



Working parents' use of work-life policies in large organizations

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Outline of the lecture

- Transformation of the European labour market
- Work/life policies and work/life balance
- Research on utilization of work/life policies
- Working parents and work/life policies: a dutch case study



Transformation of the European labour market

- More women on the labour market
- Ageing population
- Increase in dual earner couples
- Need for work/life policies



Terminology around work/life policies

- Work/family policies or arrangements
- Family-friendly policies or Work/Life policies
- Work/life balance
 - The reconciliation of work and family life
 - The integration of work and personal life
 - Towards sustainable lives (quality of life)



Types of workplace work/life policies

- 1) Policies that ease the burden of caring tasks
 - childcare provisions

- 2) Policies that give employees the flexibility to adjust work to their personal life
 - leave arrangements
 - flexibility in work schedule or location

Different impact of the two kinds of work/life policies



Reasons for employers

- Selection and retention of personnel
- Absenteeism and turnover
- Image
- Productivity



Theoretical frameworks explaining employers' involvement

- Rational choice perspective:
 - Costs and benefits of work/life policies for organizations
- Institutional theory:
 - Institutional pressure, expectations, institutionalization



Research Project

Changes in Work and Life

The implementation of work/life policies
in the European workplace

2002-2007

Together with:

dr. Laura den Dulk (Utrecht University)

www.fss.uu.nl/soc/cwl



Design of research project

- Three countries:
 - The Netherlands (corporatist welfare regime)
 - UK (liberal welfare regime)
 - Sweden (social democratic welfare regime)
- Organisations in the financial sector: public and private organisations
- Per organisation:
 - Documents and policy papers of the organisation
 - Interview with HR manager
 - Survey (mail and via web survey)
 - Interviews with managers (10-12)
 - Focus groups (only in the Netherlands)





Working parents and the utilisation of work/life policies

Case studies in the financial sector in the Netherlands

Research questions

- What are the barriers and/or support for the actual take up of work/life policies by working parents?
- Does the utilisation of work/life policies positively affect the work/life balance of working parents?



Work/life policies in the Dutch context

- Corporatist welfare regime, breadwinner model
- Only since 1990's Dutch government support combination work and care
- Majority women work part time
- 1996 Part timers treated equally by law as full timers
- Increasing number of organisations have work/family arrangements



Theoretical perspectives

1. Need perspective

3. Sense of entitlement (Lewis, 1996; Lewis & Smithson, 2001):

“... a set of beliefs and feelings that enable individuals to voice and make visible their needs to modify traditional structures at work and beyond”

- Gender
- Organisational culture
- Social policy context



Hypotheses (1)

H1: Working mothers are more likely to use work/family arrangements than working fathers

H2: Working parents with young children under 12 years of age are more likely to use work/family arrangements than working parents with children older than 12 years

H3: The more hours spent in paid employment by the partner, the more likely it is that working parents use work/family arrangements



Hypotheses (2)

H4: The more approving the perceived work/family culture is (high support/low barriers) the more likely working parents will use work/family policies

H5: The more years working parents are working for the organisation, the more likely they will use work/family policies

H6: Working parents with a higher job position are more likely to use work/family arrangements than working parents with a lower job position



Research design

- Survey in 3 financial sector organisations:
 - Fincom = consultancy/accountancy firm (n=208)
 - BIC = bank and insurance (n=271)
 - Service = government agency (n=228)

Selected: only working parents



Work/family culture

“...the shared assumptions, beliefs, and values regarding the extent to which for women and for men an organization supports and values the integration of work and family lives”

(Thompson et al, 1999)



Measurement (1)

- 17 items scale of work/life culture *
 - Support (organisational support, supervisory support, colleague support)
 - Barriers (time and career demands)

5-point scale

* Developed together with Dijkers & Geurts, partly based on Thompson et al., 1999.



Typology of organisational culture

		Support	
		Low	High
Barriers	Low	Indifferent culture	Approving culture
	High	Obstructing culture	Contradictory culture

Source: Dijkers, J., S. Geurts, L.den Dulk, B. Peper, T. Taris & M. Kompier (2007).





	Fincom N= 208	BIC N=271	Service N=228
% women	38	28	27
Youngest child 0-3 years, %	51	34	20
Youngest child 0-12 years, %	76	71	63
Partner having a paid job	80	83	84
Age			
<i>up to 24</i>	5	-	-
<i>25-34</i>	55	23	8
<i>35-44</i>	29	44	48
<i>45-54</i>	11	31	41
<i>55+</i>	-	2	3



	Fincom N= 208	BIC N=271	Service N=228
Years of employment			
<i>0-5</i>	36	26	12
<i>6-10</i>	21	17	4
<i>11-15</i>	19	17	5
<i>16-20</i>	12	14	23
<i>21+</i>	14	27	56
% Supervisory position	60	19	9
Education			
<i>Low</i>	2	4	7
<i>Medium</i>	26	57	66
<i>High</i>	72	40	27



	Fincom	BIC	Service
Work-family culture	<i>contradictory</i>	<i>contradictory</i>	<i>Approving</i>
Support	3.23	3.44	3.54
Barriers	3.69	3.24	2.62
Utilization			
Flexible hours	59%	70%	81%
Part-time work	39%	29%	32%
Childcare	30%	29%	15%
Parental leave	14%	18%	49%
Work/life balance			
Not at all/somewhat not successful	31	25	13
Somewhat successful	56	58	65
Very successful	13	17	21

Measurement (2)

- Utilization work/family policies (yes/no)
 - Parental leave
 - Part-time work
 - flexible start and finishing hours
- Work/life balance:
 - How successful do you feel in balancing work and personal life? (Moen & Yu 1999)



Linear regression analysis utilization work/family policies



	Beta
Sex / Gender	+
Child under 12	+
Hours paid employment partner	+
Org. culture: support	+
Org culture: barriers	-
Years of employment	+
Supervisory position	-
High education	0
<i>Adjusted R²</i>	.36

Linear regression successfulness work/life balance



	Beta
Utilization work/family policies	0
Sex /Gender	0
Child under 12	0
Hours paid employment partner	0
Org. culture: support	+
Org culture: barriers	-
Years of employment	0
Supervisory position	-
High education	0
<i>Adjusted R²</i>	<i>.17</i>

Findings

- All hypothesis are confirmed except for the influence of job position
- Findings point to the importance of organisational culture for utilisation, next to individual and household characteristics
- For the work/life balance of working parents a supportive organisational culture is more important then the actual take up of work/family policies



BUT: Dominance of Male model of work

- Gendered assumption about the separation of work and home
- Full-time work as the norm
- Importance of visibility at the workplace and measurement for commitment
- Work/life policies seen as favors and not as rights



Towards a family-friendly organisation?

- Increasing availability of work/life policies, but utilization remains low
- Role of organizational culture
- Diversity in organisations -> Dual Agenda

