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PREPRINT

Factors Affecting the Length of Unpaid Parental Leave in Spain¹

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Abstract

This study analyses the effect of working conditions, educational background, job mobility, grandparental availability and co-worker attitudes on the length of unpaid part- and full-time parental leave in Spain. The length of parental leave is a key factor in both the work - family life balance and the furtherance of gender equality in childcare. The conditions affecting the length of unpaid full- and part-time leaves in Spain have not been compared to date. The data for the analysis were drawn from a 2012 survey of 4000 parents with at least one child under the age of 13 across the country on the social use of parental leave in Spain. Multivariate models were built using Cox proportional hazard regression to analyse the data gathered from a sub-sample of 142 households for the part-time and 96 for the full-time model. The results attest to the heavy impact of working conditions on the length of unpaid full- and part-time parental leave. The latter is also used to adjust working hours to childcare demands when workplace flexibility or employer support for work-family balance is perceived to be lacking. Job security is a primary determinant in the length of unpaid leave in Spain. The results suggest that full-

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but not part-time leave entails a substantial opportunity cost for the most highly qualified parents.

Keywords:

Unpaid parental leave, Working conditions, Work-Family Balance, Family Policy, Childcare

Background

Unpaid parental leave in Spain

An understanding of the connections between workplace environment and childcare leave policies is requisite to an understanding of childcare practice (Doucet and McKay 2020). This article focuses on the factors, working conditions especially, that impact the length of unpaid full- and part-time parental leave in Spain. Research on the factors affecting the use of such leaves is fairly scant (Lapuerta 2013; Meil, Romero-Balsas and Rogero-García 2017; Naldini and Jurado 2013) and studies on the conditions determining the length of use practically non-existent. One noteworthy exception in Spain is an analysis by Lapuerta, González and Baizán (2011) of the data on individual and contextual conditions surrounding full-time leaves gathered in a 2006 continuous sample survey of working lives. To the present authors' knowledge, however, no nationwide study has yet been conducted of the factors conditioning the length of part-time parental leave. A comparison between the factors conditioning the two types of leaves is of interest insofar as it would afford useful insight into their respective implications for leave policy design, in this case in a southern European country.

Spain's parental leave legislation has changed only slightly over the last 10 years, except as regards paternity leave. Full-time childcare leave has been an individual right since 1995, meaning it can be used by either parent indistinctly. It consists in interrupting paid work for up to 3 years and can be used until the child's third birthday. Return to the same job during the first year has been guaranteed since 1989 and to a job in the same occupational group or category in the following 2 years since 1995. It can be used either

fully or partially since 2007 and although it carries no replacement salary, social security contributions are ensured for the duration since 2011.

Part-time leave consists in reducing the hours of paid work with a proportional decrease in salary. Since 1994, however, social security contributions are based on the full salary for the first 2 years. Hours may be cut by anywhere from one-eighth to half of the working day. Until 2012 (the year when the data for this study were collected) part-time leave could be used until the child's eighth birthday, although since 2013 the limit has been the twelfth.

The maximum length of the parental leaves most relevant to childcare in Spain in 2012 and 2020, along with their percentage of use by parents of children under 13, is given in Table 1. The last decade has witnessed no change in the length of the country's 16-week maternity leave at full pay (up to a ceiling much higher than the mean salary). In contrast, fully paid paternity leave, which can be taken by fathers only, has been gradually extended from 2 weeks in 2007 to 12 weeks in 2020. Equalling paternity and maternity leaves is deemed to be a key to reducing employment- and childcare-related inequalities between men and women: full equivalence is envisaged in 2021.

As the table shows, unpaid full- and part-time leaves are used less than paid leaves. Over two-thirds of eligible parents used paternity and maternity leaves in 2012, compared to only 4.8 % (10 % of mothers and 0.5 % of fathers) who took full- and 9.7 % (19.9 % of mothers and 1.8 % of fathers) part-time leave. Those data confirm that a generous replacement income leads to wider use of parental leave and that its absence fosters minority use (Koslowski et al. 2019; Moss and Kamerman 2009; McKay and Doucet

2010; Haas and Rostgaard 2011; Ray et al. 2008). Greater use of unpaid leave by mothers reinforces the motherhood penalty (Andersen 2018). Its scant use by fathers is consistent with some authors' (Koslowski et al. 2019) contention that fathers taking it may be pioneers who set an example of novel childcare practice (Romero-Balsas, Meil and Rogero-García 2019). In that same vein, research has shown that fathers taking more weeks of leave engage more actively in caring for their children (Pragg and Knoester 2017; Petts and Knoester 2018).

Table 1. *Maximum Length of Parental Leaves in Spain in 2012 and 2020 and Use by Parents of at Least One Child under 13 in 2012*

Type of leave	Leave	Length in 2012	Length in 2020	Use in 2012
Paid leave	Maternity	16 weeks	16 weeks	81 %
	Paternity	2 weeks	12 weeks	75 %
Unpaid leave	Full-time leave	3 years until child's 3 rd birthday	3 years until child's 3 rd birthday	4-.8 %
	Part-time leave	$\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ of working day until child's 8th birthday	$\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ of working day until child's 12th birthday	9.7 %

Source: *Boletín Oficial del Estado* and survey 'El uso social de los permisos parentales en España, 2012' [social use of parental leave in Spain, 2012]

Returning to paid work after parental leave use.

The likelihood of returning to paid work after parenthood are lower for women and low-income people with less job security (Saurel-Cubizolles et al. 1999; Pronzato 2009). Job insecurity also has a significant effect on the use of unpaid leave (Lapuerta, González and Baizán 2011; Meil, Romero-Balsas and Rogero-García 2018), although attitudes toward childcare and parental paid work consistently bear on leave-taking (Meil, Romero-Balsas and Rogero-García 2018).

The literature is not consensual on the effect of parental leave on the return to paid work. Whereas Baker and Milligan (2008) found Canadian mothers more likely to return to their prior positions if they took long-term leaves, studies conducted in European countries showed long-term leaves to lower mothers' probability of retaining their previous job (Schönberg and Ludsteck 2014; Hegewisch and Gornick 2011; Joseph et al. 2013). Parental leave-related long absences from work have also been seen to hamper career promotion (Evertsson and Duvander 2011).

Part-time leave has a low impact on the risk of job loss or career stagnation, although it raises the probability of a lower medium-term salary (Joseph et al. 2013). That notwithstanding, part-time leave in France has been seen as a possible incentive for female employment, particularly among women with a low level of schooling (Joseph et al. 2013). Müller, Neumann and Wrohlich (2018) described the potential of the use by both parents of partially paid part-time leave to foster gender equality in childcare. Brandth and Kvande (2019), however, warned that part-time leave may raise childcare-related stress and have a lower impact on gender equality than full-time leave due to the interference between work and childcare. Besides, Bueno and Grau-Grau (2020) find that working conditions within the couple perpetuate the gendered use of the unpaid part-time parental leave in Spain.

Hypotheses

This study aimed to determine whether working and family conditions and educational background affect the length of unpaid parental leave in Spain by testing the following working hypotheses.

(H1) Job security encourages the use of parental leave.

According to Bygren and Duvander (2006), private sector workers used full-time leave less often and for less time than public sector workers in Sweden. In Spain in contrast, public service appears to have no impact on the length of full-time leave (Lapuerta, González and Baizán 2011). The latter authors nonetheless found that parents with temporary contracts working in small companies took shorter leaves (Lapuerta, González and Baizán 2011).

The length of part-time leave is expected to be similarly related to job security. This hypothesis is based on the lower likelihood of part-time leave-takers' return to full-time work (Meil, Romero-Balsas and Rogero-García 2018) and the adverse impact of such leaves on salary (Blázquez Cuesta and Ramos Martín 2009).

(H2) Educational opportunity cost: parents with a higher level of schooling take shorter leaves.

Lapuerta, González and Baizán (2011) reported opportunity cost to have an effect on leave time, whereby parents with a higher level of schooling used full-time leave for shorter periods. A study conducted in Canada (Margolis et al. 2019), however, found higher income households to use full-time leave for more weeks, inasmuch as such families were able to afford a lower income for a longer period of time. Pronzato (2009) observed that parents with an intermediate level of schooling were the ones most adversely affected, given the higher opportunity cost to them than to people with less schooling and their lower engagement with their jobs than more higher up the educational ladder. In keeping with the Lapuerta, González and Baizán (2011) findings, opportunity cost (H2) is expected to affect the length of full-time leave in Spain, with shorter leaves among more highly educated parents. Part-time leave is expected to have a similar effect,

given the loss of income (Joseph et al. 2013) and parents' fear of adverse career implications. Abril et al. (2012) noted that the choice to work part time entailed conformity with such implications.

(H3) Long-distance commuters take longer parental leaves.

Work-related mobility, which has been related to greater opportunities to access paid work (Schneider and Meil 2008), is a growing trend in Spain's increasingly tertiarised labour market. Of the various forms of mobility, long-distance commuting (more than 1 hour from the workplace) is associated with a greater need to find work and a more negative attitude toward the effects of mobility (Bonnet and Orain 2010).

Mobility-induced lengthening of the working day may pressure commuters into using part-time leaves to balance their longer hours, particularly with parenthood. Moreover, qualitative studies have shown that part-time leaves are used to justify working hour inflexibility (Romero-Balsas, Muntanyola-Saura and Rogero-García 2013; Abril et al. 2012, Bueno and Grau-Grau 2020). Hypothesis H3 is that workers living at a long distance from their place of work take longer part-time leaves than those living closer. In full-time leaves, distance to the workplace may be deemed an obstacle to work-family balance and also encourage parents to postpone their return to work.

(H4) Parental leave time is shorter when grandparents live nearby.

Grandparents' participation in child-rearing is fairly common in Spain and constitutes the most significant non-parental involvement in care. When involved daily, grandparents may stand in for other types of care (Meil, Rogero-García and Romero-Balsas 2018), the use of unpaid full- or part-time parental leaves being one, although they may also be an alternative to pre-school or professional home care. Nonetheless, a study conducted by

Meil, Romero-Balsas and Rogero-García (2018) found that unpaid parental leave did not appear to be a replacement for grandparental participation. That notwithstanding, this study tests the relationship between grandparental proximity and shorter part-time leave, for grandparents' availability may favour work-family balance and an earlier return to employment. The presence of grandparents who live relatively nearby (within 30 minutes) is therefore expected to shorten the length of part-time leaves (H4).

(H5) Supportive co-workers encourage longer use of unpaid parental leave.

Welteke and Wrohlich (2019) highlighted the importance of co-worker attitudes in parental leave-taking. They showed that in Germany, in addition to financial conditions, co-worker reactions had a substantial effect on the use of parental leave, particularly at times of employment uncertainty. Hypothesis (H5) contends that co-workers' supportive attitudes toward the decision to use full- or part-time leaves lengthens the period of use.

Method

The data used for the analysis were drawn from a survey entitled 'El uso social de los permisos parentales' [social use of parental leave], the fieldwork for which was conducted in 2012. The sample covered the entire country with the exception of Ceuta and Melilla and comprised 4000 parents with at least one child under the age of 13. The data were retrospective, with responses referred to full- and part-time leaves taken from 2001 to 2012. The survey aimed to collect detailed information on parental leaves in Spain, along with family, working and personal conditions.

An event history approach (Blossfeld, Hamerle and Mayer 2014) was used to analyse the length of part- and full-time childcare leave and served as a basis for developing a multivariate model designed to factor in the length of parental leaves. The most prominent

feature of that statistical technique is the inclusion of censored data, i.e., facts referring to events (parental leave) whose non-finalisation at the time of the survey did not affect the results of the analysis. More specifically, the technique used was the Cox proportional hazard model, which is able to determine the magnitude of the effects of the independent on the dependent variables while controlling for time-dependence (Blossfeld, Hamerle and Mayer 2014). As a semi-parametric statistical technique it specifies no time distribution, estimates baseline hazard and baseline survivor functions and is apt for most issues addressed by the social sciences (Box-Steffensmeier and Jones 2004). In the Cox model the signs on the coefficients denote risk: a positive sign indicates a rise and a negative sign a decline in the risk of the event (Box-Steffensmeier and Jones 2004). Here the event was finalisation of unpaid parental leave.

The lengths of part- and full-time parental leaves, the dependent variables, were measured in months. Sub-sample 1 comprised 142 parents, 90.3 % women and 9.7 % men, with children under 13 who took part-time childcare leave between 2001 and 2012. Sub-sample 2 comprised 96 parents, 93.5 % women and 6.5 % men, with children under 13 who took full-time childcare leave between 2001 and 2012.

The replies to the survey questions on the month and year when either leave was taken and the month and year of return to full-time employment were used to calculate the length of the leave in months. A different variable was created for censored data, i.e., respondents who at the time of the survey were still on leave. Those two variables and the independent variables relating to working and family conditions were analysed with Cox proportional hazard models run on Stat 12 for Microsoft software.

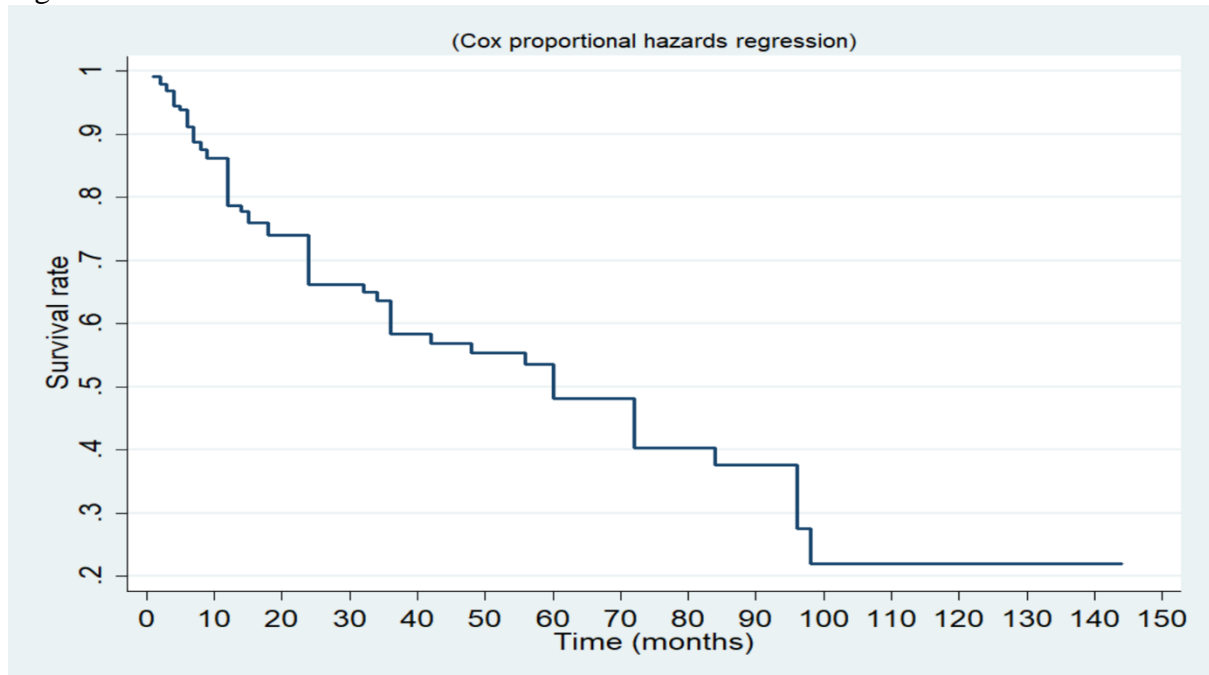
Findings and discussion

Length of part-time parental leave

As Figure 1 shows, part-time leave survival followed a staircase pattern, with particularly abrupt declines at the end of the first and second years: 80 survival sagged from 80 % in month 11 to 71 % after the first year and from 67 % in month 23 to 61 % at the end of the second. Those data translate into a drop in the survival rate dropped to under two-thirds when the social security contribution benefit terminated.

The gradual slide in part-time leave survival, in contrast to the full-time leave survival pattern discussed below, may be attributed to its generally nil impact on the position held upon finalisation. In other words, part-time leave entails a decline in salary but retention of the same job at terminus.

Figure 1. Part-Time Leave Survival Curve



Source: Formulated by the authors from 'El uso social de los permisos parentales en España 2012' microdata

The parameters for the Cox proportional hazard regression-based multivariate model deployed are listed in Table 2. The dependent variable was length of part-time leave, measured in months. The model revealed a statistically significant relationship between job security and that variable, confirming hypothesis H1. Of the working conditions studied, permanent employment, an indication of job stability, was the one with the greatest significance. Parents with a temporary contract were at 2.8 times ($\exp(1.04) \approx 283\%$) greater risk of finalising part-time leave than those with permanent employment. No significant difference in leave time was observed between private and public sector employees, for as temporary contracts may exist in both it measured job security less accurately than permanent employment. Those findings were consistent with the data observed for full-time leaves by Lapuerta, González and Baizán (2011), who found permanent employment to be significant. The present results contrasted, however, with the results reported by Bygren and Duvander (2011), who determined no such

relationship. The inference might appear to be that in Spain job security has a similar impact on the length of part- and full-time leave.

Parents between 35 and 60 years old had an odds ratio of finalising part-time leave over four-fold ($\exp(-1,42) - 1$)*100 \approx -76 %) lower than parents between the ages of 25 and 35. That might be related to a job security component not captured by the permanent/temporary condition or to the fact that younger parents had not consolidated their careers when applying for the leave.

Lack of flexibility was related to shorter part-time leaves. More specifically, the risk of finalising the leave was almost three and a half times higher ($\exp(1.49)*100\approx 343$ %) when workers perceived little or no flexibility than otherwise. The rate of conclusion of part-time leave was more than 3.5 times greater ($\exp(1.3)*100\approx 367$ %) among those who perceived the employer to be scantily or not at all supportive of work/life balance than among parents who deemed their employer to be very or reasonably supportive. As qualitative studies (Romero-Balsas, Muntanyola-Saura and Rogero-García 2013; Abril et al. 2013; Bueno and Grau-Grau 2020) have suggested, the findings for flexibility and perceived (non-)support for work/life balance may be an indication that part-time leave is more useful in working environments with stricter schedules. Part-time leave was shortest in medium-sized companies. Other working environment-related variables, such as home-officing, holding a supervisory position, being supervised, superiors' attitude and company gender composition had no significant effect on the length of part-time leave.

As level of schooling had no effect on the length of part-time leave, hypothesis H2 was rejected. Although the data might denote the existence of opportunity cost in the decision

to use the leave (Meil, Romero-Balsas and Rogero-García 2018; Blázquez Cuesta and Ramos Martín 2009), once taken, its use for a longer time would not raise the risk of career stagnation or job loss. The possibility that highly educated, like all other, women tend to conform to the loss of salary associated with part-time employment (Joseph et al. 2013) would lighten the weight of opportunity cost in the length of leave.

Commuting time was the variable with highest significance in the length of part-time leave model. When over 1 hour, the leave exit rate was more than 6.5 times lower ($(\exp(-1.91) - 1) * 100 \approx 89\%$) than when travel time was less than 1 hour. The need to balance work and family life appeared to rise when commute time was high. That relationship might have eclipsed the significance of size of city of residence or distance from home to the workplace. The inference, that part-time leave is a supplementary mechanism for long-distance commuters, would confirm hypothesis H3, whereby part-time leave was taken to adapt working hours to childcare demands (Romero-Balsas, Muntanyola-Saura and Rogero-García 2013; Bueno and Grau-Grau 2020).

The relationship between part-time leave and grandparental proximity was not significant, further to which hypothesis H4 was rejected. That finding also suggested that grandparents were not a replacement for part-time leave-taking (Meil, Rogero-García and Romero-Balsas 2018).

Supportive co-workers were not observed to exert a positive effect either. Despite the findings reported by Welteke and Wrohlich (2019) for Germany, co-worker attitudes were not a significant factor in encouraging longer part-time leaves. Hypothesis H5 was consequently also rejected.

Although the number of hours pruned off the working day did not significantly impact length of part-time leave, the year when the leave was taken did. Parents who had taken the leave in the earlier part of the period studied did so for less time than those who took it on a date closer to the time of the survey (2012). More specifically, the part-time leave exit rate rose by 12 % ($\exp(0.11)*100 \approx 12\%$) for each year lapsing since it was used, a fact worthy of note given that Spain was deep into the economic crisis in 2012. The explanation might lie in the 2007 extension of the maximum time allowed, from the child's sixth to its eighth birthday.

The variables associated with the partner's working conditions did not appear to be related to the length of part-time leave. His/her temporary/permanent employment, number of working hours, relative earnings or use of parental leave had no significant effect on length of leave.

Table 2. *Summary of Event History Analysis (Cox Regression) for Variables Predicting Length (in months) of Part-Time Childcare Leave by Working Conditions of Part-Time Leave Takers (n=142), Controlling for Background Variables*

Covariable	Coefficient
Women (vs men)	-0.58
Parents 35 to 60 (vs 25 to 34)	-1.42 ***
Size of town/city (vs population <20 000)	
Population 20 001 to 100 000	-0.24
Population > 100 000	0.09
Level of schooling (vs no or primary schooling)	
Secondary	0.28
University or post-university	0.09
Temporary employment (vs permanent employment)	1.04**
Private sector (vs public sector)	0.05
Work not directly supervised (vs supervised work)	-0.51
Non-supervisory position (vs supervisory status)	0.06
Weekly work week prior to leave >40 hours (vs <40 hours)	0.34
Over 1 hour commute time (vs < 1 hour)	-1.91**

Company with more men or men=women (vs majority women)	0.27
Company size (vs large: >100 employees)	
Medium-size (10 to 100)	0.87***
Small (<10)	0.40
Little or no flexibility (vs substantial)	1.49*
No home-officing (vs at least 1 day/month)	0.24
Employer scanty or unsupportive of work/life balance (vs somewhat, reasonably, very)	1.30**
Immediate superior scanty or unsupportive of work/life balance (vs somewhat, reasonably, very)	-0.41
Partner working > 40 hours (vs <40 hours)	-0.87
Partner without permanent employment (vs with)	0.09
Partner with same or higher earnings (vs lower)	0.01
Hours cut off working day	-0.03
Years the leave was used	0.11**
Unsupportive co-workers (vs supportive)	0.12
Partner used no parental leave (vs use of some leave)	0.77
Grandparents unavailable or living >30 minutes away) (vs grandparents at <30 minutes)	0.36
N	142
Log likelihood	-275.12027

*Significant at $p<0.1$; ** $p<0.05$; $p<0.001$; t=months; event: finalisation of part-time leave

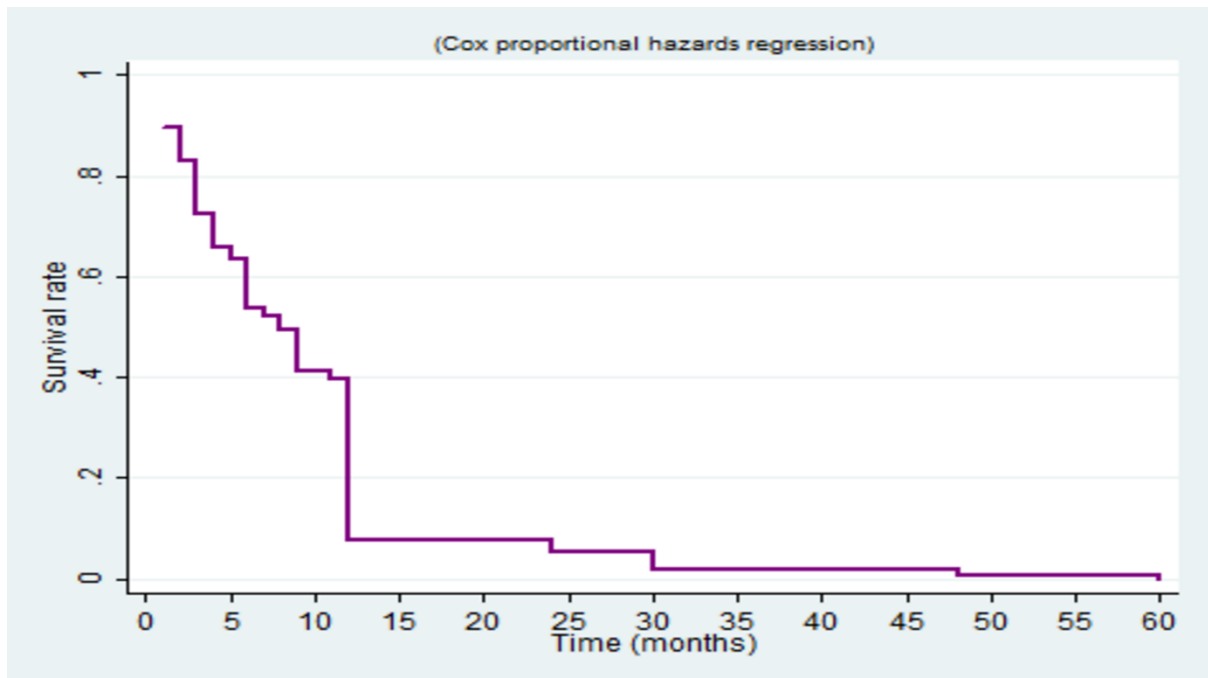
Source: Formulated by the authors from 'El uso social de los permisos parentales en España 2012' survey data

Length of Full-Time Parental Leave

The full-time childcare leave survival curve is graphed in Figure 2. In contrast to part-time leave, full-time leave survival fell steeply after the first year, from 43 % survival in month 11 to just 17 % after month 12, a 26 % plunge.

The explanation for such a high first year impact can be found in the legal provisions on full-time childcare leave, for although the maximum duration is 3 years, return to the same position is only ensured for one. The legal provisions guaranteeing a job under similar conditions in the remaining 2 years still leave considerable leeway for discretion that could be used as veiled penalisation. These findings were consistent with the observations reported by Lapuerta, González and Baizán (2011) for 1989-2007, further to which full-time leave survival dropped perceptibly after the twelfth month.

Figure 2. Full-Time Leave Survival Curve



Source: Formulated by the authors from ‘El uso social de los permisos parentales en España 2012’ microdata

Length of leave was the dependent variable for the Cox multivariate regression model 2 results listed in Table 3. Like model 1, model 2 tested the effect of family and working conditions as described in the hypotheses.

Job security in terms of type of employment was related to the length of full-time leave. Further to the model, having permanent employment and hence greater job security than afforded by temporary employment reduced the exit rate from full-time leave more than two-fold ($\exp(-0.88)-1$)*100 \approx 59 %). That confirmed hypothesis H1 for full-time leave, according to which job security is an indicator for longer leave-taking. Those data were consistent with the Lapuerta, González and Baizán (2011) findings. None of the other working conditions impacted the length of the leave, however. Contrary to the Bygren

and Duvander (2006) observation, private sector employment did not reduce leave length. Nor were company size, home-officing, flexibility or perceived company, superior or co-worker attitude of any significance.

As in the case of part-time leave, older age was related to longer leave time. More specifically, the exit rate among parents between 35 and 60 was two-fold lower ($\exp(-0.69)-1$)*100 = -50 %) than among parents 25 to 34. As age may be a proxy for job stability, these data may suggest the validity of hypothesis H1 whereby greater job security leads to longer leaves.

In this model, parents with a university education had an exit rate nearly three times higher ($\exp(1.04)*100 \approx 283$ %) than parents with no schooling. The impact of level of schooling on leave length observed here was consistent with some earlier reports (Lapuerta, González and Baizán 2011; Pronzato 2009), but differed from the data for Canada observed by Margolis et al. (2019). That would confirm hypothesis H2 for Spain. As Lapuerta, González and Baizán (2011) suggested, longer leaves may bear a greater opportunity cost for parents with positions requiring higher qualifications, for whom higher earnings or career promotion might be at stake.

Commute time was not significant in model 2. Contrary to the part-time leave findings, that parameter appeared not to be a reason for lengthening the leave. Hypothesis H3 was consequently rejected for full-time leave. Hypothesis H5 was also rejected, for co-workers' attitudes toward leave-taking were not statistically significant, nor were any of the variables relating to the partner's socio-economic status.

Table 3. *Summary of Event History Analysis (Cox Regression) for Variables Predicting Length (in months) of Full-Time Childcare Leave by Working Conditions of Part-Time Leave Takers (n=96), Controlling for Background Variables*

Covariable	Coefficient
Women (vs men)	0.73
Parents 35 to 60 (vs 25 to 34)	-0.69**
Level of schooling (vs no or primary schooling)	
Secondary	0.48
University or post-university	1.04**
Temporary employment (vs permanent employment)	-0.88**
Size of town/city (vs population <20 000)	
Population 20 001 to 100 000	-0.25
Population > 100 000	0.34
Private sector (vs public sector)	-0.34
Work not directly supervised (vs supervised work)	0.31
Non-supervisory position (vs supervisory status)	0.23
Weekly work week prior to leave >40 hours (vs <40 hours)	-0.11
Over 1 hour commute time (vs < 1 hour)	-0.09
Company with more men or men=women (vs majority women)	-0.24
Company size (vs large: >100 employees)	
Medium-size (10 to 100)	-0.25
Small (<10)	0.12
Little or no flexibility (vs substantial)	0.41
No home-officing (vs at least 1 day/month)	-0.72
Employer scanty or unsupportive of work/life balance (vs somewhat, reasonably, very)	0.13
Immediate superior scanty or unsupportive of work/life balance (vs somewhat, reasonably, very)	-0.13
Partner without permanent employment (vs with)	-0.48
Partner with same or higher earnings (vs lower)	-0.19
Unsupportive co-workers (vs supportive)	-0.04
Partner used no parental leave (vs use of some leave)	0.15
N	96
Log likelihood	-314.889

*Significant at $p<0.1$; ** $p<0.05$; $p<0.001$; t=months; event: finalisation of part-time leave

Source: Formulated by the authors from 'El uso social de los permisos parentales en España 2012' survey data

Conclusions

This study sought to determine the factors conditioning the length of time parents take unpaid full- or part-time leave in Spain. It drew from a 2012 survey on the social use of parental leave in Spain specifically designed to study leave characteristics not available

in official databases. As the sample included a short number of respondents, however, the findings must be interpreted with caution. They support previous findings on the factors affecting full-time leave-taking in Spain and furnish new data on those impacting the length of part-time leaves.

The study shows that working conditions are a key to the use of unpaid parental leaves (Meil, Romero-Balsas and Rogero-García 2018; Lapuerta, González and Baizán 2011; Bueno and Grau-Grau 2020) and especially to the length of time they are taken. Specifically, greater economic stability lengthens the time workers use both part- and full-time leaves. The findings suggest that full-time leaves bear an opportunity cost, also reported by Lapuerta, González and Baizán (2011), absent in part-time leaves. The on-the-job presence (albeit for fewer hours or days) inherent in part-time leaves may reduce the perception of the risk of losing one's job or career opportunities, as inferred by data reported by Joseph et al. (2013).

The length of part-time leaves was observed to be greatest among long-distance commuters, confirming the premise that part-time leave is used to adapt working hours to childcare demands (Romero-Balsas, Muntanyola-Saura and Rogero-García 2013, Bueno and Grau-Grau 2020). Due in all likelihood to the total interruption in paid work attendant upon full-time leave, the length of such leaves appears to be scantily affected by the distance between parents' home and their workplace. Contrary to expectations, the availability of nearby parents or parents-in-law does not shorten part-time leave, inferring that such leaves do not substitute for grandparental childcare (Meil, Romero-Balsas and Rogero-García 2018).

Inasmuch as earlier authors observed the length of unpaid leave to differ depending on sex (Andersen, 2018; Bygren and Duvander 2006), one of the limitations to this study, due to the very short number of fathers in the sub-samples, is the absence of separate analyses for men and women. Such a comparison for both full- and part-time leaves should be addressed in future research. Another line that might be explored is the impact of working conditions and educational background on unpaid (or partially paid) leaves in countries where parental leave and labour market characteristics differ from Spain's.

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Appendix:

Questions on the original questionnaire included in the models

The specific question relating to the **dependent variables** was:

- *How long were you on a) part-time or b) full-time leave? (interv.: if the respondent was still on part-time leave, from day 1 to the date of the interview). Replies: 1) number of months; 2) number of years*

The questions on **working conditions** were:

- *Was your job permanent, temporary or were you a contractor? 1) permanent; 2) temporary (seasonal, for specific project, internship, substitution, trial, apprenticeship); 3) no contract; 4) contractor; 8) respondent doesn't know; 9) unanswered*
- *Were you employed in the public or private sector? 0) public; 1) private; 8) respondent doesn't know; 9) unanswered*
- *Was your work supervised by others? 0) no; 1) yes; 8) respondent doesn't know; 9) unanswered*
- *Were other employees accountable to you? 0) no; 1) yes; 8) respondent doesn't know; 9) unanswered*
- *Were there more men, more women or more or less the same number of each in the company or institution where you worked? 1) majority of men; 2) majority of women; 3) same; 8) respondent doesn't know; 9) unanswered*
- *Was the company or institution where you worked large (>100), medium sized (10-100) or small (<10)? (If the company had more than one workplace, ask: was your specific workplace large (>100); 2) medium-sized (10-100); or 3) small (<10); 8) respondent doesn't know; 9) unanswered*
- *How freely could you decide what time you started and ended your working day? 1) Nearly total freedom to set working hours; 2) some flexibility; 3) no flexibility; 8) respondent doesn't know; 9) unanswered*
- *How often could you do some of your work at home: at least once a week, once a month or never? 1) at least once a week; 2) at least once a month 3) never; 8) respondent doesn't know; 9) unanswered*
- *Was the company very, reasonably, somewhat or not at all supportive of work/life balance? 1) very; 2) reasonably; 3) somewhat; 4) not at all; 8) respondent doesn't know; 9) unanswered*

- *And your immediate superior? 1) very; 2) reasonably; 3) somewhat; 4) not at all; 8) respondent doesn't know; 9) unanswered*

Variable on home to workplace commute

- *How long did it take you to go to and come home from work? minutes; 96) worked from home; 97) very variable; 98) respondent doesn't know; 99) unanswered*

Variable on time from grandparents home:

- *How long does it take you to go to your parents home? (If necessary ask: in the usual vehicle; mother if parents are separated) A) ____ hours; B) ____ minutes*

Variable on level of schooling:

- *What is your highest level of schooling? (as per company scale)*

Demographic variables:

- *Record sex: 0) female; 1) male*
- *Size of town/city (to be filled in by company conducting the survey)*

Variables on partner's working conditions:

- *Approximately how many hours a week does your spouse/partner work? (interviewer: if very variable, try to get an estimated average) _____ hours; 93) highly variable; 94) partner doesn't work; 97) no partner; 98) respondent doesn't know; 99) unanswered*
- *Was your partner's job temporary, permanent, or was he/she a contractor? 1) permanent; 2) temporary (seasonal, for specific project, internship, substitution, trial, apprenticeship); 3) no contract; 4) contractor; 8) respondent doesn't know; 9) unanswered*
- *Who was earning more at the time, you or your spouse/partner? 1) respondent; 2) spouse; 3) more or less the same; 8) respondent doesn't know; 9) unanswered*
- *Had anyone in your circle, family, workmates or friends, taken part- or full-time leave before you? (multiple choice reply); yes, my partner (1)*