

Summary

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Work, Family, and Volunteering

An Examination of the Role of Flexible Working Conditions

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Summary:

In the last decades many scholars of work have focused on issues of work-life balance. The focus on work-life balance has resulted in an impressive build-up of studies that examine the impact of increasing pressure for labor market productivity on family life and leisure time (Cousins & Tang, 2004; Hochschild, 1997). Yet, little work has examined whether and to what extent increasing pressure for labor market productivity limits peoples opportunities for active participation in their communities such as volunteer work. This is an important gap in the literature since most volunteers are people who also work for pay in the labor market (Wilson & Musick, 1997).

Moreover, for most people, the decision to allocate time for volunteer work is considered secondary compared to paid work and family responsibilities. Thus people only allocate as much time to volunteering as their work and family responsibilities permit (Musick & Wilson, 2008). On these grounds, we might hypothesize that increasing pressure for labor market productivity increasingly squeezes out the time people can allocate for volunteering.

Yet, a trend towards increasing pressure for labor market productivity might be negated by flexible working conditions becoming more common. Since flexible working conditions implies that employees are increasingly free to choose where and when to work, this is seen by many as a solution to work-life balance problems. Following this argument, the alleged negative effect of working hours on the time people allocate for volunteer work is expectedly moderated by the presence of flexible working conditions. On the other hand, some scholars of work argue that flexible working conditions paradoxically cause work intensification to increase, because flexible

working conditions enables people to work longer hours, and blurs the boundaries between work and leisure time creating a feeling of always being at work (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010). To investigate these issues I draw on longitudinal survey data combined with national register data from Denmark, to which I apply fixed effects regression to analyze whether and to what extent paid work hours squeeze out the time people allocate for volunteering. Second, I examine the moderating role of family responsibilities. Third, I examine the moderating role of flexible working conditions.

Most important references:

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