

Can Family-Friendly Workplace Policies Support Both Well-being and Fertility? Evidence from France

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Theme 1301 Policy issues

Incompatibilities between paid work and care have been identified as a key driver of low well-being and fertility (Goldscheider et al. 2015; Balbo et al. 2013). A large body of research on the effect of work-life conflict has examined the role of national policies and contexts (Matysiak, & Węziak-Białowolska 2016), particularly family policies (e.g. Gauthier 1996; Esping-Andersen 2009), labour market structures (Ahn and Mira 2002; Adsera 2005) or cultural norms (Bernardi 2003). Since the early 2000s, increasing attention has been paid to the role of workplaces practices and policies to mitigate the impact of work-family conflict on family outcomes (Evans, 2001; Adema, 2005).

However, to date, few empirical studies have investigated the relationship between family-friendly benefits and workers well-being and fertility intentions (Osiewalska et al. 2024). A frequent and major shortcoming of existing studies is the use of poor indicators to define family-friendly measures: such practices are defined either by using only one type of family benefit or by using a proxy for family-friendliness, such as work in the public sector. Yet, family-friendly benefits are diverse. Some employers offer a package of different benefits (Heywood, 2007; Solberg & Laughlin, 1995), while others adopt family-friendly measures in a piecemeal manner (Wood et al., 2003). We expect these different workplace family-friendly measures, in-cash and in-kind benefits and flexible work arrangements, to have different relationships effects on individual outcomes.

This study investigates the influence of family-friendly workplace policies and organizational culture on individual well-being and fertility intentions in France. We analyse (i) whether individual satisfaction in terms of work-life balance, well-being and/or fertility intentions are related with employers' family-friendly policies (ii) which types of programmes are the most effective in increasing well-being.

Data:

We use data from the first wave of the French longitudinal Families and Employers Survey (FamEmp), a nationally representative, linked employee–employer dataset conducted by INED in 2024. The family section was conducted via telephone or online survey of a sample of over 41,000 men and women aged 20–65. The employer section was an online survey sent to the workplaces where respondents from the family section were employed (about 9,000 respondent employers with 10 or more employees). The survey covered all branches of industry, in both the public and private sectors. The dataset contains wide-ranging information on individuals' and households' backgrounds, fertility intentions, health and well-being as well as a detailed description of individuals' current work situation. The employer section provides accurate and unbiased information on employers' human resource policies, such as work organization, personnel management, workplace benefits, size and composition of the workforce. For this research, we use the sample for which information on both employees and employers is available and limit our study to individuals aged 20 to 45, excluding some individuals with missing information, the sample totals 3,386 women and 3,572 men.

Methods

We use the richness of the dataset to build synthetic indicators covering a large package of different benefits, that is, a combination of 54 variables related to the work–family balance that cover several dimensions of both in-cash and in-kind child-related benefits, as well as the availability of flexible work hours, leaves, and the consideration of family life in work organization. To do so, we use multiple correspondence analysis (MCA) and a hierarchical cluster analysis.

Then we use a probit method to estimate the association between these indicators of the work-life balance and various indicators of satisfaction, health status, occupational mobility intentions, and fertility intentions.

Preliminary results

Six clusters of employers according to their family-friendly practices

Using MCA and hierarchical cluster analysis, we identified 6 clusters of workplace practices. The characteristics of these clusters and the corresponding proportion of employed men and women are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of employees by type of workplace family-friendly practices

	Type of practices	Firms characteristics	% Men	% Women
No measure	no adjustments, benefits or flexibility related to family life	Small-sized establishments, mainly in the private sector	13.3	13.4
Extended leaves only	reduced working hours, long annual leave, full wage during maternity or paternity leave no flexibility or support for family life	Small and medium-sized establishments, mainly in the education sector	2.6	7.4
Informal arrangements	no formal agreement, long working hours, flexible working hours on a case-by-case basis	Small-sized establishments, newly established, private sector (trade, manufactural industry, construction)	16.1	13.3
Remote work and flexible work schedule	Agreement for flexible teleworking, flexible working hours and family arrangements on a case-by-case basis	Medium and large-sized organisations in the private sector, tertiary highly qualified sector and some industry	27.3	24.2
Family needs into work organisation	Explicit consideration of the family life for all employees and flexible working hours, proactive corporate culture	Small and medium sized companies in the private sector, tertiary activities	13.0	12.8
Collective agreements and in-kind benefits	Numerous family benefits in kind and financial secured by collective agreements, long leaves	Private sector and private companies in the finance sector	27.8	28.8
N			3,572	3,386

Next step will be to assess the relationship between these clusters and various indicators of well being (life satisfaction, job satisfaction, work-life balance satisfaction and conflict, risk of depression, intention to change job, and fertility intentions)

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