

In support of work-family balance, internationally

It doesn't cost much to train managers to engage in family-supportive behavior, which pays off in job performance and worker retention.



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As a manager, do you listen to the problems your direct reports have in juggling work and family life? Do you help resolve scheduling conflicts? Do you yourself serve as a role model

for achieving a healthy work-family balance?

If you answered "yes," you are not only helping the people you manage; you are also helping your company.

Studies have found that managers who support work-family conciliation help employees perform better at work.

Adding to this body of research, an award-winning article by [Mireia Las Heras](#), Spela Trefalt, and Pablo Ignacio Escribano turns to the national context. Their paper, "[How National Context Moderates the Impact of Family-Supportive Supervisory Behavior on Job Performance and Turnover Intentions](#)," took Emerald Publishing's top prize for excellence in 2016 for papers published in *Management Research: Journal of the Iberoamerican Academy of Management*.

Looking at employees in Brazil, Chile and Ecuador — three Latin American countries with different cultural contexts, unemployment rates and social spending levels — the co-authors conclude that the benefits of supportive managers cross international borders. This is significant because even just a few hours of training have been shown to help managers be more supportive. The practical implication is that this training can help executives have a positive impact internationally.

Family support, in context

The survey of 988 employees in the three countries found that, with higher unemployment rates, family-supportive supervision did more to boost performance and was more important for keeping employees intent on staying at their jobs. National levels of social spending also mattered, directly and indirectly, in the survey responses.

Overall, the study concludes that family-supportive supervision does indeed make a difference internationally — it's not just a U.S. phenomenon.

With less than 1 percent of all management research looking at Latin America, Las Heras and co-authors make an important contribution by looking at work-family conciliation in three Latin American countries. They encourage colleagues to help them expand the field in the future.

They also show that the national context is a significant predictor of how much (direct and indirect) influence supervisors' behaviors have on job performance and turnover intentions.

As they explain, national context is useful as both "a source of and a threat to individuals' work-family resources."

Methodology, very briefly

The co-authors surveyed 988 employees in Brazil, Chile and Ecuador. For measuring "family-supportive supervisory behavior," survey respondents ranked their managers on their willingness to listen to problems in juggling work and family life, resolutions of scheduling conflicts, actions as a role model, creative work-family management and more.

The surveys also asked about perceived positive spillovers from home to work and vice versa. For example: "Juggling multiple tasks at home has improved my ability to multi-task at work," and "Juggling multiple tasks at work has improved my ability to multi-task at home." In addition, surveys asked employees if they were thinking about leaving their current jobs, with a few different questions. Finally, the surveys gathered information about self-reported job performance — promising anonymity.

For each country, the researchers looked at the unemployment rate and levels of social expenditures. Control variables included gender, age, job tenure, and work-family benefits.

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