
SUSTAINABILITY RELATED VALUES IN FAMILY-FRIENDLY ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract: *The focus of the study is to examine the set of values of family-friendly organizations in Hungary. The study highlights the importance of organizational values as a fundamental part of corporate culture, which can be a major competitive advantage for companies. Values at the organizational level not only influence employees' behaviour but also play an important role in strategic decision-making. Based on the results of a questionnaire survey carried out in spring 2023, this study demonstrates, which values dominate among organizations with the label Family-Friendly Workplace in Hungary and which are the priorities that influence their decisions. The research is meant to prove that a number of values related to social and environmental sustainability are considered in the basic principles of the organizations involved in the survey. They regard the family, support for families and work-life balance as core values. Beside family-related values, other important principles are included, such as equal opportunities, social responsibility and support for disadvantaged social groups. In addition, environmental sustainability and environmental awareness are strongly reflected in the values of family-friendly organizations.*

Keywords: *family-friendly organizations, organizational culture, organizational values, social sustainability, environmental sustainability*

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Introduction

Nowadays, balancing work and family life is a daily challenge for most employees. The study of the relationship between work and family life became the focus of scientific researches in the second half of the 20th century, parallel to the increasing participation of women in the labor market and the spread of the two-earner family model (Allen & Martin, 2017). Researches have shown that the two areas of life are strongly related (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000). Individuals have to manage both work and family, which can lead to conflicts between their work and family roles (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

Recently, the issue of balancing work and family life has become the focus of interest and thus, the role of family-friendly organizations is becoming increasingly important. The formulation of family-friendly organizations can be regarded as a form of corporate social responsibility (Bognár et al., 2014). According to previous studies, a workplace can be considered family-friendly if it facilitates the employees of a company to combine work with their family responsibilities (Székely et al., 2019).

Global international organizations, like the United Nations, explored the significance of social issues strongly connected to human harmonic life between private and organizational spheres. Through their activities, family-friendly organizations can make a significant contribution to achieving some of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) set by the United Nations in 2015 (Kovács et al., 2023). Among the Sustainable Development Goals, Good Health and Well-Being (SDG 3) and Gender Equality (SDG 5) goals are the most aligned with the activities of family-friendly workplaces. Family-friendly organizations support their employees with a range of measures that promote work-life balance, maintain physical, mental health and well-being, as well as equal opportunities.

UNICEF, harmonized with the SDGs, issued a recommendation package on how workplaces can implement more family friendly policies. It is a guidance for businesses in creating family-friendly workplaces in their own operations and in their supply chains (unicef.org) and its results are beneficial for families, employers and business.

Family-friendly workplaces offer their employees flexible working arrangements, such as flexible working hours, part-time work or home

office. They also provide extra-statutory leave and leave for family reasons like parental leave, for example by keeping contact with them during their absence and offering them mentoring programs after their return. Employees with young children are supported by child-friendly office environment, workplace nursery and summer camps for children. The family-friendly initiatives also include children's and family days and various family oriented programs. In addition, more and more family-friendly organizations take preventive health measures such as screening programs and sports activities for employees (Bognár et al., 2014; Fail et al., 2015).

To get a deeper understanding of the concept of values we have to conceptualize the term that is possible from several aspects. The concept has not just one definition but rather some approaches by current and former international researchers investigating various issues in business context, like values of entrepreneurs (Garai & Náday, 2015).

According to Rokeach a value is 'an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of control' (Rokeach, 1973: 5). Based on Chatman's (1991) researches we can state that value fit between the person and the organization is related to commitment. Family-friendly workplaces also introduced arrangements preferable by employees to make them loyal and committed to work and to the organization.

In terms of organizations, values are indicative of the most defining characteristics of an institution (Williams, 1979). Hill and Jones (2001) define organizational values as beliefs and ideas on the goals organization members should pursue, and also, ideas about the proper standards of behavior organization members should use to achieve corporate goals. Shine (2010) adds predicted behavior to the term saying that rules have been established by organizational leaders who expect organizational members to adhere to them, and these rules make it possible to predict behavior.

Individual and corporate values may overlap which leads to an ideal situation both for employees and employers. The individual's perception of the organization's values is arguably more important to predicting individual behaviour (Judge & Cable, 1997). Management style of leaders of various organizations are 'value driven' (Chatman, 2017), just like that in family-friendly workplaces. The mutual interest of leadership and employees is to form a common ground for cooperation and this is mostly

the shared values. Value based models are also applied and followed in other organizational perspectives, like Corporate Sustainability and Responsibility (Camilleri, 2017).

The present study examines the organizational values of family-friendly organizations and whether these values are compatible with family-friendly policies and sustainability.

Research Methodology and Sampling

The study is based on the results of a questionnaire survey conducted in 2023 in each organization carrying the „Family Friendly Workplace” label (FFW) and seated in Hungary (702 organisations altogether). No other types of organisations were involved in the research as it is aimed to reveal specific value sets of FFWs. Each organisation has a seat only in Hungary, but the owners are Hungarians as well as foreign proprietors. The research included a comprehensive examination of the family-friendly aspect, but this study only presents the results related to corporate values.

The questions in the survey are divided into 15 basic groups concerning the main topics. Family-friendly corporate values are one of these thematic units beside others, such as practices and arrangements of family friendly organisations, corporate communication, effects of COVID-19 pandemic or Corporate Social Responsibilities. The present study is meant to delve into the main values of these organisations concerning family and work balance.

The survey included open ended and multiple choice questions. Open questions enable the participants to give a detailed answer according to their preference and share all items of information they consider important. Multiple choice questions, nevertheless, make the respondents express their opinion in a more directed and focused way. Using combined types of questions made the processing of the responses more complicated, however, it contributed to attaining a more complex view on the issue of corporate values in FFWs.

The questionnaire was sent online to 702 employers certified as FFWs, and a total of 116 people – each representing a different organisation – filled in the questionnaire and provided data on the topics. The reasons for the relatively low rate of willingness to participate was not investigated.

Regarding positions, the responses were received mainly from owners, top managers, human resource managers and human resources employees. The composition of the sample according to sectors and the number of employees are shown in Table 1.

Almost half of the participants came from the business sector, but numerous state and municipal actors as well as organizations from the non-profit sector were also invited to take part in the survey. Most respondents (54) were employers with 1-49 employees, about the third of the respondents (38) were organizations with 50-249 employees, while large companies had the lowest proportion represented by 24 respondents. The settlements where the organisations are seated also represent each type of settlements that exist in Hungary.

In the next chapter, we are analysing the results of the questionnaire to get an insight into the value preferences of family-friendly organizations.

Table 1. **Characteristics of family-friendly organisations (n=116)**

	N	Percent (%)
SPHERE		
Business	55	47,4
State/municipal	46	39,7
Civil/non-profit	11	9,5
Church	4	3,4
NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES		
1-9	12	10,3
10-49	42	36,2
50-249	38	32,8
> 250	24	20,7
SETTLEMENT		
Capital city	16	13,8
County city	50	43,1
Other city	43	37,1
Town	7	6,0

Source: self edited 2024.

Value preferences of family-friendly organizations

The whole research attained information on 15 topics that are of interest regarding FFWs, and one unit of the survey included questions on value preferences of employees in economic, state and civil organisations. In the present paper we wish to give an overview of these values as they serve as a basis for FFWs and make them appealing to the employees. In this chapter we are presenting the results attained from the answers related to the issue.

We asked the participants about the three most important values which are typical of their organizations, form the basis of its functioning and represent a core value for them. The most important values are shown in Figure 1 below. In the figure only answers from 107 respondents are depicted since there were answers which are not significant expressed in percentages so they are ignored in the present paper.

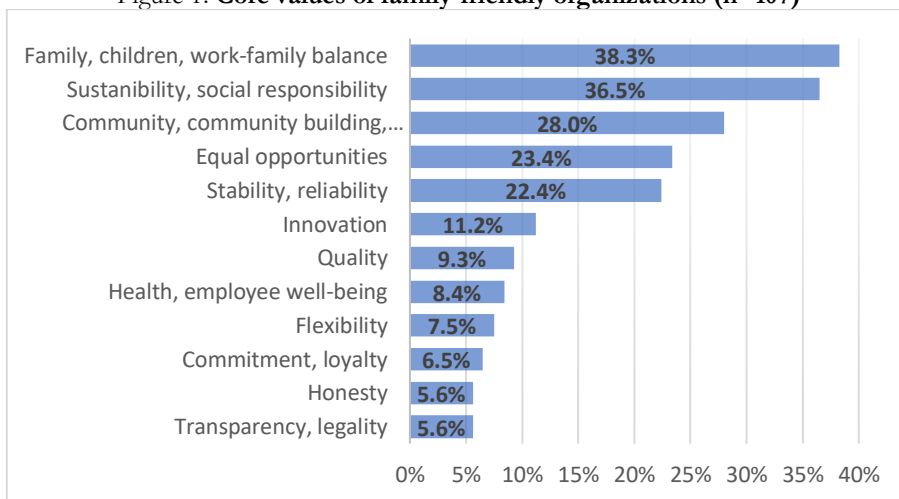
The questionnaire survey clearly demonstrated that the most fundamental value for family-friendly organizations is supporting families and communities. The question received 107 responses, almost 40% of which contained phrases emphasizing the importance of family and family-friendly approach, such as 'family-friendliness', 'family-friendly operation', 'family-friendly environment', 'family priority', 'children are the future', 'children, family consideration', 'family support'. The values of family-friendly employers emphasized 'work-life balance' and 'work-family balance'. This indicates that it is extremely important for respondents to support the employees in reconciling work and family life. Community and community-building are also key values for family-friendly employer organisations. 28% of the respondents mentioned these in some form, such as 'creating a supportive workplace community', 'a good community', 'teamwork', 'cooperation', 'collaboration', 'mutual support'.

In addition to values supporting family and community, those related to sustainability and responsibility (36.5%) and equal opportunities (23.4%) – which are closely linked – are dominant. The results show that family-friendly organizations share a set of values which demonstrate their commitment to social and environmental sustainability. On the one hand, family-friendly employers interpret responsibility as 'responsibility towards their employees', 'responsible thinking' and 'responsible employment'. Some respondents (8.4%) highlighted 'employee health' and

'employee well-being' as values. On the other hand, they emphasized not only responsibility towards employees, but also social responsibility towards local communities and their commitment to promoting equal opportunities, too. The values of family-friendly organizations include the necessity of supporting disadvantaged social groups, such as 'helping mothers returning from parental leave to get into work', 'increased protection for women', 'support for people with disabilities' or even 'helping the socially disadvantaged'. Sustainability responses stressed the importance of 'environmental sustainability', 'environmental protection', 'environmental programs' and 'sustainable development'. One family-friendly organization mentioned 'motivating employees to work together for environmental protection and environmental sustainability' as a core value, while another respondent puts it this way: 'Our organization is gradually taking significant steps towards a more sustainable world, starting with the local community'.

Other values are also considered crucial, like stability, long-term job security and reliability (22.4%): 'We ensure a stable, reliable workplace'. Furthermore, values such as 'innovation' (11.2%), 'quality' (9.3%), 'flexibility' (7.5%) or 'commitment and loyalty' (6.5%) are also essential for family-friendly organizations.

Figure 1. Core values of family-friendly organizations (n=107)



Source: self edited, 2024

Based on Figure 1 it is clear that values mentioned by the FFWs are variable and sumptuous. It is notable to see that transparency, honesty and loyalty are considered much less important (ca 5%) values than family and working sphere balance (>30%). Socially more sensitive features (e.g. stability, social responsibility, communities) are perceived as something strongly appreciated, while those directly connected to work are obviously held less valued.

The surveying process faced some limitations of the research. The request for filling in the survey and reminders of doing so were sent to the organizations three times. Despite, only 16.5% of the potential respondents provided data which lead to a limited possibility of generalization based on the results. However, the number of respondents (116) is still high which made it possible to conduct a reliable research. The demographic data do not contain gender and age which might be useful in an extended research in the future. Despite these limitations the study offers a relevant insight into the value system of organizations with the Family Friendly Workplace label.

Conclusions

The study drew attention to the importance of values which serve as a compass not only in the everyday lives of individuals, but also in those of organizations. The values presented at the organizational level as an integral part of the corporate culture represent a significant competitive advantage for companies, so addressing this issue is important.

The study examined organizations that carry the „Family Friendly Workplace” label in Hungary with regard to which values form the basis of their organizational culture. Family-friendly activities contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals, such as Gender Equality, Good Health and Well-Being. Within this framework, they carry out a range of activities to support their own employees on the one hand and local communities on the other (Pátkai Bende & Nárai, 2023).

This study confirms that family-friendly organizations’ commitment to family-friendly approach and sustainability is not only reflected in their corporate practices, but is much more deeply anchored in their corporate culture and values. In the family-friendly organizations examined, the

dominance of family and community-related values can be observed: family, family-friendly approach and community support form the basis of their daily operation. Research shows that family-friendly employers consider responsibility and sustainability as core principles in addition to family and community values. In addition to taking responsibility for one's own employees and family members, special attention is paid to supporting local communities, supporting disadvantaged social groups and other efforts to ensure equal opportunities. Furthermore, social sustainability, environmental sustainability and environmental protection are also core values for them.

To extend the value focused part of the survey it would be interesting to see how demographic data, such as age and gender influence the respondents' answers. And furthermore, a study on the preferable values in the examined types of organizations could be also investigated to understand potential differences.

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