

Never-ending work days. Supplemental work at home among employees

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ABSTRACT

In this study I explore why employees extend their work days at home and do unpaid overtime work. According to Finnish working conditions surveys from 1990 to 2008, overtime work at home forms the greatest part of all home-based work among employees. This uncompensated and informal work beyond any formal agreements is conceptualised as supplemental work. Most overtime working employees are highly skilled white collar employees with the autonomic nature of work and tasks that are detachable from a certain time and place.

I ask why employees continue their work day informally at home. Is it the unlimited character of work contents or are there more negative aspects, for example hurry or pressure from the organisations? The dimension of voluntariness vs. involuntariness is studied. In addition, due to the lack of studies that differentiate between more formal telework carried out during the normal work hours and informal supplemental work, I study the relations between these two forms of home-based work. The data consists of both qualitative and quantitative interview data. The qualitative data consists of interviews with 21 high level white collar employees and the quantitative data of the Finnish working conditions survey from 2008 with more than 4000 respondents. The methods are qualitative contents analysis and quantitative multinomial regression analysis.

The results show that supplemental work is a two-edged phenomenon. Many employees carry it out somewhat involuntarily due to the tight deadlines and heavy workload. At the same time, being able to apply their own ideas in work and seeing their own work as productive and useful strongly predict tele- and supplemental work. High education, fair pay and manager status also predict both tele- and supplemental work. According to the qualitative results, also long hour work culture and informal organisational practises push into involuntary supplemental work. However in general, the social relations and support of employer and work community are only weakly related to supplemental work. Teleworkers are predicted to be somewhat better positioned in their organisations than supplemental workers although the differences are not large.