Organizational characteristics: how do they relate to work-life policies in organizations in the United Kingdom?

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June 22, 2012

Abstract

In this study we explore the relationship between organizational characteristics and the existence of work-life policies in companies in the UK. We found that public organizations offer more often work-life policies than private companies, and the larger the organization, the more often work-life policies were offered. Finally, the higher the proportion of women in companies, the more often work-life policies were offered.

1

Contents

1   Introduction

The increasing number of women and single parents who join the workforce has been observed for several decades (Lewis et al., 2008). A growing number of people dislikes the idea of having the same job their whole life and still parents want to be able to take their children to school in the morning. Therefore, flexibility in the workplace and scheduling time of work becomes a requirement (Stavrou et al., 2010). Using work-life policies for flexibility not only helps people to balance the demands of work and personal life, it can also be seen as a staffing strategy, whenever this flexibility is in line with companies' needs (Stavrou et al., 2010). Based on the literature, work-life arrangements in this research are defined as policies implemented by organizations to help employees combine paid work and non-paid family activities including family care and domestic tasks (Beauregard & Henry, 2008; Den Dulk, 2001; Konrad & Mangel, 2000; Roehling et al., 2001; Evens, 2001). Work-life policies are for example childcare assistance, family-leave policies, flexible work scheduling and other policies aimed at reducing conflict between paid work and non-work related demands (Roehling et al., 2001; Beauregard & Henry, 2008). Although sometimes the costs of these programs might be high, they often are worth the money (Beauregard & Henry, 2008).

A lot of studies have been done on this topic. Many researchers have written about work-life policies and its connection to organizational performance. Both employee-focused (individual level) explanations such as job-related attitudes and perceived organizational support, and organizational level explanations like job productivity and retention, are explored (Beauregard & Henry, 2008; Kossek & Ozeki, 1999; Yasbek, 2004). Other literature focuses on state regulations in relation to work-life policies (Deven et al., 1998; Network on Childcare, 1994, 1996; Office for Economics Co-operation and Development, 1995).

This study will look at work-life policies from a different point of view. Not much research has been done on the number of work-life policies in different types of organizations, compared with studies on organizational performance and state regulations (Den Dulk, 1997; 2001; Evans, 2001). In their research, Den Dulk (1997; 2001) and Evans (2001) focus on different kinds of work-life policies offered by different employers. They look at differences between countries, and consider the influence of organizational characteristics on the introduction of work-life policies in organizations (Den Dulk, 1997; 2001; Evans, 2001). According to them, organizations are important actors in the provision of work-life policies and, because they can supplement public provisions (Den Dulk, 1997; 2001; Evans, 2001). Characteristics of organizations can explain why some organizations implement these policies and why other do not. In contrast with Den Dulk (1997; 2001) and Evans (2001), this study will not make a cross-national comparison, but will focus on the United Kingdom. Studies on organizational characteristics in the UK are limited. Hardly any studies give a broad perspective of this topic for this country. Although organizational characteristics are mentioned in studies on work-life policies in the UK (Cully et al., 1999), the actual relationship between the two is hardly ever studied. Thus, not many solutions have been handed by the scientific community. Therefore, this study is composed in an effort to fill

this gap. Our research question will be the following:

> What is the relationship between organizational characteristics of an organization and the existence of work-life policies in organizations in the United Kingdom?

This research could contribute to the awareness of the fact that certain companies are restrained by their characteristics, aiming new policy at those companies. An example would be that companies offering no policies, would to a certain extent be obliged to offer minimal work-life arrangements. In this way more people could benefit from work-life policies and be less troubled by the discrepancy that occurs when work and family are in conflict (Stavrou et al., 2010).

As we will look in this study at the UK, this study will mainly provide knowledge about the effects of organizational characteristics on the implementation of work-life policies in organizations in this country. Therefore, this study in essence only influence the society of the UK, when state policies will be implemented to change these characteristics. Esping-Andersen (1990) has divided countries based on the degree to which social regulations permit people to make their living standard independent of pure market forces. He makes a distinction between liberal, conservative-corporatist and social-democratic welfare states. The UK is considered the most close to liberal in Europe, which is characterized by limited governmental involvement and an emphasis on the free market (Esping-Andersen, 1990). With regard to work-life policies, there is almost no national legislation in the UK (Den Dulk, 1997). Until the late 1990s work-family arrangements were mainly a private (family) responsibility. Work-family reconciliation measures and financial support for families are still the weakest in the UK in comparison to France, Germany and the Netherlands (Lewis et al., 2008). Individual employees instead of the government are responsible for solutions to make the combination of paid employment and family work (Den Dulk, 1997). Moreover, within the UK the variation of usage (by employers) of these policies is the greatest in comparison to the other countries (Den Dulk, 2001). Looking at policies of individual firms in a country with almost no national legislation on work-life policies, makes this research specifically important. The existing policies in companies came into being almost entirely by market forces. Therefore, a factor such as governmental pressure might play a smaller part in determining the implementation of these policies than for example proportion of women in a company (Den Dulk, 1997; 2001).

First, we will look at various theories on characteristics of companies in relation to the presence of work-life policies. Then, by using the dataset of the Establishment Survey on Working Time and Work-Life Balance (ESWT 2004/2005) we will look at the actual situation in the UK.

2 Theories

In the next paragraph the most influential theories on organizational characteristics with regard to the offering of work-life policies are discussed. These theories give some explanations as to why some companies offer work-life policies and others do not. The definition of work-life policies has already been explained in the introduction, however, throughout this research we speak of work-life as well as family arrangements. Both reflect the same policies. This applies to the use of the words company and organization as well. Moreover, in this research no distinctions are made between different economical sectors, because this is not the major focus point of this research. Instead, a distinction between public and private companies is made. But, first, we will shed light on the case of the United Kingdom.

2.0.1 The case of the UK

The UK has a strong tradition of non-involvement by the state in the private sphere of the family (Den Dulk, 2001; Lewis et al., 2008). From the start, the UK's social policy was mainly based on the idea that parents had to decide for themselves how to combine work and family. This can be recognized in the provision of work-life arrangements by the state. Until the late 1990s family arrangements were only provided for through market force. Up until then, government had stimulated the participation of women in the labour market – in view of equal opportunities – , however disregarded the fact that caring responsibilities were left undiscussed (Den Dulk, 2001). At the end of the 1990s, after the election of the New Labour Government, provision of childcare was the first kind of work-life policy that was implemented in the UK. This policy was introduced in order to particularly stimulate mothers' employment in poor neighbourhoods. Free part-time nursery was being offered to all children over three year, but not until 2008 it was obligated to local authorities to provide care for this group (Lewis et al., 2008). In 1999 leave policies were also developed. The UK has focussed on providing longer and better paid maternity leave: it has increased from fourteen weeks to nine months (Den Dulk, 2001). In 2003, the right to request working flexibility became statutory (Lewis et al., 2008).

Since 1997, changes have taken place in the UK due to the acceptance of the fact that work-life imbalance has to be dealt with, however one cannot speak of a radical turning point in work-life policy history, because the role of the state is still debated (Den Dulk, 2001). New instruments have been introduced, such as the right to request flexible working arrangements, and existing policies such as maternity leave, have improved in only a few years (Lewis et al., 2008). Although governmental policies have been limited, government has always tried to stimulate employers to create work-life arrangements voluntarily (Den Dulk, 2001).

2.0.2 Institutionalization Theory

The Institutionalization Theory starts by stating that organizations react to normative pressures of society and government in different ways. "Employers do not only have to meet economic considerations, but also need to respond to regulations, norms, laws, and social expectations", Den Dulk adds (2001: 60). The degree to which organizations respond to these pressures is to a great extent dependent on companies' need for legitimacy in society as well as the possible benefits that are acquired when companies respond to these pressures (Den Dulk, 2001; Goodstein, 1994). However, companies' reactions to pressures also have to do with various organizational characteristics according to the Institutionalization Theory: the sector (public or private) in which companies are located, the size of companies and the proportion of women in companies are seen as important indicators for the adoption or presence of family arrangements.

Public and private companies are both under pressure, however in varying ways. Public organizations have to set an example by implementing work-life policies, because the government wants to carry out the value of a good work-life balance (Den Dulk, 1997). Thus, public organizations are more likely to develop facilities under governmental pressure. For private companies, society is the predominant pressuring actor (aside from state regulated policy laws), because for instance public image influences the economic well-being of a company (Felstead et al., 2002).

Under circumstances in which organizations are dependent (for instance in economic sectors that rely heavily on public image), they will more likely be 'responsive' to societal and governmental pressures (Den Dulk, 2001). However, to society invisible chain organizations can be more 'resistant' to pressures from society, because they are suppliers to other more visible firms and thus have to care less about their public image (Felstead et al., 2002). Subsequently, public companies can to a large extent be appointed to responsiveness and private companies to resistance. Public companies are pressured by government to be family-friendly and society expects them the same. Moreover, wages are fixed for public companies, whereas private companies' wages are often higher and they can to a larger extent disregard social responsiveness, because their cost-benefit nature does not compel them to be responsive (Den Dulk, 2001).

'Visibility' plays an important part in the presence of work-life policies according to the Institutionalization Theory, because when attention is drawn towards a certain topic as to being important, for instance via media or political debates, organizations are expected to institutionalize these new ideas (Den Dulk, 2001). *Large companies* are more visible in society than smaller companies and thus more prone to public appraisal (e.g. positive public image). Large companies are active in larger parts of the organizational market, are cooperating with a diffuser set of companies, and are more often active on the stock market – they 'go public' (IPO[1]) more often than small companies do (Pagano et al., 1998). Also,

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[1]IPO is an acronym for "Initial Public Offering", which means that companies enter the stock market in order to sell shares of the company (Pagano et al., 1998).

large companies are keen on controlling their public image, because a negative public image can do lots of damage to their financial assets (Pagano et al., 1998). The spending of large amounts of money on advertisement contributes to the maintaining or the improving of the view the public has of companies (Den Dulk, 2001). Societal pressures are lesser received by smaller companies, because they are to a lesser extent pursuing social legitimacy then larger companies, for they can – due to their lower visibility in society – survive without it (Felstead et al., 2010).

An important motivation for adopting work-life policies is also the keeping up with ones competitors, because a company has to present itself as at least as attractive as the other companies (Felstead et al., 2010). McKee et al. (2000) add to this that if companies fail to live up to their competition, not only recruitment will be impeded, but also their suppliers, customers and employees may change their opinion on the company. Thus, the Institutionalization Theory states that reputation plays an important part in the pressures that companies experience, which is more important for larger companies than for smaller companies (Den Dulk, 2001).

When expectations around the arrangement of family policies of both society and government rise, the pressure of responding to these demands increases most for visible companies (Felstead et al., 2010). Den Dulk argues that this can also result in negative organizational outcomes: "in order to survive, organizations conform to what is societally defined as appropriate and efficient, largely disregarding the actual impact on organizational performance" (2001: 60). To overcome this problem of visibility, larger companies more often have a larger human resource management staff, which informs an employer about societal developments and demands, from within the organization for more family policies (Den Dulk, 2001).

A theory that can be viewed as a meso perspective of the Institutionalization Theory is the Situational Theory. It states that employers are subject to immediate circumstances. Discussing the *proportion of women* in companies, in their study Felstead et al. (2002) find that a macro-development like the increasing participation of women in the labor market is one of the most important circumstances that companies have to react to. For, subsequent growing imbalance between the work and family domain of female employees requires employers' attention, they state (Felstead et al., 2002). Employers can then choose to respond to this imbalance (by making exceptions or by integrating such family policies) or to ignore it and be in risk of high replacement costs (Yasbek, 2004). Immediate circumstances can, however, also be the underrepresentation of women in a company, in which case women's pressures are lesser received by the company, and women may therefore only make use of (non-formalized) family arrangements by exception (Den Dulk, 2001).

2.0.3   Business Case Theory

The Business Case Theory states that economic thought predominates when employers instate work-family policies (Evans, 2001). Leatherman et al. add to this that "a Business

Case exists if the investing entity believes that a positive indirect effect on organizational function and sustainability will accrue within a reasonable time frame" (2003: 18). Thus, the Business Case is based on classic cost-benefit analysis. In agreement with the Institutionalization Theory, the Business Case Theory argues that the sector (public-private), the size of companies, and the proportion of women in companies are important factors in explaining the degree to which work-life policies are present in companies. However, the Business Case gives additional theoretical explanations stating that the proportion of skilled workers in a company also contributes to the explaining of family policies in a company.

First, the Business Case considers *public and private companies*. It states that visible private organizations benefit from a positive public image, because it can contribute to riding sales and attraction of skilled (female) employees (Dex & Scheibl, 1999), although Den Dulk (2001) remarks that societal responsibility only goes so far to the organizational interests. Thus, when the costs of being societally responsible outweigh the benefits of having those arrangements, companies often do not adopt these policies. Moreover, public companies benefit more from having work-life policies than the private sector, according to Yasbek (2004), because they have to take into account the economical fluctuations of the company to a lesser extent than private companies. For both companies, investing into construction and implementation of work-life arrangements on short notice produces costs, but in the long run, it is very beneficial (Dex & Scheibl, 1999).

Second, *large companies* are important in predicting work-life policies in an organization. The Business Case theorizes that large businesses get positive results from work-life policies, because in the long run high productivity and loyalty overshadow the direct costs of filling in for absent colleagues and on more importantly, large organizations have enough financial capital to afford the policies (Evans, 2001). Moreover, the size of an organization tells something about the ability of a organization to cope with large training costs. Being able to afford large training costs means that large companies can retain and replace many skilled workers (Glass & Estes, 1997). In smaller companies, skilled workers' turnover is perceived as a bigger problem than in larger companies, because replacement costs are more difficultly paid for by smaller companies. Moreover, Glass and Estes (1997) have shown in their study that large organizations introduce work-life arrangements more often than smaller ones, because of relatively higher financial capital – Glass and Estes (1997) measured that child-care arrangements (e.g. payment for, or on-site facilities) are significantly more provided for by larger companies. In their study 32% of companies larger than 250 employees supplied child-care arrangements versus 9% in small companies with less than 50 employees (Glass & Estes, 1997). As mentioned before, large companies do or do not benefit from their public image in society, which is for a great deal manifested through media attention (Den Dulk, 2001). This media attention again is very important for attracting customers. The Business Case agrees with the Institutionalization Theory that because large companies are more visible in society, making use of work-life policies not only provides a positive public image, but therefore might also bring about a rising in sales (Dex & Scheibl, 1999).

A last Business Case argument as to why smaller companies are less likely to adopt work-

life policies is 'formalization'. Because of for instance lower resources, smaller companies cannot afford to formalize arrangements, but do well provide them informally, thus per capita (Den Dulk, 2001).

Third, the Business Case theorizes that the *proportion of women* in a company has implications for the presence of work-life policies. For employers with a large proportion of female personnel, developing work-family arrangements is in most cases a good decision. For example, Goff et al. (1990) state that childcare arrangements can reduce female employees' absenteeism and turnover indirectly. This is because mostly women suffer from an imbalance between work and family life, causing them to have negative feelings towards companies that do not support employees that are mothers, which often results in absenteeism and turnover (Allen, 2001). Reducing this conflict by introducing these kind of arrangements can improve the negative feelings of mothers towards their companies and can ascertain their loyalty and commitment to the organization (Allen, 2001). The benefits of reducing absenteeism and turnover can often be higher than the costs of childcare arrangements. However, for employers with a small proportion of women or with many (low skilled) women who are easily replaced, these arrangements might not be beneficial, because then the costs outweigh the benefits (Den Dulk, 1997).

The Business Case continues promoting work-life policies to companies with many women in stating that not only are companies eager to retain skilled female employees, adopting work-life policies also increases the effectiveness at work (OECD, 2007). The diminishing of work-family conflict lowers the women's stress levels and thereby ameliorates female employees' wellbeing, mentally as well as physically (Glass & Estes, 1997). Glass and Estes (1997) found in their study that women who were hardly supported by their companies (in the case of a lack of childcare arrangements) often suffered from weak mental health (e.g. depression, physical distress), which can result in general physical malaise. As a consequence, women are attracted to firms that offer these family policies, and this again means that those companies have a wide choice of selecting skilled women (Dex & Scheibl, 1999).

Moreover, Hakim (2002) argues that there are three types of lifestyles that women choose from: a 'home-centered lifestyle' (the primary loyalty is to the family, and work is situated around it), a 'work-centered lifestyle' (the women emphasizes work and competition as primary focus, and family is situated around it) and an 'adaptive lifestyle' (women want to combine work and family without placing their emphasized loyalty to either one of them). The last lifestyle is preferred by most women in European countries (OECD, 2007). Work-life arrangements do nothing but contribute to a preference by women to not have to choose one domain over the other (Hakim, 2002). Companies with a large group of women (and subsequent work-life arrangements) contribute to the remaining of women within the 'adaptive lifestyle' which is beneficial for the company too (e.g. less work-family conflict, higher productivity, more loyalty) (Kossek & Ozeki, 1999).

Last, companies with a high *proportion of skilled workers* have direct or indirect financial benefits from adopting work-life policies, because according to the Business Case,

the key factor here is that these companies make efforts to retain their 'best people' (Den Dulk & Peper, 2009). The Business Case's driving argument appends to this: "the fear of future shortages in skilled labor [makes employers supply work-life arrangements]" (Den Dulk, 2001: 52). In more progressive companies 'new' policies such as work-life policies are adopted more often. Three forms of 'Organizational Learning' give explanations for the presence or the adoption of work-life policies: accommodation, elaboration and transformation (Den Dulk & Peper, 2009: 10). 'Accommodation' means that work-life policies are granted by exception, 'elaboration' means that there are protocols to handle the recurring issues (e.g. parental leave) and 'transformation' means that an organization adjusts its policies in order to cope with work-life imbalances (Den Dulk & Peper, 2009: 10). Den Dulk and Peper state that transformation only occurs in organizations that are located in economic growth sectors and that are therefore used to the "rapid changes in the global marketplace" – skilled workers are usually the aim of preservation in these companies (Den Dulk, 2001; Den Dulk & Peper, 2009, p.10). As mentioned before, the absence of family supportive policies often causes recruitment problems, but especially finding managers and professionals is difficult, because they are attractive for many companies and can therefore choose between their options (Glass & Estes, 1997). Thus, from a cost-benefit point of view, lacking family policies can indirectly cause for companies to be less competitive, by not attracting certain managers and professionals (Glass & Estes, 1997).

Yasbek (2004) also states that multiple researches have proven that firms with a higher percentage of professionals are more likely to implement work-life policies. Professionals are harder to recruit and retain and are more valuable than less well-paid employees. Work-life policies are an effort of companies to retain these professionals. As a consequence, professionals might put more effort in their tasks when family policies are available in a company, according to Yasbek (2004), because of their goodwill towards the company.

2.1 Hypotheses

Given the theoretical framework we have derived four hypotheses.

The first hypothesis is:

> In the UK, public companies offer work-life policies more than private companies.

The second hypothesis is:

> In the UK, the larger the companies, the more often work-life policies are offered.

The third hypothesis:

> In the UK, the higher the proportion of women in companies, the more often work-life policies are offered.

The fourth hypothesis:

> In the UK, the higher the proportion of skilled workers in companies, the more
> often work-life policies are offered.

3 Methods

3.1 Data

In our analysis we made use of the data collected by Eurofound[2] through the "Management (MM) Questionnaire", resulting in the "Establishment Survey on Working Time and Work-Life Balance 2004/2005" (ESWT 2004/2005). This survey gives an overview of working time policies and practices in establishments in the European Union and also looks at the different views on these policies and practices by different actors in an establishment. Finally, it provides policy makers with information on developments in this field and gives a clear overview of the main issues.

This survey covers responses from EU15 Member States, namely: Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom. After the first phase was completed, the survey was extended with six of the new EU Member States: Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Poland and Slovenia. A total number of 21,031 respondents were interviewed (ESWT 2004/2005). Each management (MM) Questionnaire was conducted in randomly selected establishments. The interview was held with the most senior person (manager) in the local establishment, who was responsible for the personnel in his or her establishment.

All interviews were carried out as Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI). National fieldwork agencies carried out the interviews de-centrally in the main data collection phase in the period between September 21st to November 19th 2004 in the EU-15 countries. From May 12th until July 1st 2005, the second phase was carried out. Interviews have been done in establishments with at least 10 employees in virtually all sectors of activity. Large companies in the sample were overrepresented in order to get sufficiently high number of interviews among large establishments (ESWT, 2004/2005). The managers of the institutes in charge of the data-collection have verified whether the questionnaire was adequate for data-collection in the countries of the second phase, because the working culture sometimes differs from the EU15 countries. It seemed that some slight adaptations were necessary, but on the whole, the questionnaire was suitable for interviews in the additional 6 countries.

A special screening procedure had to be developed and adopted for the five countries of the first phase (Belgium, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg and Portugal) and for three countries of the second phase (The Czech Republic, Cyprus and Hungary) in order to create a sample that could be based on company addresses. This was necessary, because some countries did only provide address registers at company level and not at the level of local units.

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[2]European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (eurofound.europe.eu)

When the non-responses were evaluated and listed, this difference between countries with screening procedures and countries without screening procedures has been made for the EU-15 countries as well as the 6 new countries. It appeared that there was a slight difference in the structure and number of nonresponses owing to size and sector. The sampling matrix showed that a sufficiently high number of interviews was available in each cell, therefore the quality of the sample was not affected by this difference in nonresponses and structure. Any differences between the cells of this sampling matrix, with regard to response rates, were corrected in the weighting process. This weighting process was by any means necessary because of the choice to over represent large companies (ESWT, 2004/2004).

3.2 Measures

Work-life policies

Work-life or family policies are the dependent variables in this research. The ESWT has listed a number of work-life arrangements in their questionnaire and managers were asked whether these arrangements were offered by their establishment. The following seven arrangements were asked: company kindergarten or crèche, professional help for childcare (e.g. company babysitting service), professional help for household management (e.g. company cleansing or shopping services), other forms of domestic support (not specified), parental leave, flexible working hours, part-time work. The category of part-time work consists of 9 categories, ranging from "none at all", and further in five ascending categories of 20%, to "all". First, the categories "don't know" and "no answer" are recoded as system missing, then, "none at all" was recoded as '0' and the other categories, in which more than 0% of the employees worked part-time, are recoded into '1'. The variables company kindergarten or crèche, professional help for childcare, professional help for household management, other forms of domestic support, already were dichotomous, parental leave and flexible working hours were already dichotomous. We have recoded them into 0 being 'no' and 1 being 'yes'.

In order to make analyses less complicated, considering the many dependent variables, and because this research does not focus on the separate work-life policies, we construct a 'Work-Life Index (WLI), consisting of the seven variables mentioned above. First, the seven variables are recoded into dummy variables. Next, the seven variables were summed up and taken together into one variable, the 'Work-Life Index', ranging from 0 to 6.

Public or private company

To analyze public and private companies, the dichotomous variable in the ESWT dataset addressed to public companies is used, which is embodied in the questionnaire as: "does this establishment belong to the public sector?" (ESWT, 2004/2005). The possible answers in the questionnaire are 1 = yes and 2 = no. This variable is recoded into the variable 'public' with 0 = no and 1 = yes. In effect, private companies are operationalized as 'non-public' companies which might be seen as problematic. According to the ESWT Questionnaire, companies can for instance be semi-governmental, in foreign ownership, in majority domestic ownership, and so on. However, this study does not focus on different

kinds of ownership, therefore a dichotomy between public and private companies is made.

Size

In order to operationalize the size of a company, we recode the ordinal variable in the ESWT dataset into the continuous variable 'size', using the class midpoints of the categories. For the last class, namely "500 or more employees" it is not possible to take a class midpoint. Therefore, we will give this class a number that is 100 more than the former class, namely 549,5. This is in line with the difference between class 7 and 8, and 8 and 9. The class midpoints of the variable 'size' are 1=14.5, 2=34.5, 3=74.5, 4=124.5, 5=174.5, 6=224.5, 7=274.5, 8=349.5, 9=449.5, 10=549.5.

Proportion of women

Like 'size', the ordinal variable for the proportion of women in the dataset will be reconstructed into a continuous variable. The variable in the dataset consists of 7 classes with categories ranging from 0 to 100%. The variable is reconstructed into 7 classes using class midpoints, the midpoints being: $1 = 0$, $2 = 10$, $3 = 29.5$, $4 = 59.5$, $5 = 69.5$, $6 = 89.5$ and $7 = 100$.

Proportion of skilled workers

Like the variable for size and the proportion of women, the proportion of skilled workers is transformed from an ordinal variable into a continuous variable, using class midpoints. The old variable ranges from 0 to 100% and consists of seven classes. The new class midpoints are: $1 = 0$, $2 = 10$, $3 = 29.5$, $4 = 59.56$, $5 = 69.5$, $6 = 89.5$ and $7 = 100$.

3.3   Missings

In this research system missings are dealt with by using listwise deletion. Individuals who did not answer certain questions will be deleted from the whole analysis. As we apply this to our data, the N decreases from 1507 for all dependent and independent variables, to a N of 1303. We consider the sample size large enough after listwise deletion, because 82,9% of the original N remains. The initial variables did not have any missings, however after reconstruction of the new variables, some categories, namely 'no answer' and 'don't know' were recoded as system missing.

3.4   Statistical model

First, interrelationships between the independent variables are observed, in order to control for multicollineality. This is measured by using a bivariate correlation analysis. The aim is to see whether the independent variables overlap to a large extent, and therefore whether independent variables have predicting power apart from the other variables, or if they are influenced by them. In the case of high correlation coefficients, indirect or spurious connections are possible.

A linear regression analysis is used to test the relationship between the independent variables (public or private sector, size, proportion of women, proportion of skilled workers)

and the dependent variable (Work-Life Index). The results will show whether the independent variables have a significant relation with the dependent variable and whether this connection is positive or negative.

3.5 Sample

The descriptive analysis below shows the minimum, maximum, mean and standard deviation of the variables used in this research. Table 1 shows the distributions of the independent variables and table 2 shows those of the dependent variables.

Table 1 **Descriptives table of all variables**

Variables	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
Public	0	1		
Size	14.500	549.500	116.204	155.695
Proportion of women	0	100	48.439	30.475
Proportion of skilled workers	0	100	43.139	35.692
Work-Life Index [a]	0	6	2.192	1.054
Total N = 1303				

[a] = Consisting of variables 'company kindergarten or crèche', 'professional help for childcare', 'professional help for household management', 'other forms of domestic support', 'parental leave, 'flexible working hours' and 'part-time work'.

The independent variable 'size' is not normally distributed as can be seen in the frequency table and more specifically in the boxplot (Table 1, Figure 1). 'Size' is a negatively skewed variable, which means that the large part of respondents are part of a small to average organization. The boxplot in Figure 1 shows this distribution. The mean of the distribution of 'size' is 116,201, however, the median is 34,5. This tells something about the extreme negative skew in the distribution. In the boxplot it shows that the first two quartiles are located below 34,5. This means that half of the companies researched are small to medium sized. The third quartile ranges from 34,5 to roughly 130, which still does not include large companies. Thus 75% of the companies in this research are small to medium sized. According to the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) this is plausible for the case of the UK (www.bis.gov.uk, 16-06-2012).

Figure 1   Boxplot of the variable 'size'
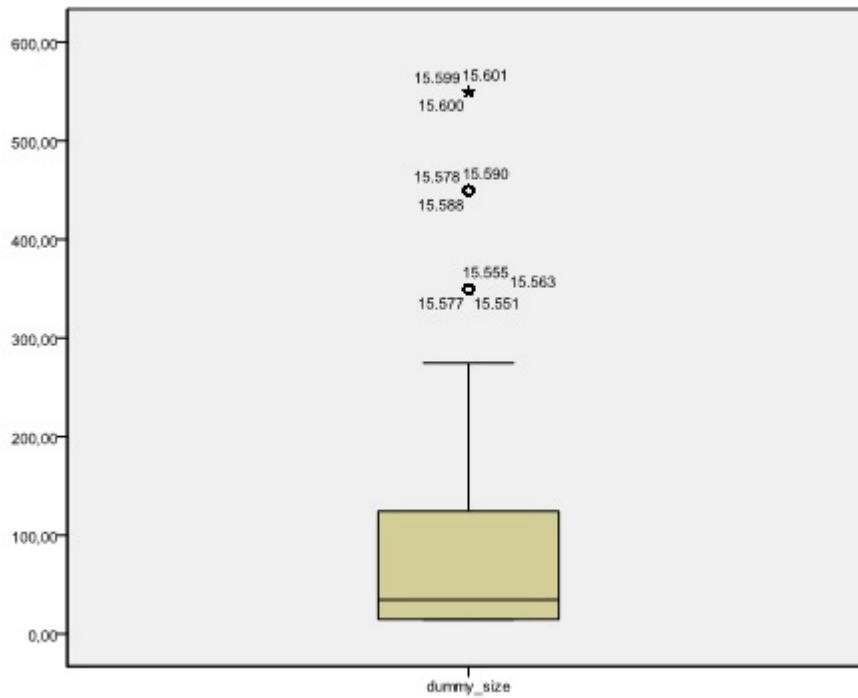
Looking at a frequency table of the variable 'public', 246 companies (18.9%) belong to the public sector, whereas the remaining 1057 companies (81.9%) are private companies, which indicates that the distribution is negatively skewed towards private companies (0.00). According to the Office of National Statistics, 51,9% of the total working age population (16 to 64 years old) belongs to the private sector, whereas 17,7% of the same population belongs to the public sector (ONS, 16-06-2012). Thus, the ESWT dataset provides a more or less corresponding distribution with the total population of the United Kingdom.

15

Figure 2   **Histogram with a normal curve of the variable 'proportion of women'**
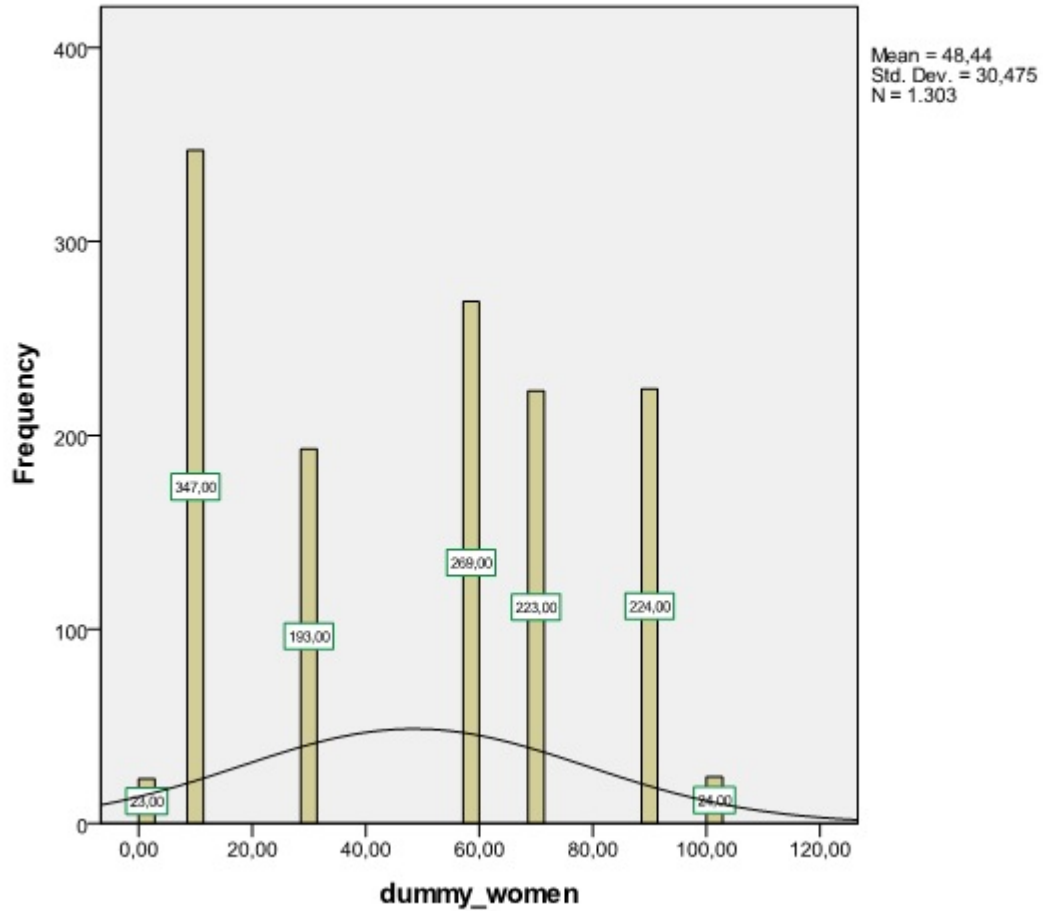
The variable 'proportion of women' is almost normally distributed (Figure 2). However, looking at the histogram, the mode of 10.00 (with 347 cases) is far from the mean (48.44) and the median (59.50), indicating slight negative skewing. Half of the respondents indicate that their companies consist of less than or equal to 59.50% of female workers. On average 48.44% of the employees of UK companies are female. Thus this distribution shows that the male-female ratio is somewhat even. Further, 23 companies indicate that they have no women in their staff and 24 companies consist of only women.

Figure 3   **Histogram with a normal curve of the variable 'proportion of skilled workers'**
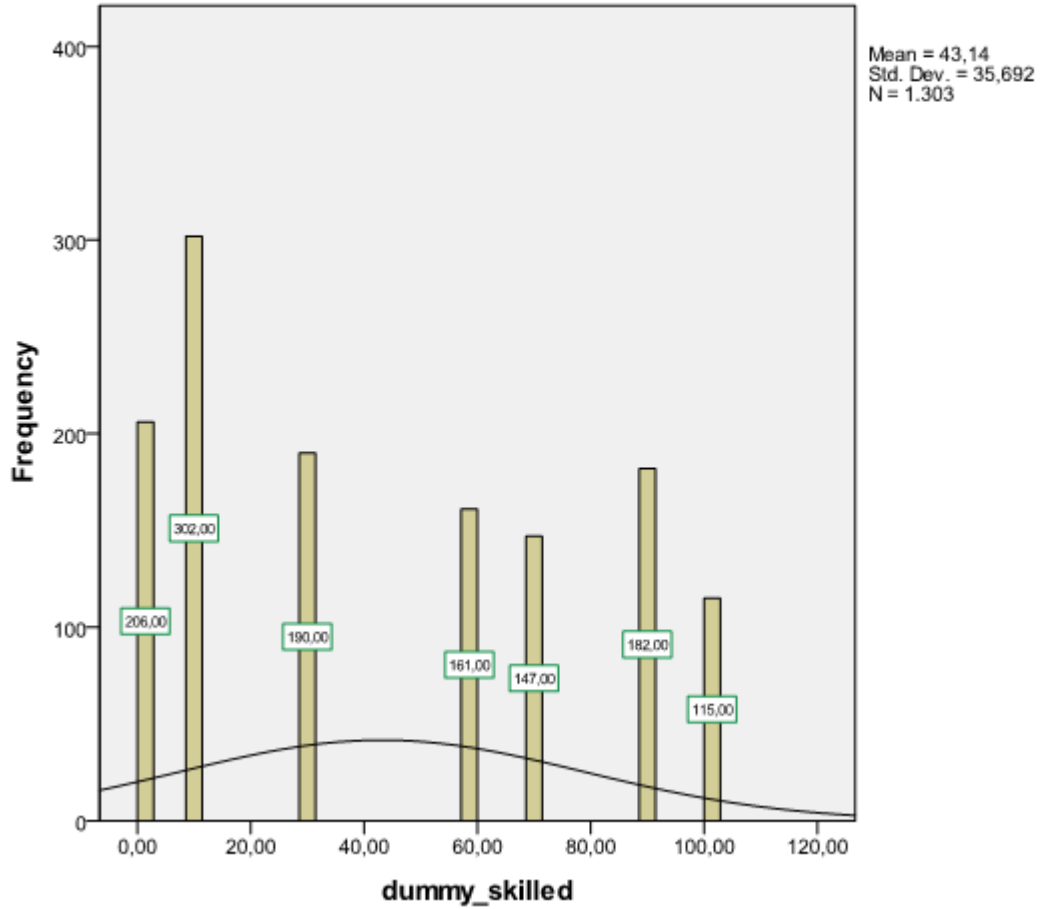
The distribution of the variable 'proportion of skilled workers' is negatively skewed: the mode is 10.00 (with 302 cases), the median 29.50 and the mean 43.14. Thus, half of the respondents answers that their company consists of 29.50% or less skilled workers, whereas companies on average have 43.14% of skilled workers. Additionally, there are more companies indicating they have no skilled workers (206) than companies having only skilled workers (115).

4 Results

4.1 Correlation analysis

Table 2   Correlation analysis table with independent variables 'public', 'size', 'women', 'skilled'

		Public	Size	Women	Skilled
Public	Pearson	1			
	Sign				
Size	Pearson	.042	1		
	Sign	.126			
Women	Pearson	.293**	.048	1	
	Sign	.000	.082		
Skilled	Pearson	.117**	-.032	-.082*	1
	Sign	.000	.251	.003	

* = p<.05 (two-tailed)
** = p<.001 (two-tailed)

To see if there are any interconnections between the independent variables a correlation analysis is made. The correlation table shows that there is a weak to medium significant relationship between 'public' and 'women' (r =.293, p<.000), a slightly weak significant association between 'public' and 'skilled' (r =.117, p<.001), and a weak significant association between 'women' and 'skilled' (r = -.082, p<.05). Thus, public companies are associated with having a higher percentage of female and skilled workers than private companies. A high proportion of skilled workers in companies is negatively associated with a high proportion of women in those companies. However, no strong correlations were found, therefore spurious or indirect connections are ruled out.

4.2 Primary analysis

Using linear regression analysis the relationship between explanatory variables 'public', 'size', 'women' and 'skilled' and dependent variable 'Work Life Index', and the strength of this connection are measured.

Table 3   Linear Regression table with dependent variable "Work Life Index"[a]

Variables	B	Stardard Error (Unstandardized)	t	Significance	Beta
Public	.238*	.073	3.273	.001	.089
Size	.002**	.000	10.153	.000	.260
Proportion of women	.008**	.001	8.758	.000	.236
Proportion of skilled workers	.001	.001	.654	.513	.017
R²= .151					
N=1303					

[a] = Consisting of variables 'company kindergarten or crèche', 'professional help for childcare', 'professional help for household management', 'other forms of domestic support', 'parental leave, 'flexible working hours' and 'part-time work'.
* = p< .05
** = p< .001

With an explained variance (R^2) of 15.10% this analysis can make some grounded statements about the relationship between the independent variables shown above and the dependent variable 'Work Life Index'. According to the regression analysis, public companies and the 'Work Life Index' have a positive significant relationship (B=.238, p<.05), thus, our first hypothesis is confirmed: public companies more often have work-life arrangements. 'Size' shows a positive, significant result in predicting the 'Work Life Index' (B=.002, p<.001). Thus, larger companies are more likely to offer work-life policies than smaller companies. The second hypothesis is confirmed. Also, a positive and significant relationship between the proportion of women and the 'Work Life Index' is found, B=.008, p=<.001, thus, our third hypothesis is also confirmed. For the proportion of skilled workers we did not find a significant result, B=.001, p = .513. Taking this together with the fact that there were only weak associations between skilled workers and the other independent variables – and therefore ruling out indirect or spurious associations –, the proportion of skilled workers in a company does not contribute to the explaining of work-life policies in a company. This means that our last hypothesis was not confirmed.

Table 3 also shows the Beta for the independent variables. 'Size' and 'proportion of women' have the highest values and therefore have the greatest impact on the Work Life Index. The Beta value is a measure that shows how strongly each predicting variable influences the criterion variable. The beta is measured in units of standard deviation. For example, a beta value of 2.5 indicates that a change of one standard deviation in the predictor variable will result in a change of 2.5 standard deviations in the criterion variable. Thus, the higher the Beta value the greater the impact of the predicting variable on the criterion variable (Brace et al., 2006).

5 Conclusion and discussion

5.1 Conclusion

In this study, we have explored the relationsip between organizational characteristics of an organization and the existence of work-life policies in organizations in the UK. The concept of governmental non-involvement predominates in the United Kingdom (Den Dulk, 2001; Lewis et al., 2008). Looking at work-life policy development, from the late 1990s on this has slightly started to change. But still, non-involvement in the private sphere still predominates (Den Dulk, 2001).

Based on the Institutionalization Theory, the Situational Theory, the Business Case Theory and the Organizational Learning Theory, we expected that, firstly, public companies offer work-life policies more often than private companies, secondly, the larger the organization, the more often work-life policies are offered, thirdly, the higher the proportion of women in companies the more often work-life policies are offered, and lastly, the higher the proportion of skilled workers in companies, the more often work-life policies are offered. As predicted, the analysis has shown that public organizations score higher on the seven

work-life policies than do private organizations. Furthermore, the larger the organization, the more work-life policies were offered. Finally, the higher the proportion of women in companies, the more work-life policies were offered. However, the proportion of skilled workers in companies did not show any relationship with the presence of family policies in companies. Thus, this research proves that there is a relationship between organizational characteristics of companies, being sector (public-private), size and the proportion of women, and work-life arrangements in companies in the UK.

Except for the proportion of skilled workers, these findings are in line with previous research (Glass & Estes, 1997; Yasbek, 2004) and the theoretical framework. According to the Institutionalization Theory public companies are more likely to implement work-life policies than private companies, because they face governmental pressure or expectations (Den Dulk, 1997). Larger companies are more visible in society and are therefore more prone to public appraisal (Den Dulk, 2001). Implementation of work-life policies are therefore more likely for larger companies. Finally, when organizations have a large proportion of female workers, employers have to react to immediate circumstances, such as the imbalance between work and family life (Situational Theory) (Felstead et al., 2002).

From a Business Case perspective, public companies benefit more from having work-life policies than the private sector, because they don't have to take economical fluctuations into account (Yasbek, 2004). Further, work-life policies are easier to afford for larger organizations, and increases in productivity and loyalty overshadow the costs of these policies (Evans, 2001). A high proportion of women in a company causes for the costs of work-life policies to be lower than the costs associated with female employees' absenteeism or turnover (Allen, 2001). In this research, the proportion of skilled workers in an organization was not related to the number of work-life policies.

Finally, we found that our sample was a good reflection of the composition of organizations in the UK, which indicates that this research can make valid statements on the subject of work-life policies based on organizational characteristics.

5.2   Discussion

The results of this study showed many similarities with the predictions of the theoretical framework and with the results of previous researches (Allen, 2001; Den Dulk, 1997; 2001; Dex & Scheibl, 1999; Felstead et al., 2002; Hakim 2002; Yasbek, 2004). As Den Dulk (2001) states, the Business Case Theory fits the United Kingdom, because of its liberal (cost-benefit) nature. However, taken together with the Institutionalization Theory the theoretical framework can consider this: 'Do the benefits of being responsive or resistant to governmental and societal pressures outweigh the costs?'. In future research, longitudinal data could predict long run costs of being responsive and being resistant. Also, with longitudinal data, the causality of our theories could be analyzed, for instance, whether societal pressures cause employers to take up work-life policies, or if work-life policies were already present.

The Situational Theory provides a meso perspective of the Institutionalization Theory and is therefore useful in this research. The Organizational Learning Theory added to what degree companies grant work-life arrangements to employees, which could maybe be further studied in employee-focused research, that is for instance focused on employees' wellbeing. In research that focuses on employees rather than on employers, this theory would probably be better suited.

On the whole, the theories used in this study fit the case of the UK. One small remark to the Institutionalization Theory would be that governmental pressures are not very applicable to the UK, because of the low state-involvement.

Overall, our study fits previous research, with the exception of 'skilled workers'. Looking at the results of this research, the relationship between skilled workers in a company and the presence of family arrangements remains unclear. Thereby, some parts of Den Dulk's (2001), Felstead et al.'s (2002) and Yasbek's (2004) research are refuted. It could be the case that the relationship simply is minimal, but according to Yasbek (2004) multiple researches have proven this relationship and therefore other explanations are possible. Another look at the literature shows that it could be the case that companies' skilled workers have wages that are sufficiently high for outsourcing matters such as childcare or for hiring an au pair (Blossfeld & Timm, 2003). Also, looking at literature on assortative mating, due to women's rising educational attainment marital homogeneity takes place more often (Schwartz & Mare, 2005). In a household in which both spouses are skilled workers, monetary constraints are minimal (Schwartz & Mare, 2005). Looking back at an earlier generation, highly skilled workers were often married to women that stayed at home, because there was no need for extra income (SCP, 2010). Thus, the need for work-life policies might be lower for skilled workers than for average workers, and thus, companies would to a lesser extent view skilled workers as a reason for offering work-life policies. Furthermore, 'no one size fits all', several authors state: many other factors, including organizational differences, contribute to this discussion, that should be further studied in future research (Den Dulk, 2001; Felstead et al., 2002).

Considering the history of non-involvement by the state in the private sphere of the family in the UK, more focus on the UK was necessary. Even though the role of the state in the work-life policy area has started to be more accepted in the UK during the late 20th century, the involvement of the state in stimulating work-life policies in companies remains limited. If a development towards more state-involvement were possible in the UK, because then work-life policies could be made statutory, which would provide every working citizen with the opportunity to balance their work and family life. If this would be the case, the UK should focus its policies on private companies and companies in which women are underrepresented. If, for instance, private companies were to a certain extent obliged to provide minimal work-life arrangements, the retention of for instance skilled female workers would be easier. Looking at small companies, it could be the case that they informally handle problems with regard to work-family imbalance, and that therefore there are no data available for the small companies in our ESWT dataset. Thus maybe no policy

21

implications are necessary here.

This research has proven three out of four hypotheses, using simple statistical analysis on cross-sectional data. However, in future research, the weakness of the explanatory value due to this type of analysis could be dispelled by more sophisticated statistical methods, uncovering the 'black box' of explanatory mechanisms. Other organizational characteristics could have a high explanatory value, for instance the economic sector or the power distance within a company (geert-hofstede, 21-06-2012). We now know some of the factors that contribute to the explaining of work-life arrangements in companies, but to what extent the policies are actually available for employees in the UK is a question, still unanswered.

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6 Appendix

6.1 Diary

When	What	Who	Hours
Week 8	Preparing converstation with Nynke van Miltenburg	A & M	5
Week 9	Preparing converstation with Wike Been	A & M	3
Week 10	Coming up with a research question and subquestions	A & M	3
Week 10	Introduction	M	5
Week 10	1/4 Theories	M	10
Week 10	3/4 Theories	A	15
Week 11	Reformulating research question	A & M	3
Week 11	Rewriting introduction	M	5
Week 12	Rewriting introduction	A	1/2
Week 12	Writing new theories	M	10
Week 12	Writing new theories and structuring	A	20
Week 13	Consulting the rewriting	A & M	2
Week 16	Rewriting introduction and writing UK case study	M	3
Week 16	Rewriting theories and operationalizing variables in SPSS	A	4
Week 17	Rewriting theories and making a start with descriptives and methods		
Week 17	Rewriting introduction and writing UK case study	M	4
Week 18	-		
Week 19	Perfectioning introduction, theories and methods for deadline of May 14th	A & M	10
Week 20	Analyzing and making table for deadline of May 17th	A & M	20
Week 21	Preparing conversation with Wike Been for May 23rd	A & M	4
Week 22	Writing results	A & M	30
Week 23	Writing individual conclusion	A	12
Week 23	Writing individual conclusion	M	12
Week 24	Rewriting theories, methods, results and taking conclusions together	A	30
Week 24	Rewriting theories and introduction	M	15
Week 25	Perfectioning and Revising bachelor thesis	A & M	30

6.2 Syntax

Syntax
    *variabele UK.
    recode country (15=1) (else=sysmis) into uk.
    *filter uk on. filter by uk.
    * DESCRIPTIVES.
    *Independent. Recode MM112 (1=1) (2=0) (3=sysmis) (else=copy) into desc_public.

RECODE mm103 (1=0) (2=10) (3=29.5) (4=59.5) (5=69.5) (6=89.5) (7=100) (8=SYSMIS) INTO dummy_women. VARIABLE LABELS dummy_women . EXECUTE.

RECODE mm104 (1=0) (2=10) (3=29.5) (4=59.5) (5=69.5) (6=89.5) (7=100) (8=SYSMIS) INTO dummy_skilled. VARIABLE LABELS dummy_skilled. EXECUTE.

RECODE mm102grp (1=14.5) (2=34.5) (3=74.5) (4=124.5) (5=174.5) (6=224.5) (7=274.5) (8=349.5) (9=449.5) (10=549.5) INTO dummy_size. VARIABLE LABELS dummy_size. EXECUTE.

*Dependent. Recode MM500a (2=sysmis) (else=copy) into desc_childcare. Recode MM500b (2=sysmis) (else=copy) into desc_childcare1. Recode MM500c (2=sysmis) (else=copy) into desc_childcare2. Recode MM500d (2=sysmis) (else=copy) into desc_childcare3.

Recode MM400 (1=1) (2=0) (3 4 = sysmis) (else = copy) into desc_parental_leave. Recode MM300 (1=1) (2=0) (3 = sysmis) (else = copy) into desc_flexiblewh. Recode MM200 (8 9 =sysmis) (1 = 0) (2 3 4 5 6 7 = 1) (else=copy) into desc_parttime.

*Count system missings. Count sysmis = desc_public dummy_size dummy_women dummy_skilled desc_childcare desc_childcare1 desc_childcare2 desc_childcare3
desc_parental_leave desc_flexiblewh desc_parttime (sysmis).

SELECT IF (sysmis = 0). EXECUTE.

* Create Work Life Index. Compute wl_index = (desc_childcare + desc_childcare1 + desc_childcare2 + desc_childcare3 + desc_parental_leave + desc_flexiblewh + desc_parttime).

* DESCRIPTIVES TEST

*Descriptives. Descriptives desc_public dummy_size dummy_women dummy_skilled wl_index.

*Frequencies. FREQUENCIES desc_public dummy_size dummy_women
dummy_skilled wl_index.

* Boxplot size.

EXAMINE VARIABLES=dummy_size /COMPARE VARIABLE /PLOT=BOXPLOT /STATISTICS=NONE /NOTOTAL /MISSING=LISTWISE.

* Histogram women and skilled workers.

GRAPH /HISTOGRAM=dummy_women.

GRAPH /HISTOGRAM=dummy_skilled.

* Correlaties tussen afhankelijke en onafhankelijke variabelen.

CORRELATIONS /VARIABLES=desc_public dummy_size dummy_women
dummy_skilled /PRINT=TWOTAIL NOSIG /MISSING=PAIRWISE.

* Regression analysis. REGRESSION /MISSING LISTWISE /STATISTICS COEFF OUTS R ANOVA /CRITERIA=PIN(.05) POUT(.10) /NOORIGIN /DEPENDENT wl_index /METHOD=ENTER desc_public dummy_size dummy_women dummy_skilled.