

Increased organizational support for employees' adoption efforts yields positive benefits

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Matt Quade, Ph.D., associate professor of management, led the study and is an adoptive parent. Credit: Robert Rogers, Baylor University

When an organization supports its employees who choose to adopt

children, the employees, their families, the adopted children and the organization itself experience positive benefits and outcomes, according to new research from Baylor University.

The study, "It Takes a Village: How Organizational Support for Adoption Positively Affects Employees and Their Families," is published in the *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*. Researchers from Baylor's Hankamer School of Business include Matthew J. Quade, Ph.D., associate professor of management; Kaylee J. Hackney, Ph.D., assistant professor of management; and Dawn S. Carlson, Ph.D., professor of management.

"This research provides empirical evidence of specific outcomes for something that organizations have been doing with increasing frequency in recent years," said Quade, who led the study and is an adoptive parent. "Such support has primarily come via financial reimbursement or leave policies. Our research provides evidence of specific ways that employees and their families benefit from such support."

The study included surveys of 592 married couples (1,184 total surveyed participants) who had adopted a [child](#) within the past two years. The results show:

- Commitment to the organization for adoptive employees as well as their spouse is greater when their organization supports their adoption of a child.
- Adoptive employees who work in organizations that support their adoption of a child have positive effects spill over into their [family](#) such as increased family functioning and reduced relationship tension.
- Spouses experience greater levels of family functioning and lower levels of relationship tension when the other spouse's employing organization supports their adoption of a child.

- Adopted children benefit indirectly from their parents' organization if the organization supported their adoption. This benefit comes in the form of a stronger attachment to the adoptive parents.

"A child's attachment to the adoptive parent(s) is obviously a key metric in the adoption community," Quade said, "and we found this to be positively impacted as a result of organizational support for adoption."

Percentage of U.S. employers offering adoption assistance grows

The United States historically accounts for nearly half of all adoptions that take place worldwide each year. In 2014, more than 110,000 children were adopted by parents in the U.S., according to the study.

"With each adoption, there is presumably one working parent, and in many cases, there are two working parents who must navigate balancing [work demands](#) alongside an extremely complex, new and unique family-life demand—the adoption of a child," researchers wrote. "Organizations have identified that they can play a role in supporting employees who are adopting a child and they have increasingly responded."

The study points to an annual survey by the Society for Human Resource Management that shows the percentage of U.S. employers offering adoption assistance had risen from 7% in 2015 to 10% in 2019.

The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, which is referenced in the study, produces a list of the 100 Best Adoption-Friendly Workplaces. The foundation measures adoption assistance through activities such as financial reimbursement for adoption-related expenses, paid or unpaid leave, flexible work arrangements or managerial support for employees

during and after the adoption process.

The researchers define this support as "the intentional effort on the part of an organization, through financial, environmental or procedural means, to support an [employee](#) who is in the process of adopting or has recently adopted a child."

The organization's commitment to assist with adoption can result in reciprocal feelings from the employees who've been helped, as well as spouses. Quade said that commitment to the organization could range from a sense of belonging or emotional attachment to the organization to a desire to spend the rest of one's career with that organization.

"Alternative form of corporate social responsibility"

The researchers found that adoption-friendly benefits offered by organizations are a worthwhile investment for employees and their families.

"Support for employees who are adopting a child can be strengthened when everyone within the organization is supportive," Quade said. "More specifically, direct supervisors and coworkers of those employees who are adopting a child can stand to contribute a great deal to the level of support an employee feels when going through an adoption process."

Quade said, based on this study, more organizations should consider enacting policies that support employees who are using an alternative, untraditional way of building a family (i.e., adoption).

"Organizational support for [adoption](#) can be an alternative form of corporate social responsibility as its offering could have indirect effects on the communities in which they operate and around the world by helping reduce the number of children needing to be adopted," he said.

More information: Matthew J. Quade et al, It takes a village: How organizational support for adoption positively affects employees and their families, *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* (2021). [DOI: 10.1111/joop.12358](https://doi.org/10.1111/joop.12358)

Provided by Baylor University

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