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Supplemental family leave provision and employee performance: Disentangling availability and use

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether the provision of supplemental family leave elicits higher work effort and extra-role behavior in employees. Drawing on arguments derived from signaling theory we test whether the beneficial effects of providing longer or better paid family leave on performance exist for all employees, or whether they are limited to the group who either took advantage of the supplemental leave in the past or is likely to do so in the future. In addition, the mechanism proposed by organizational support theory by which supplemental leave is expected to affect employee performance - by increasing affective organizational commitment - is tested. The hypotheses developed are tested using European multilevel organization-data (Van der Lippe et al., 2016a) on 11,011 employees in 869 departments or teams, and 259 organizations. The results indicate that perceived availability of supplemental family leave relates positively to employees' contextual performance, partially by increasing organizational commitment. This effect is found irrespective of actual use of family leave and is not moderated by characteristics relating to future use such as having young children, being of childbearing age or being female.

KEYWORDS

Supplemental family leave; Contextual performance; Task performance; Organizational commitment; Organizational support theory; Signal theory

Introduction

In all European countries employees have the right to some form of paternity, maternity and/or parental leave, although the duration and levels of payment differ tremendously between the countries (OECD, 2017). In addition, organizations increasingly provide supplemental leave on

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top of the policies they are obliged to offer by law, by offering a longer period of leave or increasing the level of payment employees are entitled to (den Dulk et al., 2012; Ronda et al., 2016, den Dulk, 2001). These supplemental family leave provisions are designed to help employees with young children to better combine work and family life, and as such can be beneficial to the employees (Ronda et al., 2016). At the same time, adopting such supportive policies may be beneficial for organizations, by increasing desired outcomes such as employee performance among employees, the so-called 'business-case argument' for offering supportive policies (Kossek & Friede, 2006; Wheatley, 2017). With this article we aim to contribute to the literature by investigating the mechanism via which the availability and use of supplemental leave provision is related to self-reported employee performance. By focusing on supplemental family leave provisions, we assess the effect of this policy on performance for employees who have directly benefitted from the policy, those who may benefit in the future, and those to whom it is not personally relevant. Disentangling the effect of availability and use in this way allows us to test different theoretical mechanisms and is essential for fully understanding how policies relate to employee outcomes. Availability and use are unique constructs that may independently and in different manners relate to employee outcomes (Butts et al., 2013; Kelly et al., 2008) and should thus be studied separately. To date few studies have concerned themselves with disentangling availability and use (for exceptions see Butts et al., 2013; Casper & Harris, 2008). Instead, studies examined the effects of work-family policies without specifying the underlying mechanism, and the majority of studies look solely at availability, sometimes as a proxy for use (Kelly et al., 2008; Kossek & Friede, 2006; Pasamar, 2015). Policy availability may however increase employee performance independent of use because it signals employees that their employer is concerned about them. As employees appreciate this, they want to reciprocate and work harder (Gouldner, 1960; Spence, 1973). An important question is, then, whether this signaling function is more effective for people to whom family leave is of higher relevance or whether supplemental leave provisions act as a general signal of employer support.

While performance is at the core of the business-case argument and many articles mention it as one of the potential benefits of offering work-family policies, there have been few studies that empirically test the relation between work-family policies and performance (de Sivatte et al., 2015; Eby et al., 2004; Wharton et al., 2008), with research mostly studying work-life balance, intentions to stay, job satisfaction, and commitment (Butts et al., 2013; De Menezes & Kelliher, 2011; Haar & Spell, 2004; Mulvaney, 2014). In this article we focus on two aspects of self-

reported performance, namely in-role or task performance, and contextual performance (also referred to as extra-role or Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (Koopmans et al, 2013)). Task performance refers to 'the proficiency with which individuals perform the core substantive or technical tasks central to his or her job' (Campbell, 1990, pp 708; Koopmans et al., 2013). Contextual performance, on the other hand, relates to employees' self-reported engagement in behaviors that go beyond what is normally expected of them in their job, and which 'support the organizational, social, and psychological environment in which the technical core must function' (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993, p 73; Koopmans et al., 2013).

Data from the European Sustainable Workforce Survey (Van der Lippe et al., 2016a) are used, which contains multilevel data on 11,011 employees in 869 departments or teams, and 259 organizations, in nine European countries (Bulgaria, Finland, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom). A great advantage of this dataset is its cross-national design, which enables us to test our empirical model in different institutional and cultural settings.

Theoretical background and hypotheses

We conceptualize the motivation of organizations to adopt supplemental work-family policies in line with the 'business-case' argument, that doing so in some way contributes to their organizational interests (den Dulk, 2001; Kossek & Friede, 2006). Supplemental leave provisions have not fully been examined in this light, contrary to other work-family polices such as flexible work arrangements or childcare policies (Beauregard, 2011; De Menezes & Kelliher, 2011; Mulvaney, 2014), sometimes also operationalized as bundles of work-family policies (Butts et al., 2013; Casper & Harris, 2008). We consider supplemental leave provision an excellent case for testing the business-case argument. Due to the infrequent use of these policies - after all, people do not have a child often - the availability and use of supplemental leave provisions are very distinct constructs. For many other policies availability and use can be more intertwined; for example, for flexibility it can be difficult to ascertain whether an effect can be attributed to perceived availability or to (anticipated) use, because any employee could use it at any time. This is not a problem for leave policies, as the target group eligible for family leave is clearly defined. In addition, the use of any form of family leave provision is limited to a distinct period in time and thus past use can be reliable delineated from availability.

In this paper we draw on arguments derived from organizational support and signaling theory to investigate whether the provision of supplemental family leave elicits higher work effort and extra-role behavior in employees. Past research has shown that employees who perceive their employer as supportive of their needs are more likely to engage in greater job-related efforts, resulting in increased task (or in-role) and contextual (or extra-role) performance (Kurtessis et al., 2017). Drawing on organizational support theory the relationship between employee and employer is conceptualized as one of social exchange: employees try to develop a general idea about the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Kurtessis et al., 2017). Perceived organizational support elicits the norm of reciprocity, leading to a felt obligation to help the organization and increased feelings loyalty and commitment (Gouldner, 1960). Two important conditions for organizational support to invoke the reciprocal exchange between employer and employee are that employees perceive the supportive behavior to be intended as helpful, and at the organization's discretion - as opposed to for instance being forced by government regulations (Kurtessis et al., 2017). In other words, employees must be convinced that the organization intentionally wants to do well for them.

Because organizational support and concern for employees are not directly observable, employees have less information about these qualities than the employer. Signaling theory (Spence, 1973) posits that in such a situation, people interpret observable actions as signals of less observable characteristics. Previous research shows that if certain criteria are met (i.e. the signal has to be visible and costly and related to the quality it is supposed to signal), the signal is more effective (Connelly et al., 2011), which in this case means that it assures employees that the organization is willing to invest in their well-being. Supplemental family leave arguably meets these criteria, as an official HR policy it is visible and costly, and indicative of organizational concern about and support for employees' work-family balance.

In addition, supplemental leave provisions fulfill the criteria specified by organizational support theory to be necessary to invoke reciprocity and feelings of loyalty (Kurtessis et al., 2017): Supplemental leave is designed to enhance work-life balance, is generally instigated at the request of the employee and does not directly serve the organization – in contrast to, for example, flexible working hours, which can also be used to make employees work flexibly on hours that suit the company (Leslie et al., 2012; Wheatley, 2017). As by definition it goes beyond mandatory provisions of leave it can also be regarded as being at the organization's discretion. These arguments make it plausible that the provision of

supplemental family leave is used by employers as a signal of organizational concern for their employees' wellbeing and is recognized as such by employees. This leads us to expect that *employees who perceive their organization to offer supplemental leave report higher task and contextual performance compared to employees who do not (hypothesis 1)*. In order to specifically test the mechanism proposed by organizational support theory - that the effect of supplemental leave provision on performance is driven by employees balancing the organization's favorable orientation toward them with affective commitment (Kurtessis et al., 2017) - we expect that *supplemental family leave provisions increase organizational commitment (hypothesis 2)*. Based on the large amount of evidence in the literature supporting a positive relationship between higher organizational commitment and increased job performance (Becker et al., 2012; Riketta, 2002, 2008), we expect that *higher organizational commitment in turn is associated with higher task and contextual performance (hypothesis 3)*. Our hypotheses thus imply organizational commitment to play a mediating role in the relationship between supplemental leave provision and contextual and task performance (see Figure 1).

Following the mechanism described, supplemental leave provisions function as a general signal of organizational concern and all employees in an organization would want to reciprocate the corporate concern that is expressed by making supplemental leave available. Whether the policy is also useful to employees personally is in this perspective not very important (Casper & Harris, 2008; Grover & Crooker, 1995; Prottas et al., 2007). But previous research has found that the effectiveness of signals depends in part on receiver interpretation. The process of translating signals into perceived meaning is seen as driven by preconceived notions about importance (Connelly et al., 2011). One way in which signals and their importance are weighed by employees is the perceived utility for the receiver: employees who are more likely to benefit from the provision of supplemental family leave may react stronger to this signal of organizational concern. This implies that when supplemental family leave is perceived as more useful, it invokes a stronger sense of gratitude and desire to reciprocate, which thereby increases commitment to the organization and ultimately performance more than among employees who perceive supplemental leave as less beneficial for themselves. We look at three groups of employees for whom supplemental leave might be extra beneficial: parents, people of childbearing age, and women. The group with the clearest personal interest is parents of young children, as they are the primary target group of family leave. Moreover, also people who do not have children yet, but who are likely to have them in the (near) future would see supplemental leave policies as

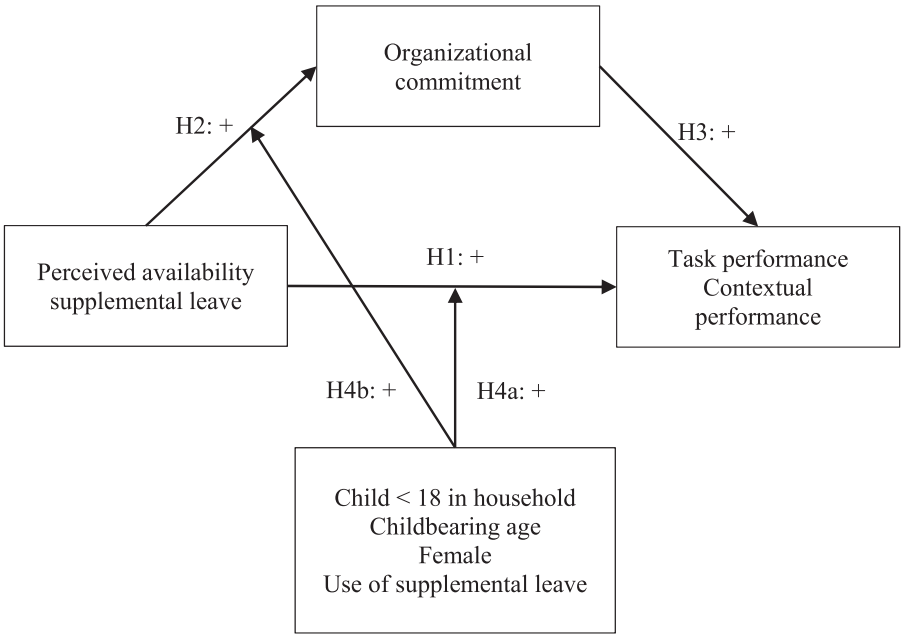

Figure 1. Conceptual model.

beneficial. Thus, we consider people of (or close to) childbearing age as perceiving family leave as personally useful. In addition, men and women might view work-family policies as existing mainly for the benefit of women because both countries and organizations offer more far-reaching work-family policies to women than to men (OECD, 2017; Pasamar, 2015). In addition women continue to be more engaged in combining work and childrearing and use work-family policies more often than men (Burnett et al., 2010; Kanji & Samuel, 2017; Munn & Greer, 2015; Poortman & Lippe, 2009). Thus, as work-family policies are more often aimed at and used by women, it can be expected that women perceive the availability of such policies as a greater signal of corporate concern than men. Based on these expected differences in perceived utility of supplemental family leave provisions, we expect *a stronger positive relationship between the availability of supplemental family leave and contextual and task performance among the following groups: parents of young children, people of (or close to) childbearing age and women (hypothesis 4a)*. Because the assumed mechanism explicitly runs *via* increased feelings of gratitude and loyalty, we expect that *the relationship between perceived availability of supplemental leave and organizational commitment is also stronger for these groups* (hypothesis 4 b). Hypothesis 4a and 4 b imply moderating effects of these characteristics, see also the conceptual model in Figure 1.

Finally we consider use of family leave as an alternative explanation, as any effect may be driven by those who have made use of supplemental leave, as they have reaped actual (as opposed to symbolic) benefits (Butts et al., 2013; Casper & Harris, 2008). When a child is born, many new demands on parents' resources arise. Experiencing the benefits of having taken a prolonged or better-paid period of leave may enable employees to better adjust to the new situation, experience less work-family conflict and stress, and consequently be able to be more productive at work (Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Butts et al., 2013; Casper & Harris, 2008). Moreover, after having enjoyed the benefits of using supplemental leave provisions employees might to an even greater extend appreciate the concern shown by the organization, and be more inclined to reciprocate by being more productive. We account for this alternative explanation by testing in how far *the relationship between perceived availability of supplemental family use, commitment and performance is stronger among employees who made use of supplemental leave (hypotheses 4 a/b).*

With regard to country differences, we assume the mechanisms we propose in our conceptual model to be of a general nature and thus not to differ by country. Nevertheless, the fact that we have at our disposal data collected in nine different countries, representing nine different institutional and cultural settings, allows us to explore in how far our model fits the data in all nine countries. We therefore refrain from formulating hypotheses about differences between countries, but will estimate our model separately per country to test the generalizability of our conceptual model.

Method

Data and sample

To test our hypotheses, we use the *European Sustainable Workforce Survey* (Van der Lippe et al., 2016b), which contains data on 11,011 employees, 869 departments or teams, and 259 organizations in Bulgaria, Finland, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the UK, collected in 2015/2016. Organizations were sampled based on their representation of six different sectors (manufacturing, health care, higher education, transportation, financial services and telecommunication) and three different sizes (1-99 employees; 100-249; 250 or bigger), using a combination of stratified random sampling and personal connections. After organizations agreed to participate, employees and department-managers were addressed at work and asked to participate in an online or paper-and-pencil questionnaire. The human resource manager filled in the questionnaire on behalf of the organization, as is

common in this type of research, because they are considered to be well-informed about the entire organization (Haas & Hwang, 2016). The response rate was 61.4% among employees, 80.9% among team or department-managers, and 98% among the organizations that had agreed to participate. From the initial sample of 11,011 employees we excluded subjects who had missing values on the central variables performance, commitment or availability of supplemental leave ($n = 716$), use of family leave for youngest child ($n = 157$), on individual control variables ($n = 671$) or at the organizational level ($n = 330$). In addition, people who used supplemental leave for their youngest child but worked at another company at the time the child was born were also excluded ($n = 104$), as we cannot know whether the leave was taken at this company or at another company. The final sample consisted of 8,861 respondents in 836 teams or departments, and 250 organizations.

Measures

Dependent variables

The measurement of the dependent variables task performance and contextual performance is based on a reduced version of the *Individual Work Performance Questionnaire* (IWPQ) designed by Koopmans *et al.* (Koopmans et al., 2013), consisting of five items per performance outcome, each assessed on a five point Likert scale (running from 'always' to 'seldom', see Table 1 for item wording). Organizational commitment was measured with four items adapted from the *Organizational Commitment Questionnaire* (Mowday et al., 1979), each assessing agreement on a five point Likert scale. A factor analysis including the 14 items of the three scales was conducted to ascertain that they are empirically distinguishable concepts. The factor loadings presented in Table 1 confirmed that task performance, contextual performance and organizational commitment are clearly delineated concepts. After establishing sufficient internal reliability of each set of items, three scales of average responses were calculated with original coding reversed so that higher values indicated better performance and higher commitment respectively.

Perceived availability of supplemental family leave

The perceived availability of supplemental family leave represents respondents' answers to the question 'to your knowledge, does your organization offer longer or better-paid leave arrangements than it is obliged to offer by law? For example, longer or better paid maternity, paternity or parental leave.' Respondents could answer 'yes', 'no' and 'don't know'. For our analyses we grouped 'no' and 'don't know' together

Table 1. Rotated factor loadings and unique variances of performance commitment items.

Concept	Item wording	Factor1	Factor2	Factor3	Uniqueness
Task performance	I was able to plan my work so that I finished on time	**0.80**	−0.12	−0.01	0.41
	I kept in mind the work results I needed to achieve	**0.69**	0.14	0.01	0.44
	I was able to set priorities	**0.77**	0.12	−0.01	0.35
	I was able to do my work efficiently	**0.83**	−0.03	0.05	0.30
	I managed my time well	**0.84**	−0.02	−0.01	0.31
Contextual performance	Without being told, I started on new tasks after finishing up my work	0.07	**0.71**	−0.06	0.49
	I took on challenging new tasks when they were available	0.01	**0.85**	0.01	0.26
	I worked on keeping my work skills up-to-date	0.16	**0.60**	0.04	0.54
	I took on extra responsibilities	−0.05	**0.82**	0.01	0.35
	I actively participated in meetings and/or consultations	−0.05	**0.66**	0.06	0.55
Organizational commitment	I am willing to go above and beyond the call of duty to help my organization be successful	−0.02	0.21	**0.63**	0.49
	I tell my friends that my organization is a great place to work	0.05	−0.06	**0.88**	0.23
	I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organization	0.01	−0.04	**0.91**	0.19
	I really care about the future of this organization	−0.05	0.04	**0.82**	0.32
Eigenvalue		4.72	2.19	1.88	
Cronbach's Alpha		0.85	0.80	0.84	

Note: $N = 8{,}861$. Oblique rotation with oblimin criterion.

as there was no theoretical basis to expect a difference between these groups: in both cases respondents experienced no signal of corporate concern. This was confirmed by exploratory analyses which showed no significant difference on performance for respondents who answered 'no' and respondents who answered 'don't know'.

Use of family leave

Use of family leave was measured by a categorical variable which represents whether the respondent had used statutory or supplemental leave provisions for his or her youngest child (assessed among respondents with at least one biological child aged 18 or under at the time of the interview). This variable therefore contains four categories: 1 = respondent has no child under 18, 2 = respondent has child(ren) under 18 but did not use leave for the youngest, 3 = respondent has child(ren) under 18 and used statutory leave for the youngest, 4 = respondent has child(ren) and used supplemental leave for the youngest. People were coded as having used statutory leave if they indicated to have used maternity, paternity and/or parental leave around the birth of their youngest child, but stated that the duration of this leave

was at most equal to the period they were entitled to by law. Supplemental leave was defined as any provision of maternity, paternity or parental leave longer or better paid than mandated by law.

Control variables

We include a number of respondent characteristics which we believe influence work performance as well as awareness respectively availability of family leave provisions. The first category of controls are related to life course phase, namely sex (male =1), age group (1 = below 30, 2 = 30 to 44, 3 = 45+), age of the youngest child in the household (1 = no child (under 18), 2= youngest child 0 to 5, 3 = youngest child 6 to 12, 4 = youngest child 13-18) and whether the respondent lives with a partner (1 = yes). Research shows that in particular parents of young children experience time pressure and resource depletion which may affect job performance (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010). At the same time these groups of employees are most likely to know about supplemental leave provisions as they are the target group of these polices. We also include a set of indicators which relate to job quality and human capital with known associations with job performance as well as with the provision of supplemental policies (Ng & Feldman, 2009). These are years of education, weekly working hours (top-coded at 84 h) and occupational status. Occupational status is measured by the International Socio-Economic Index of occupational status (ISEI, Ganzeboom et al., 1992). As research shows that especially public sector and large organizations take the lead in providing organizational work-family policies (Abendroth & den Dulk, 2011), we include whether an organization is public or private and its size (as the natural log of number of employees). Also, the sector in which the organization operated is included. Lastly, we include dummies representing the country of data collection. Table 2 presents descriptive statistics of all variables used.

Analytical strategy

To test the theoretical expectations, we estimated a series of path models, which simultaneously modelled the three outcomes of contextual and task performance and organizational commitment. The first model predicted performance and commitment by perceived availability of supplemental family leave, in a second model commitment was added as a predictor of both performance outcomes. Finally, we tested whether family leave use, age group, age of the youngest child or respondent sex moderated the relationship between availability of leave and performance respectively commitment. For each model we estimated a specification

Table 2. Descriptive statistics.

		Total		Women		Men	
	Min/max	Mean	*SD*	Mean	*SD*	Mean	*SD*
Contextual performance	1-5	3.27	.93	3.26	.93	3.28	.92
Task performance	1-5	3.77	.77	3.81	.77	3.73	.77
Organizational commitment	1-5	3.81	.75	3.80	.74	3.83	.76
Supplemental leave available		.13		.13		.13	
Use of family leave:							
No child < 18 in household		.60		.61		.59	
No leave used		.13		.10		.17	
Use statutory leave		.22		.25		.20	
Use supplemental leave		.04		.04		.04	
Control variables							
Male		.44					
Age group:							
Below 30		.15		.16		.14	
30-44		.43		.44		.43	
45 and above		.42		.41		.43	
Age of youngest child:							
No child < 18 in household		.60		.61		.59	
Below 6		.17		.15		.19	
6 – 12 years		.15		.15		.14	
13-18 years		.08		.09		.08	
Partner		.74		.72		.76	
Years of education	2-20	13.52	2.93	13.70	2.72	13.28	3.16
Working hours	0-84	39.49	9.59	37.67	9.69	41.75	8.96
Occupational status (ISEI)	11-89	56.7	18.6	57.6	17.1	55.5	20.2
Size company	9-10,000	864.28	1893.99	919.19	1967.14	795.77	1796.44
Private (vs. public or charity)		.62		.54		.71	
Sector							
Financial services		.13		.15		.11	
Health care		.23		.33		.11	
Higher education		.18		.20		.15	
Manufacturing		.23		.16		.32	
Telecommunication		.10		.07		.13	
Transportation		.14		.09		.19	
Country							
Bulgaria		.13		.15		.10	
Finland		.07		.08		.06	
Germany		.09		.09		.08	
Hungary		.12		.13		.12	
Netherlands		.23		.21		.25	
Portugal		.11		.11		.11	
Spain		.08		.07		.10	
Sweden		.10		.09		.11	
UK		.07		.07		.07	
Perceived availability other policies	0-4	1.14	1.08	1.13	1.09	1.17	1.08
Use other policies	0-4	.83	.87	.79	.87	.89	.87
N		8,861		4,921		3,940	

[b]Flexible working hours, working at home, reducing working hours, and assistance with childcare.

including only the main predictor(s) (Model 1) and one including all control variables (Model 2). In order to account for the nested nature of the data (employees clustered in teams, teams clustered in organizations), all models were specified as three-level random intercept models. All models were estimated using generalized structural equation modeling (gsem) in Stata 15. The indirect effects were calculated using the delta method (nlcom) and bias corrected bootstrapped confidence intervals

were obtained to ascertain the robustness of the estimates to the normality assumptions of the delta method.

Results

Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 2. Employees' average contextual performance was 3.27, meaning that they scored between 'sometimes' and 'often' on their engagement in extra-task performance. Task performance and organizational commitment show slightly higher averages. 13% of the respondents thought that supplemental leave was offered by the organization. 60% of the sample did not have a child, 13% of the people had a child and did not use any type of family leave, 22% had a child and used statutory leave, and 4% had a child and used supplemental leave. It stands out that the perceived availability and use of supplemental leave among men and women is very similar, which especially for use is somewhat surprising considering the fact that it is known that women use more leave (Burnett et al., 2010; Munn & Greer, 2015). However, it should be kept in mind that this reflects whether respondents used *any* leave, but says nothing about the duration of this leave and that it refers to extra payment as well.

Furthermore, we see that 44% of our sample consists of men, that most employees are aged 30-44 or 45 and older and about 30% has children aged 12 or under in the household. People on average attended 13.5 years of education, with women being slightly higher educated than men. Respondents worked 39 h per week on average, men worked more hours than women. 74% of the sample lived with a partner at the time of the interview.

Table 3 shows the results of the multilevel path model on the relation between perceived availability of supplemental leave and employee performance and organizational commitment. Based on the empty model (not shown), the intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) is obtained to assess the correlation between employees' performance and commitment in the same organization and in the same team and organization. We find all three outcome measures to be weakly correlated within the same organization (ICC between .13 for commitment and .05 for task performance) and only slightly higher within the same team within organizations (ICC between .17 for commitment and .10 for task performance). Between 83 and 90 percent of the total variance in our outcome measures can thus be attributed to individual employees.

With regard to the hypothesized relationship between perceived availability of supplemental leave and the outcome measures, Table 3 (Model 2) shows this effect to be positive and significant for contextual

Table 3. Multilevel regression results from path model simultaneously predicting performance and commitment by perceived availability of supplemental family leave provision and control variables.

	Outcome:					
	Task Performance		Contextual Performance		Organizational Commitment	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Perceived availability supplemental leave: yes (ref: no)	−0.04^{+} (0.02)	0.01 (0.03)	0.20** (0.03)	0.12** (0.03)	0.13** (0.02)	0.15** (0.02)
Family leave use						
No child		0.06* (0.03)		0.01 (0.03)		0.01 (0.03)
Child - no leave use		0.06* (0.03)		0.04 (0.03)		0.06* (0.03)
Child - use statutory leave		ref.		ref.		ref.
Child - use supplemental leave		−0.04 (0.05)		0.04 (0.05)		0.01 (0.04)
Male respondent (ref.: Female)		−0.04* (0.02)		−0.01 (0.02)		0.01 (0.02)
Age						
Age < 30		ref.		ref.		ref.
Aged 30-44		−0.07** (0.03)		−0.10** (0.03)		−0.03 (0.02)
Aged >45		−0.04 (0.03)		−0.18** (0.03)		0.04 (0.02)
Age youngest child						
Aged < 6		ref.		ref.		ref.
Aged 6-12		−0.01 (0.03)		−0.02 (0.03)		0.02 (0.03)
Aged 13-18		−0.00 (0.04)		0.07^{+} (0.04)		0.05 (0.03)
Lives with partner (ref.: no partner in HH)		0.01 (0.02)		0.07** (0.02)		−0.00 (0.02)
Years of education		−0.00 (0.00)		0.03** (0.00)		−0.01** (0.00)
Weekly working hours		−0.01** (0.00)		0.01** (0.00)		0.00** (0.00)
Occupational status (ISEI)		0.00 (0.00)		0.00** (0.00)		0.00** (0.00)
Organizational size (log)		−0.01 (0.01)		0.00 (0.01)		0.01 (0.02)
Public sector or charity (ref.: Private)		−0.10** (0.04)		0.03 (0.04)		−0.08 (0.06)
Organization information missing		−0.24** (0.08)		−0.27** (0.09)		−0.19 (0.12)
Sector						
Financial services		ref.		ref.		ref.
Health care		0.04 (0.05)		−0.11* (0.05)		−0.08 (0.07)
Higher education		0.06 (0.05)		−0.08 (0.06)		0.03 (0.08)
Manufacturing		−0.01 (0.04)		−0.09* (0.05)		−0.01 (0.06)
Telecommunication		0.02 (0.05)		0.00 (0.05)		−0.00 (0.07)
Transportation		−0.05 (0.04)		−0.25** (0.05)		−0.07 (0.07)
Country						

(*continued*)

Table 3. Continued.

	Outcome:					
	Task Performance		Contextual Performance		Organizational Commitment	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Bulgaria		ref.		ref.		ref.
Finland		−0.06		0.26**		−0.15+
		(0.05)		(0.06)		(0.08)
Germany		−0.20**		0.35**		−0.07
		(0.05)		(0.06)		(0.08)
Hungary		0.11*		0.13*		−0.21**
		(0.05)		(0.06)		(0.08)
Netherlands		−0.11**		0.44**		−0.16*
		(0.04)		(0.05)		(0.07)
Portugal		−0.13**		0.46**		0.09
		(0.05)		(0.05)		(0.08)
Spain		−0.11*		0.38**		−0.07
		(0.05)		(0.06)		(0.08)
Sweden		−0.32**		0.45**		−0.18*
		(0.05)		(0.06)		(0.07)
UK		−0.07		0.57**		−0.03
		(0.05)		(0.06)		(0.09)
Constant	3.80**	4.19**	3.27**	1.91**	3.83**	3.78**
	(0.01)	(0.09)	(0.02)	(0.11)	(0.02)	(0.12)
BIC	62625	62316				
Observations	8861	8861				

Standard errors in parentheses. Variance components are omitted from table.
$+p < 0.10$.
$*p < 0.05$.
$**p < 0.01$.

performance (b=.12, $p < 0.00$) and organizational commitment (b=.15, $p < 0.00$), but not for task performance ($b = 0.01$, $p > .05$). We thus find partial support for Hypothesis 1, employees who perceive their organization to offer supplemental family leave report better contextual - but not task - performance than employees who do not. The provision of supplemental family leave is also, as expected in Hypothesis 2, associated with higher organizational commitment. There is no significant relationship between the outcome measures and the actual use of supplemental leave.

As our theoretical expectation was that the performance enhancing effect of the provision of supplemental family leave would at least partially be driven by increased organizational commitment, the mediated effect of supplemental leave via commitment on performance is reported in Figure 2. A comparison of the effect of availability of supplemental family leave on contextual performance between Table 3 (Model 2) and Table 4 (Model 2) shows that including commitment in the model decreases the effect by roughly half its size from .12 to .07, implying that the effect is indeed mediated by organizational commitment (indirect effect: b= .06, $p < 0.00$, 95% CI =.05, .08). For task performance, availability of supplemental family leave was found to not be a significant predictor, but as Figure 2 shows commitment is a significant predictor of

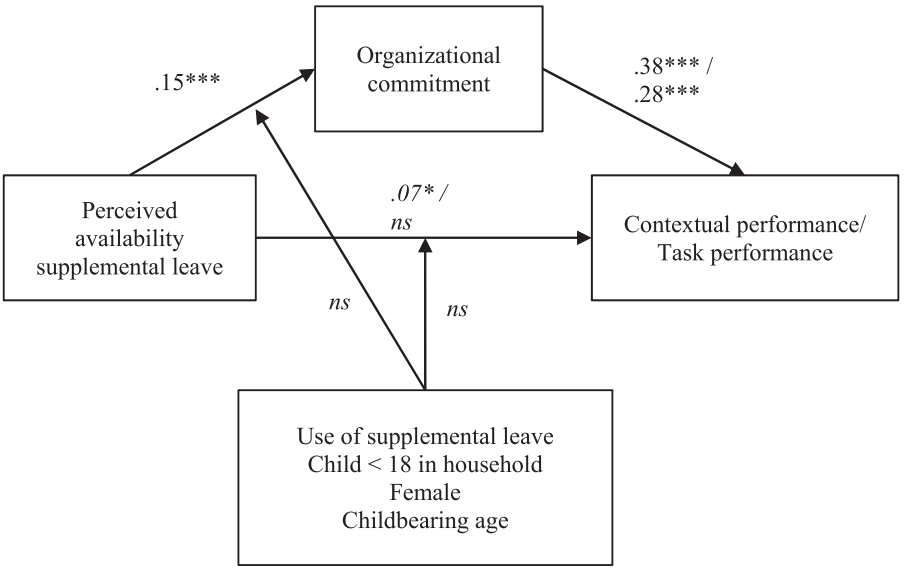

Figure 2. Coefficient estimates (b) of mediating effect of commitment between availability of supplemental leave and performance and moderation by family leave use, sex, age of respondent and age of youngest child in the household.
Note: Unstandardized coefficients obtained from three-level random intercept path model simultaneously predicting contextual and task performance and commitment by availability of supplemental leave including all control variables from full model (see model 2, Table 1, n = 8,861).

task performance (b=.28, $p < 0.01$) and availability of supplemental leave is positively associated with commitment (b=.15, $p < 0.01$). Therefore, supplemental leave may still affect task performance indirectly via its effect on organizational commitment (indirect effect: $b = 0.04$, $p < 0.01$, 95% CI =.04, .06). These results support the third hypothesis.

To test our fourth hypothesis about the moderating effect of characteristics related to the utility respectively past use of supplemental leave, interaction terms of the following characteristics and the availability of supplemental family leave were estimated: use of family leave, sex, age of respondent and age of youngest child in the household. The results showed that none of these moderators affected the relationship between the availability of supplemental family leave and performance or commitment. This is shown in Figure 3, which presents the coefficient estimates of the interaction terms and their confidence intervals. The confidence intervals all include 0, indicating the absence of statistical significance. We therefore do not find any support for our fourth hypothesis.

After testing our theoretical expectations, we estimated the main model (direct and mediated effects of availability of supplemental leave on performance and commitment) per country. The results are presented in Table 4. We focus our discussion on the direction and size of point estimates of the direct effect of supplemental leave on the outcome

Table 4. Estimates of effect of perceived supplemental family leave availability on contextual and task performance and organizational commitment per country (significant deviations from overall country mean are indicated in bold print).

	BG	FI	DE	HU	NL	PT	ES	SE	UK
Contextual performance									
Direct effect availability of supplemental leave on performance	**0.32****	0.11	0.22*	0.11	0.09+	0.04	0.10	0.06	0.33**
	(2.7)	(0.8)	(2.0)	(0.8)	(1.9)	(0.4)	(1.0)	(0.8)	(3.2)
Direct effect availability of supplemental leave controlled for commitment	0.17	0.08	0.07	0.08	0.06	−.00	0.05	0.06	0.28**
	(1.5)	(0.6)	(0.7)	(0.6)	(1.3)	(0.0)	(0.5)	(0.9)	(3.2)
Effect of commitment on performance	0.42**	0.44**	0.45**	0.44**	0.31**	0.38**	0.36**	0.38**	0.34**
	(7.3)	(8.1)	(7.6)	(9.4)	(9.5)	(7.5)	(6.6)	(8.1)	(5.2)
Indirect effect of supplemental leave on performance via commitment	0.12**	0.06	0.12**	0.02	0.04**	0.02	0.02	0.07**	0.05+
	(2.8)	(1.2)	(2.9)	(0.4)	(3.3)	(0.8)	(0.6)	(2.6)	(1.7)
Task performance									
Direct effect availability of supplemental leave on performance	0.11	0.03	0.08	**−0.22 +**	−0.01	−0.05	0.02	0.01	0.12
	(1.0)	(0.3)	(0.9)	**(−1.9)**	(−0.3)	(−0.6)	(0.2)	(0.1)	(1.3)
Direct effect of availability of supplemental leave controlled for commitment	0.02	0.00	−0.00	−0.24*	−0.05	−0.06	−0.03	−0.03	0.03
	(0.2)	(0.0)	(−0.0)	(−2.3)	(−1.4)	(−0.8)	(−0.3)	(−0.5)	(0.4)
Effect of commitment on performance	0.36**	0.27**	0.27**	0.25**	0.22**	0.24**	0.34**	0.33**	0.31**
	(10.9)	(7.7)	(6.9)	(8.1)	(10.1)	(6.3)	(7.9)	(9.0)	(6.3)
Indirect effect of supplemental leave on performance via commitment	0.11**	0.04	0.07**	0.01	0.03**	0.01	0.02	0.06**	0.04+
	(3.0)	(1.2)	(2.9)	(0.4)	(3.3)	(0.8)	(0.6)	(2.6)	(1.7)
Effect of availability of supplemental leave on commitment	0.29**	0.13	0.27**	0.04	0.14**	0.06	0.05	0.18**	0.15
	(3.1)	(1.2)	(3.2)	(0.4)	(3.5)	(0.8)	(0.6)	(2.7)	(1.7)
N	1088	719	724	1024	2147	930	730	890	609

Note: Indirect effect were obtained with the delta method. Estimates from three-level random intercept path models simultaneously predicting contextual and task performance and commitment by availability of supplemental leave. Control variables omitted from table: sex, partner present, child present, age youngest child, age group, work hours, education (years), occupational status (ISEI). Z value in parentheses.
$+p < 0.10$.
$^{*}p < 0.05$.
$^{**}p < 0.0$.

variables as well as the mediating effect of commitment. Three out of nine estimates of the main effect of supplemental leave on contextual performance differ in size from the estimate in the full sample (b=.13, $p < 0.000$): in Bulgaria and the UK the effect is larger, in Portugal it is smaller. When assessing the statistical significance of these differences, only the Bulgarian effect diverges significantly from the other estimates. The indirect effect of supplemental family leave on contextual performance via commitment is relatively small in Hungary, Portugal and Spain. This is in part explained by the weaker relationship between

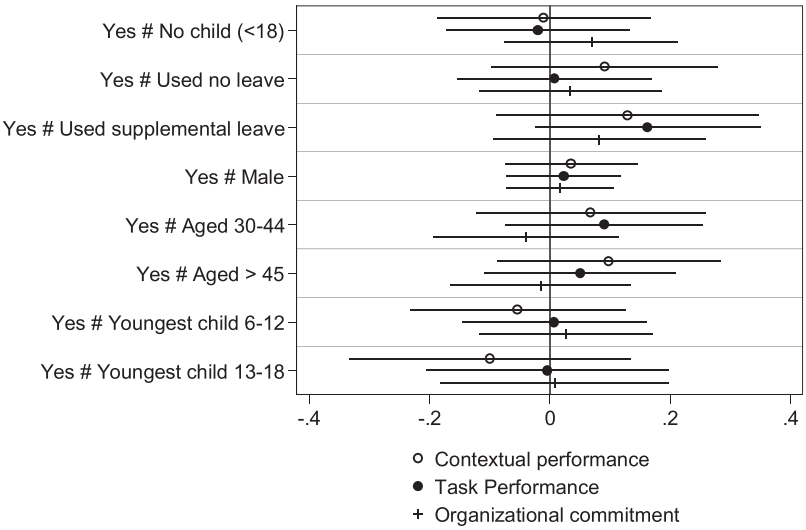

Figure 3. Coefficient estimates (b) of interaction effects between perceived availability of supplemental leave ('yes') and family leave use, sex, age of respondent and age of youngest child in the household.
Note: Unstandardized coefficients obtained from three-level random intercept path model including all control variables from full model (see model 2, Table 1, n = 8,861). Main effects omitted from figure.

supplemental leave availability and commitment in these three countries, as the positive relationship between higher organizational commitment and performance from the full sample is found to be consistent across countries.

For task performance, the effect of supplemental leave was small and not significant in the full sample and this is confirmed as most countries show small effects and all are statistically indistinguishable from zero. Bulgaria and the UK again show the strongest relation and in Hungary the relationship between supplemental leave and task performance appears to be negative (albeit at marginal significance of $p<.1$). When looking at the significance of differences, only the Hungarian effect is significantly different from the other estimates.

Robustness checks

We ran a series of checks to ascertain the robustness of our results. First, to see whether the results were mainly driven by one country or sector we ran the analyses excluding each country and sector in turn (jackknife procedure). Obtained coefficient estimates were very similar and results were substantively identical, which suggests that our findings are robust to influential cases. We also obtained bias-corrected bootstrapped standard errors and confidence intervals for the country-specific effects reported in Table 4. All results were in line with the estimates reported.

Secondly, as it can be argued that the availability and use of other organizational investments affect people's performance, we also controlled for the perceived availability and use of several work-family policies, namely: flexible starting and finishing times, working at home, reducing working hours from full-time to part-time, and childcare assistance. We created a scale (0–4) which represents the number of these policies which the respondent thought was available or which the respondent reported to have used (see bottom of Table 2 for descriptive statistics). The inclusion of these variables decreased the size of the effect of supplemental leave availability on contextual performance and commitment but both remain statistically significant and this did not alter any of the results substantively. Thirdly, when estimating the moderating effects of family leave use, sex, age of respondent and age of youngest child, we estimated each moderator in a separate model, with and without control variables. These models confirmed our conclusion that the relationship between supplemental leave and performance or commitment is not moderated by family leave use, sex, age of respondent and age of youngest child in the household.

Finally, because we had a substantial amount of missing data, we used multiple imputations on our independent variables to estimate our main model, again the results were substantively identical to the results presented here. All results of the robustness checks are available from the authors upon request.

Discussion

This study set out to investigate the link between work-family policy provision and employee performance, thereby testing the notion of adoption of work-family policies as a 'business-case' rather than a response to institutional pressures or employee needs (Wood & de Menezes, 2010). We hypothesized that the provision of work-family policies is interpreted by employees as a signal of organizational concern for their well-being and that this elicits a reciprocal response in the form of greater work-effort (in both contextual performance and task performance) and increased commitment to the organization. Our results lend support to the proposed mechanism with regard to contextual performance, for which we find an enhancing effect of the availability of supplemental family leave. In other words: employees are more likely to go beyond what is required of them in their job in organizations that offer supplemental family leave policies. In line with our theoretical expectation this effect was partially mediated by organizational commitment. For task performance our results do not show a direct effect. Results suggest though that perceived availability of

supplemental leave may ultimately exert an indirect effect on task performance, by increasing organizational commitment, which, in accordance with our theoretical expectations, was positively related to task and contextual performance. The finding that supplemental leave was a stronger predictor of contextual than task performance is in line with meta-analytical evidence on effects of organizational support on performance outcomes, which showed stronger relationships between support and contextual performance (Kurtessis et al., 2017; Riketta, 2008).

Theoretical and practical implications

While the theoretical arguments have been applied in previous research (Tremblay et al., 2010), our study contributes to the literature by providing a more precise test of the theoretical mechanism than earlier work in two ways. First, by relying on the perceived availability of supplemental family leave we are able to disentangle the signaling effect of the policy from any practical or symbolic effects of its use, which were often conflated in past studies (Eaton, 2003). Second, we tested in how far signaling effects are conditioned by the practical usefulness of the policy to the employee by testing theoretically informed moderators of the relationship between family leave and performance. Specifically, we tested whether parents of young children, people of (or close to) childbearing age and women experience a stronger relationship between perceived availability of supplemental family leave policies and performance. We do not find any evidence that the strength of the relationship between family leave and performance or commitment varies between employees by their likelihood of benefitting personally from the leave provision. This lends support to the theoretical model, which conceptualizes the relationship between work-family policy and performance as an employee response to a generalized signal of organizational support rather than instrumental concern or practical benefit. Our results add to the evidence provided by previous studies that work-family provision generates beneficial outcomes among all employees (Mills et al., 2014), a finding which also has important implications for employers. Another contribution of this study lies in the rich multi-country multi-sector data, which enabled us to test our model across a variety of contexts.

An important question when using cross-sectional data is the causal direction of the estimated effects. In this case, the question arises how plausible it is that higher commitment and performance are really a consequence of the provision of supplemental family leave and not the other way around, which would imply that more committed and higher performing employees are more likely to report that their employer offers supplemental leave compared to other employees. In fact previous research

shows that employees in high-commitment work environments, which are characterized by high-performance work practices, intrinsically rewarding jobs, and understanding supervisors, are more likely to perceive the company as helping to achieve a good work-life balance (Berg et al., 2003). This points to the possibility that the mechanism of social exchange works both ways, i.e. that in a work environment which stimulates high commitment and contextual performance employees are more likely to believe that their employer will support them and, in our case, offers more than the statutory amount of leave. That the association between work-family policy provision may be more correlational than causal implies that instead of a business-case argument, which postulates that work-families are adopted by organizations in order to increase desired outcomes such as performance or retention, perceptions of policy availability could also be a byproduct of a high involvement/high commitment management style (Wood & de Menezes, 2010). Moreover, through self-selection of employees, a positive relationship between the perceived availability of parental leave and performance/commitment is compatible with predictions from institutional theory that adoption of work-family-policies is driven by pressures to obtain social legitimacy. Possibly this increased social legitimacy attracts highly motivated and committed employees. We cannot rule out the alternative explanations for our findings given the cross-sectional nature of our data, but when considering the practical implications of our findings, it is important to emphasize that the different theoretical mechanisms all point to beneficial effects of adopting work-family policies. Even though our results indicate that the symbolic effect of the provision of supplemental family leave has a stronger relationship to the outcomes studied than the actual use, we believe that this should not be taken as evidence that actual access to policies needs not be prioritized by employers. Rather our results show that signs of organizational support are powerful means to elicit commitment among the workforce – be it through social exchange or through self-selection. In addition the perception of a supportive organization may well increase employees willingness to inquire about and make use of informal support offered by direct supervisors, which in turn can have beneficial effects such as decreasing absenteeism (Wood & de Menezes, 2010).

Limitations

Despite the insights provided by our research, there are a number of limitations to our study. First, the self-reported measure of performance we use may be subject to response bias, a problem not encountered when using a manger reported performance measure. However, manager reported measures may overlook aspects of contextual performance that

we tap into here, which would lead to an underestimation of the effect of supplemental leave. Ideally self-reported measures as well as manager reports measures of performance should be combined to assess the validity of both approaches and we encourage future research to do this. Second, the cross-sectional nature of our data prevents us from making solid causal claims. In addition, the cross-sectional design poses a challenge to measuring the effects of using supplemental leave provisions given its incidental use, as well as the possible short-term effects. To face these challenges, future studies could collect longitudinal data and specifically target employees who have made use of supplemental leave provisions, in order to sample more people who used this type of leave, to be be able to measure employee outcomes shortly after the leave was used, and thereby disentangle underlying selection effects. These studies would also be better equipped to differentiate between effects of different types of leave.

Future research directions

In order to further develop the theoretical explanations in the field, a major part of which concerns unravelling the direction of causality, future research should focus on changes in commitment and performance within employees and between employers. While this is challenging in terms of sampling and collection of data, the increasing availability of matched employer-employee data may offer promising opportunities in this regard. Moreover, our findings suggest that it is important that researchers studying the effects of work-family policies to view the availability of these policies as a unique construct in its own right - separate from use- which relates to employee performance through the signal of organizational concern.

Disclosure statement

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