

**Oklahoma State University Spears School of Business**

**Honor's College Management Thesis**

**“Benefits of Benefits: How Work-Life Benefits Affect Positive Job Outcomes”**

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**ABSTRACT**

With a focus on positive job outcomes including organizational commitment, job performance, and organizational citizenship behavior, this study explores the relationship between such organizational outcomes and fourteen varied work-life benefits (WLBs). I specifically assessed whether respondents valued each benefit and whether the presence or usage of particular benefits impacts work-related attitudes and behavior. The hypothesized relationship of positive job outcomes relating to the presence of WLBs is upheld; however, mean differences between groups are more frequent when the benefit is present *and* used by employees. I also tested how the value of WLBs differed across demographic characteristics, particularly assessing differences in minority and non-minority families. My findings emphasize and support current literature regarding the importance of WLBs as well as their overall impact on various positive job outcomes.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Former CEO of Xerox Anne Mulcahy once said “Employees who believe that management is concerned about them as a whole person - not just an employee - are more productive, more satisfied, more fulfilled. Satisfied employees mean satisfied customers, which leads to profitability” (Grubb, 2016). Some believe that the best way management can demonstrate their concern for employees is by showing an interest in their personal lives, thereby leading us to the conversation of WLBs. WLBs are defined as initiatives adopted by organizations to help employees manage the interface between their paid work and other important life activities, including family (Lobel, 1991). WLBs are a crucial part of all organizations in the world today because they influence the type of employees attracted to the job and the level of motivation. These two factors eventually impact production which impacts profitability such as Mulcahy noted. Work-life benefits are an increasingly vital part of company hiring packages that will eventually impact future company earnings; therefore reshaping the business world of the twenty-first century.

The current research seeks to find differences in the overall level of importance or value for employees in their usage of WLBs and the weight of those benefit packages on organizational outcomes. The research literature indicates that WLBs are linked to increased satisfaction (Thomas & Ganster, 1995), higher organizational commitment (Kossek & Nichol, 1992), morale and productivity (Roberts 1996). However, few studies have looked at a wide range of WLBs at one time to determine the value employees place on these employer investments and the extent to which employees use them when available.

Due to a lack of comprehensive research, this study is crucially important as it brings together various job outcomes while relating them to a spectrum of WLBs which I categorized

under three groups: health-related, family-related, and career-related benefits. Examples of common health-related WLBs are flex-time or wellness screenings, examples of family-related WLBs are childcare or dependent care, and examples of career-related WLBs are mentoring or career workshops. The categories I developed allow analysis to be conducted by category, benefit, and job outcome. In addition, the data collected is important as I also include under-represented and “newer” benefits such as fitness programs and mentoring.

### **WLBs and Positive Job Outcomes**

Previous research has indicated there is a relationship between job outcomes and WLBs. In a sample of 276 managers and professionals, employee usage of WLBs related to perceptions of a supportive work-family culture as well as positively related to affective commitment while being negatively related to work-family conflict (Thompson, Beauvais, and Lyness, 1999). Another study has indicated that providing WLBs employees use and/or value is part of a positive exchange between employee and employer thereby contributing positively to job outcomes of perceived organizational support, affective commitment, and higher levels of contextual performance behaviors (Muse, Harris, Giles, & Feild, 2007).

In conjunction with previous research on WLBs my rationale for the relationship between positive work outcomes and WLBs is supported by social exchange theory. In social exchange theory conditions are identified under which people feel obligated to reciprocate when they benefit from some person’s, or some entity’s actions (Lambert, 2000). In this case, providing WLBs that were used and aided in work-life balance lead to positive job outcomes being conducted by the employees. These positive job outcomes, as previous stated, were measured in the form of organizational commitment, job performance, and organizational citizenship behavior for this study. I am defining organizational commitment as “an individual’s

psychological attachment to an organization,” job performance as “the assessment of how well a person performs their job,” and organizational citizenship behavior as “work behavior that is discretionary and of benefit to an employing organization” (Heery and Noon, 2008).

Based on past research and social exchange theory, I propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: The availability and use of WLBs is positively related to productive organizational attitudes and behaviors. (i.e., organizational commitment, job performance, and organizational citizenship behaviors).

### **WLBs and Minority Families**

Another area this study aims to address is the relationship between WLBs and minority families. Increasing numbers of dual-career couples and working mothers with young children, means that many employees have significant household responsibilities that can compete with work responsibilities in time and resources (Bond, Galinsky, & Swanberg, 1998; Gilbert, Hallett, & Eldridge, 1994). Although families are likely to value WLBs more overall, I believe there are reasons to believe minority families would value WLBs differently. Current research on ethnic minorities, in consistency with self-determination theory and model-minority theory, shows that minorities have lower confidence in labor market prospects but higher levels in intrinsic, extrinsic, social, and altruistic work values compared to whites (Ng and Sears, 2010). Due to this finding in the current literature it was a logical consideration that minority families should have differing values of WLBs compared to non-minority families, thus yielding the following hypothesis:

H2: Minority families will value WLBs more than non-minority families.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### *Sample and Procedures*

A 10-page online survey was distributed to students of an undergraduate business program at a university in the central region of the United States. Students were offered extra credit in their Management courses if they could find a full-time working adult to participate in the study. Full-time working adults were defined as those that complete 40 hours a week or more. As full-time working adults completed each survey they were given the option to provide a name for the student that referred them in order to distribute extra credit. In addition to student referrals there were a couple of companies who were emailed the survey for their employees to fill out. These companies were blended with other respondent results since all were coded as full-time working adults.

In total, 14 different WLBs were measured. However, for interpretation, it was decided that the focus of the analysis would be on the WLBs that were the most highly valued in each category. Of the 14 WLBs there were three natural categories each variable could be associated: health-related, family-related, and career-related WLBs. I chose to analyze the two most highly valued benefits in each category, resulting in six benefits overall. The six selected WLBs for further study were fitness programs and paid recreation time (health-related), childcare services and parental leave (family-related), education reimbursement and sponsorship/mentoring (career-related).

There was a total of 226 completed surveys after removing part-time workers that managed to infiltrate the survey and incomplete responses. The sample demographics were 53% Male, 80% White, 44% married, and 33% were parents. In addition to these details we also learned that about 70% had some form of college education, the average (mean) job tenure was 4.58 years, the average (mean) organizational tenure 5.12 years, and lastly that the average working hours per week was forty-two. The detailed demographics can be seen in the chart

below.

Table 1  
Demographic makeup of sample population

<b>Individual Demographics</b>	
Gender	
Male	53.4%
Race	
White	80.5%
Black	4.9%
Native American	5.3%
Indian	0.4%
Asian	8.8%
Hispanic	
No	96.5%
Age	31.69
<b>Family-related Demographics</b>	
Married	
Yes	43.8%
Spouse Works	
Yes	75.80%
Average number of hours	39.64
Number of Children	
0	60.9%
1	8.4%
2	20.9%
3	7.1%
4+	2.7%
Dependent Children	
0	66.4%
1	17.3%
2	12.4%
3	2.7%
4+	1.3%
Education	
High School	30.5%
Associate	25.2%
Bachelors	36.7%
Masters	6.2%
PhD	1.3%
<b>Work-related Demographics</b>	
Job Tenure (in years)	4.58
Organizational Tenure (in years)	5.18
Hours worked per week	41.99

### *Measures*

*Work-Life Benefits.* Work-Life benefits were measured with a 14-item self-created scale to determine the desire for and usage of WLBs. The work-life programs were divided into three sections: health-related, family-related, and career-related. A list of common WLBs was used to create the 14-item scale; however, an “Other” option for open-ended responses was placed for any benefits that may not fit the 14 other options. Under the 14-item scale broken down by WLBs there was a three-point response scale to measure usability (i.e., “No, not available,” “Yes, it’s available but I don’t use it,” and “Yes, it’s available and I use it”). Afterwards respondents used a six-point scale to indicate the value of each benefit, regardless of whether it was available or not. This scale ranged from 1 “Do not value” to 6 “Value to a great extent.”

*Organizational Commitment.* Organizational commitment was measured with a nine-item scale developed by subject matter experts Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979) (e.g., “I talk up this company to my friends as a great organization to work for”). The items were rated on a six-point nontraditional Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Higher scores indicated an increased organizational commitment.

*Job Performance (self-reported).* Job performance was measured on an eight-item scale as created by Welbourne, Johnson, and Erez (1998) (e.g., quantity of work output). Measured with a six point scale ranging from “1=Needs much improvement” to “6=Excellent” with higher scores indicating a perceived higher job performance rating.

*Organizational Citizenship Behavior.* Organizational citizenship behavior was measured on an 11-item scale as developed from Williams and Anderson (1991) (e.g., “Help others who have been absent”). These items were measured on a six-point scale ranging from “Never” to

“Daily” to indicate frequency of self-reported actions. Greater scores indicate a higher frequency of organizational citizenship behaviors.

## RESULTS

### *Valuing Work-Life Benefits*

The degree to which individuals valued particular WLBs, as well as the availability and use of each WLB is shown in Table 2 below. Among the fourteen WLBs considered full healthcare coverage (i.e., all medical/dental/vision expenses are covered by the employer) was valued the highest at 5.34 (out of 6) and a standard deviation of 1.10. The least valued benefit was volunteer compensation with a mean value of 3.30 and a standard deviation of 1.50. Along with each WLB receiving a individual mean value from respondents, Table 2 also groups each benefit by their assigned categories of health, family, and career. Across categories, the career-related WLBs were valued the most while the family-related ones were valued the least with group mean scores of 4.67 and 3.88 respectively.

Regarding frequency, each benefit also displays what percentage of respondents have and use each work-life benefit offered. A few of the more interesting frequencies to take note of include fitness programs, maternity/paternity leave, and continuing education. Looking at fitness programs, 56.8% of the sample do not have this benefit while the remaining respondents are evenly split at 21.6% using and 21.6% not using fitness programs when offered. Maternity/Paternity leave was an interesting frequency because only 21.8% of the sample did not have this benefit offered to them but, although a third of our sample does have children, only 10.7% of the sample uses this benefit when offered. Lastly, regarding continuing education it yielded an interesting frequency as 40.5% of respondents have and use this benefit while 31.2% do not have it offered to them at all. The takeaway from these noted frequencies, as will be



expanded upon later, is that each benefit has a particularly high value placed on them although the percentage of the sample that does use these benefits are relatively low.

Table 2  
Value and frequency of all itemized work-life benefits

Work-life benefit type	Value of WLB		Are WLBs available and do you use them?		
	Mean (SD)	Mean Total	No (%)	Yes, don't use (%)	Yes, use (%)
Wellness Screening	3.93 (1.38)		39.5	26.3	34.1
Flex-time	4.27 (1.50)		40.8	24.4	34.8
Fitness Programs	4.17 (1.41)		56.8	21.6	21.6
Free Meal Programs	3.48 (1.62)		83.3	10	6.7
Full Healthcare Coverage	5.34 (1.10)		21.2	19.8	59
Telecommuting	3.49 (1.70)		59.2	16.5	24.3
Volunteer Compensation	3.30 (1.50)		67.3	14.6	18.1
Paid Recreation Time	4.08 (1.51)	4.01	58.8	10.8	30.4
Elder/Dependent Care	3.45 (1.60)		74.7	21.4	3.8
Childcare Services	3.64 (1.68)		73.8	23	3.1
Maternity/Paternity Leave	4.54 (1.56)	3.88	21.8	67.5	10.7
Continuing Education	4.89 (1.24)		31.2	28.3	40.5
Training/Workshops	4.80 (1.25)		13.5	22.8	63.7
Sponsorship/Mentoring	4.32 (1.41)	4.67	39.9	23.3	36.8

Note: Value of work-life benefits ranges from 1-6, with 6 representing "value to a great extent"

### *Health-Related Work-life benefits*

The sample suggested that two of the highest valued health-related WLBs were fitness programs and paid recreation time. Table 3 shows the relationship between our two chosen health benefits and organizational commitment, job performance, and organizational citizenship behavior. Since we divided each variable group by whether they had or even used the benefits a one-way ANOVA was used to determine the statistical significance among these subcategories.

Fitness Programs had statistically significant differences between groups in the job outcome areas of organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior. A Post Hoc Test showed that the "Yes, do use" group in both job outcome areas had a higher mean value greater than other groups. This implies that having and using fitness programs, as opposed to not offering or using them, is key to improving these job outcome areas. Organizational

Commitment significance ( $F = 5.46, p = .005$ ). Organizational Citizenship Behavior significance ( $F = 4.71, p = .010$ ).

Paid Recreation Time garnered similar benefit usage data insights but in the job outcome areas of organizational commitment and job performance. Within this benefit group, having and using the paid recreation time yielded higher mean scores than the lack thereof and not using this offering. Organizational Commitment significance ( $F = 8.51, p = .000$ ). Job Performance significance ( $F = 4.43, p = .013$ ).

Table 3  
The relationship between availability and use of health-related work-life benefits and job outcomes

Groups	Organizational Commitment			Job Performance			Organizational Citizenship Behavior		
	Mean	SD	F Value	Mean	SD	F Value	Mean	SD	F Value
<b>Fitness Programs</b>									
No <sup>a</sup>	4.53	.99		4.57	.89		5.12	.88	
Yes, don't use <sup>b</sup>	4.49	.90		4.45	.94		4.86	1.01	
Yes, do use <sup>c</sup>	5.05	.95	5.46*	4.81	.88	1.93	5.40	.64	4.71*
			c > a, b						c > b
<b>Paid Recreation Time</b>									
No <sup>a</sup>	4.44	1.01		4.47	.91		5.09	.94	
Yes, don't use <sup>b</sup>	4.53	.86		4.31	.87		4.83	.94	
Yes, do use <sup>c</sup>	5.04	.80	8.51*	4.83	.85	4.43*	5.25	.70	1.93
			c > a, b			c > b			

### Family-Related WLBs

The sample suggested that two of the highest valued family-related WLBs were childcare services and parental leave. Table 4 shows the relationship between our two chosen family benefits and their impact on organizational commitment, job performance, and organizational

citizenship behavior. Since we divided each variable group by whether they had or even used the benefits a one-way ANOVA was used to determine the statistical significance among these subcategories. However, before delving into the findings of these WLBs it must be addressed some of the limitations the family-related results may include.

Limitations concerning the family-related WLB relationships are based on the potential for sampling error given the frequency test results for each work-life benefit. As can be seen in Table 2, childcare services and parental leave, although the highest valued of the family-related group, are only offered and used by three and ten percent of our sample respectively.

Considering that our demographic is relatively young (average age 32), one-third of respondents have children, and a marginal percentage of them are using these benefits, the results for this section must be considered with caution.

Childcare Services provided interesting relationships with the job outcome variables of job performance and organizational commitment. Statistically significant results showed that the mean values for not having and not using childcare services were higher than the “Yes, do use” group. This is to say that childcare service usage actually decreases the level job performance and organizational citizenship behaviors, making it a WLB that is possibly better for family balance but detrimental to work productivity culture. Job Performance significance ( $F = 3.13, p = .046$ ). Organizational Citizenship Behavior significance ( $F = 4.87, p = .009$ ).

Parental Leave yielded very different results than its other family benefit counterpart as significant relationships were found with all three of our job outcome categories. Among all three job outcomes the mean value for having or having/using parental leave benefits were higher than the mean score of not being offered parental leave. The conclusion from this finding is that the presence of parental leave as a work-life benefit improves the positive job outcome

areas of organizational commitment, job performance, and organizational citizenship behaviors. Organizational Commitment significance ( $F = 3.23, p = .041$ ). Job Performance significance ( $F = 6.11, p = .003$ ). Organizational Citizenship Behavior significance ( $F = 8.56, p = .000$ ).

Table 4  
The relationship between availability and use of family related work-life benefits and job outcomes

Groups	Organizational Commitment			Job Performance			Organizational Citizenship Behavior		
	Mean	SD	F Value	Mean	SD	F Value	Mean	SD	F Value
<b>Childcare Services</b>									
No <sup>a</sup>	4.62	1.05		4.63	.88		5.20	.90	
Yes, don't use <sup>b</sup>	4.64	.83		4.58	.93		5.10	.74	
Yes, do use <sup>c</sup>	3.76	.91	2.2	3.70	.86	3.13*	4.08	.58	4.87*
						a, b > c			a, b > c
<b>Parental Leave</b>									
No <sup>a</sup>	4.30	1.12		4.22	1.00		4.66	1.28	
Yes, don't use <sup>b</sup>	4.71	.90		4.65	.83		5.24	.69	
Yes, do use <sup>c</sup>	4.77	1.06	3.23*	4.94	.86	6.11*	5.34	.68	8.56*
			b, c > a			b, c > a			b, c > a

### Career-Related WLBs

The sample suggested that two of the highest valued career-related WLBs were continuing education and sponsorship/mentoring. Table 5 shows the relationship between our two chosen career benefits and their impact on organizational commitment, job performance, and organizational citizenship behavior. Since we divided each variable group by whether they had or even used the benefits a one-way ANOVA was used to determine the statistical significance among these subcategories.

Continuing Education was found to have significant relationships in all job outcome areas. Through the comparison of mean scores by each usage group it is seen that the presence

and usage of continuous education benefits is crucial to improving all positive job outcome areas. Specifically, organizational commitment and job performance yield significantly higher means than continuing education benefits not being offered while organizational citizenship behavior is significantly higher when compared to the benefit being offered and not used. The takeaway from this information is that the presence and usage of continuing education, as opposed to just the presence or lack thereof, yields better job outcome relationships.

Organizational Commitment significance ( $F = 7.41, p = .001$ ). Job Performance significance ( $F = 9.14, p = .000$ ). Organizational Citizenship Behavior significance ( $F = 3.46, p = .033$ ).

Sponsorship/Mentoring provided similar findings to the Continuing Education results in terms of relationship to job outcomes in all areas except organizational citizenship behavior where the relationship was not statistically significant. Like its career benefit counterpart, Sponsorship/Mentoring was found to have higher mean scores for the “Yes, do use” group rather than the “No” group. The result found here is that the presence plus usage of Sponsorship/Mentoring helps improve organizational commitment and job performance more than the lack of being offered this benefit. Organizational Commitment significance ( $F = 7.75, p = .001$ ). Job Performance significance ( $F = 10.32, p = .000$ ).

Table 5  
The relationship between availability and use of career related work-life benefits and job outcomes

Groups	Organizational Commitment			Job Performance			Organizational Citizenship Behavior		
	Mean	SD	F Value	Mean	SD	F Value	Mean	SD	F Value
<b>Continuing Education</b>									
No <sup>a</sup>	4.33	.99		4.30	.87		5.10	1.00	
Yes, don't use <sup>b</sup>	4.60	.92		4.60	.94		4.96	.86	
Yes, do use <sup>c</sup>	4.94	.98	7.41*	4.90	.78	9.14*	5.32	.65	3.46*
			c > a			c > a			c > b
<b>Sponsorship/Mentoring</b>									
No <sup>a</sup>	4.35	1.10		4.30	.96		5.11	.85	
Yes, don't use <sup>b</sup>	4.65	.85		4.70	.87		5.10	.82	
Yes, do use <sup>c</sup>	4.98	.86	7.75*	4.94	.76	10.32*	5.21	.85	.387
			c > a			c > a			

### *WLBs and Minority Families*

My second hypothesis revolved around the value minority families place on WLBs, whether those benefits were available or not. Table 6 displays the relationship of WLBs by my designated categories of health, family, and career benefits with families by minority status. I defined my minority group as all individuals who indicated they were nonwhite, Hispanic, or of a mixed racial background.

Minority families can be found in Table 6 consistently having higher mean scores for each work-life benefit category as well as the Total Benefits category that provided the average for all benefits tested in the study. Of the WLB categories, the health and family groups were statistically significant. The Total Benefits category also yielded a statistically significant difference between our non-minority and minority family variables. These results not only show that based on pure value that minorities have greater preferences to WLBs than non-minority

demographics but that there is a huge difference in value placed on family benefits for minority families. This conclusion is displayed by the vast disparity of F Values among each benefit category. Value Health Benefits significance ( $F = 2.89, p = .093$ ). Value Family Benefits significance ( $F = 7.26, p = .009$ ). Value Total Benefits significance ( $F = 3.82, p = .055$ ).

Table 6  
The relationship between the value of work-life benefit categories by family demographics

Groups	Value Health Benefits			Value Family Benefits			Value Career Benefits			Value Total Benefits		
	Mean	SD	F Value	Mean	SD	F Value	Mean	SD	F Value	Mean	SD	F Value
Non-Minority Family	3.88	.82	2.89†	3.57	1.43	7.26*	4.56	1.19	.24	3.96	.87	3.82*
Minority Family	4.32	1.00		4.72	1.24		4.74	1.36		4.49	1.06	

## CONCLUSIONS

My first hypothesis that the availability and use of WLBs would be positively related to productive organizational attitudes and behaviors (i.e., organizational commitment, job performance, and organizational citizenship behaviors) was partially supported. Based on each of our job outcome areas, there were significant relationships between means scores on the availability and use of WLBs, but not for each of the six WLBs measured. For organizational commitment two of the six benefits had higher mean values with usage of WLBs rather than just the presence, while five of the six benefits showed higher mean levels with usage of WLBs over the benefit not being offered. Job performance showed one of the six benefits holding higher mean levels with usage of WLBs compared to benefit presence, while three of the six benefits had higher mean scores with usage of WLBs rather than not being offered by an organization. Finally, for organizational citizenship behavior, two of the six benefits had higher mean levels with usage of WLBs rather than benefit presence while only one of the six benefits had a higher

mean value with usage of the WLB over the benefit not being offered by an organization.

The results above go to say that the *usage* of WLBs, rather than not using them or their being offered, is critical in some cases but not all in improving positive job outcome areas. Because the relationship for usage is not consistent in all areas of job outcomes our conclusion is that the hypothesis is partially supported to the extent these relationships hold true in the aforementioned benefit groups described in Tables 3-5.

My second hypothesis that minority families will value WLBs more than non-minority families was fully supported. As noted in Table 6, minority families value all WLBs more than non-minority families. This conclusion is especially true when breaking down the WLB categories and noting the vast disparity in family-related benefits, which minority families were found to value the most.

## **DISCUSSION**

Some of the greatest takeaways from this research is that considering fourteen distinctly different variables, the category of benefits valued most are career-related benefits. Career-related benefits may have been the most valued by our sample considering the demographic composition of being a younger sample, with mostly dual career households, and one-third being parents. Given these demographic characteristics, the focus on professional growth to better future career prospects is a sensible conclusion but is most fascinating considering that family-related benefits were the least valued.

Another key finding is that positive job outcomes were not increased by the mere presence or quantity of WLBs offered by an employer. In fact, in most cases, organizations will only see the added job outcomes by encouraging the usage of available WLBs. This is to say the investment of financial resources is not the solution to improving any of my defined positive job



outcomes but instead the “next steps” are more important, where ensuring benefits are utilized will bring about better retention, productivity, and culture within an organization.

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