

Abstract proposal

PAID WORK AT HOME IN KNOWLEDGE WORK – CHOICE OR NECESSITY?

Jouko Nätti

Dept. of Social Sciences and Philosophy, FIN-40014 University of Jyväskylä, Finland

email natti@yfi.jyu.fi

The relations of work to time, place and household are central questions of social research in general and working life research in particular. The transformation of these relations is characterized as change from industrial to post-industrial working time regime, which is characterized by blurring of the limits of working time and workplace. The post-industrial regime creates both new opportunities and risks. At its best, the working time mosaic provides an opportunity to individually choose the length and rhythm of one's working time and working place. On the other hand, there are new risks concerning the relationship between work and private life, the time and energy available for family and social life.

Knowledge workers are often seen as forerunners of post-industrial working time regime. In the literature knowledge workers are usually defined as those who regularly use information technology at work, whose work requires planning and who have a high level of education. Knowledge work is by nature, at least partly, detachable from a certain time and place. It is typically personal and endless; you can always do it better and work more.

The aim of the study is to examine the extent of paid work at home, its predictors and employees' perceptions of paid work at home among male and female knowledge workers. Empirical analyses are based on a representative survey among highly educated Finns between 24 and 64 years of age, conducted by Statistics Finland in 2001 (n=1643).

Working at home was common among knowledge workers. During the previous week, 62 % of the respondents had at home carried work tasks related to their paid job. Almost all (85 %) respondents had a computer and majority (64%) also internet and email connection at home. Using a computer or internet connection was typical content of home-based work. On average, respondents worked six hours per week at home. The best predictors of paid work at home were occupational group and characteristics of work. Paid work at home was most common among teachers, researchers and self-employed persons. In addition, high time pressure, working time autonomy and high job involvement increased the probability to work at home.

Knowledge workers had different perceptions of paid work at home. One quarter said that they keep work at the workplace. Half of the knowledge workers reported that they try to keep the work at the workplace but sometimes, when necessary, they have to take work home. One fifth perceived working at home as natural as working at the workplace.

Similarly, knowledge workers reported both positive and negative aspects of paid work at home. Positive aspects included possibility to concentrate on work and to set one's own pace when working at home, and to a lesser extent, the possibility to integrate the work with family needs. On the other hand, the main negative aspect was that paid work at home disrupts family life.

All in all, paid work at home was part of knowledge work although most worked only few hours per week at home. Differences between genders concerning the extent, predictors and perceptions of paid work at home were minor.