Gendered discrepancies in the outcomes of flexible working: the case of overtime and income in the UK

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Consequences of schedule control

- Focus mostly on positive impact: work-life balance, productivity, work commitment, health etc.
- Some studies examine some negative impact: increase in work intensity, namely overtime
- Some overlooked aspects: income, and career perspectives
- For schedule control to be a true alternative to adapt work around family life, it should not have negative implications for career...
What we add to previous studies

- Most studies based in the US – but institutional structures may influence this relationship
  → we look at UK case

- Most previous studies gender and worker context blind
  → we specifically take gender, parental status, working time status into account

- We look at different types of schedule control → flexitime, flexiplace, but also time autonomy (control over working hours)

- Most based on cross-sectional data → We examine longitudinal data
Definition schedule control

- Control over when and where one works (Kelly and Moen, 2007)

- **Flexitime**: control over **when** one works (e.g., start end times, accumulation of hours to take days off)

- **Flexiplace**: control over **where** one works (working from home for personal reasons)

- Time autonomy: how much control do you have over your working hours?
Schedule control uses

- Can be used for a variety of reasons
  - Family-friendly arrangement
  - High performance/involvement strategy
  - Reward for higher status/supervisory, management role
Autonomy control paradox

- When workers identify more with the work domain the flexibility in the borders between work and family will result in expansion of work

- Employees who are “free” to work whenever however they wish, may work perpetually (use autonomy to become the ideal worker)

- “honey trap” (Grönlund 2007) “autonomy-control paradox” (Putnam et al 2014)

→ But depending on the extent to which you can expand the work environment
Causes of intensification (Kelliher & Anderson 2010)

- **Imposed intensification**: imposed by employers/contract – same amount of work but fewer hours (task based work)

- **Enabled intensification**: allow people to work harder easily – removal of distractions, increased optimization of hours

- **Gift/social exchange theory**: The ability to take advantage of flexible working options may engender a reaction in employees, which results in them expending greater effort, increase motivation, commitment \(\rightarrow\) increase other characteristics of the “ideal worker”
Enabled intensification & Stress of a higher status hypothesis (Schieman et al., 2009)

- Individuals in higher positions may engage in role blurring because of the **demands of higher status work conditions** which can increase work-nonwork interference.

- Schedule control for these groups of workers may entail **“work that never ends” and a devotion to work** that responds to the demands of high status.

- Clark (2000) – flexibility of borders can increase spillover to the other sphere of life when one aspect takes precedence (workers where work has a high significance in life).
Variance across individuals

- If Clark’s theory is correct, increased work intensity and hours will depend largely on individuals.
  - Individuals whose life focuses more on work, more likely to intensify/increase work efforts → increase spill over.
  - Individuals who has other demands (family demands) may be less likely to intensify/increase work efforts.

- Gender, parental status, and occupational status.
Impact on income

- Work intensity
  - Overtime/increased work intensity leads to higher income → via overtime
  - (unobserved) Increase in work effectiveness/qualitative intensity and productivity (de Menezes and Kelliher, 2011) → direct impact

- Healthier happier workers
  - ‘happy worker thesis’ (Leslie et al., 2012)
  - Decrease in stress, sickness, and absenteeism, and better work-life balance brought on by schedule control (Weeden, 2005)
Varying across individuals

- Depending on how it is used/perceived to be used by employers
  - Use of schedule control as a signal for lower work commitment (Glass and Noonan, 2016)
  - When used for personal reasons/family demands, schedule control does not lead to income gains (Leslie et al., 2012)
  - Women/parents/lower occupational groups more likely to be perceived to do so (Brescoll et al., 2012)

- Discrimination in rewards
  - Women/lower occupational groups generally gain less rewards (Acker 1990) including rewards from schedule control

- Trade off of flexibility for lower wages
Data

- Understanding Society waves 2 and 4
- Several selections
- 3,621 men and 3,837 women
- Fixed and random effects models
Preliminary Results: Overtime

- Having time autonomy positively related to the likelihood of working overtime and how much overtime people work.

- Both men and women
  - But regarding working any overtime clearer for women.
  - Using flexitime was negatively related to how much overtime men worked.

- Regardless of parental status
  - But relationship between time autonomy and working any overtime seems clearer for mothers than for childless women.
  - And relationship between time autonomy and how many overwork hours appears to be clearer for non-parents than parents.

- Part-time vs full-time (for women only)
  - Positive relationship between working (any) overtime and time autonomy seems clearer among part-time working women than among full-time working women.
  - However, when we are looking at how much overtime these women worked, we see the positive relationship only for full-time working women.
Preliminary Results: Overtime

**Predicted Probability Working Any Overtime**

- **Likelihood Working Any Overtime**
  - no time autonomy: men 46, women 36
  - a little time autonomy: men 55, women 44
  - some time autonomy: men 57, women 45
  - a lot of time autonomy: men 55, women 42

**Graph Description:**
- X-axis: Level of autonomy (no time autonomy, a little time autonomy, some time autonomy, a lot of time autonomy)
- Y-axis: Predicted probability working any overtime
- Colors: Green for women, Teal for men

**Data Analysis:**
- Men have a higher predicted probability of working any overtime compared to women across all levels of autonomy.
- The likelihood of working overtime increases as the level of autonomy increases for both men and women.
Preliminary Results: Overtime

Percentage change in overtime hours based on how much time autonomy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Autonomy</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A little time autonomy</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some time autonomy</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lot of time autonomy</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preliminary Results: Earnings

- Being able to work from home seems to be positively related to earnings
- Most clearly for women.
- Clearer for mothers than for childless women
- Clearer for part-time working women than for full-time working women.
Preliminary Results: Earnings

Percentage change in earnings based on ability to work from home

- Men: 1.6%
- Women: 3.1%
Conclusion

- Overall, schedule control can have positive outcomes (higher earnings) and negative outcomes (more overtime)

- Type of flexibility clearly matters

- There is variability in outcomes based on type of workers
Next steps

- Robustness checks
- Looking at the gender differences in more detail
- Compare high-status jobs with lower occupational groups
- Investigate possible indirection relationship from schedule control $\rightarrow$ working overtime $\rightarrow$ earnings
- When more waves are available: look at this again!
Thank you!

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