The role of life friendly policies on employees' work-life balance

Yuile, C, Chang, A, Gudmundsson, A & Sawang, S

The role of life friendly policies on employees' work-life balance.

ABSTRACT

Employees' inability to balance work and non-work related responsibilities
have resulted in an increase in stress related illnesses. Historically, research into the
relationship between work and non-work has primarily focused on work/family
conflict, predominately investigating the impact of this conflict on parents, usually
mothers. To date research has not sufficiently examined the management practices
that enable all "individuals" to achieve a "balance" between work and life. This study
explores the relationship between contemporary life friendly HR management policies
and work/life balance for individuals as well as the effect of managerial support to the
policies. Self-report questionnaire data from 1,241 men and women is analysed and
discussed to enable organizations to consider the use of life friendly policies and thus
create a convergence between the well-being of employees and the effectiveness of
the organization.

Keywords: Work-life balance, life friendly policies, HRM policies, workplace
practices.

INTRODUCTION

The growing diversity of family structures represented in the workforce, including dual-earner couples, single parents, blended families, employees with elder care responsibilities and the increasing number or people choosing to live alone, has heightened the relevance of balancing work and life roles for a substantial segment of employed men and women (Parasuraman and Greenhaus, 2002; Greenhaus, Collins and Shaw, 2003). These societal developments have greatly increased the complexities of the interface between work and life roles. Recent sociological and psychological literature has focused on how we can assist individuals balance work and non work life responsibilities. Thus, the current study explores the relationship between an individuals work life balance (WLB) and organizational life friendly policies (LFP's) aimed at providing individuals with the ability to balance work with responsibilities outside of work life. Further, this study aims to re-conceptualise Gudmundsson (2003)'s measure on family friendly organisational policies and to test its effect on WLB. This study draws upon both the organizational supportive policy and social support literature to further explore the influences of these factors on work life balance.

Conceptualizing work life balance

Many researchers have used the term work 'family' balance to describe the relationship between work and non-work life roles, whilst more recent studies have begun to examine work 'life' balance. Accordingly, there is lack of conceptual clarity in the literature between the constructs of work/family balance (WFB) and work/life balance (WLB) resulting in an interchangeable usage of these terms (Chang, McDonald and Burton, in press). Indeed, most researchers are using these terms to

describe a construct that relates to an individual's ability to balance multiple life role responsibilities. The notion of "balance" has been defined by work and family researchers as harmony or equilibrium between work and family domains (Clarke, Koch and Hill 2004; Comer and Stites-Doe 2006). However, the current study argues that WLB is 'not' interchangeable with WFB. Marks and MacDermid (1996) maintain that individuals have many role commitments, such as work roles, family roles and social roles, acknowledging that any felt difficulty in carrying out a role arises when a person's total role system is over demanding. The result is role strain. Therefore, balancing multiple roles requires an individual to be able to manage the strain resulting from the interrole conflict associated with the demands of these roles. Whilst having family responsibilities is arguably a significant role in the lives of all parents, the family role is still only one of the many life roles of an individual. We acknowledge that multiple roles can enrich a person's life (Carlson et al, 2006) as well creating a condition of overload. However this paper focuses on organization policies designed to assist the management of the excessive demand created by the multiple roles.

Given the work/family focus of past research, many definitions have been posited for WFB, however, few have attempted to posit a definition of WLB. Clutterbuck (2003, p.8) provides a definition for work 'life' balance as "a state where an individual manages real or potential conflict between different demands on his or her time and energy in a way that satisfies his or her needs for well-being and self-fulfilment". Whereas, in a critical analysis of the work/family literature Greenhaus et al., (2003) proposed a comprehensive definition of WFB to be distinguished from other work/family concepts such as work/family conflict. Greenhause et al. defined WFB as; "the extent to which an individual is equally engaged in – and equally

satisfied with his or her work role and family role" (p.513). Similarly, McLean and Lindorff (2000: 1) defined work/family balance as a state in which a range of needs are met by allocating time to both work/family roles according to a combination of individual priorities and demands. Whilst, Hill et al. (2001, p. 49) defined WFB as the "degree to which an individual is able to simultaneously balance the temporal, emotional, and behavioural demands of both paid work and family responsibilities".

The definitions articulated by Clutterbuck's (2003), McLean and Lindorff (2000), Greenhaus et al., (2003), and Hill and Weiner (2003) highlight a consistent theme of juggling multiple life roles in an attempt to achieve some satisfaction or balance between these roles. Subsequently, these definitions are used to generate a comprehensive definition of work "life" balance. Thus, for the purpose of the current study work-life balance is defined as: "a state in which a range of needs are met by allocating time to both work and life roles according to a combination of individual priorities and the demands of work and life".

Work life balance in Australia

One of the concerning issues in the Australian employment environment, as it is in many other countries, is the work life balance (Colley, 2010). The government tried to introduce practical assistance to working families in Australia (Rudd, 2007). Due to the change in household patterns, employees are demanding for family friendly working policies where they can care to their family as well as perform effectively on their jobs. The work life balance seems to have a mutual benefit to both family and organisation. Skill shortages become a critical issue in Australian labour market (Australian Parliament 2005). The family friendly work policies are one means for employers to attract and retain skilled workers (DEEWR 2009, DEIR

2008). Without the supportive policies, employees may be stressful due to one domain (work or family) interferes with effective participation in the other (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992). Stressful employees can cause significant loss in productivity and work performance (Goh, Watson, & Sawang, forthcoming)

Life friendly human resource policies

The policies which enable parents to balance their family with work life as opposed to an individual without carer responsibilities (such as children) may be very different. Thus, this study examined the life friendly HR policies" and their mechanism to balance work and non work life roles, including all individuals not only those with family or carer responsibilities.

To understand how to assist individuals attain WLB, further research is required to investigate what types of policies and programs can improve organizational and workplace flexibility. Empirical research has identified a profusion of policies, many designed to provide support or benefits to employees whilst also providing benefits to organizations (Bailey, 1991; Hyde, 1995; Berg et al., 2003; Blair-Loy and Wharton, 2002). Some researchers have attempted to categorise these studies in order to classify packages of policies that provide benefits to employees (Morgan and Milliken, 1992; Lobel and Kossek, 1996; Glass and Finley, 2002). Morgan and Milliken (1992) suggest that there are three types of work/family policies created to assist employees in balancing their work and family lives, that is, the provision of carers' arrangement, alternative work arrangements and offsite working arrangements. Glass and Finley (2002) similarly identified three categories of policies. Specifically, parental leave, alternative work arrangements and employer supported child care. Taking a different approach, Lobel and Kossek (1996) grouped policies into four different categories using the labels of time based, information

based, money based and direct services. Finally, De Cieri, et al., (2003) highlighted the breadth of policies available but did not identify clusters or categories within these policies. The previous clusters have failed to separate flexible policies to identify whether the policies are designed to provide flexibility for time off, or, provide flexibility to work part time or generate job sharing arrangements, and provide a focus on provision for all types of carer needs. In addition these categories are limited because flexible leave options have been omitted from some whilst employer supported child care category failed to include care for elders of disabled care. This is an important oversight as a number of studies have demonstrated the benefits of leave arrangements. Finally another limitation of these categories is they fail to address the needs of all individuals and focus primarily on the needs of parents with children.

To overcome these limitations, we proposed life friendly policies including carers' arrangement, flexible work scheduling, flexible alternative working arrangements, and offsite working options (see Figure 1).

[Insert Figure 1 here]

Life friendly policy components

Carers' arrangement

Carers' arrangement refers to any form of benefit specifically designed to accommodate employees with leave, facilities or flexibility to care for children, elders or other family members. Carers' arrangement could be policies perceived by individuals necessary to enhance their ability to achieve work life balance (Glass and Finley, 2002), which found positive affects on productivity (Kossek and Nichol, 1992), absenteeism, conflict reduction (Thomas and Ganster, 1995) job satisfaction and turnover (Blair-Loy and Wharton, 2002).

Flexible work schedules

The term 'flexible work schedule' is used in this study to refer to an employee's ability to start and finish anywhere within a range of times negotiated between the employee and employer, or compress their work week into less days at work, whilst still performing a standard 38-40 hour working week. Examining the effect of flexible work schedules on employees Rodgers (1992) found that flexible work schedules lead to reduction in worker stress and role strain. Similarly, Baltes et al. (1999) meta-analyzed a sample consisting of 31 studies across varied industries in both public and private sector organizations, the findings revealed that flexible work schedules had positive effects on employee productivity, job satisfaction and satisfaction with work schedule, and reduced employee absenteeism.

Alternative work arrangements

For the purpose of this study 'alternative work arrangements' is referred to as a work week of fewer than 5 days and flexibility to take time off without pay for hours not physically at work. Eaton (2003) describes these types of flexible arrangements as providing an alternative to working the 9-5, five day a week schedule, defining alternative work arrangements as "the ability to change the temporal and spatial boundaries of ones job" (p 149). Eaton (2003) also found that work/family policies were more important to employees where supervisors allowed more flexibility than the formally provided policies by the employer, such as annual leave and sick leave.

Offsite arrangement

The current study defines 'offsite' as any form of work conducted during the normal business hours performed outside the traditional workplace site that does not require a physical presence in the workplace. Research confirms that offsite

arrangements enable increased autonomy in the scheduling of paid work, housework and childcare responsibilities (Wise and Bond, 2003). Working from home has been reported to improve home communications and help families save on food, clothing and transportation costs (Kossek, 2001). Research shows that offsite policies are correlated with increased motivation and job satisfaction, helping employees have higher dedication and morale, and a higher energy level on the job due to elimination of wasted time (Hill et al., 1996; Kurland and Bailey, 1999).

The implementation of life friendly polices

While family friendly policies generally appear successful, research has identified that there is often a resistance by employees to take-up family friendly policies. This has prompted researchers to posit reasons for why some employees are reluctant to use these policies (Bailyn, 1993; Williams, 2000). Evidence suggests that many employees are not taking advantage of the available policies for a myriad of reasons (Glass and Finely, 2002; Eaton, 2003; Hill et al., 1996; Wise and Bond, 2003). This argument is broadly supported by Westphal and Zajac (1994) who contend that the formal existence of a policy does not guarantee its use and that policy use is shaped by more than the need of individuals. Some of the explanations include concerns that employees are considered to lack commitment to their work or the organization (White et al., 2003; Blair-Loy and Wharton 2002; Grover and Crooker, 1995). Anecdotal evidence suggests that many employees are reluctant to participate in work/family programs such as flexible work schedules; because they fear their careers will suffer (Hammonds, 1997). Whilst Bailyn (1993) argues that because of organizational norms for visibility, employees put their careers at risk when they participate in work/family programs that make them less visible at work. Fear of alienation and resentment from co workers has also been found to be of concern to

many employees especially from parents or employees with child related responsibilities (White et al., 2003; Kofodimos, 1995).

Despite the acknowledgement that workplace environment is critical for balancing work and personal life (Friedman and Johnson, 1997) surprisingly little empirical research has been directed toward examining employee perceptions of the affects of managerial support as a moderator of the relationship between LFP's that help individuals achieve balance.

Furthermore, Zajac (1994) suggests that support from managers and supervisors determine whether policies are used or not. A study by Bond and Wises' (2003) found strong relationship between availability of policies with part time work options, the omission of information provided to line managers about what the policies where for, or how the policies were to be used, resulted in a lack of managerial support when employees requested usage of those available policies. Therefore, organizations are unable to realise the potential or get adequate return on investment for policy implementation unless frontline supervisors demonstrate and fairly distribute support for policy adoption. Further, another consequence of a lack of support from supervisors could potentially result in loosing valued employees. Therefore, the perception of support for use of policies, without the fear of negative consequences from supervisors or peers was important to the employee in order to take-up the policies available (Thompson et al., 1999).

In conjunction with previous literatures, we hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 1: Employees will report a higher level of work life balance when they perceive the availability of life friendly polices as helpful.

Hypothesis 2: Managerial support will moderate the relationship between the helpfulness of available life friendly polices and employees' work life balance.

METHOD

Participants and procedure

A total of 1,427 questionnaires were distributed across a medium size Queensland Public Sector agency. The organization provided a day for employees from all areas of the organization to have time allocated for completing of the survey. As a result a very high return rate was achieved, with 87% of employees responding to the questionnaire, resulting in a total 1,241 responses. Of these, there was 52.2% females representing (n=645) and 45.9% (n=567). The majority of respondents fell into the 30-39 age categories (33.6%). Most respondents reported that they had been working for organization for up to six years (n=1027; 84.3%). Approximately 16% (n=200) of respondents had worked for the organization for more than six years. Similarly, most respondents had been working in their current work area for up to six years and a third of respondents working in their area for less than one year. Eighty six percent (n= 1,060) of respondents were employed in a full-time position, 12.9% were employed in part-time, casual or contract (167). Employment classifications indicated that 21.5% (n=245) of respondents were either senior executive officers or senior management, while the remainder of employees 78.5% (n=896) were from lower levels within the organization.

Measures

Life Friendly Policies

Eleven dominant life friendly policies were identified from a review of the literature and then incorporated into an instrument designed for this research to

measure the availability and helpfulness of life friendly policies. We adopted this instrument from an existing measure used to assess family-friendly organizational policies (Gudmundsson, 2003). Respondents were provided with a list of life friendly policies and practices and were first asked to indicate the availability of each policy using a response scale of yes, no, or unsure. Second, the respondents were asked to rate how helpful these policies were or (would be) to them using a rating scale ranging from '1' 'not at all helpful' to '5' 'very helpful.' (Cronbach's alpha, life friendly policies = .82 and helpfulness = .84).

Managerial Support

We employed a three item measure adapted from Thompson et al., (1999). Participants were asked to respond on a five point scale (1 = not at all to 5 = a great deal) the extent to which they agreed with three statements: "In general, managers in this business unit are quite accommodating of family and personal responsibilities", "Senior management in this office encourage others to be sensitive to employee's family and personal concerns", and "In this business unit employees are encouraged to strike a balance between their work and family lives". (Cronbach's alpha = .81).

Work Life Balance

We employed two items adapted from Hill et al's., (2001) scale. Employees were asked to respond on a five point scale (1 = not at all to 5 = a great deal) the extent to which they agreed with the following statements: "All in all, how successful do you feel in balancing your work and personal/family life" and "I am able to balance the time I spend at work and time away from work". We employed this scale to all individuals regardless of their marital or parental status. It is thus, broader than an indicator of work family conflict. (Cronbach's alpha = .91).

RESULTS

Construct validity: Life friendly policy

A principal components analysis (PCA) with oblique rotation was conducted for the product items of availability and helpfulness (n = 1,241). The PCA indicated the four components which accounted for 66% of the total variance, with the first component explaining close to 33.04% of the variance, and the second, third and fourth component explaining 16.16%, 13.68% and 11.46% of the variance respectively. The interpretive labels given to the four factors are as follows: offsite work arrangement (telecommuting and working from home); flexible work arrangement (accrued day off, time off in lieu and flexible start/finish); alternative work arrangement (part-time work and job sharing); and carers' arrangement (carers' facilities and carers' leave). Special leave and 48/52 (48/52 allows employees to work and be paid for 44 weeks of the year and be entitled to 4 weeks annual leave and additional 4 weeks leave without pay) loaded below .60. Therefore, in order to maintain content validity and as recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (1996), these two items were eliminated. Cavana, Delahaye and Sekaran (2000) additionally contend that content validity can be achieved by the judgement of a panel of experts. Therefore, academics with expertise in human resource policies were also consulted and assessed and verified the items contained within the four components.

Re-analysis lead to a cleaner exploratory principal components analysis revealing a four factor solution with item loading as described in Table 1. Consequently, the items comprising each of the four components were summed to create the four variables of, alternative work arrangements, flexible work schedules, offsite working and carers' arrangement.

[Insert Table 1 here]

A correlation analysis was conducted with the four factored life friendly policy variables and the work/life balance variable (Table 2). Results from correlation matrix indicated that there was a statistically significant positive relationship between flexible work schedules and work/life balance ($r = .14$). A significant positive relationship was also found between managerial support and the life friendly policy factors of offsite ($r = .17$), carer arrangement ($r = .13$), flexi-work ($r = .15$) and the dependent variable balance ($r = .44$).

[Insert Table 2 here]

Hypothesis testing

The purpose of the analyses was to assess the impact of life friendly policies on work life balance (Hypothesis 1). A standard multiple regression analysis was performed using a hierarchical regression analysis between the respondents reported work/life balance as the dependent variable and the four life friendly policy factors as the independent variables. Regression results (Table 3) indicated that life friendly polices (IV) accounted for 22.6% of the variances in work and life balance (DV) with three of our four polices were significant; offsite working ($\beta = -.15$, $t = -5.32$, $p < .001$), flexi-work schedules ($\beta = .05$, $t = 1.74$, $p < .10$) and flexi-work arrangement ($\beta = .10$, $t = 3.46$, $p < .001$) were significantly predicted the perceived work-life balance among employees. However, carers' arrangement did not significantly predicted the perception of work-life balance among employees ($\beta = .01$, $t = .18$, _ns_). The results partial supported the first hypothesis that life friendly policies perceived by

employees to be helpful are associated with an increase in self-reported work/life balance.

To examine the moderating effects of managerial support (Hypothesis 2), four interaction terms were calculated by multiplying the centred scores of each life friendly policy by the centred managerial support score (Tabatchnick and Fidell, 2000). According to Table 3, although, we found that managerial support associated with WLB ($\beta = .45$, $t = 17.05$, $p < .001$), managerial support did not moderate relationship between offsite working ($\beta = .03$, $t = .89$, *ns*), careers' arrangement ($\beta = .03$, $t = .94$, *ns*), flexi-work schedules ($\beta = .03$, $t = 1.00$, *ns*) and flexi-work arrangement ($\beta = -.04$, $t = 1.32$, *ns*). Thus, the second hypothesis was not supported.

[Insert Table 3 here]

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between various life friendly policies and employee's self-reported perception of work/life balance. To enable interpretability, the individual life friendly policies were factor analysed to examine the plausibility of the proposed structure of work life friendly policies. Results of the factor analyses supported the four distinctive factors of carers' arrangement, offsite work arrangement, flexible work arrangement and alternative work arrangement.

The regression analysis reveals that employees who perceive that flexible work schedules are available and helpful report an increased perception of work/life balance. These results suggest that offering employee's flexibility in their work schedules is related to the experience of greater work/life balance. These results are consistent with the findings that the provision of life friendly policies such as flexible

work schedules has a positive impact on employee work/life balance and
organizational outcomes such as turnover, productivity, and absenteeism (Baltes et al.,
1999'; Parker and Allen, 2001;Tausig and Fenwick, 2001).

We also found that offsite work negatively predicted WLB in our sample.
Although the offsite arrangement allows them greater control in managing work and
family demands but it can be disruptive to family life (Batt and Valcour, 2003).
Whilst offsite work offers the potential to enable workers to better balance work and
family life and at the same time enhancing business performance, research reveals
that alternative work venues are not a panacea for work and personal family life
troubles, but suggest that each work venue has its benefits and challenges. Kurland
and Bailyn (1999) and Hill, et al., (1996) contend that those in the virtual office have
more difficulty with work/life balance than do traditional office workers, or those who
work from home. Therefore, the benefit of offsite work was dependent on the type of
offsite work adopted.

Our study did not reveal any significant results for the carers' arrangements.
Therefore, the results of this study indicate that our sample did not perceive the
relationship between these policies and work/life balance. This could be a case that
our respondents may not have carers' demand from their family or the caring duty is
not required an extensive or regularly visits. Future research can replicate this study
by investigating level of this demand and its relationship with the work-life- balance.
We also found when employees perceived they had managerial support they reported
greater work/life balance. This is consistent with other research that found strong
direct support for managerial support. For example Thompson et al. (1999) found that
employee's who perceived the organization and their supervisor as family supportive
felt more comfortable utilising available benefits. Therefore, managerial support is

important to employees and offers them assistance when attempting to balance work and life. However, managerial support did not moderate the relationship between life friendly policy and WLB. Therefore, for the respondents in the current study managerial support is perceived as important, but does not necessarily determine whether they will or will not adopt the available policies. This outcome is supported by similar findings reported in previous research (e.g., Glass and Finely, 2002; Eaton, 2003; White et al., 2003) where positive relationships have been found for various life friendly policies and managerial support for employee take-up of these policies (Thompson et al., 1999; Wise and Bond 2003). The findings of the current study could be explained when in the absence of formal policies managerial support may be more helpful as a moderator assisting individuals to enhance WLB.

Of course the results of this study need to be interpreted with consideration given to the limitations of the research. Common method variance and self-report bias are the primary limitations of this study (Podsakoff, Mckenzie, Lee and Podsakoff, 2003). Despite the weaknesses of the cross-sectional self-report methodology, this design can be quite useful in providing a picture of how people feel about and view their jobs. Cross-sectional research also identifies the intercorrelations among various feelings and perceptions providing important insights (Spector, 1994, p. 390). However, the reliance on self report data is of concern and future research should incorporate objective measures and longitudinal designs to assess work-life balance over a life course. Generalisability of this study is also limited to public sector agencies of a similar size.

In relation to the measures of life friendly policies, this study used employee perceptions of the helpfulness of available policies. The reliance on self reported data is of concern and future research should incorporate objective measure such as system

records and patterns of use. Furthermore, the measurement tools were influenced by organizational controls over the wording used in the measurement scales. Future research is required to further examine this area.

Furthermore, the current study includes all occupational levels within a single public sector organization which according to Rousseau (1985) is both a weakness and strength. Whilst this study has limitations because of its empirical grounding in the single public sector organization, its focus on all occupational levels increases the generalizability of the results to different populations.

IMPLICATIONS

Organizations need to ensure that the policies offered in their packages are of benefit to individuals. However, the research to date in combination with the results of the current study indicates that some policies can enhance work/life balance and that others may detract from work/life balance. Individuals require many different types of policies depending on their own personal needs or life situations. Therefore, this study posits that organizations offering a cafeteria of policies are best placed to meet the needs of its workforce. Furthermore, there is evidence that work/family programs increase loyalty and commitment to the organization and reduce absenteeism and turnover, reduce conflict between work and family and as a result increase productivity (Hammonds, 1997; Solomon, 1994).

The current research emphasises the importance for organizations to be cognisant of the individual needs of the members of their workforce. In addition, it provides organizations with a valuable insight about what individuals perceive will help them achieve work/life balance. The current study has been designed to examine human resource policies that provide support for individuals, regardless of their

family structure, to balance their work and non work life. Our study could guide the HR practitioners re-evaluating their policies in relation to WLB to ensure the well-being of all employees and ensure a better fit between organizational goals and an individual's personal needs. As a result one could anticipate that human resource managers are well positioned to be the potential key in the architecture of the future firm.

REFERENCES

Adams, G.A., King, L.A. and King, D.W. (1996). Relationships of Job and Family Involvement, Family Social Support, and Work Family Conflict With Job and Life Satisfaction. *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 81(4) 411-420.

Australian Parliament (2005), *Australia's Ageing Workforce,* Research Note 7 March, no. 35, 2004-05.

Bailey, W.T. (1991). Fathers' involvement in their children's healthcare. *The Journal of Genetic Psychology,* 152, 289-293.

Bailyn, L. (1993). *Breaking the Mold: Women, Men, and Time in the New Corporate World.* New York: Free Press.

Baltes, B.B., Briggs, T.E., Huff, J.W., Wright, J.A., and Neuman, G.A. (1999). Flexible and Compressed Workweek Schedules: A Meta-Analysis of Their Effects on Work-Related Criteria. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 84(4) 496-513.

Baron, R. and Kenny, D. (1986). The Moderator-Mediator Variable Distinction in Social Psychological Research: Conceptual, Strategic and Statistical Considerations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 51, 1173-1182.

Batt, R. and Valcour, P.M. (2003). Human Resource Practices as Predictors of Work-Family Outcomes and Employee Turnover. *Industrial Relations*, 42(2) 189-220.

Berg, P., Kalleberg, A.L., and Appelbaum, E. (2003). Balancing Work and Family: The Role of High-Commitment Environments. *Industrial Relations,* 42(2), 168-188.

Blair-Loy, M., and Wharton, A.S. (2002). Employees' Use of Work Family Policies and the Workplace Social Context. *Social Forces,* 80(3) 813-846.

Bond, S. and Wise, S. (2003). Work life policy doe it do exactly what it says on the tin. *Women in Management Review,* 18(1/2) 20-31.

Cavana,R.Y., Delahaye, B.L., Sekaran, U. (2002). *Applied business research: Qualitative and Quantitative Methods*, Milton: John Wiley and Sons.

Carlson, D. S., Kacmar, K. M., & Williams, L. J. (2000). Construction and initial validation of a multidimensional measure of work–family conflict. J*ournal of Vocational Behavior*, 56, 249–276

Chang, A, McDonald, P. K. and Burton, P. M. (in press) Methodological choices in work-life balance research 1987 to 2006 : a critical review. International Journal of Human Resource Management.

Clarke, M.C., Koch, L.C., and Hill, E.J. (2004), 'The Work-Family Interface: Differentiating Balance and Fit', *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, 33(2), 121-140.

Clutterbuck, D. (2003). *Managing work-life Balance: A guide for HR in achieving organisational and individual change,* London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

Colley, L. (2010). Central Policies, Local Discretion: A Review of Employee Access to Work-Life Balance Arrangements in a Public Sector Agency. *Australian Bulletin of Labour,* 36(2), 214, 224.

Comer, D.R., and Stites-Doe, S. (2006), 'Antecedents and Consequences of Faculty Women's Academic-Parental Role Balancing', *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*, 27(3), 495-512.

De Cieri, H., Kramar, R., Noe, R., Hollenbeck, J., Gerhart, B., and Wright, P. (2003). *Human Resource Management in Australia. Strategy - People - Performance.* Sydney: McGraw-Hill.

DEEWR (2009), *Work and Family Awards*, http://www.deewr.gov.au/ WorkplaceRelations/Programs/worklife

DEIR (2008), *Work-life Balance Strategy*, Public Sector Industrial and Employment Relations Division, Department of Employment and Industrial Relations, http://www.psier.qld.gov.au/publications/wlb-strategy/index.shtml

Eaton, S.C. (2003). If You Can Use Them: Flexibility Policies, Organizational Commitment, and Perceived Performance. *Industrial Relations,* 42(2) 145-167.

Friedman, D.E., and Johnson, A.A.(1997). Moving from programs to culture change: The next stage for the corporate work-family agenda. In S. Parasuraman andJ.H. Greenhaus (Eds.), *Integrating Work and Family: Challenges and choices for a changing world* (pp 192-208). Westport, CT: Qurom Books.

Frone, M.R., Russell, M., and Cooper, M.L. (1993). Relationship of work-family conflict, gender, and alcohol expectancies to alcohol use/abuse. *Journal of Organisational Behavior*, 14, 545-558.

Glass, J.L. and Finley, A. (2002). Coverage and effectiveness of family-responsive workplace policies. *Human Resource Management Review,* 12 313-337.

Goh, Y.W., Watson, S, and Sawang, S. (forthcoming). Gender influences on the work-related stress-coping process. *Journal of Individual Differences.*

Greenhaus, J.H., Collins, K.M., and Shaw, J.D. (2003). The relation between work-family balance and quality of life. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 63(3), 510-531.

Greenhaus, J.H. and Buetell, N.J. (1985). Sources of conflict between work and family roles. *Academy of Management Review*, 10, 76-88.

Grover, S.L. and Crooker, K.J. (1995). Who appreciates family responsive human responsive human resource policies: the impact of family friendly policies on the organizational attachment of parents and non-parents'. *Personnel Psychology*, 48, 271-288.

Gudmundsson, A. (2003).Balancing work and family: A typology of dual-earner parents. *Proceedings of the British Academy of Management Annual Conference,* August 31, – September 2, 2004.

Hammonds, K.H. (1997). Work and family: Business Week's second survey of family-friendly corporate policies. *Business Week, 99, 102-104.*

Hill, J.E., Hawkins, A. J. and Miller, B. C. (1996). Work and Family in the virtual office: Perceived influences of mobile telework. *Family Relations*, 45, 293-301.

Hill, J.E., Hawkins, A.J., Ferris, M. and Weitzman, M. (2001). Finding an Extra Day a Week: The Positive Influence of Perceived Job Flexibility on Work and Family Life Balance. *Family Relations*, 50(1), 49-58

Hill, J.E., Ferris, M., and Martinson, V. (2002). Does it mater where you work: A comparison of how three work venues (traditional office, virtual office, and home office) influence aspects of work and personal/family life. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 63*(2), 220-241.

Hyde, J.S. (1995). Women and maternity leave: empirical data and public policy. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 19, 299-313.

Kofodimos, J.R. (1995). *Beyond Work-Family Programs: Confronting and resolving the underlying causes of work-personal life conflict.* Greensboro, NC: Centre for Creative Leadership.

Kossek, E. E. and Nichol, V. (1992). Effects of on-site child employee attitudes and performance. *Personnel Psychology*, 45, 485-509.

Kurland, N.B. and Bailey, D.E. (1999). Telework: The advantages and challenges of working here, there, anywhere, and anytime. *Organizational Dynamics*, 28(2), 53-68.

Lobel, S.A., and Kossek, E.E. (1996). Human resource strategies to support diversity in work and personal lifestyles: Beyond the "family friendly" organisation. In E.E. Kossek and S.A. Lobel (Eds.). Managing diversity: Human resource strategies for transforming the workplace. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

Marks, S.R. and McDermid, S.M. (1996). Multiple roles and the self: A theory of role balance. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 58(2), 417-433.

McLean, J. and Lindorff, M. (2000). *Work-Family Balance Among Dual-Career Parents: Defining the Desirable*, Working Paper 83/00 Monash University: November 2000.

Morgan, H. and Milliken, F. J. (1992). Keys to action: Understanding differences in organisations' responsiveness to work-and-family issues. *Human Resoure Management,* 31, 227-248.

Parker, L. and Allen, T.D. (2001). Work/family Benefits: Variables Related to Employees' Fairness Perceptions. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 58, 453-468.

Podsakoff, P.M., Mckenzie, S.B., Lee, J.Y. and Podsakoff, N.P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioural research: a critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 88(5) p879-9103.

Parasuraman, S., and Greenhaus, J.H. (2002). Towards reducing some critical gaps in work family research. *Human Resource Management Review*, 12(3), 299-312.

Repetti, R.L., and Wood, L. (1997). Effects of daily stress at work on mothers' interactions with preschoolers. *Journal of Family Psychology,* 11, 90-108.

Rodgers, C.S. (1992). The flexible workplace: what have we learned? *Human Resource Management*, 31(3), 183-199.

Rousseau, D.M. (1985). Issues of level in organisational research: Multi-level and cross-level perspectives. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 7, 1-37.

Rudd, K. (2007), *Election Victory Speech*, 24 November, http://www.pm.gov. au, accessed 17 April 2008.

Solomon, C.M.(1994). Work/family's failing grade: Why today's initiatives aren't enough. *Personnel Journal*, 73(5), 72-87.

Spector, P. (1994). Using Self-report questionnaires in OB research: a comment of the use of a controversial method. *Journal of Organizational Behaviour,*15(5) p385-395.

Tabachnick, B.G. and Fidell, L.S. (1996). *Using Multivariate Statistics*, 3rd edition, New York: HarperCollins.

Tausig, M. and Fenwick, R. (2001). Unbinding Time: Alternate Work Schedules and Work Life Balance. *Journal of Family and Economic Issues,* 22(2), 101-119.

Thompson, C.A. Beauvais, L.L. and Lyness, K.S. (1999). When Work-Family Benefits Are Not Enough: The Influence of Work-Family Culture on Benefit Utilization, Organisational Attachment, and Work-Family Conflict. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour,* 54(3), 392-415

Thomas, L. and Ganster, D.C (1995). Impact of Family-Supportive Work Variables on Work-Family Conflict and Strain: A Control Perspective. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 80(1) 6-15.

Westphal, J.D. and Zajac, E.J.(1994). Substance and Symbolism in CEOs' Long-Term Incentive Plans. *Administrative Science Quarterly,* 39, 367-390.

White, M. Hill, S., McGovern, P., Mills, C. and Smeaton, D. (2003). High performance' management practices, working hours and work-life balance *British Journal of Industrial Relations*. 41(2) 175-196.

Williams, J.M. (2000). *Unbending Gender: Why Family and Work Conflict and What to Do about It.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Wise, S. and Bond, S. (2003). Family leave policies and devolution to the line. *Personnel Review,* 32(1/2) 58-73.

Zajac, B. (1994). Getting the welcome carpet. *Forbes*, 154(), 276-279.

Life Friendly Policies

OFFSITE WORKING

- **Description**: policies designed to give workers flexibility to work away from the psychical work place.
- **Example**: Work from home, telecommuting

CARERS' ARRANGEMENT

- **Description**: policies designed to provide workers the facilities or time to attend to outside care responsibilities.
- **Example**: Carer facilities, and leave for

FLEXI-WORK SCHEDULE

- **Description:** policies designed to give workers greater flexibility to schedule hors while not decreasing average house worked per day.
- **Example**: Accrued day off, time off in lieu, flexible s start finish time

ALTERNATIVE WORK ARRANGEMENTS

- **Description:** policies designed to give workers greater flexibility to work hours around other commitments or when desired.
- **Example**: Part time work, job sharing

Figure1: Life friendly policy components

Table 1: Pattern matrix for the helpfulness of available life friendly policies ($N = 1,241$).

	Offsite working	Flexi-work schedule	Alternative work arrangements	Carer's arrangements
Telecommuting	.94			
Work from home	.91			
Accrued day off		.87		
Time off in lieu		.70		
Flexible start/finish		.63		
Part time work			-.92	
Job Sharing			-.92	
Carer's room				-.88
Carer's leave				-.86
% of variance explained	33.04	16.16	13.68	11.46
Mean (SD)	1.29 (1.59)	3.72 (1.28)	1.77 (1.60)	1.60 (1.59)
Cronbach's Alpha	.81	.60	.83	.72

Table 2. Correlation matrix among studied variables ($N = 1,241$).

Variables	Work-life balance	Managerial support	Offsite working	Carer's arrangement	Flexi-work schedule	Alternative work arrangements
1.Work-life balance						
2.Managerial support	.44*					
3.Offsite working	-.04	.17**				
4. Carer's arrangement	.05	.13**	.35**			
5.Flexi-work schedule	.14**	.15**	.17**	.30**		
6. Alternative work arrangements	.05	.03	.30**	.30**	.25**	

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3: Hierarchical regression analysis (Work-life balance as dependent variable) ($N = 1,241$).

Predictors	Step 1				Step 2			
	B	S.E.	β	t	B	S.E.	β	t
1. Managerial support	0.51	0.03	0.46	17.18***	0.51	0.03	0.45	17.05***
2. Offsite working	-0.09	0.17	-0.15	-5.32***	0.16	0.02	-0.16	-5.43***
3. Carers' arrangement	0.00	0.02	0.01	0.18	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.12
4. Flexi-work schedule	0.03	0.02	0.05	1.74+	0.03	0.02	0.05	1.64+
5. Alternative work arrangements	0.07	0.02	0.10	3.46***	0.07	0.02	0.10	3.50***
6. Support x Offsite					0.02	0.02	0.03	0.89
7. Support x Carer					0.02	0.02	0.03	0.94
8. Support x Flexi-work schedule					0.02	0.02	0.03	1.00
9. Support x Alternative work arrangements					-0.03	0.02	-0.04	-1.32

Note: *** Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed), + Correlation is significant at the 0.10 level (2-tailed)