

Outcomes of Work-life Initiatives in the Manufacturing Sector

A Systematic Review

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Abstract

The pervasiveness of work-life conflict with its attendant challenges confronting manufacturing employees and employers has spurred increasing calls for a wider implementation of work-life initiatives to mitigate the problems caused by the pressures of work and employees' personal lives. The purpose of this paper is to examine the impact of the implementation of work-life initiatives on employee and organizational outcomes. The author employed a systematic review design based on an aggregative review approach to identify, appraise, analyze, and interpret the data found. Blau's social exchange theory provided the theoretical explanation for the wide implementation of work-life options in the manufacturing sector. Using a thematic synthesis method, the author identified and explained the unique and converging patterns of perspectives on the outcomes of work-life initiatives from 10 selected studies. The findings revealed a positive association between work-life initiatives and positive work attitudes, improved retention, and enhanced employee productivity. This paper offers implications for human resource practitioners, business leaders, and management scholars. This paper is novel as it focuses on optimizing productivity in the manufacturing sector and it is a contribution to the global policy debate on work flexibility and economic competitiveness. Finally, the study's implications and conclusions are presented.

Key words: Work-life initiatives, work life balance, work-related outcomes, systematic review.

Introduction

In recent years, inspired by the various outcomes of work-life initiatives, employees, employers, and governments are clamoring for the implementation of work-like initiatives (WLIs). Manufacturing is a critical sector in every economy because of its role in defining global competitiveness and supporting sustainable employment creation. In the United States, for instance, the manufacturing sector contributes considerably to the nation's gross domestic product (GDP). According to the 2016 report by the Bureau of Economic Analysis, the overall manufacturing sector in the United States (US) contributed about \$2 Trillion to the nation's gross domestic product (GDP) representing about 12% of economic output making manufacturing the

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most consequential sector in the US economy. It is common knowledge that the manufacturing workforce, currently made up of almost 13 million workers is the main driving force behind this growth. Therefore, firm-level performance in the manufacturing sector and its contribution to economic growth is largely dependent on a workforce that has access to work-life initiatives. According to the 2008 National Study on the Changing workforce, 85% of manufacturing workers surveyed reported that having access to workplace flexibility is extremely important to them. Employees' need for work-life balance requires that their employers offer them suitable work-life options that make them love their jobs more, enhance their commitments to their organizations, increase their productivity, as well as reduce or eliminate any intentions to leave.

In some organizations, work-life initiatives (WLIs) are also known as workplace flexibility and flexible work arrangements (FWAs) among others (Kersley, Alpin, Forth, Bryson, Bewley, Dix, & Oxenbridge, 2013). Kossek, Lewis, and Hammer (2010) define WLIs as work-life policies and practices which are geared "to enhance organizational, structural and cultural/relational support for work, family, and personal life" (p.4). This study focuses on the four classifications of WLIs by Thompson (2002). The four classifications are Time-based strategies including flexible work options; information-based strategies like intranet resources on work-life balance programs; money-based strategies, and culture change-based strategies including training and other organizational development tools. Work-life initiatives are types of benefits purposely designed to engender result-based performance outcomes in an organization.

Work-life initiatives are a form of benefits purposely designed to engender targeted outcomes in an organization. These targeted outcomes can be positive employee behaviors and attitudes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment (human resource-related outcomes) or organizational outcomes like productivity (Boselie et al., 2005). The term outcome can be explained as the result of a specific action. In this study, outcome is used within the context of result-based performance where the application of management action is specifically geared towards enhancing performance. The outcomes of WLIs have been discussed in a plethora of studies from different disciplines (Eaton, 2003; Konrad & Mangel, 2000; Kossek, Lewis, & Hammer, 2010). Furthermore, there is mounting empirical evidence on the relationship between WLIs and specific outcomes such as reduced worker absenteeism (Comfort, Johnson, & Wallace, 2003; Dex & Scheible, 1999; Galinsky & Johnson, 1998), reduced worker turnover ((Dex & Scheible, 1999; Eaton, 2003; Galinsky & Johnson, 1998), and employee productivity (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Kossek, Lautsch, & Eaton, 2006). Notwithstanding all the positive outcomes of WLIs, there has not been a wide implementation of work-life initiatives in the manufacturing industry.

Romer (2014) mentions that manufacturing and small firms are the two types of firms where flexible policies particularly, are arguably difficult to implement (therefore, less likely to be prevalent). A study by Bond and Galinsky (2008) on workplace flexibility revealed that employees in manufacturing industries have lower access to overall workplace flexibility (19%) than those in the non-manufacturing sectors (24%). With production jobs accounting for 46.5 percent of the employees in the manufacturing sectors, the study also showed that 44 % of production workers have low levels of access to flexible work options as compared to 25% of non-production occupation. The table below highlights the overall workplace flexibility in the United States.

Table 1: Overall Workplace Flexibility

Overall Workplace Flexibility	Industry	
	Manufacturing (n=317) Percent	Others (n=2,416) Percent
Low	25	24
Moderate	55	53
High	19	24

Data Source: National Study of the Changing Workforce, Families and Work Institute. Data was based on 2008 research on workplace flexibility in the manufacturing sector. Adapted from the study by Bond and Galinsky (2008).

According to the National Study of Employers report, since 2012 little has changed with the adoption of flexibility practices (Mateo et al., 2016). Certain employers have attributed this snail pace attitude of implementing WLIs to factors including cost and technological difficulties which limit the scope of flexibility that manufacturing firms can give to their workers (Bond & Galinsky). More so, for firms that run formal shifts, employees leaving at non-standard times may disrupt the production process. Furthermore, the on-site physical nature of many manufacturing jobs renders the adoption of work-life initiatives such as time-based strategies irrelevant, if not impossible (Guvanathy, 2011; Romer, 2014).

The significance of the problem as contemplated by this study lies with the snail-paced attitude towards the wide implementation of WLIs in the manufacturing sector. Notwithstanding the plethora of empirical evidence on the outcomes of implementing WLIs, some organizations have not implemented them probably because of the lack of clear understanding of what WLIs entail, their purported outcomes and how to implement them. Most of the empirical literature on WLIs focuses on the impact of a specific work-life category either from employees or employer perspectives. Limited comprehensive and replicable empirical studies exist on the impact of work-life initiatives on employee and organizational outcomes.

Currently, a systematic review that explores the impact of the implementation of work-life initiatives in the manufacturing sector does not exist. A systematic review that addresses this gap in the literature is warranted. This study aims to examine the impact of the implementation of WLIs on employee and organizational outcomes in the manufacturing industry. The increasingly competitive dynamics in global markets for skilled labor have ramped up demands for compensation arrangements that are responsive to the needs of manufacturing workers, particularly within the millennial workforce, which represent about a third of the current labor force (Joyce & Barry, 2016). As a result, organizations are gradually recognizing that implementing work-life balance programs or practices in their workplaces represents an important step in boosting retention and optimizing organizational performance. This systematic review was guided by the review question: “how do work-life initiatives influence employee and organizational outcomes in the manufacturing sector?” The significance of this review question is not only to help address the gap in literature but also advance extant literature on the positive impact of WLIs as well as contribute to practical management. To address this review question, this paper provides the method for evidence identification including literature search and study

selection. Next, the available evidence is synthesized to identify emerging themes and patterns. The recommendations and practical implications of findings are provided in the closing section.

Theoretical Frame

Social Exchange Theory (SET)

Blau's social exchange theory (1964) provides a theoretical explanation for understanding the review question. This theory provides useful insights into the dynamics of how human social interactions drive the fulfillment of needs and how that impacts workplace relationships. Blau's theory is based on key concepts of equity and reciprocity and the theory's premise is that the determining factor of human behavior is the exchange of rewards. The theory suggests that the social and economic interactions of individuals are transactional in nature (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). This means that in any social interactions, recipients of benefits demonstrate their gratitude by extending benefits that are of value to the other party at the opportune moment. In a business context, what this means is that employees perceive the rewards they receive from their employers as an indication of their benevolence and goodwill towards them and so they are obliged to reciprocate with favorable response employers' value (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Positive work attitudes underpin the reciprocal contribution employers need from their employees. Blau's SET provides contextual relevance for the implementation of WLIs in the manufacturing sector. It helps explain the reciprocal exchange of rewards between employers and the manufacturing workforce and how a fair and reciprocal relationship generates positive work attitudes like improved organizational commitment, reduced turnover intentions, improved retention, enhanced job satisfaction, and improved employee productivity (de Menezes & Kelliher, 2011).

Theoretical lens.

Different perspectives of SET exist (Hormans, 1961; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). However, Blau's social exchange model has inspired a plethora of management research on workplace relationships due to its emphasis on transactional and reciprocal social interactions. One such notable contemporary management research is on social exchange relationships whose main tenet is strong workplace relationships and how they foster positive work attitudes (Cropanzano, Byrne, Bobocel, & Rupp, 2001).

One main criticism of SET is its hedonistic value to relationships and interpreting human interactions mainly through the lens of economic exchanges (Russell Cropanzano, Erica L. Anthony, Shanna R. Daniels, and Alison V. Hall, 2017). Notwithstanding this criticism, SET makes a good case for explaining an organizational behavior in terms of what motivates workplace attitudes. It is also worth mentioning that Blau's SET offers valid explanatory power to the review question because it embodies the mutuality of benefits inherent in the employee/employer relationship as reflected in the review question (Francis & Reddington, 2011).

The conceptual model below provides a visual presentation of the relationship between the implementation of WLIs and organizational and employee outcomes. This conceptual model based on Blau's SET highlights the principle of reciprocity which undergirds the employer/employee relationship. Employees reciprocate employers' reward of implementing WLIs with positive work attitudes which translates to positive work outcomes such as increased productivity and retention.

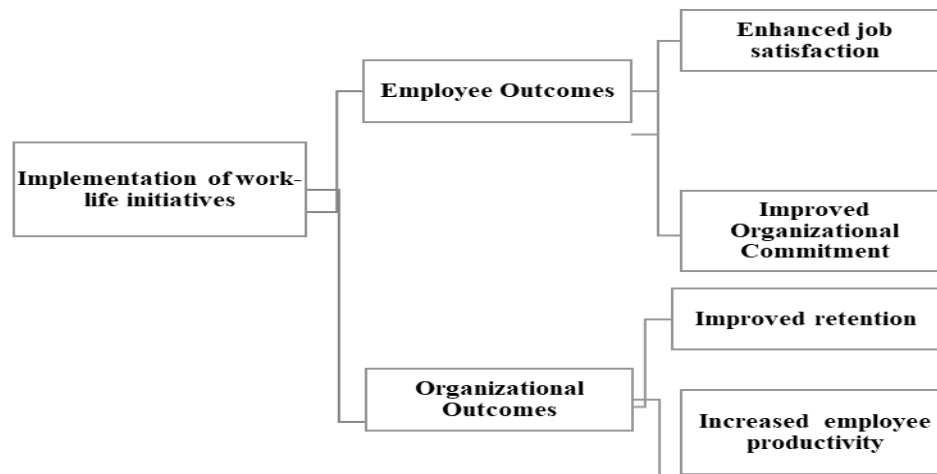


Figure 1. Conceptual model of the implementation of Work-life initiatives. This conceptual model is based on Blau’s social exchange theory (SET) and offers insights into the outcomes employees and organizations derive from the adoption of WLIs.

Methodology

This study employs a systematic review (SR) as an appropriate tool for identifying, appraising, and synthesizing credible empirical evidence on the research question (Higgins & Green, 2011). The explicit and rigorous process of SRs makes their evidence credible. More so, single research studies may have narrower perspective and may be fallible partly because of the study design and methodology.

Search Strategy

The databases used for the bibliographic search included ABI Inform and Business Complete. Published Studies were retrieved electronically from author’s University library system. The table below offers additional details on the search documentation. Search limiters such as date and language were used. Boolean operators “AND” and “OR” were included in search strings to ensure precision (Wilson, 2009).

Eligibility criteria.

The inclusion criteria were the following:

- (a) published articles should be in English language only.
- (b) the publication date should cover the period 2000-2017.
- (c) articles should discuss work life balance related policies or practices as their main topic.
- (d) studies’ outcomes should focus on employee or organizational outcomes or both; and
- (e) published studies should include scholarly articles and grey literature.

Articles which did not meet the afore-stated eligibility criteria and those whose studies outcome focused on performance of organizations in the hospitality, service, and finance industries were excluded.

Table 2, Study Search documentation

Search	Search Terms	Results
1	("flexibility work practices" OR "work life balance policies" OR "work life balance initiatives*") AND ("manufacturing employees" OR workers)	126
2	("work-life initiatives" OR "work life balance practices" OR "flexible working practices") AND ("manufacturing workers")	197
3	Article search by snowballing	3
4	Total Sample	326

Note. Articles selected for inclusion were scholarly journals, November 2017. The databases used for the bibliographic search included Business Source Complete and ABI Inform.

Study Selection

The study selection consisted of two screening phases. The initial screening phase was based on title relevance and abstracting. Thirty-three studies were identified after the initial screening. A second screening was carried out to assess the eligibility of the identified studies against inclusion and exclusion criteria. Twenty-three articles were excluded because they did not meet any of the criteria in the abstract, results, or discussion sections. After an exhaustive study selection process, ten articles were found to be relevant and full text was retrieved (See Appendix for data analysis).

Critical Appraisal

The author employed the Rees model (Glasper & Rees, 2013) for critiquing qualitative and quantitative research. This critical appraisal tool was the appropriate qualitative tool to use because it offered a balance for the variances in research designs of the ten articles. The Rees Model consists of 12 criteria namely focus, background, aim/objectives, study methodology or broad approach, data collection method, ethical considerations, sample, method of data analysis and presentation, main findings, conclusion and recommendations, overall strengths and limitations, and application to practice.

For this review, the author focused more on the relevance of the studies' findings to practice than their methodological appropriateness and quality. Accordingly, each study was appraised and rated based on the number of criteria met. The outcome of the quality assessment revealed four high quality studies and six medium quality studies.

Coding procedure.

Thematic coding was conducted to identify recurring themes from the ten articles (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Using first level and line-by-line coding, the findings and discussion sections of each included study was examined to extract thematic codes (Gough, Oliver, & Thomas, 2012). The coding process yielded the following were the recurring thematic codes: Enhanced job satisfaction, enhanced organizational commitment; reduced turnover or improved retention, and improved employee productivity.

Findings

Description of Study Characteristics

Overall, this systematic review (SR) highlights the outcomes manufacturing employees and firms derive from the implementation of work-life initiatives. This SR also reveals that the outcomes of the WLIs are being explored quantitatively and qualitatively. Sixty percent of the studies (Six out of the 10) used a quantitative approach and the remaining four used a qualitative approach. Data analysis allowed grouping the results into two categories as reflected by the review question and aim of the study. Majority of the studies' findings showed positive direct and indirect association between types of WLIs and outcomes.

Impact of WLIs on employee outcomes. Sixty percent of the studies reported some association between work-life initiatives and employee outcomes. Eighty percent of the studies revealed a positive association between a type of WLIs and enhanced employees' job satisfaction and commitment to their jobs and the organizations (see Altindag & Siller, 2014; Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Batt & Valcour, 2003; Butts, Casper & Yang, 2013; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2011; Sivatte & Guadamillas, 2013; Yasbek, 2004).

Impact of WLIs on organizational outcomes. Forty percent of the studies discussed organizational outcomes resulting from the implementation of WLIs. Sixty percent reported a strong positive association between some bundle of WLIs and employee retention (Batt & Valcour, 2003; Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Butt et al., 2013; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2011; de Sivatte & Guadamillas, 2013; Romer, 2014). The improvement in employee work attitudes resulting in the impact on job productivity was well attested by these studies (Altindag & Siller, 2014; Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Batt & Valcour, 2003; Butts, Casper & Yang, 2013; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2011; Sivatte & Guadamillas, 2013; Yasbek, 2004).

Antecedent of WLIs Outcomes

Another noteworthy point is the overlap of moderating and mediating variables in the study sample. The following constructs -organizational support (management or supervisors support), work family culture, employee autonomy, availability of WLIs, use of WLIs, moderated the relationship between WLIs and the outcomes identified. Also, the data analysis showed gender seemed to influence (mediate) the use of certain WLIs and their outcomes (Batt & Valcour, 2003; Butt et al., 2013; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2011). Further, the preponderance of evidence revealed organizational support moderated the relationship between WLIs and the study outcomes. Fifty percent of the articles fully discussed managerial or organizational support as a moderator that strengthens the relationship between WLIs and work outcomes (Batt & Valcour, 2003; Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Butt et al., 2013; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2011; de Sivatte & Guadamillas, 2014). Where the result showed a negative correlation between WLIs and outcomes, mediating and moderating variables such as gender and organizational support positively influenced the outcomes of the WLIs. For instance, perception of flexible working arrangements availability negatively correlated with turnover intentions and work-life conflict in two out of 10 studies (Batt & Valcour, 2003, Beauregard & Henry, 2009; de Sivatte & Guadamillas, 2013). However, when WLIs were measured with antecedents of WLIs, perception of WLIs availability correlated positively with turnover intentions.

Taken as a whole, the data analysis shows a positive association between WLIs and identified outcomes. This affirms the author's claim that the implementation of WLIs holds

benefit for both employees and organizations in the manufacturing industry. A synthesis of the evidence based on an aggregative review approach will help interpret the findings and offer further insight into understanding the relationship among the four themes.

Thematic Synthesis

Enhanced job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is a critical work attitude because of its impact on employees' job performance and retention (Yasbek, 2004). Eighty percent of the studies discussed job satisfaction as an essential part of employee work outcomes. The findings showed that time-based work-life initiatives such as remote working and flexible scheduling had a positive impact on employees' job satisfaction (Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Butts, Casper & Yang, 2013; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2011; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2016; Romer, 2014; Yasbek, 2004). De Menezes & Kelliher (2016) examined the mediating effect of job satisfaction on employee performance. The authors' examination of the relationship between formal and informal FWAs and employee performance revealed that job satisfaction is positively associated with formal and informal flexibility practices. This suggests that irrespective of the type of arrangement, employees' access to WLIs leads to job satisfaction. However, job satisfaction does not contribute to employee performance when employers offer formal FWAs (de Menezes & Kelliher, 2016). This goes to buttress the viewpoint of Beauregard and Henry (2009) that the sheer availability and use of WLIs do not necessarily increase job satisfaction. The authors are of the view that organizational support for the use of WLIs, compatibility of type of WLIs to employees' needs, autonomy, among others, contribute to job satisfaction. The evidence as shown overwhelmingly points to job satisfaction as a crucial predictor of job performance.

Enhanced organizational commitment. Findings from 80% of the included studies revealed that employees' access to and use of WLIs amplify their commitment to their organizations (Altindag & Siller, 2014; Beauregard & Henry, 2004; Butts, Casper & Yang, 2013; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2011; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2016; de Sivatte & Guadamillas, 2013; Romer, 2014; Yasbek, 2004). Out of these studies, only the studies by Butts, Casper, and Yang (2013) and Altindag and Siller (2014) discussed the positive effect of work-family support policies (FSOP) on affective commitment. Though their results showed a positive modest relationship between the availability and use of FSOP and affective commitment, the results also revealed that the availability of work-family support policies has an impact on affective commitment than their use. The reason being that employees' access to WLIs should be steeped in a supportive work-life culture and work environment. This study also points to the positive impact of flexible scheduling on organizational commitment (OC) (Altindag & Siller, 2014; Beauregard & Henry, 2009; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2011; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2016). Findings from these studies show that employees who had access to flexible scheduling options like informal flexible working hours and compressed hours reported higher levels of OC than those employees without it.

Enhanced employee productivity. There is a preponderance of evidence that work-life initiatives positively impact employee productivity as revealed by 60 percent of the studies (Altindag & Siller, 2014; Beauregard & Henry, 2009; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2011; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2016; Romer, 2014; Yasbek, 2004). However, this association is mediated by job satisfaction, organizational commitment, gender, employee autonomy, availability of flexibility practices, work-family culture, and organizational support. The indirect link between the implementation of WLIs and employee productivity is reinforced in the study by de Menezes and Kelliher (2016). The authors maintained that the adoption of informal flexible arrangements, whereby employees have a greater say in the choice of WLIs compatible with their needs,

generates positive workplace attitudes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment which contribute to enhanced performance. The authors also affirm existing evidence that gender difference, job characteristics, among others determine the impact of flexibility interventions on productivity. Beauregard and Henry (2009) are of the view that it is because more women tend to favor WLIs due to family demands. Butts, Casper, and Yang (2013) also posit that women's access to those policies and the decision-making autonomy in terms of having the authority to control their work schedules enhance their productivity.

The evidence on the direct association between WLIs and employee productivity has been mixed. The provision of formal flexible arrangements has been shown by some studies to have a negative impact on employee productivity (de Menezes & Kelliher, 2016). The plausible explanation for the negative link is that the absence of autonomy coupled, with the perception of the unfair nature of the allocation process may elicit negative work attitudes and hamper productivity. According to Beauregard (2014), employer initiated WLIs allocation may generate negative work behaviors such as absenteeism which leads to decrease in productivity.

Improved Retention. Ninety percent of the articles in this study examined the impact of WLIs on employee turnover /retention (Altindag & Siller, 2014; Batt & Valcour, 2003; Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Butt et al., 2013; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2011; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2016; de Sivatte & Guadamillas, 2013; Romer, 2014; Yasbek, 2004). Romer (2014) claims that due to the high prevalence of work-life conflicts, potential employees are attracted to firms that offer competitive compensation practices that include FWAs. These flexible work options are not the only key to recruiting highly skilled workers but also retaining them and eliminating their intentions of leaving. This view is shared by Sivatte and Guadamillas (2013) who state that a positive association between employees' perception of a favorable work-family culture enhances their job satisfaction, their commitment to the organization, and lowers their intention to leave.

Discussion

One of the major findings of the study is that the implementation of work-life initiatives holds positive benefits for the employees and employers. The multiple levels of analysis in terms of performance indicators revealed interesting links between WLIs and individual performance measures such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment on one hand, and WLIs and organizational performance indicators such as retention and employee productivity on the other hand. This study's findings affirm existing evidence the outcomes resulting from the implementation of HR strategies including work-life initiatives, are a win-win for employers and employees (Peccei, 2004) and reflect the view of mutuality of benefits.

For employers, the need to remain competitive in this business environment and to reduce labor costs through productivity-enhancing strategies makes the adoption of WLIs paramount. A high turnover rate can be attributed to the absence of flexibility in the workplace due to the limited and/or lack of organizational structural and cultural support for work-life balance practices and policies (Engineering Employers Federation-Manufacturers' organization, 2011; Kossek et al., 2010). The human and financial cost of labor turnover has tremendous implications for manufacturing firms' overall competitiveness. Consequently, employers pay a great deal of attention to retention. Workforce productivity is important for both organizations and employees because it is an indication of the latter's job satisfaction and commitment to the organization and a signal of the good health of organizations (Comfort, Johnson & Wallace, 2003).

Further, the preponderance of evidence indicates manufacturing employers benefit by adopting and implementing the four types of WLIs at the workplace. This is consistent with previous studies which reveals implementing human resource policies and practices such as employee engagement, career development, and a culture that supports work-life balance through work-life options positively impact key organizational performance indicators such retention and productivity (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Kossek, Lautsch, & Eaton, 2006; Pitt-Catsouphes & Marchetta, 1991; Stavrou, 2005). Findings from these previous studies have suggested that flexible schedule options like reduced hours, remote working, among others are positively associated with employee retention. These flexible work arrangements are not the only key to recruiting highly skilled workers but also retaining them as well as limiting, if not, eliminating their intentions of leaving.

Regarding employee outcomes, the study findings indicate employees are not only motivated using work-life options but also the sheer availability of WLIs motivates employees who perceive their employers' actions as a show of their concern for their wellbeing. Making WLIs available to employees does not only help manufacturing firms recruit skilled job applicants but also elicit positive employee work attitudes like job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Employment benefits like WLIs are determining factors of employees' job satisfaction. Job satisfaction speaks to employees' general attitude to their jobs and reveals how satisfied employees are with the jobs they do as well as the conditions of the jobs. Job satisfaction can be intrinsic, dealing with employees' contentedness with the responsibilities that go with their jobs, and extrinsic, having to do with employees' satisfaction with work conditions such as access to work-life initiatives (Goetz et al., 2012). In a survey by the Society of Human Resource Management -SHRM (2016), sampled employees ranked benefits as the third most important predictor of job satisfaction. Employers value benefits due to their impact on work outcomes and the firms' bottom line. Several studies have shown support for the positive relationship between the use and availability of WLIs on employees' job satisfaction ((Hooker et al., 2007; Konrad and Mangel, 2000). This is in line with the research findings by Cranfield School of Management (2008) which revealed that job satisfaction was higher among employees who used FWAs than those who did not.

Organizational commitment is one of the most important work attitudes because it determines retention levels, turnover intentions, and productivity of employees. OC can be affective, continuance, or normative. These three dimensions of OC reflect the different natures and levels of employees' commitment to their organizations (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). Affective commitment should be the most desirable and valuable construct for manufacturing employers because it reveals employees' intense loyalty to their employers and their jobs as well as their deep commitment to fulfilling the organization's mission and set goals (Barton, 2016). There is mounting evidence of the benefits of affective commitment on turnover intentions, absenteeism, employee productivity and job satisfaction (Roehling, Roehling, & Moen, 2001).

Organizational support for the availability and use of work-life initiatives is the common denominator in the relationship between the implementation of WLIs and improved outcomes. Managerial or supervisor's support for employees' access to specific work-life options elicits positive employee work attitudes. Organizational support for the WLIs implicitly suggests a positive organizational culture or climate which advances the welfare of employees by not only making work-life initiatives available to employees but also actively encouraging its use. There is evidence in the literature which suggests that the perception and prevalence of a work-life

supportive culture and work environment positive work outcomes beneficial to both employees and organizations.

Another key finding is the customization of work-life options. Within the context of Blau's SET, employees' needs drive the social exchange processes. Therefore, no one category of WLIs can be offered to satisfy employees' needs. In Gunavathy's (2011) study, the author argues that certain factors such as culture, the profile of the organization, profile of employees, nature of business should be considered when implementing WLIs at the workplace. De Menezes and Kelliher (2011) affirm this view and make the case for the consideration of flexible working arrangement (FWAs), albeit with three important caveats:

- a) The scheme must be employee-driven and not imposed.
- b) options must include both formal and informal types of FWAs, and
- c) individual WLIs must be targeted and customized to the needs and characteristics of employee profiles.

The significant implication of this finding is for employers to recognize the differences among the four main work-life initiatives and how they can be tailored to the needs of the workforce. The one-size fits all flexible working practices will not be relevant in the manufacturing sector with diverse workforce groups (professionals – manual workers).

It is important to mention that notwithstanding the moderating role of organizational support, availability of WLIs, use of WLIs, among others also moderated the relationship between WLIs and the outcomes identified. Additionally, individual differences in gender played a mediating role between WLIs and both study outcomes. For instance, the findings revealed the perception of the availability of WLIs, availability, and use of WLIs mediated by gender contributes to enhanced OC. This reinforces findings from other studies (Nadeem & Metcalf, 2007) that female employees who are mothers, and dual working parents with access to bundles of WLIs like family health benefits, on-site child care, maternity and paternity leave benefits, and voluntary reduced hours tend to exhibit more affective commitment. This study's findings also showed that OC was higher for all employees especially male employees when there was a prevailing organizational support and culture workplace flexibility.

One of the pertinent insights that the study's findings provide is the prevalence of a positive work-life culture that facilitates the generation of positive work outcomes. The presence of a strong and adaptive work-life culture that fosters a positive management/employee relationship, promotes a participative style of management, encourages manufacturing employees to exercise job autonomy as well as supports work-life integration may result in reduced turnover and high job performance. Organizational support for manufacturing employees' access to WLIs implicitly suggests a positive organizational culture that advances the welfare of employees by not only making WLIs available to employees but also actively encouraging its use.

Given that leadership style plays a crucial role in creating and shaping a strong work-life culture, it is interesting that a discussion of leadership or management style as a contributory factor to work attitudes, retention, and employee productivity was limited, if not absent in most of the studies. Leaders and managers play a critical role in eliciting organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) which is fundamental to the retention of employees (Simmons, 2016). By promoting a positive and stimulating work environment that encourages job autonomy and ensures the use of informal work arrangements to address the work-life needs of employees, managers or leaders increase the level of organizational citizenship behaviors in their employees and by extension, optimize organizational performance outcomes. Leadership style is particularly

important for the manufacturing sector on the cusp of digitization. An effective leadership style is needed to attract and retain qualified workers, especially, millennials talents with technological skills to help manufacturing firms navigate the digital revolution of the 21st century. This suggests creating a flexible work environment that encourages creativity and job autonomy.

The theoretical explanation of the findings resides in Blau's SET (1964). Research has shown that employees' motivations are driven by the fulfillment of their needs (Herzberg, 2008). Blau's social exchange theory provides a powerful explanation of employees' motivation and its link with work attitudes. The theory suggests that, in exchange for their access to work-life balance options, employees demonstrate positive workplace attitudes that are beneficial to their employers. With respect to employers, the need to remain competitive in this globalized business environment, and to reduce labor costs through productivity-enhancing strategies make the implementation of WLIs paramount. More so, the availability of work-life initiatives is perceived by employees as management concern for their wellbeing (support) and so they reciprocate the favorable treatment by demonstrating positive employee work attitudes and behaviors beneficial to the organizations in the form of improved reduced turnover intentions and improved retention. In this sense, employees' perception of organizational support, evidenced by access to work flexibility practices and their autonomy in negotiating for the appropriate work life practice or policy that suit them, mediate the link between work-life initiatives and employee outcomes (Beauregard, 2009). The interesting links between employees' workplace attitudes and their influence on retention, employee productivity, and overall organizational performance speak to the fair exchange and mutuality of benefits in the employee/ employer relationship espoused by Blau (1964) in his social exchange theory.

Manufacturing is a critical sector of the American economy because of its role in defining global competitiveness and supporting employment creation. It is common knowledge that China has replaced the US as the leading manufacturing giant globally. One of the ways that the US manufacturing sector can sustain its current growth and optimize its competitive edge globally is to undertake a wide implementation of WLIs. In this highly competitive and volatile organizational environment, manufacturers can maintain their competitive edge with the help of a flexible and adaptive workforce. The effective implementation of work-life initiatives in manufacturing firms helps boost employee workplace attitudes and ultimately firms' profitability and performance.

Management Implications

The evidence derived from the systematic review holds significant organizational and management implications for manufacturing firms. Further, the evidence has revealed the beneficial effects of WLIs for employees and employers. A business case has therefore been effectively made for their wide adoption in the manufacturing industry. The significant implication of the study's findings is for employers and/or managers to recognize the differences among the four main work-life initiatives and how they can be tailored to the needs of the workforce. As the findings showed a one-size-fits-all approach to implementing WLIs at the workplace will undermine the realization of the intended benefits of these initiatives. Pitt-Catsouphes et al. (2007) assert that the effectiveness of WLIs can be realized if employers effectively assess the extent of employees' needs for work-life integration, the resources available for the implementation of the initiatives among others.

The managerial or organizational implication of the evidence presented is that enabling a flexible working culture sets the stage for generating positive employee workplace attitudes

which translate into organizational performance. Within the context of organizational change theory, organizations can benefit from flexible working policies and practices demonstrating support of work-life balance by espousing the value of flexible work. Implementation of human resource policies and practices and a culture that supports work-life balance through flexible working practices will positively impact organizational and employee outcomes such as low turnover and productivity. This affirms the mutual gains theory of human resource management.

These findings have relevance for manufacturing firms that have concerns about implementing WLIs especially small firms and start-ups. Research shows several manufacturing companies have successfully adopted WLIs (Matos & Tahmincioglu, 2015). A case in point is Kraft Foods which offers shift swapping to its hourly workforce to address schedule conflict issues, while PlastiCert, a small firm provides flexible options to its workforce. Such examples attest to the feasibility of implementing WLIs in the manufacturing sector as well as affirm the claim that WLIs in the manufacturing sector is a benefit for employers and employees.

In sum, the study findings offer a road map to manufacturing business leaders and HR managers on the use of WLIs as a recruitment and retention strategy to attract, recruit, and retain technical talents required for an increasingly innovative manufacturing industry. In this highly competitive and volatile organizational environment, manufacturers can maintain their competitive edge with the help of a flexible and adaptive workforce. The effective implementation of work-life initiatives in manufacturing firms helps boost employee workplace attitudes and ultimately firms' profitability and performance.

Conclusion

There has been mounting evidence to support a business case for WLIs in the manufacturing sector. However, a wider implementation of WLIs has proven elusive and challenging over the past decades because of the notion that adopting work-life practices or policies is not feasible due to the cost involved and the nature of the sector. Based on a gap in the literature on the impact of the implementation of WLIs on employee and organizational outcomes, this study employed a systematic review with an aggregative approach to address the review question: How does the implementation of work-life initiatives impact employee and organizational outcomes? The purpose of the research question was to examine the relationship between WLIs and outcomes.

An examination of recurring themes that highlighted the links between WLIs and the outcomes studied was carried out. Analysis of the articles revealed an associational relationship between WLIs and outcomes such as employee productivity, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and retention. The examination revealed four recurring themes that were strongly, positively, directly and indirectly, linked to bundles of WLIs. A discussion of the moderating and mediating variables that linked WLIs to the employee and organizational outcomes was subsequently presented. The data analysis also revealed that the "one size fits all" adoption of WLIs is impracticable in an industry such as manufacturing. Blau's SET offered theoretical explanatory value to the findings in terms of providing employers and human resource professionals an understanding of the significance of implementing work-life balance strategies as a way of achieving organizational goals.

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Appendix

Source	Design	Type of WLI	Related Outcomes	Association/ Main Findings
Altindag & Siller (2014)	Cross-sectional study	Flexible hours	Org. Loyalty, employee performance, job satisfaction	Flexible hours directly impact job satisfaction and loyalty positively enhance employee performance
Batt & Valcour (2003)	Cross-sectional study	Generic	Turnover, work like conflict and turnover intentions	Link between work family policies and outcomes mediated by gender, job autonomy etc.
Beauregard & Henry (2009)	Literature Review	Generic	workplace attitudes reduced turnover, and intentions to stay	Indirect positive link between WLIs and outcomes are moderated by organizational support
Butts, Casper & Yang (2013)	Meta-analysis	Generic	job satisfaction, affective commitment, and intentions to stay	Availability and use of work life policy positively impact outcomes
de Menezes & Kelliher (2016)	Cross-sectional study	FWAs	Employee performance job satisfaction and commitment	FWAs generate positive work attitudes which indirectly contributes to enhanced productivity
de Menezes & Kelliher (2011)	Systematic review	FWAs	work attitudes, performance, productivity retention, absenteeism and wellbeing	Positive link between performance and FWAs mediated by factors like gender and autonomy
de Sivatte & Guadamillas (2013)	Cross-sectional study	FWAs	Employee commitment turnover intention, work-to Conflict	Outcomes are positively influenced by availability of FWAs, supervisor's support, and work family culture.
Gunavathy (2011)	Descriptive study	Generic	Work life balance	Work life balance initiatives are beneficial for both employers and employees
Romer (2014)	White paper	FWAs	Productivity, reduced absenteeism, improved health reduced turnover, recruitment, and improved firm profitability	Adoption of FWAs positively impact firms and workers
Yasbek (2004)	Literature Review	Generic	Improved productivity, profitability Reduced stress, reduced cost of Recruitment and training, and enhanced retention	Work life balance policies are beneficial for firms especially big firms

Note. Out of the 10 articles analyzed, 90% of them revealed a positive link between studied outcomes and WLIs