LEADERSHIP INITIATIVES FOR EFFECTIVE WORK-LIFE INTEGRATION

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Overview of Problem/ Issue

Work-life integration has been largely regarded as a "woman's problem." However, employees' ability to effectively combine their responsibilities in their professional and personal lives is relevant to both women and men, and society in general. As such, organizational leaders and policies can support employees in their work-life integration and, we believe, ultimately result in payoffs for the organization as well as employees. This study examined how organizations can improve quality of work-life and career outcomes for employees, as well as show how organizations benefit from such improvements.

Research Design

The research team was trained in research ethics and Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was acquired. A sample of over 200 U.S. employees from a variety of organizations completed an online survey containing questions on their integration of workplace and personal life responsibilities. Participants were recruited via email, electronic newsletters, professional associations, and organizational databases. A large portion of the sample came from individuals in an HR director role. This role is particularly important to the question given the impact they have in supporting employee and organizational effectiveness. The survey assessed organizational factors (i.e., perceptions of work-life support from one's organization and supervisor, organizational structure, and leadership), employee outcomes (i.e., satisfaction, work-life conflict, developmental opportunities), organizational outcomes (i.e., turnover intentions, organizational commitment and citizenship behaviors) as well as demographic information.
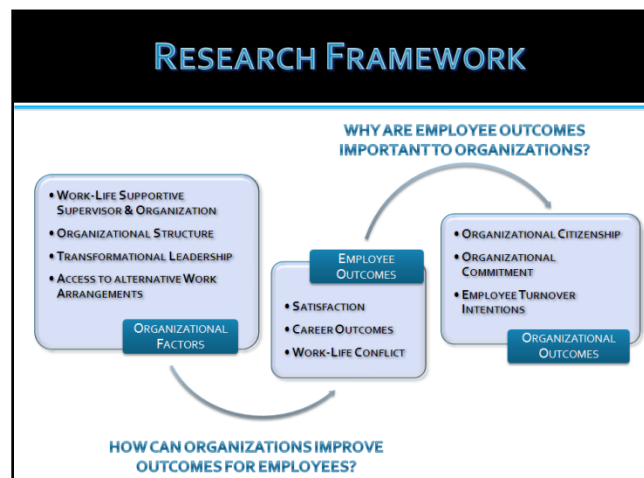
Findings

- ➢ Participants reported that as perceptions of work-life support from one's organization and supervisor increased, work-life conflict decreased. However, just having access to alternative work arrangements did not decrease work-life conflict. Other organizational factors were seen as critical in supporting employees' work-life effectiveness.
- ➢ Transformational leadership and organizational structure significantly and positively predicted employee satisfaction (job, life) and professional development opportunities.
- ➢ Positive employee outcomes led to positive organizational outcomes. As job satisfaction and development opportunities increased, participants reported lower turnover intentions and greater commitment and organizational citizenship behaviors (going above expected behaviors). Further, as work-life conflict decreased, organizational citizenship behaviors and commitment improved and likelihood to quit decreased.
- ➢ No significant differences between men and women on employee or organizational outcomes were found, however the organizational activities with the highest relationships with work-life conflict will be discussed.

Implications

Organizations can impact the satisfaction of employees by providing support and access to alternative work arrangements; however, providing flexible work arrangements is not enough to decrease the work-life conflict experienced by employees. Other organizational factors, such as leadership and supportive work-life organizations and supervisors increase employee satisfaction, work-life effectiveness and opportunities for professional development. Further, our results suggest these employee outcomes can positively affect organizations. Organizations that are more work-life friendly are better at retaining talent, and their employees are more committed and likely to "go above and beyond" for the company. Lastly, while no significant gender differences were found on employee or organizational outcomes, effectively retaining and supporting employees are good business practices. More specifically, women in this study were not found to have significantly higher levels of work-life conflict than men, dispelling work-life effectiveness as a "woman's problem." This provides support for the notion that effective work-life integration is an issue for all employees, and both men and women require support in balancing their personal and professional lives. We encourage organizations to provide work-life supportive and family friendly personnel practices to improve outcomes for all employees as well as the organization itself, and we will discuss specific recommendations relevant to women and women leaders in the workplace.