Nonstandard Working Time, Family Life and Child Care in Finland

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FamilyTies
- Time is Money?
Schedules, time negotiations, time coordination and ICT in family
24/7
Economy?
Reconciling Work and Family: Dimensions of Working Time

Employment in Finland

• Employment rate in 2018:
  – 65-68% women; 68-70% men

• Gender segregated labour markets

• Full-time work usual (circa 37hrs /week)
  • also among women (and mothers)
    – ‘stay at home motherhood’ usual until child is 2or 3yrs
  • Part-time rate around 20% among women

• Evening & Night work is usual compared to EU on average, especially for men;

• Working time autonomy/ flexible working time arrangements usual;

• Working tempo, hurriedness usual.
Working Shifts, EWCS 2015
Working Nights (22-05) once or more a month, EWCS 2015
WHEN PARENTS’ ARE AT WORK - WHERE ARE SMALL CHILDREN?

Pippi Longstocking (by Astrid Lindgren)
Universal Welfare State

• Equality ambition: *Publicly funded, provided, high quality services directed to and used by all social groups according to need and not purchasing power.*

• Early Child Care Education and Care (ECEC) in Finland
  – Finnish parents are entitled to place their children in public ECEC until child starts school (usually at the age of seven).
    • When children turn six, they are obliged to attend, free of charge, 20 h per week of mandatory pre-school education for one year.
    • ECEC services are regulated by the Ministry of Education and Culture.
  – Services organized either in:
    • Day care centres: Family day care; or Group family day care units.

• Childcare is affordable for families, as it is heavily subsidized by the state.

• Publicly subsidized **private** services are also available
  – of all children in ECEC, 8% were cared for by private centres in 2014.
Publicly Funded and Organized Care "Around the Clock"

- Finland is among the global innovators in making a systematic flexibly scheduled ECEC service available to parents who work non-standard hours.

- In Finland the service is known as ‘day and night care’, ‘around-the-clock care’, ‘extended hours care’ or ‘shift care’
  - Refers to childcare that takes place outside office hours i.e. during early mornings, evenings, weekends and nights.
  - Some units operating from e.g. 5 to 23 o’clock, others 24/7 – throughout the day, all the time
  - Day units typically 7 to 17 o’clock

- In the international literature, various other concepts are used:
  - flexible day care (de Schipper et al. 2003),
  - non-standard hours child care (Halfon and Friendly 2015; Jordan 2008),
  - childcare services at non-standard times (Statham and Mooney 2003);
  - day care with extended hours (Anme et al., 2010).

Flexibly Scheduled Early Education & Care in Finland

Number of children in flexibly scheduled ECEC:
• A total of 14,335 children, or 7% of all the children receiving public ECEC, attended flexibly scheduled ECEC services in the year 2013.
  – Compared with the year 2010, the flexible care rate had remained unchanged (Säkkinen 2014).
  – More information needed.

How it is organized?
• Extended hours or overnight and weekend care is concentrated in some centres of the city only.
• Needs are not always met
  – Parental demands for flexibly scheduled ECEC were met in only 62% of Finnish municipalities (Plantenga&Remery 2009);
  – Service Workers Union survey found in 2017 that 19% respondents had not been provided adequate child care service.

• Concentration in large units
  – Arranging extended hours childcare in a family day care unit is constrained by legislation governing staff working times.

• Only to under school aged children:
  – Only a few municipalities offer services for older children.
  – Small school children stay at home alone.
Cost of public ECEC for families

For second, third ect.child, reductions on the payments.
Red line: payments since 1.1.2018
Source: https://www.kuntaliitto.fi/asiantuntijapalvelut/opetus-ja-kulttuuri/varhaiskasvatus/varhaiskasvatuksen-asiakasmaksut

- Private ECEC compensated also publicly ("service voucher").
- Payments somewhat higher, from 290 € to around 600€ /month for the family.
What kind of families use flexibly scheduled services (compared to those using day care service)? Families 24/7 - survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Day-care users, families (N=140)</th>
<th>Flexibly scheduled care, families (N=163)</th>
<th>Statistical difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of children (M)</td>
<td>1.98 (.85)</td>
<td>1.63 (.75)</td>
<td>F(1)=14.75, p = .000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of lone parent families</td>
<td>8.6 %</td>
<td>24.6 %</td>
<td>x²(1) = 13.51, p = .000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of respondent</td>
<td>35.54 (5.16)</td>
<td>33.37 (5.14)</td>
<td>F(1) = 13.11, p = .000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of higher education (BA, MA or higher)</td>
<td>65.7%</td>
<td>49.7%</td>
<td>x²(2) = 8.13, p = .017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work schedule other than day work, proportion</td>
<td>50.4 %</td>
<td>95.4%</td>
<td>x²(2) = 74.24, p = .000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NONSTANDARD WORK HOURS – A Threat or Opportunity for Family Life?

Opportunities?

Threats?
OPPORTUNITIES:

• Shift work, atypical hours of work are not seen/experienced necessary negative (Wooden& Warren 2004; Kandolin et al. 2001)

• Time (care and work) desynchronization
  – i.e spilt – shift or mirror -parenting (eg. Presser 1989; Brayfield 1995); maximal parental child care time (Barnett& Gareis 2007)
  – Parents spend more time with their children (e.g. Wight et al. 2008; Täht 2011)
  – More equal sharing of parenting
    • Fathers spend more time with their children (Täht 2011)
      – Barnett & Gareis (2007) suggest that can influence marital satisfaction through paternal involvement.

• Economic compensation (if applies)
"Work in the evening, nights and weekends makes our daily life easier."

Opportunity for our family, because...

- Children don’t have to stay at care so much (days off, split shift parenting)
- We don’t have time to have arguments
- Father’s take more responsibility of household work and child care
- Financial reasons: pay is better
THREATS:

- In general, atypical hours/shift work of work are linked with:
  - Health problems (shift work), often links with long working hours
    - -> negative impact on parenting, spousal relationship, work-family interaction
  - Socializing, meeting friends, hobbies more difficult

- For family and spousal relationship:
  - Problems in spousal relationship and difficulties in family functioning
  - Negative work-family spillover
    (Presser 2000; Stradzins et al. 2006; Täht 2011; Liu ym. 2011)

- For children:
  - Associated with socio-emotional wellbeing, stress (Stradzins et al. 2006; see e.g Barnett & Gareis 2007)
    - Quality of care is often ignored (see also Galinsky 2005)
    - Hardly any information on day-and-night care to child’s wellbeing.
“Work in the evening, nights and weekends makes our daily life more difficult”

Threat for our family, because...

- We lack shared family time, because our rhythms are different.
- Negative influence on partnership: lack of time together, partner has to do it all when I work.
- Concern on the child wellbeing: unregular rhythms for small children and young school children staying at home alone in the evenings.
- I feel tired because of such hours.
- It is difficult to arrange child care.
Work Organizations & Supervisors

- Often work hours /schedules are negotiable with the employer, at least to certain extent
  - Many micro level arrangements to meet individual needs
  - Work place culture, supervisor role important!

- Unexpected changes to work schedules difficult!
  - Most difficult for families (and child care organizations) are sudden changes to work schedules
    - unpredictability of work hours
  - Substitutes and zero-hour contracts
  - In Families 24/7 – survey a third (28%) of respondents had difficulties in organizing child care
What is family life in the context of nonstandard working hours?

“Our family schedules are like a rubber band that is wound up to the max. Everything is so tightly scheduled. [...] I work irregular shifts, and my husband works 24/7. [...] Sometimes I wonder what would happen if something were to come up unexpectedly. I don’t know.”
Conclusions

• As expected, our studies have found that non-standard work is associated with difficulties organizing daily life
  – But also other working time of dimensions, such as unpredictability, length of hours & hurriedness are important

• Family situation, care resources and employer/work place flexibility play a vital role.

• Working time pattern of the (possible) partner – great importance!

• Is a risk to family life, but also positive sides:

“In my opinion, shift work is fantastic for those with young children. I spend a huge amount of time with my kids compared with other Fathers working a 9-5 job.” (Comment: Families 24/7 survey)


Rönkä, A., Ekonen, M., Tammelin, M. & Turja, L. (2017) Management in the 24/7-society raises concerns of fairness and social responsibility. Accepted for publication. Social Responsibility Journal


Thank you!

More information on the research:

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