

Motivating Employees to Walk in the Same Direction—A Study of the Influence Mechanism on Family-friendly Practices Improving Employees' Subjective Well-being

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Abstract. How does an organization motivate employees to walk in the same direction? The data from 179 employees was examined by using moderated multiple regression analysis based on SPSS. The family-friendly practices were taken as an independent variable and the employees' subjective well-being as a dependent variable to explore their influence effect and mechanism. The conclusion of this article is as follows: (1) Family-friendly practices correlate significantly with the employees' subjective well-being; (2) Employee cognitive factors, such as the norm of reciprocity and perceived organizational support, play a partial intermediary role in the impact of family-friendly practices on employees' subjective well-being; (3) Employee emotional factors, such as emotional balance, also play a partial intermediary role in the impact of family-friendly practices on employees' subjective well-being.

Keywords: SPSS, family-friendly practices, employees' well-being, employee cognitive factors, employee emotion factor.

1 Introduction

Some people believe that the goal of effective management is not only to improve the performance of employees, but also to promote the employees' well-being[1]. Family-friendly practices have received extensive attention as one of the strategies for enhancing employees' well-being. A meta-analysis study shows that research on family-friendly practices focused on topics such as job satisfaction and organizational performance[2]. This study will mainly discuss how family-friendly practices affect employees' subjective well-being by using moderated multiple regression analysis.

Family-friendly Practices refer to management measures which could help employees better perform their family responsibilities[3]. Family-friendly policies moderate the relationship of work demand and work-family conflict[4]. It can promote their work-family enhancement and balance[5]. We made the first hypothesis of this study: Hypothesis 1: Family-friendly practices can significantly increase employee subjective well-being.

The term "reciprocity norm" refers to criteria that all parties recognized during the exchange process. Li Shuangyan et al. (2009) found that the generalized reciprocity and balance reciprocity of enterprises significantly improved the life satisfaction of employees[6]. Perceived organizational support refers to an overall perception and belief of employees about how organizations see their contributions and care about their interests. A study shows that organization support in terms of perceived organizational support has a positive effect on subjective well-being[7]. Emotional balance refers to a relatively pleasant experience compared with an unpleasant one. We made the second hypothesis: Hypothesis 2a: There is a significant positive correlation between the norm of reciprocity and employees' subjective well-being; Hypothesis 2b: There is a significant positive correlation between perceived organizational support and employees' subjective well-being; Hypothesis 2c: There is a significant positive correlation between emotional balance and employee subjective well-being;

Chinese value interpersonal relationships and use reciprocity as an important strategy for survival and development. Family-friendly practices may have a significant impact on the norm of reciprocity. The various family-friendly practices can also enable employees to perceive and enhance the perceived organizational support. The effect of family-friendly practices on emotional balance is mainly achieved by raising positive emotions and reducing negative emotions. On this basis, we made the third hypothesis of this study: Hypothesis 3a: There is a significant positive correlation between family-friendly support and reciprocity norms; Hypothesis 3b: There is a significant positive correlation between family-friendly practices and perceived organizational support; Hypothesis 3c: There is a significant positive correlation between family-friendly practices and emotional balance;

The study by Eisenberger et al. (2003) confirms the intermediary role of reciprocity. Zhang Jianwei et al. (2011) proved that the intermediary role of perceived organizational support is the indirect mechanism of the family-friendly program. Social exchange theory, perceived organizational support theory, stress theory and motivation theory can further explain the intermediary role of reciprocal norms and perceived organizational support. In addition, emotion is an important factor in stress theory ,while motivation theory focuses on cognitive elements. These two factors play an important role in subjective well-being .On this basis, this study proposes that : Hypothesis 4a: Reciprocal norms and perceived organizational support have played an intermediary role in the impacts of family-friendly practices on employees' subjective well-being; Hypothesis 4b: Emotional balance plays an intermediary role in the impacts of family-friendly practices on employee subjective well-being;

2 Research Methods and Procedures

2.1 Respondents

Data collection was carried out through traditional questionnaires and web-based surveys (1:1). The web-based surveys are mainly completed by the subjects by a survey link. Foreign-funded enterprises, private enterprises, and state-owned enterprises are selected. A total of 120 questionnaires were collected in this survey and 105 questionnaires were valid . The data collection of the traditional questionnaires was completed in the prosperous business district of Guangzhou in two weekends (4 days) which were randomly selected. A total of 110

questionnaires were distributed in this type of survey, and 92 valid questionnaires were issued. The demographic characteristics of the surveyed subjects are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Sample Data Distribution (N=179)

Variable	Level	Frequency	Percentage(%)	Variable	Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	92	51.4	Natural of Units	Government agencies and institutions	45	25.1
	Female	87	48.6		State-owned enterprises	27	15.1
Working years	<2	65	36.3		Private enterprises	78	43.6
	2-5	32	17.9		Foreign-funded enterprises	29	16.2
	5-10	68	38.0	High School (secondary) and below	12	6.7	
Age Group	>10	14	7.8	Education	College	32	17.9
	<20	16	8.9		Bachelor's degree	123	68.7
	21-30	90	50.3		Masters and above	12	6.7
	31-40	61	34.1				
	41-50	12	6.7				

2.2 Research Tools

The family-friendly practice adopted the survey of family-friendly program revised by Min Mina (2008). The scale has a total of 19 items in the form of a five-point Likert scale with $\alpha = 0.89$. Subjective well-being was measured using the overall subjective well-being scale in the International University Survey scale compiled by Ed Diener (1999). The scale contains five entries in the form of a nine-point Likert scale with $\alpha = 0.72$. The norm of reciprocity uses the extensive reciprocity scale in the three-dimensional reciprocal normative scale designed by Wu et al. (2006). The scale contains four entries in the form of a five-point Likert scale with $\alpha = 0.71$. Organizational support adopted the POS scale developed by Eisenberger (1990). The scale contains eight entries in the form of a seven-point Likert scale with $\alpha = 0.86$. Emotional balance is based on the emotional balance scale designed by Bradburn (1969). The scale contains 10 items, and the answer is yes or no. $\alpha = 0.71$. After the questionnaire was recovered, SPSS17.0 was used for data analysis.

2.3 Results and Analysis

The Harman single factor test was performed by using SPSS software. The family-friendly practices, the norm of reciprocity, perceived organizational support, emotional balance, and subjective well-being were put into an exploratory factor analysis to test the unrotated factors. The results showed that 13 factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 were precipitated and the variance interpretation ratio of the first common factor was only 18.49% which does not exceed 40%. Therefore, the influence of common method biases on the study could be excluded.

Descriptive statistics for each variable are shown in Table 2. It can be seen that the scores of family-friendly practices and emotional balance are at a moderately low level, while the scores of broad reciprocity, perceived organizational support, and subjective well-being are all at a moderately high level. Meanwhile, there is a significant positive correlation between these five host variables. This laid the foundation for subsequent data analysis.

Table 2:Descriptive statistics of each variable(N=179)

Variable	M	SD	r				
			1	2	3	4	5
1Family-friendly practices	2.66	1.138	1				
2Emotional balance	0.49	0.417	.617*	1			
3Generalized reciprocity	3.16	1.050	.554***	.049*	1		
4Perceived organizational Support	4.22	0.619	.436***	.044*	.331***	1	
5Subjective well-being	5.21	0.078	.580***	.633**	.702***	.446***	1

*, p<0.05; **, p<0.01; ***, p<0.001.

Taking subjective well-being as a dependent variable while the other four variables were taken as independent ones to gradually return, it is clear that their contribution to subjective well-being was 20.6% (R²=0.206, F=63.651, Sig. <0.001).(1) Specific conditions are shown in Table 3.

$$\text{Subjective well-being} = 0.140* \text{ Family-friendly practices} + 0.292* \text{ Emotional balance} + 0.100* \text{ Reciprocity} + 0.266* \text{ Perceived organizational support} + 63.199 . (1)$$

Table 3:Regression analysis of each variable

Model	Unstandardized coefficients			Standardized coefficients	
	B	Standard error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	63.199	6.267	10.085	.000	
Family-friendly practices	.155	.090	.140	1.719	.008
Emotional balance	.251	.462	.292	3.852	.000
Reciprocity	.121	.134	.100	1.197	.033
Perceived organizational support	.427	.128	.266	3.334	.001

a. Dependent variable: Subjective well-being

Moderated multiple regression analysis, is a statistical technique used to examine the relationship between an independent variable, a moderator variable, and a dependent variable. We conducted a series of regression analysis with three regression equations for these five variables. The results are as followed. (Table 4-6) The amount of interpretation of family-friendly practices on subjective well-being s decreased from 14.5% to 9.5% when the emotional balance variable appeared, and the standard regression coefficient decreased from 0.215 to 0.169 (Figure 1). When the perceived organizational support sense variable appeared, the amount of interpretation of family-friendly practices on subjective well-being decreased from 14.5% to 9.2%, the standard regression coefficient decreased from 0.215 to 0.176 (Figure 2).When the reciprocal variable appeared, the interpretation of family-friendly practice on subjective well-being decreased from 14.5% to 2.9%, and the standard regression coefficient

decreased from 0.215 to 0.107 (Figure 3). In this way, it is proved that there are three intermediary factors between family-friendly practices and employee well-being, including emotional balance, reciprocity and perceived organizational support.

Table 4: The regression analysis of family-friendly practices on emotional balance, reciprocity and perceived organizational support (Equation 1)

	Emotional balance			Reciprocity			Perceived organizational support		
	β	R2	F	β	R2	F	β	R2	F
Family-friendly practices	.274	.117	20.920	.152	.086	33.978	.327	.121	39.299

Table 5: The regression analysis of family-friendly practices on subjective well-being (Equation 2)

	Subjective well-being		
	β	R2	F
Family-friendly practices	.215	.145	14.180

Table 6: The regression analysis of family-friendly practices, emotional balance, reciprocity, perceived organizational support and subjective well-being (Equation 3)

	Subjective well-being				Subjective well-being				Subjective well-being		
	β	R ²	F		β	R ²	F		β	R ²	F
Emotional balance	.325	.093	16.423	Reciprocity	.155	.051	16.005	Perceived organizational support	.181	.107	8.674
Family-friendly Practices	.169	.095	27.828	Family-friendly Practices	.107	.029	9.482	Family-friendly Practices	.176	.092	7.891

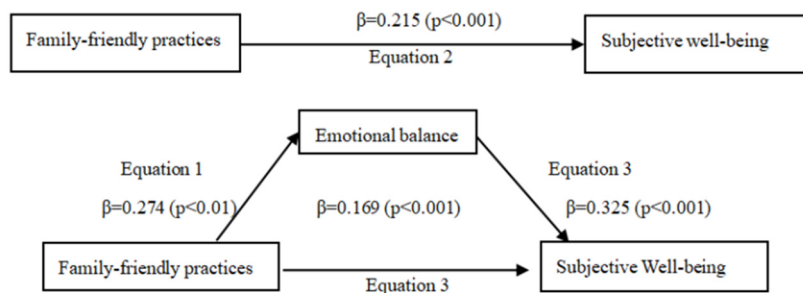


Fig 1: Examination of emotional balance as an intermediate model for family-friendly practices and subjective well-being

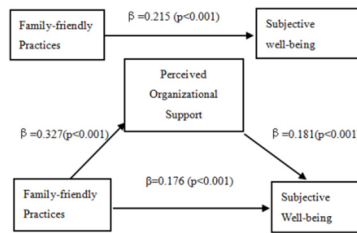


Fig 2: Examination of perceived organizational support as an intermediary model for family-friendly practices and subjective well-being

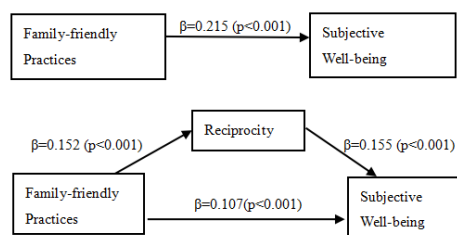


Fig 3: Examination of reciprocity as an intermediary model for family-friendly practices and subjective well-being

3 Discussions and Conclusions

SPSS is a commonly used statistical analysis software. From the statistical results, all the hypotheses have been verified. The study found that family-friendly practices have a significant impact on employees' subjective well-being. On one hand, this conclusion has confirmed that “work factors are significant to Chinese employees”. Yang et al. (2000) pointed out that individualism usually places work behind the family, while collectivism (such as in China) usually places work before the family (pp. 113-123)[8]. On the other hand, this result has confirmed the conclusions of research on similar topics in the past. For example, more job satisfaction can be attracted by lowering the work-family conflict of employees among employees using family-friendly policies and supervisor support[9]. The findings on the intermediary role of emotional balance may be explained by stress theory and motivation theory. Stress theory believes that family-friendly practices can maintain the balance between work and family by reducing psychological tension (Frye and Breugh, 2004), or directly reducing employees’ workload, job complexity, and role conflict to maintain emotional balance (Caplan, 1775). The motivation theory believes that the implementation of family-friendly policies sends signals to employees that companies are concerned about the work and family of employees, which will make employees have a positive psychological response. A study shows that life satisfaction, positive affect, negative affect, and emotional balance correlated significantly with job performance[10]. This study discovered the intermediary role of reciprocal norms and perceived organizational support. The psychological mechanisms of perceived organizational support can also be explained by social exchange theory. Once employees perceive that the organization supports themselves, they will have obligations beyond the contract, and thus generate more positive behavior.

The theoretical value: (1) The study has put individual cognitive factors and emotional factors together, which can more systematically reveal the impacts and ways of individual factors between family-friendly practices and employees' well-being; (2) This study helps to further enrich the content of labor relations in Chinese enterprises and consolidate the status of "happiness" as the core content of the humanistic spirit; (3) It is an effective supplement to the previous concept of "high-performance human resource management".

The practical implications: (1) Managers should change their management concepts, understand and support family-friendly practices; (2) Organizations should strive to create a "family-friendly" cultural atmosphere; (3) Managers should refine "soft strategies" for human resource management, balance the interests of organizations and employees, and introduce flexible adjustment measures for enterprises.

This study still has the following limitations: (1) The sample representativeness is relatively limited, the sampling area is not broad enough, and the sampling method is mainly subjective answers, which may affect the promotion of the conclusions; (2) The path of the impact of family-friendly practices on employees' subjective well-being is relatively complex. This study selected only a few variables, which may not reveal the overall appearance of it. In the future, big data analysis and experimentations can be adopted to further discuss the effect mechanism of family-friendly practices on employees' well-being. Besides, the employees' subjective well-being can be examined in connection with performance.

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