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‘Perception is Reality’

Cultural Effects on the Uptake of Family-Friendly Policies by Fathers Working
in SMEs

by

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Executive Summary

Purpose – The family-friendliness of SMEs has gotten little attention within the literature, where the findings that do exist are often inconsistent. This research aims to explore cultural effects on the uptake of family-friendly policies by fathers within SMEs to unravel the reasons behind the provision-utilisation gap. It also takes part in increasing the literature and knowledge within this field, which adds further value to this study.

Methodology – This was a mono-method qualitative research conducted through a cross-sectional time horizon. The philosophy that underpinned the design was interpretivism with an inductive approach through grounded theory. The sample consisted of 10 participants, 9 of which were males and one female, hence, the author conducted 10 interviews that lasted between 40 minutes up to 1 hour. Lastly, the interviews were transcribed and analysed, both manually and by using NVivo.

Findings – SMEs in Scotland have all the necessary policies in place where most offer non-legislative policies in addition to the requirements. Furthermore, they were also believed to have a family-friendly culture. However, the awareness of policies available, and the benefits of providing and utilising them for the employee, his family and the organisation was critically low. The low awareness allowed negative perceptions to thrive, which hindered fathers in utilising the policies. Thus, it formed the provision-utilisation gap. Increased informal and formal communication, open encouragement and role-modelling were believed to be vital in eliminating these perceptions. Furthermore, the size of organisations did not matter for the fundamentals for a family-friendly organisation were always the same.

Limitations – Due to the nature of qualitative research, the risk of subjectivism increases and the generalisability and transferability are restricted. The scope, generalisability, validity, and reliability were further limited due to the homogeneity and size of the sample. Because the findings were self-reported the risk of several biases increased, such as selective attention, attribution, the halo effect, stereotyping or the self-fulfilling prophecy. Furthermore, the field is largely dominated by a few authors which increases the likelihood of biased literature where it also fails to acknowledge different family arrangements, such as same sex partners or single parents. Lastly, because English is not the author's native language, fluency in language might have affected the interpretation of the interviews.

Keywords Fathers, Work-Life Balance, Family-Friendly Policies, Awareness, Culture

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1. Background Information	1
1.2. Research Purpose.....	3
1.3. Research Structure	4
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	5
2.1. Family-Friendly Policies	5
2.2. Utilisation of Family-Friendly Policies	9
2.3. Gendered Uptake on Family-Friendly Policies	10
2.3.1. Financial Reasons.....	11
2.3.2. Career Consequences.....	11
2.3.3. Gender Stereotypes.....	11
2.4. Organisational Culture	12
2.4.1. Family-Friendly Culture	15
2.4.2. Supervisor Support.....	16
2.4.3. Co-Worker Support.....	17
2.5. Conclusion.....	18
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	20
3.1. Overview	20
3.1.1. Philosophy and Approach.....	21
3.1.2. Strategy and Design.....	21
3.1.3. Data Collection and Analysis.....	22
3.1.4. Ethics, Reliability, Validity, and Generalisability	23
3.2. Limitations	23
Chapter 4: Findings	25
4.1. Values and Policies	26

4.2. Culture.....	27
4.3. Support.....	28
4.4. Implications.....	29
4.5. Awareness.....	31
Chapter 5: Discussion.....	35
5.1. Values and Policies.....	35
5.2. Culture.....	35
5.2.1. Support.....	36
5.3. Implications.....	37
5.4. Awareness.....	38
5.5. Summary of Findings.....	39
Chapter 6: Conclusion.....	40
6.1. Recommendations for Future Research.....	41
Chapter 7: Recommendations and Implementation Plan.....	42
References.....	46
Personal Learning Statement.....	58
Appendix 1: Interview Guide.....	60
Appendix 2: Interview Questionnaire.....	61
Appendix 3: Word Cloud.....	63
Appendix 4: Information Sheet.....	64
Appendix 5: Consent Form.....	65
Appendix 6: Common Family-Friendly Policies.....	66
Appendix 7: Interview Transcript.....	67
Appendix 8: Interview Transcript.....	76

Table of Figures and Table

Figure 1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs	6
Figure 2 The Performance Pyramid	6
Figure 3 National Culture	14
Figure 4 The Research Onion	20
Figure 5 Family-Friendly Culture Model.....	42
 Table 1 Timescale	 44

Glossary

UK – The United Kingdom

SMEs – Small or Medium Sized Enterprises

FNS – Fathers Network Scotland

HR – Human Resources

Chapter 1: Introduction

Being a parent is usually a joyful, although challenging, experience that requires a lot of physical and emotional energy for both parents. This can become especially difficult when experiencing stress, exhaustion, or other forms of work-life conflict (Women and Children's Health Network, n.d.; Opinion Matters, 2015). This issue was mostly limited to females, but is now affecting fathers as well in their fight for increased family involvement (McCrary, 2012; Opinion Matters, 2015; Henz, 2017; Coontz, 2017; Working Families, 2017). With both parents working together, child-rearing not only becomes easier, but it also positively affects the father, the mother, the child, and the organisation (Women and Children's Health Network, n.d.; Opinion Matters, 2015).

1.1. Background Information

Fathers may benefit from spending time with their children in various ways, as has been underpinned by Maslow, in his Hierarchy of Needs where 'belonging' was listed as a fundamental need for the individual (Lester, 2013; Stum, 2001); and by the psychological contract which includes the need for work-life balance (Sturges & Guest, 2004; Dex & Scheibl, 2001). Furthermore, Swedish fathers who took paternity leave in the late 1970s had an 18% lower risk of alcohol-related issues and/or death than other fathers and a 16% overall reduced risk of early death (Månsdotter, et al., 2008; Månsdotter, et al., 2007). Furthermore, they were more satisfied with the overall time spent with their children, more supportive to their partner, valued family-life more than others and were less likely to apply stereotypical gender roles to their children (Haas & Hwang, 2008; Feldman, et al., 2004; Coontz, 2017). Spending time with children can increase employee productivity, satisfaction and work-commitment and may reduce the risk of turnover and work-family conflict (Eaton, 2003; Thomas & Ganster, 1995; Anderson, et al., 2002; Thompson, et al., 1999).

The positive involvement of the father within a family unit is measurably important for children for several reasons, it reduces instances of both behavioural and psychological problems, enhances cognitive development and decreases the likelihood of criminal behaviour (Sarkadi, et al., 2008). Adolescents from cohesive, 'intact' families are less likely to engage in 'risky' or 'troubled' behaviour and academic motivation is positively affected (Flouri & Buchanan, 2002) where father's involvement in the family may also be linked to lower instances of obesity in children (Wong, et al., 2017). Furthermore, research has shown that

father-child relationships and mother-child relationships matter equally for the wellbeing of children (Parkes, et al., 2017).

Mothers can also benefit from increased father involvement, where according to McCrady (2012), mothers still experience inequality regarding their careers and choices. Women feel responsible for decisions relating to work and family, and experience pressure to sacrifice certain aspects of their careers for the family, such as business-related travel. Work-family conflict, can lead to increased stress, decreased job satisfaction, and negative effects on psychological well-being, which could result in reduced performance, higher staff turnover, and 'burnout' (Zhou & Wen, 2016).

Although various legislations protect the rights of parents (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2016), fathers are struggling to balance their responsibilities and are now experiencing work-life conflicts at high rates (Skinner & Pocock, 2008). Furthermore, they may suffer career penalties when utilising family-friendly policies, making them more likely to leave their jobs for lower paid positions with fewer responsibilities (Coontz, 2017; Working Families, 2017). Family-friendly policies, such as paid maternity, paternity or adoption leave, job sharing, flexible working, nursery provision, part-time or remote working, allow the employee the potential to fulfil their family and work obligations (Dex & Smith, 2002; The Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service, n.d.). However, it is vital that fathers can access and utilise these policies available with the support of their employer and co-workers and without any negative consequences (Eaton, 2003; Thompson & Prottas, 2006). Family-friendly policies have the potential to benefit employees and employers alike, despite this, their utilisation is low (McDonald, et al., 2005) making fathers more likely to cut short the leave to which they are entitled or even leave to their job permanently (Waldfoegel, 2011).

Deeply ingrained societal gender-stereotypes, financial barriers, perceived and real career consequences, and the culture within organisations are just some of the reasons that lie behind the low utilisation of family-friendly policies (Hussain, et al., 2015; Gov.UK, 2016; Opinion Matters, 2015; Working Families, 2017). Furthermore, the overall understanding and communication of the policies and benefits available is low (TotalJobs, 2016). This research is especially concerned with identifying the effect that culture has on the uptake of family-friendly policies among fathers within SMEs, and exploring this provision-utilisation gap (McDonald, et al., 2005). Small businesses accounted for 99.3% of all businesses within the private sector at the start of 2016 in the UK and 99.9% were small or medium-sized (National

Federation of Self Employed & Small Businesses Limited, 2016). Due to the numbers of SMEs in the UK, any attempt to reduced research gap is a treasured one. The European Commission (2009) defines SMEs as medium sized businesses that have up to 250 employees and small businesses, up to 50.

According to the literature, a family-friendly culture that supports its employees in balancing their responsibilities is more important than the individual policies alone (Thompson & Prottas, 2006; Anderson, et al., 2002; Bond, 2004; Allen, 2001; Thompson, et al., 1999). Two elements are important in shaping a family-friendly culture in the workplace, the level that managers wish to support the employee in fulfilling their work and family responsibilities and co-worker support (de Janasz, et al., 2013; Anderson, et al., 2002; Kirby & Krone, 2002; Thomas & Ganster, 1995). If workers perceive their co-workers to be against, or have negative attitudes towards the utilisation of family-friendly policies, they are less likely to use them (Kirby & Krone, 2002; Young, 1999; Allen & Parker, 2001; Casper, et al., 2007). Some studies have shown that there is a lack of awareness of the disadvantages that employees experience when utilising family-friendly policies, as well as little comprehension of the practical advantages of providing and utilising these policies, suggesting a possible communication issue (Kirby & Krone, 2002; Haar & Spell, 2003).

1.2. Research Purpose

This research, *'Perception is Reality'; Cultural effects on the uptake of family-friendly policies by fathers in SMEs* was conducted by an MSc student in Human Resource Management at The University of Edinburgh Business School, in collaboration with Fathers Network Scotland, a charity supported by the Scottish Government. The name of this study, 'Perception is Reality' is a direct quotation from participant B, which neatly highlights one of the main findings from this research, that perceptions are real barriers. The purpose was to explore how culture within SMEs affects the utilisation of family-friendly policies among fathers, to reveal the reasons behind the provision-utilisation gap and to further FNS's mission to improve the involvement of fathers in Scotland in their children's lives (Fathers Network Scotland, n.d.). Furthermore, the limited amount of research that exists within this field prompted the author's interest in the topic.

The research studied the results of 10 interviews, 9 of which were with fathers and one female HR manager. Using grounded theory that is, without initial thesis or hypothesis, the interviews were then transcribed and examined, both manually and with the help of a software

program that supports qualitative and mixed methods research, NVivo. Due to the nature of grounded theory, where theories are derived from systematically gathered and analysed findings (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 584), no theories were established at this stage, but a research summary will be presented in the discussion.

1.3. Research Structure

The following dissertation consists of an overall introduction to the topic and its importance where the research purpose and structure is introduced. The literature review discusses previous research within this field, first in relations to the policies available and the provision-utilisation gap and secondly regarding the importance of family-friendly culture, and the main dimensions that help create it. Thirdly, the methodology will be explained and justified, describing the philosophy, approach, strategy, and design of the research as well as the data collection and analysis, reliability, validity, the ethical issues, and the limitations that arose. Themes that emerged from the interviews will be presented in the findings chapter and further elaborated on in the discussion, where the research summary will be introduced. Next is the conclusion, where recommendations for future research will be discussed followed up by the recommendation implementation plan.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Family-Friendly Policies

There is an increasing demand from employees, for businesses practices that support working parents, not only through leave, payments, or insurance packages, but also through general policies designed to foster family-friendliness within the workplace and ease the management of work and family responsibilities (Olivetti & Petrongolo, 2017; Coontz, 2017; Thomas & Ganster, 1995). According to Henz (2017), men are showing an increased interest in childrearing, which has often been considered a woman's role, with 63% of participants in a research conducted by Opinion Matters (2015) saying, that females made more natural parents and with 33% viewing it as their traditional role. As a result, fathers are now experiencing work-life conflicts at a comparable rate to mothers, especially in relation to work overload, a strong indicator of work-life conflict (Skinner & Pocock, 2008). Men also suffer similar penalties to women regarding pay, promotions, and discriminatory treatment on-the-job. This is often referred to as the 'fatherhood penalty', where fathers leave their jobs for lower paid and lower quality work (Coontz, 2017; Working Families, 2017). Internationally, this fatherhood penalty is not a consistent phenomenon; Nordic countries (Denmark, Sweden, Iceland, Finland, and Norway) are often considered pioneers in designing family-friendly policies to balance family and work responsibilities. In doing so, they address both future economic challenges and female labour supply, without affecting fertility or damaging children's development (Gupta, et al., 2008). These proactive policies increase fathers' commitment and decrease work-life conflict (Fox, et al., 2009). In spite of evidence that family-friendly policies have the potential to be beneficial for the employees, families and for the organisation itself, their utilisation is low (McDonald, et al., 2005).

The importance of minimising work-life conflict has been underpinned by several theoretical frameworks, such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and the Psychological Contract of Argyris & Schein. In his hierarchy (fig. 1), Maslow divided basic individual needs into five categories, where the lower levels are stronger than others and basic for physical survival. As each criterion is met or satisfied, the individual can move up the hierarchy (Lester, 2013; Stum, 2001). According to Maslow, everyone has the desire to make progress up the hierarchy in order to achieve self-actualisation. A failure to reach other levels in the hierarchy disrupts the process of self-actualisation, resulting in individuals who fluctuate between the levels, making them more eager to achieve their needs (McLeod, 2007).

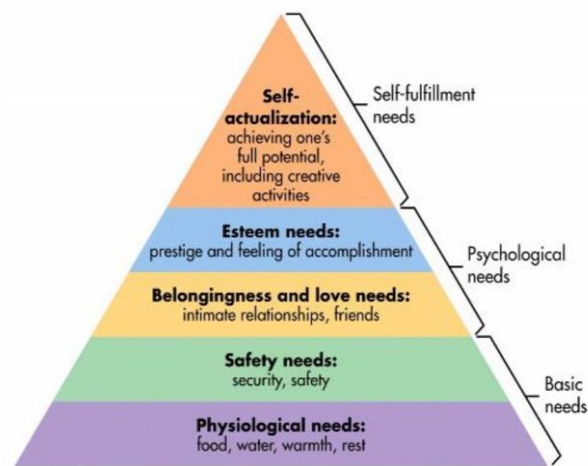


Figure 1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (McLeod, 2007) accessed on the 17th of June 2017

Maslow attempted to conceptualise motivation through the core needs up to the needs of self-fulfilment, looking at the individual in relation to the totality of their environment (Lester, 2013; Stum, 2001). Several versions and extensions of the hierarchy exist (McLeod, 2007) one of which was developed by Stum (2001), as presented in Figure 2.

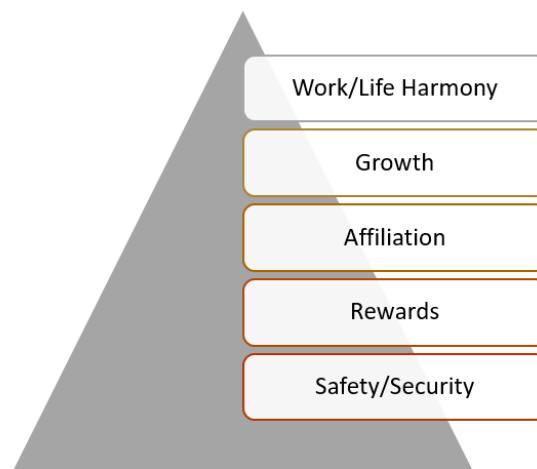


Figure 2 The Performance Pyramid (Stum, 2001) accessed on the 3rd of July 2017

This model seeks to understand different motivators that influence employee commitment. Looking at the employee/employer dynamic that takes place between the individual and the organisation. The levels consist of safety/security, rewards, affiliation, growth and at the top, work/life harmony, 'the drive is to achieve a sense of fulfilment in balancing work and life responsibilities' (Stum, 2001, p. 7). Both pyramids include family

needs, either in relations to the need of belonging, or in balancing work and family responsibilities (Lester, 2013; Stum, 2001) and consider family needs as an important factor in building commitment. This highlights the importance of the provision and execution of family-friendly policies that support those needs within an organisation (Stum, 2001). Another theoretical framework is the psychological contract, a term known and recognised for over 50 years (Conway & Briner, 2009). According to Sturges and Guest (2004) organisations can play a fundamental role in improving work-life conflicts for employees, both through organisational support and through psychological support, which is believed to include family-friendly policies as cited by Dex and Scheibl (2001). Failing to meet these requirements could negatively affect an employee's commitment to an organisation (Sturges & Guest, 2004). The psychological contract is a term used to describe the employees' perception of the level of performance acceptable to their employers, and what benefits the employers should be expected to provide their employees in return (Robinson, 1996). All in all, it's an exchange agreement (Conway & Briner, 2009) that creates the basis for good employment relationships (Rodwell, et al., 2015). Work within this field has been largely dominated by few authors and has otherwise received little attention, with only a small amount of in-depth research, findings regarding the consequences of a psychological contract breach have, however, been consistent (Conway & Briner, 2009). A violation of the psychological contract might result in overall negative outcomes for both the organisation and the employee himself where they could experience severe emotional reactions, develop negative attitudes towards the organisation and withdraw from positive behaviours. Hence, negatively affect the organisational commitment (Conway & Briner, 2009; Azim, et al., 2012).

According to the literature, family supportive policies, such as work-life balance, flexible working arrangements, and childcare provision, increase productivity and reduce staff turnover for both genders. Furthermore, employees report lower work-family conflict rates and higher levels of job satisfaction where organisations experience greater and more affective employee commitment (Eaton, 2003; Thomas & Ganster, 1995; Anderson, et al., 2002; Thompson, et al., 1999). It is vital however, that employees can access and utilise the policies with the support of their managers and colleagues without penalty, actual or implied, and without negative career consequences (Eaton, 2003; Thompson & Prottas, 2006). But research has shown that the utilisation of these policies by employees is often seen as a sign of low commitment, which in turn negatively affects salary (Manchester, et al., 2013). Some research argues that, to work effectively the policies should enhance the employee's sense of control

(Thomas & Ganster, 1995; Thompson & Prottas, 2006). Furthermore, employees who would utilise family-friendly policies are less likely to use them if they perceive a work ethos where their co-workers are unlikely to make use of them. As a result, organisations that are simply offering these policies without cultivating a supportive environment in which they can be adopted, would gain little value from them (Mandeville, et al., 2016). Friedman (2014) argued that the very terms and concepts used to describe these policies, such as work/life balance give the impression that ‘work’ and ‘life’ are completely unrelated when, in reality, they coexist. Friedman believed that the individuals who were most successful were those who managed to balance the various parts of their lives through a process called work-life integration. It is important therefore, that jobs are advertised as flexible, as the norm rather than the exception. Job descriptions need to be realistic and allow flexibility, considering alternative ways to support their employees, such as making childcare more easily affordable and promoting a family-friendly culture (Working Families, 2017). Despite the extensive research and somewhat consistent results, showing the benefits of these policies within organisations, a certain level of uncertainty exists as to whether or not SMEs provide support for families when balancing their work and family responsibilities (Dex & Scheibl, 2001; Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2012).

The employment act, known as the Maternity and Parental Leave etc. Regulations 1999, was one of the first statutory instruments introduced within the family-friendly area. It included three months of job-protected parental leave, which mothers and fathers could share to meet their family responsibilities or react to emergencies. Although this leave outlined in the policy was unpaid and, was only offered once over a youngster’s life, it was the first step of many towards helping working families (Waldfoegel, 2011). Today, parents’ rights are protected by the Employment Rights Act 1996, The Employment Relations Act 1999, The Employment Act 2002, the Work and Families Act 2006 and the Children and Families Act 2014 (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2016; Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2017; The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, 2014; Work and Families Act, 2006). Family-friendly policies, both statutory and contract-based, include: reduced working-hours for parents with infants or ill children, time to breastfeed, job sharing, nursery or childcare provision, flexitime, flexible working, and the right to take paid leave to take care of essential family responsibilities. Hence, statutory maternity, paternity, and adoption rights apply to times of absence granted to parents before and after the birth or adoption of their child (Halrynja, 2017; Waldfoegel, 2011; Chartered Institute of Personnel and

Development, 2016; The Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service, n.d.; Dex & Smith, 2002). Although the leave was once limited to mothers only, parental, paternity and adoption leave are now statutory rights for adoptive parents, same-sex partners and fathers, to support parents' involvement in their children's life (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2016; Tanaka & Waldfogel, 2007). Research has shown that fathers who take longer parental leave remain more involved with their children's lives and are less likely to apply stereotypical gender roles to their sons and daughters (Coontz, 2017). Furthermore, fathers' involvement can be beneficial for the children's' emotional and social development (Sarkadi, et al., 2008; Flouri & Buchanan, 2002) and for the mothers' career (McCrady, 2012; Zhou & Wen, 2016). Employees who are denied or are not eligible for these rights may have to choose between cutting their leave short, or leaving their job permanently (Waldfogel, 2011).

2.2. Utilisation of Family-Friendly Policies

The introduction and provision of family-friendly policies does not guarantee their uptake (McDonald, et al., 2005; OECD, 2016). Statistics gathered from 2,138 adults in the UK on the attitudes towards Shared Parental Leave from Opinion Matters (2015) revealed that the main responsibility for childcare lies mainly with women (63%) where 73% of males and 67% of females concluded that mothers make more natural parents. Only 4% of males said fathers made more natural parents and 0% of females. This would indicate that to a large extent, when it comes to taking care of children, gender stereotyping within society still exists. On the 5th of April 2015, Shared Parental Leave was introduced in the UK and research conducted since then has shown a gap between intention and actual uptake (TotalJobs, 2016). The majority of participants (75% of males and 63% of females) stated that they would have considered SPL had it been available when they had children and 40-50% were optimistic about using it for future children (Opinion Matters, 2015). TotalJobs (2016), which is a leading recruitment agency in the UK, conducted a survey in 2016 with 628 participants overall. The results showed that 50% of parents did not use SPL and only 20% used the full 52 weeks. Only 35% of males and 33% of females reported that they knew and fully understood SPL (Opinion Matters, 2015) but, according to TotalJobs (2016) 65% were not informed about whether the employer offered enhanced SPL pay and 74% did not get any support or information from their HR department. Furthermore, fewer men, compared to women work flexibly and enjoy the benefits available for families, their perception of the policies available is often that they are directed towards working mothers, but not working parents (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2009;

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2012; Burnett, et al., 2013). According to the existing literature, this could be especially true for SMEs and other organisations with high task independence, some of whom ostensibly have a negative attitude, where it is perceived that family-friendly policies might adversely affect the small or medium sized businesses (Dex & Scheibl, 2001), and where fewer employees experience supportive attitudes from co-workers and managers (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2012). SMEs were also shown to be less likely to introduce and include formal family-friendly practices (Dex & Scheibl, 2001; Cassell, et al., 2002). Other results however, show that SMEs are simply more cautious in their approach to family-friendliness and are more likely to offer informal practices (Dex & Scheibl, 2001). Flexibility, which builds the basis for family-friendly policies are in place, and employees are more likely to utilise them in smaller organisations compared to medium-sized or large organisations (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2012).

2.3. Gendered Uptake on Family-Friendly Policies

Balancing work and family responsibilities is essential for employee and parent well-being, however, many factors are hindering mothers and fathers in this fight, such as gender stereotypes, financial barriers, and the organisational culture (Hussain, et al., 2015; Gov.UK, 2016). Female employees who are married with children are more likely utilise family-friendly policies than other employees. Despite this, male employees who are fathers in today's modern society are likely to experience the greatest work-life conflict. As a result, employees who are fathers are increasingly taking family-friendly policies into consideration before selecting firms they might wish work for (Ferrer & Gagné, 2013; Bond, 2004; Thompson, et al., 1999). According to some of the literature, this issue is less likely to exist within larger organisations, perhaps because of their economic power. They are often regarded to be leading the field in adopting family-friendly practices, whereas, these policies are far less common within smaller organisations (Dex & Scheibl, 2001; Allen & Parker, 2001). On the other hand, larger organisations are more likely to turn down requests for flexible working than SMEs (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2012) and are less likely to take personal circumstances into consideration (Dex & Scheibl, 2001). There are several inter-related reasons for the low uptake among fathers and the higher uptake amongst mothers exist.

2.3.1. Financial Reasons

Due to the gender pay gap, where females earn from 13.9-18% less than men (The Fawcett Society, n.d.), the family's overall income might suffer from mothers taking shorter leave and returning to work (OECD, 2016). Two thirds of the 2,750 participants in the Modern Family Index (2017) said they could neither afford, nor had the time to utilise their leave, where 47% thought that, since 2015, financial barriers to raising a family had grown, making it even harder to raise a family. Hence, for the sake of the overall household income, fathers are less likely to utilise their leave than mothers (Gayle, et al., 2010).

2.3.2. Career Consequences

A major contributor to the gender pay gap is the career consequences faced by women as a result of time taken off work due to childbearing, or because of undervalued work (Equal Pay Portal, 2017). Women's career development suffers, not only due to time taken off from having children, but also because of women's low representation in senior roles (World Economic Forum, 2016; Equal Pay Portal, 2017). Furthermore, family-friendly working, such as part-time working, which is common amongst mothers, reduces the likelihood of promotion and access to male-dominated occupations and it negatively affects their opportunities to go on business-related travel. This, as was highlighted before, contributes to decreased or lower salary, making fathers less likely to utilise the policies available for the sake of the family's income (Gayle, et al., 2010). Lastly, by utilising family-friendly policies, employees might face a lack of understanding from colleagues and inter-relationships may suffer (Kirby & Krone, 2002; Haar & Spell, 2003).

2.3.3. Gender Stereotypes

Gender is a historical phenomenon, which is understood and developed differently in different cultural contexts (Alvesson & Billing, 2009). It is a term used for our body, identity, and expression (Gender Spectrum, n.d), however, societal expectations towards masculinity and femininity create so-called gender stereotypes. Women might be viewed as more natural parents, gentler, more delicate and more sensitive in their approach, while men are perceived to be strong, aggressive, brave and independent (Hussain, et al., 2015; Opinion Matters, 2015). These cultural perceptions are often supported from a very young age through toys, decorations and compliments which are intended consciously or unconsciously, to reinforce the appropriate stereotype (ibid.). Ultimately, this affects the representation of genders within the workforce,

where females accommodate for 33% of junior level staff, 24% of mid-level staff, 15% of senior level staff and 9% of CEOs (World Economic Forum, 2016). However, culture and social practices are responsible for the ratio of males and females within sectors, hierarchical levels or within full-time part-time employment, not genes (Alvesson & Billing, 2009). Family-friendly policies alone are not enough to reduce work-life conflict for, without support from the organisational culture, the policies might either be under-utilised or have adverse effects on those who make use of them (Chou & Cheung, 2013).

2.4. Organisational Culture

A work-place culture is a complex phenomenon, which can be hard to define (Iran, et al., 2013); it evolves from adaptation to the organisational environment and from managing internal relationships (Javidan & House, 2001). By developing an extensive understanding of organisational culture, one could reveal some of the reasons behind the provision-utilisation gap (McDonald, et al., 2005). Furthermore, organisational understanding along with family-friendly policies have a greater effect on work-life balance and job satisfaction than individual policies alone (Saltzstein, et al., 2001). Organisational culture affects employee performance and relationships between employees, supervisors, and customers (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2013). Culture is commonly defined as a set of beliefs and values about desirable and undesirable behaviours within the organisation as well as formal and informal practices to support the organisational values (Javidan & House, 2001; Schein, 1983). According to Huczynski and Buchanan (2013, p. 113) organisational culture comprises, ‘the shared values, beliefs, and norms which influence the way employees think, feel, and act towards others inside and outside the organisation’. Beliefs are practices within a specific culture and the values that stand for people’s perception about how things should be executed (Javidan & House, 2001). Traphagan’s (2017) argument of the complexity of culture, underlines the importance of culture within organisations. He argued that common views and debates on organisational culture are too simplistic. Where it also affects decision-making and the distribution of tasks to achieve organisational goals, culture represents far more than just unity. Using culture simply to unify the workforce is a control mechanism used to increase loyalty, devotion, and commitment through methods of manipulation and control. This could lead to conformity, where those in power believe that the employees uncritically accept these core values (Ray, 1986; Knights & Willmott, 1987; Traphagan, 2017). Hence, culture is a complex phenomenon (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2013) and its role within organisations reaches far beyond unifying, where it is for

example, crucial for supporting family-friendliness within organisations and the utilisation of policies (Thompson & Prottas, 2006; Anderson, et al., 2002; Bond, 2004; Allen, 2001; Thompson, et al., 1999).

Culture is usually established by the founder of the organisation and is often derived from the leaders' personality. It develops over time, through growth, adaptations, and survivals by establishing coping mechanisms in times of internal and external crises in the organisation; hence it is drawn up in learning to deal with problems of external adaptation and internal integration (Schein, 1983). Several factors are considered to influence the creation of culture, including the vision, values, practices, people, narratives, location, and the behaviour of leaders (Whitehurst, 2016; Coleman, 2013). Culture and its role within businesses, has been a popular topic since the early 1980s. Recently however, it has gained increasing attention (Hofstede, 1986). Schein and Hofstede were the authors of two influential theories. Schein (2010) played a fundamental role in increasing the understanding of the complexity of organisational culture and the effects it has on organisations and employees. His model described three cultural levels, presented by visibility and accessibility. The levels consisted of artefacts and creations, values and beliefs and basic assumptions (Schein, 2010; Schein, 1983).

National culture is considered more influential and enduring than organisational culture and consequently, there is a body of research exploring the effects that it has on organisational culture (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2013). Geert Hofstede's work (1967-73), provides an overview of the key cultural drivers in the United Kingdom. Although the theory is largely built up of national stereotypes (Minkov & Blagoev, 2012), it could shed light on possible explanations for the provision-utilisation gap.

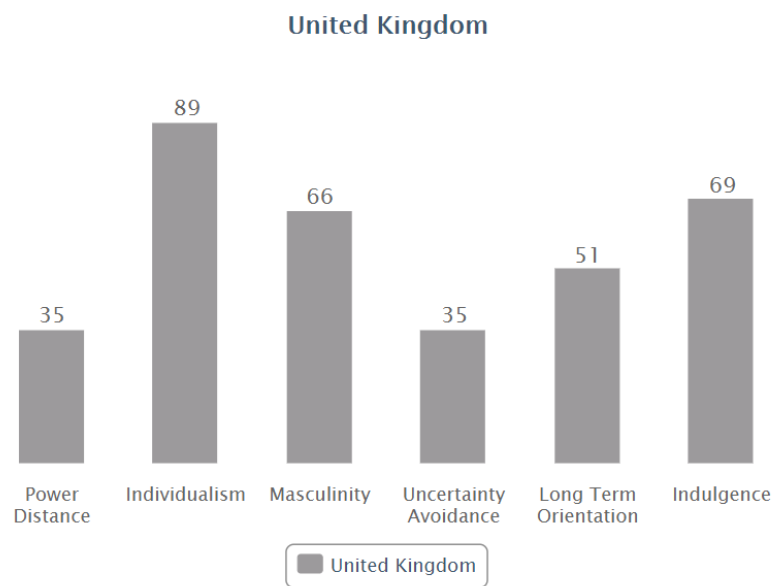


Figure 3 National Culture (The Hofstede Centre, n.d.) accessed on the 14th of May 2017

A high score on the masculine dimension indicates that competition, achievement, and business success largely drive the society, with success being defined by the best in the field. A low score on the masculine dimension indicates that the dominant values in the society are ‘caring for others’ and ‘quality of life’, which is defined as a feminine society (Hofstede & Bond, 1988; The Hofstede Centre, n.d.). Arguably, ‘Feminine society’ understands and balances the relationship between power and emotional life more successfully (Seidler, 2006). The central issue in relation to work-place culture is what motivates people; wanting to be the best (masculine) or liking what you do (feminine) (Hofstede & Bond, 1988; The Hofstede Centre, n.d.). At 66 on Hofstede’s Masculinity/femininity scale, Britain would appear to be a masculine society, highly success-oriented and driven (The Hofstede Centre, n.d.). ‘Masculine ethics’ within organisations are said to be underlying barriers that make it harder for employees to balance their work-and family life, as cited by Haas, Allard & Hwang (2010). Furthermore, organisations with lower masculinity are more likely to offer flexible-working, to try to support fathers in balancing work and family responsibilities by utilising family-friendly policies (Haas & Hwang, 2007).

The work of Handy (1993), had a different approach, dividing organisational culture into four categories: role culture, person culture, task culture, and power culture. Power culture often exists within small or medium sized businesses, where one individual has more power in

decision-making without much democratic process. This can be reinforced through the recruitment of people who demonstrate similar values and views to support their ideas (Kane-Urrabazo, 2006). This type of culture could be a possible explanation for the degree of family-friendliness within SMEs.

The term ‘socialisation’ is used to describe the process of promoting organisational culture (Pascale, 1985; Schneider, 1988). It represents the process of becoming a member of a group, that is, learning the formal and informal ways of doing things (Pascale, 1985) and it is believed to evolve throughout the employee's career, as cited by Chao et al. (1994). The definition according to Huczynski & Buchanan (2013, p. 120) is, ‘the process through which an employee’s pattern of behaviour, values, attitudes, and motives is influenced to conform to that of the organisation’. Socialisation is sustained through seven steps, where the last one is consistent role models (Pascale, 1985; Huczynski & Buchanan, 2013). Role modelling is ‘a form of socialisation in which an individual learns by example, copying the behaviour of established organisation members’ (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2013, p. 122). According to Bandura (1965) managers, supervisors, or other role-models, could affect the utilisation of policies among fathers, for people often maintain behaviour or standards provided by models if the behaviour or standard is repeatedly demonstrated and paired with positive reinforcement.

2.4.1. Family-Friendly Culture

The availability of family-friendly benefits, alone, is not enough to promote a family-friendly culture (Lewis, 2010; Bond, 2004; Allen, 2001). The organisational culture, in which the employees thrive, is more important than individual programmes or benefits. The culture affects the availability and utilisation of programmes and the attitudes towards the organisation (Thompson & Prottas, 2006; Anderson, et al., 2002; Bond, 2004; Allen, 2001; Thompson, et al., 1999). Furthermore, family-friendly work environments support staff in taking care of their job and family responsibilities, such as the care for dependents, (Thomas & Ganster, 1995), as well as considering work-life responsibilities before making decisions that affect employees (Daverth, et al., 2016). It is not, however, only important to create and provide family-friendly culture, but also to regularly re-assess that culture, along with the family-friendly programmes (Thompson, et al., 1999) and to actively encourage employees to utilise them (Bittman, et al., 2004).

Unsupportive organisations where family-friendly policies are not included with human resources issues might mistake employees who are interested in family-friendly policies for less committed employees, undeserving of career advancement (Saltzstein, et al., 2001). Businesses that do not have family-friendly cultures experience more work-family conflict, less job satisfaction, less organisational commitment, and greater turnover than those who focused on supporting families (Allen, 2001; Scandura & Lankau, 1997; Thompson, et al., 1999). Both formal and informal support for family and life increase employee perception of control and, in turn, decrease the likelihood of negative experiences (Thompson & Prottas, 2006). It is essential that employees believe that their career opportunities will not suffer from utilising family-friendly policies (Anderson, et al., 2002), otherwise they might be reluctant to use them. By creating family-friendly environments, organisations may be able to contribute to reducing work-family conflict and improving employee attitudes (Scandura & Lankau, 1997; Thompson, et al., 1999). An organisation can have excellent family-friendly policies in place but, without supportive family-friendly culture utilisation will be low and attitudes towards the organisation might suffer. There are two critical dimensions of family-friendly culture; supervisor, and co-worker support (Mesmer-Magnus & Chockalingam, 2006).

2.4.2. Supervisor Support

Supervisor support is necessary when shaping family-friendly cultures (de Janasz, et al., 2013; Anderson, et al., 2002) and to convey norms and policies within organisations to actual practices (O'Driscoll, et al., 2003). Supportive supervisors are characterised by their wish to fulfil the employee's desire for work-life balance, by providing flexible working arrangements, tolerating personal errands during work hours, or offering employees the opportunity to bring their children to work during emergencies (Thomas & Ganster, 1995). This kind of behaviour positively affects the decision-making around the utilisation of family-friendly policies and reduces turnover (Batt & Valcour, 2003; Thompson, et al., 1999). Fathers need to know that they have both direct support through mentors and contextual support (supportive work environment) in their efforts to balance work and family obligations (Anderson, et al., 2002; de Janasz, et al., 2013). The type of social support within organisations and the source it originates from, positively affects work-family conflict (Kossek, et al., 2011; Batt & Valcour, 2003; Butler, et al., 2004). The more supportive a supervisor or manager is, less family-conflict is experienced by the employee, which in turn reduces absenteeism (Goff, et al., 1990). According to Allen (2001), by supporting the use of family-friendly policies both directly and indirectly, employers can positively affect job attitudes, because supervisor support and

behaviour are fundamental elements in determining how employees perceive the organisational environment. Perceived supervisor support and family-friendly environments are positively related to the uptake of family-friendly policies enhancing perceived organisational support in balancing in-role performance, and extra-role performance (Allen, 2001; Thomas & Ganster, 1995; Bittman, et al., 2004). Supportive, and fair treatment of employees and its positive consequences may in turn, arise from the supportive treatment of supervisors within the organisation (Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006). For this reason, it is important to offer training and guidance for supervisors on how to be supportive and tolerant of their employees and how to encourage all employees within their organisation to acknowledge and fulfil their family obligations (Fiksenbaum, 2014; Allen, 2001). As mentioned earlier, employees within SMEs are believed to be less likely to experience supervisor support for utilising family-friendly policies than employees within larger organisations, whereas employees within Micro-enterprises (of less than 10 employees) are least likely to feel supported (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2012; European Commission, 2009).

2.4.3. Co-Worker Support

Another factor essential for the uptake of family-friendly policies is co-worker support. Co-workers might encourage family involvement or, alternatively see it as a negative factor, increasing the workload for the remaining employees (Kirby & Krone, 2002). The growth of family-friendly policies within organisations has not received entirely positive feedback, and among particular groups within the workforce, they are perceived as creating inequality and preferential treatment (Kirby & Krone, 2002; Casper, et al., 2007). Hence, co-worker's unsupportive discussion, perception, and behaviour in relation to the utilisation of family-friendly policies, creates peer-pressure within the workforce to avoid using these policies. There is a growing proportion of childfree and/or single employees who do not benefit from these policies. This has created what has been referred to as 'work-family backlash', leading to discussion and criticism of the limited interest and unequal access to these policies for employees within this group (Kirby & Krone, 2002; Young, 1999; Allen & Parker, 2001; Casper, et al., 2007). Very few, if any organisations would wish to admit that they were treating certain lifestyles preferentially, but the focus on family-friendly policies, which have been widely adopted leaves some employees feeling undervalued and resentful. Some employees may feel that the reward for their commitment is simply a greater work-load because of parental-leave absences (Michele, 1997; Kirby & Krone, 2002). Older employees with grown children might resent new work-life policies available today, since they had to balance their

responsibilities without any support (Allen & Parker, 2001). Meanwhile, in general, individuals who can make use of the family-friendly policies available are also the ones that perceive them as positive (Kirby & Krone, 2002). Stereotyping also plays a part in co-worker support where, they are more likely to act supportively towards mothers taking leave, whereas fathers are met with a lack of understanding (ibid.). According to Palmer (2017) organisations should focus on establishing ‘human-friendly’ workplaces, where parents are not prioritised but flexibility for human nature will be practiced, and made equally available for all. However, negative perceptions of both supervisor and co-worker support might lie with the lack of communication. By implementing a transparent communication system, organisations might increase the understanding of the sacrifices that employees sometimes must make when utilising family-friendly policies, such as co-worker relationships, salary, and work-related travels as well as communicating the advantages of providing family-friendly policies for the business case and societal goods they might increase understanding, and hence, support. Employers need to foster an environment where concerns and benefits can be openly expressed and discussed until all stakeholders come to a consensus (Kirby & Krone, 2002; Haar & Spell, 2003).

2.5. Conclusion

Conclusively, fathers are interested in participating in care-taking (Henz, 2017) and father’s participation can be beneficial, not only because the organisation experiences increased productivity, reduced turnover and higher levels of job satisfaction, but because it benefits the employee and his family (Eaton, 2003; Thomas & Ganster, 1995; Anderson, et al., 2002; Thompson, et al., 1999; McDonald, et al., 2005).

Theoretical frameworks such as Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs and the Psychological Contract have also highlighted the importance of work-life balance for employee’s commitment and satisfaction (Lester, 2013; Stum, 2001; Sturges & Guest, 2004; Dex & Scheibl, 2001; Conway & Briner, 2009; Azim, et al., 2012). In spite of the weight of evidence, the utilisation of family-friendly policies is low (McDonald, et al., 2005), whether because of the motherhood and fatherhood penalty, such as career consequences, experienced by parents who attempt to balance work and family responsibilities (Coontz, 2017; Working Families, 2017) or because of financial reasons such as the gender pay gap or decreased salary (OECD, 2016; Working Families, 2017; Gayle, et al., 2010; Manchester, et al., 2013), gender

stereotypes (World Economic Forum, 2016; Alvesson & Billing, 2009) or because of the organisational culture (Chou & Cheung, 2013; McDonald, et al., 2005).

Several types and explanations of organisational culture exists, where one can, for example, reveal possible explanations for the low uptake of family-friendly policies in the UK through Hofstede's work (Hofstede, 1986; Hofstede & Bond, 1988; The Hofstede Centre, n.d.) where certain national characteristics could hinder the utilisation of policies (Haas, et al., 2010; Haas & Hwang, 2007). Handy (1993) then described a type of culture which, according to him, often exists within SMEs, called power culture, which is of particular interest for this study. Family-friendly cultures consist of supervisor support (de Janasz, et al., 2013; Anderson, et al., 2002) and co-worker support (Kirby & Krone, 2002). According to the literature, family-friendly cultures, characterised by the support for family involvement which positively affects employees, organisations and families, is more important than individual policies (Thompson & Prottas, 2006; Anderson, et al., 2002; Bond, 2004; Allen, 2001; Thompson, et al., 1999; Daverth, et al., 2016). However, it is essential to support supervisors throughout their training in the family-friendly area, to guarantee the best results (Fiksenbaum, 2014; Allen, 2001). The attitudes among colleagues towards the utilisation of family-friendly policies substantially affects the uptake, certain groups within the workforce might be resentful towards the policies which hinder parents in their family-involvement (Kirby & Krone, 2002; Casper, et al., 2007; Young, 1999; Allen & Parker, 2001; Michele, 1997). A transparent communication system might be the solution to negative attitudes amongst co-workers, where a deeper understanding of the multiple sacrifices employees have to make and knowledge of the benefits of providing family-friendly policies for the business, the employees and the families might increase their understanding and hence, their support (Kirby & Krone, 2002; Haar & Spell, 2003).

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1. Overview

The goal of this research was to explore how culture within SMEs affects the utilisation of family-friendly policies among fathers. The focal areas of culture were the overall family-friendliness of the organisation, the provision of policies and, supervisor and co-worker support. Another objective of this study was to reduce the research gap that exists on family friendliness around small or medium sized businesses. The research was conducted in collaboration with Fathers Network Scotland, a charity that focuses on ‘allowing men to be the fathers they want to be’ (Fathers Network Scotland, n.d.) and The University of Edinburgh Business School. Both parties took part in the research by granting access to participants through their extensive network, which the researcher then interviewed. This chapter will introduce the research methodology, including the philosophy, approach, strategy and design, data collection and analysis, ethical issues, reliability, validity, and generalisability, as is presented in figure 4, and lastly, the limitations.

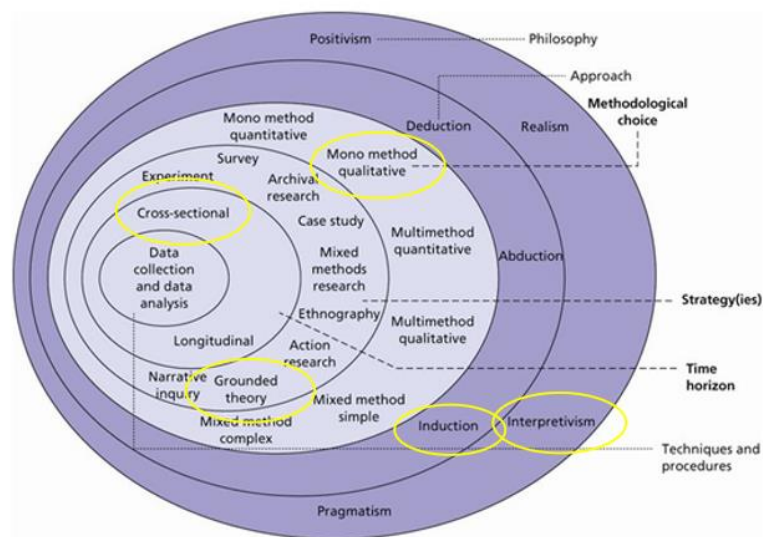


Figure 4 The Research Onion (Saunders, et al., 2016) accessed on the 10th of July 2017

3.1.1. Philosophy and Approach

The philosophy that underpinned this research was interpretivism¹, which allows the study of human beings and their logic, and thus fundamentally differs from the philosophies characterising the natural sciences (Bryman & Bell, 2015). This philosophy was especially important for this topic, the focus of which, is individual perceptions, experiences and opinions about cultural aspects of the business, such as friendliness, policies and support that might affect the utilisation of family-friendly policies among fathers.

Due to the importance of experiences and perceptions, a qualitative research with an inductive approach² was adopted. A ‘bottom-up’ approach was used to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomena, and to generate the theory at the end of the process. This method, which was understanding (inductive) rather than predicting (deductive) (Bryman & Bell, 2015), was considered more appropriate for this specific research.

3.1.2. Strategy and Design

A mono-method qualitative research design was chosen, through a cross sectional time horizon and by using primary data, that is, through interviews carried out by the researcher. Furthermore, grounded theory was applied, ‘An approach to the analysis of qualitative data that aims to generate theory out of research data by achieving a close fit between the two’ (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 724). In other words, a theory derived from data, which is systematically conducted and analysed through the research process (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 584). After conducting the interviews, the data gathered was coded using software called NVivo, to break down, examine, compare, conceptualise, and categorise data, through a process within grounded theory known as open coding (Bryman & Bell, 2015), which allows the researcher to fracture or slice the text of resolving data into components (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). The initial analyses through NVivo involved a thorough, time consuming, reflective examination to break open the text for further analysis. Through micro-analysis such as the one done for this research, the author generates an awareness of the fullness of the data, and the detailed attention to the text through the coding process reduces the risk of the author's preconceptions affecting the analysis. The process was quite slow at first, where the author

¹ Interpretivism: ‘An epistemological position that requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action’ (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 724)

² Inductive: ‘An approach to the relationship between theory and research in which the former is generated out of the latter’ (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 724)

oriented his thinking to the issues by using reflection and adding memos, annotations and creating nodes.

The themes that emerged from the data were five in total; values and policies, culture, support, implications, and awareness. Theme clarity was considered satisfying when theoretical saturation was achieved which, in grounded theory is, ‘the point when emerging concepts have been fully explored and no new theoretical insights are being generated’ (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 729). Finally, to maintain a close connection between the data and the concepts, constant comparisons were used throughout the research process (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The sample consisted of ten individuals, one female and eight males either from, or based in Scotland and one male, now located in Germany. All the participants worked within SMEs, in various positions, two were HR managers, who had children and eight were employees or managers who were fathers.

3.1.3. Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected through ten interviews, one with each participant, lasting between forty minutes up to an hour. Interviews were either conducted in the businesses themselves, or at The University of Edinburgh Business School. To minimise possible external effects, interviews were all carried out in complete privacy at the same or similar time of day. All the interviews were anonymously recorded on three devices, a DELL XPS13 computer, a SAMSUNG S6 smartphone and AngLink voice recorder to make sure that backup recordings were available in case of emergencies. An interview guide was used to formalise the questions (Appendix 1) and a close co-operation with Fathers Network Scotland and the academic supervisor was maintained to help guarantee the most consistent results. The interview questions were semi-structured; several key questions were scripted to define the phenomena and the areas to be explored, while at the same time, this structure enabled the opportunity to elaborate on new elements emerging from the interview, that had not previously been considered (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Further probing was used to clarify answers, where necessary to expand on detail and explore feelings, thoughts, and emotions. (See appendix 2 for interview questions and probes).

Later, the interviews were transcribed verbatim and, after reading and listening several times, key points, themes, and considerations were highlighted. NVivo was also used to categorise data using nodes, in relation to grounded theory. Finally, a ‘word-cloud’ was formed, using the frequency of words in the interview (Appendix 3), amongst frequent words used

were; family, flexible, organisation, managers, need, culture, support, and policies. The software enabled a comprehensive overview of the data collected and a holistic understanding of the concepts.

3.1.4. Ethics, Reliability, Validity, and Generalisability

For ethical considerations, the participants received an information sheet (Appendix 4), which provided them with all the information relevant to the study and a consent form (Appendix 5) to ensure that they agreed to and understood the research and their rights as participants. All participant received a sheet that included information on common family-friendly policies in the United Kingdom (Appendix 6) to minimise the risk of misunderstanding terms and to increase the level of comfort that participants felt when discussing the topic. Furthermore, no interviews were conducted until the ethical approval through ATLAS was received. Due to familiarity with the terms, this study attempted to evaluate the quality, rigour, and potential of the research by considering the reliability, validity, and generalisability rather than using alternative criteria for qualitative research, such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Constant data comparison and the comprehensive use of data underpinned the reliability of this study. It is the nature of qualitative research however, that the external reliability may suffer, for it is impossible to exactly replicate social settings in such a study (Bryman & Bell, 2015). In this research however, it was possible to adopt a similar role to the original researcher so that the replication could be considered comparable to the initial research. The internal reliability might be considered relatively high, as the questions and answers were directly related to the topic and the research was conducted by one individual. The external validity was fairly robust and the results could to some degree be generalised to other social settings due to the size and variability within the sample. However, a bigger sample would certainly strengthen the external validity. The internal validity can be considered to be relatively robust as there was a good match between the observation and theoretical ideas.

3.2. Limitations

Although this research was prepared and conducted carefully, there are several limitations. Some of these constraints emerge as a consequence of carrying out a qualitative analysis. For example, the risk of subjective research increases, as it is difficult to replicate them which may negatively affect the reliability, and the generalisability and ultimately, the transferability may be restricted (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Saunders, et al., 2016). The field in which the research

was conducted is largely dominated by a few authors, which increases the risks of biases in the literature. Furthermore, some limitations arise from the size of the sample, which consists of 10 participants who are all around the same age, all but one of who are males and who all live or operate within the same country, except one. This effectively limits the generalisability and scope, which, in turn might be seen to negatively affect the reliability and validity of the research. It was found to be exceptionally difficult to get access to potential participants and businesses. This might possibly be because SMEs were reluctant to participate in research on family friendliness, or because the role-clarity or boundaries in smaller organisations are sometimes unclear, hence individuals might have a harder time in fitting an interview into their schedule. This affected the population of the sample, which was originally was supposed to include 15 individuals but ultimately ended up with 10. Lastly, since English was not the native language of the researcher, it is possible that fluency in language might, to some extent affect the interpretation of the interview. Due to the fact that the findings were self-reported, several other issues arise, such as selective attention or ‘the ability, often exercised unconsciously, to choose from the stream of sensory data, to concentrate on particular elements and to ignore others’ (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2013, p. 806), attribution, or ‘the process by which we make sense of our environment through our perceptions of causality’ (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2013, p. 795), the halo effect or ‘a judgement based on a single striking characteristic, such as an aspect of dress, speech, posture, or nationality’ (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2013, p. 800) or stereotyping ‘a category or personality type, which we allocate to people on the basis of their membership of some known group’ (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2013, p. 807), and the self-fulfilling prophecy ‘a prediction that becomes true simply because someone expects it to happen’ (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2013, p. 806). This study attempted to acknowledge that all these factors could arise and consciously tried to consider and to limit them.

Moreover, a major limitation for the field in general is its failure to acknowledge different family arrangements, such as same sex partners, or single parents where most research is directed towards family units that consist of a father, a mother, and a child. Thus, overlooking other individuals and children that would benefit from a deeper knowledge of the provision-utilisation gap, and from openness and support of policy use.

Chapter 4: Findings

To start the interviews, the author asked the participants (coded as A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, and J) if they felt comfortable and were ready to start. Afterwards, the author confirmed his approval for recording and taking notes. Furthermore, the author allowed employees to discuss or describe their family arrangements if they wanted to. The author considered this discussion to be a stress revealing factor, and hence, a good way to properly start off the interview. After careful examination of the data, both manually and by using NVivo, several themes emerged, which will be presented with direct quotations from participants where [...] is used to cover up personal information that could identify the participant in one way or another or to exclude irrelevant information. The themes are vision and policies, culture, which alongside with the culture itself, includes the leadership and working atmosphere. Support is another theme which includes co-worker and supervisor support, and implications accounted for yet another theme, including comfort levels, perceptions, and difficulties of returning to work. Lastly, awareness, which was an emergent theme that unexpectedly arose from the interviews includes accessibility and communication. To shed light on the importance of family involvement for the fathers, the following quotes have been selected, but all answers indicated high relevance to the employees, in one way or another.

‘One of the reasons I like to work from home is that it lets me take my son to nursery [...] then take my daughter to a breakfast club in the morning [...] as a dad, it is really nice to just be there after school to wait for her. To see her face when she comes running out their door and listen to her stories when it is all fresh and she can tell me. Then we jump on our bikes together and cycle down the road’ – Participant E

‘I think it is critical [...] I think it will soon change from being an attractive differentiator to a barrier to entry’ – Participant B

‘My approach is, whenever possible, family comes first because the kids grow up fast’ – Participant E

‘I came from a very dysfunctional family so I understand what is going the other way, so that partly affected my decision to be more involved with my child. Because I could see what happens when you go the other way’ – Participant A

4.1. Values and Policies

The author quickly realised that, although all SMEs fulfilled the statutory requirements and some provided non-legislative policies in addition to that, such as agile working, term-time working or provided full flexibility, the employees valued the practices, culture, and friendliness more than the policies themselves. Furthermore, they acknowledged the importance of understanding from supervisors. The majority of the participants were happy about the policies in place within their workplace and deeply valued them. No participant expressed resistance towards the policies because they are designed especially for individuals that have children for they saw children as the future members of society, and hence, of great importance to all. The following quotes were selected to represent the answers given.

'It has regulated policies and some awareness' – Participant C

'As long as the work is done and as long as the work is done in time, nobody has any issues' – Participant F

'There is a difference between the written policy and the practice on the ground. In many ways, what matters more to me as a dad is the practice on the ground as opposed to the written policy. I mean, it is easy to have a policy, everyone can have a policy' – Participant E

'The policy makes no difference, whatsoever. It is black and white as that. It is cultural. In a big company, it is down to who your manager is. Do they have the right attitude, behaviour, and approach to this? Doesn't matter what the policy says' – Participant D

'I came from an environment that was typically not family-friendly [...] where it is typically frowned upon to take any kind of time off for family to come here to this environment where they have all kinds of these policies, it has been a real head-turner in fact [...] a real eye-opener' – Participant A

'I think staff needs to know that the culture within the organisation is accepting of that because it is one thing to have a policy but then there is another thing for that policy to be lived and you know, certainly other places I have worked the policies are written down but not promoted so it becomes a box-ticking exercise' – Participant I

When describing the policies and overall family-friendliness of SMEs, several participants reflected on their experiences from larger organisations. Although some acknowledged the extensive resources they might have, no participant thought they were friendlier towards families where some even had negative experiences which made them reluctant to working for large organisations again in the future. Other participants said the size of the company made no difference regarding the policies. According to their experiences, SMEs had friendlier cultures, were more supportive and flexible, and the employees

experienced more trust than in larger organisations. Lastly, due to the size of SMEs, it was a network of close relationships which positively affected the atmosphere. The following quotes were chosen to represent the answers given.

'In my previous job in a larger company [...] I wouldn't even think about it [utilising policies] they would go 'get somebody else to do it' just the mentality' – Participant D

'When I worked in a bigger organisation, I probably would know what I am entitled to but not felt as comfortable taking time off or trying to arrange childcare around my son at that point. My media line manager, although he had children I probably would say he wouldn't be that supportive' - Participant F

'Although you are focusing on SMEs, apart from the cost, I think you could do the same for large or SMEs it is almost the same to be honest. They have slightly bigger budgets so they might have more flexibility but in the larger organisations that I worked in, you run on very tight budgets as well' – Participant D

When asked about the organisational values within the SMEs, the participants who could answer the question reported organisational values that were strongly related to family-friendliness, support, and flexibility which all contributes to the creation of a family-friendly organisation.

'It is a top-down infrastructure on supporting family life, I would say that is certainly a value and a good one to have. To be friendly towards family, I mean beyond legislation [...] I would say it is a family-friendly value' – Participant A

'Supportive is one, respect is another core value, excellence is the third, humour is another and I cannot remember the fifth one' – Participant D

'I think our core value is this flexibility' – Participant F

4.2. Culture

When asked about the culture of the organisation, all participants described a modern, supportive, inclusive, open, and flexible family-friendly culture with a positive working atmosphere. The employee involvement was generally high, where they could participate in decision-making in one way or another, although they questioned the impact of their participation. However, the employees valued these practices greatly and considered it to be a powerful factor regarding retention and loyalty. Furthermore, some participants who predicted future growth in their SMEs worried about how well they could protect the culture to allow it to thrive within larger organisations.

'I think we have a good culture here [...]. I Wouldn't have stuck around if there wasn't a supportive culture' – Participant E

The interviewees mostly agreed that the leadership style was essential for developing a family-friendly culture where they acknowledged the importance of role-modelling. Several participants even concluded that eventually, the culture emerges from the leadership style. One participant, however, discussed a stability issue with the leadership which greatly affected his satisfaction within the organisation and his perception of the overall family-friendliness. The leadership style, however, was not only seen as essential for closeness, and good relationships with managers or supervisors but also vital for creating family-friendly organisations where employees are comfortable enough to request policies such as flexible working.

‘Quite easy going [...]. I would go to my boss and ask for this or that and he would say no, I wouldn’t have a problem because he is very supportive and approachable’
– Participant A

‘My line manager is very approachable on these things, it is an informal style and I think she sets a good example in terms of flexibility’ – Participant E

‘Very approachable, very trustworthy [...]. They are family oriented where ultimately both of them want to include everyone, there is this really inclusive atmosphere [...] I think it is that trust’ – Participant F

Furthermore, answers on the working atmosphere were relatively consistent with the ones about both culture and leadership. Normally described as friendly and supportive while remaining productive and focused. However, some participants noted the conflicts that sometimes arise between individual needs and operational requirements although they did not think that badly affected the atmosphere and showed a deep level of understanding for the business needs.

‘Fun, productive and friendly’ – Participant D

‘Friendly and productive’ – Participant E

4.3. Support

Support was a key aspect in establishing a family-friendly organisation, according to all participants, hence an important theme. All interviewees discussed supervisor support. They said that if supervisors or managers would openly utilise family-friendly policies, or openly support the uptake it would send a very much appreciated message to other employees that it was okay to use these policies. Hence, wanting more involvement in family life was not a big deal. Furthermore, the employees felt more comfortable reporting to managers or supervisors that were using the policies themselves, had children or were openly supportive of father’s

involvement. It would create a different atmosphere around the issue. The author picked the following quotes to represent the answers given.

'The biggest issue is who your boss is' – Participant D

'Deferentially without a doubt. Without a line manager who is receptive to flexible working I think people are reluctant to ask to be honest. Whether your line manager is receptive to flexible working is demonstrative to how many people around you, you see with flexible working arrangement. So, it makes it easy for other people to ask for it because they can already see someone working with it' – Participant E

'Where supervisors or managers are promoting the policies, it feels more..., I suppose it gives staff permission to come and ask' – Participant I

'Absolutely, I think it is critical [...] so I think the supervisor link is key [...]. I think if they see a supervisor who is open and who is flexible in that sense, I think they would be less reluctant [...]. It is about having open communication and the ability for the employee to feel comfortable to come and say, 'look, how can this work for me'. I think supervisors are the key and the employees feeling comfortable enough with the company to come and ask' – Participant J

Furthermore, co-worker support was equally important. The feeling of guilt experienced by fathers utilising the policies was said to be a significant barrier where they worried about what attitudes other employees held towards the policies and if they believed that they fathers were working from home and taking care of their child. However, this could be due to previous experiences within other organisations, or due to personal reasons or perceptions. Again, the employees underpinned the importance of being openly supportive of family involvement or having co-workers that were parents for it made them feel more comfortable with utilising the policies.

'Very important that people don't feel if you make a flexible working request that you are letting your colleagues down or leading them with more work to do [...]. We all appreciate it and want to help each other out [...] if your co-workers were really aggrieved having to pick up extra work because you didn't work on a Tuesday or Wednesday or what it is, it would absolutely be a barrier' – Participant E

Lastly, a few participants discussed the lack of support available for managers when educating themselves about the policies and practices in place within the organisation which they believed negatively affected their comfort levels while assisting employees on that matter.

4.4. Implications

This theme introduces several implications that could occur due to the uptake of family-friendly policies from the supervisor's and the father's point of view. The first issue discussed was

managers comfort levels while making decisions on whether a father could utilise a family-friendly policy. Some participants were certain and knew from experience that managers found it difficult, frustrating, and uncomfortable to make those decisions where they look to HR for support.

'I guess anything new kind of brings up a level of anxiety' – Participant I

Other participants, however, said the complete opposite where they did not believe making those decisions was difficult for their managers, because of the flexibility within SMEs. Interestingly, the participants who were confident that their managers did not struggle at all were reflecting their experiences within larger organisations.

'He was very comfortable with that. That was the issue. If somebody is racist they are comfortable being racist. Because they think 'what is the problem, it is somebody's else's problem' and I think that's you know where I struggled most with' – Participant D

Another barrier often mentioned was difficulties in returning to work after utilising policies, such as flexible working. Despite that, every participant showed a thorough understanding of the business case and met the barrier with delicacy. Hence, the findings did not support the concern often held by managers about problems that could arise from employees over-utilising the policies, for the employees fully understood the needs of the business.

'Recently I had a discussion with my line manager, and you know, my sort of upper manager if you like to say that I would like to come back to work because my son will start some nursery soon [...] therefore I would see less of him on my days off and that discussion has been somewhat negative in the fact that they are now saying that we have managed without you for almost three years so why would we let you come back, and you know, why would we be paying you when we discovered that we don't need you. And that is a valid point. It makes perfect sense. But getting back out of that can be quite problematic' – Participant A

Amongst other implications mentioned were, unsurprisingly, gender stereotypes and financial barriers, but some of the participants predicted that financial impact would become a greater issue in the future due to the enormous debt students are graduating with. Making it even harder to sacrifice salary for the family. However, the findings showed that the fathers own perception is the biggest barrier, by far. The fathers viewed their perceptions, ideas and thoughts, sometimes realistic and sometimes not, as a substantial barrier which hindered them in many ways when deciding whether to utilise a family-friendly policy.

'There is also a significant aspect in terms of the perception around what this would do for your career. I don't think the statistics necessarily back that up in terms of

our organisation [...] but the perception is there and that is a part of the issue, perception is reality' – Participant B

'You probably perceive there to be a barrier, whether it is there or not but it is about perception isn't it' – Participant E

'I think there is a difference, if we focus on dads for a moment, I think there is more reluctance on the part of dads to request flexible working or ask for flexible working. That is because often dads will look around them and they will see that colleagues that work flexibly around them are mainly their female colleagues, and I think there is, whether it is real or imagined barrier, I think there are deferentially a barrier to dads asking' – Participant E

4.5. Awareness

An emergent theme was awareness, which received a staggering amount of discussion. The issue of awareness goes hand in hand with the perception, a lack of awareness such as little or no discussion of policies and utilisation allows wrongful perceptions about the issue to thrive. Open communication channels could substantially improve father's perceptions on utilising family-friendly policies. When asked about how employees could access information on policies available the participants all agreed that it was not hard to seek it out, it was either on the internet, on internal IT channels, in employee handbooks, by email or simply by asking. Most participants never had an issue with getting time off for family and perceived their SMEs to be supportive in that matter. However, all participants, including managers, knew that only a few employees familiarised themselves and were up-to date with the policies available. Still, little or nothing was done to increase the knowledge.

'It would make me feel awesome if I would not have to chase that information and that it was made readily available' – Participant G

Furthermore, when the employees answered the question about whether they knew of any supervisors or senior managers that were using family-friendly policies the employees who were aware of them utilising the policies were often managers themselves. Most employees were not aware at all. The findings suggest that the utilisation of policies by managers is often done informally and is not widely communicated. However, managers often have the responsibility to be present and to give direction, making it harder for them to utilise policies. Hence the explanation might, in some cases, be due to the nature of the position. In those cases, managers could execute role-modelling by being openly supportive of family involvement.

'if you think about the companies that are very successful, the leaders are very good at communicating with their employees [...] the style of leadership really

affects the culture [...] and I think the communication really helps' – Participant E

'Certainly, my manager works very flexibly and she has got a big role as well [...]. I think the more senior you become the more of a challenge it perhaps is. I do not know if any of our partners work part time' – Participant E

'I think that makes a big difference, having senior managers, CEO or etcetera doing it as well' - Participant F

All participants thought it would be helpful for dads if the organisation would increase the communication of policies available or even 'showcase' dads that were using different options to increase work-life balance. They expected dads to feel more support which would reduce the anxiety that often occurs when taking on a new role. By increasing the informal and formal communication of family-friendly policies transparently, the organisation could reduce the concerns that new parents often have and help them accommodate a balance that benefits the employee, the family as well as the organisation. Furthermore, employees within flat organisations or SMEs with close relationships between supervisors/managers and employees are more comfortable with using policies than others. The reason being that they engage on a regular basis, and the worker can see when the supervisor leaves early or utilises a policy and vice versa, making it easier to balance work and life responsibilities.

'Any dad that has, whether in a situation of having children being born or adopting children, I think that is a good opportunity to remind dads what the policies are within the organisation [...] what would be good as an organisation is to sit down with dads to remind them what policies are or provide a link' – Participant E

'I think if people knew the help was there and that support there that could help because some people might be worried about their own childcare and not knowing that they had the option to go ask, and maybe the company would say 'well it cannot be on Fridays but it can be on Tuesdays'' – Participant H

'I think people need that discussion, they need to know that they have the option and it is okay to ask. I think a discussion would help' – Participant H

Lastly, the author asked the interviewees to summarise their feelings about family-friendly policies in their SMEs, and their experiences, as well as suggesting ways to improve the family-friendliness of the enterprise. Overall, the participants were relatively satisfied with the policies in place and the family-friendliness within their SMEs. However, every participant discussed the importance of increased awareness in the form of communication or advertisement of policies, as well as showcasing dads using policies to encourage fathers to seek the service out and to eliminate the perception widely held amongst fathers that utilising policies was a sign of weakness. Several participants discussed the user-unfriendly nature of

the policies and would appreciate it if they were made more approachable and not so legislative and unfriendly. Some participants felt they had to fight hard to utilise the policies which they would like to access more easily and be trusted to use with caution. Furthermore, the importance of role-modelling was often acknowledged. The following quotes represent the issues raised in this section.

'I think the more you see people in senior positions work flexibly the more encouragement that gives to others. It goes back to the point at the very start, it is very good to have the policies but you need to see the practice and if flexibility is embedded in the culture and if you can see that it is, it will really make a difference'
– Participant E

'Quite positive here the only thing that I would change is making it more advertised, more knowledgeable out there, that's it' – Participant H

'There is more that is needed to be done to support managers to get a really thorough grounding in all the policies and procedures. To have more awareness to them all and promote them because we can't rely on the staff through the policies in the handbook, because we know for a fact that they don't. We know for a fact that managers don't as well so there is more that needs to be done in terms of growing that understanding and knowledge there in order to pass that on to staff'
– Participant I

Conclusively, although the SMEs had all the necessary policies in place as well as non-legislative policies within some enterprises, the employees valued support, friendliness, informal practices, and culture more. The reason being that everyone can form a policy, but within a family-unfriendly or unsupportive culture, which according to participants, often existed within larger organisations the policy made no difference. The family-friendly culture was supported through the organisational values within SMEs included in this research. The participants were satisfied with the culture that existed within their SMEs and believed it to be modern and family-friendly which positively affected their loyalty and retention. Furthermore, the leadership style was perceived to be necessary for shaping the culture and for creating a positive working atmosphere. The participants perceived both supervisor and co-workers support to be vital in creating a family-friendly organisation. Supportive supervisors and colleagues were crucial for employees to feel comfortable with utilising family-friendly policies where it was also believed to create a different, family-friendly working atmosphere. Without support, employees were more likely to feel reluctant towards family-friendly policies which created a significant barrier. Varieties of implications for both the employee himself as well as his manager could emerge whether it is low comfort levels of managers in charge of making decisions, difficulties in returning to work after utilising a policy for some time or the perceived barriers, real or not, that individuals have. All of which hinder fathers in utilising

family-friendly policies. The biggest finding of this research was the importance of awareness and its subcategories, that is, communication, openness, advertising and showcasing. Increased awareness and understanding of policies available is something every participant would greatly value. Although it was not hard to seek the policies out, the responsibility rested mainly or only on the employees' shoulders, resulting in a little knowledge about the policies. Furthermore, employees were generally unaware of managers or supervisors that used the policies, although all of them did, but often informally. This, however, could be because of the nature of the position they are in. All interviewees would greatly value open informal and formal communications as well as increased awareness of policies available to their SMEs as they believed it would result in fewer negative and hindering perceptions about the uptake of family-friendly policies amongst fathers. Lastly, they would appreciate a user-friendly access to policies.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1. Values and Policies

The importance of family involvement, as was highlighted by Maslow's, and Stum's theories (2013; 2001), was supported by the research findings, where all participants perceived the policies to be vital to help them reduce their work-life conflict, and to decrease the risk of the 'fatherhood penalty' (Olivetti & Petrongolo, 2017; Coontz, 2017; Thomas & Ganster, 1995; Skinner & Pocock, 2008; Working Families, 2017). Furthermore, organisational values within the SMEs were directly linked to the family-friendly culture, which is essential when creating an organisational culture that influences employees' thoughts, feelings, and behaviour towards others (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2013).

Contrary to some of the literature (Dex & Scheibl, 2001; Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2012), where SMEs have been described as family-unfriendly, the findings from this research indicate high levels of family-friendliness, with a friendly atmosphere, supportive culture and good policies. They fulfill all statutory requirements and often provide non-legislative policies in addition to that. Thus, supporting Dex and Scheibl (2001) suggestion that SMEs are more cautious with their family-friendly approach and more likely to encourage the utilisation of informal practices. Furthermore, according to the CIPD (2012) SMEs are often characterised by flexibility and the findings from this research further supported that, for many enterprises had flexibility as their core organisational value. Lastly, employees within SMEs were more likely to utilise family-friendly policies than those within large organisations (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2012). This is consistent with the findings from this research, where most participants reflected their past experiences from large organisations and reported higher comfort levels when utilising family-friendly policies within SMEs than with their previous employer. As was previously highlighted by participants F and D, they did not feel supported by their managers in their attempt to balance work and life responsibilities and were faced with a lack of understanding.

5.2. Culture

According to the literature, it is not enough to simply provide policies, for they are not enough to promote a family-friendly culture (Lewis, 2010; Bond, 2004; Allen, 2001). For employees appreciate family-friendly cultures more than individual policies, as culture affected both the availability, accessibility and uptake of the policies, as well as positively affecting the attitudes

towards the organisation which increased loyalty and commitment (Thompson & Prottas, 2006; Anderson, et al., 2002; Bond, 2004; Allen, 2001; Thompson, et al., 1999). Findings from this research are in line with existing research, where all participants discussed the importance of a family-friendly culture. Some participants even said the policies made no difference; it was all about the culture and your supervisor as was for example highlighted by participant D;

‘The biggest issue is who your boss is’

Furthermore, employees who previously worked within an organisation that did not have a family-friendly culture felt discomfort when utilising family-friendly policies which increased their work-life conflict and negatively affected their loyalty, as was also noted by Allen (2001), Scandura and Lankau (1997) and Thompson et al. (1999).

The findings were partly inconsistent with Handy’s (1993) work, which predicted that power cultures, a culture where one individual has more power to make decisions than others without much democracy, were common amongst SMEs. No participant described a culture like power culture within their SMEs. Several employees even reported high involvement in decision-making and all SMEs had some way to involve individuals in the decision-making progress, although some employees questioned how much effect their participation had. However, some leaders or supervisors reported that they reinforced the organisational values, such as friendliness, through recruitment of individuals, much like is done by powerful leaders in power cultures. Masculinity, as was described by Hofstede (The Hofstede Centre, n.d.) where it was the leading characteristic of the national culture in the UK did not affect the family-friendliness of SMEs, where the cultural description given from participants was not based on masculinity. Interestingly, some participants who reflected on past experiences within larger organisations described their culture as ‘macho cultures’ where they were reluctant towards working within such cultures again because of their lack of family-friendly values, this has gotten previous support from the literature (Haas & Hwang, 2007).

5.2.1. Support

An important element of family-friendly culture is supervisor and co-worker support (de Janasz, et al., 2013; Anderson, et al., 2002; Kirby & Krone, 2002). Supervisor support not only positively affects the utilisation of family-friendly but also reduces turnover (Batt & Valcour, 2003; Thompson, et al., 1999). Similar findings came from this research, where supervisor support was said to be one of the most important encouragements for utilising family-friendly policies and employees who had their supervisors support reported higher levels of loyalty and

commitment towards their organisation. Additionally, participants highlighted the need to support and help managers who are responsible for making decisions on whether a father can utilise a family-friendly policy. A relevant example included assisting them in getting a thorough grounding in all the practices and policies in place so they can confidently evaluate the situation. This issue was also highlighted by Fiksenbaum (2014), Allen (2001) and by Shanock and Eisenberger (2006).

According to the CIPD's (2012) and the European Commission's (2009) findings where employees within SMEs were said to be less likely to experience supervisor support for utilising policies. On the contrary, the findings from this research exposed high levels of support from supervisors, where participants expressed no issues with discussing the possibility of utilising policies with their managers or supervisors.

Co-workers support, as mentioned before, is very important. They can either be supportive of family involvement or view it as an undesirable issue that increases their workload (Kirby & Krone, 2002). The findings from this research further support this claim, where participants often felt guilty when utilising family-friendly policies and worried about their colleagues' attitudes towards the decision. Family-friendly policies have been criticised for discrimination against childfree individuals, accused of making them feel undervalued and resentful (Kirby & Krone, 2002; Michele, 1997; Young, 1999; Allen & Parker, 2001; Casper, et al., 2007). This was not supported by the findings, where the majority of participants saw children as the future employees, parents, and members of society. Hence, parents' involvement, support and role-modelling were considered necessary for the future generation, workforce, and society. It is important to acknowledge though, that all participants were parents, and according to Kirby and Krone (2002) the employees who can make use of the family-friendly policies are also those who are more likely to view them as a positive addition to the organisation. Furthermore, due to common societal stereotypes, co-workers are more likely to support female's uptake of policies than males (Kirby & Krone, 2002), the findings from this research supported this, where employees expressed concerns about attitudes towards utilising family-friendly policies due to their gender where some saw females' high uptake as a barrier for fathers to seek the service out which negatively affected their uptake of policies.

5.3. Implications

Although the participants acknowledged the barriers often mentioned by other literature within the same field, such as gender stereotypes and financial barriers (Hussain, et al., 2015; Gov.UK,

2016), the most influential barrier, by far, was the perception that individuals held towards the uptake of family-friendly policies, imaginary or real. The perception either hindered fathers in seeking out the policies available or resulted in experiencing discomfort while utilising them. One factor that hindered the uptake was because the majority employees using the policies were females, hence the policies were perceived to be directed towards females, as was also mentioned by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (2009), the CIPD (2012) and Burnett et al. (2013). Gendered perceptions, as well as other hindering perceptions was a common barrier within SMEs included in the research, which severely hindered fathers in seeking out the service, and resulted in lower comfort levels while utilising the policies.

Contradictory to some of the literature that assumed this issue would be less likely to exist within large organisations, for they were leading in adopting family-friendly practices (Dex & Scheibl, 2001; Allen & Parker, 2001) the findings from this research indicate that SMEs are friendlier towards families and provide better support for fathers that attempt to balance their work and life responsibilities. Furthermore, they are, as was discussed by Dex and Scheibl (2001), more likely to take personal circumstances into consideration when supporting fathers. Moreover, the findings strongly supported previous literature that perceived larger organisations to be more likely to find reasons to turn down requests for flexible working, as discussed by the CIPD (2012). Lastly, the findings underpinned previous data where the participants reported increased loyalty to organisations with family-friendly cultures which positively affected their retention (Eaton, 2003; Thomas & Ganster, 1995; Anderson, et al., 2002; Thompson, et al., 1999; Fox, et al., 2009; Stum, 2001; Sturges & Guest, 2004).

5.4. Awareness

Aspects of the literature acknowledged the importance of encouraging fathers to utilise policies (Bittman, et al., 2004) where according to Kirby & Krone (2002) and Spell & Haar (2003) open and transparent communication systems may play a big part in increasing the understanding and support towards employees utilising the policies. Despite that, the issue has not received a staggering amount of attention. The importance of awareness, through open encouragement, role-modelling through socialisation or leading by example and communication is perhaps the most significant finding of this research. All participants discussed the lack of both formal and informal communication of family-friendly policies available and little emphasis on role-modelling or open encouragement and viewed it as the missing piece of the family-friendly puzzle. Furthermore, employees criticised the unfriendly nature of the policies, which made

them hard to access and apply for. This lack of awareness created perceived barriers, real or not, which severely hindered fathers in seeking out the services and thus, created the provision-utilisation gap.

5.5. Summary of Findings

Conclusively, SMEs in Scotland have good policies in place and a family-friendly culture, however, the utilisation of these policies suffers due to the lack of policy awareness. Low awareness allows negative perceptions to thrive, which hinders fathers' uptake of family-friendly policies. From the findings of this research, the following has been theorised;

Overall policy awareness (through open communication, role-modelling and by showcasing fathers that utilise the policies) a vital addition to eliminating perceived barriers that significantly hinder fathers in their family involvement. Furthermore, it is necessary to increase fathers' overall uptake of family-friendly policies.

Thus, it is important for organisations to take steps towards increasing the awareness of the policies that are in place, to decrease or eliminate negative perceptions and reduce the provision-utilisation gap. This should be done in a systematic way that includes all the necessary steps in the process that have been highlighted by the findings. That is, the policies themselves, the announcement of policies and the informal communication of them, the supervisor and co-worker support and lastly, the role-modelling. A Family-Friendly Culture Model that includes all elements necessary to increase awareness, decrease negative perceptions and reduce the provision-utilisation gap will be introduced in the *Recommendation and Implementation Plan* chapter (pg. 42).

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to explore the effects that organisational culture has on the uptake of family-friendly policies by fathers working within SMEs in Scotland, to reveal the reasons behind the provision-utilisation gap. Although several policies are in place to support parents in increasing their work-life balance in the UK, the utilisation of such policies by fathers has been critically low, which led to the author's curiosity on the topic. Furthermore, by conducting research on SMEs, the author took part in reducing the research gap that exists on small or medium sized enterprises.

Fathers involvement in family-life is not only important for the father himself, but also for the child, the mother, and the business for it increases desirable characteristics, such as loyalty and commitment. Without a good access and utilisation of family-friendly policies that help employees balance out their work- and life responsibilities, all these stakeholders will be negatively affected. Furthermore, by encouraging the uptake of such policies, organisations can take part in eliminating the gender stereotypes that exist within society when it comes to child rearing. However, fathers must be able to use the policies without experiencing the 'fatherhood penalty'. The literature had previously highlighted the importance of family-friendly culture which includes both supervisor and co-worker support as a fundamental element to create a family-friendly organisation where employees feel comfortable utilising the policies, in addition to the family-friendly policies. Furthermore, larger organisations were often perceived to be family-friendlier due to their extensive resources and policies available. The flexibility that often characterises SMEs positively affects their overall family-friendliness although a level of inconsistency exists when it comes to SMEs making it hard to evaluate the family-friendliness of the firms.

According to the findings of this study, organisations of all sizes can have both good policies and a family-friendly culture. But without increasing the policy awareness through communication systems and role-modelling (see steps 2 and 4, figure 5, pg. 42), the awareness will remain low, wrongful perceptions will thrive, and the provision-utilisation gap will exist. Thus, it is important for organisations, families, and employees to increase the policy awareness through several key steps, which are presented in figure 5, pg. 42.

6.1. Recommendations for Future Research

Future research within this field might look at specific sectors; since it was evident from the beginning that family-friendliness was in many ways, very much dependent on the industry in which the interview subject worked. Furthermore, bigger, and more diverse samples across the United Kingdom would increase the generalisability of the research. Moreover, a study with the objective to look at the importance of awareness when it comes to utilising policies would be a treasured addition. To explore the precise effect of awareness through the implementation of practices, such as transparent communication systems, dad groups, role-modelling or showcasing fathers that utilise policies in newsletters. By doing so, organisations can take part in fighting against stereotypical gender roles when it comes to child-rearing and it might partly or entirely eliminate the provision-utilisation gap.

Lastly, research that includes other family arrangements, such as same sex partners or single parents would be a treasured addition to the literature in the family-friendly area. Most of the literature today defines families as units consisting of a father, a mother, and a child, when families in today's society are much more diverse. Diverse family arrangements should be cherished and included in the literature, so that every mother, father, and child can benefit from the research conducted, irrelevant of their family arrangements.

Chapter 7: Recommendations and Implementation Plan

Based on the findings, the author developed a model for raising awareness, which according to the findings, is fundamental for establishing a family-friendly culture (fig. 5). The model includes all the policies and practices highlighted by participants, that are necessary to create a family-friendly culture within small, medium sized or large organisations. According to the findings, steps 2 and 4 are vital for succeeding in establishing a family-friendly organisation. Despite that, they were likely to be overlooked by organisations.

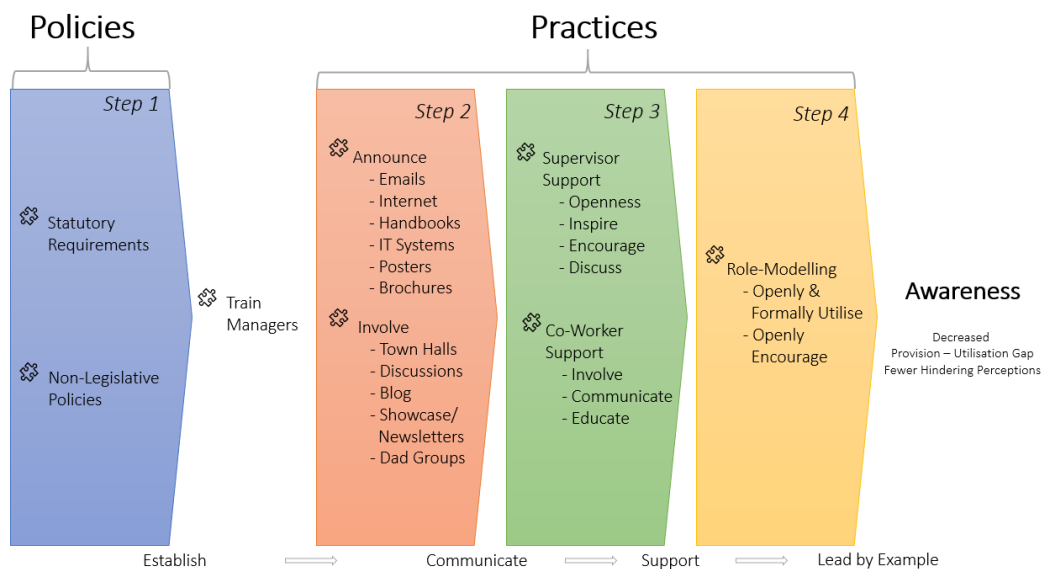


Figure 5 Family-Friendly Culture Model

The model is designed as a puzzle, the idea is that when an organisation includes all the pieces of the puzzle, in a way that fits the individual organisation, it can create a family-friendly culture where employees feel comfortable with utilising the policies available. The model is user-friendly and straightforward, presented in a systematic manner where several ways of establishing each factor are introduced.

Step 1

The first step simply includes the policies, both statutory and non-legislative that should be in place within organisations to support employees in balancing their work and life responsibilities.

Interphase

As was underpinned by the findings, it is not enough to simply establish policies. Hence, the interphase between step 1 and 2 highlights the importance of enhancing managers awareness

and knowledge about the policies to increase their confidence when it comes to giving advice, controlling discussions, or educating or counselling other employees.

Step 2

Step 2 includes a factor often overlooked or forgotten by organisations, communication. Formal and informal communication of policies and practices available is vital. First the organisation must effectively announce the policies available. That can be done with common procedures such as, emails, websites, and handbooks. However, based on the findings, posters and brochures would be a cherished addition that would remind employees of the policies available and thus easing the access to information. Secondly, the organisation must involve employees in the process, to further develop their understanding and knowledge of the policies and to eliminate negative perceptions towards the utilisation. This can be done through town halls, discussions, blogs or by showcasing fathers that utilise policies in newsletters or with other public procedures. Lastly, dad groups could be a valuable addition to establish an environment where dads can share their experiences and advice, council and support each other.

Step 3

The next step presents the support from both supervisors and co-workers, without it, participants did not feel comfortable utilising policies. Supervisors must openly discuss and encourage the uptake of family-friendly policies, by doing so, they let their employees know that utilising those policies is nothing to be ashamed of. Furthermore, it is important to involve co-workers in the process and to communicate the benefits of providing and utilising such policies for the employee, his family and for the business. By increasing co-workers understanding one can not only increase the likelihood of their support but also reduce perceived barriers experienced by fathers regarding co-worker attitudes towards the policies. This step was already established within all SMEs in this research.

Step 4

Lastly, step 4 highlights the importance of leading by example, either by being openly supportive to the uptake of the policies, and by formally and publicly utilising them, when that is possible.

By following the steps, organisations increase awareness of the policies available and of the benefits of utilising them. Thus, decreasing the provision-utilisation gap, and reducing

hindering perceptions, which ultimately is the goal. The timescale for executing the plan is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Timescale

Short-Term	Medium-Term	Long-Term
Establish Policies - Statutory Requirements - Non-Legislative Policies	Communication - Town Halls - Blogs - Showcasing Fathers - Dad groups	Family-Friendly Organisation
Announce Policies - Emails, Internet, Posters etc.	Openness Towards the Utilisation of Policies	Reduced Provision-Utilisation Gap
Create an Involvement/Awareness Plan	Role-Modelling/Leading by Example	High Awareness
Educate/Support Supervisors and Managers	Supervisor and co-worker support	Fewer hindering perceptions

The short-term goal is to establish all the necessary policies and to successfully announce them, so that every employee is aware of the policies in place (steps 1 and partly 2 in the model). Another task is preparation for phase 2, by creating an involvement/awareness plan as well as educating and supporting supervisors and managers that are responsible for the integration.

The medium-term phase includes a part of step 2, and steps 3 and 4 in the model. The goal is to get employees talking about the policies previously established, to create openness towards the utilisation. This will be done by executing the involvement/awareness plan that consists of events such as town halls, blogs, showcasing, or dad groups. In this step, role-modelling or leading by example is very important, where managers and supervisors use the knowledge they gained previously to encourage fathers to utilise the policies available, and publicly utilise the policies themselves when that is possible. Lastly, both co-workers and supervisors should be informed enough to be able to openly support fathers who wish to increase their family-involvement.

The long-term goal is to create a family-friendly organisation with a high awareness of policies available and fewer hindering perceptions towards the utilisation which in turn reduces the provision-utilisation gap. Furthermore, it increases employee loyalty and commitment, and benefits the employee, his family and the organisation, as was highlighted before.

The long-term goal is dependent on how well the short and medium-term goals are executed, hence it is important to face barriers that may arise, such as resistance, shyness, stereotyping or prejudgements in a timely manner. That can be done by further involving employees in the process to further increase their understanding. The implementation should neither be too expensive nor demand too many resources for organisations since the goal is to raise awareness through systems that are partly or entirely in place already.

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Personal Learning Statement

This dissertation marks the end of my MSc in Human Resource Management programme at the University of Edinburgh Business School. It is my first experience of doing an extensive qualitative research, where my previous research experience is mostly quantitative. This approach substantially developed my research, communication and listening skills, where I find myself more easily able to understand situations from different perspectives, which I know will be beneficial for my career.

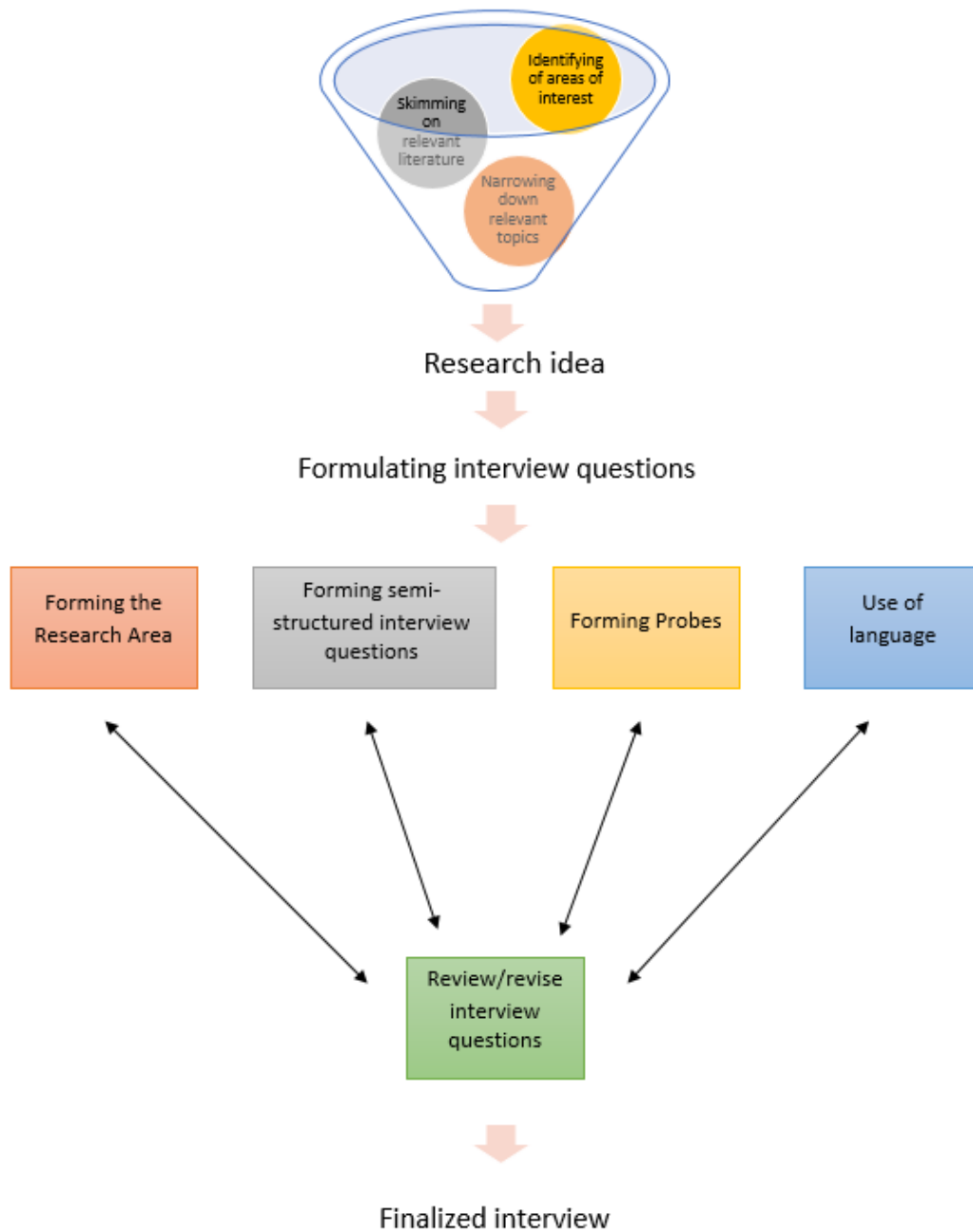
After being introduced to the dissertation proposal from Fathers Network Scotland, I immediately knew this topic was within my field of interest. Working on this dissertation has been challenging where I had to push my limits and substantially expand my comfort zone, but overall, an inspiring and interesting experience. Especially due to my own immaturity from looking at situations from a masculism perspective, being an equalitarian, that was an invaluable experience for me. Furthermore, I got the opportunity to grow and develop as a researcher, which will benefit me for the rest of my life. Through grounded theory, I learned the importance of keeping my own preconceptions to myself, and not letting it affect my results for allowing the findings to emerge themselves, through patience and hard work, is a surprising and rewarding experience.

The most challenging factor was finding participants, which left me stressed for weeks. Especially due to the pending summer vacations that would severely hinder my access to participants, supervisors, and my coach. However, with both feet on the ground, determent attitude, hard work, and help from supervisors, I managed to book 10 interviews which I conducted successfully within two weeks. My learning experience from this was substantial, especially regarding my patience, calmness, flexibility, and my belief in myself. I believe this barrier occurred due to the short notice given for the interviews. Role clarity within SMEs is often blurry, hence, they employees have difficulties with fitting interviews in their schedule. A treasured learning point to take away from this challenging experience is that more notice than one month should be given where holidays are considered from the beginning. By doing so, this implication could be partly or entirely avoided.

Furthermore, during this period, I developed my critical thinking ability substantially, where I found myself critically evaluating the work of other academics and fields in general. Especially in relations to the homogeneity of family arrangements in the literature conducted within this field, with a little research on families that include same sex partners or single

parents and their uptake, accessibility, and barriers regarding family involvement. Despite this, this challenging process has given me a deeper appreciation for the contribution that academics make to the field science and society, with their hard work and determination, which in turn benefits us all.

Appendix 1: Interview Guide



Source; (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 488)

Appendix 2: Interview Questionnaire

Opening questions

- 1. Do you have any questions about this research?**
- 2. Are you ready to start?**

Research Questions

Policies

- 1. What policies does your organisation have which are relevant for working fathers to improve their work-life balance?**
 - a. Can you elaborate?
- 2. How do you feel about these schemes compared to other similar organisations?**
 - a. Can you give any evidence for this rating?
 - b. How does this make you feel towards the organisation?
- 3. How do employees find out about such policies?**
- 4. What do you think is the uptake of such policies by fathers in this organisation?**
 - a. What do you think affects the uptake?
 - b. How do you think this rate affects the decision-making around the uptake for other employees?
- 5. How are the policies linked to the overall strategy and vision of your company?**
 - a. How well do you think employees understand this?
- 6. What is your opinion on the importance of family friendly policies for fathers?**
 - a. Why?
- 7. Have you yourself used family friendly policies?**
 - a. Why/why not?
 - b. What was your experience like?

Culture, Decision-Making and Leadership

- 8. How would you describe the culture of this organisation?**
 - a. Can you elaborate on this description?
- 9. How would you describe the lines of authority/influence and power in this organisation?**
- 10. How would you describe the working atmosphere in this organisation?**
 - a. Why?
- 11. What values does this organisation hold?**
- 12. How are desirable behaviours rewarded and encouraged?**
 - a. How are undesirable actions discouraged?
- 13. How do employees participate in decisions that affect them?**
 - a. Can you elaborate?
- 14. What would you consider before deciding if a father can take time out to be with their family?**
 - a. Question for an HR Manager (or similar)
- 15. What affects your decision-making around using family friendly policies?**
 - a. What would you consider before asking for permission to take off?
 - b. how comfortable do you feel asking such questions?
 - c. What might be the perceived consequence and benefits?
- 16. How comfortable do you think managers are at making such decisions for fathers to use policies and work flexible or take time off for children?**
 - a. Why?
- 17. Do you know if senior managers or board members within the organisation who have used family friendly policies?**
 - a. who – level of responsibility/why haven't you seen any?
 - b. Do you think this has any effect on employee uptake?
- 18. How do they/you access ad-hoc time off such as a doctor's appointment for your child or a parent's event at school or nursery?**
- 19. How would you describe the leadership style of managers in your organisation?**
 - a. Can you elaborate on what you mean?
 - b. Do you think this affects employee behaviours? Why and how?
- 20. Considering all your responses, overall how would you summarise your feelings about family friendly policies and your experiences of these in the organisation?**

Thank you

Appendix 3: Word Cloud



Appendix 4: Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in the research study *Perception is Reality; Cultural Effects on the Uptake of Family Friendly Policies by Fathers* which is a part of the MSc. course *Human Resource Management at the University of Edinburgh Business School*. This study is being undertaken by [name of researcher], an MSc student. Before you make your final decision on whether to take part or not, it is important that you understand why this research is being done and what it involves. Please take your time to read the following information carefully and do not hesitate to ask, if any questions arise.

You have been invited to participate because you are an employee within a small or medium sized organisation (50-500 employees), and furthermore, you are a father. This study is a qualitative research on how culture affects the decision-making around the uptake of family friendly policies by fathers. The goal is to see the effects on work-life balance for fathers and if it affects career prospects. You are free to decide whether you take part or not. If you do wish to continue you will be asked to sign two consent forms; one for you to keep and the other one is for my records. It is important that you understand that you are free to withdraw from this research at any time, and without giving reasons. Should you decide to withdraw from the study, your data will not be used and will be securely destroyed.

If you agree to take part, the researcher will interview you where you are asked to answer a few questions related to the topic, where no answer is right or wrong. The interview will last for approximately 1 hour and it will be audio recorded for research purposes. The data will be anonymized and will not be used in a way which would enable identification of your individual responses. The Data will be stored securely with password protection for a period of 1 year, where afterwards it will be disposed of securely. The data will not be shared with third parties of any kind.

Source: (Bryman & Bell, 2015, pp. 141-142)

If **any** questions arise, feel free to contact me at any time;

[Name]

[Address]

[Contact information]

Alternatively, if you are concerned about any aspect of this study you may contact; [supervisor], [contact information].

Appendix 5: Consent Form

Perception is Reality; Cultural Effects on the Uptake of Family Friendly Policies by Fathers

Researcher:

[Name]

[Address]

[Contact Information]

Faculty:

The University of Edinburgh Business School

29 Buccleuch Pl

Edinburgh

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Mobile: 01316508074

Email: msc@business-school.ed.ac.uk

I, the undersigned, confirm that (please tick appropriate boxes)

1.	I have read and understood the study information sheet and been given enough time to consider it.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the Study and my participation, and they have been answered to my satisfaction.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	I understand that my participation in the Study is voluntary.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	I understand I can withdraw at any time without giving reasons and that I will not be penalised for withdrawing nor will I be questioned on why I have withdrawn and that my data will not be used if I choose to withdraw.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained (e.g. use of names, pseudonyms, anonymization of data, etc.) to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	I understand that taking part in the Study will involve me being interviewed and I agree to this interview being audio-recorded	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	I understand that my words may be quoted, but data collected about me during the Study will be anonymized before it is submitted.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.	I understand that other researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the data and if they agree to the terms I have specified in this form.	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.	I, along with the Researcher, agree to sign and date this informed consent form.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Source: (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 142)

Participant:

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Researcher:

Name of Researcher

Signature

Date

Appendix 6: Common Family-Friendly Policies

A family-friendly workplace promotes work-life balance and allows employees to fulfil their family and work obligations, some are protected by law others are provided by the organisation.

Common Family Friendly Workplace Policies Include:

- Parental Leave and pay
- Maternity Leave and pay
- Paternity Leave and pay
- Adoption Leave
- Job Sharing
- Working only during term-time
- Working at or from home during normal working hours
- A change from full- to part-time hours
- Workplace or other nursery provision
- Help with the cost of childcare
- Flexitime
- Time off for emergencies for all employees

(Dex & Smith, 2002; The Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service, n.d.)

Appendix 7: Interview Transcript

Policies

- 1. What policies does your organisation have which are relevant for working fathers to improve their work-life balance?**

- b. Can you elaborate?

Probably several things, it does all the usual statutory requirements so the paternity leave, parental leave, and due consideration for flexible working. Ehm. So, I think that's pretty much it but in terms of policies, one thing different from attitude and behaviour. It does everything it has to do.

- 2. How do you feel about these schemes compared to other similar organisations?**

- c. Can you give any evidence for this rating?
 - d. How does this make you feel towards the organisation?

Ehm. Culturally I think it is more accepting of flexible working and it, one of the guys, there are two people in a company who are married and just about to have a baby. And they have already decided that his wife is going to do half of the maternity leave and the husband is going to do the other half of the maternity leave so they are going to swap which you clearly can do and our company was totally fine with that. There was no 'ehm that is a bit difficult to do' or other problems. Also, there are quite a few, I would say nearly 50% of our staff are women and also there is quite a lot of flexible working, work part time, work compressed hours and one of the ladies works school terms only. So she just finished on Friday because she looks after the kids on a summer holiday so that is the first time I have come across that. Term time working.

Me: What is the process of getting flexible working like?

D: I mean our statutory requirement is due consideration. Ehm. Which is fine in there was an application for flexible working but the rational given, so it was declined, but the rational given for flexible working is because they drink heavily over the weekends and don't like working Mondays. We are not bothered by that. If it was because of care for elderly as well as children, then we would make adjustments but it is fairly straight forward. You just write an email to the right manager setting out the rational what you would like to do and why.

- 3. How do employees find out about such policies?**

Mainly because we have a policy booklet a handbook a staff handbook with all our procedures, only about 2 or 4 pages long it's not huge, if you'd like to find more about the detail, for example we have a policy about cycle to work scheme, it doesn't give you all the details in the policy about cycle to work scheme we have a separate document that tells us that, in the handbook it tells them what they can do but not all the details. An executive summary.

4. What do you think is the uptake of such policies by fathers in this organisation?

- c. What do you think affects the uptake?
- d. How do you think this rate affects the decision-making around the uptake for other employees?

Eh in the company I now work for quite a few, so quite a few that work from home on Fridays so let's say some of the other things we do is to work from home and to allow, because some have disabled children or difficult issues with their children or whatever and it helps them cope a little bit more and also give relief to other parents. I haven't done an analysis of the uptake but its one of the companies where they have quite a lot.

5. How are the policies linked to the overall strategy and vision of your company?

- b. How well do you think employees understand this?

By accident. Really. It is just by accident. We need to separate, if you think about company strategy which includes employee proposition in that its tenures ehm... because the reason we got to where we got to is because we have a brand cultural director who is one of the founders of the company who just felt really strongly about these issues and he has driven culture in the company to be the way it is rather than, we are going to adopt these almost in a taught way and I've been in big companies as well because that will be a hook to get good employees to stay with us and that is the strategy we are going to apply to get them in and we say we are going to do all the things but the reality of achieving or doing them and how that looks and etcetera is completely different. So, its I think it is better to lead from actually mean these things and you live and breathe there culturally and then you go right how do we develop from that what should our employee proposition and retention strategies be. It's mainly the other way around but it works.

Me: So, if I'm understanding it correctly, you would say it is adopted through the leadership style.

D: yes, which is one of the reasons I joined. The role modelling is so important.

6. What is your opinion on the importance of family friendly policies for fathers?

b. Why?

Well I married a [...] woman and we are backwards here. There, the people I know as a standard will work four days a week and one other day will be a childcare day in some shape or form and it is very normal for both parents to do that whereas there is still a model if you want to be really successful there are two solutions to that, three the one we just talked about where you share that. Isn't just basically adopted. Option two one becomes the significant breadwinner, and I have friends who are staying home dads or their wife works I've seen it both ways. But there is a significant breadwinner and one staying home, predominantly it's a female in our culture but increasingly there is more of our staying home dads. Three you get a nanny and you outsource the problem and you both work but your childcare duties are affected by almost none because you give that to somebody else to do. I think all three of those work. Depending on what is right for you. But it would be better I think culturally and greater acceptance that both parties in a family are of equal importance if we adopted more with option one where you both work but maybe just did a slightly less or compressed hours or flexibly or whatever to be able to cope.

7. Have you yourself used family friendly policies?

c. Why/why not?

d. What was your experience like?

In flexible working, as in working from home one day a week, yes. Because we came in my previous company it was a large company we had to work from home merely one day a week because it saved office space and it was more cost saving and 20% of the workforce aren't in the office generally which planned for that. But had I had a benefit which allowed me to do things like plan for but it was really difficult in that culture even though they had the best family friendly policies, to attract the talent, you know esoterically. The reality was that my boss wanted me in the office and work 60-70 hours per week that is standard.

Me: So with this day out of the office you are using what is your experience like?

D: Now in my new work, I don't do that. The reason I don't do that is I'm four months into the new job. And I'm the managing director so they are looking for direction and support I need to be there to understand who my team are what are they doing how does it work it is

much harder to do that if 20% of my time isn't in the office. However I collect [...], I've got three children [...] I collect them from school around five on Tuesdays because my wife works late ehm so it my diary it is always I'm never available, I'm out it is my diary that I'm collecting my kids. When I cut of about half past four quarter past five I'm going to collect my kids and I make that really obvious because its okay to collect your kids its okay to go to these things. The last thing I've been doing its been a summer term and then it's the end of school activities such as sports days and those kinds of things. And I say normally to my kids sports day, for the last five years I have not been allowed to do that even though these is a family friendly policy there that says I can, the reality is no I couldn't. So now when I take half day holiday its fine, you work long enough, work hard enough go take couple of hours and if you need to catch up tonight fine, but go see your kids.

Culture, Decision-Making and Leadership

8. How would you describe the culture of this organisation?

b. Can you elaborate on this description?

D: The policy makes no difference, whatsoever. Its black and white as that. It is cultural. In a big company, it's down to who your manager is, do they have the right attitude and behaviour and approach to this. Doesn't matter what the policy says. The culture is family friendly.

9. How would you describe the lines of authority/influence and power in this organisation?

It's both distinctive because there are some strong characters there, but it is a very flat organisation. So there are from the lowest to highest is two layers.

10. How would you describe the working atmosphere in this organisation?

b. Why?

Fun. Productive yes. And friendly. Interesting to bring that to life a little bit, our office manager has been off [...] for 6 months so we had series of temporary agency staff to help around that, reception area and etcetera. We had two who said this is one of the best companies I ever worked for. If they ever had another job, one of the ladies was in her late 50s and said this is an amazing place to work. Which is great that someone new coming and we are seeing that we must be doing something right.

11. What values does this organisation hold?

Ehm. So its, ehm. Supportive is one of that, the its, respect is another core value. Excellence is the third. Humour is another and I cannot remember the fifth one. Not competitive.

12. How are desirable behaviours rewarded and encouraged?

b. How are undesirable actions discouraged?

Yes. We haven't used it for a couple of years and I think it's, it's for a review just now there are two ways I'm hovering this. There are some poor behaviours occasionally and those aren't been dealt with and that is way more harmful than rewarding good. Ehm. Because you walk past that and you say its acceptable. I would say its not the same respect you would expect or, yeah. Respect is the key bit if someone is not being as respectful, one colleague or one department than that's. we are looking to deal with that but it is more through consequential, I wouldn't say punishing but more calling it out. That's not what we are here for. That is not acceptable type of approach. And I have seen that linked to more in a negative way is where half of a bonus scheme is dependent on behaviours and half is on some quantities or some results but its used as a club to beat you with then you get a better results for demonstrating it. I would rather just get really good results and as long you are demonstrating the right behaviours that's a good thing. Can be easy to measure etcetera and we are focused on the results driven and I think that is one of the thing that, we are all very friendly very superb by the moment but it is not quite that commercial and I think there is an need to find the balance a little bit between this is a fun, great place to be and very friendly we are not making money. There is a little more commerciality required to going that is all great but lets be more supportive to each other about making money. Always the balance.

13. How do employees participate in decisions that affect them?

b. Can you elaborate?

We have consultation groups so last year we started doing a staff survey. About 50 questions, which are too many questions but again just to actually when I joined to company they were just doing it the second time to do some comparison but as a result from that there are some themes coming from that and it is more about the culture and values, about how we reinforce the right behaviours but so they've set up, let's get working groups together but what that look like and how that be done and help develop that to typify the types of behaviours 'what would good look like' and come up with scenario situations to help bring to life the values we like. So fairly consultative. They are all very intelligent people, more than half have PhDs,

83% have got MSc second degrees so you know from the university students here, they've all got opinions. We've got 100% completion in our staff survey.

14. What would you consider before deciding if a father can take time out to be with their family?

b. Question for a HR Manager (or similar)

I think that it just needs to be half thought through. That's all. Just going, like you've had to deal with you know, I have a new born child can I take every Friday off, can I work at home one day a week or so that I can help support my wife. Fine no problem. It's a 10-sec conversation for one that is for a good reason. It needs to demonstrate that you thought about it and we tend to think a little bit more about how would you keep in touch with the office. What do you need a mobile phone, do you need skype how are you going to work around that you are not in the office? We redirect your phone you know, these, have you thought through the solutions of some of the problems that are quite evident. And most of the time yes because there are quite a few people doing it. Focusing on solutions.

Me: Do you know of any negative experiences from utilising policies?

D: Not in my recent history. No. There was a lady who was applying to come back from time and was considering doing that and we've got the compacity to do that so really not. Working five days is different from working for four. I don't know if it's that difficult however with tight budgets I can see an issue or if you don't have work. You go suddenly you are paying 20% extra for somebody and if you don't have 20% extra work to do that is then a great cost. Stating the obvious. And it's like your duty to do that is to have due consideration for both the employee and the business. Trying to find the balance between yes, I'll pay you more money but I need to earn more to get that money and if that is the case given the margin is 20% one would need a 100% increase in my revenue to pay for your cost increase so you kind of go fjuiff. That might be okay. But it might not be.

15. What affects your decision-making around using family friendly policies?

- d. What would you consider before asking for permission to take off?
- e. how comfortable do you feel asking such questions?
- f. What might be the perceived consequence and benefits?

Ehm. I am going to use, now I am in a different situation because I run the company so I am in a very difficult position because I need to be seen there as well but I do try to demonstrate some flexibility. As we discussed here earlier. In my previous job, which was in a larger company. To be honest. Although you are focusing on an SMEs apart from the cost, I think you could do the same large or SME it is almost the same to be honest they have slightly bigger budgets so they might have more flexibility but in the larger organisations that I worked in you run on very tight budgets as well. So although company makes lots of money the reality is that the part you work for is on very time constraint cost budget so it is very similar. Now. My previous situation was I wouldn't even think about it apart from trying to get away at a decent time to collect my girls and I did say, look they're going to be out on the streets at 6 o'clock if I don't get away you know. And they went, get somebody else to do it. The boss I had is like, I was like 'I want to work one day at a week from home' and they were like 'but there is a spare desk here'. Yeah, I know that but I'm also trying to work flexibly. If I don't demonstrate that my team don't do that. But they are going 'well I need you where I can see you so that I can speak to you straight away and you can give me the solution' and I go well you can do that over the phone. Just mentality was, his wife doesn't work. She just looks after the kids. You have the same as that and you'll be fine. I think that is the biggest issue that your frame of reference is very different.

16. How comfortable do you think managers are at making such decisions for fathers to use policies and work flexible or take time off for children?

b. Why?

He was very comfortable with that. That was the issue. If somebody is racist they are comfortable being racist. Because they think 'what is the problem, it is somebody's else's problem'. And I think that's you know where I struggled most with is that even though we said, you really need to change because you know we are bunch of people in our staff survey are saying they don't feel they can take these policies. Nobody said to me or left a note to me saying they wanted that. That's because they are too frightened. The biggest issue is who your boss is. Even within the same company you can have a different experience...Pretty similar. The SME is a badge. Makes no difference teams are generally around 6-16 people there is a standard team irrespective of which industry, where you work where it is. It is just a bunch of teams. If you have lots of teams suddenly you are a large company if you have fewer then you are an SME.

17. Do you know if senior managers or board members within the organisation who have used family friendly policies?

- c. who – level of responsibility/why haven't you seen any?
- d. Do you think this has any effect on employee uptake?

Not in my company. Because it is like the chief exec. I call myself a managing director but I could be called a chief executive. It is just that I choose the badge of manager director because we are an SME. If I would be running a large company then I would be a chief exec. Unless I know other chief execs that are doing it in their companies. But I have been using it.

18. How do they/you access ad-hoc time off such as a doctor's appointment for your child or a parent's event at school or nursery?

Personally, I just put it in my diary. I am going to this. I encourage other people. You know through Christmas. There are half a dozen things in a calendar year where you kind of should be there. If it is a play or a musical show or whatever. You should be there and I say go away and do that. In my previous job I missed every single sports day, every single activity I just said daddy cannot be there. The employees just need to tell me and that's it.

19. How would you describe the leadership style of managers in your organisation?

- c. Can you elaborate on what you mean?
- d. Do you think this affects employee behaviours? Why and how?

I think exacting so I think we are becoming clearer about what we want and how we want to get there from a company strategy perspective but certainly open, straight forward, friendly. What you see is what you get. There is no, something else and someone says something. Straight forward.

20. Considering all your responses, overall how would you summarise your feelings about family friendly policies and your experiences of these in the organisation?

I think we are on the right path. It feels welcoming and friendly culture and that is a good place to start from. We need to add a little bit of bite and clarity I think, and that is my job. To invite the strategy and clarity to the whole organisation. About what we are trying to achieve and how we are trying to get there and to involve them. And what I'm thinking about is employee share options to get them involved in owning the company so moving towards that is a direction I want to get to. They go 'it's somebody else's company' you are the

shareholder like I am the shareholder yes, I have a slightly different say because of the roles we have but that is what I would like to get to.

The ages of the children make a big difference. There are key points. So, I have three children they are now [...]. Very different they stay out longer with their friends the job now is just making sure they do their homework that is quite a different situation from babies and youngsters who now my girls just walk to school, it is easy. Ehm. But they can choose to walk home if they want to that is fine but I want to be there to help with that but that is very different for babies and young children where you have to be at the nursery at a certain time that could be a distance away and then trying to get to work and that is a huge stress. For my wife and her work, she is saying I cannot do all that and get to work at 9 it is just impossible with traffic and all that stuff. So she starts at 9:15 and that is fine for her for other that sort of approach needs little bit more flexibility is applied because of distance and stuff. And also, when they go sick you take them off for two days. Your requirements of working flexibly the stress is involved with having small children is way more than having older and I think policies need to reflect greater consideration for the younger ages of children and the parents of them compared to teenage children so I am more likely to say yes to someone who has a small child than to someone who has a 17-year-old son. He is unlikely to even want you there. It is quite different. They are going to be my children for ever until I die but their requirements are different and from a parental and politic perspective taking due consideration that age.

Thank you

Appendix 8: Interview Transcript

Policies

1. What policies does your organisation have which are relevant for working fathers to improve their work-life balance?

c. Can you elaborate?

So. I would say at the moment very limited. We are a start-up organisation in total between, so we have two elements to the business. [...] there is nothing in certain statutory governmental policies which really are there for policies. There is nothing where I can go to the policy handbook and say [...] but from a governmental point of view if I was having a child, parental leave etcetera obviously I could have that but it is not up there for me to read if that makes sense. I think it comes down to, what's written in policies and what is in line, with and what you are looking at is the culture. So, I know that I can take time off to go to look after my son or my daughter if they were ill or if I need to go to a doctor's appointment I would happily take time off to do that. I wouldn't have to worry about if I could do that. My senior management team is really flexible in allowing that I think it helps because they have children themselves which I think makes a big difference.

Me: What do you think about the role of supervisors?

Yeah, I think ultimately...yes. You are ultimately reporting to somebody and therefore for me to have time off for father duties I would obviously need a report from my seniors and I think them having children really helps just in my senior company he just had a child and again I think from a cultural point of view I think I feel much more comfortable now asking him and say I need to go to the doctors or I need time off because the child is ill when prior to him having children, I would still be comfortable but I think there is now this different atmosphere.

Me: What about co-worker support?

I think ultimately, we have an assistant in the office and she is a single parent and she works flexible hours so she comes in slightly later and leaves slightly later and she works online when she is at home. I think even though there is this culture of, no one has difficulties saying I want to take time off to go to my child and she is taking time off to work flexible. I always, I mean personally feel that there is that, there is always that feeling where you feel slightly guilty. Do my co-workers know that I am actually at home working and looking after my

child, is that perceived that way and I think that is actually a personal think rather than them thinking that, for me that is how I perceive my co-workers might look at it. [...] I sometimes wonder whether or not in any situation how that is perceived by not being physically in the office and I think that is probably being a personal thing because it is, well some people might be thinking that but it is probably previous culture in other companies that is ingrained making me think what do people actually do think. So not necessarily a cultural think [...] a previous cultural thing.

2. How do you feel about these schemes compared to other similar organisations?

- e. Can you give any evidence for this rating?
- f. How does this make you feel towards the organisation?

I think what we have in [...] is actually quite special. Thinking about we are a start-up and working in a pretty cool industry so for me I have, I think we would be very flexible we want our mission as an organisation is flexibility and it is flexibility in the sense of how we work with clients but I think the culture really resonates around the whole company so for me I have full flexibility to take as much time off work as I need to if I, if my son was ill for a week or two I had no hesitation saying to my CEO that I need to take time off to look at him or to do things. I think across boards and across all our employees I would think that is how everyone feels. I think nobody has any issues with, as long as the work is done and as long as the work is done in time, nobody has any issues.

I think ultimately happy and I said there is nothing, there are probably two elements. Being less information for me to any for me to say I need to take time off but equally I have not felt I need to seek out those policies because I know it is so flexible that I could just say 'I am taking the day off' to look after my son I will be online not working wherever I need to work. Two elements that the policy is maybe not there but they are there not written or they probably are written somewhere but I have not been proactive enough to search out these policies because I know there is so much flexibility I will have no issue.

In summary, I don't feel there are any restrictions on me having any issue in taking whatever I need to take off whatever I need to do in terms of family responsibilities. Children, wife whatever it might be I don't think there is an issue there.

3. How do employees find out about such policies?

So, we have a policy handbook and the assistance she deals with HR responsibilities so it is just in case of asking. Very easy very simple.

4. What do you think is the uptake of such policies by fathers in this organisation?

- e. What do you think affects the uptake?
- f. How do you think this rate affects the decision-making around the uptake for other employees?

[...] I can only speak for the UK office. I would say, because there are no set policies, there are no angles because it is not that culture where people look at policies to see what you can do I think there are no issues in terms of people having any flexibility whatever they need to do for their childcare responsibilities. My colleague leaves when she needs to leave another one has a new child, he takes time off when he needs and then we have another he has three children and he regularly comes in late or leaves [...] I think the uptake in the UK is fine and I think everyone feels comfortable in doing that. There is one who just came out of a university and I don't know how he perceives everyone leaving early coming in late etcetera but I don't think there is any issue in the office essentially.

Me: What is your experience like from bigger organisations?

F: I would say ultimately yes they are similar as I would never in the start-up organisation that I am in now and the large organisation that I was in I would never feel that I couldn't take time off or I couldn't have some type of benefits [...] I would never feel that was not there in place to do that kind of thing but there is again this perception but I would feel less comfortable doing it as to now I have no hesitation saying look I am not coming in today for whatever reason whereas in a larger organisation I probably would do it but I wouldn't feel good doing that and I think it probably goes down to as well that my immediate line manager wasn't very supportive in that sense essentially. That was where my main dealing was with the culture wasn't essentially nice. For me personally in larger organisation while you probably see more people you interact with them less. Whereas in my organisation I talk to them and see them every single day.

5. How are the policies linked to the overall strategy and vision of your company?

- c. How well do you think employees understand this?

I think again it goes back to this flexibility our core kind of piece as an organisation is that we are very flexible when we work with clients. We help organisations launch group products

[...] we work in a very [...] I think that resonates across the whole organisation in the UK [...]. That helps when I am looking at what policies are in place that there is this flexibility if there is something there that wasn't a policy like I needed a month of work I wouldn't feel as I couldn't go to my boss and say look this is my situation I need four weeks off work. I don't think he would ever tell me no. I think as long as the work is getting done I would be fine. So I think yes from our vision our mission is flexibility and I think that resonates with our culture across the whole organisation.

Me: So, if you wanted to take time off work to attend a sports day. What would you do?

F: So, I just attended a sports day three weeks ago. I will go into that in very detail. I just sent out an invite in the calendar and said I would be working in Edinburg that day and there was a sports day so I would be offline for 2-3 hours. And I would just say to my manager I will be off these ours, work in the morning and be off these hours. Just a discussion. No writing and nothing else.

6. What is your opinion on the importance of family friendly policies for fathers?

c. Why?

I think it is important I do think the culture we have in the organisation is great and that resonates with the mission I said which is flexibility and how my bosses core beliefs that I am employee at [...] but therefore my family is too. It is a community. So, I think it is important, with that said, I often think that with this flexibility with this, unwritten kind of policies I wouldn't hesitate to do this and that. So I wonder who would take advantage of that so I wonder as we grow, as we how will that culture change or how will the culture need to change, will people abuse our system and that is ultimately you know and individual choice but I think that is my opinion that as we grow and get bigger and larger will it have to be more policies in place and therefore I wonder how that culture will change in time.

7. Have you yourself used family friendly policies?

e. Why/why not?

f. What was your experience like?

Good experience. [...] If I wouldn't get a chance to text my boss or let him know that I would be late I don't see that as a problem. [...]

Culture, Decision-Making and Leadership

8. How would you describe the culture of this organisation?

c. Can you elaborate on this description?

Again, flexibility open flexible organisation. We want, as a start-up organisation we want to try to be a bit edgy so there are no set policies on dress code or nothing. Client facing yes we need to be professional and give the impression of a professional culture. For me it is just a great culture I have no issue in discussing anything with colleagues we are all very approachable we talk daily everyone is included once a week we have a meeting where we catch up on thing that we have been doing the past week and what is on the horizon and everyone is doing that all kinds of employees. We have by monthly meeting where we have all employees of [...], we have. Interestingly we have some consultants who work from satellite offices [...] and I often wonder if they feel included in the organisation because they are not here on a regular basis so their only real time with us is [...] Across the organisation I think everyone feels they can use flexible working. Even the core founder in the [...], just thinking last week we had a meeting arranged him and I and he had to rearrange and he had to watch Karate. He cancelled a meeting and vice versa I think it would be exactly the same. The culture yea, for me it is great. From a family friendly point of view, it is really good to have that flexibility there and I hope that continues if the organisation grows. In our organisation, there I probably less of that hierarchy I mean we know how to go to to chat with. But I don't think on a daily basis there is that hierarchy in the organisation which is great and probably helps.

9. How would you describe the lines of authority/influence and power in this organisation?

There is not that hierarchy of cofounders and CEO and etcetera they are approachable and we all work together in a team I think it helps that we do work together on a daily basis so yeah. I think the flat organisation is the best way to describe it is a really great culture. I think both our CEOs are just approachable people I think fair people you know they, for me I wouldn't have problems with anything both probably different styles of people, one is more inclusive include family and we work as a team we do this together and the other is probably less than that but again he is an approachable person so yes, I think that works pretty well.

10. How would you describe the working atmosphere in this organisation?

c. Why?

Yeah, I think again daily working atmosphere is great it is an open plan office everyone is approachable we all share responsibilities we put together proposals we all have our strengths and build on them and take advantage of them so ultimately we all work together so yeah there is no it is a great place to be and a great place to work I often do wonder how inclusive some of the external workers are [...] Ultimately again, a bit cliché but I enjoy going into work. I get in very early and I don't need to get in very early. I choose to go in early and I leave probably relatively late I don't need to do that but I think it is a great place to work and there are loads of things that need to be done. My only negative for me, and I think it is a personal thing, but because it is an open pan office and because and there is not that hierarchy there is not that structure where you, people working on eggshells sometimes when something big is going on or I am working on something big. I go it I sometimes difficult to do that what I tend to do is that we have various breakout rooms and etcetera I would just move in there to work in that room for a day. People know that there is something going on so if I go into another room people put their headphones on so I think there are underline cues there we don't say look I am working can you stop doing this? There is just this underlying cues where I go into another room and other people put headphones on.

11. What values does this organisation hold?

I think our core value is this flexibility I think both with external clients bot also with internal as well you know the CEO wants to have this very flexible organisation very inclusive organisation and that is his core belief so I think that is one of our core values in this organisation I think, secondly one of our core values and mission is that we are an organisation, and this is to some extent controversial but we are an organisation that builds up on experience so one of our core values is that we are a very experienced organisation even for a start-up we have ... a start-up organisation we are not afraid to say that our core competitiveness is that [...] we feel that we have this flexible approach so I think that kind of core value and mission is flexibility back to back experience but ultimately it is not just experience I mean, the core member of the team who is just left he just graduated so he just finished so he not necessarily his experience but that is the experience we bring to the team as a whole and that is what I am looking at. It is flexibility back to back with experience. As a start-up company we are not afraid to say that our key competitiveness is we feel that we have this flexible approach and the experience I think that is our core value flexibility back to back with experience but ultimately it is not just experience, it is I have worked in this industry for a long time as I say we have a really core member of our team who is just left the

university just graduated so it is not necessarily his experience but the experience we bring to the team as a whole that is the thing that we are key to looking at who we are employing as an organisation it is really looking at what their core strengths are not necessarily how many years they have been on the job or in the industry it is really bringing the best to our organisation. But I think ultimately it is the flexibility,

Me: Am I understanding you correctly, that you think there is growth in the future of the company?

F: Yes

Me: How do you think that will affect your culture?

F: Yes, ultimately there is this. Cause I think one of the core things when I joined was for me I when I had an informal chat with the CEO I got that impression that it would be a flexible organisation include to work but for me personally when I look at joining the organisation, it is what is the culture like, for me that is really important for others that is not that important but for me I think it will really help with recruiting whoever. It really will make a big difference.

12. How are desirable behaviours rewarded and encouraged?

c. How are undesirable actions discouraged?

F: I don't know.

13. How do employees participate in decisions that affect them?

c. Can you elaborate?

So, I think, again, I am probably. Generally, day to day decisions to the more important decisions ... again it will have this inclusiveness and flexibility. If it is an important decision I need to get an approval. But there is not really a situation where I feel that I had to go to the CEO and say see, I need you to approve this ultimately he's approving it but I feel like I, It is a much more softer approval then, most of the time it is a very informal personal discussion. [...] Ultimately, what I am going to speak about does benefit the organisation but it is more of my personal benefit than the organisation so I just finished a PhD and I still want to publish papers so my, the two co-founders actually give me time to work in office time on papers which I ultimately should do on my own time but that is important to me, I value that and I want to do that. Here is what I am doing, here I how I'd like to do it, is it okay if I

would do this in my work time. Ultimately client facing time needs to become first and if there is anything that needs to be done it needs to be done. But I didn't feel any issue in approaching the co-founders asking for that. So, I think it is a very formal approach for decisions and even important decisions. I mean, it is a pretty informal process. Now that is probably because I am a quite laidback person. [...] I think it is just some informal passing comments so to speak. Which works for me and works for him. Something that is really big, I would probably pass by my CEO but I think ultimately, he is the kind of man he would just want me to make the decisions for him. I would have no hesitation in making these decisions if he wasn't there. I wouldn't feel threatened about how he would have an issue with that.

14. What would you consider before deciding if a father can take time out to be with their family?

c. Question for a HR Manager (or similar)

So, I probably would say I didn't consider anything because, as in if I wasn't granted that flexible working I would say nothing because I ultimately knew that wouldn't be an issue. Ehm. So I, Kind of knew that I think from the very. That is maybe because for me I knew that, how the CEO would work so I think for me I probably didn't think of anything else. [...] In the beginning, I didn't take my son to school because I was still figuring out what the culture was, but then with time I started doing that. I rely and on that flexibility.

15. What affects your decision-making around using family friendly policies?

- g. What would you consider before asking for permission to take off?
- h. how comfortable do you feel asking such questions?
- i. What might be the perceived consequence and benefits?

[Already answered]

16. How comfortable do you think managers are at making such decisions for fathers to use policies and work flexible or take time off for children?

c. Why?

I wouldn't say, I wouldn't think that it is a decision to make I think it is so relaxed that whatever you need to do you would just do. If that is not something that is the norm or should be done I think there is a way around it. In the organisation, nobody would take advantage of that. I think that is perhaps why he maybe is why he is. Very nice core team. If somebody was out with the norm he would know that and he would need to have some flexibility. I

wouldn't just be asking because we are trying to share responsibilities for example. He probably doesn't make those decisions on a daily basis.

17. Do you know if senior managers or board members within the organisation who have used family friendly policies?

- e. who – level of responsibility/why haven't you seen any?
- f. Do you think this has any effect on employee uptake?

F: Yes because I am not the fact that I sit in the same office opposite to the CEO probably does make a big difference. Because we all engage on a regular basis and I can see when he is leaving and he can see when I am leaving [...] I think that connects that we don't have that policy in place because it is more informal. When I worked in a bigger organisation I probably would I would know what I am entitled to but not felt as comfortable taking time off or trying to arrange childcare around my son at that point and my media line manager although he had children I probably would say he wouldn't be that supportive so I think that makes a big difference having senior managers or CEO etcetera doing it as well. I think what actually helped with this again it is back to this cultural thing is that the CEO is very family oriented so he includes all family members so we have a barbeque where we have all family members and he runs events where all the family is invited so he is being he wants to include not as an organisation and me as an employee but my wife, my son my daughter he wants to include everyone into the organisation because he thinks that is important from a cultural perspective.

18. How do they/you access ad-hoc time off such as a doctor's appointment for your child or a parent's event at school or nursery?

[already answered]

19. How would you describe the leadership style of managers in your organisation?

- e. Can you elaborate on what you mean?
- f. Do you think this affects employee behaviours? Why and how?

I think for me personally it is a really, the two core founders [...] analytics and consultants. I have much more interaction with the one here in the UK management as a broad statement is great. Very approachable very trustworthy I have no issues making big decisions. Why would I have to run that past them. Ehm. There is no issue. They are expected to do the work and do

it on time. So I think that probably if you do that that is probably I feel like there is this little barrier. I think for me that is probably more important because it is not that kind of hierarchy. [...] They are family oriented. Ultimately both of them want to include everyone there is this really inclusive atmosphere. [...] is probably very laid back. [...] I think it is that trust and believe in, when we take on individuals we take them on for a specific reason. They have to have this culture that we have in the organisation and I think that is where you get that trust. Ultimately everyone is capable of making these decisions themselves.

20. Considering all your responses, overall how would you summarise your feelings about family friendly policies and your experiences of these in the organisation?

I think for me, yes. Family friendly policies are great. I don't know exactly what is written down but I don't feel like I need to know that. If there is something there I need to do that is fine. If there is something that isn't there I wouldn't have a problem approaching the CEO saying I need that. It is a great place from a culture point of view. Ultimately it is not an organisation that has those processes policies in the place but it is probably somewhere there in the organisation. For me if I would want to have the flexibility for anyone to approach me as a CEO but I think it goes down to the fact that we have a team, and in my opinion, is going to take advantage of the fact that we do have this flexible approach. I think for me I wouldn't do anything differently. So there is nothing I would change.