Telework and informal overtime at home: Following work or family needs?

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Part of Project "Spatial dispersion of paid work" (Finnish Academy 2010–2013)

• Aims to examine:
  (1) Concepts and prevalence of work at distributed timings and locations
  (2) Characteristics: nature of work, informal and unintended features
  (3) Consequences for employees, families and organisations

• Data:
  • Finnish Quality of Work Life Surveys 1984–2008, Statistics Finland
  • European working conditions surveys 1990–2010, Eurofound
  • Finnish Time Use surveys, Statistics Finland
  • Interviews with management and employees

• Group:
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In this presentation:
Focus in work at home and family


Research setting of this study

- **Question**
  - How formal telework and informal overtime at home are related to positive and negative work-family interface?

- **Data**
  - 2003 and 2008 Finnish Quality of Work Life Survey data
    - two time series points combined, not longitudinal
  - representative sample of Finnish wage earners
    - N = 4,104 for 2003 and 4,392 for 2008
  - Important measures to analyse the nature of work at home!

- **Methods**
  - crosstables
  - logistic regression
Work at home & work-family interface?

• Home-based work is expected to
  • enhance the work-life balance
  • provide greater autonomy and individual flexibility (e.g. Wilson and Greenhill, 2004)
  • help reconcile incompatible time schedules (Felstead et al. 2005)

• Support for increased sense of balance in Gajendran and Harrison’s (2007) meta-analysis of 19 primary studies telework

• Also mixed findings:
  • work at home may negatively affect family relations (e.g. Mann and Holdsworth, 2003)
  • the main motivation for work at home NOT family BUT catching up on work (Wight and Raley 2009; Ojala 2011)

• why mixed results??

Concepts

Telework
• during regular / normal (day-time) working hours
• a written or an oral agreement between employer and employee on the terms of work outside the workplace
• on private premises

Informal overtime at home (Sullivan 2003; Fenner & Renn 2010; Ojala 2011; Song 2009)
• during private hours
• at home / other private spheres
• work early mornings, evenings, nights, weekends or during holidays
• the informality refers to (partly) unpaid, non-agreed and thereby somewhat hidden nature
Prevalence and nature of work at home
(Quality of Work Life Survey 2003 & 2008, Finland)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Do you sometimes do work connected with your main job at home?”</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>“Is this work mainly:”</th>
<th>Home-working employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Works occasionally or partially at home</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>“Overtime work without compensation” (informal overtime)</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works at home only</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>“It is agreed that some of the normal working hours are done at home (telework)</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not work at home at all</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>“Both” / does not know</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>8496</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>2748</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Measures for work-life interface
(Quality of Work Life survey 2003 & 2008, Finland)

- Positive interface:
  - (1) ‘I cope better with my children when I also go to work’: 1 = Totally true/True to some extent, 0 = Untrue to some extent/ Totally untrue
    - families with children
  - (2) ‘Have there been conflicts in your family about working hours, household work and personal time?’ 1 = No, the times are adjusted peaceably/ There were conflicts before but not anymore, 0 = Conflicts arise from time to time/ There are a lot of conflicts and battles about time.
    - respondents having a spouse/partner

- Negative interface:
  - (3) ‘I feel that I am neglecting home matters because of my job’
    - all respondents
  - (4) ‘In my spouse’s (partner’s) opinion I work too hard’
    - respondents having a spouse/partner
  - Both measures: 1 = Totally true/True to some extent, 0 = Untrue to some extent/ Totally untrue.
Logistic regression models

- **Demographic controls:**
  - Gender
  - Age
  - Educational level

- **Family situation:**
  - Spouse employed
  - Single parent
  - Age of the youngest child
  - Child care

- **Job characteristics:**
  - Manager
  - Autonomy
  - Long hours
  - Unsocial hours
  - Pressure
  - Flexibility needed
  - Superior support
  - Work at home
    - Not work at home (reference group)
    - Telework at home
    - Informal overtime at home

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**What did we find?**

- **Weak evidence for positive interface**
  - telework does not ease balancing
  - disputes over the allocation of time were NOT more easily solved by couples who used homeworking options
    - informal overtime at home weakens it
    - coping with children not reactive after controls

- **Strong evidence for negative interface**
  - Informal work at home strongly predicts feelings that issues at home are neglected due to the demands of work
    - only the controls for long hours and for being a single parent are stronger
  - Spouses react rather negatively to homeworkers’ long hours
    - both telework and informal overtime concerned
Discussion

• Formal and informal forms of work need to be separated in the studies, they produce different outcomes

• White-collar work not limited by time nor place <-> need for renewing the working time regulation (Supiot et al. 2001)?

• Dual-earner situation as a strengthening form of employment: EU encourages women to seek employed
  • two thirds of white collars work at home overtime
  • what about time for family?
  • part-time work rather than fulltime?

• Need for overtime is somewhat an individualised problem
  • time cultures within organisations need to be discussed
  • better managing of informalities

References