Employees’ Parental Involvement and Parental Responsibility with the Benefit of Corporate Childcare Services

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to explore the employees’ parental involvement and parental responsibility with the benefit of corporate childcare policy. Ten interviewees who were from double-career families were selected because they had at least one young child aged below 6 and were using childcare services provided by corporations. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Three issues were discussed in this paper:

1. A real balance between work and family?

   The purpose of corporate childcare services was to reduce employees’ stress between work and family. Extend childcare time might release employee’s working stress, however, it may not benefit to children’s social development and parent-children relationships. Parents’ responsibilities could not be excluded from their childcare services.

2. A new form of Elite cluster - dual roles of colleagues and parents

   Employees who used corporate childcare services also played the roles of parents in the children’s nurseries. The colleagues organized an informal parents’ association who would help each others in caring children. With the relationships of informal parents’ association, the employees had more opportunities to
meet and communicate with colleagues in other departments.

3. Corporate and nurseries working together

The corporate and affiliated nurseries were partners. They organize family activities suitable for their employees. The nurseries provided key issues/topics to promote employees’ parenting. An outdoor activity arranged by nurseries attracted children and their families because they considered it is a good opportunity to build up friendships and the employees believed that it also benefited to their relationships with other colleagues. The partnership of companies and nurseries created a win-win strategy.

Keywords: corporate childcare services, parental involvement, parental responsibility
Introduction

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) becomes an important idea in recent year. CSR means that the corporation has to take responsibilities for all stakeholders instead of stockholders (The Taiwan Business Council for Sustainable Development, 2004). It is believed that the corporation has the duty and rights to feedback company profits to society.

The inadequate childcare services and working environment unfriendly to family are perceived as main reason of low fertility in Taiwan. According to Yeh’s (2007) research, the Taiwanese people’s preferences of fertility policy were according: working environment supporting family, childcare services, allowances/cash transmit, preferred loan, and tax reduction. The content of family-supported working environment was: corporation childcare service (72.4%), flexible working time (71.2%), and male workers have parental leave (70.8%). The interviewees regarded that childcare services and family-friendly working environment created by the corporation would be beneficial for family with young children. It would also create a social atmosphere of encouraging fertility.

‘The Gender Equality in Employment Act’ provided by Taiwanese government aimed to resolve work-and-family conflict, to assist the corporate to establish affiliated nurseries (Council of Labour Affairs, 2007). However, the childcare services are not popular in most companies. According to the statistics by the
Ministry of Economic Affairs (2008), most enterprises in Taiwan in 2007 are small and medium enterprises\(^1\) (97.63%). The childcare services encouraged by the government are not suitable for most labour workers in Taiwan. Nevertheless the childcare support scheme encouraged by Taiwanese government has been practiced for a long time. The researchers suggested that it would be important to explore the benefits of the corporate childcare services and to discuss the impact of affiliated nursery on employees’ parenting responsibilities.

Corporate childcare means the manager provides any service to resolve employees’ childcare problems in the workplace directly or indirectly (Wang, 1994). Apart from corporate affiliated nursery, family-friendly policy is another type of childcare service. Family-friendly policy (or strategy) includes formal regulation and information activities to assist employees to balance their work and family (Scheibl & Dex, 1998).

The function of corporate childcare is a manpower managing strategy, and a ‘win-win’ corporate policy. It benefits to both employees and enterprise managers (Friedman, 1986; Wang, 1994). Corporate childcare can satisfy employees’ needs in rearing children, share the caring responsibility, and reduce the caring pressure for employees with young children. Corporate childcare services are regarded as enterprise welfare and corporate social responsibility. The advantages of corporate childcare services had

\(^1\) Small and medium enterprises means the capital is less than 80,000,000 NT dollars and the employees are no more than 200 persons.
been indicated which included: promoting the positive images of a corporate (Hsu, 2005), and appealing better employees and lower down turn over rate (Ding, 2000). Corporate childcare services, a ‘win-win’ strategy, not only contribute to the social responsibility of an enterprise, but also benefit employees’ family life (Rosenbloom, 1992).

The aims of this research are to: describe the childcare services supplied by the corporation and to explore the effects of company affiliated nurseries on the parents’ participation in parenting. The research questions included:

1. What are the employees’ opinions about the corporate affiliated nurseries?
2. What are the benefits of corporate affiliated nurseries in assisting parents?
3. How will the company and parents work together to fulfill parental responsibility?

Methods

The researchers adopted qualitative research methods. In-depths interviews were applied for data collection in order to explore whether employees’ parenting participation and their interaction with children would be affected by the childcare services provided by the companies.

Ten interviewees who actually used corporate childcare services were interviewed. They were introduced by friends of the researchers or recommended by the cooperation. These
interviewees worked in the companies which provided childcare services and some of them have their affiliated nurseries.

Alex, Betty, and Clare were colleagues in a corporation in north of Taiwan. The employees were about 2,600. The company set up a welfare committee to organise the childcare services for employees. In this company, there was an affiliated nursery, an after-school club for employees. The company also provided short-term childcare and summer camps. The nursery was 10 years and it had 200 young children aged 2 to 6. All nursery school teachers at the nursery had higher degrees. School pupils were mainly the employees’ children and only few of them were from the located community.

Alex was the senior manager at the company. He worked in this company for 14 years. He used to be the director of welfare department. He had two children (age 6 and 10). His children were sent to nursery at the age of 3. Betty worked in the public relationship department. Sometimes she needed to work on weekends if necessary. She had two children (age 3 and 5). Her two children were at the nursery. If she needed to work on weekends, her mother-in-law would look after her children. Clare was in the financial department. She also had two children (age 1 and 6). Clare took care of children in the evening and her husband took turns on weekends. Alex, Betty, and Clare had children attending the corporate affiliated nursery.

David and Emily worked in a manufacturing company in south of Taiwan. The employees were about 4,500. The company had a
welfare department. The corporate affiliated nursery took young children aged 2 to 6, mainly from their employees. David was a technical worker and he had to take a rotate turn. He lived with his parents and his mother would take care of children when David and his wife had to work. But now both of their children were at the corporate affiliated nursery. Emily was also a technical worker. Her husband also worked in this company. She had two children (age 6 and 3). Emily sent both children to nursery when they were two.

Frank worked in a company (size 780 persons) in the north of Taiwan. It was a technology company. Frank was an engineer in this company. The company provided contrasted nurseries near the office and the employees would have discount in nursery fees. Frank’s wife worked in the same company but she resigned after the second child was born. The ages of two children were 1 and 6.

Grace worked in a company with 250 employees in the north of Taiwan. The company did not have affiliated nurseries but providing contrasted nurseries. Grace was in administrative department which was a routine work, as she said. Her children were aged 2 and 5. She paid a childminder for their children.

Henry worked in a traditional manufacturing cooperation with employees more than 15,000 in the north of Taiwan. The welfare department provided parenting information, and different sports facilities such as swimming pool. Because the company did not provide nursery childcare, Henry’s three daughters were sent to other nursery near his house.

Irene worked in a manufacturing company with 250 workers in
the north of Taiwan. Irene’s husband did not live with the family, so she sent her two children (age 7 and 6) to corporate affiliated nursery.

Jack worked in a manufacturing company with 9,400 employees in the south of Taiwan. The company set up a welfare department. The corporate affiliated nursery take children from age 2 to 6. Henry sent his 5-year-old child for nursery. His mother took care of the two-year-old child. The employees had nursery fee discounted. The nursery also took children from the community recent years.

Results

The Benefits and Obstacles of the Companies’ Affiliated Nurseries

Corporations which managed their own nurseries provided a childcare place for their employees. The employees may feel the support from the company. However, there still existed some obstacles. For instance, this situation may not be suitable for a small company. A company which can operate successfully does not mean it could also run a self-managing nursery equally.

Our corporate affiliated nursery takes mostly employees’ children. They would release some quotas for community publics when the nursery places were available. So the nursery’s schedule would follow by the company. I think that is good... But my husband’s company is in big city. They do
not have enough place to set up a nursery. Also the employees are about one hundred, and the manager would not consider to invest such huge amount of money just for a few people. They provided contrasted list of nurseries. But it is very difficult for the various nurseries to meet companies’ schedule. Also their support for the employees’ was very limited. (Clare, 2007/12/12)

**Do parents have choices? - Parents having Childcare Leave or Complete Childcare Support**

I really really want to look after my child. But I had to consider my economics. I think that is the main reason. I think it is better to educate my children when they are very small. If a mother can take care of children by herself, maybe it is better for children to develop a stable personality. Well... that is ideal. Probably I would do so if I were very rich. I would consider quitting my job. But I cannot now. If I had childcare leave, the company would hire a supplement person. I would worry that I will be replaced and there would be no suitable vacancy when I decide to come back. If I am lucky enough to keep my work, I may need to transfer to other departments and to do those tasks I don’t familiar with at all. (Irene, 2008/5/9)

Parent would request the nursery to extend their caring time because they need to work late in the office. Many nurseries would do so based upon a business concern because they did not want to lose children. Nursery school teachers faced a dilemma of taking children or reminding the parents the long-term negative effects on children (Chang, 2007). However, the interviewees who used ‘extended childcare’ frequently expressed that the company policy
of ‘childcare service with limited time’ reminded employees to value the importance of parenting.

Alex and Clare said some colleagues expressed their needs of extending childcare time. However, the corporation and the nursery would put children’s rights in the first priority. Finally they communicated with parents and advocated the importance of parents’ participation.

Alex is the department director at a company and he used to work at the employee’s welfare department. He mentioned that parents would leave their children at the nursery until very late, and he found the problem:

_There once upon a time, our colleagues would work very very late and they picked up children about seven or eight o’clock per night... At that time, these children showed anxiety at nursery and bad tempered. They complained they waited for such a long time. After then I tried to communicate with my colleagues and requested them to pick up their children before seven. Children needed to reserve some time privately for their parents. I think that is important._ (Alex, 2007/12/5)

_We are in a rush every day... every day... So we are always late for picking up children. Sometimes we had lots of work in the office, and I would selfishly request the corporate affiliated nursery to look after children at night. Nursery school teachers told me we shall not take our time and extend our work simply because we think the nursery would take care of children. Even the nursery can prepare the dinner for children. But this is not good for children. So seven o’clock is the limited time for picking up._ (Clare, 2007/12/12)

_If the nursery can extend their school time, I would leave my_
children at nursery. Absolutely I am a lazy parent. If the nursery can look after children in the evening, I would choose to stay in the office till very late night. When the company set up the picking up time, I need to finish my task as soon as possible in order to pick up children on time. When you are late, the company will give you a note and you got to pay the fine. It is not the issue of money, but the problem of children. They are innocent. Since the company managers would like you to follow up the rule. So I agree with the rule. (Betty, 2007/12/12)

However, the employees involved in parenting because that they agreed with the parenting was important, not because the nursery lacking extended childcare service. For example, Jack said:

*I left the office around half-past-six. If I had to work, I would expect the nursery can look after children in the evening. But I was aware of the time we spent on children was very limited. I really don’t want to disappoint my child.* (Jack, 2008/5/15)

*You know, if we need extra caring, we had to pay for that. I think it is 80 NT dollars per hour, probably. I do not concern about money. But I would prefer to talk with children and know how they were in school.* (Irene, 2008/5/9)

The company and the nursery were not business-directed or completely profit-directed. They were aware of assisting employees to balance work and family and helping them to resolving childcare problem was necessary in maintaining good labour force and promoting working accountability.

2. Dual Roles - Colleagues and Parents
The advantages of corporate affiliated nursery included: to encourage colleagues in different department formulated a supporting group, and to lessen employees’ time pressure in picking up children. With the dual roles of colleagues and parents, the interviewees said they would know more ‘parents’ from other departments. The personal connection would benefit to their work.

For example, Clare mentioned:

*The corporate affiliated nursery will take care of children until seven. I felt safe to leave children at school. I can trust the nursery school teachers. I think it is better to leave them at nursery instead of taking children to the office. Sometimes if I were stocked in the office, my colleagues– they are all friendly and nice, will pick up children for me. So I don’t need to worry my children were alone at the nursery.* (Clare, 2007/12/12)

*When I worked late, I had to rely on my colleagues. Now we became an elite group – we these parents were from different departments. Since our children were in the same nursery, we had many chances talked about children because we were also school parents. When I was late for children, I would call my colleagues and they could pick up children first. I just went to their house straightforward after work. At the beginning, I was not so familiar with these colleagues. But now we become good friends, helping each other when anyone needs help. That is a beneficial personal relationship, no matter we colleagues or our children and their nursery friends.* (Betty, 2007/12/12)

In the past, childcare relied on the big family and the
neighbors. They helped each other to minimize the childcare burden. However, the cooperation and group-caring style vanish in the modern society because of the isolated relationship. An interesting result showed that the traditional childrearing style which neighbors or the big family shared the caring responsibilities together, appeared again among the parents who used the corporate affiliated nursery. Because the parents were also the colleagues in the company, they formulated a manipulated group-caring style. The employees took turns and helped each other to sharing the caring work and transportation. Furthermore, the employees became closer because their children went to same nursery and they had more conversations about their children apart from their work. Besides, they exchanged the parenting information and went for family trip together.

The interviewees said, some children would like to have a trip with their nursery classmates. Sometimes, the children at nursery would also keep close relationship. The company colleagues would discuss with each other about the trip and organise it. Even they would convince some other colleagues to join the trip together. For example, David said:

*The company would organise a family day once or twice per year. That was a one-day trip on holiday. We seldom attended when our children were small. We did not even know many colleagues or nursery parents at that time. Once a colleague in other department knew the*
family trip and came to me. I thought, OK, since my boy was also classmates of his son. I took my family at that time. Since then, I join the family trip every year. (David, 2007/12/12)

Sometimes I was forced to attend the family trip because my child would come back to me and said her good friends and their family attended the trip. I could hardly reject her. Sometimes the company would organise some family activities and I would also invited my children’s family. When I attended these activities, I had more time with my children. That is precious for me. (Alex, 2007/12/5)

When parents wanted to take their children out for a trip, they would firstly concerned the members attended mainly were relatives or close friends. However, far distances seldom became a reason to concern (Fong, 2006). The researchers also found that family trip provided for employees and their families created opportunities for parents to interact with their children. Also they created friendly atmosphere and promoted positive interactions among colleagues and their children.

**Traveling Supplement – A substitute for Family Trip**

Alex used to be the director of employees’ welfare department. He participate a lot of childcare service plans in the company. He mentioned that some companies would provide traveling supplement for employees but he thought he would rather to provide a family trip for employees. He mentioned:
There used to have some colleagues suggested to distribute the welfare bonus... such as twenty thousand NT dollars per year per person. But I insisted to devote these suggestions. Perhaps many people would feel good at that moment when they saw the money. But I knew these funding would not benefit any parent-children relationship at all. So the welfare department would like to create interactions among employees’ families. We tried to build up a social support network and a friendly climate. (Alex, 2007/12/5)

**Family Trip shall Consider Employees’ Family Life Circle**

Jack mentioned that some family trips organized by the company seldom take employees’ family life circle into consideration. For example, the inappropriate traveling routes for young children or over-crowded participants worsen the quality and some employees even expressed that they would rather to reserve the time for private family activities. Jack said:

*Although it is a family outdoor activity, there were thousands of company workers and their families attended. We had to line up when finding a place to take a rest. I did not feel well last time. I would also think that was a torture for my young kids. So I refused to attend these activities. Basically I think the company shall consider different needs of employees’ children at various age stages. (Jack, 2008/5/15)*

**3. Company and family working together**

Some interviewees said the company invited professional
lecturers to give a talk on parenting or children’s education. They thought this was very convenient for them because they did not need to rush to the place and it was free to attend. Normally the lecture was held in the company.

There were two kinds of parenting education provided by the company. The nursery would provide some articles sharing with us. Mostly were about children’s moral education. I found they were useful. Also the nursery would sometimes have lectures on parenting on Friday afternoon. I used to attend one lecture telling parents how to teach a well-behaved child. (Betty, 2007/12/12)

The interviewees expressed that the lecturing courses were beneficial. Not only they promoted employees’ parenting knowledge and skills, but also clarified parents’ misunderstanding of young children. The company believed that the investment of employees’ parenting skills would reduce their anxiety in taking care of children. The company was also benefited from the relationship.

A win-win policy – why a company shall support a family-centered ethos

Corporations provide childcare service would release parents’ pressure in child rearing. Wang (1994) indicated that corporate childcare services provided an important social function. It supplemented the insufficient social welfare
provided by the government. Also female labours would not terminate their career because of rearing children. It ensured equal opportunity of work, and female employees would not need to resign from work simply because they had go home and take care of children. A family-centred policy would assist the employees to balance their work and family. Corporate childcare services did not mean to deprive parents’ rights of rearing children. The interviewees expressed their opinions of corporate childcare service:

*I used to work until 8 or 9 in the evening when I was single. But the nursery set up a limited time for picking up, I had to finish my office work. That was good for me because I had to use my time efficiently. I had to finish my work before nursery closed. When I picked up my young children, I would have a complete family time sharing with children. I could really enjoy my family life without worrying my job. (Betty, 2007/12/12)*

*Basically the company would like the employee not only devote themselves in work, but also their own family. So the arrangement of company activity would be family-centred, no matter the content and schedule. The company would expect we spend our free time with families during the holiday breaks. (Betty, 2007/12/12)*

*Company valued employees’ family very much. The basic ethos was that the company would reduce their production rate when the employees had to spare time worrying their family. They might bring a bad-mood to the company, and this would cause more negative effects on their colleagues. Childcare services were a small part of welfare. The more important thing was to convey the family values to the*
employees. (Alex, 2007/12/5)

Childcare services which were provided by the company reduced employees’ parenting pressure. An employee-friendly policy does not mean to take over parents’ roles completely and to deprive parenting ability of child rearing. However, companies had responsibilities to assist employees to become good parents. What more can a company do apart from organizing a family trip or providing parenting information? Companies can do more based upon employees’ childcare needs – flexible working hours, respiring care, or parent leaves for both male and female workers.

Conclusions

The aims of this research were to explore employees’ participation in their parents’ roles and their opinions about work and child rearing. Ten interviewees used corporate childcare services were interviewed and the research results were included as follows:

1. Corporate affiliated nursery is convenient for employees

    The advantages of corporate affiliated nursery were generated. They were close in location because most corporate affiliated nurseries were beside the company. Company affiliated nurseries would consider companies’ schedule when they arranged children’s activities. The dual roles of colleagues and parents lessen parents’ child rearing pressure because they could find
supporting from other colleagues.

2. A family trip provided by company

Companies provided family trip and they took nurseries’ schedules into consideration. With the encouragement and promotion from the companies, the employees would spend more time with their children. Going out with familiar colleagues and their families was also an important factor to bring all the employees’ family together.

3. A partnership relationship – corporate and nurseries working together

The corporate and affiliated nurseries were partners. They organize family activities suitable for their employees. The nurseries provided key issues/topics to promote employees’ parenting. An outdoor activity arranged by nurseries attracted children and their families because they considered it is a good opportunity to build up friendships and the employees believed that it also benefited to their relationships with other colleagues. The partnership of companies and nurseries created a win-win strategy.

References


