

Essays in Swedish Family Policy

Malin Tallås Ahlzén

Academic dissertation for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Economics at Stockholm University to be publicly defended on Friday 23 September 2022 at 10.00 in Nordenskiöldsalen, Geovetenskapens hus, Svante Arrhenius väg 12.

Abstract

Parental Leave Quotas: Peer Effects and Workplace Related Costs

In this paper, I estimate whether the introduction and expansion of parental leave quotas in Sweden triggered spillovers at the workplace level. Using a regression discontinuity design, I find that the introduction of the quota did not affect the uptake of parental leave of male coworkers. However, the expansion of the reform appears to increase the days of parental leave taken by male coworkers when the child is relatively young. For both reforms, the response is similar across workplaces that differ in terms of costs of parental leave. The lack of spillovers from the first reform is consistent with the introduction of the quota being more distorting.

Human Capital Effects of Opportunities for One-on-one Time with Parents: Evidence from a Swedish Childcare Access Reform

We study the effects of increased opportunities for one-on-one time with a parent during infancy on the human capital formation of children. To this end, we exploit a nationwide reform that mandated Swedish municipalities to offer childcare access for infants' older siblings, while parents were on parental leave to care for their infants. Survey data on childcare enrollment show that the reform had a significant impact on the childcare enrollment of older siblings. Using rich administrative data, we estimate intention-to-treat effects in a differences-in-differences setting, comparing infants with and without siblings of childcare age, pre- and post-reform, in municipalities that were affected by the reform. We find no robust overall effects on the children's sixth grade test scores, but we find evidence of positive effects on test scores for boys, driven by sons of less than university educated mothers. There is no corresponding overall effect for girls, but we find suggestive evidence of positive effects for daughters of highly educated mothers. Exploring potential pathways, we find no evidence of changes in quantity of parental time during infancy, pointing instead towards the role of improved quality of parent-child interactions as a result of less competition for parental time. We also find that improvements in physical and mental health in school age may have contributed to the positive effect for boys.

Seasonality of Childcare Enrollment

In this paper, I establish that childcare enrollment varies systematically over the year, which translates into differences in the age at childcare enrollment. The pattern aligns with the seasonal variation in childcare supply, implied by the institutional structure of the childcare system. I find the strength of the seasonality in childcare enrollment to differ with the socioeconomic status of the parents. High-status parents exhibit more variation in enrollment across the year, likely because their financial resources allow them to wait for peaks in supply when higher quality childcare is available. I examine possible consequences of these results for household and child outcomes and discuss equality implications.

Keywords: *public economics, labor economics, parental leave, quotas, childcare, cognitive development.*

Stockholm 2022

<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:su:diva-207713>

ISBN 978-91-7911-962-1
ISBN 978-91-7911-963-8
ISSN 0283-8222



Stockholm
University

Department of Economics

Stockholm University, 106 91 Stockholm