An exploration of the perceptions of flexible work arrangements (FWAS) and factors affecting their uptake at a tertiary education institution in Australia

Fleur Sharafizad

Edith Cowan University

Follow this and additional works at: https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses_hons

Part of the Labor Relations Commons

Recommended Citation

This Thesis is posted at Research Online.
https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses_hons/1234
Edith Cowan University

Copyright Warning

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study.

The University does not authorize you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site.

You are reminded of the following:

- Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright.

- A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. Where the reproduction of such material is done without attribution of authorship, with false attribution of authorship or the authorship is treated in a derogatory manner, this may be a breach of the author’s moral rights contained in Part IX of the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth).

- Courts have the power to impose a wide range of civil and criminal sanctions for infringement of copyright, infringement of moral rights and other offences under the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth). Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.
An exploration of the perceptions of Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs) and factors affecting their uptake at a Tertiary Education Institution in Australia.

Thesis
Bachelor of Business (Honours)

Fleur Sharafizad
3014861

Supervisor:
Associate Professor Dr. Maryam Omari
Edith Cowan University

May 2010
I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has supported me while writing my thesis. It has been a very lengthy and, at times, exhausting process. Foremost, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my beautiful children, Anees and Jordane and my husband Hamed, for being understanding and supportive when I needed time to study. I appreciate that the three of you would go off for our usual family weekend activities without me to give me the time to work on my thesis. Hamed, thank you for allowing me to pursue dreams of my own!

I would also like to thank my family here in Australia and those at home in Holland. Thank you Mr. and Mrs. Sharafizad, Flora Sharafizad and Tracey Sheriff for looking after my munchkins when I wanted to spend some time studying. I thank my beautiful family in Holland for all their love, support and encouragement throughout the process. Particularly my mother, Ruth Broekhuizen, who managed, over the phone, to instill perseverance in me at the lowest points of the process!

Dr. Maryam Omari, thank you for believing in me, for all the time spent on reading my drafts, for your invaluable suggestions and for keeping me on as your student after you changed jobs. Your consistent patience, kindness and guidance allowed me to complete the task without compromising my family-life. I could not have asked for a better supervisor.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank my dear friends Jenny Habibi and Tanya Cunningham, for making time to read my thesis in the midst of your own busy family lives and for making suggestions for improvements.

I could not have done this without any of you.

Thank you.
USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.
Flexible work arrangements (FWAs) have become an area of considerable interest. The reason for this increased interest is that flexibility has been found to offer organisations a competitive advantage and helps in attracting and retaining high quality employees (Carlson, Grzywacz & Kacmar, 2010, p. 330). FWAs do not only offer employees the opportunity to create a better work-life balance (WLB) their uptake has also been linked to increased organisational commitment, morale and job satisfaction. Work-life conflict, on the other hand, has been linked to negative individual, as well as organisational consequences. Research has, however, identified gaps between the FWAs on offer and the accessibility and utilisation of these arrangements. This is generally referred to as the provision-utilisation gap in work-life policy. Research suggests that major factors that influence the decision to utilise FWAs are gender equality, type of job and national and organisational cultures. It has been suggested that underutilisation of available FWAs can be a serious problem for both employers and employees.

This research aimed to investigate the factors affecting perceptions and uptake of FWAs at an Australian tertiary education institution (the University). Data was obtained through an on-line anonymous staff survey that consisted of both multiple choice as well as open-ended questions and was aimed at all part-time and full-time staff at the University. Out of the 1154 full-time and part-time employees at the University, 495 employees opted to participate in this study and completed the survey. The objective of this study is to provide organisations, legislators and the wider community with a better understanding of the factors affecting the decision to utilise FWAs. These findings can assist in narrowing the provision-utilisation gap, increasing the uptake of FWAs and the organisational benefits associated with their utilisation, assist governments policy makers in making policies to break through the identified barriers and assist employers and employees to "foster healthier family lives" (Papalexandris & Kramar, 1997, p. 582).

The findings from this study indicated that an employee’s age significantly affects the uptake of different types of FWAs. Parental arrangements were utilised most by employees aged less than 30 or between the ages of 30-45. These same employees were
also more likely to utilise FWAs that allowed them flexibility in the time and place that work was conducted to look after their child(ren) while remaining employed. An employee’s age and career stage were found to be comparable with both factors yielding similar relationships to the variety of FWAs, with employees in their early or mid-career utilising FWAs most.

The results indicated significant differences in the way that male and female employees utilise FWAs. Female employees were found to take up FWAs that allowed them to simultaneously fulfill their domestic as well as their work responsibilities, while male employees were found to take up FWAs that allowed them to further their knowledge-base or take up annual leave. The findings further indicated that an employee’s family circumstances will affect their uptake of FWAs. Employees who indicated that they had no dependants were much less likely to utilise any type of FWA, while employees with dependants were highly likely to take up a variety of FWAs that allowed them to work around their family-responsibilities.

The premise that knowledge workers that are central to the functioning of an organisation are more likely to obtain special considerations from their employer does not appear to ring true at the University. While academic staff were found to have a higher uptake of FWAs that allowed them flexibility in the place of work, their uptake of other FWAs appears limited due to their increasingly high workload. General staff were found to have a significantly higher uptake of leave arrangements or a reduction in hours. Not surprisingly, academics were also found to be significantly less satisfied with their current WLB.

By identifying which employees are more likely to value certain types of FWAs organisations can ensure that these employees are informed about the available FWAs and that potential barriers are, wherever possible, removed. This will ensure that those employees that require flexibility to create a satisfactory WLB are able to do so. In addition to reducing the negative effects associated with the provision-utilisation gap, facilitating employees’ WLB will be beneficial for organisations in terms of reduced
absenteeism and turnover and increased commitment and performance at work. In addition, it offers organisations the opportunity to attract larger groups of applicants and a means to retain high quality workers.

For those organisations employing academic employees these findings suggest that the increase in academics’ workload is resulting in a reduction in the attractiveness of academic work. As the future of (Australian) universities as mass educators will depend on qualified staff, it is therefore imperative, for the future of education, that findings such as these are utilised as a trigger to investigate the expanding role of academics and the role that universities can play in combating their increasing workloads.

The qualitative responses to the survey further suggested that there were a number of external factors that affected employees’ utilization of FWAs. These included: the inconsistent application of FWAs by different managers, the staff shortages and intensifying workloads, an organisation’s culture, the software utilised, a lack of awareness, a disparity between FWAs on offer and their accessibility and unsupportive co-workers also created barriers to the uptake of FWAs. Each one of these barriers would be suitable for further investigation.
Fleur Sharafizad

Honours thesis
May 2010

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

i) incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;

ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or

iii) contain any defamatory material.

iv) I also grant permission for the library at Edith Cowan University to make duplicate copies of my thesis as required.

Date: 24/08/10

Signed:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FAMILY CIRCUMSTANCES</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAREER STAGE</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOB TYPE</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SATISFACTION WITH WLB</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORMALITY</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUMMARY</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATA ANALYSIS</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE AND THE UPTAKE OF FWAS AND SATISFACTION WITH CURRENT WLB</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GENDER AND THE UPTAKE OF FWAS AND SATISFACTION WITH CURRENT WLB</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAMILY CIRCUMSTANCES AND THE UPTAKE OF FWAS AND SATISFACTION WITH CURRENT WLB</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAREER STAGE AND THE UPTAKE OF FWAS AND SATISFACTION WITH CURRENT WLB</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOB TYPE AND THE UPTAKE OF FWAS AND SATISFACTION WITH CURRENT WLB</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUMMARY</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISCUSSION</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TYPE OF JOB</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GENDER</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAMILY CIRCUMSTANCES</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAREER STAGE</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOB TYPE</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER EXTERNAL SOURCES AFFECTING THE UPTAKE OF FWAS</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOCAL MANAGER</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAFF SHORTAGE AND INTENSIFYING WORKLOADS</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CULTURE</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOFTWARE</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LACK OF AWARENESS</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INFORMAL VERSUS FORMAL ARRANGEMENTS</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVAILABILITY VERSUS ACCESSIBILITY</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNSUPPORTIVE CO-WORKERS</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUMMARY</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORGANISATIONAL IMPLICATIONS</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE IMPACT OF AN EMPLOYEE’S DEMOGRAPHICS ON THE UPTAKE OF FWAS AND SATISFACTION WITH CURRENT WLB</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE IMPACT OF AN EMPLOYEE’S AGE ON THE UPTAKE OF FWAS AND SATISFACTION WITH CURRENT WLB</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE IMPACT OF AN EMPLOYEE’S GENDER ON THE UPTAKE OF FWAS AND SATISFACTION WITH CURRENT WLB</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE IMPACT OF AN EMPLOYEE’S FAMILY CIRCUMSTANCES ON THE UPTAKE OF FWAS AND SATISFACTION WITH CURRENT WLB</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE IMPACT OF AN EMPLOYEE’S CAREER STAGE ON THE UPTAKE OF FWAS AND SATISFACTION WITH CURRENT WLB 139
THE IMPACT OF AN EMPLOYEE’S JOB TYPE ON THE UPTAKE OF FWAS AND SATISFACTION WITH CURRENT WLB 140
ADDITIONAL EXTERNAL BARRIERS TO THE UPTAKE OF FWAS 141
CONCLUDING COMMENTS 142

REFERENCES 144

APPENDIX 1: STAFF SURVEY AS POSTED ONLINE 151

APPENDIX 2: KOLMOGOROV-SMIRNOV NORMALITY TEST FOR ALL VARIABLES 160
Table of Figures

Figure 1 – The research framework .................................................................................. 41
Figure 2 – Staff composition as at March 2008 ................................................................ 51
Figure 4 - Age distribution among survey respondents .................................................. 61
Figure 5 - Age distribution among staff at the University ................................................ 62
Figure 6 - Gender distribution among survey respondents ............................................. 63
Figure 7 – Gender distribution among staff at the University ......................................... 64
Figure 8 - Family circumstances distribution among respondents ................................... 65
Figure 9 - Career stage distribution among respondents ............................................... 66
Figure 10 - Job type distribution among respondents .................................................... 67
Figure 11 - Satisfaction with current WLB among respondents .................................... 68
Figure 12 – Potential barriers to the utilisation of FWAs ............................................ 135
Introduction

This study has investigated the perceptions of FWAs and factors affecting their uptake at an Australian university. More specifically, it aimed to identify relationships between demographic factors, such as age, gender, family circumstances, career stage and job type and the uptake of a variety of FWAs of the staff at the University. It also investigated the relationship between these factors and an employee’s satisfaction with their current work-life balance (WLB). It intended to further identify, through qualitative data, additional external factors that appear to affect the uptake of FWAs. In addition, this study identified certain groups of employees who were more satisfied with their current WLB than other groups. This study was conducted in collaboration with the University who were keen to obtain more information about the uptake of FWAs and the perceptions relating to accessibility of the various arrangements.

FWAs are defined, by Maxwell, Rankine, Bell and MacVicar (2007, p. 138), as “any policies and practices, formal or informal, which permit people to vary when and where work is carried out”. Lewis (2001, p. 22) elucidates that FWAs can include “part-time work, reduced hours of work with pro rata employment benefits, job sharing, compressed working weeks, voluntary reduced time, flexible work schedules and working from home programs”. Compressed working weeks are weeks in which employees work longer hours a day for fewer days of the week (Melbourne, 2008). Maxwell, Rankine, Bell and MacVicar (2007) further add flexitime, time off in lieu, shift swapping, self-rostering, breaks from work and cafeteria benefits to FWAs that employers are offering their employees.

One of the biggest challenges facing organisations of all sizes is staff retention (Lanigan, 2008). Deery (2008, p. 800) states that “the most recent addition to the research into employee retention is the role that obtaining a balance between work and life has in an employee’s decision to remain with the organisation”. Deery (2008) suggests that a conflict between work and life (work-life conflict) is likely to result in
job dissatisfaction and consequently an intention to leave the organisation as well as causing conflict with family members and family activity. The full extent of this challenge was expressed by Harnois and Gabriel (2000) for the World Health Organization (quoted by Muna & Mansour, 2009, p. 124) who warned that “mental health problems due to work pressure are expected to become the second most common cause of disability and death by 2020”. Many organisations, including the University at which this research was conducted, realise that if they are unable to offer the biggest monetary rewards that they can offer other benefits that can prove just as valuable to employees (Hammond & Churchmand, 2008). FWAs are some of the benefits that could be offered to ensure competitiveness in attracting and retaining staff (Poelmans, Chinchilla & Cardona, 2003).

Bond, Thompson, Galinsky and Pratts (2002, cited by Shockley & Allen, 2007) found that 43% of employees with families report some, or a lot of, conflict between their jobs and family lives. Grover and Cooker (1995, quoted by Shockley & Allen, 2007) agree and explain that in an attempt to alleviate such conflicts organisations have started offering FWAs. Whittard (2005, p. 658) concurs and further believes that flexible working also has “enormous potential to improve productivity, increase employee job satisfaction and bring about direct cost-savings to the business”. Whittard (2005, p. 658) further adds that, with the shrinking workforce in Australia and New-Zealand, practical solutions will be ‘fundamental’ to the way in which companies retain their competitive advantage.

Unfortunately, Whittard (2005) has found that, despite these benefits, a majority of organisations in Australia (and New Zealand) have not embraced the possibility of offering FWAs. Dreike Almer, Cohen and Single (2003) agree and warn that a failure to understand what factors impact the decision to adopt FWAs may result in missed opportunities by firms to retain valued professionals. Waters and Barndol (2006, p. 79) add that the mere “provision of work-family policies is not enough and that they are likely to remain symbolic unless the barriers that inhibit their use are removed”. Hyman and Summers (2004) identified several constraints in employees establishing
WLB, both at policy and organisational levels. Just as a marketer needs to be aware of its target-market, organisations should also be aware of what groups of employees would value which types of FWAs and use this information to its advantage. This indicates the importance of conducting further research to identify what these barriers to the uptake of FWAs are within the Australian work-environment.

It has been suggested that WLB is one of the most “difficult issues facing families in the twenty-first century” (Walker, Wang & Redmond, 2008, p. 258). It is therefore not surprising that family-oriented workplace policies are expected to compromise the fastest growing employee benefits category in the coming decades (Cook, 1987; Judy & D’Amico, 1997, quoted by Secret, 2000). Secret (2000, p. 217) contends that previous research on FWAs has focused on the availability of benefits throughout the workforce, the advantages of work-family policies for employees and their families, or on “bottom-line” advantages for business and industry. Secret (2000) warns, however, that the creation of these benefits does not mean that employees will actually use them and underutilisation can, in fact, be a serious problem for both employers and employees. Therefore, it is important to investigate which employees would, or would not, utilise these benefits and why.

As demonstrated through research by Waters and Bardoel (2006) a university staff body consists of both general as well as academic staff. This current study has taken advantage of this differentiation in the workforce and further investigated the notion that knowledge workers are likely to have better access to FWAs due to the increased value attached to their expertise. Donnelly (2004) finds this to be debatable and unclear. Knowledge work is defined by Kelly (1990, quoted by Wickramasinghe & Ginzberg, 2001, p. 245) as “non-repetitive, non-routine work that entails substantial levels of cognitive activity”. While some general staff members may also perform knowledge work it appears widely acknowledged that as a collective group they are “somewhat different from their ‘academic’ colleagues (Paull, Omari & Sharafizad, 2009, p. 6). This research would therefore like to test this notion by comparing the
data obtained from the general staff with the data obtained from the academic staff. This would allow for the identification of similarities and differentiations.

This chapter will firstly introduce relevant literature through which it will identify and highlight the research gap. After the research framework, the initial findings and the discussion section will each be presented in separate chapters. A framework consisting of the major findings will be presented along with the conclusion in the final chapter.

**Literature review**

**Introduction**

Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs) have become an area of considerable interest. The reason for the intensification of FWA interest and provision is that flexibility has been found to offer organisations a competitive advantage and helps in attracting and retaining high quality employees (Carlson, Grzywacz & Kacmar, 2010, p. 330). Research suggests that FWAs have become a particularly critical tool for retaining valued employees (Brumit Kropf, 1999; Cole, 2006, Poelmans, Chinchilla & Cardona, 2003). Burke (2000, quoted by Johnson, 2004, p. 722) concurs and has found that organisations have developed “family-friendly employment policies to remain attractive in the war for talent”. FWAs are also likely to increase motivation, commitment and satisfaction, reduce absenteeism (Nadeem & Hendry, 2003) increase retention and recruitment, reduce turnover, increase production and increase morale (Tomlinson, 2004). FWAs can further increase staff loyalty and morale, reduce turnover and absenteeism, improve productivity and “ultimately earn an organisation a reputation as an employer of choice” (Melbourne, 2008, p. 45). Sanchez, Perez, Carnicer and Jimenez (2007, p. 43) believe that flexibility is a “component of the organisation’s dynamic capabilities that sustain competitive advantage.”

Research also suggests that the mere provision of these FWAs does not necessarily result in utilisation (Hall & Atkinson, 2006; McDonald, Guthrie, Bradley & Shakespeare-Finch, 2005). Burke (2010, p. 97) suggests that in some cases the FWA
policies have brought about “value, attitude and behavior changes”, while in other cases the policies have only existed on paper. It has been suggested that organisations are currently experiencing a “female brain drain” by failing to retain highly educated women (Cabrera, 2009). Cabrera (2009) suggests that organisations can no longer afford to lose these talented and experienced employees. Why can these organisations not retain their female employees? Several authors have reported barriers to employees’ decision to take up FWAs. Would a better accessibility to FWAs retain these employees and if yes, what FWAs would be most valuable to them and other employees that value WLB? With the aid of previous research this literature review will attempt to identify the main barriers and identify any research-gaps.

A recent report by Corporate Voices for Working Families (2005, quoted by Carlson, Grzywacz & Kacmar, 2010, p. 331) further highlights the value of research such as this by stating that:

“...whether in driving financial performance or leveraging human capital, flexibility contributes powerfully to business success. But the positive benefits of flexibility cannot be realized until it is expanded to more workplaces with more varied and effective implementation. It is time to take action to unleash the power of flexibility and accomplish its expansion.”

This literature review will provide the reader with a brief overview of FWAs, its definition, the types of FWAs that are generally available, the reasons for the rise in the interest in these arrangements, the benefits and challenges associated with its implementation and factors affecting its uptake.

**Flexible Work Arrangements**

FWAs are defined as “any policies and practices, formal or informal, which permit people to vary when and where work is carried out” (Maxwell, Rankine, Bell & MacVicar, 2006, p. 138). Gardiner and Tomlinson (2009, p. 672) suggest that FWAs are those work arrangements that deviate from the “standard employments”, which
usually compromise “permanent contracts, fixed day-time working of between 30 and 48 h a week, and working on the employer’s premises”. FWAs are, for some employees, crucial in achieving a satisfactory WLB. WLB is defined by Hill et al. (2001, quoted by Lyness & Brunit Kropf, 2005, p. 34) as “the degree to which an individual is able to simultaneously balance the demands of both paid work and family responsibilities”. While the terms work-family balance and WLB are often used interchangeably it is important to stipulate that this research would like to use the work-life concept as suggested by Hyman and Summers (2004) and Hall and Atkinson (2006) as this is a more inclusive perspective, to include free and leisure time, irrespective of family commitments. The WLB concept recognises that employees who may not have families may still be interested in FWAs to pursue other interests. However, Hyman and Summers (2004) feel that a definition for ‘balance’ can be in itself problematic as it is subjective. The definition of a satisfactory balance will further depend on the circumstances and across individuals (Muna & Mansour, 2009).

Morgan (2004) states that there are a variety of different FWAs, but that they all include either one or a combination of the following: flexible locations, flexible time or flexible contracts. While flexible locations and flexible time are self-explanatory, Morgan (2004) describes flexible contracts as including agency working, temporary contracts and outsourcing arrangements. For the purposes of this research at the University only the first two options are relevant.

In terms of this research at the University it should be noted that Universities were among the first institutions to implement equal employment opportunities and affirmative action legislation in Australia (McDonald et al., 2005). Furthermore, Universities are generally perceived as having in “place strategies and structures to encourage the participation of women and other minorities in senior management, organisational development and educational programs” (Department of Employment, Education and Training, 1996, stated by McDonald et al., 2005). In spite of these positive attributes of Universities, Waters and Bardoel (2006) still identified multiple
barriers to the uptake of FWAs at an Australian University, which will be further discussed in later section.

Initial FWAs were, according to Atkinson (1985, quoted by Twiname, Humphries & Kearins, 2006, p. 335), aimed at achieving financial gains and increased managerial control through the "re-categorization of employees as core and peripheral workers". Cole (2006) concurs and believes that FWAs were initially adopted because employers realised that success in business involves, to some extent, having a workforce flexible enough to meet changeable demands. According to Cole (2007, p. 536), however, they have now become a two-way process in which employees, particularly mothers of young children, are "increasingly requesting work arrangements that allow them to better balance work and home life". Brumit Kropf (1999, p. 177) agrees and states that voluntary flexible work options were introduced into the workplace as more women, especially those with family responsibilities, "became a critical part of the professional workforce and found it difficult to respond to the demands of their personal responsibilities within the framework of a traditional work schedule". However, Brumit Kropf (1999) and Collingswood (1996, quoted by Secret, 2000) point out that, although the focus of FWAs may be on females, the interest is also coming from men. Research by O’Brien (1992, quoted by Lewis, 2001) concurs with this view and found that men are increasingly valuing their family roles and wishing to be actively involved in parenting. Essentially, the change from FWAs as a means to increase manager control has been altered as a tool to attract and retain quality staff and to allow employees to create a more satisfying WLB.

The increasing utilisation of FWAs is apparent in data from the American Bureau of Labour Statistics (BSL, 2005; 2006, referred to by Gainey & Clenney, 2006) which indicates that the number of workers with flexible arrangements increased from about 13.1 million in 1985 to around 38.0 million in 2004. Employers that choose to ignore this movement will be hindering their progress and success in today's labour market and competitive economic environment. It is unlikely that employees will stay with
an organisation that is not willing to offer them the benefits that other organisations are offering.

**Rise in interest in FWAs**

The modern organisation generally has four generations working side by side; Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y (Sutton-Bell & Narz, 2007). The Baby Boomers are the largest group and the reality is that, as they leave the workforce, due to retirement or death, that there will not be enough new entrants into the labour force to fill their positions (Cabrera, 2009; Sutton-Bell & Narz, 2007). Patrickson and Hartmann (2001) concur and state that in 1998, 12 percent of the population in Australia was aged over 65 years and this is projected to become 25 percent by 2051. This has resulted in a decreasing number of workers in the workforce and an escalating competition for highly skilled workers in a global economy (Secret, 2000).

It has been suggested that the traditionalists and Baby Boomers were more likely to work the traditional ‘work-day’ (Sutton-Bell & Narz, 2007). Peus and Traut-Mattausch (2008) describe the typical employee of the 1950s as a male full-time employee with a wife at home taking care of family duties. Today, less than 10 percent of the workforce fits this stereotype and traditional programs no longer tend to fit today’s more diverse workforce (Robbins, Millett & Waters-Marsh, 2004). Cabrera (2009) also finds that the workplace has changed very little over the last 50 years, yet the workforce has changed dramatically. These changes in the workforce need to be mirrored in societal norms and work arrangements. The latter generations (Generation X and Generation Y), for example, are said to value “education, independence and parenting” above work (Sutton-Bell & Narz, 2007, p. 57). Employees of these generations are less likely to be loyal to one employer and are more likely to job-hop in order to find the employment that suits them best (Sutton-Bell & Narz, 2007). This makes it harder for organisations to retain these employees long-term, unless new work arrangements are made available.
Walker, Wang and Redmond (2008) further suggest that economic pressures over the last decade have resulted in an escalation in dual-earner families, with this type of arrangement now being the norm rather than the exception. These changes in the characteristics and requirements of the younger generations have consequently required developments in alternative work arrangements on offer. Wiatrowski (1995, quoted by Secret, 2000, p. 218) believes that “employers have progressed from providing no benefits, to providing a standard package of benefits for a male-supported family, to providing innovative and flexible benefits to meet differing family needs”. Lewis (2001) suggests that these changes are brought on by the changing structure of demand for labour and not necessarily by an organisation’s wish to be family-friendly. According to Lewis (2001, p.22) this business case has also included “concerns about skill shortages, the need to recruit and retain women with family commitments and to reduce absenteeism”.

Other trends that have occurred within the Australian population, are the “long-term decline in fertility rates and its impact on population and labour force growth; as well as the strong growth in women’s labour force participation in the child bearing and rearing age group” (Ministerial Task Force on Work and Family, 2002, quoted by McDonald et al., 2005, p. 479). McDonald et al. (2005) also point out that legislative changes, such as the anti-discrimination, industrial relations and affirmative action law, have also lifted the profile of work and family issues. Widener (2007) further adds that the rise in divorce rates has added to the rise in female employment as these single women are likely to go back to work as well as care for their children.

Due to the decreasing number of workers, particularly skilled and knowledge workers, it has become challenging for organisations to attract and retain employees. Several studies have indicated that flexible work options have proven to be a critical tool in gaining a competitive edge by retaining valued employees (Parkinson, 1995; Solomon, 1994, quoted by Secret, 2000). Lyness and Brumit Kropf (2005) concur and believe that this is explained by the resource dependence theory. When an organisation depends on certain types of workers then those organisations will be
more likely to adjust their human resource policies to take this group into account. If valuable employees, for example, are members of Generation X or Y and value a WLB, then employers will have to adjust their policies to take the wishes of these employees into account or risk losing them.

In terms of the proposed research at the aforementioned University, Raabe (1997, quoted by Waters & Bardoel, 2006, p. 69) suggests that, similar to managers in the corporate arena, academic administrators have “become interested in the contribution of various WLB policies towards improving faculty recruitment and retention, as well as supporting productivity and professional development”. Raabe (1997, quoted by Waters & Bardoel, 2006) found that universities do not only offer FWAs to attract and retain staff, but also to gain a competitive advantage.

The findings of this research will allow the University in question, as well as organisations in the wider community, to better utilise the FWAs that they are currently offering plus potentially expand the range of arrangements available. The findings can also assist organisations to increase awareness among groups who may currently not be utilising or underutilising FWAs by identifying and targeting these groups and stimulating them to feel comfortable with utilising FWAs. An awareness of the barriers associated with the uptake of FWAs and a plan of action to counterbalance these barriers can enhance organisations’ attractiveness for current and future employees. This may result in these organisations becoming more of an ‘employer of choice’. Ultimately this would result in better attraction and retention of employees, as well as increased satisfaction, performance and production - a win-win situation for both parties involved.

Types of FWAs
Lyness and Brumit Kropf (2005, p. 37) elucidate that FWAs offer employees “flexibility in the timing of their work, including opportunities to vary starting times or schedules, or to work part-time, or flexibility in the location of work, such as telecommuting or working from home”. Flextime and flexspace are the most popular
forms of FWAs (Shockley & Allen, 2007). Flextime refers to flexibility in the timing of work, while flexspace involves flexibility in location (Shockley & Allen, 2007). Gainey and Clenney (2006) found that telecommuting as well as flextime, has been instrumental in helping employees meet the many demands on their time. Harpaz (2002) describes telecommuting as working away from the office – usually from home. Secret (2000) adds part-time work and job-sharing as particularly popular types of FWAs. Maxwell, Rankine, Bell and MacVicar (2007) further add flexitime, time off in lieu, shift swapping, self-rostering, breaks from work and cafeteria benefits to FWAs that employers are offering their employees.

**Benefits associated with the use of FWAs**

Work-life conflict has been associated with unfavourable consequences, such as stress, job dissatisfaction, lowered performance and commitment and increased turnover (Poelmans, Chinchilla & Cardona, 2003). In contrast, employees who feel their “organization cares for them and their ability to balance work and family demands have higher affective commitment, lower work-family conflict and lower intentions to quit” (Forret & de Janasz, 2005, p. 479). Brumit-Kropf (1999, p. 179) further adds that FWAs are also useful when recruiting valuable talent and “expanding client/customer service beyond traditional hours”. Johnson (2004) stipulates that organisations, in order to compete in the new economy, will have to establish their dexterity by ensuring work continues, even away from the traditional places of work. The successfulness of these strategies will depend on the ability to create a working-relationship that appreciates the needs of both the employer and the employee (Johnson, 2003).

The fact that employees perceive themselves to have more control over work and family matters indirectly improves the ‘attitude, mental health and physical health of workers’ (Thomas & Ganster, 1995, quoted by McDonald et al., 2005, p. 480). Research by Hall and Atkinson (2006) points out that an employee’s perception, rather than the reality, of increased control is a key factor in promoting positive outcomes. According to Melbourne (2008, p. 44) FWAs “allow employees to balance
family and work commitments, can work uninterrupted for longer periods and spend less time commuting to and from work”.

While FWAs are generally seen as a way for employees to balance their work-family life, research also suggests that there are employer benefits associated with the implementation of this work practice. One study in particular, conducted by Dreike Almer and Kaplan (2002), investigated the effects of FWAs on stressors, burnout and behavioural job outcomes. A drawback of this research in relation to the current study is that this research was conducted at a public accounting firm in the United States of America (USA). While one might argue that employees would be similar across industries and most Western countries there has been no research to substantiate this, so while this research may be utilised as an indicator it may not be directly applicable to other industries or Western countries. The role stressors that were studied were: role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload. Role conflict, according to Wolfe and Snoek (1962, quoted by Dreike Almer & Kaplan, 2002, p. 5), is “the simultaneous occurrence of two (or more) sets of pressures such that compliance with one would make difficult or impossible compliance with the other”. Role ambiguity is defined by Senatra (1980, quoted by Dreike Almer & Kaplan, 2002, p. 4) as “the absence of adequate information which is required in order for person to accomplish their role in a satisfactory manner”. Beehr et al. (1976, quoted by Dreike Almer & Kaplan, 2002, p. 4) define role overload as “having too much work to do in the time available”. Other areas which were investigated were the relationship between FWAs and burnout and job outcomes.

The research method in Dreike Almer and Kaplan’s study was a questionnaire which was sent to two demographically similar groups, one of which were full-time employees and the other of which were employees on FWAs. Dreike Almer and Kaplan additionally conducted a smaller study by interviewing employees who had switched from full-time to a FWA and asking them about their ‘before and after’ experiences. While the researchers acknowledge the fact that this ‘backward’ view may have resulted in potential covariates in analysis in the ‘flex switch’ participants, they did feel that this was offset by the chance of uncovering valuable information in
relation to their research. Dreike Almer and Kaplan’s (2002) research found that role conflict was significantly lower under the FWAs, but found no association with role ambiguity or role overload. In terms of burnout the research concluded that work arrangements were significantly associated with emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation. No significant effect, however, was found between FWAs and personal accomplishment. Another important finding was the significant association between job satisfaction and turn-over intentions – the more satisfied the employees the less were their turn-over intentions. Dreike Almer and Kaplan’s research (2002) adds to the growing body of evidence highlighting the benefits of FWAs for both the employer and the employee. The findings signify the relevance of further research in the area, particularly into the disparity between awareness, accessibility and actual uptake. In a competitive labour market FWAs can be utilised to not only retain staff, but also, to attract groups who are currently under-participating in employment due to family responsibilities. Information relating to FWAs could prove extremely useful to managers in order to retain valued employees. The identified benefits associated with the offering and uptake of FWAs will allow managers to assist employees by decreasing their stress levels. The uptake of FWAs is also likely to increase job satisfaction. In addition to this, Dreike Almer and Kaplan’s (2002) research suggests that FWAs can lessen an employee’s emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and role conflict, which would, consequently, positively affect an employee’s overall job satisfaction. Furthermore, Dreike Almer and Kaplan’s (2002) findings in relation to the significant association between job satisfaction and turn-over intentions are particularly important in a labour-market where employees, particularly educated ones, can easily find new employment.

Some research has suggested that organisations are currently only offering FWAs out of a desire to “adjust market fluctuations, increase profits and reduce employment costs” (Atkinson and Gregory, 1986) rather than out of “commitments to meet equal or fair opportunity motivations to assist employees to meet their family responsibilities as is sometimes claimed” (Twiname, Humphries and Kearins, 2006, p. 337). McDonald, Brown and Bradley (2005, p. 38) refer to this view as the
“business case for equality”. Some authors further suggest that an economic downturn or change in the labour market will impact on the flexibility that employers are currently offering their employees (Cole, 2006; Doherty, 2004). Sanchez, Perez, Carnicer and Jimenez (2007) believe, however, that organisational flexibility will remain an important focus to respond to changing environments, but that a downturn may decrease the options of certain employees. Lewis (2001) points out that, when recruitment concerns were largely overshadowed in the 1990s, that the need to avoid absenteeism and stress associated with work-family conflict was recognised as being a compelling argument for continuing the development of FWAs. Cole (2006) concurs and believes, however, that if the tide turns and the labour market becomes more competitive that only those employees that are highly valued will be able to secure their preferred working arrangements. De Vos and Meganck (2009, p. 45) believe that HR managers are “pressed to attract and retain talented employees who have competencies that are critical for organizational survival”. A concern with this potential prospect is that research indicates that women with care-taking responsibilities at home are more likely to take on relatively low-skilled or part-time jobs (Doorewaard et al., 2004, quoted by Panteli & Pen, 2010). Dunn (2001, quoted by Pini and McDonald, 2008) found this to be particularly true in Australian local governments where women were overly concentrated in lower level administrative positions. If the tide turns and organisations will only be flexible with those employees whom it values, then the implication might be that these women will not have a strong enough bargaining chip and will have to choose between family and employment. This would result in 1) unhappy and unmotivated employees that, for financial reasons, remain with their employer or, 2) in employees leaving their employment altogether. Cole (2006) believes that only a strong union presence and increased government regulation could offset this as this combination of forces could collectively benefit workers within an organisation or entire industry.

Challenges associated with the use of FWAs

Cole (2006, p. 536) points out that success in business involves “to some extent having a workforce flexible enough to meet changeable demands”. While FWAs,
according to Atkinson (1985, quoted by Twiname, Humphries & Kearins, 2006, p. 335) were initially aimed at achieving financial gains for the organisation and increasing managerial control, it has now become a two-way relationship. In a study, conducted by Cole (2006, p. 536), “spending time with family” was found to be the most popular reason for employees to want to reduce their working time. Cole's (2006) research revolved around the problem that managers face in controlling working time with the increase of FWAs in the workplace. The rise in flexible options is thought to intensify "the headache for employers faced with the already unenviable task of marshalling their workforce" (Cole, 2006, p. 539).

A limitation of work-family policies, as identified by McDonald et al. (2005, p. 481), is that although the policies are supposedly gender neutral that these policies “in practice revolve around facilitating the working conditions of women”. The high number of women using these arrangements has, according to McDonald et al. (2005, p. 481), not served them well as it has lead to women being seen as the “beneficiaries” of special treatment. Secret (2000), however, was unable to substantiate this hypothesis and found that gender is not a particularly strong predictor of the uptake of work-family benefits.

For employees that utilise FWAs, and particularly the move from full-time to part-time employment, a major challenge is the fact that taking up FWAs appears to affect further career advancements. The notion that time at the office demonstrates commitment and productivity is still very much alive; managerial roles are likely to still require a full-time presence (University Work and Family Guide, 1997, quoted by McDonald et al., 2005). It appears that employees are aware that part-time work in particular, will slow down their rate of promotion and that they could only move laterally until they returned to full-time employment (MacDermid, Lee, Buck and Williams, 2001). However, MacDermid, Lee, Buck and Williams (2001) found that most employees were satisfied with this trade-off and felt good about having a career as well as being able to place high priority on the quality of their family lives.
Other challenges, as identified by Dreike Almer, Cohen and Single (2003), are that employees on FWAs will not reach the depth or breadth of experience, reduce their opportunities to network within the office, will not be able to participate in mentoring programs and may experience deterioration in professional relationships. While there has been a significant rise in the amount of employees with FWAs, ‘career considerations’ could still be a factor for certain employees not to utilise the arrangements.

**Factors that can influence the usage of FWAs**

A particularly interesting study in light of this research is a study conducted by Waters and Bardoel (2006). This qualitative study, which used focus groups with both academic as well as general staff participants, who self-nominated to gather the data, was conducted at a university in Australia. The study was aimed at identifying factors affecting the decision to use, or not to use, work-family policy. Qualitative data can assist in developing new understandings about organisational phenomena through recording and evaluating employees’ experiences. The data for this study was descriptive. The study was intended to identify a set of recommendations to improve accessibility of flexible arrangements and to “legitimise” their use. The data collected from focus groups was sorted into themes. Six themes were identified as being discouraging factors from utilising work-family policies. These factors were; poor communication of policies; high workloads; career repercussions; management attitudes; influence of peers; and administrative processes. These findings aligned with a framework proposed by McDonald, Brown and Bradley (2005, quoted by Waters & Bardoel, 2006). McDonald, Brown and Bradley’s (2005, quoted by Waters & Bardoel, 2006) framework for organisational work-life culture accounts for the gap between work-life policy provision and utilisation. The framework identified lack of managerial support, negative career consequences, organisational time expectations, gender equity and perceptions of co-workers (McDonald, Brown & Bradley, 2005). The aim of Waters and Bardoel’s study was to test the aforementioned framework. The study consisted of 56 women and 20 men. No job descriptions were given. An important finding from this research was the confirmation that if policies remain
"symbolic that they are of little use to staff" (Waters & Bardoel, 2006, p. 79). The study also raised questions for further research – particularly about the effect of demographics, such as gender, age, career stage and the type of job on the utilisation of FWAs.

**Gender**

While many studies have been conducted into the implementation, adaptation, benefits and challenges associated with FWAs, one study is particularly relevant to this research project. A study, conducted by Secret (2000), considered family, job and workplace characteristics of employees who use work-family benefits and was one of the first studies that attempted to investigate employees’ utilisation of FWAs. (Secret, 2000). The research method for Secret’s study was qualitative and involved 30-minute semi-structured survey telephone interviews with 527 employees who were full-time employed in 83 businesses or organisations in the United States. The initial hypothesis for this study was based on the ‘asymetrical balance’, which revolves around the idea of gender differentiated scripts enacted by males and females (Pleck, 1977, quoted by Secret, 2000), and therefore assumes that female parents, who are traditionally the primary care givers, should be the most likely of all employees to use benefits. Charlesworth (1997, quoted by McDonald, Guthrie, Bradley & Shakespeare-Finch, 2005) claims that, even though the arrangements were available to all workers, that women with dependant children have by far been the largest demographic group to utilise these arrangements. Secret (2000), however, was unable to substantiate this hypothesis and found that gender is not a particularly strong predictor of the uptake of work-family benefits. Secret’s findings concur with a study conducted by Collingswood (1996, quoted by Secret, 2000) which found that men used the work-family benefits as much as women. The research conducted by Collingswood was unavailable to the author and an analysis of the research method utilised to possibly explain the discrepancy in findings could therefore not be conducted. Secret (2000) found that role experience rather than role occupancy determined utilisation of FWAs. Secret (2000) also found that the macro level conditions (such as legislation, organisational culture, etc.) exert a major influence on
the utilisation on the work-family considerations of employees. Limitations of this study are that the respondents were chosen from organisations that were assumed to be ‘family-friendly’, which limits the pool of respondents to a select group of organisations. Another limitation, which seems unavoidable in this type of research, is the voluntary nature of the sample. This makes it likely that the respondents had a special interest in work-life issues.

A further study that has incorporated gender into a discussion about WLB is research by Lyness and Brumit Kropf (2005). Lyness and Brumit Kropf’s study investigated the relationships between national gender equality and organisational support with employees’ WLB through a study of European managers. WLB was, for this research, investigated by examining “two important types or organisational work-family supports, which are FWAs and supportive work-family cultures” (Lyness & Brumit-Kropf, 2005, p. 33). A supportive work-family culture was defined by Thompson et al. (1999, quoted by Lyness & Brumit Kropf, 2005, p. 37) as “the shared assumptions, beliefs, and values regarding the extent to which an organisation supports and values the integration of employees’ work and family lives”.

In this particular study by Lyness and Brumit Kropf (2005) national gender equality was based on the United Nations’ Gender Development Index Scores of national gender equality, which “reflects a society’s support for women’s development and achievements, and recognition of the importance of including women in all aspects of life” (United Nations Development Programme, 2001, quoted by Lyness & Brumit Kropf, 2005, p. 35). This Index was, in unison with survey responses from 505 managers and professionals from 20 European countries, used to test this relationship. Lyness and Brumit-Kropf (2005) believed that any data collected in a single country did not allow for comparison and it was therefore impossible to distinguish specific national differences, which is why they decided to collect data in a variety of countries.
Lyness and Brumit Kropf (2005) believe that the national context is important to investigate as there are likely to be relationships between national context and organisational practices. If women are considered to be valuable members of the workforce in one country then organisations in that country are more likely to concentrate on issues that are important to women, such as FWAs. This is referred to as the resource dependence theory (Dreher, 2003, referred to by Lyness & Brumit Kropf, p. 36). In addition, institutional theory predicts that organisations “will adjust their practices in response to environmental pressures, which could include cultural expectations or regulations supporting gender equality” (Dreher, 2003, quoted by Lyness & Brumit Kropf, 2005, p. 35).

The study by Lyness and Brumit Kropf found some support for the predicted relationship between national gender equality and organisational support with WLB and this, according to the authors, “highlights the importance of considering the larger context, and especially a nation’s standing in terms of its gender equality, for understanding work-life balance” (Lyness & Brumit Kropf, 2005, p. 54). Lyness and Brumit Kropf further found that age was positively related to WLB and that hours worked per week was negatively related to WLB. A limitation of this study is that the respondents were all managers. WLB issues are likely to affect other employees in the organisation as well, if not more so. Research suggest that there are negative career consequences associated with the utilisation of FWAs, which would make it unlikely that all, or even the majority, of these managers would be struggling to maintain a WLB in the way that some other employees would be.

A study conducted by Motiejunaite and Kravchenko (2008) concurs with Lyness and Brumit Kropf’s finding that national gender-role attitudes will affect any family policies in place. The study compared the national cultures of Russia and Sweden to examine whether their national culture will have an effect on family policy, employment and gender-role attitudes. It attempted to either confirm or refute the generally acknowledged idea that public social policy is the crucial factor in structuring women’s employment patterns. It found that, although both countries had
a large female labour force participation rate and substantial similarities in family policy, the differences in gender-role attitudes can slow down the effects of family policy or even contradict them. Motiejunaite and Kravchenko’s study, in contrast to all other cited research, was based solely on secondary data. It drew on indicators from public social services, assistance for families and labour force data. An advantage of research based solely on secondary data is that the data used comes from reputable databases rather than being collected from voluntary recipients and is likely to be more reliable. A drawback of the study is that it only utilised secondary quantitative data. There is no qualitative data available to explain the findings and the study can therefore only serve as exploratory research which will likely lead to further research. A study by Pini and McDonald (2008, p. 604) suggests that the Australian “organisational and societal discourses” went “beyond “real” men work full-time, to “real men work long hours””. The participants in this study indicated that they felt that there is a link between masculinity and full-time work. This perception is likely to create a barrier to men utilising FWAs. In addition to this, Perrons (2000, quoted by Gardiner and Tomlinson, 2009, p. 674) warns that the “limited earnings and opportunities for career development tend to lock individuals into dependency on partners or the state”. This would reinforce traditional gender roles in the long term. Gardiner and Tomlinson (2009, p. 674) propose that to combat this gender-role reinforcement that, rather than FWAs being individually negotiated, that they become part of the “organisational work design processes or as an integral part of business strategy.”

The direct implications from these studies suggest that in any study that attempts to inquire into perceptions about FWAs the national culture, as well as the organisational culture, in relation to gender-equality will need to be examined. For this particular study at the University, these studies would indicate that the Australian culture would influence many of the individual and organisational factors affecting the uptake of FWAs.
**Type of job**

A study by Donnelly (2006) found that the economies in Western countries are now largely based on knowledge and this has resulted in the emergence of new employment patterns. Wickramasinghe and Ginzberg (1991) support this statement and find that managing knowledge workers is an important area of concern because of the impact that these knowledge workers have on organisational performance. Davenport et al. (1996, p. 2, quoted by Bentley & Yoong, 2000, p. 347) define knowledge work as:

> “the acquisition, creation, packaging, or application of knowledge. Characterised by variety and exception rather than routine, it is performed by professionals or technical workers with a high level of skill and expertise...”

Sulek and Marucheck (1994, quoted by Bentley & Yoong, 2000, p. 347) further expand this definition by adding cognitive skills, such as “planning, problem solving and decision making, and the knowledge worker as having high levels of education, experience and organisational status”.

In terms of the research at the University it is clear that the University’s employees cannot be divided as knowledge workers and non-knowledge workers. General staff at the University may or may not be knowledge workers. The differentiation for this particular research, therefore, attempts to investigate whether academic employees and general employees utilise different types of FWAs and whether one group of employees is more satisfied with their current WLB than the other group.

Donnelly (2006, p. 78) believes that due to the level of employer-employee interdependency that knowledge workers are more likely to be able to extract “deeper concessions” from their employers than traditional workers. Albert and Bradley (1997, quoted by Donnelly, 2006, p. 82) and Nadeem and Hendry (2003) support this notion and state that from a “supply-side analysis organisations have to respond to the
increasing demands of such workers or risk losing them”. Nadeem and Hendry (2003) further add that organisations would be more likely to accommodate employees whose skills and knowledge are central and who would be difficult to replace.

One would expect academic employees to be central to the functioning of the University, but while this theory seems prevalent, research suggests that for academic employees this situation does not apply. While some of the general staff could also be classified knowledge workers, academic work is distinctly different. Academics’ skills and knowledge are central to the functioning of the University and its reputation, and this particular differentiation will therefore be tested. Hammond and Churchman (2007) concur and believe that “the nature of academic work and indeed the Australian academic profession is being transformed by profound long-term changes.” These long-term changes include “funding, technology, quality assurance and accountability, globalization and organisational flexibility” (Hammond & Churchman, 2007, p. 238). These changes have resulted in Australian Universities finding it “difficult to fill vacancies due to the declining attraction of academic careers” (Hammond & Churchman, 2007, p. 238). Doherty and Manfredi (2006) suggest that while academic staff already have substantial flexibility that a satisfactory WLB is hard to achieve. The findings of Doherty and Manfredi’s (2006) research suggest that the long hours required for career progression are to blame.

This research at the University intends to investigate the view that academic staff would have better access to FWAs. In addition, this research will be identifying the variances in the uptake of a spectrum of FWAs between the two types of employees. Is one type of employee group more likely to take up a distinctly different group of FWAs and why?
**Formal work-family policies aims vs. actual employee experiences**

A study, conducted by McDonald, Guthrie, Bradley and Shakespeare-Finch (2005) investigates whether the aims for which family-work policies were adopted are in fact achieved through the mere implementation of the policies. McDonald et al. (2005, p. 478) question whether the implementation of family-work policies alone "facilitates the effective blending of work and family". The study by McDonald et al. (2005) is particularly relevant as it was conducted at an Australian University. McDonald et al. (2005, p. 480) believe that there is empirical evidence that "work-family policies go some way towards achieving their overall aim, that is, to assist employees to simultaneously fulfill their responsibilities both at work and at home". The method adopted by the researchers was comparing the actual policies of the university with the qualitative data (semi-structured interviews) collected from 20 female employees of the university with children. One interesting finding from this study, which the current study would also like to examine and which links back to the earlier discussion in 2.7.2, is that academic staff reported having more flexibility than professional staff. This disparity is attributed to the differences in the types of work. The nature of work can either facilitate or hinder the extent of flexibility. Professional, or general, staff, for example, are usually required to be physically present in the office at certain "core-hours" of the day (McDonald et al., 2005, p. 488).

McDonald et al. (2005) found that the reported experiences of FWAs were consistent with several policy aims. "Women’s experiences of utilising flexible work policies was largely consistent with rhetoric notions of flexibility being 'good' for employees as well as the aims identified in organisational documentation such as ‘achieve a greater balance’, ‘create a climate of trust’, and integrate public and private spheres” (McDonald et al., 2005, p. 488).

The study by McDonald et al. (2005) also found that, even though part-time work is generally seen as a satisfying form of employment, that part-time female employees
in this particular study did indicate that their less than full-time status limited their opportunities for job advancement. This would concur with the notion that time spent at the job is an indication of commitment and productivity (University Work and Family Guide, 1997, quoted by McDonald et al. 2005) and that a more managerial role would require a full-time presence. This is in direct contrast to the particular university’s official policy which stated that it aimed to “allow access to part-time/fractional positions at all levels of the career structure, including supervisory positions.” The part-time employees, however, were also aware that their part-time employment was helpful in preventing the “deterioration of their job-related skills and minimizing their earning losses by maintaining some contact with paid employment” (McRae, 1993, quoted by McDonald et al., 2005). This would increase their chances of promotions if, and when, they decide to return to full-time work, rather than re-entering the workforce after taking a substantial break from work.

The research methodology of McDonald et al. (2005) was an analysis of the organisational documents which described WLB in combination with 20 interviews with employed women with dependant children. A drawback of this research is that WLB relates to more than only women with children and that these parties were not involved in the research. Men can also be involved with their children, employees could be carers for elderly parents or have non-dependant children that require assistance. While interviews with a sample of twenty participants will provide enough data for exploratory or descriptive research, it is unlikely that 20 participants allow an accurate appraisal of the entire population.

**The Work Environment**

As discussed earlier national gender equality is an important determinant in the perceptions about, and uptake of, FWAs. The study by Lyness and Brumit Kropf (2005) found that the national gender equality influences the organisational culture in regards to FWAs. Sweden and Russia, for example, were found to have similar work-family policies in place, but their uptake was very different as Russia still had a
stronger male-breadwinner model, and was therefore less likely to be supportive of women in the workforce (Lyness & Brumit Kropf, 2005).

Waters and Bardoel (2006) found, through a study at a university, that many employees were under the impression that WLB policies were only available to certain employment categories, such as academic staff or staff in certain faculties. The majority of participants in this study felt that formal and informal family-friendly arrangements were not encouraged nor promoted, with “their understanding sometimes gleaned from ‘tea-room chat’ with peers” (Waters & Bardoel, 2006, p. 44).

Remery, Doorne-Huiskes and Schippers (2003) found that some organisations provided facilities merely because they found it an issue ‘that they could not escape’. Remery et al. (2003) stipulated that while these organisations might officially have the policies in place they are unlikely to have a supportive organisational culture. This could result in employees not utilising the available arrangements (Remery et al., 2003).

Several authors have furthermore stipulated the importance of managers in establishing a supportive organisational culture that supports FWAs in practical terms (Maxwell, Rankine, Bell and MacVicar, 2006; Hall & Atkinson, 2006). Maxwell et al. (2006) believe that managers can either help or impede the operationalising of flexible working. Wise and Bond (2003) found that the line managers responsible for implementing policies were not adequately informed about FWAs; what they are for and how they are to be used. Johnson (2004) concurs and believes that the challenges associated with managing an increasingly fluid workforce also have to be appreciated and that organisations will need to educate and train managers. Johnson (2004, p. 726) describes these managers as having to be “chameleonic”, while Muna and Mansour (2009, p. 121) liken such leaders to “acrobats”.

Page 36 of 160
Summary

Developments such as the rise of women in the labour force, the decline in fertility, ageism, increasing divorce rate and legislative changes have altered the demographics of the Australian workforce. Generation X and Y, as well as the women entering the workforce, value a WLB and are unlikely to be satisfied with the traditional 9-5 working day (McDonald, 2008).

FWAs have become a common way for employers to assist employees in creating a more satisfying WLB. The advantages of offering these arrangements for employers are that they are likely to attract and retain staff that may have otherwise not considered applying for a job at that particular organisation or may have been considering leaving the organisation. The implementation of FWAs, however, does require new managerial skills as managing a workforce that is not within your physical vicinity would obviously pose different challenges from the more traditional work arrangement. If managed properly, however, FWAs are also thought to offer managers the opportunity to meet changing demands in the environment, which would increase their competitive advantage.

The review of the literature suggests that there are many benefits associated with the offering and usage of FWAs, both for the employee and the employer. The benefits for the employee relate to being able to have a better WLB, which affect the “attitude, mental health and physical health of worker” (Thomas and Ganster, 1995, quoted by McDonald et al., 2005, p. 480), while the benefits for employers relate to increased employee commitment, morale and job satisfaction (McDonald et al., 2005). Job satisfaction has, in turn, been found to relate to turn-over intentions, which demonstrates the value of one of the indirect effect of FWAs (McDonald et al., 2005).

Analysis of the literature has further demonstrated that FWAs are becoming a necessity in today’s working environment. Companies can no longer afford to force employees to follow the traditional working day. This may result in valuable employees leaving the organisation and finding employment elsewhere. The
realisation that organisations who wish to remain competitive no longer have a choice is why further research into this area is important. Studies aimed at identifying factors affecting the perceptions about and the uptake of these arrangements would be especially valuable. Organisations could utilise these findings to alter their policies and put a strategy into place to make FWAs work to their advantage.

Several studies have identified important factors affecting the perceptions about and the uptake of FWAs in organisations. These factors can be divided into three levels. The first level relates to macro or national factors, such as government policy and national culture, particularly the nation’s gender-role attitudes. The second level of factors that affect the uptake of FWAs are organisational aspects. Literature has recognised that the organisational culture, the manager’s practical implementation of these policies and their practical accessibility can all influence employees’ decision to utilise available FWAs. These factors should therefore be considered in any organisation implementing or modifying policies in this area. A failure to understand what factors impact the decision to adopt FWAs is thought to potentially result in missed opportunities by firms to attract and retain valued professionals. The challenge, as stated by Doherty and Manfredi (2005, p. 244) is: “for the employers to integrate flexible working into their working practices and organisational culture in a way that is responsive to the needs and the expectations of individuals without creating a dysfunction to the business.” In order to meet these challenge employers must become acquainted with the needs and expectations of their employees, which is one of the aims of this research at the University.

The third level of factors that affect the uptake of FWAs are the individual factors. These factors relate to gender, type of job, age, career stage and family circumstances, which are the factors that this research is mainly aimed towards. Studies focusing on the utilisation of work-family benefits in relation to gender are inconsistent in their findings. Secret (2000) reported that leave taking employees in her study were more likely to be female, while Collingswood (1996, quoted by Secret, 2000) found that males use work-family benefits as much as women. Secret
(2000) has stated that previous research on FWAs has usually focused on the availability of benefits throughout the workforce, on the advantages of work-family policies for employees and their families, or on the bottom-line advantages for business industry. Secret (2000) feels, however, that information about the employees who use work-family benefits is conspicuously absent in the major literatures on the topic. While the author did identify multiple unconnected studies that related to one specific factor (e.g. gender, type of job, etc.) and its relationship to the perceptions about, and the uptake of FWAs, it appears that there has not been one study that:

a) collected data on the wide range of demographical issues that were collected for this research to establish relationships between these and the perceptions about and the uptake of FWAs at a tertiary institution; and

b) tied these multiple factors together in one study and applied this to both knowledge-workers as well as to the more traditional workers in order to identify any variances amongst the two groups.

Waters and Bardoel (2006) concur and have, through a comprehensive review of the literature, found there to be limited research examining the direct link between work-family policies and their use by academic and general staff in Australian universities. It is expected that this research will be able to provide the university, as well as the wider community, with new findings in this mostly unexplored area.

As suggested by Waters and Bardoel (2006), the combination of both qualitative and quantitative data is also likely to add a depth to the research that has not been reached in the research previously conducted on this particular topic. This study has attempted to fill this research gap. The staff survey used in this study contained both multiple choice and open-ended questions and these two sources of information will be combined to obtain and support final findings. The information obtained through this research will be beneficial on the managerial-, organisational, governmental and societal level.
Theoretical framework

This chapter will present the research problem, the subsequent research questions and research framework. It will present the expected outcomes of this research and stipulate the significance of the findings for individuals, organisations and society as a whole.

Research problem

The main aim of this research was to identify what factors have an effect on the uptake of a variety of FWAs as well as employees' satisfaction with their current WLB at a tertiary institution in Australia.

This research was linked to a study already approved and underway by a tertiary institution (the University) that was very keen to obtain further information regarding the challenges and benefits associated with the use of FWAs. The University is particularly eager to find out what factors are likely to affect the uptake of FWAs. The identification of these factors would allow the University, as well as organisations in the wider community, to develop policies and implement changes to utilise FWAs to their advantage.

Dreike Almer, Cohen and Single (2003) have warned employers that a failure to understand what factors impact the decision to adopt FWAs may result in missed opportunities by firms to retain valued professionals. An organisation may officially offer a variety of FWAs, but if employees are either unaware of the availability of the FWAs or are hindered to utilise the arrangements by other external or internal factors then this could have tangible costs (e.g. turn over) and intangible costs (e.g. disengaged employees). For this reason, the University wanted to identify these factors early, and amend any identified areas suitable for improvement. These findings will also provide valuable insights into the benefits and challenges associated with the offering and implementation of FWAs for other organisations.
Research questions

The three research questions that will guide this research are:

1a) Do demographics (such as age, gender and family circumstances) have an impact on the utilisation of FWAs and employees’ satisfaction with their current WLB?

1b) Does the stage of an employee’s career have an impact on the utilisation of FWAs and employees’ satisfaction with their current WLB?

2) Does the nature of the job have an impact on the utilisation of FWAs and employees’ satisfaction with their current WLB?

3) Can any environmental factors be identified that affect the uptake of FWAs?

Research framework

This research will be guided by the research framework illustrated below.

![Figure 1 - The research framework](image)

Page 41 of 160
The main aim of this study is therefore to identify relationships between:

- Demography (age, gender, family circumstance, career stage)
- Nature of the job (academic or general)
- Environmental issues

and:

- The uptake of FWAs
- The satisfaction with current WLB

**Expected outcomes**

It is expected that the research outcomes from this project will be the identification of factors affecting the utilisation of FWAs in an Australian academic environment. These findings will allow the University to identify whether there is a gap between the actual policies that are in place and the perceptions that staff have as to their availability and accessibility. This study can further inform other research as well as assist other organisations to maximise the utilisation and benefits associated with FWAs by offering them an insight into the barriers faced by employees that impede their utilisation of FWAs.

Potential employees, who may, due to carer responsibilities, age, or other family circumstances, have been unable to work the traditional work hours may have been overlooked for employment in the past. These employees can prove to be valuable employees for organisations who take full advantage of the benefits that FWAs have to offer.

The findings of this study can therefore provide organisations with additional information about the usage of FWAs which will allow them to take full advantage of the many benefits research suggests these arrangements have to offer. The author is confident that other related matters, such as the work environment, WLB and any other identifiable barriers to the utilisation of FWAs, will also be factors of interest in
this discussion. The data collected is likely to uncover additional barriers to the uptake of FWAs. This will allow the University, as well as the wider community, to gain some understanding on how to manage FWAs in a way that minimises these barriers and will achieve the greatest advantages for both the employees as well as for the organisation. These findings or identifications may also inform further and more definitive research in those particular aspects of the FWAs arena.

With the continuous ageing of the workforce and the subsequent tightening of the labour market (Chesley & Moen, 2006) FWAs will offer organisations the opportunity to employ valuable employees who may have been under-participating in the workforce due to personal circumstances. It is therefore imperative for organisations to gain as much information about the opportunities and challenges associated with FWAs. Acquiring this knowledge will allow organisations to obtain, and retain, the most suitable staff, and ultimately give the organisation a competitive edge.

**Significance of the research**

This study will build on and add to existing research on FWAs. The mere offering of FWAs does not ensure uptake and underutilisation can, according to Secret (2000), be a serious problem for both employers and employees. Any findings on what factors affect this provision-utilisation gap can be used to assist the individual employee, the University at which this research is being conducted and organisations in the wider community and their management practices. It can additionally be utilised to guide government policy makers and society as a whole.

**Significance at the Individual level**

The findings of this research can be utilised to gradually fill parts of the provision-utilisation gap in work-life policy. Lessening this gap will have a positive effect on employees as it will allow them to create a more satisfactory WLB. WLB is defined as “the degree to which an individual is able to simultaneously balance the demands of both paid work and family responsibilities” (Hill et al. 2001, quoted by Lyness &
Brumit Kropf, 2005, p. 34). If employees had more control over when and where they performed their work, then this would allow them to better balance their work and their life. This indirectly improves the ‘attitude, mental health and physical health of workers’ (Thomas & Ganster, 1995, quoted by McDonald et al., 2005, p. 480) while a lack of balance would negatively affect these individuals. Poelmans, Chinchilla and Cardona (2003, p. 130) feel, therefore, that the “creation of family-friendly work cultures is one of the most pressing concerns at this moment, both for academics and practitioners”.

**Significance at the Organisational level**

According to Baughman, DiNardi and Holtz-Eakin (2003) workers apply for jobs not only because of total compensation levels, but also “based upon how well the mix of cash wages and offered benefits meet their needs.” For the University and organisations in the wider community, this indicates that a better understanding of the implications associated with FWAs and the barriers impeding employees from utilising them will assist organisations in developing improved awareness and accessibility programs. A recent report by Corporate Voices for Working Families (2005, quoted by Carlson, Grzywacz & Kacmar, 2010, p. 331) suggests that the power of flexibility cannot be “unleashed” until FWAs are expanded across more organisations with more effective implementation. To implement FWAs more effectively organisations will need to obtain in-depth information about why employees would or would not utilise FWAs, which is what this research is intending to supply.

If many employees demand FWAs then companies that offer these arrangements will have the largest pool of applicants from which to hire. This will increase productivity as higher-quality newly-hired employees will “improve productivity directly” and “there will be a cost-savings effect of reducing the time needed to fill vacant positions” (Baughman, DiNardi & Holtz-Eakin, 2003, p. 249). Additionally, FWAs have been linked to increased staff loyalty and morale, reduction in turn-over and
absenteeism and improved productivity (Melbourne, 2008), which would all create a financial benefit for the organisation.

The significance of this research will reach beyond the micro level benefits for the employees and employer of this particular organisation. Being able to apply or utilise any findings from this study will offer other organisations the chance to maximise the benefits, and minimise the challenges, associated with FWAs for both the employer and the employee.

The findings of this research can further contribute to the identification of ways to improve management practices. The identification of specific variables affecting the uptake of FWAs can also assist the wider community in obtaining some practical insight and knowledge into the benefits, as well as the challenges, associated with implementing FWAs. These insights can guide and support management in establishing more efficient policies that support and encourage utilisation of FWAs, in order to attract and retain skilled employees. Organisations that appreciate the challenge associated with the management of a fluid workforce can utilise these findings as the rationale behind mandatory training courses for management. Once organisations and managers understand the monumental role that managers play in the successful implementation of FWAs management courses are likely to become a prerequisite for management roles.

**Significance at the Government level**

The research findings can further assist government policy makers to formulate better policies, which could potentially break through some of the barriers identified by this research. Some researchers have expressed concern about the potential prospect that if the economy takes a turn for the worse that only those employees that are valuable to the organisation will be able to access FWAs. As research indicates that women with care-taking responsibilities at home are more likely to take on relatively low-skilled part-time jobs (Doorewaard et al., 2004, quoted by Panteli & Pen, 2010; Dunn, 2001, quoted by Pini and McDonald, 2008) then this would mean that these women
will not have a strong enough bargaining chip and will have to choose between family and employment. This is likely to result in them leaving their employment, which would be a loss for those individuals, for the organisation as well as for the overall economy. Cole (2006) believes that only a strong union presence and increased government regulation could offset this as this combination of forces could collectively benefit workers within an organisation or entire industry. As female employees can only access low-paid employment they are likely to become dependant on their partner or the state, which consequently, only reinforces the gender-roles that have become a norm in most Western societies (Perrons, 2000, quoted by Gardiner and Tomlinson, 2009, p. 674). If the Government recognises the under-utilisation of FWAs and the re-negotiation of WLB as areas of concern and further acknowledges the potential for improvements, then legislation, informed by current research, should be developed to compel organisations to break through some of the barriers identified by this research.

Significance for society as a whole

Papalexandris and Kramar (1997) additionally suggest that the effective implementation and utilisation of FWAs can promote social outcomes. Moussourou (1996, stated by Papalexandris & Kramar, 1997, p. 582) suggests that an adjustment of the organisation of work is needed in order to:

"...facilitate the upbringing of children, bring paid work in line with family responsibilities and create employment opportunities for those undertaking substantial family responsibilities. This will require a more equitable sharing of duties between men and women."

This proposition is corroborated by Deery (2008) who suggests that work-life conflict will result in job dissatisfaction, which will in turn cause conflict with family members and family activities. McDonald, Brown and Bradley (2005) further suggest that the underutilisation of FWAs has potential implications for fertility levels in
developed countries where women, who fear the negative consequences associated with the flexibility that having a child requires, are postponing having children.

A better understanding of FWAs and factors affecting their uptake could therefore be used to assist in the adjustment of the organisation of work and “foster healthier family lives” (Papalexandris & Kramar, 1997, p. 582). The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2008) in its latest has reported a decrease in marriages and an increase in divorces among Australians in a census in 2006-07, so re-establishing a balance between work and life, for those employees that are struggling to find one, would prove to be a benefit to society as a whole.

Research design

Research instruments

There are a variety of research methods available to any researcher. The type of research being conducted will guide the research method utilised. There are three types of research: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. Kumar (2005) points out that, although theoretically, a research study can be classified in one of these perspectives, most studies are a combination of either two or three of these research types. This research will be a combination of descriptive and exploratory. Descriptive research, according to Kumar (2005, p. 10) is concerned with “describing what is prevalent with respect to the issue/problem under study”, while exploratory research is undertaken to explore an area where little is known. This research was exploratory in the absence of any study comparable to this one in the tertiary sector. Additionally, it was also be descriptive as it aimed to identify and describe prevalent perceptions in regards to FWAs.

A third research purpose is explanatory. This type of research attempts to explain why a relationship or association exists or occurs. This type of research was not the purpose of this study. However, it may guide further research in the future.
The main instrument for this research was a structured questionnaire (attached as Appendix 1) designed by the Human Resource Department at the University with input from the researcher. For quantitative data this is considered to be the most appropriate instrument, particularly as, in this case, the type of information required is clear and there is a large group of respondents who can all be reached through the University's intranet. By employing an instrument that was easily accessible and that did not require respondents to spend too much time to complete it the University was hoping to reach the maximum amount of respondents. A questionnaire is a fixed series of questions to which respondents record their answers. The answers provided are usually placed within closely defined alternatives as this will compel respondents to choose one of the options available and this will reduce the chances of miscommunications or any other type of error (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005). This particular questionnaire, however, consisted of additional open-ended questions, which were aimed at providing the research with a better context for the quantitative research.

The questionnaire was, according to the Strategic Human Resource Manager (personal communication, May 14th, 2008), based on similar ones used in the United Kingdom higher education sector in a research project called 'the flexible employment options project' funded by the Higher Education Funding Council of England (HEFCE). The Human Resources department of the University also reviewed the existing Australian literature and consulted with academics who have been published on this topic and sought guidance from them about the sorts of questions that they felt still needed to be addressed. These academics also contributed to the questionnaire by sending HR questions that they would like to see included. The questionnaire was also designed with a lot of 'help' boxes to explain terms that staff may be unfamiliar with. The HR manager felt that these would not only provide explanations, but also informed and educated the staff while they were completing the questionnaire. This would greatly improve the measurement validity of the findings as they were more likely to provide a valid measure of the concept in question (Bryman & Bell, 2007). The explanations also increased the questionnaire's
reliability. Reliability, according to Bryman and Bell (2007, p. 40) is concerned with “the question of whether the results of the study are repeatable”. In this case, the fact that the questions and answers are explained in detail will make it likely that respondent’s responses would be similar on two different occasions.

The questionnaire was piloted with a cross section of staff, including the staff who had the technical survey expertise. The survey was adjusted to their feedback, which in particular included the recommendation to put in more explanatory notes for terminology that the Human Resource Department assumed would be understood by staff. The HR manager communicated with the researcher throughout the process and several opportunities were provided for the researcher to ensure that all information required to answer the research questions was in fact included in the questionnaire.

This study utilised the mixed methods research to obtain data. Crewswell and Plano Clark (2007, p. 5) define mixed methods research: “...as a method; it focuses on collecting, analyzing, and mixing both qualitative and quantitative approaches in a single study or series of studies.” Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) find that mixed methods research provides a variety of benefits. Mixed methods research is thought to provide strengths that offset the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research, provides more comprehensive evidence and it helps answer questions which can not be answered by qualitative or quantitative research alone. The qualitative data was obtained through open-ended questions included in the survey. This data was obtained to support, question or explain the data obtained through the quantitative research method.

Denzin and Lincoln (2008, p. 14) explain that the word “qualitative implies an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processed and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured (if measured at all) in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency”. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) further emphasise that qualitative research is usually assigned to exploration, while quantitative studies are used for confirmation. While quantitative research will be utilised to determine
relationships between variables, the qualitative research was collected in an effort to explain any findings from the quantitative study.

**Design and Approach**

This cross-sectional exploratory and descriptive research will be supported by primary quantitative data. This research will be exploratory in the absence of any study comparable to this one in the tertiary sector. In addition, it will be descriptive research. Veal (2005, p. 4) describes descriptive research as research that “seeks to find out and describe, but not necessarily explain”. This study aims to describe what is prevalent amongst the staff at the University. Additionally, this study would like to identify whether there are links between a variety of variables. To identify these links quantitative research, with additional qualitative research to provide a context, will be utilised.

The survey utilised consisted of both multiple-choice as well as open-ended questions. The open-ended responses will be used to support, challenge or possibly elucidate any findings from the quantitative research. Qualitative research is thought to be focused on gaining an appreciation of major issues and understanding through close investigations of people’s words and is therefore thought to be the best method to surface the hidden tacit knowledge of respondents. The open-ended responses will be woven through the discussion section to enhance and rationalise the quantitative findings wherever possible.

This research is linked to a study already approved and underway by a tertiary institution that is interested in obtaining further information regarding the challenges and benefits associated with the use of FWAs. The Strategic Human Resource Manager has evidence that the University’s particular demographic profile in relation to age and gender may affect the interest in; and uptake of; such arrangements. The University is particularly interested in targeting groups that are under-participating in employment due to personal circumstances, such as individuals caring for children or ageing parents. This research will have access to the data obtained by the University
through the staff mailing list and online questionnaire. This alliance will benefit this research greatly in terms of time and costs and will cease the need for the University to employ an outsider to analyze the collected data. The findings will assist the University in developing or modifying existing policies to best serve the needs of existing employees as well as facilitate the attraction of suitable applicants to best serve the current and future staffing needs of the University.

**Sampling**

The data for this study was collected through a census. The full-time and part-time employees at this University made up the population of this research. The total number of combined full-time and part-time academic and general staff at the time of the survey, which was conducted in March 2008, was 1154. Their composition at this time was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Full time staff</th>
<th>Part time staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Staff</td>
<td>163.00</td>
<td>218.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Staff</td>
<td>355.00</td>
<td>236.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUB TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>518.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>454.00</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL (Academic + general, full time + part time staff)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2 – Staff composition as at March 2008**

Waters and Bardoel (2006) consider academic staff to be knowledge workers. Knowledge work, according to Kelly (1990, quoted by Wickramasinghe & Ginzberg, 2001, p. 245) as “non-repetitive, non-routine work that entails substantial levels of cognitive activity”. While other employees at the University will also be involved in knowledge work, due to academics’ central role at the University it would be interesting to find out whether these employees do, in fact, have more access to flexibility. It has been acknowledged by Paull, Omari and Sharafizad (2009) that, although general staff may perform knowledge work, that, as a group, there are
somewhat different from their academic colleagues. According to Paull, Omari and Sharafizad (2009) academic staff are “engaged in the traditional academic roles of teaching and research”, while general staff are not.

The inclusion of both academic as well as general staff will allow the researcher to identify commonalities as well as disparities in their perception about FWAs, its availability and accessibility.

**Data collection**

The data for this research was collected through a questionnaire that was posted on the University’s website for a period of three weeks during the month of April, 2008.

One important thing that should be noted, at this point, is that the researcher and the Human Resource manager both required specific, and sometimes different, information and, as a result of this, the questionnaire has been designed in such a way that it fulfilled the information requirements for both parties. The questionnaire, therefore, consists of a variety of information that is useful for either, or both parties involved.

**The questionnaire design**

The questionnaire consisted of five parts, each containing between one to eight sub questions (see appendix 1). It has been suggested that dividing questionnaires into a limited amount of parts is more likely to result in respondents being willing to complete the questionnaire. If respondents completing a questionnaire see 50 questions then they might be unwilling to participate for fear that it will take too much of their time. The questions on the questionnaire were either open-ended or placed along scales. The questions about gender, career stage and type of job were placed on nominal scales. Nominal scales are assigned to objects or classes solely for the purpose of identification and do therefore not allow for a high level of analysis, besides frequency and percentages. Another scale that was utilised throughout the questionnaire was the ordinal Likert scale. A nominal scale measures data on the basis of some order, but intervals between these measurements are not consistent. An
interval scale was also utilised when asking respondents about their age groups. Interval scales allow comparison among and between numbers.

The format of the questionnaire was as follows:

Part one was titled about you and these questions related to demographics. The demographics were gender, age group, family circumstances, postcode, length of employment, type of employee and career stage. This information is important for this research as some of these are the independent variables that we want to test in relation to the dependent variables.

Part two of the questionnaire was titled flexible leave utilisation and was designed to find out whether the respondents had previously utilised FWAs and knew how to apply for a variety of arrangements. The flexible work options listed in this section were: flexible start/finish time, part time work, part time options on maternity leave return, compressed working hours, time off in lieu, work from home and part time work contract in transition to retirement. Three additional questions in this section were intended to find out where employees are likely to have gained information about FWAs from and whether FWAs were increasing or decreasing in importance to the respondent.

Part three was aimed at finding out the respondents’ flexible working options utilisation. It questioned respondents about how they rate the University in terms of FWAs. Respondents were asked whether the University compared favorably to respondents’ previous places of employment. It further listed a range of FWAs and inquired what options respondents would find helpful in balancing work-life demands. The last question in this section asked the respondents whether they were aware of any FWAs offered by other employers that would be attractive to them.

The fourth section inquired about respondents’ experience of workplace flexibility at the University. Questions in this section related to flexible work negotiations, experiences, the usage of informal flexible work negotiations, the flexibility of the
University in comparison to two years ago and any constraints that may have withheld employees from utilising FWAs.

The fifth and last section inquired about respondents’ WLB. It asked respondents whether they were satisfied with their current WLB, whether they had any suggestions for ways in which the University could assist them in obtaining a better WLB, their feelings about other staff members utilising FWAs and any recommendations that they might have had in terms of policies, management or work practices.

**Data analysis**

To assess the relationships between demography, nature of the job, environmental issues and the uptake and effectiveness of FWAs, descriptive statistics, such as mean and standard deviation, as well as t-tests and ANOVA were conducted. The initial data analysis suggested that the data was not normal, which is why non-parametric tests were additionally conducted on all data to ensure validity. All quantitative analyses in this study were conducted through SPSS for Windows Version 15.0. The demographic factors related to gender, age, family circumstance and career stage. The fact that the data was collected at the interval or ratio level of measurement made it suitable for t-test analysis. The t-test analysis was conducted to identify whether employees within one demographic group had a higher uptake of FWAs then employees in another group. The findings from the t-test analysis will allow the University to develop or amend existing policies to be more inviting to employees who do not necessarily fall into this particular group.

ANOVA was also conducted in order to compare the means of multiple groups. While the t-test may be suitable to illustrate the differences in uptake between females and males it was not useful for analysis when there were more than 2 independent variables. ANOVA was utilised in order to establish any differences between, for example, age groups (e.g.: 18-30, 31-44, 45-60, >60) and the uptake of flexible work arrangement. The non-parametric tests, which were utilised to ensure
validity of the findings as the data was found to be not normally distributed, were the Mann-Whitney U-test and the Kruskall-Wallis test.

The uptake of FWAs was based on the information provided by questionnaire respondents that described the way that respondents utilised the various FWAs. There were five possible answers to the utilisation questions: Use regularly, Use Sometimes, Have used once or twice before, Plan to use in the future and Never Used. The independent variables will be tested against each of the FWAs to see whether demographically different groups utilise various FWAs differently. The second part of the first and second research questions aimed to find a relationship between the independent demographic variables and employees' satisfaction with their current WLB. There were five different answers to the WLB satisfaction questions. These answers were: Very satisfied, Satisfied, Neutral, Dissatisfied and Very dissatisfied.

Research schedule

This research was conducted over a twenty-four (24) month period from May 2008 to May 2010.

The author of this research has been very fortunate that, at the time of this research, a university was conducting extensive research into the area of FWAs. The University's reason for conducting this research was to investigate the range and uptake of FWAs and options across the University in order to ensure its competitiveness in attracting and retaining staff. This common interest has enabled the author to form an alliance with the Strategic Human Resource Department of the university in question.

The structured questionnaire was placed on the University's website for a period of three weeks in May 2008. In addition to this, all full-time and part-time staff received an email explaining the reason for this research and a link to the actual questionnaire. The researcher and Strategic Human Resource Manager were both hopeful that the direct effect that this issue has on employees' WLB would encourage and motivate them to participate by completing the questionnaire. Placing the questionnaire online
for an extended period of time would have allowed employees to complete it at a time that was convenient for them, which would, hopefully, have increased the overall response rate.

To complete the questionnaire staff were required to enter their user name and password to ensure that only staff could answer the questionnaire and that the questionnaire could only be completed once. The reason behind this is that employees who were unhappy with the current policies in place might have been tempted to fill out more than one questionnaire in order to influence the final findings. Actions such as these would have affected the validity and, consequently, the reliability of the findings. Validity refers to: “the degree to which a researcher has measured what he set out to measure” (Kumar, 2005, p. 153). Kumar (2005) proposes that the increase in validity or “the lower the degree of error” in an instrument, as a result of the process that allows employees to complete the questionnaire only once, the higher the level of reliability. Reliability refers to “the degree of accuracy or precision in the measurements made by a research instrument” (Kumar, 2005, p. 156). The fact that respondents could only complete one questionnaire and that questions and answers were elaborated on throughout the questionnaire aimed to avoid misunderstandings and subsequently increase the validity and reliability of the research.

This research would like to determine the relationships between demographics, type of job, environmental factors and the uptake and effectiveness of flexible working arrangement by obtaining information from individual employees and analysing this data to uncover significant relationships.

For employees who were hesitant about filling out a questionnaire online or who did not have access to a computer, a hard-copy version was made available upon request, which could then, anonymously, be posted back, through internal or external mail, to the human resource officer in charge of the research.
Limitations

There are a number of possible limitations to this study. Firstly, the questionnaire was only completed by employees of the University who chose to do so, which is likely to result in a non-sampling error. Employees that felt compelled to complete the questionnaire may have done so because they had an invested interest in issues surrounding FWAs. Therefore, there is always the possibility that those employees that responded may have had systematically different opinions from those who did not respond.

Feedback received by the HR department of the University suggested that respondents were concerned about the lack of opportunity for free form commentary. Some staff-members felt constrained to tick a box while they felt that none of the answers provided really corresponded with their situation or feeling. This lack of free form commentary may have resulted in some staff answering the question in a manner that was not entirely reflective of their true feelings. This may slightly affect the accuracy of the findings and may prove to be a loss of valuable input and recommendations for the University. The additional qualitative data will be utilised to validate the survey results to ensure the minimisation of this limitation and reduction of error. These findings could also identify areas for future research.

Due to confidentiality concerns of some staff at the University only limited detailed demographic information was requested in the questionnaire. This was done purposely in the hope of obtaining a higher response rate as employees would be less concerned about possible identification. This would have affected the findings of the analysis as it did only produce results on a broad spectrum, rather than more exact relationships. In terms of the University’s purposes this may affect the usefulness of the findings.

Research has suggested that the mere provision of FWAs does not necessarily result in uptake (Hall & Atkinson, 2006; McDonald, Guthrie, Bradley & Shakespeare-Finch, 2005). According to Waters and Bardoel (2006, p. 69) higher education
institutions would, “on the surface, appear to offer certain positives for combining career and family life”. Waters and Bardoel (2006) point out, however, that the use of work/family policies does, just as is the case with other organisations, not immediately flow from their existence on paper either. Some specific stressors within the higher education environment have been identified that will affect uptake and that, for this reason, may not be entirely apply to other work-environments. These factors principally relate to the workload associated with academic work. The other barriers identified through this study, however, such as gender, family circumstances, age and career stage, are likely to be relevant to other organisations, particularly in Australia or other Western countries. These findings can provide organisations with insights into the factors affecting perceptions and the uptake of FWAs within the work environment. These findings could then be incorporated into their flexible work arrangement policies.

**Ethical considerations**

According to Cooper and Schindler (2003, p. 120) ethics are “norms or standards of behavior that guide moral choices about our behavior and our relationships with others”. The goal of ethics in research, as detailed by Cooper and Schindler (2003, p. 120) is that “no one is harmed or suffers any adverse consequences from research activities”.

Ethical considerations, in research, refer to the collection of data from human participants. Qualitative research, as it is a much more personal form of data collection, provides more significant ethical issues (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). For this reason, respondents were only asked for limited personal information in the survey. This would ensure that no responses can be linked back to an individual employee.

In accordance with the University’s ethical consideration regulations the data obtained through the online questionnaire was only provided to the author once ethical approval was granted. Upon collection all hard copies were kept in lockable facilities while all soft copy data was stored on password protected computers.
Following analysis, all data was stored securely and will remain so for a period of 5 years as per the University’s ethical guidelines on research.

Summary

FWAs have been heralded as one of the practical solutions which are said to be fundamental to the way in which companies retain their competitive advantage. However, research suggests that the creation of these benefits does not mean that employees will actually use them. This provision-uptake gap of FWAs can, in fact, be a serious problem for both employers and employee. This is why research into the availability versus accessibility of FWAs, as well as factors affecting its uptake would be a valuable contribution to research already available. The researcher is confident that studying the relationships between demographics, type of job and environmental factors and perceptions about the uptake of FWAs and employees’ satisfaction with their current WLB can provide benefits for the organisation as well as the wider community by fostering “healthier family lives” (Papalexandris & Kramar, 1997, p. 582. Additionally, the results of this study can improve managerial practices and policy development, assist government policy-makers and benefit society as a whole.

Survey findings

Introduction

This chapter will provide an overview of the quantitave findings of this study. In the first section the response rate and the respondent characteristics will be presented. The second section contains the findings of the parametric and non-parametric tests relating to the relationships between demographic variables and the uptake of a variety of FWAs and employees’ satisfaction with their current WLB. A discussion of these findings can be found in the next chapter along with the presentation and discussion of the qualitative findings from the survey.
Response Rate

The survey was aimed at, and made available to, all full-time and part-time academic and general staff members at an Australian University in May 2008.

The total number of full-time and part-time academic and general staff was, at the time of the survey, 1154. There were 495 completed surveys, which indicates an overall response-rate of 43%.

There were 411 full-time and part-time academic employees at the University. Of these 411, 126 academic staff completed the questionnaire. This suggests that the response rate among academic staff was 31%.

The majority of employees at the University hold general positions. At the time that this questionnaire was completed there were 743 general employees at the University; 369 of the general staff completed a questionnaire. The response rate for the general staff was therefore 50%.

Respondent Characteristics

The initial data-analysis resulted in a preliminary understanding of the characteristics of the respondent group that chose to participate in this project. The initial data-analysis was conducted to explore the distributions of gender, age, career stage and the type of job amongst respondents. Wherever possible these distributions were compared to the overall University distributions. The objective of making these comparisons was to determine whether the survey distributions were representative of the overall University population or whether they were significantly different. If the distributions of a sample are similar then the respondents will be more representative of the overall target group. In situations where distributions are significantly different then this can provide some insight into whether one particular group may have felt more inclined to participate than other groups. The respondent distributions are presented in turn in the sections below.
Age

The respondents' ages were as follows: 13% of respondents were less than 30 years old, 40% were aged between 30 and 45, 43% were aged between 46 and 60, while 4% were aged over 60. Overall 80% of respondents were aged between 30 and 60 years old. This distribution is illustrated in Figure 4.

![Age distribution of respondents](image)

**Figure 3 - Age distribution among survey respondents**

The age distribution of respondents is almost identical to the age distribution of the overall staff of the University as indicated in Figure 5 below. Over 80% of overall staff at the University was also aged between 30 and 60 years. The largest divergence between the respondent groups and the actual age groups among University staff was 2%. This indicated that the surveyed group was similar to the target group, which enhances the validity of the findings.
Figure 4 - Age distribution among staff at the University
Gender

As indicated in Figure 6, the majority of the respondents, 67%, were female. The male respondents accounted for 33% of the total respondent pool.

The distribution of respondents’ gender is almost identical to the population’s gender distribution with only 1% difference among the two groups. This indicates that a similar percentage of each gender chose to participate in this project. The gender distribution among staff at the University is shown in Figure 7. The similar distribution of gender among the population and the respondents increases the validity of the findings as the respondents are more representative of the overall population.

Figure 5 - Gender distribution among survey respondents
Family circumstances

The question dealing with family circumstances was: do you have any dependants and what is your role in their care? The 10 possible answers were:

1= No dependants
2= Both primary carer and earner
3= Primary carer
4= Primary earner
5= Contributing carer
6= Contributing earner
7= Primary earner and contributing carer
8= Primary carer and contributing earner
9= Contributing carer and contributing earner
10= No dependants and contributing earner.
The distribution was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family circumstances distribution among respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No dependants 6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both primary carer and primary earner 2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary carer 4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary earner 12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributing carer 4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributing earner 7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary earner and contributing carer 6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary carer and contributing earner 16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributing carer and contributing earner 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No dependants and contributing earner 8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7 - Family circumstances distribution among respondents

The findings indicate that 44% of the staff at the University did not have any dependants, while the remaining 56% did have dependants. Among these employees, 27% were the primary earner in their family, while 30% of respondents were the primary carer. The overall distribution is depicted in Figure 8.

Career stage

Respondents were asked about the career stage in which they currently found themselves. Among the respondents, 22% indicated that they were in their early career; 47% considered themselves to be mid-career; 26% found themselves in their late career, while 6% found themselves in a career transition. The career stage distribution is demonstrated in Figure 9. The career stage distribution appears to be somewhat similar to the age distribution above as age is generally related to an employee's career stage (Robbins, Millett & Waters-Marsh, 2004).
Job type

The majority (74%) of respondents held general positions within the University. Academic staff constituted 24% of the respondents, while 2% of respondents were in academic as well as general positions. This distribution, shown in Figure 10, indicates that general staff, who make up 64% of the workforce at the University, had a much higher response rate than the academic staff. Academic staff-members make up 36% of the University’s workforce, but only 24% of survey respondents. General staff have clearly felt more compelled to participate in this project.
Satisfaction with WLB

When asked about their satisfaction with their WLB, 14.5% of respondents indicated that they were very satisfied; 42% of respondents felt satisfied; 18% of respondents were neutral; 19% was dissatisfied and 6.5% were very dissatisfied. This distribution is illustrated in Figure 11. When combined, about 54% were either satisfied or very satisfied. Approximately 25% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied and the remaining 18% were neutral. Waters and Bardoel (2006) suggest that higher education institutions would, on the surface, appear to offer certain positives for combining career and family life. Doherty and Manfredi (2006, p. 242) concur and believe that the university context has many of the features that are “conducive to the successful introduction of WLB provisions”. Perhaps these statistics are therefore not as optimistic as one would have expected.
Normality

To assess the normality of the data the Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic with a Lilliefors significance level test was applied to all variables of the study. If the significance level of this test is greater than 0.05 then normality is assumed. In this case the p-values were all smaller than 0.05 or 5%. All p-values were 0.000. This indicated that the variables were not normally distributed. Table A. 1 (in Appendix A) shows the computed p-values for all the studied variables. Normality is a prerequisite for many statistical tests. ANOVA assumes normality of the data, even though it can be applied if n >100. To ensure the validity of any ANOVA findings non-parametric tests, Mann Whitney U or Kruskall-Wallis, were also conducted on all data to verify any findings.
Summary

The initial data analysis indicated that 74% of the respondents were female and 80% of respondents were aged between 30 and 60 years. Close to half of the participants considered themselves mid-career and a further 25% considered themselves to be in their late career. The sample was representative of the overall population in terms of gender and age. There was, however, a significantly higher response rate among general staff than among the academic staff, particularly when taking total staff numbers at the University in account. The findings also indicated that 44% of employees did not have any dependants and 56% did. Approximately 55% of respondents were either very satisfied or satisfied with their current WLB, close to 20% of respondents were neutral about their current WLB, while approximately 25% of respondents were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

The initial data analysis further indicated that the data was not normally distributed. This affects the analysis of data. ANOVA assumes normality of the data, even though it can applied if n>100. To ensure the validity of any ANOVA findings additional non-parametric tests were conducted.
Data Analysis

This section will present the findings on the relationships between demographics (gender, age, career stage, job type and family circumstances) and the uptake of certain FWAs. Information was collected on the following FWAs:

- Dependant sick leave/family leave
- Long service leave half pay
- Long service leave double pay
- Paid maternity leave
- Paternity leave unpaid
- Special paid leave
- Paid study leave
- Unpaid study leave
- Annual leave
- Purchased additional annual leave
- Flexible start/finish times
- Part-time work
- Part-time options on maternity leave
- Compressed working hours
- Time off in-lieu
- Work from home
- Part-time contract in transition to retirement
- Satisfaction with current WLB

The scales that were utilised to determine a respondent’s uptake of a certain FWA were: 1 = use regularly, 2 = use sometimes, 3 = have used once or twice before, 4 = plan to use in the future and 5 = never used.
The next section will furthermore present the findings on the relationship between these demographics and employees’ satisfaction with their current WLB. As this research is exploratory a α level of 0.1 will be used to establish significance.

**Age and the uptake of FWAs and satisfaction with current WLB**

ANOVA and Kruskall-Wallis tests were applied to the collected data to infer into the relationship between each type of FWAs and age. The age groups for this question were: 1 = <30, 2 = 30-45, 3 = 46-60 and 4 = >60.

The findings, both for ANOVA and the Kruskall-Wallis tests, indicated that there was a significant relationship between an employee’s age and the uptake of a variety of FWAs.

An employee’s age was directly related to the uptake of *paid maternity leave* (F=8.999, p=0, Z=30.927, p=0), *paternity leave unpaid* (F=3.125, p=0.026, Z=9.638, p=0.022) and *part-time options on maternity leave return* (F=2.915, p=0.034, Z=13.48, p=0.004). These parental FWAs were all used more by employees under 45 years of age. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2009) indicated that the median age for mothers in 2008 was 31 years of age, while for fathers the median age was 33. It is therefore likely that FWAs associated with newborn babies are related to an employee’s age. Particularly employees between the ages of 30-45, and employees <30 years of age, were taking these FWAs up.

Other variables that were directly related to an employee’s age were:

- *dependant sick leave/family leave* (F=6.136, p=0, Z=30.927, p=0.001),
- *annual leave* (F=12.705, p=0, Z=46.947, p=0) and
- *work from home* (F=6.267, p=0, Z=18.918, p=0).

Employees that took up *dependant sick leave/family leave* were most likely to be aged between 30 and 45 years of age, followed closely by the employees between the ages of 46 and 60. Employees that were aged over 60 years were least likely to take up *dependant sick leave/family leave*. 
Annual leave was taken up mostly by employees over 60 years of age and by employees between 45-60 years of age. While all age groups appeared to utilise the work from home arrangement at one time or another, employees between 30-45 and 46-60 years of age were the employees that had the highest uptake. It is a plausible rationalisation that employees with dependants, either the age-groups most likely to have dependant children or the age-groups that would have elderly parents, will be the ones looking at ways to combine work and their carer-responsibilities by taking up these types of leave/flexible arrangements.

The other significant relationships were between the age of an employee and long service leave half pay \( (F=3.861, p=0.009, Z=9.879, p=0.020) \) and part-time contract in transition to retirement \( (F=21.086, p=0, Z=36.515, p=0) \). Long service leave can only be taken after a certain amount of time at the University, which would therefore not be available to younger employees. For employees to be able to use the part-time contract in transition to retirement they would have to be nearing retirement age. It was therefore not surprising that employees >60 years of age were the ones taking this FWA up most.

The relationship between employees’ age and the uptake of special paid leave is debatable as ANOVA indicated a relationship \( \alpha \) at 0.1 \( (F=2.1, p=0.099) \). The Kruskall-Wallis test, however, did not support this finding \( (X^2=5.244, p=0.155) \). This finding should therefore be viewed with caution and may warrant further investigation.

No statistical relationship was found between the age of an employee and their uptake of long service leave double pay, paid study leave, unpaid study leave, purchased additional leave, flexible start/finish times, part-time work, compressed working hours and time off in-lieu.

There was no statistically significant relationship between an employee’s age and their subsequent satisfaction with their current WLB.
Gender and the uptake of FWAs and satisfaction with current WLB

To infer into possible relationships between gender and the uptake of FWAs and employees' satisfaction with their current WLB the T-test and Mann-Whitney U-test were applied to the data. Both tests indicated significant relationships between the gender of an employee and the uptake of a variety of FWAs.

Firstly, gender was directly related to the uptake of paid maternity leave ($t=4.61$, $p=0.000$, $Z=-4.773$, $p=0.000$) ($x_m=4.98$, $x_f=4.72$) and part-time options on maternity leave return ($t=3.135$, $p=0.002$, $Z=-3.764$, $p=0.000$) ($x_m=4.98$, $x_f=4.78$). Maternity leave is only available to women at the University and the uptake of these FWAs would therefore be expected to be related to gender. Fathers do have the option to take up paternal leave unpaid.

In addition to this, gender also impacted the uptake of dependant sick leave/family leave ($t=2.838$, $p=0.005$, $Z=-2.769$, $p=0.006$) ($x_m=4.07$, $x_f=3.72$), part-time work ($t=8.358$, $p=0.000$, $Z=-8.142$, $p=0.000$) ($x_m=4.78$, $x_f=3.50$) and time off in-lieu ($t=5.300$, $p=0.000$, $Z=-5.117$, $p=0.000$) ($x_m=4.06$, $x_f=3.33$). All of these FWAs are taken up significantly more by females than males. An explanation for these relationships is that women, perhaps, in their role as primary carers for children or elderly parents, are more likely to take up these types of leave arrangements or flexible work-time arrangement so that they can work around other responsibilities.

Other relationships that were significant were between an employee's gender and their uptake of paid study leave ($t=-1.683$, $p=0.093$, $Z=-2.144$, $p=0.032$) ($x_m=4.52$, $x_f=4.66$) and long service leave double pay ($t=-2.689$, $p=0.007$, $Z=-2.097$, $p=0.036$), ($x_m=4.84$, $x_f=4.94$). More males than females appeared to take up these FWAs. Overall, these results clearly indicate that male and female employees utilised very different types of FWAs.

The T-test also indicated a relationship between gender and the uptake of the compressed working week ($t=2.088$, $p=0.037$). The results suggested that more
females than males utilise this FWA ($x_m = 4.98$, $x_f = 4.87$). However, as the Mann Whitney test did not support this finding it should be viewed with caution. This may be an appropriate area for further investigations.

No relationships were found between gender and two distinct groups of FWAs. The first group of FWAs that were not affected by gender were FWAs that were hardly taken up at all. The uptake of these FWAs was low to non-existent among all respondents and therefore not significantly different. The FWAs in the first group were: paternity leave, special paid leave, long service leave half pay, purchased additional leave, part-time contract in transition to retirement and unpaid study leave. In the second group, no relationships were found between gender and the uptake of annual leave, work from home and flexible start/finish times. The second group, however, were FWAs that were in fact utilised in significant, and similar, amounts by females as well as males.

No statistically significant relationship was found between an employee's gender and their satisfaction with their current WLB.

**Family circumstances and the uptake of FWAs and satisfaction with current WLB**

To infer into the relationship between an employee's family circumstances and their uptake of FWAs and satisfaction their current WLB, ANOVA and Kruskall-Wallis tests were conducted. The question in the survey was: Do you have any dependants and what is your role in their care? There were 10 possible answers:

1 = No dependants
2 = Both primary carer and earner
3 = Primary carer
4 = Primary earner
5 = Contributing carer
6 = Contributing earner
Fleur Sharafizad  

Honours thesis

7= Primary earner and contributing carer  
8= Primary carer and contributing earner  
9= Contributing carer and contributing earner  
10= No dependants and contributing earner.

Both ANOVA and the Kruskall-Wallis tests indicated a statistically significant relationship between an employee's family circumstances and their uptake of dependent sick leave/family leave ($F=5.002, p=0.000, X^2=40.942, p=0.000$), paid maternity leave ($F=9.714, p=0.000, X^2=55.630, p=0.000$), and part-time options on maternity leave return ($F=5.490, p=0.000, X^2=33.354, p=0.000$). Not surprisingly, employees that indicated to be primary carer utilised these FWAs the most. This will be further discussed in the next chapter.

In addition, ANOVA and Kruskall-Wallis tests both indicated significant relationships between family circumstances and

- annual leave ($F=2.563, p=0.007, X^2=20.257, p=0.016$),
- part-time work ($F=5.438, p=0.000, X^2=43.148, p=0.000$), and
- work from home ($F=3.260, p=0.001, X^2=25.874, p=0.002$).

Employees that indicated that they were the primary earner and contributing carer were most likely to take up annual leave. Perhaps this FWA allows parents/carers to ensure that there is always one parent caring for children or elderly parents. Part-time work appeared to be a FWA that was taken up mostly by employees that were primary carers and in some cases contributing carers. Working part-time would allow these employees to combine their work and their carer-responsibilities. The work from home arrangements was taken up most by employees that were either primary earner and contributing carer or primary carer and contributing earner. The option to work from home would allow these particular employees to combine these responsibilities.
Lastly, a significant relationship was found between an employee’s family circumstances and paid study leave ($F=2.168$, $p=0.023$, $X^2=19.907$, $p=0.018$). The option to take paid study leave was taken up mostly by employees that were the primary earner in their family. Perhaps taking this arrangement up would allow them to simultaneously increase their employability and opportunities while not sacrificing any income for their families.

In addition, ANOVA found that family circumstances and long service leave half pay were significantly related ($F=2.706$, $p=0.004$). As the Kruskall-Wallis test did not find this relationship significant ($X^2=11.540$, $p=0.240$), this result should be interpreted with caution.

No relationships were found between family circumstances and an employee’s uptake of long service leave double pay, paternity leave unpaid, special paid leave, unpaid study leave, purchased additional annual leave, flexible start/finish times, time off in-lieu and part-time contract in transition to retirement.

An employee’s family circumstances furthermore did not appear to significantly affect their satisfaction with their current WLB.

**Career stage and the uptake of FWAs and satisfaction with current WLB**

ANOVA and Kruskall-Wallis tests were applied to all FWAs and employees’ career stage to establish relationships between an employee’s career stage and the uptake of FWAs and their satisfaction with their current WLB. For the purposes of the survey, the career stages were: 1) early career, 2) mid-career, 3) late career and 4) career transition.

The findings from both ANOVA and the Kruskall-Wallis tests demonstrated statistically significant relationships between an employee’s career stage and the uptake of various FWAs.
The uptake of *paid maternity leave* \( (F=3.355, \ p=0.019, \ X^2=13.053, \ p=0.005) \) and *part-time options on maternity leave return* \( (F=2.938, \ p=0.033, \ X^2=12.827, \ p=0.005) \) were directly influenced by an employee’s career stage. As previously mentioned, the ABS (2009) indicated that the median age for mothers in Australia in 2008 was 31, while the median age for fathers was 33. This relationship can possibly be explained by the fact that employees in this age range are likely to be in their early or mid-career.

An employee’s career stage was also directly related to *dependant sick leave/family leave* \( (F=3.676, \ p=0.012, \ X^2=10.438, \ p=0.015) \), *annual leave* \( (F=17.619, \ p=0, \ X^2=59.92, \ p=0) \), *part-time work* \( (F=4.922, \ p=0.002, \ X^2=14.775, \ p=0.002) \), *time off in-lieu* \( (F=3.648, \ p=0.013, \ X^2=10.78, \ p=0.013) \) and *work from home* \( (F=3.826, \ p=0.01, \ X^2=11.394, \ p=0.01) \). Uptake of these types of FWAs can be associated with employees that are in carer-positions, either for young children or elderly parents. It is therefore likely that employees in their mid-career (with young children) and employees in their late career (with elderly parents) are more likely to take these FWAs up.

The uptake of *long service leave half pay* \( (F=7.11, \ p=0, \ X^2=18.32, \ p=0) \) and *part-time contract in transition to retirement* \( (F=14.368, \ p=0, \ X^2=43.572, \ p=0) \) was directly influenced by an employee’s career stage. *Long service leave half pay* can only be taken up after a certain amount of service with the University. Employees taking this arrangement up are likely to be older employees in the latter stages of their career. Employees can only take up a *part-time contract in transition to retirement* when they are in their late career, so this is evidently related to career stage.

ANOVA further indicated significant relationships between career stage and the uptake of *long service leave double pay* \( (F=2.345, \ p=0.072) \) and *special paid leave* \( (F=2.416, \ p=0.066) \). The Kruskall-Wallis test did, however, not corroborate these findings \( (X^2=5.896, \ p=0.117; \ X^2=6.074, \ p=0.108) \). The Kruskall-Wallis test also indicated a relationship between career stage and *flexible start/finish times* \( (X^2=7.807, \ p=0.005) \).
The ANOVA results did not support this finding (F=2.042, p=0.107). As these results are not corroborated by both tests they will have to be viewed with extreme caution and further testing may need to be conducted in the future to support or refute these findings.

No significant relationship was found between an employee’s career stage and uptake of paternity leave unpaid, paid study leave, unpaid study leave, purchased additional annual leave and compressed working week.

The relationship between an employee’s career stage and their satisfaction with their current WLB was significant at the 0.1 level of significance (F=2.529, p=0.057, X²=6.965, p=0.073). Employees in their late career were found to be most satisfied with their current WLB, followed by employees in their early career stage. Employees in their mid-career were least satisfied with their current WLB. A possible explanation for this is that employees in certain stages of their career will not or will no longer feel the pressure of having to juggle a young family and employment. This will naturally increase their satisfaction with their WLB. Juggling a variety of responsibilities may increase dissatisfaction with one’s WLB.

**Job type and the uptake of FWAs and satisfaction with current WLB**

To determine whether relationships existed between various types of FWAs and an employee’s job type ANOVA and Kruskall-Wallis tests were applied to the data. The staff types were: 1) academic staff and 2) general staff and 3) both academic as well as general.

As this study is particularly interested in the distinctions between employees in academic and general positions T-tests and Mann-Whitney U-tests were also conducted on the data. This was done by removing the employees who indicated that they were both academic as well as general staff from the data-sheet. The findings from these tests concurred with all the significant findings from the tests conducted with the three different staff types. However, ANOVA and the Kruskall-Wallis tests...
also indicated a relationship between an employee’s job type and their uptake of flexible start/finish times \((F=2.848, p=0.059, \chi^2=5.814, p=0.055)\) and part-time work \((F=5.459, p=0.005, \chi^2=8.979, p=0.011)\). The results suggested that flexible start/finish times and part-time work were utilised most by respondents who were both general and academic staff. General and academic staff appeared to utilise these particular FWAs in a similar way, which would explain why the T-tests and Mann-Whitney U-tests did not find the relationship between an employees’ job type and their uptake of flexible start/finish times and part-time work significantly different.

According to both the T-test and the Mann Whitney U-test significant relationships exist between the type of job an employees has and the uptake of dependant sick leave/family leave \((t=4.444, p=0.000, Z=-4.349, p=0.000)\), time off in-lieu \((t=7.564, p=0.000, Z=-7.123, p=0.000)\), special paid leave \((t=2.369, p=0.018, Z=-2.142, p=0.032)\), long service leave double pay \((t=2.259, p=0.024, Z=-2.489, p=0.013)\) and paid maternity leave \((t=2.180, p=0.030, Z=-2.179, p=0.029)\). General staff had a significantly higher uptake of all of these FWAs. While academics have been traditionally able to work flexibly, many academics are, according to Doherty and Manfredi (2006) now facing a problem of heavy workloads and a requirement to work longer hours. It appears that these workloads and the requirement to work longer hours are affecting the academic employee’s ability to utilise FWAs.

Significant relationships were also found between an employee’s job type and the utilisation of work from home \((t=-9.757, p=0.000, Z=-8.767, p=0.000)\) and paid study leave \((t=-2.862, p=0.004, Z=-2.142, p=0.000)\). These FWAs were taken up more by academic staff than general staff. It appears that some of the components of academic work are not location-bound and work from home would therefore be suitable FWAs for this group of staff members. General positions, however, are often location-bound and work from home would therefore be logistically impossible. As academics are expected to continuously add to their knowledge-base it is probable that they, for that reason, have easier access to paid study leave that would allow them to further develop.
No significant relationships were found between an employee’s job type and the uptake of long service leave double pay, paternity leave unpaid, unpaid study leave, annual leave, purchased additional leave and part-time options on maternity leave return.

The findings further revealed a statistically significant relationship between the type of job an employee held and their satisfaction with their current WLB ($t=4.644$, $p=0.000$, $Z=-3.985$, $p=0.000$). General staff appeared to be more satisfied with their current WLB.

Summary
The data analysis has indicated that significant relationships existed between certain demographics and the uptake of a variety of FWAs. Information was collected on the following demographics: gender, age, career stage, job type and family circumstances. T-tests, ANOVA, Mann-Whitney and Kruskall-Wallis tests were utilised to determine the impact of these particular demographics on the uptake of a range of FWAs that are offered at the University. The previous section has presented the findings by indicating whether a relationship was significant, non-significant or debatable. In the next chapter, the significant relationships will be further explored. Existing literature and qualitative data collected with the survey will be utilised to try and elucidate on the quantitative findings.
Discussion

Introduction

The findings from this research have clearly indicated that several significant relationships exist between the demographics of age, gender, career stage, type of job and family circumstances and the uptake of a variety of FWAs. Some of these demographical variables have also appeared to be significantly related to an employees' satisfaction with their current WLB.

This chapter will further investigate the significant findings. Each section will look at one particular demographic and explore, with the assistance of the qualitative results and relevant research, the FWAs that were significantly related to this demographic. The qualitative data collected through the survey and relevant external references will be utilised to explain and add depth to any quantitative findings. The aim of this chapter is to combine these data to create a broader picture of how and why these demographics affect uptake. In addition to this, suggestions will be made as to how this data can be of assistance to employees, employers and the wider community. Please note that only the relationships that were found to be significant in both ANOVA and the non-parametric testing will be further discussed. The findings that were only relevant in one of the tests will require further research to either support or refute these findings and ensure accuracy.

Type of job

The findings indicate that an employee’s age impacted on the types of FWAs that they took up. There were four possible age categories:

- Less than 30 years of age
- Aged between 30-45 years
- Aged between 46-60 years
- Aged over 60 years
The significant relationships are listed below and will be explored in turn.

**Parental arrangements**

The parental arrangements that were available at the University were significantly related to an employee’s age. Statistics from the U.K. suggest that by 2010 1 in 5 employees will be mothers. This increase in employees with carer-responsibilities is likely to be mirrored in Australia. These parental arrangements will therefore become an important group of FWAs. The parental FWAs are: *paid maternity leave, paternity leave unpaid* and *part-time options on maternity leave return*.

The uptake of *paid maternity leave* was significantly related to the age of an employee. Employees between the ages of 30 and 45 years took this FWA up most, followed closely by the employees who were under 30 years of age. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2009) indicated that the median age for a first-time mother in Australia in 2008 was 31 years of age, which would explain why women in this age group would be most likely to take up maternity leave.

The results for the *paternity leave unpaid* were very similar to the results for the *paid maternity leave*. Uptake of this FWA was significantly related to the age of the employee. As with the *paid maternity leave*, employees between 30-45 years of age were most likely to take up *paternity leave unpaid*. Employees younger than 30 years of age were the second largest group taking up this FWA. This finding also correlates with statistics from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) which indicated that the median age for first-time fathers in Australia in 2008 was 33 (2009). Based on these findings and statistics it would be expected that male employees between the ages of 30 and 45 who are starting their own families would therefore be most likely to be interested in *paternity leave unpaid*.

The age of an employee was also significantly related to their uptake of *part-time options on maternity leave return*. Employees under the age of 30 years utilised this FWA most. This finding is distinctive as it is different from the findings on the other
parental arrangements that were used most by employees between the ages of 30-45. Employees between the ages of 30-45 had the second-highest uptake of part-time options on maternity leave return. Employees over the age of 45 years and over the age of 60 years are statistically less likely to take up maternity leave, which would explain the significant differences in uptake between the age groups. However, possible explanations for the differences in uptake between employees under the age of 30 and employees between the ages of 30-45 could be that employees under the age of 30 are either more likely to come back to work rather than stay at home with their newborn child or, that they are simply less interested in coming back full-time. This would be a suitable area for further investigation. If female employees under the age of 30 are more likely to come back to work part-time then does this mean that females over the age of 30 years come back as full-time employees or are they more likely to become stay-at-home mums instead of coming back to work? Do they not come back because they perceive there to be not enough flexibility? If the latter is the case then the organisation might consider exploring and negotiating further FWAs that might be attractive to these female employees.

Arrangements such as conducting work from home or coming into the office during times that suit these women might be ways in which they can continue working at the University. The benefit of this arrangement, if the job requirements allow this particular individual to be flexible, is that this person will already be familiar with the culture of the organisation and the job description at hand. The University will a) not lose the knowledge that this employee has gained over their years of employment with the University, and b) they will not need to hire and train a new employee for that same position, which could be more costly than allowing the current employee to take up a FWA (McDonald, Brown & Bradley, 2004). If the job at hand requires more hours in the office then this particular employee is able to commit then the University might consider offering the employee a comparable, but perhaps less time-demanding position or consider job sharing for that particular position.
It is important for the University, as well as organisations in the wider community, to ensure that employees that fall within the under 30 years of age group and the employees aged 30-45 years, are aware of the availability of these arrangements. If organisations can create flexibility for both women and men and allow them to be a part of the workforce without feeling that they are compromising their family life then this is likely to work to the organisation’s advantage in a variety of ways. Women who have young families might not go back to work at all if they are not offered any flexibility or they might decide to look for employment elsewhere. These women could be very knowledgeable and valuable assets to any organisation. By offering these FWAs organisations would be more likely to attract competent staff that may otherwise not be a part of the workforce. For employees that are already employed, and that, after having started families of their own, have had shifts in their priorities, the offering of these FWAs could ensure their continuing employment with their employer, albeit in a different capacity than before. The partial-loss of such an employee would surely be preferable to a total loss of an employee who has been with an organisation for an extended period of time and has become a valuable source of knowledge about the organisation and the position(s) that they held. Baughman, DiNardi and Holtz-Eakin (2003, p. 249) support this view and found that the cost of employee turnover “averages 1.5 times the annual salary of the worker being replaced”. This cost includes not only the recruiting costs, but also the lost productivity (Baughman, DiNardi & Holtz-Eakin, 2003).

Particularly male employees who have the option to take up paternity leave unpaid should be informed and encouraged to take this up if they would like to spend time with their newborn child(ren). Being ‘forced’ to work through such a special time could create resentment towards the organisation, which is likely to decrease job satisfaction and motivation. However, as research suggests that there are negative career consequences associated with the utilisation of FWAs (Lyness and Brumit-Kropf, 2005) male employees who are, in most cases, still the main breadwinners might be hesitant to take these arrangements up. Another concern with the option of paternity leave unpaid, which continuously came up throughout the qualitative
questions in the survey, was that it is difficult for new families to take time off work without getting their wages. When asked what additional FWAs they would like to see offered at the University, many respondents suggested that the University follows the example of other Universities in Western Australia that offer paid paternity leave. One of the respondents stated that:

"I was disappointed that the University did not offer paid paternity leave to fathers. I got 12 weeks paid for my first child when I was employed at another University which enabled my wife to return to work after 6 months (she earns a lot more than I do as an [sic] HR Manager) and I was able to spend 3 months look after my child – an experience I was very grateful to have. I was disappointed when I discovered that the University offered only unpaid leave to fathers. Not only that but no type of leave to cover the period my wife was in hospital, another University gave me 5 days leave for this...I had to take carers sick leave in order to look after my two kids when number 3 was born!"

In a work-environment that is continuously employing an increasing number of women, FWAs need to be altered to facilitate and encourage this movement. This does not only entail offering FWAs to the female employees but will also require flexibility for the male employees who would then also have the choice and opportunity to support their partners and family when necessary. Based on this research and the qualitative findings, the University might consider adding a fixed amount of paid paternity leave as a part of the FWAs package.

The University and organisations in the wider community should encourage staff to feel comfortable taking up FWAs that are relevant to their circumstances and create an organisational culture in which this is accepted. In addition to this, employees that are supportive of other employees could be rewarded and acknowledged. Management should be offered courses that train managers to handle and monitor an increasingly fluid workforce. Managing this type of workforce would obviously be quite different from managing a traditional workforce where all employees can be found at their desk between 9am-5pm Monday through to Friday. It has been suggested that FWAs can also offer managers the opportunity to meet changing
demands in the workforce, which would increase an organisation’s competitive advantage. These strategies should be further explored in any organisation that wants to meet the challenges in our changing environment while simultaneously creating and maintaining a “happy workforce”. This, in turn, is likely to result in an increase in employee engagement and productivity.

Availability does not always ensure uptake and this provision-uptake gap has been found to be problematic at the level of both the employee and the organisation as well as society as a whole. Research has suggested that the perceived control employees have over work and family matters indirectly affect the “attitude, mental health and physical health of workers” (Thomas and Ganster, 1995, quoted by McDonald et al., 2005). McDonald, Brown and Bradley (2005) even found that under-utilisation of work-life policies has potential implications for fertility rates in developed countries, with females delaying or abandoning childbirth in the belief that it would negatively affect employment security and promotion.

Informing and encouraging all employees at any organisation to be supportive of employees requesting to take these arrangements up could reduce the resistance to the uptake of FWAs. Particularly managers should be trained and educated on the benefits of FWAs. Managers should also be given common guidelines that would apply across the board rather than decisions on FWAs being left to individual managers’ discretion. Training courses or awareness courses about the FWAs that are available and the goals and aims of the organisation in offering them should be communicated to the staff. Employees that do not take-up FWAs sometimes feel exploited when they have to pick up work after an employee that is utilising a FWA. Ensuring that parties on both sides understand and support each other would be helpful to the overall culture. A culture that is encouraging of employees creating a balance between their work and family responsibilities will encourage employees to take up FWAs, which in turn will assist an organisation in attracting and retaining competent staff. McDonald, Brown and Bradley (2005) believe that the provision of FWAs will benefit organisations by improving the retention or recruitment of skilled
women. These FWAs, and the subsequent increased WLB, is likely to result in higher levels of job satisfaction among these employees and decreased levels of absenteeism and turnover.

**Dependant sick leave/family leave**

Age was a significant factor in an employee’s uptake of *dependant sick leave/family leave*. Employees between the ages of 30-45 were the highest up takers of this FWA. Employees between 46 and 60 also had a high uptake of *dependant sick leave/family leave*. The uptake of this FWA was much less by both the employees under the age of 30 years and employees over the ages of 60 years. These findings are once again likely to relate to the fact that the employees between 30 and 45 are likely to have young families. This group of employees is also more likely to have elderly parents that they might be caring for. The employees that are either under the age of 30 or over the age of 60 are less likely to have any dependants, such as children or elderly parents.

It appears that employees in different stages of life require different types of FWAs to balance their work and outside life. At some point in life every employee is likely to have a need for some type of flexibility. In fact, Matthews (2007) suggests that more than half of the employees in the UK will be carers at some point in their lives. One would expect Australia’s statistics to be similar. It is important for an employee, for the organisation and for society as a whole that these carers are able to “identify themselves and feel comfortable about accessing support” (Matthews, 2007, p.22). In addition to this, it would be rare these days to find a employee who would be satisfied with the traditional working hours that previous generations, such as the traditionalists and baby boomers, were more likely to comply with.

Creating awareness and allowing employees to take up these FWAs is likely to increase their satisfaction with their WLB and will alleviate the stress of attempting to combine the two aspects of one’s life. It will help create a bond of loyalty between the employee and the organisation. This will positively affect the organisation as it is
likely to increase an employee's job satisfaction and productivity, which in turn is likely to result in the retention of these employees. It appears that a lack of WLB, or work-life conflict, can be the cause of stress for many employees. This stress is likely to affect not only this particular employee, but also their immediate social circles. Further studies could be conducted to investigate the relationship of these stressors on the increasing divorce rate and disintegration of family-life. Therefore, allowing employees, through the use of FWAs, to create a more satisfactory WLB for themselves and their family would benefit society as a whole. As the data indicates that the option of taking up dependant sick/family leave is particularly valued by employees between the ages of 30-45 the organisation should ensure that this group is targeted with information about the availability of this option.

It is also important to advertise the availability of dependant sick/family leave to new applicants, particularly, but not exclusively, if these applicants fall within the 30-45 years of age range. Job applicants might value the availability of FWAs to such an extent that this would sway them in their decision to work for the University. In addition to this, awareness about these FWAs should be created among staff at the University, both to inform them of their options as well as to create an understanding and appreciation for those employees, and their personal situations, that choose to take up FWAs. Throughout the qualitative data the responses very often stated that employees were actually not familiar with the different FWAs and were not aware that they were entitled to any FWAs. If employees are unaware of these FWAs then they might leave the organisation to look for an “employer of choice” in order to create a more satisfactory WLB without realizing that this may have been a possibility at their initial place of employment. The University, or organisations outside, can create better awareness through creating publicity, perhaps through internal communication channels, or through the organisation of awareness and information session. These sessions can be used to inform staff about what FWAs are available and how these can best be accessed.
Annual leave

An employee’s age was found to be significantly related to the uptake of annual leave. The uptake of annual leave was greatest among the older employees. Employees over the age of 60 were the highest users of this FWA and the employees between the age of 46 and 60 were the second highest up takers. The younger employees, particularly the employees under 30 years of age, used this arrangement much less. A possible explanation for this finding could be that the employees in the latter stages of their employment feel that they need this time to rest and recuperate. The employees in their earlier career might also feel like they are working up the corporate ladder and that taking such a substantial amount of time off will have repercussions for this aspired ascent. They might instead choose to take a few days off during the year, rather than take the whole lot at once.

By understanding that these periods away from work are important to particularly the older employees, organisations can ensure awareness and accessibility of annual leave amongst this group of employees. The finding that younger employees might not want to take too much time off from work at once during their career-building years could be utilised to offer these employees alternative leave arrangements. Perhaps working having an extra day off each month would be a preferable and valuable FWA for these employees.

Work from home

Age was also significantly related to an employee’s uptake of the work from home option. The uptake of this option was highest among the employees aged between 46-60 and 30-45 years of age. The group that utilised this arrangement least were the employees under 30 years of age. It is likely that employees aged 30-60 years of age are more likely to have dependants that they care for. These dependants could either be children, elderly parents or other family members, such as grandchildren. Working from home would give these employees more flexibility to look after these dependants. In addition to this, employees that are aged 46-60 might not find it as necessary to come into the office and would prefer to spend time working rather than
commuting to and from work. Employees that are aged less than 30 years of age might enjoy working in an office with colleagues and enjoy the social aspect of their employment and therefore not consider working from home at that stage of their career. Employees that are aged over 60 might be in a career transition or in part-time positions and might also enjoy working in an office with other people during the hours that they come to work.

Working from home is an option that is suitable to some positions, while not to others. Employees that are in general positions where a presence is required for face-to-face customer interaction cannot easily transfer their responsibilities to an office at home. Academics, however, can, when not required to teach or attend meetings, easily research or prepare materials at home. While this may appear to send an inconsistent message to employees when one employee is permitted to conduct work from home while another employee cannot, employees should be made aware that the logistics of working from home can be complicated by the job at hand. This is another reason that the approval or disapproval of FWAs should be consistent across the University, so that employees will know and trust that when there is a disparity between the accessibility of FWAs between employees that this is due to logistics rather than favoritism. One of the respondents clearly agreed and stated that:

"It is more that not all departments can take advantage of these flexible options with the University. As a whole the University is extremely flexible, better then most employers, however, this is 100% dependant on your role and position within the company." 

Managers will need to be trained in the challenging responsibility of managing an increasingly fluid type of workforce where employees can no longer all be found at their desk between 9am-5pm (Johnson, 2004). Morgan (2004) found that managers were hesitant to support FWAs due to attitudinal barriers, rather than substantive and valid reasons. These managers were concerned about employees' ability to manage themselves (Morgan, 2004). If not properly educated and trained in the benefits and
challenges associated with FWAs managers might be hesitant approving any requests for flexibility for fear of a loss of control.

Organisations and managers have to realise that for some people, working from home is the only way that they can, or are willing to be, employed. If this option was not available then they might choose not to work at all or they would be very dissatisfied driving to and from work for hours each day. As these individuals could be valuable employees to an organisation, the organisation should attempt to meet the request for this FWA wherever the job at hand allows this.

**Length of employment benefits**

As was to be expected the uptake of long service leave half pay was significantly related to an employee’s age. Employees over 60 years of age took this arrangement up most, followed by employees between the ages of 46 and 60. In this day and age employees are not likely to remain loyal to their first employers long-term. They are likely to change jobs a few times before finding their ideal long-term employment. This makes it likely that these employees will not be eligible for length of employment benefits until relatively later in life. Long service leave is a benefit that an employee can take up after 10 years of continuous service at the University. After an additional continuous 7 years of service they are eligible for further long service leave.

The uptake of a part-time contract in transition to retirement was also related to an employee’s age. Retirement is, for most, not an option before the age of 60, so the group of employees over 65 years of age was the group of employees that were found to take this option up the most. This FWAs allows these employees to remain active in the workforce, but on their own terms and not full-time. The benefit of these arrangements for the University, or any other organisation for that matter, is that the knowledge and experience that these employees have accumulated over years of service to the organisation will remain part of the organisation for at least a little longer. If the part-time contract in transition to retirement was not an option for
employees then these employees might take their knowledge and experience to
another organisation where they are able to work part-time up until retirement. In
addition to this, it would allow the employees that are in transition to retirement to
potentially transfer their knowledge to a new employee slowly. The option of part-
time contract in transition to retirement should therefore be communicated to all
employees that are nearing the age of retirement in advance. Perhaps the University
can identify the employees that are approximately two years from retirement age and
inform them of the option to remain employed part-time whenever they decide that
they are ready for retirement. Retaining these employees for as long as possible
would be beneficial to any organisation.

Summary
The findings clearly indicate that an employee’s age will impact upon the appeal and
uptake of different types of FWAs. It is likely that parental arrangements will be most
attractive to employees that are either aged less than 30 years or between the ages of
30 and 45. Organisations should therefore create awareness as well as formal
structures that ensure that employees will feel comfortable and supported taking these
available arrangements up. Age was also significantly related to an employee’s
uptake of the work from home option, with employees between the ages of 45-60 and
30-45 years of age utilising this arrangement the most. These are the employees that
are most likely to have a dependant child or relative that they care for or who no
longer feel the need to come into the office for all facets of their work. These
employees might prefer to spend time working at home, rather than commuting,
particularly at times when the tasks at hand do not require them to be physically
present. Ensuring that this group of employees are aware of these arrangements is
essential. For the employees in the younger age groups it is also important to note that
there are indications that: “...achieving a healthy WLF is one of the most important
considerations for graduates when it comes to choosing an employer (Personnel
that they are competitive in the offering and accessibility of FWAs to ensure the
attraction and retention of staff.
According to this research, *annual leave* and arrangements pertaining to length of employment are most likely to be taken up by employees over the age of 60. Policy-makers and HR practitioners should utilise these findings to create more awareness and better accessibility, particularly among employees in that age-group. It has been suggested that academic salaries at Australian Universities are “relatively uncompetitive with comparable private sector salaries in Australia and some overseas academic salaries” (Horsley et al., 2005, quoted by Hammond & Churchman, 2008, p. 238). These finding suggesting that certain groups of employees seem to value specific FWAs, could be used in offering and promoting these arrangements to these groups of employees to attract and retain individuals that are valuable to the University. One of the respondents supported this view and stated that:

“WLB is *THE* most important aspect of my job. No amount of salary will compensate for working hour flexibility.”

This particular employee would not be alone in this view and organisations should attempt to utilise FWAs to attract and retain these individuals.

**Gender**

An employee’s gender also appeared to have a significant effect on the types of FWAs taken up. While the relationships between gender and certain FWAs, such as *paid maternity leave* and *part-time options on maternity leave return*, are not surprising, the other relationships were more capricious. Previous research has suggested that gender is not a particularly strong predictor of the uptake of FWAs (Collingwood, 1996; Secret, 2000). While the uptake of FWAs in terms of overall numbers might or might not be different, the findings of this particular study, which examined relationships between demographic variables and the uptake of each specific type of FWA, indicated a clear distinction in the types of FWAs that each gender appears to favor. There was, however, no significant difference in satisfaction with the current WLB between the genders.
A relationship that was not found to be significant, which is an important finding in itself, is the relationship between an employee’s gender and their uptake of *paternity leave unpaid*. The collected data indicated that the gender of an employee bore no relationship to their uptake of this particular FWA. As female employees are not eligible to take up *paternity leave unpaid* the most likely explanation for this would be that neither male (or perhaps a negligible amount) nor female employees take up this arrangement. When respondents were asked what FWA they would like the University to consider introducing, a large amount of respondents suggested the University consider offering paid paternity leave. It appears that the fact that it is unpaid is a big factor in new fathers deciding not to take the option up. This is quite understandable as it is in most families also a time in which the mother stops working and most families would probably prefer not to go without both incomes when first starting a family and becoming responsible for new life.

Maternal arrangements

Not surprisingly, an employee’s gender is significantly related to their uptake of *paid maternity leave* and *part-time options on maternity leave return*. *Paid maternity leave* is a FWA that is exclusively available to women. These results were therefore to be expected. A surprising finding in relation to the uptake of FWAs associated with maternity leave, however, is that, although women did take them up more than men, that their uptake is not particularly high. This may be due to the fact that there is not enough awareness, an unsupportive organisational culture, the age of the respondents or perhaps women that consider taking up this option are held back by career-concerns. Research by Allen and Russell (1999, quoted by McDonald, Brown and Bradley, 2004, p. 43) suggests that employees who utilised family-friendly policies were perceived by co-workers as “having decreased organisational commitment, which was thought to subsequently affect the allocation of organisational rewards, including advancement opportunities and salary increases.” McDonald, Brown and Bradley (2004) suggest that for this reason work-life policies tend to be underutilised, particularly by men, single earners or career-oriented women. One of the survey respondents felt that:
"All in all my experience at [the University] since I had my children is that there is a lot of lip service in regards to flexible work arrangements but that is all!!"

This once again stipulates, as indicated by the literature, that even if formal arrangements are in place that there may be informal or external factors that would hinder women from actually taking up these arrangements.

**Dependant sick leave/family leave**

Dependant sick leave/family leave was found to be taken up significantly more by women than by men. It appears that the females are still likely to be the primary-caregivers and men the main income-earners in families. While the employment of women in the workforce is much higher than it used to be and continuously increasing, these findings appear to indicate that the national culture still primarily views men as the main breadwinners and women as the primary carers. Ezzedeen and Ritchey (2009) concur with this notion and find that women are much more likely than men to adjust their careers in response to being a parent. A study by Pini and McDonald (2008) within the Australian local government supported findings by Sheridan (2004, quoted by Pini and McDonald, 2008, p. 608) who suggested that men suffer from “chronic presenteeism as a criteria for career success”. Pini and McDonald (2008) found that male employees associate long hours with masculinity. A reduction in hours or any utilisation of FWAs would therefore affect their view of their own masculinity. This would explain why women would be most likely to take leave for family matters.

For organisations this would indicate that the national culture will play a significant role in the uptake of FWAs for both male and female employees. When creating organisational policies organisations should be aware that the policies might not be effective, unless specific plans of action are designed, if they differ from the national culture and, in this case, subsequent gender-roles. Governmental policies and changes can be developed with the intention to initiate gradual changes to the gender-roles.
within our society. Additional research aimed at identifying effective strategies in which organisations can create a culture which, irrespective of the changes in the national culture, encourages both male and female employees to utilise FWAs would be beneficial.

*Long service leave double pay*

The *long service leave double pay* option appeared to be taken up more by males than by females. This FWA allows employees to take half the amount of long service leave and get double the remuneration during the time that they are on leave. A possible rationalisation for this finding could be that women, in their role as caregivers, are more likely to prefer the longer period of time off at the normal rate to be with their families. For male employees it may allow them to still take some time off and also obtain a financial benefit. Male employees might perceive negative career consequences if they take off too much time, so this FWA would be an ideal alternative to a lengthier, normally remunerated long service leave.

It appears that the offering of this FWA is an ideal alternative to the traditional *long service leave* arrangement. This gives employees the choice of a long or short period of leave.

*Flexible hours*

The uptake of *part-time work, time off in-lieu* and the *compressed working week* were significantly related to an employee’s gender. The findings indicate that significantly more women take up all of these FWAs than males. As women are still often the primary caretakers *part-time work* would allow them to meet their family and work responsibilities. Warner and Hausdorf (2009, p. 373) have suggested that the “traditional family dynamic is being replaced with a less gender-role prescribed model where men are more involved in parenting and women are more involved in paid work outside of the home”. While statistics and research support the statement that women are more involved in paid work outside of the home, various studies challenge the view that men are more involved in parenting and have shown that
women are still responsible for “household tasks and child-rearing, regardless of how many hours they work outside the home” (Hochschild, 1989; Lewis and Cooper, 1987; Pleck, 1985; Linehan and Walsh, 2000, quoted by Peus & Mattausch, 2008, p. 560). Fraser (2004) concurs and states that the overwhelming majority of part-time workers are females who choose the reduced hours to fulfill their domestic responsibilities. Women found that a part-time position usually has a larger than part-time workload and they often find themselves taking work home (MacDermid, Lee, Buck & Williams, 2001). In addition to this, a part-time position often affects their future work opportunities as part-time workers are often assumed to have “stepped off the career track” (MacDermid, Lee, Buck & Williams, 2001, p. 307). This is a finding supported by Ezzedeen and Ritchey (2009) who believe that the leaves of absence and fewer years of experience undercut women’s career progress and earnings. Women managers have reported feeling “exhausted, isolated, and frustrated by repeatedly having to face stereotypes that they are less committed, knowledgeable or able.” (MacDermid, Lee, Buck & Williams, 2001, p. 307). Schwarz (1989, quoted by McDonald, Brown and Bradley, 2005) concurs and contended that part-time women were paid less, received less training and had less job opportunities. Research has also indicated that a woman’s child-bearing and child-rearing years are the same years in which potential managers are expected to prove their commitment to an organisation (Peus & Traut-Mattausch, 2008). Peus and Traut-Mattausch (2008, p. 560) point out that this has resulted in women having to “choose between a managerial career and having children, whereas men are expected to combine both”.

However, despite these draw-backs women often do not have another choice if they wish to remain active in the workforce while caring for their families. Cabrera (2009) suggests that for many women the price of getting to the top are too high in terms of the impact on their family lives. Research by Wise and Bond (2003) endorse this proposition stating that their findings: “support the theory that female parents are attracted to/remain in an organisation because they offer part-time hours that help them manage care responsibilities”. *Time off in-lieu and a compressed working week* are also ways in which women can combine their work and their families. These
FWAs are all ways in which work hours are flexible as long as the total hours of expected work is met.

_Paid study leave_

_Paid study leave_ was found to be a FWA that was taken up more by males than by females. An explanation for this finding could be that this would allow male employees to simultaneously fulfill their responsibilities to their families by not reducing their earnings to take time off, as well as further their knowledge and career-opportunities. As men still appear to be the main breadwinner in most households in Australia, _paid study leave_ would be an ideal way to gain more knowledge, while not taking away from their pay or time with their family. Another explanation for this finding is presented by Pini and McDonald (2008, p. 599) who suggest that men’s perception of hegemonic, or “culturally exalted”, masculinity within Australian society play a role. Pini and McDonald (2008, p. 605) found that men rationalise their departure from working full time, and thus from hegemonic masculinity, by emphasising their adherence to other aspects of this dominant gender identity. That is, “their work commitment, capacity for career success, ambition and singularity of purpose” (Pini & McDonald, 2008, p. 605). This newly acquired knowledge could open up new job opportunities and offer career advancements. Patrickson and Hartmann (2001, p. 200) agree and found that “credentialism has become a powerful means whereby individuals invest in their intellectual capital and expand their choices”. It is also likely that female employees, who have families, will be more interested in FWAs that allow them to increase their WLB, rather than additional responsibilities and commitments. _Paid study leave_ might be an arrangement that females without families or older employees would be interested in, but studying is less likely to be a priority for female employees with families who are continuously aiming to combine their work and family life.

_Summary_

Previous studies on the uptake of FWAs have been ambiguous with different findings on whether male and female employees have a similar uptake of FWAs. Charlesworth
(1997, quoted by McDonald, Guthrie, Bradley, Shakespeare-Finch, 2005) claims that, even though the arrangements were available to all workers, that women with dependant children have by far been the largest demographic group to utilise these arrangements. This finding seems to comply with the resource dependence theory where an organisation is likely to concentrate on issues that are important to the employees that they value and want to retain. Many of these FWAs have been developed and made available alongside the rise in women's participation in the workforce in order to assist them in staying or re-entering the workforce. Women have been found to be under participating in the workforce and FWAs are a way in which employers can assists them to be a part of the workforce. Clearly, organisations understand that these under participating groups of individuals can be valuable employees and have therefore started offering these arrangements. However, organisations should be aware that merely offering these FWAs may not assure uptake, and may therefore not result in the aspired goals.

The findings from this particular study at the University clearly indicate that different FWAs appeal to male employees than to female employees. While females appear to be more likely to take up FWAs that allow them to simultaneously fulfill their domestic- as well as their work responsibilities males were found to be taking up FWAs that allowed them to further their knowledge-base or long service leave.

Papalexandris and Kramar (1997) concur with this finding and append that, until now, women have had to make the necessary arrangements to accommodate their work and family responsibilities. Papalexandris and Kramar (1997, p. 583) also found that women “bear the stress and conflict associated with combining employment and family responsibilities.” This concurs with a study by Cunningham (2001, quoted by McDonald, Brown and Bradley, 2005) who found that most male employees tended to give work priority over family. Pini and McDonald (2008) have found that, within the Australian local government, “full-time paid work remains a powerful symbolic and material expression of hegemonic masculinity”. This view of masculinity is likely to be a barrier to male employees utilising FWAs. The uptake of FWAs for family-
reasons is likely to Chesley and Moen (2006) indicate that women are not only more likely to be the primary carers for children, but they are also more likely to care for aging relatives, even if the relative is an in-law. The types of FWAs that women were found to take up at the University would corroborate this and indicate that these FWAs are critical in order for women to be active in the workforce.

The discovery that male employees utilised different types of FWAs was also found by Fraser (2004, p. 168) who suggested that if a male employees requests a career break or a reduction in his working hours that this is likely to be because he would like to “undertake vocational development, such as further study”. However, a female employee that requests a career break is likely to use the time to care for her family (Fraser, 2004, p. 168). These findings indicate that female and male employee value different FWAs and, unless the male-breadwinner culture changes, this is likely to remain unchanged. Hyman and Summers (2004) voice the concern that despite “women’s increased participation in paid work and its attendant concerns, there has been little obvious movement over time over the balance of household responsibilities in terms of domestic labour and child care.” The bulk of these responsibilities are still carried out by females. This assertion is supported by Ezzedeen and Ritchey (2009, p. 390) who also state that modern Western family norms still assign the task of looking after “hearth and home” with women and this makes it harder for them to advance in their career or increase their earnings. As a result, these employees are locked into dependency on their partners or the state and to reinforce traditional gender roles in the long term (Perrons, 2000, quoted by Gardiner & Tomlinson, 2009, p. 674).

Employers can utilise these identified FWA preferences by ensuring that the available FWAs are communicated to the employees and that awareness and support are established within the organisation. Organisations should attempt to create a distinct organisational culture, particularly for men, where full-time employment is not necessarily associated with masculinity and where uptake of FWAs does not negatively affect an employee’s career.
These findings can be utilised by organisations that wish to prevent the female brain drain. Particularly FWAs that facilitate the combination of work with family life appear valuable to female employees. Developing policies that enable female employees to be more flexible and ensuring that these policies are accessible will assist in retaining and attracting valuable employees.

No significant difference was found between the genders in terms of satisfaction with their current WLB.

**Family circumstances**

There were 6 possible answers to the question about an employee's family circumstances. Employees could tick more than just one box. However, as these somewhat overlapped, the researcher, in consultation with the relevant department at the University, decided to create 10 independent groups of employees, which included all of the possible answers to the question by employees:

1. no dependants
2. Both primary carer and earner
3. Primary carer
4. Primary earner
5. Contributing carer
6. Contributing earner
7. Primary earner and contributing carer
8. Primary carer and contributing earner
9. Contributing carer and contributing earner
10. No dependants and contributing earner

The answers provided in the survey were not mutually exclusive and somewhat unclear. It is therefore possible that respondents may have ticked the first suitable box without having read the last few answers.
A relationship that was not found to be significant was the relationship between an employee’s family circumstances and the uptake of unpaid paternity leave. Unpaid paternity leave was also found not to be affected by an employee’s gender. These non-significant findings are significant in their own right as they indicate that male employees do not tend to utilise unpaid paternity leave as discussed in section 11.1.2.

To initiate small changes in the gender-roles within Australian culture, this research would encourage organisations to offer paid paternity leave. This would demonstrate that fathers are an important educator of their children and encourage society to begin balancing work and family life amongst both genders.

**Maternal arrangements**

An employee’s family circumstances were significantly related to their uptake of paid maternity leave and part-time options on maternity leave return. Employees that considered themselves to be either: the primary carer and contributing earner or the primary carer took up paid maternity leave and part-time options on maternity leave return the most. As maternity arrangements are only available to women it is likely that the primary carer for children is their mother. This finding was therefore not surprising.

While maternity arrangements are a good way to facilitate employees’ WLB, organisations have to appreciate that once the maternity leave period has ended that employees will still need to create a new WLB around their new-born child. The part-time options on maternity leave return are a great start, but primary carers may need, at certain stages, to take care of sick children or drop or pick children up from school. By communication with employees, creating awareness and encouraging input in new types of innovative FWAs organisations are likely to reap the benefits in terms of employees’ job satisfaction, loyalty to the organisation, reduced absenteeism and job performance.
Dependant sick leave/family leave

The FWA of dependant sick leave/family leave was taken up most by employees who categorised themselves as being the primary carer or the contributing carer and contributing earner. It appears that employees who clearly categorise themselves as being in a carer-role are more likely to take up FWAs when this is required by their families, while the employees that view themselves as the primary earner are less likely to do so. It appears that most families have made the conscious decision to divide their roles in such a way that the male usually acts as the breadwinner, while the female takes the role of the primary care-giver. Surprisingly, the data suggests that employees that are the contributing earner utilise it least followed closely by employees who do not have any dependants. This finding highlights the limitation of this particular question and its subsequent findings. Did employees that described themselves as the contributing earner have any dependants? Did they look at all the possible answers to this question before answering or they pick the first suitable answer?

Annual leave

An employee’s circumstance was also significantly related to their uptake of annual leave. Employees that viewed themselves as both the primary earner and contributing carer or as the primary earner reported taking this FWA up most. As annual leave is an entitlement, rather than a negotiated additional arrangement, for all employees, perhaps taking this up would allow employees who are usually the primary earners the chance to assists their partner and share care for the children over the holiday periods or at times that their partner really needs to be at work. Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, employees who categorised themselves as both the primary carer and earner utilised annual leave least. This would indicate that, if they have the choice, that these employees want more presence at work, rather than less and will only take FWAs up when this is a necessity. Perhaps not utilising their annual leave all at once will allow these employees more flexibility and negotiating-power with their manager, when their family duties really require them to work flexibly.
Part-time work

Employees who saw themselves as the primary carer and contributing earner were by far the highest users of part-time work. Employees who categorised themselves as the primary carer were the second highest users. These findings were to be expected as part-time work would be the ideal way to combine work and family life. For the primary carers this would allow them to create a schedule that would work for their particular circumstances. Employees could potentially reduce their daily hours and decide to drop their children off at school, come in to work and then leave to pick them up. This ensures that their children are cared for and that they are still active in the workforce.

For organisations this is an agreeable way to hold on to high-quality employees. For this reason, it is particularly important to communicate the option of part-time work to the entire workforce. That way, employees, who might at one time or another, be able to work less hours each week, will consider this option before looking elsewhere for employment. By facilitating their WLB employees are likely to become more loyal to the organisation and if they decide to come back to full-time employment, it is probable that they will stick with the organisation.

Work from home

An employee’s family circumstance was also significantly related to their uptake of the work from home arrangement. The three groups of employees that utilised this FWA most were employees that were: 1) the primary earner and contributing carer, 2) the primary carer and contributing earner and 3) the primary carer. Working from home would allow these employees to look after their dependants while conducting their work (Harpaz, 2002). The rationalisation that employees who were carers were more likely to take up work from home was corroborated by a statement from one of the respondents who felt that:

“...for me homebased work is invaluable – allows me flexibility with dropping kids off and picking them up from school.”
Employees who indicated that they had no dependants were least likely to take this FWA up. Harpaz (2002, p. 77) suggests that disadvantages of telecommuting for individuals relate to an “impaired feeling of belonging and feelings of isolation.” If an employee does not have dependants to care for at home, then perhaps they would prefer the social aspect of working in an office with other employees over working alone at home. In addition to this, it has been suggested that it is difficult for workers to develop their career when they are out of sight (Harpaz, 2002). While this may be an acceptable cost for employees that are caring for family members, for employees that do not have dependants, and for whom it is not necessary to be at home, this potential consequence is likely to affect their decision to take this arrangement up.

For employees that need to be at home for carer-responsibilities work from home would be an ideal arrangement. It would allow them to remain employed, while simultaneously caring for a dependant(s). For this type of FWA to work, however, new management practices will have to be developed that measure and reward output, rather than time at the office. Organisations and employees will also have to learn to trust each other. The psychological contract, which is defined as “employees’ perceptions of what they owe the organization and what the organizations owes them in return” (De Vos & Meganck, 2009, p. 47), will have to be amended to match this new work arrangement. Organisations have to be able to trust that their employees will complete the work that they have taken home, while employees will have to trust that the organisation will ensure the development of their knowledge and career even when they are not physically present. Management training courses will need to be provided to prepare managers for the challenges associated with a fluid workforce.

**Paid study leave**

Paid study leave was an option that was utilised most by employees that indicated that they were the primary earner. For employees that are the primary earner but who also have a family, paid study leave would be an ideal arrangement to develop their knowledge and skills base. By utilising the paid study leave arrangements these employees would not be compromising the income for their family, but still develop
their skills. This newly acquired knowledge would make them more employable as well as put them in a better situation for promotions. Employees that are the primary carers as well as employees of an organisation are likely to be struggling with their WLB as it is and these employees would therefore less likely to take on extra tasks.

If organisations appreciate the value of this FWA to its employees then it could use it as a drawing card for its organisation. This would heighten the expertise of the organisation, act as an attraction and retention strategy and increase employees’ job satisfaction and performance.

**Summary**

The findings of the relationships between an employee’s family circumstances and the uptake of FWAs is in agreement with research by Tausig and Fenwick (2001, p. 101, quoted by Maxwell, Rankine, Bell and MacVicar, 2007, p. 140) who state that: “the most consistent family characteristic predicting imbalance is being a parent”. It is clear that employees who are parents are more likely to experience an imbalance between work and family if required to work ‘traditional hours’. The employees that indicated to be the primary carer, or in some cases supporting carer, in their family were significantly more likely to utilise FWAs that allowed them to be flexible in the time and place in which work is conducted. These employees are more likely to juggle work and family and require FWAs to create a satisfactory WLB.

Organisations should identify employees that are parents and ensure awareness of the various FWAs that can assists these employees in creating a more satisfactory WLB. Organisations should make certain that the available FWAs are also easily accessible. If employees have to go through various channels or feel that the organisational culture does not fully support the utilisation of FWAs then they might decide not to request them. This is likely to result in work-life conflict, which would present negative consequences for the organisation, for the individual and their family and for society as a whole. By ensuring that the FWAs are accessible organisations show that
they are totally committed to the facilitation of employees’ WLB and this will positively affect the parties involved as well as the wider community.

**Career stage**

An employee’s career stage was significantly related to their uptake of a variety of FWAs, such as paid maternity leave, part-time options on maternity leave return, dependant sick leave/family leave, annual leave, part-time work, time off-in-lieu, work from home, long service leave half pay and part-time contract in transitions to retirement. According to Robbins and Judge (2010) most people start working between the ages of 18-23 and therefore their generational eras are also likely to be closely related to an employee’s chronological age. This same theory would then apply to employee’s career stages and their chronological age, although it should be noted that a career stage is not as easily defined. It should also be noted that this relation may be somewhat different for female employees. Female employees, who are more likely to stop working or work less during the child bearing years, might not reach the career stage that male employees, without the time off work, would. An employee’s age and an employee’s career stage appeared similarly related to an employee’s uptake of FWAs and their satisfaction with their current WLB. All of the FWAs, apart from paternity leave unpaid, that were identified as significantly related to an employee’s age were also significantly related to an employee’s career stage. In addition to the FWAs that were also significantly related to age, however, time off in-lieu was also found to be significantly related to an employee’s career stage.

In addition to this, an employee’s career stage, unlike an employee’s age, was significantly related to an employee’s satisfaction with his/her current WLB.

**Maternity arrangements**

An employee’s career stage was significantly related to their uptake of paid maternity leave and part-time options on maternity leave return. Both these arrangements were taken up most by employees who were in their early career, followed closely by employees in their mid-career. Both arrangements were least utilised by employees
who found themselves in a career transition. These findings are very similar to the findings on the relationship between an employee’s age and their uptake of maternity arrangements. It should be noted that the career stages were not clearly defined and different people might have different perceptions of what would constitute each one of the career stages. It is therefore difficult to determine whether the findings on the relationships between age and the uptake of FWAs correlate or contrast the relationships between an employee’s career stage and uptake of FWAs. These comparisons will therefore be rough estimates, rather than exact findings.

One can imagine that an employee who categorises him or herself as being in their early career would be either less than 30 years old or just over. This finding would then correlate with the findings on age where employees between the ages of 30-45 and employees under the age of 30 years were most likely to take up these maternal arrangements. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) the average age of first-time mothers was 31 in 2008. This statistics would therefore agree that women around the age of 31 years and over would be most likely to take up maternity leave and part-time options on maternity leave return.

**Dependant sick leave/family leave**

Employees in their mid-career and late career had a significantly higher uptake of dependant sick leave/family leave. Both the employees in their early career and the employees in a career transition used it much less. Yet again this finding can be explained by the fact that employees in their mid-career are more likely to have young families as well as elderly parents that might need caring for. It is therefore to be expected that these employees would be most likely to take up dependant sick leave/family leave. It would be beneficial for organisations to support employees in this situation. The flexibility of an organisation and its willingness to assist its employees is likely to determine an employee’s satisfaction levels. An employee with high levels of job satisfaction is likely to have a variety of positive organisational influences, such as higher job performance, higher levels of organisational citizenship.
behaviour (OCB), lower levels of absenteeism and turnover and decreased levels of workplace deviance (Robbins & Judge, 2010).

Annual leave

An employee’s career stage also had a significant impact on their uptake of annual leave. Employees in their late career had the highest uptake of this arrangement. Employees in their mid-career had a slightly lower uptake, while employees in a career transition and in their early career utilised it much less. As with age, this finding is likely to indicate that employees in their late career and mid-career are more likely to allow themselves to take this time off to rest, recuperate and enjoy life. It is plausible that they have done the hard work and have established themselves comfortably within the organisation. Employees in their early career are likely to be working to ascertain their positions in the organisation and are still more likely to be striving towards better positions and roles within the organisation. These employees would probably be less prone to take a large amount of time off from work as this might be viewed as a lack of commitment to the organisation and these employees might fear negative repercussions if they did take time off.

Age was similarly related to the uptake of annual leave and organisations. This suggests that the older employees appreciate the time off work, while the younger employees might feel that they need to be physically present at work as much as possible to maximise their career opportunities. While annual leave is an entitlement organisations can still utilise this finding to ensure that annual leave is easily available to these employees when they request it. This finding could suggest that older employees might need this time to recuperate and rest or, alternatively, that they simply feel more comfortable being away from the office as they would have already climbed their way up the ladder. This question would be a suitable area for further research.
Flexibility in hours

An employee’s career stage significantly affected their uptake of part-time work, time off in-lieu and work from home.

Part-time work was taken up most by employees in a career transition, followed closely by employees in their late career. Employees in their early career were the third highest users, while employees in their mid-career utilised it least. Employees in a career transition are likely to be employees that are taking up part-time work in transition to retirement. Employees in their late career, who were the second-highest users of this FWA, might be thinking about their retirement and ready to reduce their hours. This finding would be suitable for further research as it somewhat conflicts the earlier findings (p. 95). This section indicated that females are much more likely than males to utilise part-time work. The assumption was that the reason behind this would be that part-time work would allow these females to combine work and family-life. These findings, however, somewhat question this rationalisation as they suggests that employees in career transitions and in their late career are much more likely to utilise part-time work. The finding that more females than males utilise part-time work might be coincidental and would need to be further investigated.

The work from home arrangement seemed most appealing to employees in their mid-career. Employees in a career transition and in their late career utilised this arrangement similarly, while employees in their early career took this arrangement up least. The employees in their mid-career are most likely to have dependant children or other family members that they care for at home. Working from home would therefore suit them best. Employees that are in a career transition and in their late career were the second highest users of this FWA. These employees might choose to work from home when the job at hand allows them to do so for convenience sake, rather than spending time commuting to the office and back when it is not necessary to be physically present. One respondent suggested a similar rationale behind her/him working from home by stating:
"available Broadband and IT connections to work remotely on DT enables me to be just as effective at home and that I don't have to travel >80-90km per wk day (70-80 minutes travel time)."

Employees in their early career are likely to enjoy the social aspect of coming into work and might therefore not consider the work from home arrangement.

An employee’s career stage also affected their uptake of time off in-lieu. Employees in their late career were the highest uptakers of this arrangement. Employees in a career transition were the second highest users, while employees in their mid-career and early career were third and fourth successively. As time at the office still appears to be seen as an indicator of commitment to a job and organisation the employees who are in their early or mid career might choose not to take this up for fear of the consequences.

Organisations might consider creating a whole new approach to appraisals that include measurements of output and quality versus the obvious indicators of presence at work and networking relations. This would additionally ensure that promotions are based on performance, rather than personal preferences. The implementation of new appraisal approaches would naturally require further research into the possibilities and challenges of such a method.

Long service leave
As is to be expected an employee’s career stage is also significantly related to their uptake of long service leave half pay and the part-time contract in transition to retirement. Long service leave half pay was taken up most by employees in their late career followed by employees in their mid-career. Long service leave half pay allows employees to take double the amount of long service leave at half of the pay. This is ideal for employees who really feel like they need the time off work and are financially able to live on half of their regular earnings during this period.
Employees in their late career and employees in a career transition were found to be the highest users of the *part-time contract in transition to retirement*. It should be noted here that the term career transition was not defined in the survey and can be interpreted in many different ways. However, due to the high percentage of respondents in a career transition indicating that they took up this particular FWA would suggest that many of the employees were in fact employees around the retirement age. This particular FWA would allow the employees that are nearing retirement age to work part-time before retiring. This is likely to allow for a better transition for the employee as well as the organisation. For employees, it would appear more natural to gradually reduce their time at work from full-time employment into retirement. In addition to this, it is beneficial for the University to retain these employees as long as possible.

*Satisfaction with current WLB*

An employee’s career stage also appeared significantly related to their satisfaction with their current WLB. Employees in their late career were most satisfied with their current WLB, while employees in their mid-career were least satisfied. Employees in their early career or in a career transition were the second and third most satisfied.

The findings indicated that employees between the ages of 30-45 and below the age of 30 were the highest users of the parental arrangements. It is likely that this age group, who would likely be classified as being mid-career, have to juggle their work around young families. This juggling-act could create stress that would reduce their satisfaction with their current WLB. The employees in their late career, who were found to be most satisfied, are likely to have raised their family and will no longer have the pressure of combining work and family responsibilities in the same manner. In addition to this, they are likely to have become valued employees to the organisation who no longer have to prove themselves in the same way that employees in earlier career stages would be inclined to.
Summary

These findings have shown that employees in different career stages will be likely to take up different FWAs. Understanding these relationships will allow managers to create better awareness amongst employees in different stages about the FWAs that would appeal most to them. It is important to create an understanding that employees in their early or mid-career may be struggling to combine their young family and work tasks and that these FWAs may be the only way that they can combine these responsibilities. Similarly, appreciating that employees in their late career or in a career transition will be looking for very different types of FWAs will allow the organisation to develop and promote specific FWAs to them. Offering employees FWAs tailored to their individual needs could be used as a drawcard for employment at the University or any other organisation. Offering these employees the flexibility that they are looking for can assist an organisation by increasing employees’ levels of job satisfaction and assisting in attracting and retaining the best employees to their organisation.

The findings from this research also seem to indicate that employees who struggle to combine their work and family responsibilities are less likely to be satisfied with their current WLB. The quality of one’s WLB, according to Thomas and Ganster (1995, quoted by McDonald et al., 2005) affects the “attitude, mental health and physical health of a worker”. It seems therefore only logical for organisations to want to attempt to maximise employee’s satisfaction with their current WLB.

Job type

The findings indicated that an employee’s job type is significantly related to their uptake of various FWAs. General staff were found to take up paid maternity leave, dependant sick leave/family leave, time off in-lieu, long service leave double pay and special paid leave more than their academic colleagues. It appears that general staff have better access, or are more able to utilise, FWAs that provide them with periods of leave. Academic staff, however, were found to utilise work from home and paid study leave significantly more than general staff. A first look at these findings clearly
demonstrated that these two groups of employees use distinctively different types of FWAs. It appears that general staff utilise a much wider range of FWAs, while academics appear to mainly take up the FWA that allows them flexibility in the place that their work is conducted and paid study leave.

While academics have been traditionally able to work flexibly, many academics are now facing a problem of heavy workloads and a requirement to work longer hours (Doherty & Manfredi, 2006). The results of this study at the University corroborate these findings. Through the qualitative data that was collected with the survey it appeared that academics are simply overwhelmed by their workloads. Doherty and Manfredi (2006), in a study on FWAs at a University in England, found that the increased student numbers, the increase in full cost courses with more demanding students, increased levels of evening and weekend teaching, pressure to do good quality research and the tension between research and a plethora of new initiatives. The qualitative data suggests that this is similar in Australia. Even if there are arrangements available these academics feel that time simply does not allow them to take these up. It may be easier for a general staff member to take time off and come back, while it appears more complicated for an academic staff member. This is a finding corroborated by research by Doherty and Manfredi (2006, p. 242) who found that

“...considerable progress can be made for APT&C (Administrative, professional, technical and clerical staff) in a University context which has many of the features which are conducive to the successful introduction of WLB (WLF) provisions. By comparison, it will show that the situation for academic staff, who already have considerable flexibility and autonomy in the organisation of their work, is far more problematic as they experience unrelenting work intensification.”

The intensifying workload of academic staff was corroborated by a statement from one of the academic survey respondents:
There is a constant call for flexibility from academics and no flexibility from the University – it is all one way. Talk of flexible working hours is a complete nonsense as the teaching loads are so overwhelming that there is no capacity for flexibility. How can one find WLF [sic] when it takes 60 hours a week to get everything done? I am insulted by the survey author’s insolent inclusion of “time off in lieu” and other so-called options that are completely outside the realm of possibility for academic staff. Do some of you people actually believe that such things can happen?”

Clearly academic staff feel that their workload is simply too high to allow them to take up certain FWAs. The findings clearly support this belief and suggest that general staff were more likely to take up FWAs that allowed them to reduce their hours or allowed them to obtain leave. Academic staff were more likely to take up FWAs that created flexibility in the place where work was conducted, but did not result in a reduction in working hours or periods of leave.

These findings were also supported by the following statement from an academic staff member:

“As an academic one has flexible arrangements within the overall expectation of working hours being 24/7; the form of the questions is oriented to General Staff, not academics.”

An academic staff member pointed out that: “Work pressures have increased my total work time so it is hard to be flexible.” As indicated by the findings, the only type of flexibility possible in this situation is the work from home arrangement as this does not reduce total working hours, but offers academics the opportunity to decide where these hours are conducted. One of the respondents felt that:

“Working from home could assist with productivity in tasks like writing papers and reports avoiding interruption and distraction from the main task by other work tasks and colleagues”.

However, according to another academic staff member this flexibility is also limited due to teaching-hours with him/her finding that:
"As an academic staff member I have good flexibility, though regular evening teaching is a bit detrimental to WLF."

According to Whitechurch (2006, cited by Paull, Omari & Sharafizad, 2009) there is a blurring of the boundaries between traditional academic work and administrative functions. This research indicates that academic staff are dissatisfied and are experiencing stress due to their increasing workload. Further research is required to investigate the increasing job requirements for academic positions and suggestions for improvements in order to ensure that Universities can continue to retain and attract academic staff.

**paid study leave**

The uptake of *paid study leave* was also significantly related to an employee’s job type. Academic staff took this arrangement up much more than general staff. A part of an academic employee’s job is to continuously broaden their knowledge base by reading or conducting research. Undertaking extra studies would therefore be a part of an academic’s job and *paid study leave* is therefore an ideal FWA for academic staff. However, while the study leave will be paid, the question remains whether this FWA can be classified as leave for academic staff. They are likely to have to make up the hours in their own time in order to complete their work. While the option of *paid study leave* is officially available to both types of staff, it is likely that an application from a general staff member would have to be approved by their supervisor and the Faculty that they work for. For their application to be successful, their proposed study would probably also have to be linked, and contribute to, the role that they are in at that point in time. One of the respondents, who was employed as a general staff member at the time of the survey, indicated that he/she would like to see the University:

"promote learning/education amongst the non-academic staff!! And not just PD short courses but actual qualifications. Have clear incentives, what's [sic] the purpose of giving the department heads budgets when the incentive to
learn is on individual basis. Dept PD budget is what the manager thinks you need to learn. Incentive is what the person would like to learn.”

Another respondent who identified himself/herself as a general staff member agreed with the fact that paid study leave should be more accessible to general staff by the following statement:

“To get paid study leave (for non-academic staff) is like skinning a cat. You will get there but it is painful. To get flexible hours ie [sic] leave early for class etc is ok as long as you are getting your work done.”

These findings indicate that, while the FWAs are available on paper, that there are clearly factors that affect the actual uptake, such as general staff feeling discouraged from requesting it due to the lengthy process and a lack of awareness about the type of studies an employee can undertake.

Satisfaction with current WLB

This research found that an employee’s job type was significantly related to their level of current WLB. Academic staff were found to be significantly less satisfied than the general staff at the University. This finding concurs with previous research by Doherty and Manfredi (2006, p. 245) who felt that the heavy workloads and requirement to work longer hours “substantially impeded” academic staff’s ability to achieve a sustainable WLF in practice.

It has been suggested that academics traditionally had flexibility in their work (Paull, Omari & Sharafizad, 2009). Throughout the qualitative data it became clear, however, that the role of academics has been changing and expanding. Many academics appear inundated with their workload and, even though the University officially offers these FWAs, they can simply not take time-off as this would mean falling behind. This finding was supported by research by Gorgasz and Leder (2006, quoted by Paull, Omari and Sharafizad, 2009) who demonstrated that academic staff in two universities worked approximately 55 hours a week with the work spread from
7.30 am to 10.00 pm and on weekends. This increased workload was encapsulated by the following response in the survey:

“What other commitments?? Most of the academic staff I know don’t have time for much of a life beyond their work commitments. The trouble is that most seem to see this as normal – just part of the job, but it puts an inordinate strain on families and friendships.”

Another insightful comment from the survey was as follows:

“Seriously look at what is being pushed down to academics. Everyone works such long hours and there is a growing expectancy that this is the norm. If you stick to a reasonable working week then what suffers is your own research productivity which means that you trap yourself here as you become no longer competitive for employment elsewhere. Alternatively if you focus on your own research and do not do the ENDLESS admin associated with teaching then you leave that work for colleagues to do and make their lives worse.”

Unfortunately, as stated by Doherty and Manfredi (2006, p. 256): “despite the contribution that academic staff make to the competitive position of their universities it seems unlikely that their employer will act to tackle the fundamental workload problems unless the labour market pressures to do so increase.” This has lead to Australian universities, who have been found to be uncompetitive in terms of remuneration, finding it difficult to fill vacancies “due to the declining attraction of academic careers” (Hammond & Churchman, 2008, p. 238). Hugo (2005, cited by Hammond & Churchman, 2008) predicts that there will be a “major shortfall of academics in the English-speaking world over the next decade” Hammond and Churchman (2008) further stipulate that the future of Australian universities as mass educators will depend on “highly qualified and specialised staff” It is therefore imperative, for the future of Australian education, that findings such as these are utilised as a trigger to investigate the expanding role of academics and the role that universities can play in combating their increasing workloads.
Summary

The common thought that knowledge are more likely to extract deeper concessions from their employer, as suggested by Donnelly (2004), appears to be only a snap-shot analysis of the current situation at the University and most likely across other Universities as well. It appears that while academic may have a higher uptake of certain FWAs that their uptake of other FWAs is limited strictly due to their workload. General staff appear to have a broader variety of FWAs accessible to them. Academics found that they were only able to take up FWAs that allowed them to be flexible in the time and place that their work was conducted as long as they completed their workload, which in most cases would take more time than the regular work-week. General staff had a significantly higher uptake of FWAs that would actually result in a reduction in their working time or allowed them to take periods of leave.

Research suggests that traditionally academic staff have been able to work flexibly, which is why it might be surprisingly to some, that general staff also had a significantly higher level of satisfaction with their current WLB. From the findings of the qualitative data it appears that the academic staff at the University are overwhelmed by their workload. This is creating work-life conflict, which in turn is likely to affect their job satisfaction and potentially their performance. In addition to this, it is likely to result in increased levels of absenteeism and turnover. This pattern is a threat to the future of Australian tertiary education with research suggesting that the attraction of academic careers are declining, which consequently means that it is proving increasingly difficult for Australian universities to recruit staff. Research such as this should be used as a trigger to investigate the increasing workload of academics, so that strategies can be put in place at organisational and/or national level, to halt this trend.
Other external sources affecting the uptake of FWAs

Approximately 50% of the employees at the University indicated that they were satisfied with their current WLB, 20% of respondents were neutral about their current WLB satisfaction, while approximately 25% of respondents were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their current WLB. One of the respondents that was satisfied with their current WLB stated that:

"...the University is a flexible place to work and it is one of the reasons I stay here. There is not much else particularly fantastic about the University at the minute."

The qualitative data collected offered some insights into additional external factors that affect the uptake of FWAs within this particular University. Identifying these external barriers was the focus of the final research question. The external barriers identified through the open-ended survey questions were:

- The local manager
- Staff shortages and intensifying workloads
- Culture
- Software
- Lack of awareness
- Informal versus formal arrangements
- Availability versus accessibility
- Unsupportive co-workers

These qualitative findings offer a valuable insight for managers and organisations and can, in addition, inform further research. Each barrier will be looked at in more depth in the remainder of this section.
Local manager

Throughout the qualitative data many employees indicated that flexibility at the University very much depended on the manager within that area. While some of the respondents were extremely satisfied with the availability of FWAs within their particular work area, many respondents felt that FWAs were only available on paper. This clearly signifies that, while the University officially makes these FWAs available, it still depends very much on the managers whether an employee can actually take the arrangement up. If a manager appears not to approve of FWAs then this will impede employees from requesting them, even if they are officially available. This was corroborated by findings from Rapoport and Bailyn (1996, quoted by McDonald, Brown and Bradley, 2005) that suggest that managers may send negative signals that imply that the use of FWAs is a problem for them and the organisation. This would impede employees from requesting FWAs.

One employee at the University felt that:

"while the University offers all these options, it is applied at an operational level. There are massive differences in the application of such leave across areas leading to inequity."

and:

"Positive experience is largely due to the people working in my area that I have been able to negotiate with. A change in personel [sic] might render the situation different. That is, I consider it very important to have both formal structure enabling flexible work as well as a supportive culture."

These findings correlate with research by MacDennid, Lee, Buck and Williams (2001, p. 313) who found that a “supportive boss was the single factor most consistently identified as critical to the success of reduced-load work arrangements.” One employee indicated that with a change of management so did the FWAs that were already in place:
“Initially this (accessibility of FWAs) was agreeable. However, with a change in management I’ve been made to feel increasingly pressured to give up this arrangement.”

For the University as well as organisations in the wider community this would indicate that management will need to be trained and informed about FWAs to ensure consistency across departments. Lewis (2001, p. 25) suggests that line management is “a crucial layer that has to be convinced of the value to the organisation or their department of flexible working arrangements”. While staff are likely to appreciate restrictions caused by the job itself, such as service staff having to be available between certain hours of the day, unnecessary restrictions placed by individuals managers, who perhaps fear a loss in control, should ideally be eradicated. Perceived or genuine inconsistencies will not benefit employees and the organisation as a whole. Part of being pro-active in terms of FWAs is training staff, managers in particular, and promoting the availability and benefits of FWAs. Some of the respondents of the survey, who indicated to be managers, expressed their struggles in managing a ‘flexible workforce’. One respondent stated:

“We are now part of a service area and I have many staff working flexible hours because I want to ensure flexibility for them in order to balance their home/work life. As the manager, however, I end up with the short end of the straw.”

At the end of the day managers are responsible for the productivity of their employees and managing and organising a flexible workforce will present managers with new challenges (Richardson, 2010). Research suggests that managers are not adequately informed about FWAs, what they are for or how they are to be used (Wise and Bond, 2003, p. 28). Therefore, it is important that managers are all trained to handle requests for FWAs as well as an increasingly fluid workforce. If managers are not properly educated and informed then they might be likely to prevent their subordinates from taking FWAs for fear of a loss of control. Richardson (2010) proposes that striking a balance between managers allowing autonomy, yet avoiding micromanagement, and increasing the role of trust can be challenging aspects of
managing employees under FWAs. Lewis (2001) suggests encouragement of line managers to be flexible, so that flexibility becomes something that is standard.

One respondent felt very strongly about the fact that any negotiation about FWA would be at the discretion of individual managers and believed that:

"Although I am aware of the flexible working arrangements available to the University’s employees, the condition added to the availability – ‘at the discretion of your supervisor/manager’ – has meant that any attempted negotiation with the manager has been met with refusal. This is despite flexible working arrangements being promoted by the same manager to potential new staff, and other staff in the same centre (reporting to different manager) being able to successfully work in a flexible manner. The issue of flexibility in working arrangements was raised by all team members in a team meeting recently with the manager of the area and we were informed that it is not possible for our area. The issue of other staff in the centre with flexible working arrangements was also raised, but the manager’s response indicated that the examples raised were ‘special cases’.”

Experiences such as these would result in resentment and perceptions of inequity among employees, rather than in a supportive environment for FWAs. Either the organisations encourage the overall use of FWAs and educate and instructs managers across the organisation in these matters or it is likely to send the message that it, although having offered FWAs officially, does not fully support the use of FWAs by leaving it at the discretion of individual managers, who may or may not be supportive of FWAs.

Staff shortage and Intensifying workloads

A large amount of respondents felt that the fact that many areas of the University were understaffed increased their workload in such a way that there was no room for FWAs. While they may be officially available, employees feel that, to keep on top of their workload that they could simply not afford to utilise any FWAs. Comments such as: “more staff would be the only solution to this departments flexibility issues” and “Being short staffed has not allowed anyone to really be flexible with their hours” were plentiful throughout the survey. Other respondents felt that the workload in
itself was simply too high. A few comments from respondents are listed below and reflect the thoughts of most respondents.

“The central issue is too much work and not enough time to do it. This makes huge inroads into your life outside work. Flexible working arrangements or leave do not deal with the sheer workload issue.”

“The workload and the demand of the job is so high that there is no point in any negotiation on it.”

“Nothing is even worth talking about while the teaching loads are so unrealistically high. We have no say in timetabling our units. It seems that academic staff are required to fit into the lifestyles of the students rather than students expected to fit their lives around their study. Perhaps that is what comes when students are regarded as customers.”

While the literature has suggestions for most barriers affecting the uptake of FWAs, any suggestions as to how to combat the barrier of high workloads seem to be absent. As research suggests that FWAs can increase productivity it might be a possibility for organisations to offer flexibility in the location at which work is conducted. An important factor to consider is that quantity does not always mean quality and that employees may perform better and more efficiently when they work in their own time. Perhaps a rostering system that allows employees to conduct the most urgent business at the workplace and take the rest home to be conducted at a different time that is more suitable for the employee could be trialed at organisations. Wherever logistically possible, making employees responsible for the end-result and using these results, rather than face-time at the office, for their performance-reviews, will allow employees more autonomy in the time and place in which work is conducted. Employees that prove worthy of this trust can increasingly be given more autonomy, while employees that do not perform as required will need to be monitored.

**Culture**

While many employees indicated that the uptake of FWAs very much depended on the line manager’s discretion some employees also suggested that the organisation’s culture may not be supportive of managers approving FWAs. Managers would be
unlikely to approve FWAs when the overall culture of the organisation is not FWA friendly. One employee stated that:

"Managerial discretion is required for flexibility to be provided in the workplace. Managers are reluctant to be seen to be flexible for fear of the consequences – culturally/organisationally. Power!"

This statement clearly indicates that ultimately the manager’s decision is inhibited by the expectations of his or her superiors. This creates the impression that while FWAs are officially available that it has, as yet, not become an entirely accepted part of the organisational culture. This finding concurs with research by MacDermid, Lee, Buck and Williams (2001, p. 313) who found that a supportive corporate culture was a critical factor to the success of reduced-load work arrangements.

One employee at the University described the culture as follows:

"Archaic work attitudes from staff and managers – productivity is regarded as less important than being seen in the office. My productivity goes up when I work from home, because there are no interruptions, but I am made to feel like I am “truanting” because I am not available for unproductive largely pointless meetings."

This culture will continue to affect employees’ decisions to take up FWAs if the culture is not adjusted. Employees that can not create a satisfactory WLB are not likely to be very satisfied employees. This will affect their performance at work and their loyalty to their employer. Ultimately, they might leave the organisation if they continue to experience stress and a lack of support in combining their work and life responsibilities. Offering these FWAs but having employees underutilise them due to the organisational culture or other factors, might be more damaging then not offering these arrangements at all.
Another employee suggested that there should be:

"More HR involvement with managers to perhaps promote the benefits to managers of being open to negotiating flexibility in working arrangements. Perhaps changing the condition applied to flexible working conditions so that managers need to justify and document a reasonable explanation why flexible conditions cannot be made available."

One employee also suggested that flexibility for some employees means extra work for others by stating:

"By the University committing to equity amongst workers, those who do not take advantage of flexible work hours are often penalized by those who do as they are required to "fill the gaps;", often with not formal not informal reward."

This situation could potentially create ill feelings between colleagues and result in an environment where employees may feel uncomfortable requesting FWAs.

Another employee felt that, while their immediate manager was positive about the flexible work arrangements, that the manager's supervisor was unhappy about it and that this might be causing strain for the manager.

One of the respondents acknowledged that this is an:

"...education process for managers who probably need strategies for managing their areas with staff working under arrangements they are not familiar with. Remember most managers have developed in times when everyone works fulltime, flexitime was abused and they controlled the employment market."

All in all, it appears that there is no consistent approach to, and understanding of, FWAs between different Schools and Service Centres at the University and between different managers and supervisors. This inconsistent approach is likely to be an issue among other organisations as well. These perceived and genuine inconsistencies can create strain between parties, which would not be conducive to job satisfaction and
productivity for employees. Therefore, the importance of training and education cannot be overemphasised. One respondent agreed and believed that: “management/supervisors needs training on how flexible working hours can be utilised in their areas.”

Software

Many respondents indicated that the software currently used at the University does not promote FWAs. Many respondents felt like it was a “big brother” situation where every move an employee makes is monitored. A situation such as this does not stimulate trust and confidence. One employee felt that:

“The introduction of Solidus is also EXTREMELY inflexible – to have to be accountable for when you take toilet breaks and making sure we are “ready” to take calls. The system is big-brother like, archaic, and has dropped the morale of staff more than anything I have seen in my 8 years here. The ‘workplace flexibility at the University’ motto is completely lip-service.”

And:

“Have not got the option of flexible working with the solidus system having to be covered until 5pm as well as providing a walk in service to students until 4.30pm every day. Office too busy for staff to avail of any flexi time.”

FWAs would, for general staff working with this software, be very inaccessible. In addition to this, the findings indicate that staff feel very restricted by the software and indicate that it has reduced staff morale. Perhaps organisations need to look at the systems that are in place to ensure that they support policies that the organisation is attempting to promote, rather than counteract them. There is no point in advertising FWAs to attract and retain staff when they are, in reality, not accessible to staff.

Lack of awareness

Another common theme among respondents was that they were in fact not aware of all the different types of FWAs that were available, nor did they know how they could
access them. Clearly, the University needs to create more awareness amongst its staff and provide them with information about how to access the FWAs.

Common themes were:

"Difficult to get the flexible information – it is not advertised."

And:

"A less controlling and dictatorial approach to flexibility in the workplace is needed. It is not enough to have a policy on flexibility and congratulate ourselves – very little information is provided to support flexible working arrangements; very little support and/or encouragement is evidenced in the workplace towards developing a flexible workplace culture and given that managerial discretion is the principal authorizing agent in relation to flexible work practices the take up of flexible workplace practices is entirely dependant on managers flexibility which is often not great."

This finding was consistent with findings from another university where participants also indicated that their knowledge of the formal work-family policies and entitlements was vague or limited (Waters & Bardoel, 2006). One of the respondents indicated that there was a need for awareness to ensure consistency between different departments as well current employees and new recruits:

"Greater awareness of the possibilities for both staff and the organisation. As more staff enter flexible arrangements, some of the myths are 'busted'. Competition for staff gives new recruits greater opportunities to negotiate flexible arrangements."

These findings again stipulate the importance of creating awareness among staff at an organisation. Policies are meaningless without awareness and accessibility. Creating a website specifically designed to inform staff about the availability and accessibility of FWAs, ensuring that managers are fully informed and possibly targeting certain groups of employees through special events to inform them of
the FWAs that might be particularly valuable to them would be ways in which organisations could promote awareness among staff.

Informal versus formal arrangements

Many respondents indicated that, while they did not have a formal FWA in place, that they utilised FWAs informally through collaboration with their local manager.

One staff member suggested that:

"Most of our arrangements are informal as a formal solution would inhibit the best outcomes."

This corresponds with findings from Hall and Atkinson (2006) who found that there were advantages for managers to encourage informal, rather than formal, FWAs. Hall and Atkinson (2006, p. 383) believe that these advantages from a management perspective are that "informal flexible working provides managerial flexibility, whereas formal flexible working, once agreed, provides a more permanent pattern of working where ongoing flexibility has been diminished."

One of the academic staff members stated that:

"Much of the flexibility I have is informal. As an academic I am able to organize, for example, that my classes do not start at 8.30am. This allows me to drop my children at School before coming to work. This flexibility is absolutely critical for me to balance work and family. The School I am in is very supportive. We all do the same job, it is just that some of us can't do it all between 8.30 and 5.30. Some of us informally choose a shorter day and make up the hours at night!!"

Informal FWAs would increase employee’s perception of control and "yet evidence that managers too benefit from a workforce that are prepared to be more flexible in return" (Hall & Atkinson, 2006, p. 384). In this manner, FWAs become ongoing negotiations with both parties acknowledging and cooperating to meet each other’s needs (Hall & Atkinson, 2006).
Hyman and Summers (2004) stipulate, however, that the direct control of line managers, who are often untrained and lack awareness and understanding of family-friendly and WLB issues, could lead to internal differences. This could create a problem where there is a discrepancy between the FWAs accessible to similar employees in different sections of the same organisation. This is likely to result in groups of employees feeling dissatisfied with the inequity, which could result in decreases in their overall satisfaction and performance as well as increase their absenteeism and potential resignation.

An organisation-wide approach to FWAs would ensure equity between departments, unless specific jobs do not facilitate FWAs. Ensuring that all managers are aware of the organisation’s policies in terms of FWAs and adhering to this policy would increase consistency in the utilisation of FWAs.

**Availability versus accessibility**

Another employee found that, although FWAs are officially available, that actually taking them up was quite a challenge or “too many hoops to jump through.”

“One of the reasons I applied for a Job at the University was on the basis of the ‘benefits’ offered on the web site. I originally wanted to work flexi-time (in 2008). I was TOLD IT WAS NOT OPERATIONALLY POSSIBLE!!”

The University has to ensure that the FWAs that it offers are accessible. If the University is hoping to utilise FWAs to attract and retain employees then it needs to ensure that it delivers on its word. Organisations that advertise FWAs will set up expectations among new staff. If these expectations are not met then these employees will get demotivated and will lose their drive and enthusiasm. Research shows that “an organization risks employee turnover when it does not fulfill its promises regarding valued inducements” (De Vos & Meganck, 2009, p. 47). These promises would have been a part of the psychological contract, which is defined as “employees’ perceptions of what they owe the organization and what the
organizations owes them in return” (De Vos & Meganck, 2009, p. 47). Even if employees do not leave the organisation, this breach of the psychological contract is likely to affect job satisfaction, performance, turnover and absenteeism.

**Career advancement concerns**

Research suggesting that the uptake of FWAs negatively affect one’s career is abundant (Ezzedeen & Ritchey, 2009; Lewis, 2001; McDonald, Brown & Bradley, 2003; McDonald, Guthrie, Bradley & Shakespeare-Finch, 2005; Patrickson & Hartmann, 2001). The responses to the open-ended questions relating to additional barriers to the utilisation of FWAs clearly identified career concerns as a major influence on the decision to utilise FWAs. One of the respondents suggested that:

> "Work demands take precedence over family demands because unless you put in more than 100% there is no chance of promotion."

Ezzedeen and Ritchey (2009) have found that, particularly for female employees, it very often comes down to having to choose between family and work advancement. Linehan and Walsh (2000, quoted by Peus & Mattausch, 2008, p. 560) report that women are still responsible for “household tasks and child-rearing, regardless of how many hours they work outside the home”. Career concerns are also likely to underlie findings by Sheridan (2004, quoted by Pini and McDonald, 2008, p. 608) who suggested that men suffer from “chronic presenteeism as a criteria for career success”. To combat this phenomenon organisations might consider increasing the emphasis on employees’ productivity and output, rather than on hours spent at the office. Nesbit (2006, p. 332) further suggests that, to encourage the representation of women in management, more attention will need to be paid to “the professional culture of management” in their research. Currently, the nature of management is suggested not to lend itself to flexibility due to the need “for full-time attendance to ensure career momentum”. It appears that, to combat the negative career consequences associated with the utilisation of FWAs, further research and major changes are required in terms of gender roles and the nature of management.
Unsupportive co-workers

A theme that emerged from the qualitative data was that employees who work with colleagues that utilise FWAs find that this often impedes on their work and that they have to do more than their share. While the employees that utilised FWAs did not once express this to be a reason for not utilising FWAs, it was a common theme amongst employees that did not make use of FWAs. This implies that perhaps these employees voice their discontent through covert, rather than overt, actions. This may still affect the culture of the department or organisation and possibly manager’s willingness to comply with requests for FWAs. McDonald, Brown and Bradley (2005) also report this is a finding in a similar study that attempted to explain the provision-utilisation gap in work-life policy. They report that childless workers report that they are “expected to work longer hours, take assignments involving travel and are provided fewer opportunities to take advantage of flexible work arrangements than employees with children” (McDonald, Brown & Bradley, 2005, p. 45). This is referred to as the “backlash” movement by Haar and Spell (2003, quoted by McDonald, Brown and Bradley, 2005, p. 45).

Some of the respondents’ responses included:

"By the University committing to equity among workers, those who do not take advantage of flexible work hours are often penalized by those who do as they are required to "fill the gaps", often with not formal or informal reward."

And:

"Greater recognition needs to be given to staff who work with people who have flexible working arrangements as they often pick up the slack."

To reduce these differences in “perceived fairness” (McDonald, Brown & Bradley, 2005, p. 46) perhaps a formal or informal reward or acknowledgement system could be considered to ensure that one employee’s FWAs do not negatively affect other employees. Ensuring that individual employees complete their task, rather than the task being moved onto a colleague, will ensure fairness.
Or, if it will affect other employees, that these employees are acknowledged and offered some type of compensation for facilitating a colleague’s FWA.

Summary

The responses to the open-ended questions in the survey allowed a further insight into factors that impede employees in their decision to utilise FWAs. The responses supported and built on McDonald, Brown and Bradley’s (2005, p. 49) model that depicted five dimensions of organisational work-life culture that account for the gap between work-life policy provision and utilisation. The five dimensions were: manager support, career consequences, time expectations, gendered perceptions and co-worker support. The dimensions of gendered perception were not identified through the open-ended survey responses. The open-ended responses did, however, identify a further four factors affecting the utilisation of FWAs. These were: organisational culture, software, awareness and formal versus informal arrangements. The identified moderators each been discussed and suggestions for management improvements as well as further research have been made.

Organisational implications

The findings of this study indicate that different employees require different FWAs to enable them to have a satisfactory WLB. An understanding of these different requirements can assist organisations in developing more effective policies, specifically aimed at breaking through some of the identified barriers. By additionally advertising and creating better awareness among employees, organisations can start minimising the provision-utilisation gap of work-life policy. By strategically filling parts of this gap, through a better understanding of the barriers associated with the uptake of FWAs, employees and organisations can begin reaping the benefits that FWAs have to offer. Being able to better balance family and working life has been found to be positively related to employees’ mental and physical well-being. Organisational benefits of offering FWAs include reduced absenteeism and turnover and increased job satisfaction and motivation. Research suggests FWAs are further acknowledged as being an effective organisational attraction and retention strategy.
The following figure illustrates the different barriers as identified through this research.

Through this research and a review of the literature three levels of barriers were identified, which have been integrated (Figure 11). The first moderator, which relates to a country’s national culture, was identified by Lyness and Bumit-Kropf (2005), who indicated that the national context is important to investigate as there are likely to be relationships between national context and organisational practices. The responses to the open-ended questions in the survey also clearly indicated that the male breadwinner model still applies to Australia. Females were much more likely to be the primary carer and utilise FWAs to accommodate this dual-role. Established gender-roles within any society will be different and this role-division will affect national policies, organisational policies, practices and cultures as well as individual perceptions about their individual role and the subsequent opinions about the suitability of utilising FWAs. The inclusion of national culture as a moderator would therefore widen the model’s application to include various organisations across the world. The second moderator includes the organisational barriers that were identified through the open-ended survey questions and will be discussed after the discussion of each of the demographical individual factors.

Through the open-ended questions additional, external factors, affecting the uptake of FWAs were identified. These factors were: the local manager, staff shortages and increased workload, culture, software, lack of awareness, informal versus formal arrangements, availability versus accessibility and unsuppmiive colleagues. The first factor relating to managers having the final decision when a request for a FWA is made was mentioned most. When such matters are left to the personal discretion of individual managers there are bound to be discrepancies, which are certain to affect employees’ perception of fairness in the organisation. By not ensuring a consistent approach to FWAs the organisation might be perceived as not entirely committed to flexibility in the workplace with some respondents referring to FWAs at the University as “lip service”. Training managers in the importance and advantages as
well as recognition of the challenges associated with FWAs might also create a more accommodating culture. Individual negotiations could further add to the idea that FWAs are only accessible to privileged individuals. Flexibility should ideally become a part of the organisation with employees as well as organisations reaping the many benefits its utilisation has to offer.

Figure 11 – Potential barriers to the utilisation of FWAs
Conclusion

This final chapter will revisit the research questions that guided this research and present the findings. Each section in this chapter will represent a research question and major quantitative and qualitative data will be presented with practical suggestions for organisations and, wherever suitable, proposals for further research. This research investigated the relationship between demographic factors and the uptake of flexible work arrangements (FWAs) as well as employees' satisfaction with their current WLB. The demographic factors under investigation were: age, gender, family circumstances, career stage and job type. In addition, the study aimed, through qualitative data, to identify external factors that affect employees' decisions to utilise FWAs. The data was collected through an online survey, which was posted on the University's intranet for 3 weeks. The total respondent number was 495. T-tests, ANOVA, Kruskal Wallis tests and Mann-Whitney U-tests were utilised to test the relationships between the aforementioned variables and the uptake of FWAs. The main purpose of this analysis was to identify what factors affect an employee's decision to take up FWAs. These findings can assist in reducing the provision-utilisation gap in work-life policy, which has been identified as a serious problem for both employers and employees. These results can further facilitate a better work-life balance (WLB) for employees, which in turn, will have benefits for the organisation in terms of more satisfied employees, increased performance and commitment as well as less absenteeism and turnover.

The impact of an employee's demographics on the uptake of FWAs and satisfaction with current WLB

The first research question related to the relationship between an employee's demographical factors and the uptake of FWAs and the employees' satisfaction with their current WLB. The three demographical variables tested in relation to their uptake of FWAs and employees' satisfaction with current WLB were: an employee's age, gender and family circumstances. Each of these demographical variables was significantly related to a variety of FWAs. These demographic factors and the
implications for individuals, organisations and managers as well as suggestions for further research will be discussed in the next three sections.

The impact of an employee’s age on the uptake of FWAs and satisfaction with current WLB

The findings clearly indicate that an employee’s age will affect their uptake of FWAs. Employees in different age brackets appear to have very different needs in creating a satisfactory WLB. Employees under 45 years of age are much more likely to utilise parental arrangements and FWAs that allow flexibility in the time and place that they conduct their work. Employees over 60 years of age are much more likely to utilise annual leave and FWAs pertaining to length of time at the organisation. An employee’s age was not found to be related to an employee’s satisfaction with their current WLB. As certain groups of employees were found to significantly utilise FWAs more than other groups, one would expect these employees to perhaps, be struggling with their WLB more. This finding is therefore somewhat surprising and further studies to support or challenge this finding would be informative. By understanding the differing needs of its employees, organisations can develop and promote specific FWAs to particular groups, with the aim of better attraction and retention, improved job satisfaction, motivation and performance at their organisation.

The impact of an employee’s gender on the uptake of FWAs and satisfaction with current WLB

The analysed data clearly indicated that male and female employees appear to value very different kinds of FWAs. Female employees were significantly more likely to utilise FWAs, such as dependant sick leave/family leave and part-time work that allowed them to fulfill their domestic and employment responsibilities. Male employees were more likely to utilise FWAs that provided them with the opportunity to further their knowledge-base or long service leave. These findings clearly suggest that the male-breadwinner model seems to remain prominent within Australian society. For some female employees, FWAs are clearly the only way that they can remain employed without compromising their family life. These women can be
valuable assets to an organisation and these companies should therefore ensure, in order to attract and retain these female employees, that they offer FWAs that allow female employees to combine their employment with their domestic duties. However, in recognising the challenges that female employees face in combining work and family life, the findings of this study indicated the male and female respondents were similarly satisfied with their current WLB. This would be an area suitable for future research as one might expect female employees, who appear to be responsible for work as well as domestic responsibilities, to perhaps be less satisfied with this dual role. It appears that there has been a shift in the role of women in society, while the role of males seems somewhat unchanged. Perhaps the national culture and its role in establishing a pattern where women feel that it is the norm to work as well as be responsible for the majority of the domestic work should be investigated.

Organisations and employees could both benefit for a more holistic approach to performance appraisals and focus on output rather than on time spent at the office. A new approach is required to manage and lead employees utilising FWAs. In addition to this, the national culture should be investigated as the national culture may, as is the case in Australia, very much define masculinity by full-time work and time spent at the office. This would create barriers to male employees utilising FWAs if they wished to do so. Therefore, further research between a variety of countries would be beneficial to further explore whether the national culture will affect gender roles in organisations in the same manner. This study could also inform similar research amongst a variety of organisations to investigate whether the organisational cultures across industries would be influenced by the national culture in a similar manner.

*The impact of an employee’s family circumstances on the uptake of FWAs and satisfaction with current WLB*

Significant relationships were found between an employees family circumstances and the uptake of FWAs. These findings concur with earlier research by Tausig and Fenwick (2001, p. 101, quoted by Maxwell, Rankine, Bell & MacVicar, 2007, p. 2007) who concluded that “the most consistent family characteristic predicting
imbalance is being a parent”. Employees who indicated to be either the primary or secondary carers in their family were significantly more likely to take up FWAs that allowed them to combine these responsibilities with their job. Interestingly, an employee's family circumstances were not related to their satisfaction with their current WLB. It is important for organisations to recognise that this juggling act can be strenuous for employees and facilitate a satisfactory WLB wherever this is logistically possible. This facilitation would allow employees to create a better WLB, which is likely to increase an employee's job satisfaction, while simultaneously serving as a strategic attraction and retention strategy for the organisation. As career concerns have been identified as a barrier to employees utilising FWAs as well as a reason for women to start their family later, further research is required to change this culture. Women are now mostly found in part-time or lower-level employment, even when they are overeducated for these positions, for the only reason that these positions allow them the flexibility to care for their family as well as being employed. It has been suggested that organisations are suffering a “female brain drain” by failing to retain highly educated women (Cabrera, 2009). Organisations can not afford to loose these employees. By creating a culture where flexibility is available to all employees who require it, by creating new strategies to manage a fluid workforce and by appraising and promoting employees on productivity, rather than face-time, flexibility can positively affect the lives of the employees as well as the organisation. Additional studies could be aimed at identifying organisations that have been working towards creating a culture that encourages flexibility or that have found new ways to appraise employees. Case-studies indicating the challenges and rewards would be particularly informative.

The impact of an employee’s career stage on the uptake of FWAs and satisfaction with current WLB

The findings indicate that an employee's age and an employee's career stage are comparable in their relationship to the uptake of FWAs. As most employees are likely to enter the workforce between the ages of 18-23 (Robbins & Judge, 2010) their career stage is likely to be closely related to their chronological age. The younger
employees, who indicated that they were in their early or mid-career, were more likely to utilise FWAs associated with the care of children. The employees in their latter career stages were more likely to utilise FWAs that are related to length of employment or retirement options. It should be noted that, although an employee’s age was not significantly related to their satisfaction with their current WLB that an employee’s career stage was. Employees in the latter stages of their career were significantly more satisfied with their current WLB than their colleagues in earlier career stages. This finding can be explained by the fact that employees in their latter career stages are less likely to have dependants that need to be looked after. They will therefore not be experiencing the same struggle in combining their family and working lives. While the older employees may wish to slow down in transition to retirement this is not likely to result in the same strain as the combination of family and work. Organisations can utilise these findings by creating policies and offering FWAs specifically aimed at certain groups of employees. By acknowledging that certain employees need certain FWAs to allow them to balance their family and work lives, while other employees may value a part-time contract in transition to retirement organisations can ensure meeting employees’ needs and improving their WLB.

The impact of an employee’s job type on the uptake of FWAs and satisfaction with current WLB

The findings from this research did not support the common premise that knowledge workers whose expertise is central to the functioning of an organisation are able to extract deeper concessions (Donnelly, 2004) from their employer. Academics’ knowledge and expertise play a vital role at the University and these employees are responsible for the front-line teaching and reputation of the University. This central role did, however, not appear to increase their ability to negotiate flexibility. General employees were found to have significantly higher uptakes of a variety of FWAs, particularly those that provided them with reduced hours or periods of leave. While academics had a higher uptake of work from home, they were prevented from taking up other FWAs due to their increasingly high workloads. The impact of these high workloads can also explain the finding that academic staff were significantly less
satisfied with their current WLB than general staff. The qualitative findings suggested that many academics simply feel inundated with their workloads with many respondents displaying their discontent in the open-ended questions. It has been suggested that academic positions are losing much of their appeal and that Australian universities are experiencing difficulties in filling academic positions. As academic staff are responsible for teaching the younger generations it is imperative that this trend is further examined. This research can inform further research, particularly aimed at the specifics of the increasing roles of academics to investigate whether some of their additional administrative tasks might be transferable to other departments within a University.

**Additional external barriers to the uptake of FWAs**

The responses to the open-ended questions in the survey provided further insight into factors affecting employees' decisions to utilise FWAs. The following factors were identified: local manager, staff shortage and intensifying workloads, culture, software, lack of awareness, informal versus formal arrangements, availability versus accessibility and unsupportive colleagues. These initial findings can inform further research as well as add to organisations' understanding of the implications of the uptake of FWAs. Each of these barriers would be suitable for further investigations. Particularly, the changing role of manager needs to be recognised and new ways of managing an increasingly fluid workforce identified. Further research would also be recommended into differences among organisational cultures, perhaps across industries, and a comparison on their effects on the uptake of FWAs. Another area appropriate for further research would be what the effects of employees negotiating informal arrangements. Some of the open-ended responses from the survey related to employees feeling that FWAs are only accessible to favoured employees. This is likely to lead to inconsistencies and perceived unfairness between employees and could potentially be the cause of discontented employees. Rather than approaching flexibility through individual negotiations flexibility has to become a part of the organisation, a part of its competitive advantage and a reason for employees to want to work for that organisation.
Concluding comments

Waters and Bardoel (2006) found there to be limited research examining the direct link between work-family policies and their use by academic and general staff in Australian universities. Waters and Bardoel (2006) felt that particularly mixed-methods research would be a valuable contribution to the literature in this area. This study has aimed to fill this research gap.

This study has clearly corroborated that the mere offering of FWAs will not ensure uptake amongst employees. The findings further indicate that there are significant differences in the utilisation of FWAs between groups of employees. While this study was conducted at a university, these findings are, in all probability, similar across organisations within Australia. Further research at other Universities, as well as across industries and countries, would be beneficial to compare and contrast these findings.

A further significant finding of this study relates to the workload of academics. Academics were found to have access to significantly less FWAs and were further significantly less satisfied with their current WLB balance. While the increasing workload of academics has been a topic of interest in previous research, none of the previous studies seemed to have found such significant findings in relation to their access of FWAs and satisfaction with their current WLB. Due to these changes to the job requirements universities are finding it hard to fill academic positions. Clearly, in order to ensure the future of Australian Universities, further research, particularly to identify whether some of their administrative tasks could be outsourced, is required to inform plans of action to combat this increasingly debilitating workload.

By understanding which groups of employees value which types of FWAs organisations can use the arrangements as a way of attracting and recruiting employees. Organisations can utilise the findings by ensuring that target groups of employees are made aware of the availability of FWAs that they would appreciate. Facilitating employees to establish a satisfactory WLB is found to be positively
related to job satisfaction and performance. It is also likely to reduce turnover and absenteeism. Research further suggests that an increased WLB will assist in creating healthier families. While it is clear that the successful implementation and managing of FWAs might prove challenging, previous research and the findings of this study would indicate that these struggles would be worth the effort. Further studies in the arena of the changing gender-roles within societies and the challenges associated with the management of a fluid workforce would be particularly valuable.
References


Appendix 1: Staff survey as posted online

Please note that any information which could identify the University or persons associated with it has been removed to ensure anonymity. The name of the University has been replaced with “the University”.

Workplace Flexibility Survey

Dear Colleagues,

As part of the staffing strategy, Human Resources Services are currently investigating the range and take-up of FWAs and options across the University in order to ensure our competitiveness in attracting and retaining staff.

There is currently only limited information collected across the University about the practices and preferences of staff in this matter.

This survey is designed to collect information that will provide a clearer snapshot of staff practices and attitudes in relation to flexible work options. A sample of front-line managers across all areas will also be interviewed.

Thank you for your support

XXXXXXXX
Director
Human Resources Services Centre
PART 1 - ABOUT YOU

Gender
- Male
- Female

Age group
- <30
- 30-45
- 46-60
- >60

Do you have any dependents and what is your role in their care?
- Yes - primary carer
- Yes - primary earner
- Yes - both primary carer and primary earner
- No dependents
- Contributing carer
- Contributing earner

HELP:
Dependents might include grandchildren, disabled or ageing relatives and so on. Some family members have particular responsibilities: either providing support income (as primary earner) or providing care (as primary carer).

What is the postcode of your usual place of residence, or the place you live most of the time?

How many years have you been with the University?

Are you in an academic or general staff role?
- Academic staff role
- General Staff role

Career Stage:
- Early career
- Mid career
- Late career
- Career transition

Help:
Career transition - in transition and changing careers.
PART 2 - FLEXIBLE LEAVE UTILISATION

1. My use and awareness of flexible leave options available to me at this Organisation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My usage of this leave type</th>
<th>Use regularly</th>
<th>Use sometimes</th>
<th>Have used once or twice before</th>
<th>Plan to use in the future</th>
<th>Never used</th>
<th>I know how to apply for leave type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dependent sick leave/family leave</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long service leave ½ pay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long service leave Double pay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid maternity leave</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paternity leave unpaid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special paid leave</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid study leave</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpaid study leave</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual leave</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchased additional annual leave</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dependent sick leave/family leave - Employees can request permission to use their accrued sick leave to take care of an immediate family member

Long service leave 1/2 pay - Long service leave may be taken at half pay to double the amount of leave taken

Long service leave double pay - Long service leave may be taken on double pay if the amount of leave taken is halved

Paid maternity leave - Female employees with at least 12 months service are entitled to 26 weeks paid maternity leave

Paternity leave unpaid - The partner of a birth mother or adoptive parent who is not the primary carer may apply for 3 weeks unpaid leave immediately after the birth or placement of the child

Special paid leave - Employees may, upon sufficient cause being shown, be granted up to three days leave in one year (also known as short leave)

Paid study leave - Academic staff may apply for up to 12 months paid study leave which is relevant to their academic or research areas

Unpaid study leave - General staff may apply for up to 5 hours per week for study purposes
PART 3 - FLEXIBLE WORKING OPTIONS UTILISATION

2. My use and awareness of flexible work options available to me at this University?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My usage of this work option</th>
<th>Use regularly</th>
<th>Use sometimes</th>
<th>Have used once or twice before</th>
<th>Plan to use in the future</th>
<th>Never used</th>
<th>I know how to apply for leave type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flexible start/finish times</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part time work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part time options on maternity leave return</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compressed working hours</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time off in lieu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work from home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part time work contract in transition to retirement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. What was the most helpful source of information on flexible working options
   - Manager
   - The University website
   - Colleague
   - I contacted HR
   - I am unaware of such arrangements

4. Are FWAs increasing or decreasing in importance to you?
   - Decreasing in importance
   - Increasing in importance

5. Are flexible leave arrangements increasing or decreasing in importance to you?
   - Decreasing in importance
   - Increasing in importance
PART 3 - FLEXIBLE WORKING OPTIONS UTILISATION

6. The current flexibility options I have in my workplace here at the University compares favourably to organisations I have worked for in the last two years.
   - Strongly agree
   - Agree
   - Neither agree nor disagree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly disagree

7. Which of the following options would be helpful in balancing your work with life demands?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Very Likely</th>
<th>Likely</th>
<th>Indifferent</th>
<th>Not likely</th>
<th>Not very likely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greater range of leave types</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexitime</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annualised hours</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seasonal hours</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shift working</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary reduced hours</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zero/Nil hours</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career breaks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary reduced working time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term working</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HELP:
- Annualised hours - This is an arrangement in which an employee contracts for a total number of working hours over a 12 month period.
- Zero/Nil hours - Contracts that remain 'alive', but dormant, during non work periods and which pay for only the hours worked.
- Voluntary reduced working time - Income is traded for time off. Employees negotiate to reduce their full-time working hours by an agreed percentage for a specified period with the possibility then of either returning to full-time work or extending the reduced work time arrangement.
8. Are you aware of flexibility offered by other employers that would be attractive to you?

PART 4 - EXPERIENCE OF WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY AT the University

9. Have you negotiated FWAs in the last two years.
   ○ Yes
   ○ No

10. What is your experience with negotiating FWAs to balance work and personal/family life at this University?
   ○ No experience
   ○ Very positive
   ○ Positive
   ○ Neutral
   ○ Negative
   ○ Very negative

11. Can you give more information about the reasons for your rating?

12. Are there any informal arrangements that you believe could assist within your work area? These may be options that other organisations use.
13. Has flexibility in your work area increased or decreased in the last two years or remained the same?

- Increased
- Decreased
- Remained the same

14. Do you have any comment about the reasons for this?

15. Constraints on your use of FWAs:
Rank in order of importance 1 – 6:

- Reduced income
- Work area requirements
- Management attitude
- Colleagues attitude
- Workload
- Other [ ]
PART 5 – Work-life balance

16. How satisfied are you with your current Work-life balance?
   - Very satisfied
   - Satisfied
   - Neutral
   - Dissatisfied
   - Very dissatisfied

17. What could this University do to support you achieving a better balance?

18. What do you think is the biggest issue for individuals when balancing their work and other commitments?

19. What is your feeling towards other staff negotiating FWAs to balance work and personal/family life at this University?
   - No experience
   - Very positive
   - Positive
   - Neutral
   - Negative
   - Very negative

20. Can you give more information about the reasons for your rating?
21. Do you have any suggestions for improvement? Policy, management or work practices suggestions?

22. Please give each of the issues below a percentage score out of 100, based on how important they are to your job satisfaction. The total must equal 100%. Please enter 0 against those not applicable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development of your career and enhancement of future prospects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance and integration of work and life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive pay and remuneration benefits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A satisfying and rewarding job</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive co-workers and colleagues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective leadership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competent management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank you for completing the survey.

This survey is anonymous and your responses confidential. Should you wish to discuss any matters raised by the survey please contact XXXXXXXX
## Appendix 2: Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test for all variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>P-values Kolmogorov-Smirnov test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dependant sick leave/family leave</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long service leave half pay</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long service leave double pay</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid maternity leave</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paternity leave unpaid</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special paid leave</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid study leave</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpaid study leave</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual leave</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchased additional annual leave</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible start/finish times</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time work</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time options on maternity leave return</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compressed working hours</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time off in-lieu</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work from home</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time contract in transition to retirement</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family circumstances</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job type</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career stage</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>