Parental employment, Work Family Conflict and Child Outcomes in Middle childhood

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Introduction

- Ireland large increase in mothers' employment in recent decades (Russell et al 2017). Work-family conflict increasingly prominent issue in Ireland and internationally (Eurofound, 2018)

- Lit on WFC focuses mainly on consequences for adults' health and well-being (Allen et al 2000); much less focus on impact on children

- Work-family conflict also focuses on those in employment (McGinnity and Whelan, 2009): what about too little employment?

- Previous research on the impact of employment child outcomes typically focuses on *maternal* employment often framed in expectation of negative effect but results mixed. Depends on outcome measured (cognitive, socio-emotional, test), age of child (at time of maternal employment and at time of measurement – few lasting effects) and quality of alternative care

Introduction II

- Previous lit focus on infants, but potential influences extend throughout childhood and may differ at different stages (Ruhm, 2008)

- Lack of research on fathers' employment (Ruhm, 2007) - but WFC lit emphasises importance of hh employment strategies (Scherer & Steiber 2003) and ability of parents to adjust (Fagan, 2003).

- Much WFC research is cross-sectional (except Dinh et al., 2017) – we exploit longitudinal element of GUI to strengthen the analysis and account for unobserved differences

Research questions:

- Is hh employment pattern (mum + dad) associated with child outcomes at age 9: emotional/ behavioural; and child-parent relationship?

- 3 potential pathways …..

➢ level of work-family conflict in the household

➢ differences in the time spent with children by working parents

➢ Differences in household income

Operate in different directions

- Do these relationships hold when we look at change over time (9year and 13 years)? Controls for unobserved within-individual heterogeneity

Data and Methods

- First two waves of *Growing Up in Ireland* child cohort study
- 9 years (2007 /2008) and 13 years (2011)
- Select **couple hhs only**
- Survey mother, father, and child
- Wave 1 N= 6,457; Wave 2 N=5,147 both completed
- OLS regression of outcomes at 9 years
- Two-wave panel models of change over time between 9 and 13

Child Outcome Measures

– **Social, emotional and behavioural problems** - Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (Goodman, 1997).

  Total difficulties combines 4 subscales; emotional, hyperactivity, conduct problems, peer problems

– **Parent-child relationship** - measured using the Pianta Child-Parent Relationship Scale (Pianta,1992).

  Two subscales:

  • Conflict (12 items)

  • Closeness (10 items)

Work-life Conflict Measure

Because of your work responsibilities:

A. You have missed out on home or family activities that you would have liked to have taken part in

B. Your family time is less enjoyable and more pressured

Because of your family responsibilities:

C. You have to turn down work activities or opportunities you would prefer to take on

D. The time you spend working is less enjoyable and more pressured

Response categories – Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree

Scale created combining all four items (alpha > .7).

- Coded so higher score indicates greater conflict, ranges from 1 to 5
- If both are employed average is used, if only one respondent is employed non-employed given a value of 2. Where both were not employed the couple were given value of 2*

Primary caregiver time/activities with child

Activities

A.   Sit down to eat together

B. Play sports, cards or games together

C. Talk about things together

D. Do household activities together (e.g.   gardening, cooking, cleaning, etc.)

E. Go on an outing together   (including going shopping)

Response categories

Every day / 7 days per week,	5
3 to 6 days per week,	4
1 to 2 days per week	3
1 to 2 times per month,	2
Rarely or never	1

PCG report (mostly mother) – others may also be present

SCG not asked at w1

Analytic strategy

At Age 9 - Base Model: control only for parental employment

   Add couple work-life conflict measure

   Add measure time spent in activities with child

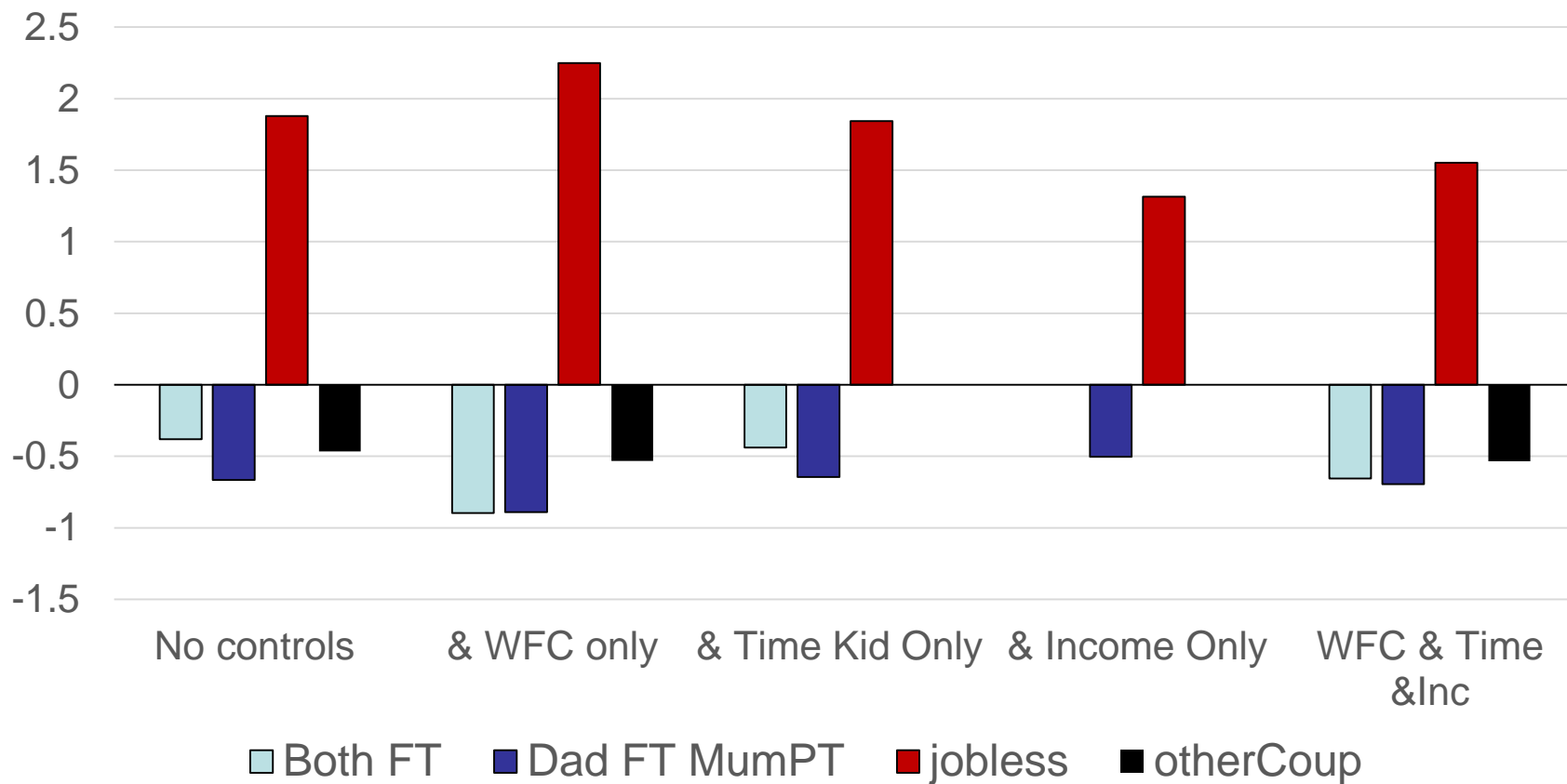   Add household income (equivalised income quintiles)

   Final Model: Add additional family context and PCG well-being measures (reconstituted family, number of children, parenting style, depression PCG, child gender, child chronic illness)

Change score (9-13) – change in child outcomes - test effect of time varying factors (change in hh emp, WFC, Income, Time with child). Equivalent to fixed effects model for 2-wave analysis (Wooldridge 2002)

Child Total Difficulties Age 9: influence of HH Emp

Difficulties Score: Compared to Male Breadwinner HHs

Legend: Both FT, Dad FT MumPT, jobless, otherCoup

X-axis categories: No controls, & WFC only, & Time Kid Only, & Income Only, WFC & Time &Inc

SDQ at 9: Higher Score = More Difficulties

		B		B	
	(Constant)	9.1	**	9.343	**
ref: Dad emp Mum not emp	BothFT	-0.656	**	-0.701	**
	dadFTmumPT	-0.695	**	-0.633	**
	Jobless	1.553	**	1.221	*
	Other	-0.535	*	-0.558	*
	WFC	1.168	**	0.941	**
	Time kid PCG	-0.938	**	-0.804	**
Ref: lowest Inc Quintile	Second	-0.601	*	-0.532	*
	third	-0.674	*	-0.592	*
	fourth	-0.99	**	-0.878	**
	highest	-1.593	**	-1.517	**
	Child female			-0.331	**
	N. Kids <18yrs			-0.379	**
	Child chron ill			2.201	**
	Step-parent			2.216	**
	Depress PCG			0.291	**
Parenting Style Ref: consistent	Authoritarian			1.182	**
	Permissive			-0.082	**
	Neglectful			1.023	
	N	6444		6444	
	AdjR2	0.046		0.120	

Change in SDQ Age 9-13years reduction => fewer difficulties

	Model 1		Model 2	
(Constant)	-0.928	**	-1.008	**
Mum enter emp	0.135		0.061	
Mum exit emp	0.156		0.247	
Mum full to part-time	0.301		0.389	
Mum part to full-time	-0.019		-0.077	
Dad enter emp	-0.439		-0.452	
Dad exit emp	**0.413**	*	**0.488**	*
Dad full to part-time	0.175		0.221	
Dad part to full-time	0.619		0.658	
Change WFC			**0.319**	**
Change Time kid			**-0.472**	**
Income quintile drop			-0.069	
Income quintile increase			-0.131	
N	5147		5147	
Adj R2	0.000		0.007	

Summary - Change Score Model Results

- Increase in WFC results in increased SDQ

- Increase in maternal employment not associated with an increase (or decrease) in child difficulties

- Dad exits from employment associated with increased socio-emotional difficulties for child – suggests spillover of unemployment. Persists when income change included.

- Increase in time with child associated with decreased SDQ

Limitations & Robustness Checks

- WFC: have to impute a score for non-employed partner. Robustness check limited to dual-earner couples show the same pattern of results but miss negative effects of joblessness

- Correlation of subjective indicators –combination of scores for both partners for WFC may dilute this
  - For SDQ also have a teacher score- this shows sig increase for WFC and hh Joblessness, still sig reduction for Dad FT Mum PT. No effect for time PCG spends with child, suggests there may be some reverse causality here.

- Effect employment earlier point in child's life (could investigate further with GUI infant sample)

- Limited information on employment conditions – flexibility, pressure, unsocial working hours

Conclusions

- Parental employment – important to consider both parents
- Employment positive with with child wellbeing at 9 yrs: two-earner or 1.5 earner fewer difficulties than children in male breadwinner hh. Change model only dad exits significant.
- Couple joblessness has a <u>uniformly negative </u>influence on child wellbeing, partly explained by lower income – but not completely.
- Negative impact of work-life conflict on child well-being very robust, irrespective of parental employment pattern
- Suggests way in which hhs adapt to paid work and family demands is crucial
- Impact of time/activities with child is direct rather than indirectly through work patterns, little variation between hh employment categories (compensation - Bianchi 2000)
- Workplace policies to address WFC important

Thanks for listening!

Comments/questions very welcome