjected to a principal factor analysis with a forced one-factor solution. These factor loadings appear in Table 1. The results indicated that all of the item loadings on the single factor were greater than .50, ranging from .54 to .81. Taken together, the results provided support for the reliability of the measure and indicated that the items were measuring a single global construct.

TABLE 1
FSOP Items and Descriptive Statistics

Item	Mean	SD	ITC	FL
1. Work should be the primary priority in a person's life (R)	3.16	1.20	.66	.69
2. Long hours inside the office are the way to achieving advancement (R)	2.74	1.16	.52	.54
3. It is best to keep family matters separate from work (R)	2.59	1.02	.55	.58
4. It is considered taboo to talk about life outside of work (R)	3.90	.87	.51	.54
5. Expressing involvement and interest in nonwork matters is viewed as healthy	3.72	.75	.59	.62
6. Employees who are highly committed to their personal lives cannot be highly committed to their work (R)	3.40	1.13	.70	.69
7. Attending to personal needs, such as taking time off for sick children is frowned upon (R)	3.39	1.04	.66	.69
8. Employees should keep their personal problems at home. (R)	2.79	1.01	.58	.62
9. The way to advance in this company is to keep nonwork matters out of the workplace (R)	3.11	.99	.62	.66
10. Individuals who take time off to attend to personal matters are not committed to their work (R)	3.42	1.06	.78	.81
11. It is assumed that the most productive employees are those who put their work before their family life (R)	3.11	1.19	.74	.78
12. Employees are given ample opportunity to perform both their job and their personal responsibilities well	3.24	.99	.63	.66
13. Offering employees flexibility in completing their work is viewed as a strategic way of doing business	3.20	1.15	.64	.68
14. The ideal employee is the one who is available 24 hours a day (R)	3.15	1.25	.62	.64

Note. (R) indicates the item is reverse coded so that higher scores indicate more positive perceptions of the organization's support for work/nonwork balance. The items were preceded by the following instructions: "To what extent do you agree that each of the following statements represent the philosophy or beliefs of your organization (*remember, these are not your own personal beliefs*—but pertain to what you believe is the philosophy of your organization)." ITC = corrected item–total correlations (item scores correlated with the sum of all other item scores); FL = factor loadings.

Relationships with Other Variables

Hypotheses 1 through 5 were tested by examining zero-order correlations among the variables. The means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations of all study variables are presented in Table 2. As expected, individuals who reported favorable FSOP responses also reported a greater number of family-friendly benefits available within the organization ($r = .19, p < .01$) and more supervisor support ($r = .62, p < .01$). Benefit availability was also correlated with supervisor support perceptions ($r = .16, p < .01$). Both FSOP ($r = .18, p < .01$) and supervisor support ($r = .17, p < .01$) correlated with benefit usage. Thus, full

TABLE 2
Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations among Study Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. FSOP	—								
2. Supervisor support	.62**	—							
3. All benefits offered	.19**	.16**	—						
4. Flex benefits offered	.21**	.15**	.80**	—					
5. Depend care offered	.06	.09	.69**	.11*	—				
6. All benefits used	.18**	.17**	.39**	.38**	.19**	—			
7. Flex benefits used	.27**	.22**	.36**	.54**	-.06	.82**	—		
8. Depend care used	-.05	-.02	.12**	-.15**	.38**	.49**	-.02	—	
9. Work-family conflict	-.47**	-.30**	-.08	-.05	-.07	-.09*	-.14**	.01	—
10. Org commitment	.48**	.40**	.14**	.16**	.05	.14**	.15**	.04	-.22**
11. Job satisfaction	.53**	.46**	.13**	.13**	.05	.14**	.14**	.04	-.39**
12. Turnover intentions	-.40**	-.33**	-.09*	-.11*	-.02	-.09*	-.10*	-.05	.35**
13. Gender	.08*	.08	.10*	.09*	.06	.13**	.10*	-.07	.05
14. Age	.03	-.04	.01	.13**	-.14**	-.10*	.05	-.20**	-.02
15. Education	.09*	.04	.18**	.19**	.06	.08	.12**	.00	.14**
16. Race	-.07	.03	-.02	-.02	.00	-.02	-.04	.03	.00
17. Marital status	.13**	.09*	.00	.04	-.05	.10*	.06	.06	-.02
18. Organizational tenure	-.11*	-.14**	-.02	.13**	-.20**	-.03	.04	-.17**	.02
19. RFD	-.03	-.01	.06	-.02	.13**	.20**	.05	.20**	.02
20. Salary	.07	-.02	.14**	.17**	.03	.01	.05	-.07	.14**
Mean	3.21	3.48	2.54	1.52	1.03	1.06	.71	.17	3.25
SD	.73	.71	1.82	1.33	1.11	1.13	.89	.47	.84

TABLE 2—Continued

	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
1. FSOP											
2. Supervisor support											
3. All benefits offered											
4. Flex benefits offered											
5. Childcare offered											
6. All benefits used											
7. Flex benefits used											
8. Childcare used											
9. Work-family conflict											
10. Org commitment	—										
11. Job satisfaction	.70**	—									
12. Turnover intentions	-.62**	-.68**	—								
13. Gender	.07	.09*	-.04	—							
14. Age	.10*	-.03	-.08	-.17**	—						
15. Education	.09*	.03	.05	.25**	.01	—					
16. Race	-.03	-.03	-.01	-.06	-.03	-.04	—				
17. Marital status	.10*	.21**	-.12**	-.10*	.02	-.01	.05	—			
18. Organizational tenure	.10*	-.03	-.14**	-.19**	.53**	-.15**	.02	-.02	—		
19. RFD	-.03	.02	.01	-.10*	-.10*	-.07	.04	.22**	-.05	—	
20. Salary	.18**	.08	-.06	-.07	.22**	.32**	-.01	.05	.17**	-.03	—
Mean	3.25	3.88	1.97	NA	39.88	4.73	NA	NA	9.32	6.65	54538
SD	.84	.84	1.05	NA	8.85	1.46	NA	NA	7.92	5.57	34828

Note. *N*s range from 476 to 520.

* $p < .05$, two-tailed.

** $p < .01$, two-tailed.

support was found for Hypotheses 1 through 5. However, upon further inspection of the correlations, it should be noted that of the two categories of benefits, FWA and DCS, only FWA was significantly related to FSOP and to supervisor support.

Hypotheses 6a through 6d were tested via hierarchical multiple-regression analysis (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). Specifically, in the first step, the eight control variables, number of family-friendly benefits available, and perceived supervisor family-support were entered into the regression equation. FSOP was entered into the equation at the second step. The regression results revealed that FSOP accounted for a significant amount of unique variance associated with work-family

conflict [$R^2\Delta = .15$, $F\Delta = 93.51$, $p < .001$; R^2 Total = .28, $F(11, 447) = 15.90$, $p < .001$], job satisfaction [$R^2\Delta = .08$, $F\Delta = 56.10$, $p < .001$; R^2 Total = .34, $F(11, 447) = 21.31$, $p < .001$], organizational commitment [$R^2\Delta = .08$, $F\Delta = 48.64$, $p < .001$; R^2 Total = .30, $F(11, 447) = 17.40$, $p < .001$], and turnover intentions [$R^2\Delta = .06$, $F\Delta = 33.41$, $p < .001$; R^2 Total = .24, $F(11, 447) = 11.47$, $p < .001$] above and beyond the variance contributed by the control variables, number of family-friendly benefits available, and supervisor support. Thus, Hypotheses 6a through 6d were fully supported.

Hypotheses 7a through 8d were tested with hierarchical multiple regression. The criteria established by James and Brett (1984) were used to determine if mediation effects existed: (1) the independent variable must be significantly correlated with the mediator variable, (2) the mediator variable must be significantly related to the dependent variable, and (3) when the influence of the mediator variable is held constant, the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable should be nonsignificant. Partial correlations controlling for the effects of the eight control variables were computed and indicated that conditions 1 and 2 were met for each hypotheses proposing mediation.¹ Condition three was tested by (1) entering the control variables into the regression equation, (2) adding benefit availability to the equation, and then (3) adding FSOP as the proposed mediator variable to the equation. The significance of the beta-weight associated with benefit availability at each step was used to determine mediation. This procedure was followed for each of the dependent variables and then was repeated for the hypotheses involving supervisor support. The results are shown in Tables 3 and 4.

Hypotheses 7a through 7d suggested that FSOP would mediate the relationship between benefits available and employee reactions. The results indicated that the beta-weights associated with the number of family-friendly benefits available were significant in the equation when first entered for the dependent variables of work-family conflict, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. However, after FSOP was entered into the equation, the beta-weights associated with benefits available became nonsignificant in these three equations. Thus, Hypotheses 7a, 7b, and 7c were fully supported. Given the differences in correlations associated with the FWA and DCS categories of benefits noted earlier, these analyses were repeated using each of these categories in place of the overall number of benefits available. The results were virtually the same for FWA. That is, the beta-weights associated with the number of FWA benefits available were significant when first entered into the equation with work-family conflict, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment as dependent variables, but became nonsignificant after adding FSOP. Conditions 1 and 2 were not met when considering DCS, hence regression analyses were not performed (see footnote 1).

Hypotheses 8a through 8d suggested that FSOP would mediate the relationship between supervisor support and employee job attitudes and experiences. The results indicated that the beta-weights associated with supervisor support were significant in the equation when first entered for all four dependent variables.

¹ Complete results of these analyses are available upon request.

TABLE 3
Results of Regression Analyses Involving Benefits Available

Independent variables	Standardized regression weights											
	WFC			Job satisfaction			Organizational commitment			Turnover intent		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
RFD	.04	.05	.02	-.02	-.03	.00	-.03	-.04	-.01	.03	.04	.01
Salary	.11*	.13*	.15***	.10*	.09	.06	.15**	.14**	.12**	-.06	-.05	-.03
Race	.00	.00	-.03	-.03	-.03	.00	-.03	-.03	.00	.00	-.01	-.03
Sex	.02	.04	.06	.12*	.11*	.08	.10*	.09	.07	-.10*	-.09	-.06
Marital Status	-.02	-.03	.05	.22***	.22***	.15***	.11*	.11*	.04	-.14**	-.14**	-.08
Org. tenure	.06	.06	-.01	-.01	-.01	.06	.08	.08	.15**	-.13*	-.13*	-.19***
Education	.11*	.13*	.13**	-.04	-.05	-.05	.02	.01	.01	.08	.09	.09
Age	-.07	-.07	-.02	-.03	-.03	-.08	.03	.03	-.01	-.01	.00	.03
Benefits offered		-.12**	-.04		.11*	.02		.12*	.03		-.10*	-.03
FSOP			-.50***			.51***			.47***			-.40***
R ² at each step	.04	.05	.28	.06	.08	.31	.06	.07	.28	.05	.06	.21
R ² Δ		.01**	.23***		.01*	.24***		.01*	.20***		.01*	.15***
F ^a			17.83			20.87			17.63			11.89

^aAll *F* values were significant at *p* < .001.

* *p* < .05.

** *p* < .01.

*** *p* < .001.

TABLE 4
Results of Regression Analyses Involving Supervisor Support

Independent variables	Standardized regression weights											
	WFC			Job satisfaction			Organizational commitment			Turnover intentions		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
RFD	.04	.03	.02	-.02	-.01	.00	-.03	-.02	-.01	.03	.02	.01
Salary	.11*	.11*	.15**	.10*	.10*	.08	.15**	.16***	.13**	-.06	-.07	-.04
Race	.00	.01	-.03	-.03	-.05	-.02	-.03	-.04	-.01	.00	.01	-.02
Sex	.02	.04	.06	.12*	.09*	.07	.10*	.08	.07	-.10*	-.08	-.06
Marital Status	-.02	.01	.05	.22***	.17***	.14***	.11*	.07*	.04	-.14**	-.10**	-.08
Org. tenure	.06	.02	-.01	-.01	.05	.07	.08	.14**	.16**	-.13*	-.10**	-.20***
Education	.11*	.11*	.12**	-.04	-.04	-.04	.02	.02	.02	.08	.08***	.09
Age	-.07	-.06	-.02	-.03	-.05	-.07	.03	.02	-.01	-.01	.01	.03
Supervisor support			.00		.45***	.22***		.41***	.19***			-.15**
FSOP		-.30***	-.51***			.38***			.36***		-.34***	-.32***
R ² at each step	.04	.13	.28	.06	.26	.34	.06	.22	.30	.05	.16	.22
R ² Δ		.09***	.15***		.20***	.08***		.16***	.08***		.11***	.06***
F ^a			17.42			23.48			19.14			12.62

^aAll *F* values were significant at $p < .001$.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

Concerning WFC, after entering FSOP, the beta-weight associated with supervisor support became nonsignificant. That is, FSOP fully mediated the relationship between supervisor support and WFC. On the other hand, regarding the other three dependent variables, in each case, the beta-weight associated with supervisor support became smaller, but remained significant. Hence, evidence for partial mediation was found concerning job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions.

DISCUSSION

The present study makes a number of unique contributions to the work-and-family literature concerning family-supportive work environments. The results indicated that employees do form inferences about the family supportiveness of the organization's environment and that these perceptions can be measured reliably. Moreover, FSOP was related to, but unique from, other variables associated with the work-and-family literature such as supervisor support. FSOP also contributed a significant amount of the variance associated with work-family conflict, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions beyond the variance contributed by multiple control variables (e.g., gender, marital status, organizational tenure, and family responsibility), supervisor support, and benefits available. The results indicated employees who perceived that the organization was less family-supportive experienced more work-family conflict, less job satisfaction, less organizational commitment, and greater turnover intentions than did employees who perceived that the organization was more family-supportive. The results suggest that benefit availability alone has a small effect on job attitudes and experiences. On the other hand, the global perceptions that employees form regarding the extent the workplace environment is family-supportive appears to be strongly related to employee job attitudes and experiences. These findings underscore the important role of family-supportive organization perceptions.

The present study is unique in that it provides an explanatory mechanism for why family-supportive benefits have an effect on job attitudes and experiences. Other than the work of Thomas and Ganster (1995) concerning the mediating role of control perceptions, little empirical research has focused on identifying the psychological process underlying how and why family-supportive benefits have a positive impact on employees. Results indicated that family-supportive benefit availability is indirectly related to work-family conflict and job attitudes through family-supportive organization perceptions. The positive effect of family-supportive benefits appears to be attributable to an enhancement of employee perceptions that the organization as a whole is family-supportive.

The direct impact that supervisor support has in mitigating work-family conflict has been underscored in previous studies (Goff et al., 1990; Thomas & Ganster, 1995). The present results suggest that the effect that family-supportive supervisors have on work-family conflict is also completely transmitted through family-supportive organization perceptions. On the other hand, family-supportive organization perceptions only partially mediated the relationship between supervisor

support and job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions. Family-supportive supervisors had both direct and indirect effects on employee job attitudes. Clearly, supervisors play a meaningful part in determining how employees perceive and experience the environment of the organization. As noted previously, since the administration of benefit options is typically at the discretion of supervisors, their willingness to allow employees to take advantage of these benefits is likely to have a critical influence on employee job attitudes. These findings also underscore the importance of providing training to supervisors on how to deal with employee work–family balance issues and the appropriate administration of work–family benefits.

One of Thompson et al.'s (1999) key findings was that managerial support was more highly associated with benefit utilization than were their other two dimensions of work–family culture (perceived career consequences and organizational time expectations). Somewhat consistent with Thompson et al., the present results indicated that those who perceived less family support from the work environment were less likely to utilize family-friendly benefit options. Both perceived supervisor support and family-supportive organization perceptions were positively related to overall benefit use. As noted by Schneider (1990), management in organizations make both implicit and explicit choices regarding the adoption of certain practices and procedures and to reward and support certain employee behaviors. These policies, and the behaviors that get rewarded and supported in organizations, communicate to employees what is valued and important in the organization. When employees perceive that the work environment and/or supervisors are sending the message that benefit usage is not supported, employees may be fearful of using the benefits, despite their availability.

It was also interesting to note that when examining the two different sets of benefits, benefits associated with flexible work arrangements (e.g., flexible work hours and compressed work weeks) were more highly related to family-supportive organization perceptions than were dependent care supports. This is consistent with Rodgers (1993), who reported that the option of full-time, flexibly scheduled work was rated as the most valuable benefit option by employees, ranking ahead of dependent-care issues. Similarly, of a number of different family-supportive policies, Thomas and Ganster (1995) found that only flexible scheduling had significant effects on outcomes such as psychological and physiological indicants of job strain. These findings may occur because all employees can profit from flexible work options, whereas child care-related benefits are more likely to be of value to only a subset of the workforce. Flexible work options give employees greater control over how they manage work and multiple nonwork activities, thus facilitating employee efforts to achieve work/nonwork balance. In concert with previous research, the present results tentatively suggest that one of the most effective ways for an organization to create a family-supportive environment is to offer flexible work options. These results also have implications for future research concerning the effects of benefit availability. Since the current study, as well as Thomas and Ganster, suggests that different types of benefits have different relationships with other variables, it may be important to use benefit categories rather

than summed composite indicators of overall number of benefits in future research endeavors.

Given that work–family conflict has been found to have adverse effects such as lower life satisfaction, greater psychological burnout, and more psychosomatic symptoms on individual well-being (e.g., Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000; Aryee, Luk, Leung, & Lo, 1999; Frone, Yardley, & Markel, 1997; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Pleck, Staines, & Lang, 1980; Thomas & Ganster, 1995), identifying factors that can explain sources of work–family conflict is an important endeavor. The present results demonstrate that FSOP significantly contributes to the variance associated with work–family conflict beyond that of family-friendly benefits offered and supervisor support.

Several limitations to the present research should be addressed. First, a self-report measure of benefits offered by the organization was used. There may be cases where employees are not accurately aware of what benefits are available within the organization. However, it should be noted that Thomas and Ganster (1995) found no major discrepancies between organizational informant reports of company benefit policies and employee reports. Additionally, in cases where there is a discrepancy between actual benefits offered and employee reports of benefits offered, what seems most likely to be related to individual perceptions of the environment are the benefits offered of that the employee is aware. Since the data were based on self-report measures collected at a single point in time, issues such as respondent consistency motifs or response styles, transient mood states, and spurious results due to common method bias are of concern (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). Reliance on self-report measures is a difficult issue to address in this type of research, as employee cognitions are the central focus of interest. Longitudinal research examining family-supportive organization perceptions and the dependent variables of interest both before and after the implementation of family-friendly benefit programs is needed to address these concerns.

Future Research and Implications for Practice and Research

One question that could be raised regarding the family-supportive organization perceptions construct concerns the appropriate level of analysis. In the present study, I was interested in the individual's phenomenological experience regarding organizational efforts to help employees balance work and family life within his or her work environment and the meanings the individual attached to that experience. Thus, given the purpose of the present study, aggregation to other levels was not deemed appropriate nor necessary. An interesting topic for future research might be an examination of family-supportive organization perceptions at the group level and its relationship with other group level variables such as unit performance. Future research should also examine how family-supportive organization perceptions relate to other global organizational constructs such as perceived organizational support (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Shore & Tetrick, 1991) and perceptions of fair interpersonal treatment (Donovan, Drasgow, & Munson, 1998). Although the qualitative content of the items from the above-mentioned measures and the

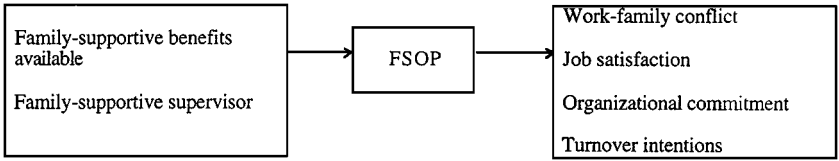


FIG. 1. Proposed relationships among study variables.

family-supportive organization perceptions measure vary considerably, each deal with aspects of the work environment that may relate to employee behaviors and attitudes. Future research is needed to examine the unique influence of each.

Future research is also needed to assess the role that individual personality variables play in reaction to family-supportive work environments. For example, negative and positive affectivity may influence how individuals respond to organizational efforts to provide a family-supportive environment. Both variables have been described as pervasive cognitive states that influence responses to a wide range of situations (Clark & Watson, 1991) and have been found to be related to work attitudes (Cropanzano, James, & Konovsky, 1993). It would be valuable to determine the extent that the family-supportive variables included in the presented study account for variance in job attitudes and behaviors beyond that of dispositional variables.

Assessment of family-supportive organization perceptions and perceived supervisor family support can serve several practical purposes. The measures could be used as a tool to help diagnose employee perceptions regarding the organization's environment and determine if an intervention is needed. Including both an organizational level and supervisor level measure is important to identifying specific sources of employee concern. The measures could also then be used to help evaluate the effectiveness of work-family policies after program implementation. Pre- and postassessments of employee perceptions may be a particularly effective evaluation mechanism. Employers are typically motivated to implement family-friendly policies based on the premise that economic gains will be realized from increased employee productivity and reduced turnover as a result of such policies (Glass & Fujimoto, 1995). It is doubtful that these economic gains will occur if employees do not believe the work environment or their supervisors are open to their use of the benefits. Work-family initiatives are more likely to be effective when employees believe the organization is truly supportive of their needs to balance work and family obligations. Finally, assessment of family-support perceptions could be an integral part of quality-of-worklife surveys conducted by organizations.

Assessing family-support perceptions should have considerable utility for work and family researchers. To date the results of research examining outcomes associated with family-friendly policies has been mixed. Additional research examining the effects of different aspects of the work environment that includes the type of family-friendly benefits offered, supervisor support, and global environment support perceptions on work-family conflict, job performance, and job attitudes

should be helpful in furthering our understanding of work and nonwork interactions.

In summary, most of the research in the work/family arena has focused on issues such as work–family conflict or on the effects of family-friendly benefits on outcomes such as turnover and organizational commitment. More research is needed to further assess the influence of the environment on employee reactions to family-friendly benefits. In light of the considerable amount of organizational resources that are currently being devoted to work–family policies, research examining how components of the work environment can influence the effectiveness of these benefits seems warranted. Benefit implementation alone does not appear to be a panacea for organizations interested in facilitating employee work and nonwork balance.

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