
Summaries

Time competition: a personal or social matter?

Do workers compete with each other by working long hours? And is this competition a threat to social welfare? This article investigates the underlying arguments for this view. Compared to the other projects of the research program that are presented in this issue, this article builds on a more specific conception of time competition. According to the literature, time competition is stimulated by the flexible processes of the 'post-fordist' work organization. In these firms, workers have more personal responsibilities for the achievement of individual targets and deadlines, while the boundaries between work and family life are blurring. Although this is not an empirical article that aims to test a hypothesis, we present some preliminary results from the Time Competition Survey that support the basic ideas.

Keywords: time competition, social welfare, status competition, post-fordist work organisation

Working overtime: when does it harm well-being?

This article investigates the effect of working overtime on feelings of time-pressure, work-home interference and overstrain. Furthermore, the article focuses on the question if the different mechanisms that lead to working overtime can at the same time compensate or aggravate its consequences. To answer this question the Time-Competition Survey 2003 is used, a survey among 1.114 employees of 30 organizations in The Netherlands. From this data-set 885 employees are selected. The re-

sults show that an increase in overtime causes an increase in problems related to time-pressure, work-home interference and overstrain. If the employee enjoys his work or if he feels enthusiastic about it (work-is-hobby mechanism), this appears to compensate the negative consequences of working overtime. Financial rewards for working overtime (work-is-money mechanism) do not compensate the negative consequences of working overtime. Employees who work in a situation with high work pressure and unpredictable work (crisis mechanism) or a situation in which working overtime enhances career-opportunities (time-competition mechanism) experience a relatively high level of time-pressure, work-home interference and overstrain.

Keywords: working overtime, time-pressure, work-home interference, overstrain

The choice of organizations for home-based telework and formal telework policies in organisations

Using a transaction-costs theoretical and a cultural approach, this study looks into the effects of employment-relations characteristics and organisational culture on the decision of organisations to allow employees home-based (tele)work, and if so, to introduce a formal telework-policy. Both the presence of employment relations having a relative small 'telework-risk', and a more 'flexible' culture are expected to increase the odds of telework, but decrease the odds of formal telework-policies. Moreover, with respect to both decisions, we expect the effect of a smaller risk to be larger within a more flexible culture. These expectations are

tested employing logistic regression analyses on data from 530 organisations collected in 2003. A smaller risk is shown to increase the odds of telework. Neither culture, nor its interactions appear to be significant. Against our expectations, a smaller risk and a more flexible culture do also increase the odds of formal policy. In addition, within a more flexible culture the effect of the presence of a higher proportion knowledge workers appears to be larger and the effect of output control smaller. It is concluded that a formal policy should not (only) be considered a means to control workers, but (also) an employee benefit for certain categories of workers.

Keywords: telework policy, transaction-costs theory, control, organisational culture

Participation in a flexible benefits plan

Since the late 1980s, employers have been offering flexible benefits plans. In a flexible benefits plan, employees are given the opportunity to change the composition of their benefits, so that they can choose those benefits that suit them best. In the present study, the effects of employees' household and work situation on the choice-behaviour of employees of a Dutch university is studied (N=488), employing logistic regression analyses. The study especially focuses on their choice to trade time. It is shown that employees mostly choose for trading-in leave for another, usually financial, benefit. Both household and job characteristics appear to influence employees' participation in the flexible-benefits plan, and their choices within it. The flexible-benefits scheme offered by the university is clearly used by the employees.

Keywords: flexible benefits, employee behaviour, compensation system

Job characteristics and the outsourcing of domestic and caring tasks

This article studies the influence of job characteristics on the outsourcing of two flexible domestic tasks (housecleaning and home maintenance) and two inflexible tasks, bound to set times (cooking and childcare). The central hypo-

thesis predicts that households will outsource their tasks more often when partners are less available for own domestic labor and care due to work restrictions. Analyses of the Time Competition data containing information of 795 Dutch couples with at least one working partner show that more working hours, and less available time at home, increase the demand for the outsourcing of female tasks (housecleaning and childcare). The shorter the time period that at least one partner is at home, the more often households hire formal childcare. Flexible availability through autonomy and working at home facilitates the combination of work and care by making outsourcing more accessible. Working at home by women does reduce the use of formal childcare, but working at home by men actually increases the outsourcing of childcare.

Keywords: job characteristics, domestic work, childcare, outsourcing

Household governance and work-household conflict. Structures and processes of social control in Dutch households

This article introduces the concept of 'household governance'. It stresses informal household rules and conflict-handling strategies of cohabiting couples as important means to govern daily time allocation. The leading question is to what extent the concept of household governance contributes to our understanding of the way households combine the demands from paid and unpaid work. Empirical analyses based on a sample of 809 Dutch cohabiting employees and their spouses (Time Competition Survey 2003) show considerable differences in the use of household rules and conflict-handling strategies among Dutch households. A linear regression analysis shows that the demand to govern daily time allocation by means of household rules and conflict-handling strategies is influenced by the earner type of the household, household characteristics (e.g. the presence of children), and job demands (e.g. frequent requests for working overtime). In this context, the interaction of household demands and job demands plays a major role for the type of household governance that is used in the household. Moreover, we found charac-

teristic differences in conflict handling between men and women.

Keywords: time allocation, work-household conflict, household rules, conflict-handling

Causes of work pressure: a neglected topic

To date studies on work pressure were strongly focussed on its effects and very little on its causes and the risk groups involved. On the basis of sometimes ill-founded theories and assumptions in articles in more popular HRM-journals, we tried to formulate eight hypotheses with respect to possible causes of work pressure. The relation of these eight causes – operationalised with 17 variables – with work pressure were tested in a large sample, representative for the Dutch work force. The data were gathered in October 2000 with the TNO Work Situation Survey and comprised 3100-3500 employees.

Multivariate analyses showed that the most important causes of work pressure were: complex, unpredictable, heavy, repetitive, emotional and VDU-work, as well as managerial work. Regardless of their work situation, fema-

le employees reported more work pressure than male employees. In addition, being married or living together with a partner, as well as having children, were significantly related with reporting more work pressure.

Professional risk groups with respect to work pressure turned out to be teachers in lower, middle and higher education, doctors and nurses, insurance and real estate agents, bookkeepers and cashiers, and executive or managerial employees. Among teachers, doctors and nurses the main causes were, next to the complexity and unpredictability of the work, the emotional demands of the profession. Among managers and insurance and real estate agents, another factor played an important role in the high level of work pressure, namely the relatively large amount of computer or VDU-work. Finally, a third factor (heavy and repetitive work), played an important role in the work pressure of construction and agricultural workers.

At the end of the article the renewing implications of our results were discussed, also in the light of work and family debate.

Keywords: work pressure, causes, risk groups