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Developments in working long and unsocial hours in a Danish prospective cohort study on family and work life

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A recent systematic literature review by Wagstaff and Sigstad Lie (2011) of shift and night work and long working hours found that those involved might have a higher risk of being involved in occupational accidents especially within safety critical occupations like long-distance lorry drivers, medical professionals and food processing workers. Several of the studies included pointed at life style behavior, well-being, fatigue and dys-functional sleep patterns as mediating factors while none of the studies had looked at work-family life interaction. On the other hand, this factor is included in a study by Smith and DeJoy (2012) analyzing occupational injury in the US based on data from the General Social Survey. The study found that work-family conflict is an occupational safety risk factor and that employees reporting the largest amount of interference between work and family lives had the highest injury frequency. Conversely, employees with lowest degree of work-family life interference also had the lowest injury frequency. Many recent studies have shown that employees has to meet the challenges of living in societies that never sleep and that working unsocial work hours and/or working long hours are connected to a negative work-life interaction. That is, many employees working long hours and/or working unsocial hours struggle with the interaction between everyday work and family life experiencing stress, imbalance, conflicts and stability in couple relationships. However, studies have also shown that working unsocial hours might have a more positive impact on family life like increased opportunities to take part in their family's everyday social activities. The study is based on a randomized sample (n=1600) of people born in 1968, living in Denmark in 2003. A statistical representative number were included in the panel (n=989). The panel has participated in two waves of data collection. One in 2003, collected via Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews, and one in 2014, based on a web-based survey (n=457). In 2003, the respondents were 35 years old, which means that they at follow up are 46 years old. The response rate in 2003 was close to 68 percent and in 2014 approximately 47 percent. The paper present results on developments of working long and unsocial hours, working at home and its long-term impact on family status and work-family life conflict. The study shows that significant more people are working more than full time in 2014 compared to 2003 and more people are working unsocial hours in 2014. Moreover, there is a significant difference with respect to female partners spending less time at work than their male partners do and this difference is robust over the time span of the study. The literature show that there is a higher risk of occupational accidents when working long and unsocial hours. In this sense or our study, show a negative development in working longa and unsocial hours and that this development could have a negative impact on safety at work.

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