

**An examination of the Infant-at-Work program and its influence
on office culture in Washington State**

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ABSTRACT

This research was conducted with organizations in Washington State identified as offering an Infant-at-Work program to employees. The Infant-at-Work program allows parents to bring their infant to work with them from six weeks old until the child is six months old. Study participants took part in semi-structured hour-long interviews over Zoom to share their unique understanding of the Infant-at-Work program. Of the six interview participants, four were direct participants of the Infant-at-Work program, and two were program coordinators working in Human Resources at their organizations. All participants reported they believed the program had a positive influence on their workplace. This phenomenological study attempted to understand the unique experience of parents participating in the program; the influence the program has on office culture, how the program creates equity for women in the workplace, and the adaptability of the workplace to a family-focused environment. The study findings indicate employee participation in the Infant-at-Work program created a supportive work environment by forming unique relationships, institutional support, and adaptive work schedules. Through this study, new information is added to the post-COVID-19 conversation around the complexity of new parents in the workforce and the lived experience of people who have participated in the Infant-at-Work program.

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CHAPTER 1

CHAPTER 1-PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

In the U.S., the gender wage gap remains steady. “In 2020, women earned 84% of what men earned, according to a Pew Research Center analysis of median hourly earnings of both full- and part-time workers” (Pew Research Center, 2020). While there are many contributing factors to the gender wage gap, one area of concern for many women is taking maternity leave. “Some women are actually hesitant about starting a family for fear of it harming their career and think that they can either have one thing or another,” says Johnson-Marshall. (Smith, 2021, p.7).

In the 21st century, American society continues to fall behind other leading western countries in gender equality in the workplace. Women’s Workplace Equality Index, which is published by the Council on Foreign Relations, ranks countries on the laws protecting women's access to institutions, use of property, protection from violence, and incentives to work. The U.S. ranks 20, the leaders being 1 Australia, 2 Canada, and 3 New Zealand. Currently, one out of four women residing in the U.S. will return to work just ten days after childbirth (paidleave.us, 2022). For many years doctors frequently recommended women wait at least six weeks after childbirth before returning to work and strenuous activities. However, when considering the access to paid family leave available to Americans, the reality is people do not always have a reasonable choice in returning to work. For employed Americans, the access to paid family leave is limited: 23% of civilian workers have access to paid leave, 23% of private industry workers, and 26% of local and government workers. (US Bureau of Labor Statics, 2021).

Parents have a harder time maintaining and advancing in their chosen careers. COVID-19 has challenged the American idea of a standard office environment and the typical 9-5 employment. In 2020 due to issues surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, a staggering 865,000 women dropped out of the workforce compared to 216,000 men (Kashen, Glynn, & Novello, 2020). This gender divide is largely

attributed to mothers bearing a larger load of childrearing during the pandemic, needing to assist children with online school, and a lack of open childcare facilities (Kashen, Glynn, & Novello, 2020). As we transition back to a “normal” life after two years of large numbers of employees working from home due to the pandemic, what benefits can be integrated into this new office environment to remain competitive employers in Washington State?

Key Terms: Infant-at-Work Program, Organizational Culture, Infants in the Workplace

The Infant-at-Work program allows new parents, including through adoption, to bring a child who is six weeks to six months old to work with them. Some organizations have flexible rules around the child's age; the consistent limitation to ending the program is that “once the child is mobile,” they cannot continue to come into the office. In most organizations, part of the program is parents assigning one to two “alternate care givers” who have volunteered to assist the parents with watching over the child at work. These alternate caregivers would care for the child if the parent has to facilitate a meeting or participate in a meeting where the infant may cause distractions. Parents often are allowed a flexible or reduced work schedule during participation in the program. Some organizations allow the infant to be brought to work every day while others limit the child in the office to two to three days a week.

The guiding resource for companies implementing an Infant-at-Work program is the *Parenting in the Workplace Institute* (babiesatwork.org). Carla Moquin has hosted *Parenting in the Workplace Institute* since 2008. *Parenting in the Workplace Institute* offers resources and mentorship programs to encourage the expansion of Infant-at-Work programs across the US. In February 2018, Senate Bill Report, SHB 2367, established the recommendation of a child care collaborative task force. While the task force was charged with reviewing the Infant-at-Work program, all their current recommendation are focused on accessibility and affordability of childcare. There is no investigation into creative solutions to the current childcare affordability issues or non-traditional childcare methods.

Research has focused on the Infant-at-Work program in the context of women in the workplace, establishing a balance between paid work and family work (Secret, 2006). In the last 14 years, new protections for women in the workplace have been enacted into law; in 2010, the Fair Labor Standards Act was amended to include a provision for nursing mothers. The 2018 dissertation by Riley Stoltenburg emphasized the health benefits and access of breastfeeding for women. While the research focused primarily on the implementation of the Infant-at-Work Program in Texas, the research explored health benefits for women and their children and positive environmental influences on coworkers.

The Infant-at-Work program is implemented differently at almost every institution. Three core themes remain similar: a new parent is able to bring their child to work starting around six weeks in age, the workplace is modified to create a safe environment for the infant, and the parent is offered support by their supervisor and organization to make the arrangement work, (Department of Health Policy, 07.063). The program is often role-specific (Secret, 1998), being most successful with administration positions that allow for independent task-oriented work. The Infant-at-Work program is currently offered at nine publicly noted institutions and organizations in Washington State. The program offers the opportunity for parents to return to work earlier than the average person after welcoming an infant into their family while also mitigating the high cost of childcare during the early months of the child's life in addition to providing increased retention rates for the employer.

While limited previous research on the Infant-at-Work program is available, no published research has been completed post-pandemic. The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way many companies do business. Many major national firms, such as Google, Facebook, Twitter, and REI, allow some full-time employees to work remotely indefinitely (WWR 2021, IBM 2020). According to an IBM study, 54% of workers would like to remain working from home full time, while 75% of workers would like to work from home at least part-time. Given this new and drastic change to the traditional work environment, the Infant-at-Work program should be reexamined for functionality and

application in the post-COVID-19 office environment.

This study aims to explore the impact of the Infant-at-Work program on office environments at organizations offering the program and the experiences of program participants. Through individual interviews with program participants and Human Resources administrators, the phenomenon of the Infant-at-Work program in Washington state will be examined. The study explores two main research questions 1. **Does the Infant-at-Work program contribute to a positive organizational culture? and 2. Does the Infant-at-Work program create equity for women in the workplace and create an adaptive family-focused work environment?**

In the simplest form, organizational culture can be described as “how things are done around here”; the tacit knowledge, common practices, general understanding of the office status quo, and how things are “supposed” to be (Indeed Editorial Tea, 2021). For the purpose of this study, we are defining organizational culture as: The common practices, attitudes, and values experienced by employees in the workplace environment (Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E., 2017, p .258).

For the purpose of this study, we are defining equity as eliminating discrimination and increasing the representation of previously excluded groups. “It is about creating the conditions enabling people of all races and genders to realize their capabilities as they understand them” (Sturm, S, 2006, p. 250).

Through this study, new information is added to the post-COVID-19 conversation around the complexity of new parents in the workforce and the lived experience of people who have participated in the Infant-at-Work program.

CHAPTER 2

CHAPTER 2-REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In February 2018, WA Senate Bill Report SHB 2367 established the recommendation of a child care collaborative task force to research solutions to the high cost of childcare in Washington State. This task force was challenged with investigating childcare licensing programs, Infant-at-work programs, and the Child Care Workforce Development Technical Work Group. “The Task Force must develop policies and recommendations to incentivize employer-supported child care and improve child care access and affordability for employees.” (SHB 2367, p. 2-3). Unfortunately, the task force has focused more on how to support the financial access of parents to child care rather than on supporting existing programs that allow parents to minimize the costs of childcare while working. Recommendation 2.0 made to Washington State;" Help working parents enter, re-enter and stay in the labor force:

- Graduate subsidy copayments to eliminate the “cliff effect”
- Shift subsidy eligibility from 200% of the federal poverty level to 85% of state median income.
- Allow parents preparing to enter or re-enter the workforce, and parents participating in job training, apprenticeships, and higher education, to receive child care subsidies.”

(Washington State Department of Commerce, 2021)

These recommendations do not recognize the potential to expand the current Infant-at-Work programs in existence in Washington state and the financial gains the programs offers to both businesses and parents.

The Infant-at-Work program was adopted in Washington State by the Department of Health in 2015 but has existed nationally for many years. *Parenting in the Workplace Institute* has been the national guiding resource used by companies developing Infant-at-Work programs across the US since 2008, providing organizations with an implementation guide. The site is hosted and managed by Carla

Moquin, offering easy start-up instructions for corporations, mentorship programs, and resources for employees pitching the program to their employers. Resources offered by the site include frequently asked questions for employers, template policies, supportive federal government materials, and cost-benefit analysis for employers to understand the effectiveness of retaining employees over recruitment of new hires and the decreased health cost for children associated with breastfeeding mothers.

Moquin developed the Parenting in the Workplace Institute, which provides services to create equity for parents in the workplace and navigate the implementation of Infant-at-Work programs. Parenting in the Workplace offers Mentorship programs in thirteen different states, including; California, Alaska, Hawaii, New York, New Hampshire, and Tennessee. “PIWI offers a proven structure for a babies-at-work program that ensures that everyone's needs are met—management, coworkers, parents, and babies,”(Moquin, 2018).

Study of Infant-at-Work Implementation

Infant-at-Work is a program offered nationwide at select organizations. The program is adapted to fit the different needs of organizations and parents at each institution. Studies of the program typically focus on one region or state to understand the application of the program and the nuances experienced from a micro perspective. The most recent studies conducted are from three states: Arizona, Nevada, and Texas.

In 2009 the Nevada State Health Division piloted an Infant-at-Work program. Five pregnant employees lead to concerns within the office about retention at the Division's main Carson Office. This time period was also difficult for the general retention of state employees due to furloughs, layoffs, and mandatory payouts. The program was attractive to the administration because of the low cost of implementation. The State Health Division partnered with the Parenting in the Workplace Institute as well as the Arizona Department of Health which had a robust Infant-at-Work program for implementation materials, and the pilot was launched.

Parents in the Nevada pilot program were reported to be responsive to their children so as not to disrupt the work of their co-workers; newborns often sleep a lot and are content due to the high amount of physical contact they are receiving in the office, the newborns in the program were often healthy due to the longer period of breastfeeding they experienced. In Nevada, the cost of childcare for a newborn is usually around \$200 a week (in 2012) the financial benefit to a family participating in the Nevada Infant-at-Work program was about \$5,000 in a 6-month period (Langdon, 2012).

Since the pilot of the program in 2009, the program has become a permanent policy at the Nevada State Health Division. The program has been revised to allow babies to stay in the workplace until they are mobile, which has extended the time of participation by parents for months in most cases. This program has been expanded across the state of Nevada to many government and non-government agencies, including Nevada Child and Family Services and the Ron Wood Family Resource Center.

Mary Secret in *Parenting in the Workplace* examines the ad-hoc creation of an Infant-at-Work program in professional staff positions in an interdisciplinary center of a large university. The program was created out of need without formal recognition or permission from the university. The study emphasized the experiences of the 26 co-workers of women parenting in the workplace. A workplace questionnaire was conducted with a Likert-type format. The employees were asked questions about their perceptions and attitudes towards the Infant Care Program. All levels of staff - part-time, full-time, and those with supervisory responsibilities were represented as respondents to the questionnaire. Most staff reported that the presence of the babies in the workplace had no effect on their completion of deadlines (96%) and no effect on their job productivity (88.5%) (Secret, 1998). 44% of staff members reported the presence of babies increased their job satisfaction, while 28% thought the presence of babies increased their ability to interact with the parents. 92% of respondents indicated they were proud to work for an organization that recognized the needs of parents.

Overall the research conducted by Mary Secret found positive results from instituting less formal and more flexible work agreements for parents. The study found a positive impact on the office

environment without large financial investments from the institution. Four main elements were cited as important: 1 flexibility in work schedule for the parent, 2 individual task-based work, 3 a safe working environment free of heavy machinery or potential hazards, 4 a “progressive thinking” office culture which recognized the importance of accommodating many different lifestyles. The small sample size of the population is listed as a major limitation of the study.

In 2018 Riley Stoltenburg conducted a study of the Texas Infant-at-Work programs with an emphasis on breastfeeding access and positive health outcomes for new mothers. In the study, 19 participants were interviewed from 6 different companies in Texas participating in the Infant-at-work program. The interviews conducted were semi-structured phone interviews usually lasting 20-35 minutes. Three groups of participants were interviewed, the HR director of the program, Participating mothers, and their direct supervisor or manager. Each participant was asked specific questions corresponding to their job role. Four types of coding were used to catalog participants’ responses to interview questions: descriptive coding, process coding, emotional coding, and employee data evaluation coding.

Stoltenburg found each program contained unique qualities, which ensured the program “functioned for their specific physical space , and for their work type,” (Stoltenburg, 2018, p. 24). Some workplaces utilize the wearing of babies in slings while other more desk-bound workers have more freedom to set up baby equipment in their space. Some companies paired new parents with recent graduates of the Infant-at-Work program to help build a support network around the program participant. This study examines seven main areas of interest: Unique Components, Motivating Factors, Productivity, Barriers, Support for Program, Benefits to Employer, Benefits to Coworkers, and Benefits to Employees.

Contrary to other research on the Infant-at-Work program, Stoltenburg reported both positive and negative critiques of the program “one out of the seven mothers who used the program reported not liking it as much as she thought she would,” (Stoltenburg, 2018, p.35). While most participants of the

program were given a decreased workload by their employer, some participants still found balancing work while their child was awake at the office difficult. Contradictory to research conducted by Mary Secret in 1998 and 2006, participants in the study conducted by Stoltenburg acknowledged the need for reduced or scaled back full-time workloads. The difference in study design and methodologies between Stoltenburg and Secret could explain some of the differences in findings. Stoltenburg conducted authentic open interviews while Secret conducted surveys. Overall in Stoltenburg's research, program participants found the program beneficial, and "Program directors had positive perceptions about the programs and believed that it worked for their company both financially and in creating a stronger working environment," (Stoltenburg, 2018, p.38).

Work-Family Conflict

After the baby: work-family Conflict and Working Mothers' Psychological Health is a longitudinal study examining the depressive symptomatology among working mothers of infants. More than 50% of mothers of infants are working, and most new mothers return to work three months after giving birth (U.S. Department of Labor, 2004). The study examines the complex issue of work-family conflict from systems thinking perspective; the family is a system with complex elements and internal and external influences. Employment is also viewed from systems thinking perspective. Within the microsystem of a family, distinct elements (presence of a father) or absence of particular elements (additional children in the household) can contribute to the overall experience of the work-family conflict. *After the baby: work-family Conflict and Working Mothers' Psychological Health* is a quasi-experimental study that examines longitudinal data from the NICHD Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development.

The researcher breaks down small measurable variables which can be narrowly defined to apply across multiple demographics and experiences. The variables are then assessed multiple times over 18 months. The work microsystem is evaluated in 2 main categories, work hours and job quality. The family microsystem is assessed in 3 variables; the number of children, the presence of a partner, and the

health of the child. The work-family conflict is then measured on a six-item scale to analyze the levels of stress the individuals have experienced. A mother's depressive symptomatology was assessed using the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression (CES-D) Scale, administered at 1, 6, and 15 months postpartum.

The study hypothesized 1, that characteristics of both work and family microsystems would be associated with the mother's depressive symptomatology. The results of the predictive model were high. The hypothesis was partially supported by some of the characteristics of the work and family microsystems to predict a working mother's depressive symptomatology.

The study hypothesized 2, that relations between work-family conflict and depressive symptomatology will be mediated by work-family conflict. It was found that work-family conflict "could not serve as a mediator of the relation between these family microsystem variables and depressive symptomatology."(Marshall, N. L., Tracy, A. J., Orthner, D. K., & Rose, R., 2009, p.6).

Key findings of the study reveal both job quality and hours worked contributed to higher work-family conflict but working more hours did not always contribute to higher depressive symptomatology. The demands of working more hours contributed to difficulties in conflicts of time, scheduling, and energy but did not contribute to feelings of loneliness, sadness, or other symptoms of depression. Another finding was the relationship between a working mother's postpartum health, mother's with less healthy infants reported great depressive symptomatology. Through the rigorous culmination of data in this study, we begin to understand the complexity of women returning to work after having infants. The primary cited contribution to reducing work-family conflict and depressive symptomatology is a flexible work schedule.

Understanding Alternative Work Arrangements - Remote Work

The most current peer-reviewed data on teleworking and remote work employment is being peer-reviewed and published using data from the Sixth European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS). While this data is specific to European countries, the key insights are not limited to citizens in European

nations. Quantitative studies by both Palumbo (International Journal of Public Sector Management) and Paula Rodríguez-Modroño and Purificación López-Igual (International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health) examine different variables but found similar results on workers' satisfaction and work intensity. “Regarding skills and discretion, gender gaps were significant and negative for women when home-based teleworking ($p = 0.001$), being highly mobile ($p = 0.022$), and occasional teleworking ($p = 0.030$). Prospects were better for male teleworkers, especially for home-based male teleworkers ($p = 0.049$), while gender gaps in earnings were always significant and negative for women ($p = 0.000$ in the three groups of teleworkers).” (Paula Rodríguez-Modroño * and Purificación López-Igual, 2021), Women were found to have more homelife variables which negatively impacted feelings about work-life balance. While advantages of flexibility and greater autonomy to organize work-time was seen as advantages for women with children, there was a growth in work intensity which presented conflicts. “Our results support the social exchange theory in the sense that all telework arrangements lead to work intensification, though in a different degree in exchange for a higher discretion.” (Paula Rodríguez-Modroño * and Purificación López-Igual, 2021).

CHAPTER 3

CHAPTER 3-METHODOLOGY

The design used in this study is phenomenological. *Phenomenology* is grounded in the field of philosophy, specifically epistemology. Phenomenology is a popular research method in social and health fields (Creswell and Creswell 2012) and is most appropriate in this study as we seek to understand the phenomenon of the Infant-at-Work program and the lived experience of parents in the workplace. In this study we explore the knowledge and lived experience gained by parents through their participation in the Infant-at-Work program. This approach allows for findings about the program to emerge rather than be imposed. Lived experiences of participants cannot be assumed.

The study investigates the experience of participants in their journey in the Infant-at-Work program. The participant's perceived impact of the program on their life, family, workplace, and office relationships. The interviews are initially structured with specific general questions providing participants authority to guide the information as they choose based on their lived experience. The questions attempted to be free of preconceptions and presuppositions about the participant's experience. While theories like work-family conflict (Marshall, N. L., Tracy, A. J., Orthner, D. K., & Rose, R., 2009) and management frames are explored (Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E., p .258, 2017), questions guiding participants to name theories are eliminated to ensure participants are sharing their authentic experiences free of preconceived research outcomes.

Participants

Purposive and snowball sampling are both used for the selection of participants. Purposive sampling was used for targeted recruitment of people who previously or currently participated in the Infant-at-Work program in Washington State or a Washington-based employer. Participation in the program is defined as (A) being a direct participant as someone who brought their child to work and (B) a director or Human Resource administrator who oversaw the implementation of the program in the office environment. Snowball sampling was used as a referral system for which individuals participating in the study could offer recommendations to others within the targeted population who may have an interest in also sharing their lived experiences in their participation in the Infant-at-Work program. To qualify for the study, individuals need to meet three main criteria: be over 18 years old, be an English speaker, and have participated in the Infant-at-Work program in some capacity. Participants were asked to "opt-in" on the consent form if they wanted to receive the final report of study findings and results.

Initially, nine organizations and companies were contacted because they were perceived to be current or former administrators of the program to their employees. *Parenting in the Workplace Institute*, and search engines were used to probe job postings and press releases to find these companies in Washington State. Companies had to be contacted through general website inquiries because no organizations had a direct contact person for the program listed on their organization's resource pages or company directories. The organizations contacted were: Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Office of Financial Management, The Central Co-op (Seattle), Sustainable Connections (Bellingham), Village Books (Bellingham), Within Reach (Seattle), The Department of Health, WA State Traffic Safety Commission, and the Washington State Attorney General's Office. Contact was reciprocated by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the Washington State Attorney General's Office (ATG) from which participants were recruited.

This study contains a sample of $n=6$ from OSPI and ATG. Four participants are in group A, two participants are in group B, and at least 1 participant is in each group from the two organizations. Sampling took place from May 15th, 2022, to July 10th, 2022. The eligible/known participants of the Infant-at-Work program in Washington state is relatively small for the purpose of this study the target sample for interview participants was originally six respondents, meeting the minimum 3 participants threshold of a phenomenological research study (Creswell and Creswell, 2018, p. 301).

The groups were selected to capture the broad spectrum of experiences across roles in the program. Direct participants of the program provide a unique lived experience as an employee of their organization and a participant of the Infant-at-Work program within that organization. Human Resource administrators provided a broader understanding of the program functionality within their organization. While their work was impacted by the program, Human Resource administrators could provide more objective insight into the program. The Human Resource office at each institution was tasked with the implementation of the program, the intensity of program facilitation and shift in workplace culture could be observed by these stakeholders.

Design and Materials

This study utilized individual person-to-person interviews recorded over Zoom. Interview participants were asked to participate in the interview from a location most comfortable to them, which allowed for privacy and minimal distractions. At the beginning of each interview, participants were presented with a consent form that was previously reviewed by the participant. The consent form

detailed the protection of the participant's identity and the right to refuse to answer any questions. Interviews were scheduled to be 60 minutes in length with each participant. Prior to interviews, initial contact was made over email. At that time, the consent form, a copy of the interview questions, and the research questions of the study were then sent to each participant to review.

The interview questions were semi-structured, with exploratory follow-up questions asked based on individual respondents' answers. The intention of the interviews was to gather individual unique experiences. The semi-structured interview format was selected to capture a broad range of experiences rather than forced commonalities between the participants.

Across all participant groups, the same four main themes were explored: 1. experience of the participant and their role in the program, 2. understanding of the office environment, 3. opinion of working from home, 4. closing questions in which participants were asked to rate their level of satisfaction on their job and the Infant-at-Work program. At the end of the interview, participants were asked to share anything they felt was important or relevant about their experience that was not previously covered in the interview questions. For direct participants (A) interview questions included a section about career movement and perceived limitations. For Human Resource administrators (B), questions included a section on understanding the implementation of the policy in the work environment, developing the policy within their company, and how employees apply and are approved for the program.

MAXQDA software was used to transcribe and code interviews using both In Vivo and Value coding (Saldana, J. M., 2015, p.105, p.131). Six interviews were transcribed, totaling 275 minutes. Initial themes to emerge in coding are institutional support of the program, coworkers' value of the presence of babies, and the financial impact of the program on participants.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used to examine the lived experiences of the sample. IPA emphasizes an examination of how individuals make meaning out of their lived experiences. IPA is grounded in phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012, p.362).

Data Collections Procedure

Participants were provided with a consent form, a preview of interview questions, and the study research questions prior to their interview. Participants were recruited through email, with interview appointments set up over email. Participants were recruited with targeted purposive sampling by first contacting the Human Resource Department within their organization. Due to privacy concerns, Human

Resources was asked to share the interview invitation with previous and current program participants and forward information of individuals interested in participating in the study. Once initial recruitment was completed, the study participants were also asked if they would like to share the research opportunity with other qualifying individuals for snowball sampling.

Interview procedure:

The researcher shared a verbal overview of the study and the research questions were provided. The researcher reviewed the consent form with participants and asked for any concerns, at which time the researcher attempted to address any concerns. Participants confirmed their understanding of the consent form and acknowledge they were free to skip or refuse to answer any questions throughout the interview. At this time, submission of the consent form was submitted via a google form. Finally, participants were then asked if they would like to pick their own pseudonym name for the final report.

Group A interview Format: Direct Participants of the Program

Group (A) started interviews with **Section 1**, which includes questions on understanding their job role and their participation in the program. Another question was attempting to determine whether the participant was knowledgeable about the program prior to participation. Finally, there was a question on what year they participated and what was their overall experience.

Section 2 explored the Career Movement of the participant over the last five years. Did they have career concerns about creating their family? Did they feel pregnancy put limitations on their career?

Section 3 explored the office environment of their workplace. Were supervisors and co-workers supportive of bringing their baby to the office? What was the effectiveness of the work they performed during this time?

Section 4 explored working from home. These questions were included to understand the difference between participation in an office environment rather than working from home. All participants had experience working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic and were able to provide insight into whether they thought a remote office work environment would have been beneficial rather than working in the office with their child. The questions specifically explored if the participant believed the Infant-at-Work program could be eliminated with alternative work-from-home options.

Section 4 asked participants to rate their job satisfaction and stress level associated with work on a scale of 1-10 (10 being the highest). Participants were asked to share their thoughts on what financial impact the program had on their family, what they believed made the program work (or not work), and what they believed could be improved in the program. Participants were invited in this section to share any additional relevant information about the program not explored in the above interview topics.

Group B interview Format: Human Resource Administrators of the Program

Group (B) interviews are different than groups (A). Group (B) started with **section 1** inquiring about the rules around the policy in their organization. Questions included what does it take for an employee to apply and be approved for the program? What is Human Resource's role in the facilitation of the program? And finally, what kind of accommodations are made for employees?

Section 2 focuses on the development of the company policy. Questions for this section were how was the policy developed? And did said policies emulate another institution?

Section 3 explores the policy in practice. To better understand this, participants were asked how is the policy working for the company? How quickly do people return to work? And how has the policy influenced the office environment?

Section 4 explores institutional leadership and employees' reception of the program. Have there been complaints? How are complaints managed?

Section 5 explores the feasibility of employees working from home longer-term instead of participating in the Infant-at-Work program.

Section 6 explores the benefits experienced by the organization. Are employees retained longer? Has the company experienced unexpected benefits because of the program?

Section 7 is the closing of the interview and invites the interviewee to share any information not previously explored in the interview.

After the completion of each interview, the researcher conducted journaling on their initial thoughts of the interview and procedure. Questions journaled by the researcher include: How well was the interview conducted? How many distractions interrupted the interview? Were there non-variable ques made by respondents which should be logged for coding? What was the emotional tone of the interview? What was the emotional intensity of the respondent to the questions?

After the completion of each interview, a \$25 Amazon gift card was emailed to participants at the email of their choice as a sign of appreciation for their time and willingness to share their experience.

Ethical Considerations

The University of Washington, Office of Research, Internal Review Board approval was sought for this study and was found by IRB to be exempt. Participants of this study faced no immediate risks to their well-being beyond what they would experience in their daily lives. Additional ethical considerations addressed by the researcher to participants were: voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and disclosure of findings. Participants were given the

option to select their own pseudonym names for the final report. Participants were given the option to be sent the final report and findings at the conclusion of the study.

Limitations

Unfortunately, the timing of the study was a major limitation. First, due to remote work, many employees had not participated in the program in the last two years. Of the employees who had participated in the program prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, many had left their institutions. The time of year was also a barrier, the study was conducted in June of 2022 when many people are planning vacations and employees working at educational institutions are planning to be off-contract for the summer months.

The overall contact of Infant-at-Work representatives at institutions was a challenge. A role-specific employee in Human Resources typically manages the Infant-at-Work program. Due to the current social and political climate, HR offices around the state had recently begun a hard lockdown on releasing information about job roles and tasks to people outside the organization for the safety of their staff members.

Originally coworkers of program participants were also targeted for recruitment. Due to scheduling conflicts and a low response rate of coworkers, no interviews were able to be conducted with alternate caregivers or other office coworkers of participants.

No direct participants (parents who brought their children to work) of the Infant-at-Work program identifying as male participated in this study. While both OPSI and ATG reported they have had male participants, none responded to recruitment emails. Understanding how gender impacts the experience of participants is unfortunately not explored in this study.

CHAPTER 4

CHAPTER 4-RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data represented here is from six formal exploratory interviews with employees of OSPI and the ATG office in Washington State (n=6). The average time of each interview was 45 minutes. Approximately 25% of the interviews were introductions and questions posed by the researcher, and 75% of the interview time was responses from the participants. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was used to code and analyze interviews.

Pseudonym names are used to report findings and refer to participants to protect their anonymity.

Demographics

Six exploratory interviews with employees of OSPI and the ATG office in Washington State (n=6) were conducted. 2 respondents are employed in positions with Human Resources, one from each organization, OSPI, and ATG. Four respondents are direct participants of the Infant-at-Work program, three are employed with OSPI, and one is employed with ATG. Of the four direct program participants, one participated in 2016, two participated in 2018, and one participated in 2020. Five of the respondents are female, and one respondent in the study is male. Three respondents have worked at their current institutions for over ten years, two respondents for about eight years, and one respondent for over three years, totaling over 50 years of experience within their organizations. Of the four direct participants of the Infant-at-Work program, three have made career advancements since participating in the Infant-at-Work program and now are executive or director-level employees, leading work within their divisions and supervising other employees.

Organizational Culture

Organizational culture in this research study is described as the common practices, attitudes, and values experienced by employees in the workplace environment (Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E., p .258, 2017). In the analysis of two separate organizations, the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the Washington Office of the Attorney General (ATG), and their participation in the Infant-at-Work program; four main themes were observed in the context of Organizational Culture affecting these organization:

1. Support for the Program

2. Work-Time Flexibility for Parents
3. Coworkers value the presence of babies
4. Donation of gently used items to offset costs for new parents participating in the program

1. Support for the Program

Institutional Support. Participants of the study working in Human Resources help coordinate the Infant-at-Work program within their institutions. Both participants reported the program was a low-risk, high-reward initiative to implement. While analyzed data is not publicly available for the retention of new parents who have completed the program, both representatives confirmed the retention of new parents as employees is a common outcome of the program. At OSPI, the foundational support of the Executive Team ensured the initial pilot of the program was well supported within the organization (Taylor). At ATG, Lisa Rowe, a Human Resource employee, was tasked with implementing the program and acted as a liaison with the WA DOH to adapt the program to fit the needs of ATG (Sam). Both OSPI and ATG adapted the program to fit their organization's unique characteristics with varying regulations on how long an infant can participate in the program, the qualifications of an alternate caregiver, and physical building modifications like a new lactation room at OSPI. Taylor shared the joy employees across the institution found in the program; "*Employees are very proud of the program; they are happy to see babies in the hallways. Seeing that we support families and young mothers.*" Taylor emphasized the normalization that occurred as more parents participated in the program, the welcoming of babies on campus, and the simplified sign-up procedures once more people had observed the program in action.

Supervisor Support. All direct participants of the program reported the foundation of their success in their participation was multifaceted and rooted in the authentic support of their supervisors. Kenzie reported her supervisor's support curbed some of her initial anxiety around participating in the program "*If my supervisor had been anything less than lovely and amazing and supportive, I think it would have been more anxious.*" All participants reported an adjustment period getting situated back into the office upon returning from maternity leave. Participants described this period as both joyful in the pride they experienced introducing their coworkers to their infant and also overwhelming in finding the balance between motherhood and work.

Both Jean and Kenzie discussed the depth of understanding they received from their supervisors while participating in the program also allowed them a more intimate understanding of their

supervisor's relationships with children. While Kenzie learned her recently appointed supervisor was a mother of three, Jean felt lucky in her connection with her male supervisor, who “*grew up in a family full of women and has babies in his family.*” This intimate understanding of the positionality of their supervisors’ created a humanistic element in their working relationship during participation in the program.

Coworker Support. Coworker support is a fundamental asset to the program. Without coworkers willing to be alternate caregivers and coworkers in the immediate working vicinity of participants providing their consent to have infants in the office, Infant-at-Work would struggle to function at large institutions. All participants reported their connection to coworkers was increased through their participation in the program. While 1 out of 4 participants reported having a difficult experience due to the personality of her infant, zero mitigation of complaints was required from HR for all participants.

Participants relied heavily on their team for more than teamwork on daily tasks. Jean reported her infant was an incredibly light sleeper, and she depended on her team to help curb visits from employees outside their division who wanted to visit the baby during naptime. Kelly shared she experienced a difficult first day returning from maternity leave with her baby in tow and left early. “*I left early, and the next day my coworker said, ‘Ahhh, Hey, Mommy, maybe that’s you? You’re kind of anxious and your baby is reflecting your nervousness’ hearing this helped me relax.*” Participants shared many unique experiences of how their coworkers advocated for them and provided flexibility which supported their success in the program.

2. Work-Time Flexibility for Parents

Interview participants reported flexibility as a core aspect of the program; the ability to flex work hours and work tasks to fit the demands of their families better. The flexibility the program creates allows participants to feel supported in their roles as they adjust to competing priorities in their lives. Participants described this flexibility as the willingness of coworkers to be more patient and “*handle tasks and issues with less urgency*” (Morgan). Participants commonly discussed the balance of their work day is structured around the routine of their infant. The frequent naps of their infants were key opportunities to complete tasks. Participants also noted the flexibility provided by their supervisors to take on more projects to complete at home, allowing them to flex their work day and spend less time in the office.

Sam remarked that flexibility for parents at his organization was recognized beyond just the temporary allowance for Infant-at-Work participants. The Infant-at-Work program is suspended until

babies can safely be allowed back in the office. During the pandemic, parents were deeply impacted by changes to public schools and childcare. The need for more flexibility for all parents was reflected in returning to campus requirements.

“Although we reopened our office back on April 4, we're not bringing babies back to work with us yet. Because COVID, of course, is still a real thing. And the pandemic is not over. We're not interested in risking babies who can't be vaccinated. That said, what it looks like for our remote workers is heavy during the pandemic, we recognized that we needed increased flexibility for a variety of reasons. Whether you're a new parent or you're a parent with older children, kids weren't going to school at school, they were doing their remote learning. And so there is a need for flexibility, just all the time anyway. For the majority of the pandemic, we suspended our core hours, which were always a really big thing between 9 am to 3 pm; everybody had to be working and at the office. And that just went out the window with remote work. Now that we're back, core hours have become a thing again, most people have kind of been able to figure that out. Most schools, if not all, are back in session. So it's really just become incumbent on most parents, including parents of newborns, to have some plan. And in the transition going from remote work back to the office, there was a recognition that some people, particularly new parents, may need additional time. So it wasn't like April 4; the offices reopened, and everyone needed to be in their chair in the office that day. It was far more fluid.” (Sam)

3. Coworkers value the presence of babies.

Valuing the presence of babies at the organization was evident in the general office excitement. Participants acknowledged the general happiness and impacts having babies in the office had on everyone. Participants reported having babies in the office created a conversation buzz. Sam reported an increased amount of conversations and a shift in the office culture when people in a division announced their participation in the Infant-at-Work program. Kenzie reported receiving “*huge smiles and reactions*” as she passed coworkers in the halls and participated in meetings. People liked to talk about the privilege of getting to hold a baby or possibly being selected to be an alternate caregiver for a

parent. Morgan shared that at her organization, graduation ceremonies were performed for babies exiting the program because they were “moving on.” The ceremonies were a celebration for the parents but also a form of closure for the alternate caregivers and coworkers in the office who were sad to see the babies age out of the program.

4. Donation of gently used items to offset costs for new parents participating in the program

Coworkers supported the program through the donation of baby items. Two direct participants reported receiving donated items to be used in their office spaces. Morgan was donated items from coworkers she knew; Jean was donated items through coordination by HR from anonymous coworkers. Taylor from OSPI HR reported a high frequency of items offered for participants. OSPI announces participants in their monthly newsletter. After a new announcement, employees would contact HR to offer items such as swings, bouncy seats, and pack-n-plays for any participant needing additional equipment. Employees recognized the high cost of outfitting an office space; baby equipment like pack-n-plays are essential, used frequently, expensive, and a hassle to transport home daily.

Equity for Women in the Workplace

The Infant-at-Work program attempts to bridge a work-family conflict often experienced by parents: the desire to present for the critical development of their child and the costly burden of child-rearing in American society. Equity for women in the workplace was recognized in three distinct themes unique to the Infant-at-Work program:

1. Financial Impact of the Program
2. The Choice of Career Versus Family
3. Mother-to-baby bonding

1. Financial Impact of the Program

Participants were asked what financial impact the program had on their families. All participants reported the program saved their families an estimated \$1600 a month they would have spent on childcare during participation in the program. Two participants, Jean and Kenzie, used the word “huge” to describe the impact. In Washington State, parents must pay for childcare like a subscription service.

Even if the child is sick or on vacation, parents must pay the monthly fee to maintain their spot at the childcare facility. Morgan described this system as “*stressy*.” After aging out of the program her daughter attended about six weeks out of the three months Morgan paid the infant room rate because her daughter was often sick in the first few months she was attending care. Kenzie also emphasized the financial impact of age. Infant care is more expensive than toddler care; extending the program to have her son at work until he was nine months allowed her only to pay the infant care price for three months.

Jean reported a more complex and substantial impact on her family. “*I wasn't ready to put her into daycare at that time. I for sure would have taken at least another three months of unpaid leave.*” In a time when American women are not guaranteed maternity, yet 72% of mothers are working full or part-time (Livingston 2019), Jean was offered a unique opportunity to provide for her family.

2. The Choice of Career Versus Family

Participants of the program are at different levels of education, job tenure, and career advancement. While the overarching positive reactions about participating in the program among participants were similar, all participants had slightly different reflections on the interview questions “What would have been different if you were unable to participate in the program?” and “Were you concerned about the impact your pregnancy would have on your employment?” Due to the nature of IPA analysis, these findings are presented in the narrative of each individual direct participant of the program to maintain the essence of their unique experience.

Three participants (Jean, Kenzie, and Morgan) acknowledged they were unlikely to have returned to their job when they did, had they not planned to participate in Infant-at-Work.

Jean. During the interview process, Jean was reflective on how motherhood was a difficult adjustment for her, her family dynamic, and her career. The program helped remove a barrier to continuing her career advancement because she could be both present for her job and her newborn. While more time off to care for her child would have been ideal, the opportunity to participate in Infant-at-Work helped to remove the need for an immediate decision when she wasn't ready to leave her baby in childcare yet. Jean was able to return to work with a more flexible schedule and the presence of her newborn in the office.

Jean has advanced positions within her institution every year for the last five years since participating in the Infant-at-Work program. “*I would say the overall support provided to me as a new mom definitely has contributed to how long I've been here.*” The combination of support and opportunity at the organization enabled her to remain with the organization while also advancing in a

career focused on legislation, a typically male-dominated career.

Kenzie. Kenzie shared that her family is her number one priority. She did return to work quickly after giving birth, only taking the allowed 12 weeks of leave. For Kenzie, the nurturing of her family is a core value, and while she appreciates the impact her work contributes to the field of education, given the opportunity, she would highly value being a stay-at-home mom. *“I’ve never been a career-driven person. I’ve always been a family-driven person. And so I work because I have to, but I’m a mom because I want to.”* Kenzie reported the decision to return to work was difficult, but she felt like she was getting the best of both worlds: a job that recognizes her family comes first.

Kenzie shared she has firm boundaries, which allow her to maintain a healthy work-life balance. She does not take additional work home on the weekends, and she doesn't respond to emails after the completion of her work day.

Morgan. Morgan, a mother of five, had the opportunity to participate in the formal Infant-at-Work program with baby #4 and an informal program prior with babies: 1, 2, and 3. Baby 5 was born post-covid and unable to come into the office due to the vaccine requirements but does participate in office Zoom meetings with Morgan. Morgan’s experience is slightly different given her vast experience bringing her children to work. With children prior to #5, she did not have the opportunity for remote work like in the post-COVID-19 work era, but she was able to bring her children to work while they were infants and work a slightly modified schedule. Morgan started bringing baby #4 to the office as she chose to return to work quickly after giving birth due to the chaos of COVID-19.

“So I had planned on coming back, more gradually. Coming back a couple of days a week. But then we knew the pandemic had started and stuff was coming and going to happen. There was this huge workload spike trying to figure out all of these different things. I didn’t end up taking as much time with her as I planned on because I wanted to be here to help with the pandemic response. And I could.”

Throughout the interview process, Morgan reflected on how difficult it was to leave her children in the care of someone else when they were young, she felt she would miss out on important moments. She found joy in the fact the face her children saw the most in their infancy was hers. Morgan also phrased participating in the program as the *“best of both worlds”* because she did not have to choose between family responsibilities and work.

Kelly. Kelly returned to work after six weeks of maternity leave. She was passionate about returning to her work as a data analyst and wanted to get as much as she could out of the program. She recognized a child is a special gift, and these moments do not happen often. Kelly is the mother of two and participated in the program with her second child. She had baby #1 prior to starting with her current organization.

Since participating in the program, Kelly has advanced job roles three times continuing in the Data Department. The only limitations Kelly mentioned to her career related to her pregnancy were the physical limitation of being careful around her due date to ensure she didn't go into labor at work and the time she had to take off for baby wellness visits to the doctor.

Kelly was the only participant to mention the need for advanced sensitivity in the office for people who cannot or choose not to have children. She reported the heightened baby-centric conversations could be difficult for coworkers who are struggling with their own fertility, which should be recognized as a challenge of the program.

3. Mother-to-baby bonding

Mothers discussed how special the additional time with their infant was during these early phases of development. In their ability to both work and care for their child, there was relief in being the face their baby saw every day caring for them. The additional time with their child allowed them to witness and be present for moments they would have missed if they had returned to work without them. Kenzie emphasized this ability to not miss out on “*precious moments*” with her baby was special because it’s time she’d never get back. The program created a sense of equity for working mothers they would not have had without the program. Morgan shared her pride in “*being the face her child sees the most*” as he joined her Zoom calls on a regular basis playing in her lap.

Adaptive Family Work Environment

An adaptive work environment is embedded in the organizational culture of an institution. It’s the ability of an organization to respond with intent to the internal and external forcing pressing on the common practices, attitudes, and values experienced by employees in the workplace environment. Four themes are recognized in this study as impacting the organizational culture of an institution to which the institution, employees, or policies adapt to fill a need.

1. Community of Care
2. Forming Groups
3. Feelings of work effectiveness and telework accommodations
4. Forming Significant Familial Connections

1. Community of Care

Alternate caregivers are a central part of the program. They provide care for the infant when the parent needs to facilitate a meeting or engage in activities where having an infant would be a challenge. Participants working in Human Resources highlighted that people both enjoyed the duty and recognized it was added on top of their daily tasks. Employees within their respective institutions often volunteered for the duty without being asked.

No direct participants reported seeking alternate caregivers as a challenge. Most participants reported people were happy to be selected or volunteered before being asked. Jean commented during her interview, *“I didn't actually ask, as I talked about participating, coworkers essentially volunteered.”* Which was a sentiment echoed by two other direct participants.

Kenzie had a slightly different experience. She was the very first to pilot the program at her organization. She had already had her baby and was on leave during the time others were signing up for the initial pilot. On a visit back to the office prior to returning from maternity leave, she heard about the Infant-at-Work program from coworkers. Kenzie went to her supervisor and HR to ask about the requirements and was fast-tracked to allow her to participate. In this rush, she did not assign alternate caregivers but has seen the participation in the program be easier for those with assigned helpers. Kenzie reported while she did not have an assigned alternate caregiver, coworkers were accommodating and would often help her when she needed to attend meetings.

2. Forming Groups

Jean reported taking part in a group with other parents participating in the program. She explained the ability to connect and share best practices with other program participants helped her bond with people at her organization she likely would not have met otherwise. Currently, because their children are roughly the same age, Jean continues to meet with these parents at the park for playdates with their children. Taylor reported HR tries to connect current and previous participants as a way to ensure knowledge is passed from one group to another because the unique experience of the program is

best mentored by other people who have participated.

An unofficial workgroup was formed at OSPI to improve the accommodations for working parents at the organization. While many of the committee participants were parents, some were not. This mixed demographic of participants helped to establish a general understanding in the workplace of what accommodations were necessary for parents. Out of this committee came the construction of a dedicated lactation room for mothers. The previous lactation room was not a dedicated space, but a multiple-purpose wellness room employees often used when they were feeling sick or needed to lay down. The lactation room was designed to be a comforting space for mothers to nurse children with the necessary accommodations for pumping.

3. Feelings of work effectiveness and telework accommodations

All direct participants of the program were asked how they felt about the effectiveness of the work they performed during the time they were bringing their infant to work with them. All participants reported they felt they completed about 70-75% of their normal work. Some participants took opportunities offered by HR to reduce their normal work hours, while some negotiated with supervisors for additional projects to be completed at home during downtime. As Kenzie describes the experience, while she was doing a little less work overall, the arrangement was beneficial for both her and the organization. *“If I was taking the additional time off, or if I was not coming in at all, and they hired someone to backfill the position while I was gone, that person wouldn't know how to do 75% of my job without substantial training. I think having someone there who knows their job is still better for the company or the business overall.”* Morgan describes the experience as creating more dedication to her role because the organization was offering her a special opportunity, *“In some ways, I felt like I was more dedicated, because I felt a stronger need to like, try, if that makes sense. They were so accommodating, and people were being so kind. I felt a greater connection and a greater appreciation for my job.”*

All participants had worked from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants were asked based on their prior experience with the Infant-at-Work program and their experience with teleworking, if they believed the program could be replaced with a remote or telework option for parents. All participants acknowledged that a 100% telework option would not be as beneficial as bringing their baby into the office a few days a week. All participants responded that a hybrid option offering more flexibility would be beneficial, but the advantages of working in the office with their child would not be replicated in the same way with a 100% telework option. Morgan and Kenzie both

reported they believed the office environment was very stimulating for their children. The environment offered a lot of socialization for the infants. Kelly responded that the program “*provides a connection with coworkers,*” and “*You cannot completely replace that benefit with remote work.*” All participants acknowledged the ability to “mute” during meetings would have been a blessing some days with their infant, but as Morgan remarked, “*There are things that I can do better at the office. It’d be nice to choose based on specific circumstances; some meetings I can do from home, some staff interactions I’d prefer to have in person.*” Jean shared that as a supervisor of her division, if one of her direct reports chose to participate in the program, she’d be an advocate for a hybrid work format “*...that comfort of being in your own space with your own stuff and not having to worry about interrupting other people would be beneficial AND everyone here knows [my daughter] now. The office workers here all know her; they’ve all seen her and talked to her. That part is really special.*”

4. Forming Significant Familial Connections

Beyond the general coworker excitement happening in the office; were the deeper significant familial connections coworkers formed with both the babies and the parents. Parents felt authentically **seen** by their coworkers due to the overlap of life and work so drastically on display during program participation. Direct participants of the program spent a lot of time during interviews expressing the deep connections created between themselves, other employees, and their babies. These relationships lasted beyond the duration of the program and, in one example, beyond the coworker's employment with the organization. Participants report coworker connections built around the participating babies that the participants did not experience with previous children. The presence of babies and this level of humanity welcomed into the office environment influenced deeper development of inside jokes and positive sentimental cultural practices, which are unlikely to have come about without the participation in the program. The investment and connection into these children by coworkers is evident in their investment in time spent with the children once they got older. In all interviews, participants acknowledged at least one coworker checks in on their child regularly, often attending T-ball games, birthday parties, and other extracurricular activities.

Jean referred to this level of connection as “*humanity being brought into the office,*” the breakdown of professional walls in an environment where work is usually “*strict and important.*” Coworkers adapted to the presence of babies developing deeper authentic relationships with participants.

Kenzie shared her baby was often referred to as the office intern, and the way her coworkers

adapted to her baby in a cubical setting helped relieve some of her general concerns that her child would be troublesome to the office environment. *“I was concerned my baby would be disruptive to others in a cubical setting. In practice, when he was talking or babbling, people kind of liked it. They’d say, ‘There’s our office intern who won’t shut up again.’ or something similarly funny.”* Throughout interviews, participants frequently remarked the presence of their babies contributed to the environment of connection, team building, and authenticity in the workplace.

Discussion

The purpose of this study is to understand the impact of participation in the Infant-at-Work program on organizational culture, creating equity for women in the workplace, and creating an adaptive family-focused work environment. Study participants had overall positive perceptions of the program, the benefits of the program on their organization, and the impact of the program on their immediate work environment and relationships. The data collected during the interview process suggests the Infant-at-Work program has a positive impact on workplace culture and the employees of an organization.

Data suggests that an organization’s participation in the Infant-at-Work creates a better work environment. With the foundational support for the program stemming from leaders of an organization, the culture of that organization is influenced to assign a higher value to the interactions and relationships of employees. This top-down support influences supervisors to develop distinct humanistic relationships with their employees. Colleagues within divisions develop a deeper level of teamwork because caring for a baby within the office promotes connection, excitement, and a human-centered focus. These values are exhibited in the flexibility and support offered by supervisors and coworkers to program participants.

The analysis identifies two key factors as creating equity for women in the workplace: the financial impact of the program and the removal of a complex career barrier, the need to often choose family over career. The financial impact of childcare in Washington is such a hardship on families the WA Senate has tasked a committee with investigating resources to mitigate the cost (SHB 2367, p. 2-3). The cost savings for women participating in the program are huge. As noted in *After the baby: work-family Conflict and Working Mothers’ Psychological Health*, the primary cited contribution to reducing work-family conflict and depressive symptomatology is a flexible work schedule (Marshall, N. L., Tracy, A. J., Orthner, D. K., & Rose, R., 2009, p.6). The ability for women to have both a flexible work schedule and reliable income as offered to participants in the Infant-at-Work program suggests a reduction in work-family conflict.

The cost of childcare is a complex, multifaceted issue. When the infant rate childcare costs can be mitigated for women and the benefit of more time to bond with their child is added to a work environment, women have more access to succeed in their workplaces.

The data supports the theory allowing babies into an office environment creates an adaptive family-focused work environment. Given the opportunity, coworkers raise to the occasion to support colleagues in the care of their families by volunteering to be alternate caregivers in the program. Coworkers rally around one another in developing Infant-at-Work participant affinity groups and committees to advance the office environment for working parents. As COVID-19 accommodations for remote work suggest, organizations can adapt to more flexible work agreements when external forces push companies to shift their values.

CHAPTER 5

CHAPTER 5-CONCLUSION

The Infant-at-Work program is generally perceived by direct participants and HR administrators tasked with overseeing the program as beneficial to themselves and their institutions. All through, there were commonalities between participants across organizations, the program is adaptive to fit the office environment of individual organizations. Building rapport with interview participants in the brief interactions we had was simple, participants enjoyed talking about the program because they authentically enjoyed their experience, even when their experience was embedded with unique challenges. When people are given access to advance their families, they are resilient, adaptable, and appreciative.

Throughout the interview process, participants were enthusiastic to talk about their experience with the program. During two interviews, women had their children present. Kelly's children played in the background, and Morgan's youngest son was on her lap. I quickly observed the comfort and normalcy of their children being present while they were engaged in a serious conversation. This is counter to my current experience in my own workplace, where parents are often embarrassed or present as shameful when their children are making noise while they are teleworking. The comfortability I observed in these women at the intersection of work and family is a gift all parents deserve to experience in the workplace.

Recommendations

Companies, organizations, and large institutions offering safe work environments for infants should consider running a pilot of the Infant-at-Work program. The program is a low-cost high-reward initiative to positively influence workplace culture and place increased value within the organization on employee relationships.

Companies currently offering the Infant-at-Work program should reflect on the last few years of changes to their telework policies and expand the program to include some remote work options for program participants when appropriate for their organization.

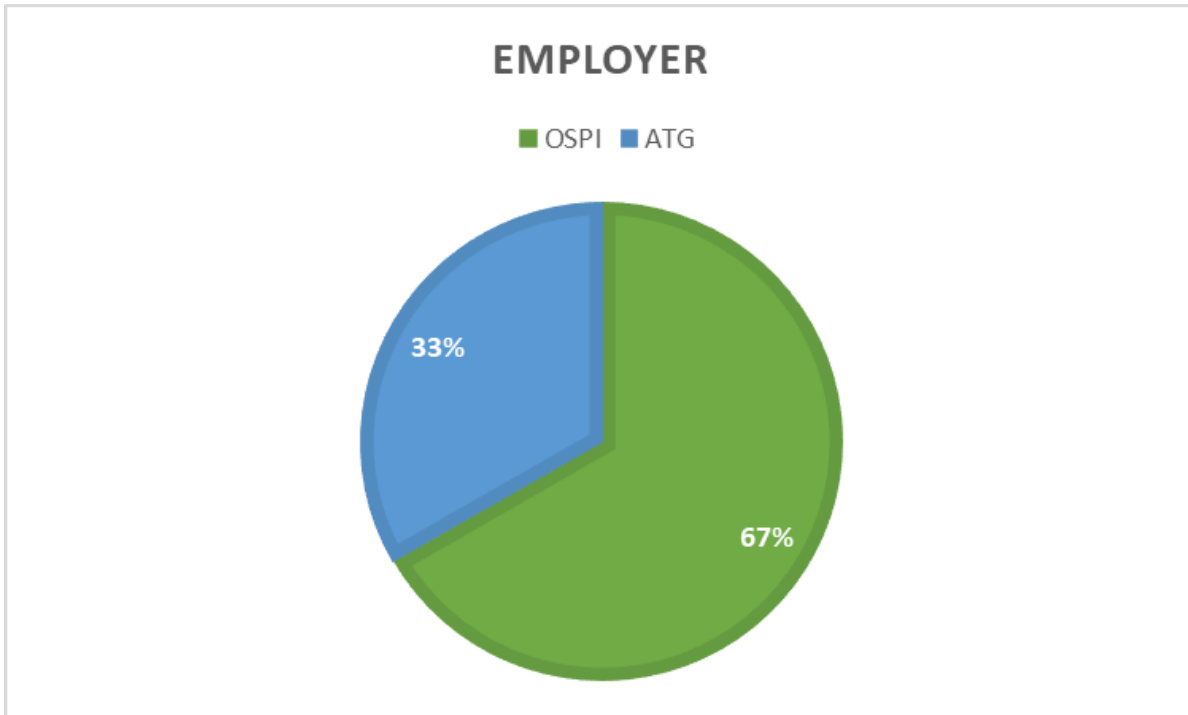
There are still many dimensions of the program which warrant further exploration. The positive influence on the mental health of parents participating in the program should be explored. While this was not explored as a topic, general observations suggest parents participating in the program experience slightly increased stress from parenting in the workplace and substantial reductions in financial stress and stress induced by leaving an infant, often suffering minor health complications, in

the care of someone else.

Research on the Infant-at-Work program should continue to investigate the program's impact on the family unit. While not appropriate in this study, there could be further benefits to be explored on the impact of a family unit when one or both parents participate in the Infant-at-Work program.

APPENDICES

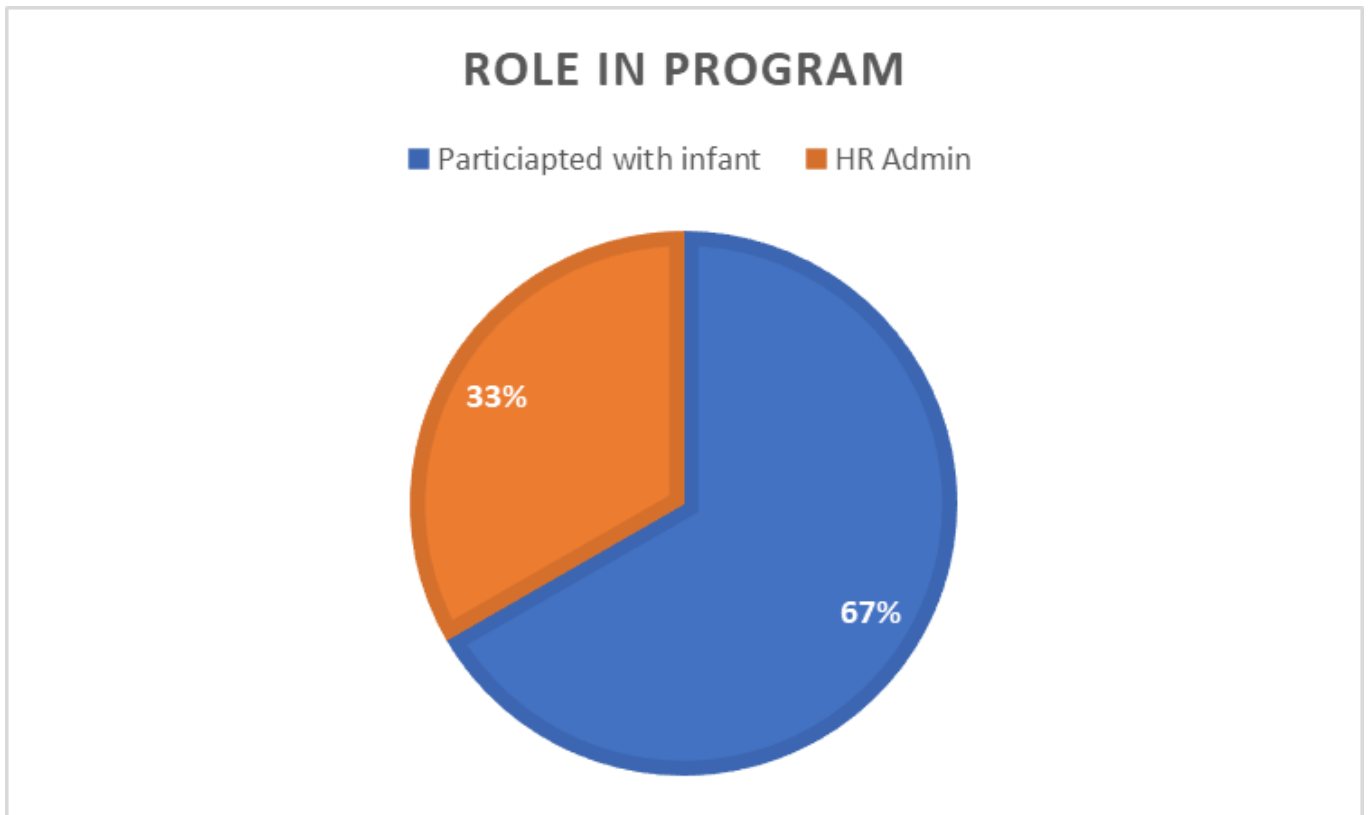
Appendix I: Chart of Employers



6 Respondents

What organization or institution were you employed with during participation in the Infant-at-Work program?

Appendix II: Chart of Role in Program



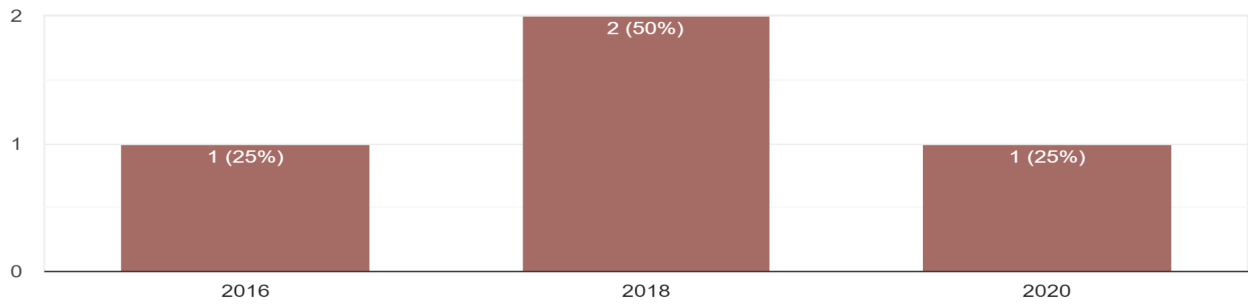
6 respondents

What was your role of participation in the Infant-at-Work program?

Appendix III: Chart Year of Participation (direct participants)

What year did you participate in the Infant-at-Work program?

4 responses



4 respondents

What year did you participate in the Infant-at-Work program (as a direct participant)?

Appendix IV: Interview Script Group A, Direct Participants

Introduction

1. With your permission, I'd like to record this interview. The recording will only be used to help us in our research, and it won't be shared with anyone in raw form, only the transcribed written copy with personal information removed. Recording this interview also helps me because I will only need to take limited notes. Is that okay?
2. Hello, my name's [Name] with the University of Washington in Bothell. I'll be leading our interview today. We have been communicating about the Infant-at-Work program currently offered to employees at your company.
3. I'd like to start by thanking you for taking the time to speak with us. Your feedback is valuable and will be used to inform others about the program across Washington state. Just to confirm, we'd like to keep this interview to [45- 60 minutes]. Does that still work for you?
4. Great. If you need a break or to stop at any time, please let me know.
5. During this interview, I'll ask you a few questions about the Infant-at-Work program and your employer. Please be aware that there are no wrong answers — you're the expert here! We're doing interviews to hear things from your perspective.
6. Finally, I want to confirm that you've signed a participant consent agreement — is that correct? Have you had a chance to review it? Reminder: even if you agree to participate now, you can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind. Do you have any questions about the consent form?

Great. Do you have any questions for me at this time?

Understanding Participation

- What attracted you to the program/why did you want to do it?
- What year did you participate in the Infant-at-Work program with your employer?
 - Did you know about the program prior to taking your position with the company?
 - Was this something you were looking for when job searching?
 - Can you describe the general steps of participating in the program and what that looked like for you?

- How long did you take off for parental leave? What influenced this length of time?
- How did participation in the program influence your feelings about coming back to work when you did?
- Can you describe what it was like your first day on campus - the transition back to work?
- Did you breastfeed during this time? What was that experience like for you?
- Did participation in the program influence your decision to stay with your employer post-baby?
- How many children do you have?
- Have you participated in this program with previous children?
 - How was that experience different, and how was it similar?
- What would be different if you did not have the opportunity to participate in this program?

Career Movement

- Can you describe your career movement over the last five years?
 - What is your current job position?
 - What positions did you hold prior to planning your family?
 - Once you knew you were pregnant, did you feel it put limitations on your career? why/why not? In what ways?
 - How would you describe your level of employment during your participation in the program? Underemployed, just right for your skill set, over-employed (slight challenges in your job duties)

Office Environment

- Can you describe the general office environment you experienced while bringing your infant to work?

- Did you feel your supervisor was supportive?
- Were your co-workers supportive?
- Did your child build any long-lasting bonds with your co-workers?
 - Do they still visit your child?
- How do you feel about the effectiveness of the work you performed during this time?
- How many hours of sick or relief time did you need to use during this time for child-related issues?

Working From Home

- Did you work from home during the COVID-19 Pandemic?
 - Given your experience with the Infant-at-Work program and working from home, what do you think are the advantages of coming into the office with your infant rather than working from home?
 - Do you think the program could be eliminated with a work-from-home option? why / why not?

Closing

- On a scale of 1 -10, 1 being bad and 10 being great, can you rate:
 - The level of work-related stress did you experience during your pregnancy?
 - Stress after returning to work?
 - the health of your infant?
 - your satisfaction in your job?
 - your office environment?
 - The financial impact of participation in the program on your family?
- Given the opportunity, would you participate in the program again?
- What do you think it takes for this program to work successfully?

- Are there any insights or advice you'd like to share with companies considering program implementation?
- Is there anything we didn't ask about that you think is important to share?
- Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix V: Interview Script Group B, Human Resource Administrator Introduction

1. With your permission, I'd like to record this interview. The recording will only be used to help us in our research, and it won't be shared with anyone in raw form, only the transcribed written copy with personal information removed. Recording this interview also helps me, because I will only need to take limited notes. Is that okay?
2. Hello, my name's [Name] with the University of Washington in Bothell. I'll be leading our interview today. We have been communicating about the Infant-at-Work program currently offered to employees at your company.
3. I'd like to start by thanking you for making the time to speak with us. Your feedback is valuable and will be used to inform others about the program across Washington state. Just to confirm, we'd like to keep this interview to [45- 60 minutes]. Does that still work for you?
4. Great. If you need a break or to stop at any time, please let me know.
5. During this interview, I'll ask you a few questions about the Infant-at-Work program and your employer. Please be aware that there are no wrong answers — you're the expert here! We're doing interviews to hear things from your perspective.
6. Finally, I want to confirm that you've signed a participant consent agreement — is that correct? Have you had a chance to review it? Reminder: even if you agree to participate now, you can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind. Do you have any questions about the consent form?

Great. Do you have any questions for me at this time?

Understanding of Policy

Please describe your company's Infant-at-Work program.

- What year(s) did you oversee participants in the Infant-at-Work program?
- Did you know about the program prior to taking your position with the company?
- When are employees told about the program?
- As an HR admin, what is your role in the program?

- Can you describe the general steps of participating in the program and what it takes to be approved?
- Do specific roles have approval? What if someone wants to participate in the program but is in a less than ideal role?
- What are the guidelines for roles which qualify to participate in the program?

- Do you know the average length of time employees take for parental leave with your company?
- Do you know the average age of infants when people participate in the program?

- Do you know how many babies have participated in the program with your company?
- What do you think would be different if your company did not offer this program?

Understanding how the company developed the policy

- How long has the program been in place?
- How many employees are on the program at any given time? Is there a limitation on the number of employees who can participate?
- Can you describe how the program was originally implemented at your company?
 - Who initiated the program implementation?
 - How long did it take for the program to become policy to when the first participant was approved?
 - Were there any barriers or resistance to implementation at the company? Challenges of funding?

Understanding of Practice

- What does the average implementation look like for an employee?
 - How quickly do employees return to work with an infant? Is six weeks common?
 - How is the program working for the company?

- How does participation in the program impact employee productivity?
- Are there changes in the program you work recommend?
- Was there a shift in the social environment of the workplace when this program was implemented?
- What is working in the office like with a baby around?
- What is the employment longevity of employees who participate in the program?
On average, do these people stay with the company longer?

Employees' reception of the program

- How do coworkers think about the program?
- Is there a raise in grievances while an employee participates in the program?
- How do you overcome or mitigate issues that arise?
- Have you formed any long-lasting bonds with an infant who participated in the program?
Do you still visit them?

Working from home

- Did you work from home during the COVID-19 Pandemic?
- Given your experience with the Infant-at-Work program and working from home, what do you think are the advantages of bringing a baby into the office rather than working from home?
- Do you think the program could be eliminated with a work-from-home option? why / why not?

Benefits

- What are some benefits to the employer
- What are some benefits to the employee?
- Are there any benefits to coworkers?
- Any surprising or unexpected benefits from implementing the policy?

Ending of interview

- What do you think it takes for this program to work successfully?

- Are there any insights or advice you'd like to share with companies considering program implementation?
- Is there anything we didn't ask about that you think is important to share?

Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix VI: Consent Form

TITLE OF STUDY:

Infant-At-Work Program Impact on Workplace Culture

INVESTIGATOR:

Manda Pelly, master's candidate in Policy Studies at the University of Washington.

CONTACTS:

Manda Pelly: apelly@uw.edu

IRB Human Subjects Division at the University of Washington: (206) 543-0098.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?

You are being invited to participate in this interview because you have a lived experience directly impacted by the Infant-at-Work Program. We are looking at the benefits and influence this program has had on employees in Washington State. This research is designed to gain new insights on the program, the impact on employees, and the culture of their workplace.

We ask you to be both truthful and honest about your experience and use your own judgment to decide if a question is too sensitive or personal to answer. You may refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.

It is important to state that consent is ongoing; you may choose to stop the interview at any time in the process.

WHAT AM I BEING ASKED TO DO?

You are being asked to participate in a one-hour interview with the researcher. Most of the questions are open-ended, have no right answer, and are intended to collect only the responses you feel comfortable providing. We ask you not to provide explicit details about other employees, only your experience and the impact participation in the program has had on you. We are interested in how your participation in this program has impacted your career choices and the longevity of your employment. Understanding the overall environment of your workplace is important to this study.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of the Infant-at-Work Program on employees, the culture of their workplace, and job satisfaction in Washington State.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS or RISKS?

The benefits of this survey may not be immediate. However, the information collected from this interview will hopefully be used to help improve employee experiences across Washington State. The data that will be collected is centered around the Infant-at-Work Program and understanding its impact on workplace culture. The data collected will provide key insight that will allow employers, policymakers, and unions to make better future decisions regarding the adaptation and implementation of the program across Washington.

No risks for participation in this study.

WHO WILL SEE THE ANSWERS I GIVE ON THE SURVEY?

The researcher will see the information provided during the interview. A summary of findings will be available to the University of Washington community. It is important to note that your name and other identifying information will never be released because it will be replaced with a pseudonym in all research-related notes and documents. The information will always remain confidential.

OTHER INFORMATION

You must be at least 18 years old to participate in this study and have participated in the Infant-at-Work program. Research participants must speak English.

Research participants will not be directly provided with results from this study but may view the complete report document online through the University of Washington Capstone Library.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions or concerns about the research and study that are being done, please reach out to the researcher, Manda Pelly. Her Email is apelly@uw.edu. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, please call the Human Subjects Division at the University of Washington. Their phone number is: (206) 543-0098.

SUBJECT'S STATEMENT

I consent to being a research participant in the Infant-At-Work Program Impact on Workplace Culture Study, associated with the University of Washington. I understand the risks and benefits associated with being part of this study, and I agree to participate in it. I also agree to have the head investigator of this research share the information I am providing, with the knowledge that my stories may be shared with other people who are not affiliated with this study or even the University.

I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.

I have had the purpose of the study explained to me in writing, and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

I agree to my interview being video-recorded.

I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.

I understand that in any report on the results of this research, my identity will remain confidential. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of the people I speak about.

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