

## **Proposed paper to be presented at the EPC 2010 Vienna**

Ulrike Schneider, Birgit Trukeschitz, Richard Mühlmann and Ivo Ponocny

### **Implications of intergenerational support to ageing relatives: How does elder care affect the workplace behaviour of employed informal caregivers?**

#### **Introduction and aims of the paper**

One of the major challenges ageing societies face is the provision of long-term care to frail older people. At present care arrangements are characterized by an outstanding role of informal care. As demography changes, and with female work participation, age at retirement and age at first birth increasing, more people will be confronted with challenges originating from combining work and informal care.

Existing research on the nexus between unpaid care work and waged labour is framing the debate in terms of caregivers' labour market participation rates, weekly work hours or earnings forgone. By contrast, literature on the very working environment and the workplace behaviour of employees who combine work and eldercare is still very sketchy. Given the dearth of data on working caregivers, work in this line of research mostly relies on qualitative approaches, namely firm-level case studies, or selective and small scale quantitative studies.

This paper aims to analyse impacts of caregiving to frail older relatives on the workplace behaviour of employed informal caregivers. It investigates positive and negative spillovers of informal elder care on (i) productivity related workplace strain and (ii) intentions of job-to-job mobility and intentions to exit the labour.

#### **Data**

Our empirical analyses build on a large scale survey of informal caregivers in Vienna, and a comparison group survey of employees without eldercare obligations. The dataset offers a unique combination of variables, providing information on both the working sphere (characteristics of the workplace, workplace behaviour and characteristics of the employer) and the care arrangement (e.g. characteristics of the care recipient, number of weekly hours of care, measures of care related stress). Our sample consists of 743 employed informal caregivers and a control group of 612 employees without eldercare obligations.

#### **Measures and models**

Productivity related workplace strain is measured using a five-item five-point scale. Survey participants were asked how often they (i) "had unusual problems coping with stressful situations", (ii) "had been unable to finish their tasks timely", (iii) "made mistakes at tasks they can normally cope with easily", (iv) "experienced situations to be stressful faster than usual", and (v) "how often their work had been affected by pain or fatigue" during the last three working weeks. Answer categories were "never", "1-2 times", "3-5 times", "6-8 times" and "more often".

A factor analysis was performed on these five items. All five items loaded one common factor, explaining 58.4 percent of total variance. Cronbachs Alpha was 0.814. As all five items clearly relate to productivity or stress-related, work-specific problems, the factor

score can be interpreted as a measure of productivity-decreasing workplace strain.

Due to the skewness of the dependent variable – indicating a truncation of measurement in the area of low strain levels – a Tobit model was estimated.

Intentions to either move on to another job or to exit the labour market altogether is our second dependent variable describing workplace behaviour. In the surveys, individuals were asked whether or not they thought that within the upcoming two years they would give up employment, change their employer or switch to another position in the same company.

It turned out that for reasons of estimation both categories indicating an anticipated change of position (either to another employer or within the same company), had to be merged to one category indicating “job change”. Otherwise, the two separate categories would have become too small to obtain statistically reliable results.

Reasoning about the consequences of informal eldercare obligations on carers’ intentions to quit jobs is based on a simple human capital model. This model of behavior translates coherently into a multinomial logistic regression model.

As mentioned above our predictor of primary interest relates to informal care which was measured by a set of variables. Our models includes a dummy variable indicating caregiver status, a measure of subjective care burden based on a short version of the Zarit Burden Interview (Bédard/Molloy et al. 2001) and a measure for objective care burden capturing the intensity of care provided.

In our models we control for objective and subjective work related characteristics (e.g. industry, sector, skills, work experience, weekly working hours, job motivation, worries about job loss) and socio-economic characteristics of the persons involved.

### **Results I - productivity related workplace strain**

Our results show that a commitment to informal eldercare in addition to gainful employment does not necessarily add to work-related performance problems. Providing informal eldercare has a moderating effect on the strain level felt at the workplace. However, the intensity of the eldercare provided has a contrary, reinforcing effect on workplace strain. This holds true regardless of whether weekly hours, as an objective measure of the extent of caregiving, or the care burden informal carers feel, as a subjective measure of caregiving strain, are considered as explanatory variable.

### **Results II – intentions to quit jobs**

Results from our analyses indicate that informal caregivers are less inclined than employees without a caregiving commitment to leave the labour market, except for those supporting the care recipient in many ADL. We also find informal caregivers to be less likely to change their jobs, except for those who live with and provide care to a frail older person who needs to be monitored. It shows that the characteristics of the elder care arrangement influence the utility people ascribe to their employment status, while job and family characteristics influence job change decisions in the face of eldercare obligations.

## **Summary and conclusions**

This paper to be presented at the EPC 2010 in Vienna contributes to a currently small strand of literature that aims to measure the effects of intergenerational support illustrated by eldercare on the workplace behaviour of informal carers.

Results show that the fact of caring for an older relative does not necessarily impact negatively on the workplace behaviour of an informal caregiver. In addition, variables characterizing the care arrangement prove to be interesting predictors of workplace behavior. Productivity related workplace strain is more likely to increase if the intensity of caregiving obligations or the care burden increases. Job quits (either due to job-to-job mobility or labour market exits) are affected by the intensity of care or by specific care tasks (especially monitoring of the care recipient).