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Grandparents' role in Spanish families' work/life balance strategies

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Abstract: In recent years, grandparental childcare has been instrumental to Spanish parents' ability to engage in paid work. At the same time, the use of formal childcare services, paid domestic assistance and parental leave-taking have also intensified. The objectives of this study are: (1) to estimate the scope of the support received from grandparents in caring for children; and (2) to assess the impact of the diversification of childcare resources on highly frequent grandparental childcare in two-parent families. The sample covered the 2304 parents with at least one child under 13 interviewed on the occasion of the Survey on the Use of Parental Leave in Spain, 2012. Three types of factors were analysed: (1) use of external childcare resources; (2) time devoted by parents to childcare and paid work; and (3) control factors measuring grandparents' availability, childcare needs and income. The findings suggested that international comparative studies based on the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE) underestimate the scope of grandparental childcare. Two-parent families with higher incomes resorted less frequently to grandparental childcare. In addition, formal childcare services, paid domestic work and parental leaves are associated with less frequent grandparental involvement. Overall, the findings suggest that more diversified deployment of the available resources may contribute to reducing grandparental childcare.

Keywords: Grandparents, families, intergenerational relationships, childcare, gender

INTRODUCTION

As in other developed countries, in Spain the growth in the proportion of women joining the workforce in recent years has accentuated the social importance of the work/life balance. The percentage of Spanish women aged 25 to 54 with paid employment rose from 38.8 % in 1992 to 62.3 % in 2014 (Eurostat, 2018). One of the responses of this new generation of mothers to the need to harmonise family and work life has been to resort to inter-generational support (Tobío Soler, 2012). Consequently, an increasing proportion of grandparents have

become involved in caring for their grandchildren in one way or another: whereas in 1993 15 % of Spanish grandfathers and 14 % of grandmothers 65 or older reported that they were engaged in caring for their grandchildren at the time of the survey (Meil, 2011), by 2010 the percentages had climbed to 37 % and 33 %, respectively (IMSERSO, 2010). Not only has the proportion of grandparents involved in childcare grown, but also the time devoted to care has increased. The percentage of grandparents reporting that they engaged in childcare daily grew from 11 % of all grandparents 65 or older in 2006 to 17 % in 2010 (IMSERSO, 2010). Inasmuch as these data refer to grandparents 65 or older, they underestimate the scope of grandparental childcare, for grandparenthood typically begins at earlier ages.

Grandparents' growing participation in childcare has been attendant upon diversification of the childcare resources deployed by families. Firstly, the use of pre-primary childcare services has risen: 96 % of 3-year-olds were enrolled in educational institutions in 2012 and the use of public or private day care centres for 2-year-olds children grew from 22 % in 2002 to 52 % in 2012 (MEC, 2018). Secondly, parental leave conditions have improved and their use by fathers and mothers has intensified in recent years (Meil, Lapuerta and Escobedo, 2017). Thirdly, the steep rise in immigration between the mid-nineteen nineties and the onset of the economic crisis boosted the use of part-time or live-in domestic help (Cox, 2015). Fathers have also become more and more involved in childcare and domestic chores as a result of the slow but steady social redefinition of gender roles within the family (García Román and Ajenjo Cosp, 2014; Meil and Rogero-García, 2015). The result has been a diversification of childcare resources and concomitantly greater complexity in families' childcare arrangements, in which grandparents play an instrumental role (Díaz Gandasegui, Díaz Gorfinkiel and Elizalde-San Miguel, 2017).

Despite its social significance, however, grandparents' involvement in childcare in Spanish society is still poorly understood. Most studies focusing on Spain are descriptive (Marí Klose Marí-Klose, Vaquera, and Cunningham, 2010; Meil, 2011; Pérez Ortiz, 2007) or fail to analyse grandparental childcare against the backdrop of the diversification of ways to harmonise work and family life (Marí Klose Marí-Klose, Vaquera, and Cunningham, 2010; Meil, 2011; Pérez Ortiz, 2007). Studies comparing several countries, based on the exploitation of the first wave of data from the 2004 Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement

in Europe (SHARE) (Bordone, Arpino & Aassve, 2017; Di Gessa, G., Glaser, Price, Ribe, and Tinker, 2015; Hank y Buber, 2009; Igel and Szydlik, 2011), do not analyse each country individually and, as discussed below, underestimate the care provided by Spanish grandparents. Moreover, most studies fail to analyse how the use of different conciliation resources affects the frequency of grandparental care, whilst those that do, use macro-indicators that afford no information on the relationship between those resources and grandparental care (i.e., Bordone et al., 2017; Di Gessa et al., 2015; Igel and Szydlik, 2011; Zamarro, 2011).

The present study aims to fill these knowledge gaps by analysing the role played by grandparents in Spanish families' childcare strategies and provide a view of the scope of grandparental support other than as gleaned from SHARE. The first objective is to estimate the scope of the support received from grandparents in caring for children under 13 in Spain. Grandparents' participation in childcare should be compared to that of other family members or acquaintances and a distinction should be drawn between the scope of that care by type of family (lone or two-parent) and parents' occupational status.

The second objective is to determine the impact of diversifying childcare resources on grandparental care in two-parent families, controlling for the factors identified in the literature. Contrary to the approach adopted in other studies, here grandparental childcare is analysed relative to the use of parental leaves, formal childcare services, domestic paid care and parents' involvement in childcare, controlling for other significant variables, to verify the existence of substitution effects between these resources and grandparental childcare. The study consequently contributes to the discussion of the possible effects of work/life balance policies and changes in family structure on intergenerational support. Unlike many other prior studies, this survey takes not grandparents as the observational unit, but the parents of the children cared for. With this methodological strategy, grandparents' role can be explored in the context of all the childcare resources deployed by households.

FACTORS CONDITIONING GRANDPARENTAL CHILDCARE: STATE-OF-THE-ART

Grandparents may become involved in caring for their grandchildren as a result either of their support for their children or of their assumption of the children's custody (known as custodial care) in the parents' absence. This article focuses only on the former. The literature on grandparenthood, which is steadily growing, suggests that grandparents' involvement in childcare is conditioned primarily by their availability (and willingness), parents' and children's needs and preferences and, although to a lesser extent, by social norms (Bordone et al. 2017; Jappens and van Bavel, 2016). Grandparents', parents', and children's characteristics have been shown to be sufficiently significant to merit joint consideration in empirical analyses (Hagestad, 2006). Moreover, from this three-generational perspective, studies analysing differences among European countries have also focused on the impact of furthering work/life balance policies, particularly as regards the provision of formal childcare and parents' working condition, in particular the possibility of part-time work (Bordone et al., 2017; Di Gessa et al., 2016; Jappens and Van Bavel 2012).

Grandparents' availability depends on geographic distance: provision rises significantly with proximity (Igel and Szydlik 2011; Meil, 2011; Nicholson and Davey Zeece, 2008; Vandell, McCartney, Owen, Booth and Clarke-Stewart, 2003) and is greatest among grandparents living in the same household as their grandchildren (Hank and Buber, 2009; Hirshorn, 1998). The relationship between grandparents' employment status and their provision of childcare differs depending on the country. In Europe, studies based on SHARE (Di Gessa et al., 2017; Hank and Buber, 2009; Zamarro, 2011) found that working grandmothers and working grandparents were significantly less likely to care for their grandchildren. In contrast, Baydar and Brooks-Gunn (1998) observed no such difference among U.S. grandmothers. Grandmothers tend to be involved more widely than grandfathers (Hank and Buber, 2009; Tobío Soler, 2012) and mothers' parents are more likely to participate than the fathers' in all countries (Nicholson and Davey Zeece, 2008; Pérez Ortiz 2007).

Younger, particularly pre-primary school, children are more likely to be cared for by their grandparents (Di Gessa et al., 2016; Hank and Buber 2009; Igel and Szydlik 2011; Meil, 2011; Meggiolaro, 2017; Nicholson and Davey Zeece, 2008). The relationship between the number of grandchildren and the likelihood of their being cared for by their grandparents

has likewise been explored, albeit inconclusively (Di Gessa et al., 2016; Meil and Rogero-García, 2015; Meggiolaro, 2017).

Lone-parent families receive more assistance from grandparents, not only because they tend to live in the same household, but also when the analysis controls for that circumstance (Di Gessa et al., 2016; Hank and Buber, 2009). Parents' employment status is central to grandparental participation in childcare. More specifically, the likelihood of the latter rises when the mother has a full or part-time job (Marí-Klose et al, 2010 for Spain; Vandell et al. 2003 for USA). SHARE-based studies show that parents' employment status is significant in the expected direction (Di Gessa et al., 2016; Hank and Buber, 2009), although they fail to control for both parents' status or for how mothers' working hours affect the likelihood of grandparents' involvement, which is still unclear (Aassve, Arpino and Goisis, 2012; Jappens and van Bavel, 2012; Marí-Klose et al., 2010). Inter-spousal cooperation and in particular the time devoted by parents to caring for their children condition conciliation strategies. Meil and Rogero-García (2015) found a substitutional relationship between fathers and grandparents in dual-income families, whereby the greater the father's involvement, the lower the frequency of grandparental participation.

Grandparental childcare has been seen as a vehicle for family/work life balance where formal childcare is not an option. A number of studies have suggested that parents are less likely to rely on grandparents in countries where formal childcare is more readily available (Attias-Donfut, Ogg, & Wolff, 2005; Hank & Buber, 2009; Koslowski, 2009), but few have analysed it formally. In an attempt to explain the wide variability among European countries, Di Gessa et al. (2016) included in their analysis of the 2004 SHARE database the extent of recourse to formal childcare for children under 3 years old as a proxy for non-formal care strategies implemented by parents of children under 16. They concluded that extensive use of formal (public and private) childcare seems to offset intensive grandparental childcare. Other analyses based on the same edition of the survey delivered similar results. Igel and Szydlík (2011) found that in European countries where national spending on family benefits and formal childcare is low, more grandparents care for their grandchildren on at least a weekly basis. Confining their analysis to children under the age of 3 and adopting a different approach, Bordone et al. (2017) also observed that countries with welfare regimes in which

the family is the default option (Mediterranean countries and Poland) are characterised by an 'early care gap', meaning that when grandparents provide childcare, they tend to be involved daily. Studies based on other international databases using contextual variables have yielded similar results (Jappens and Van Bavel, 2012).

The overall conclusion is that families rely on grandparental support when formal childcare, measured in terms of pre-primary enrolment, is not available or not affordable, as in southern Europe in general and Spain in particular. A number of limitations to this approach can be identified. Firstly, the proxy used as an indicator of families' formal hiring of childcare is only valid for children under the age of 3. Secondly, it measures countries' pooled data rather than effective use by families. Thirdly, formal care is not confined to educational institutions. Paying third parties (often immigrants) for certain types of care is fairly widely extended, as noted in the introduction. Parental leaves constitute another option open to families, although their regulation is very uneven (Blum, Koslowski, and Moss, 2017). In Spain, while not paid, parental leave terms are relatively generous (full-time until children are 3 years old and part-time until they are 12). This study proposed to overcome these limitations by surveying families' use of the various conciliation resources available. No other study has analysed grandparents' involvement in childcare in which other resources are also used.

The use of alternatives to grandparents' involvement often entails costs in countries such as Spain where the welfare state model does not favour childcare outside the family (Gandasegui et al., 2017; Saraceno and Keck, 2010). The intensity of grandparents' involvement would consequently be expected to depend on income level. Findings in other countries such as the USA have shown that caring for grandchildren is more frequent in lower income families (Vandell et al., 2003). In Spain, a positive relationship appears to exist between the preference for pre-primary school and income level (Moreno Mínguez, 2007), whilst income level and frequency of grandparental assistance are inversely related (Meil and Rogero-García, 2015).

The aforementioned review led to the formulation of two hypotheses, based on parents' constraints.

H1. Controlling for the effects of the variables identified in the literature as instrumental to grandparental childcare, such care is less intensive when formal care resources are present and declines as the number of such formal resources rises.

H2. The greater parents' involvement in caring for their children, the less intensive is grandparents' daily assistance.

METHODOLOGY

In Spain, the information from most data sources and research reflects the grandparents' perspective, as they are usually the observational unit for which the findings are established. This paper takes one of the parents of the child/children receiving grandparental care as the observational unit. The perspective analysed, then, is the family's (mother, father, children), viewed as an institution that meets its childcare needs by drawing from different resources, depending on the circumstances. The source of the information was the 'Encuesta sobre el uso de los permisos parentales' (survey on the use of parental leave); the questionnaire was designed by the authors and the field work was conducted by CAPDEA, a market-research institute. The sample is representative of all of Spain except the cities of Ceuta and Melilla. A total of 4000 people between the ages of 25 and 60 were interviewed by telephone between January and March 2012. The sample included 2304 parents of children under 13 who had at least one living grandparent. This survey collected detailed information on the use of different childcare resources.

Given that the primary aim of the present study was to ascertain the circumstances governing the frequency of grandparental childcare, the dependent variable was the 'frequency with which grandparents usually help care for the respondent's children'. The possible responses were *daily, weekly, several times a month, several times a year or never*. Contingency tables were drawn up on the frequency with which grandparents participate in caring for children under 13 by the type of relationship (maternal or paternal grandparents). For the intents and purposes of comparison, information on other relatives', friends' or neighbours' participation in childcare was included in the tables.

A binary logistics regression model was used to explore the factors inducing daily as opposed to less frequent grandparental involvement in two-parent families. Although the survey also gathered information on lone parents, given the short number of cases, multivariate analysis was conducted for two-parent families only. Logistic regression models analyse the likelihood of a phenomenon occurring under given circumstances and determine whether the event is statistically related to one or more factors (Harrel, 2001). The model fit was measured with Nagelkerke's R^2 (Norusis 2005). The dependent variable was "daily childcare support received from at least one grandparent", whose categories were *yes*, assigned a value of 1 in the logistic regression model or *no*, assigned a value of 0. The analysis addressed the two types of factors identified by the literature on grandparental childcare, plus the use of other resources to harmonise family and work life, as described below.

(a) *Grandparental availability*. Number of generations living in the same household: two or three; distance from the nearest grandparent: 15 minutes or less or over 15 minutes.

(b) *Needs and situation of children and parents*. Age of youngest child; number of children: 1, 2 or 3 or more; mother's employment status: no paid work, less than 35 hours, 35-40 hours, over 40 hours and variable number of hours; father's employment status: employed/unemployed; number of hours devoted by the mother to childcare (continuous variable); number of hours devoted by the father to childcare (continuous variable); net monthly household income: under €900, €901-€1500, €1501-€2000, €2001-€2500, €2501-€3000, and over €3000.

(c) *Use of childcare resources*. Parental leave-taking (leave of absence or shortened hours) during the childcare period on the part of the respondent, at the time of the interview or prior thereto: taken or not taken; No. of hours of paid domestic work: less than 10 or 10 or more; whether or not the children have lunch at school.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As Table 1 shows, most parents with children under 13 claimed to receive support from at least one grandparent, only 19 % reported having received no support from the mother's or

the father's parents. Routine care was widespread, for nearly half of the families interviewed claimed to receive assistance at least weekly. More specifically, 26 % said they had daily, and 22 % weekly, help. Whilst generally recognised by Spanish mothers as a key element for harmonising work and family (Tobío Soler, 2012), daily assistance from grandparents was a minority option, whilst sporadic support was much more common. Grandparents on the mother's side (23 %) were more prone than those on the father's (12 %) to help out daily, whilst only a minority of parents claimed to never receive grandparental assistance (24 % and 32 %, respectively). These findings are consistent with other empirical studies on childcare in Spain based on information furnished by parents, although using other indicators (Marí-Klose et al. 2010; Meil, 2011). When other members of parents' social network also furnished assistance, they did so only sporadically (with a few exceptions), with only 11 % of families receiving such help weekly or daily. That attests to the importance of the grandparental resource for conciliating childcare and family life with work in today's society, as corroborated in the literature (Di Gessa et al., 2016).

The picture portrayed by the findings implies much more frequent intergenerational help than deduced from the 2004 SHARE survey, according to which southern European countries such as Italy and Spain are characterised by sparse albeit intensive care (Albertini, Kohli and Vogel, 2007; Di Gessa et al. 2016; Hank and Buber, 2009).

Further to the SHARE database, 52 % of grandmothers provided childcare of some nature in the past 12 months, whilst 35 % claimed 'almost weekly or more frequent' involvement (Hank and Buber, 2009), compared to 77 % and 48 % of parents who claim to receive some or weekly or more frequent grandparental support, respectively, in the present survey (Table 1). Combining frequency of care with the time devoted, Di Gessa et al. (2016) calculated that 15.2 % of grandparents cared for grandchildren under 16 almost daily or at least 15 hours almost weekly, compared to 26 % in the present survey for children under 13. That difference may be largely attributed to the population surveyed in the two studies: the former, the grandparents themselves and in the latter families with small children. The same pattern can be observed in Italy (Meggiolaro, 2017). SHARE would appear, then, to underestimate grandparents' role in childcare.

(Table 1 here)

In line with results from other studies (Di Gessa et al., 2016; Hank and Buber 2009; Igel and Szydluk 2011; Meil, 2011; Meggiolaro, 2017; Nicholson and Davey Zeece, 2008), the younger the children, the more frequent was support. As shown in the last column in Table 2, while one of every three families with children under 3 claimed to receive daily assistance, that proportion declined to one in four when the smallest child was 3 to 5 years old, one in five when the child was 6 to 8 and one in six when the youngest was 9 to 12.

As observed in other studies (Hank and Buber, 2006), support was much more frequent among lone-parent families, with the proportion benefitting from daily assistance approximately doubling the percentages recorded for two-parent families (Table 2). Daily grandparental aid did not appear to be the most common harmonisation strategy among the latter, even when both had paid jobs and children under 3, contrary to the pattern observed among lone parents. While slightly over one in three families (38 %) in which both parents had (full-time, in the vast majority of cases) paid work and a child under 3 received daily support from grandparents, the remaining 62 % received support less frequently. That ratio was reversed in lone-parent families, attesting to the significance of grandparental support in this type of families.

(Table 2 Here)

The data breakdown by type of family also showed that routine grandparental childcare was fairly frequent among one breadwinner families and, surprisingly, very frequent among families in which neither parent was employed, particularly where small children were involved. Such results were likely to be due to respondents' variable interpretation of what 'daily grandparental childcare support' means, both in terms of the activities regarded to constitute 'assistance' and the definition of 'daily' frequency. Where one of the parents is not employed, support may be routine but not very time-intensive, such as picking children up at school or taking them to the park, either with the unemployed parent (generally the mother) or in her place to give her time to perform other tasks (take care of the baby, for instance, while the grandparents care for the older children). In families with no

breadwinners, one hypothesis that would have to be explored is whether care is provided less to cover parents' absence than to meet basic needs: i.e., whether the high frequency of daily grandparental care not only helps the family to organise time but also provides indirect economic support by feeding the children and keeping them in a heated home. The data available are insufficient to investigate that possibility. Where both parents have paid employment, the respondent may refer to childcare all the time they are at work, or to more specific tasks such as taking them to and picking them up at pre-primary school, taking them for walks or babysitting after school until the parents arrive home. In other words, daily grandparental childcare does not necessarily imply time-intensive involvement or even substitutional care while parents work. Unfortunately, neither the estimated number of hours devoted by grandparents nor the type of care they provide is available.

The multivariate analysis conducted for two-parent families confirmed that families that resort to the formal childcare facilities furnished by the education system, such as meals at school, relied less on daily grandparental care (Table 3), corroborating other authors' findings (Bordone et al., 2017; Di Gessa et al., 2016). Where children had lunch at school, the odds ratio for receiving daily grandparental support declined by half, to 0.509. Nonetheless, some families also used other non-family-based care to balance work and family, which also translated into a lower frequency of intensive grandparental involvement in childcare. Where parental leave was taken (shorter hours or leave of absence), the odds ratio for receiving daily grandparental assistance slid by one-third (from 1.000 to 0.666). One of the primary reasons for taking parental leave is to 'avoid over-burdening grandparents' (Meil, Romero-Balsas and Rogero-García, 2017). Having paid help at home also appeared to affect grandparental involvement in childcare. When the family had at least 10 hours of paid domestic assistance, the odds ratio slumped by two-thirds to 0.345. The findings showed when conciliation resources were diversified, grandparents were resorted to much less frequently, therefore confirming the first hypothesis. They also showed that daily grandparental support depended not only on the resources furnished by the welfare system, as some studies have shown (Igel and Szydlik, 2011), but also on those paid for by families themselves (private care services, unpaid parental leaves or paid domestic assistance).

(Table 3 Here)

The time that parents devote to caring for their children would not appear to affect the likelihood of receiving daily grandparental assistance, after controlling for the time devoted to paid work. This was clearly true for the time devoted by mothers, whereas the findings for fathers' greater or lesser involvement in care were less straightforward. Further to the conventional significance level of 5 %, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected, although if the threshold is lifted to 10 %, the greater fathers' involvement, the lower the likelihood of grandparents' daily assistance. In an earlier analysis of these same data, although confined to two-earner families, a significant relationship was observed between the time devoted by fathers to childcare and grandparental care (Meil and Rogero-García, 2015). These findings would partially confirm the second hypothesis, as they indicate that more father's involvement in childcare is conducive to lesser dependence on grandparental support.

Other logistic regression analysis findings that merit mention are that while no relationship was observed between fathers' employment status and grandparents' daily involvement, the latter was found to be related to mothers' working hours. Women with part-time jobs were 2.343 times as likely to receive daily support than those with no paid job. Mothers with full-time employment (35/40 hours), in turn, were 3.766 times as likely. Women working more than 40 hours, however, were no more likely than mothers working 40 hours to receive such assistance. The major differences, then, were between having paid employment or not and whether or not it was full time, corroborating the relationships observed by other authors (Di Gessa et al., 2016; Marí-Klose et al., 2010 for Spain; Vandell et al. 2003 for USA). These findings reinforce the interpretation of the results discussed earlier, for they show that fathers' available time appeared to have a fairly small impact on the likelihood of receiving grandparental support and that such assistance was provided essentially where the work burden was especially heavy, i.e. in dual-earner families.

The pattern of greater daily assistance from grandparents where the burden is heavier was also corroborated by the fact that this type of care declined as children's ages rose. It was not applicable to large families, however, where the likelihood of receiving assistance declined to half of the odds in smaller families, after controlling for the effects of the other

variables analysed. The inference would be that intergenerational assistance, measured in time, is smaller in large families, possibly due to the fact that the older siblings provide care to the younger ones.

In addition, the likelihood of receiving daily grandparental assistance was observed to decline with rising income levels, a finding consistent with previous studies (Vandell et al., 2003). Overall, then, the frequency of grandparental care was highest when the need was greatest: where the children were smaller and called for more intensive care or when parents had insufficient time or were unable to afford alternative resources.

The literature has firmly established that geographic proximity between generations is a determinant in the frequency of grandparental support (Baydar and Brooks-Gunn, 1998; Hank and Buber 2009; Igel and Szydlik 2011; Meil, 2011; Vandell et al. 2003). The shorter that distance, the higher was the likelihood of receiving more frequent assistance. More specifically, the likelihood was three times as great when one of the grandparents lived within 15 minutes of the parents. When three generations lived in the same household, the likelihood of receiving daily support was 11.875 times as great as when parents and grandparents lived in separate homes, a logical outcome in light of the circumstances.

CONCLUSIONS

Grandparents' involvement in caring for their grandchildren has grown in the last two decades and is essential to Spanish families' work/life balance strategies. International comparative studies based on SHARE data, however, argue that such care is seldom provided in southern European countries, Spain among them, although when furnished, it tends to be highly intensive (Di Gessa, et al., 2015; Bordone et al., 2017; Hank and Buber, 2009; Igel and Szydlik, 2011). This research addresses the issue from the standpoint of families with children less than 13 years old and questions such studies' portrayal of the facts based on a grandparental perspective. It also analyses the role of grandparental care in the context of the diversification of care resources.

The findings discussed here show that daily grandparental involvement in childcare is relatively common in Spain and that those elders are by far the members of the broader social network most actively involved in childcare. Only a minority of families never or hardly ever receive assistance from grandparents. These findings confirm that studies on the SHARE data underestimate the relevance of the support received by Spanish families with small children. Grandparental childcare is most frequent in the earliest phase of the family cycle, prior to children's enrolment in pre-primary school. While grandparental participation does not disappear in later phases, it is less frequent and the proportion of families receiving daily support declines with children's rising age, as reported by previous authors working with other data sources (Di Gessa et al., 2016; Meil, 2011; Meggiolaro, 2017). The present findings afford sound evidence that grandparental support intensifies in situations where time and financial needs are particularly acute: grandparental childcare is a vital resource for lone-parent families and in the cases where both members of a couple are unemployed or employed.

The results of the multivariate analysis conducted on two-parent families confirm the hypothesis that when received, daily grandparental care replaces external assistance. The use of formal childcare provided by educational institutions and paid domestic assistance is associated with a lower frequency of daily grandparental support. The present findings suggest that, beyond personal preference, resorting to grandparents as a harmonisation strategy is highly conditioned by parents' socio-economic circumstances. While people in the lower social strata tend to resort to grandparents more frequently, that strategy declines in importance with rising social status and is complemented by other resources (Meil and Rogero-García, 2015; Vandell et al., 2003). One hypothesis to explain the lower grandparental care in families with higher incomes, not verifiable with the data presented here and which might be explored in future research, is that parents with higher levels of education avoid grandparental involvement in childcare because they regard it as a non-specialised service that has an opportunity cost in terms of education. According to earlier qualitative studies (Megías Quirós and Ballesteros Guerra, 2011), grandparents themselves are aware that their attributes and responsibility for their grandchildren's upbringing are of lesser entity than those of other agents, such as parents or pre-primary school. This study also confirms prior findings on the relationship between grandparental care, geographic

proximity, grandchildren's age and mothers' employment status. It corroborates the instrumental role of mothers', and the lesser impact of fathers', employment status in care arrangements (Hank and Buber, 2009; Vandell et al., 2003).

With respect to the second hypothesis, the time devoted to care by the spouses appears to have no significance in the analysis, although earlier research has shown that in dual-earner families the time devoted to care by fathers (but not by mothers) tends to substitute for grandparental care. Similarly, the findings imply that the use of parental leave by one of the parents could lower the intensity of grandparents' involvement, an indication that such policies might have significant effects on the intergenerational transfer of childcare. Further development of public childcare services would also enable grandparents to participate in caring for their grandchildren less to make up for household shortcomings and more out of their children's and their own desire to do so.

This study is subject to limitations that should be borne in mind when interpreting the findings. Firstly, the database used contains no information on the time devoted to daily childcare nor the type of care provided (physical, jointly with a parent...). That calls into question the meaning given by respondents to the category 'daily childcare support' and attests to the need for additional indicators to measure grandparental involvement, as well as for a qualitative analysis of this issue. More specifically, an analysis of the number of hours devoted by grandparents to childcare is recommendable. Another limitation lies in the possibility that different respondents may construe childcare to mean different things. Lastly, the lack of individual information on grandparent carers (essentially age, sex and employment status) precludes the study of significant data on the circumstances that make care possible.

Despite the aforementioned limitations, the findings provide new and significant information on grandparental childcare in Spain. They reveal that diversifying childcare resources reduces grandparents' participation, but only for couples with access to these alternatives. In a context of limited public investment in childcare policies (essentially pre-primary schooling and parental leaves), the availability of financial resources is a determinant in deciding whether or not to resort to family solidarity. The future of grandparents'

participation in caring for their grandchildren will depend largely on household income trends (and hence in part on change in the labour market) and political initiatives in connection with the work/life balance.

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TABLES

Table 1:

Table 1. Frequency with which members of parents' social network provide childcare for children under 13, by sex and type of relationship: Spain 2012

	Maternal grandparents (%)	Paternal grandparents (%)	Maternal paternal grandparents (%)	or Other relatives, friends or neighbours (%)
Daily	23	12	26	3
Weekly	20	20	22	8
Several times a month	18	18	17	14
Several times a year	15	17	12	16
Never	24	32	19	59
No reply	0	0	3	0
Total	100	100	100	100
Number of cases	2 168	2 090	2 287	2 304

Respondent: father or mother living with children under 13 who have at least one surviving grandparent

Source: Autonomous University of Madrid, *Encuesta sobre el uso de los permisos parentales*

Table 2:**Table 2. Percentage of families receiving daily childcare support from maternal or paternal grandparents by age of youngest child and type of family: Spain 2012**

Age of youngest child	Two-parent families				Lone-parent families (%)	All families (%)
	Neither employed (%)	One employed (%)	Both employed (%)	Total (%)		
0 to 2	48	29	38	35	62	35
3 to 5	22	18	29	24	48	25
6 to 8	21	15	24	20	38	21
9 to 12	19	9	20	16	30	16
Total (0 to 12)	29	19	29	25	42	26
N	136	866	1 176	2 178	126	2.304

Note: the difference between values listed and 100 is the percentage of families in each category receiving no daily assistance from grandparents.

Source: Autonomous University of Madrid, *Encuesta sobre el uso de los permisos parentales*

Table 3. Logistic regression analysis for factors related to daily grandparental childcare in two-parent families (base: less frequent grandparental childcare received): Spain 2012

	B	Wald	Sig.	Exp(B)
Caring resources:				
Children lunching at school	-.676	25.833	.000	.509
Parental leave taken	-.407	5.833	.016	.666
Domestic help used (base: less than 10 hours/week)	-1.064	13.747	.000	.345
No. of hours devoted by mother to childcare	-.010	.174	.677	.990
No. of hours devoted by father to childcare	-.045	2.916	.088	.956
Time availability:				
Mother's paid work (base: none)		55.659	.000	
Less than 35 hours/week	.851	20.944	.000	2.343
35 to 40 hours/week	1.326	54.531	.000	3.766
Over 40 hours/week	1.029	17.024	.000	2.799
Variable No. of hours	.474	1.449	.229	1.607
Father employed	-.071	.143	.705	.931
Control variables:				
Age of youngest child (base: 0 to 2)		57.583	.000	
3 to 5	-.502	10.893	.001	.605
6 to 8	-.814	21.053	.000	.443
9 to 12	-1.328	51.797	.000	.265
No. of children (base: one)		8.899	.012	
Two	-.105	.703	.402	.900
Three or more	-.690	8.887	.003	.502
Income level	-.119	7.034	.008	.888
Three generations in same household (base: two generations)	2.474	68.211	.000	11.875
Grandparents less than 15 min. away	1.088	65.297	.000	2.969
Constant	-3.442	58.780	.000	.032

Goodness of fit: Nagelkerke's $R^2 = 0.23$

Source: Autonomous University of Madrid, *Encuesta sobre el uso de los permisos parentales*