The Social Context of Schedule Control: Flexible Work Practices in an Information Technology Workforce

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Objective

To examine individual- and team-level job conditions associated with individual flexible work practices and perceived schedule control among IT workers in one organization

Background

- Growing interest in flexible work policies among employees and employers
- Sometimes employees use formal policies, but sometimes employees negotiate informal arrangements
- Prior research (e.g. Blair-Loy & Wharton 2002) shows that team and manager characteristics matter for employee use of flexibility policies

Definitions

Perceived Schedule Control: “Employees’ sense of latitude or control regarding the timing of their work, the number of hours they work, and the location where they work” (Kelly, Moen & Tranby 2011)

Flexible Work Practices: Working a Variable Schedule

Data

- Collected as part of the Work, Family & Health Study in 2009-2010 in the Information Technology division of a Fortune 500 company we call TOMO
- Analytic sample: 570 non-supervisory employees in 105 work teams

Results: Question 1

Employees’ Flexible Work Practices ARE Impacted by Manager & Team Power (measured similarly to Blair-Loy & Wharton 2002)

Log Odds of Flexibility Use Comparing Blair-Loy & Wharton (2002) to TOMO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manager &amp; Team Power</th>
<th>Blair-Loy &amp; Wharton</th>
<th>TOMO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior Leadership</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager Married or Partnered</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager with Children 18 or Under</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Mean Ln Salary</td>
<td>0.668**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Mean Ln Organizational Tenure</td>
<td>1.078**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager Married or Partnered</td>
<td>2.311**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results: Question 2

Individual Job Demands and Status

- Job Demands (Physical Job Demands, Hours Worked) and Status (Decision Authority) are odds of Variable Schedule
- Job Demands (Psychological Job Demands, Hours Worked) and Status (Decision Authority) are odds of Variable Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Job Demands and Status</th>
<th>Blair-Loy &amp; Wharton</th>
<th>TOMO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job Demands:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Job Demands, Hours Worked</td>
<td>0.572*</td>
<td>1.453*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Job Demands, Hours Worked</td>
<td>1.341^</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Authority</td>
<td>0.572*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results: Question 3

The four categories below illustrate what we mean by a combination of Schedule Control and Flexible Work Practices.

- Traditional Work Environment
  - Employee can choose to work a variable schedule
  - Can maintain a regular schedule

- Traditional Work Practices
  - Employee can choose to work a variable schedule
  - Can maintain a regular schedule

- Voluntary Flexible Work Practices
  - Employee can choose to work a variable schedule
  - Can maintain a regular schedule

- Involuntary Flexible Work Practices
  - Employee can choose to work a variable schedule
  - Can maintain a regular schedule

Conclusion

- Flexible work practices are impacted by manager and team power
- Individual job demands/status and team institutionalization of flexibility matter, especially for remote work
- Not all “flexible” work practices are voluntary / things that employees feel they control

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