

ABSTRACT

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This thesis aims at identifying factors important in employees' strive toward combining work and family in a satisfying way. The thesis relies on four papers that focus on the use of parental leave, experiences of work-family conflict and experiences of work-personal life harmonization. Papers I, II and III are based on several surveys of fathers working at private companies in Sweden. Paper IV is based on data from a survey of employed mothers and fathers working for Swedish national governmental authorities.

*Paper I* examines the effects of organizational culture on fathers' use of paid parental leave benefits. *Paper II* aims at examining fathers' experiences of work-family conflict and their perceived extent of family-supportive organizational culture. The association between a family-supportive organizational culture and work-family conflict was also explored. *Paper III* explores managerial fathers' flexible working arrangements and experiences of work-family conflict. The aim of *Paper IV* was to examine parents' self-reported health and their experiences of work-personal life harmonization.

The results of the present investigations suggest that:

- a) Men's use of parental leave is affected by the company's commitment to caring values, level of father-friendliness and support for women's equal employment opportunities, as well as fathers' perceptions of support from top managers, and of work-group norms that reward task performance vs. long hours at work;
- b) Employed fathers who experience their work organization as family-supportive will likely be better able to combine work and family;
- c) Managerial fathers experience high levels of work-family conflict despite high access to flexible working arrangements;
- d) Gender egalitarianism in the family and flexible working arrangements are important factors in managerial fathers' experience of work-family conflict;
- e) Work-personal life harmonization is positively related to parents' self-reported health.

This thesis contributes to the discussion concerning how the work-family dilemma should be solved. The results reveal employees' needs for gender equality and informal flexible working arrangements, as well as to work in organizational cultures based on values supporting employees' efforts to combine work and personal life in a harmonized way. The thesis concludes that work organizations have to assume their responsibility and make efforts that challenge traditional values. If they have the courage to do this, their employees are likely to have better self-reported health and better possibilities for a life that works.

*Key words:* parental leave, Swedish family policy, work-family conflict, work-personal life harmonization, flexible working arrangements, organizational culture