

Chapter 10

Work Longer Or Live Smarter? Striving for Desirable Work Time Arrangements in Diverse Cultural Contexts

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Abstract The long working hours and their noxious effects seem to be more prevalent in today's competitive global business world. This chapter thus explores the joint role of personal choice and social welfare provision in the context of working hours and work attitudes across a wide range of countries with diverse levels of economic development, cultural background, and welfare regimes.

Secondary analysis was employed using data collected from the International Social Survey Program (ISSP), with a sample of 8,525 employees from nine countries. These countries represent four types of social welfare regimes: the social democratic welfare (Denmark, Sweden, and Norway), liberal welfare (United States and Australia), conservative corporatist welfare (France and Germany), and the East Asian welfare (Taiwan and South Korea).

I found that the fit between desired and actual working hours was associated with higher job satisfaction and organizational commitment. However, this association did vary across different social welfare regimes. Logistic regression further revealed that compared against the East Asian welfare regime, employees in countries with social democratic, conservative, and liberal welfare systems were more likely to experience a fit between personal preferences and actual choices of working hours. Furthermore, after controlling for the macro-level social institutional factors and micro-level demographics, personal financial needs of "wanting to earn less" could still predict the state of misfit.

Recommendations are thus made to organizations to facilitate a state of fit between individual preferences and available choices through supplying multiple options to employees.

Keywords Working hour • Personal choice • Social welfare regime • Cross-national comparison • Work attitudes

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10.1 Working Longer: Combined Pressure of Economic Recession and Cultural Sanction

10.1.1 Job Insecurity: The Economic Drive to Work Longer

Fierce global competition and worldwide economic recession over the years have resulted in fundamental changes in the employment relationship, such as layoffs, early retirement, and temporary employment (Sparks et al. 2001; Worrall and Cooper 2013). Afraid of losing jobs, most employees work harder than before; however, more working time leads to increased strain (Dekker and Schaufeli 1995; Lu 2011). The advance of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) is also changing the nature of work, in two seemingly contradictory ways. On the one hand, ICT brings in more flexibility in terms of place and time of work, which can make work arrangements more accommodating to diverse personal needs and lifestyles. On the other hand, the widespread use of ICT easily trespasses the demarcation of work and life. One consequence of such a blurring of the line between work and nonwork is the increasing “invisible” working hours when employees are constantly bombarded with instructions and queries sent through ICT by their employers outside the official working time. Some governments (e.g., Taiwan) are now considering amendments to the labor law to forbid such invasion of employers into workers’ personal time and space, or to compensate workers for these “invisible” working hours with overtime pay.

Hours of work have long been recognized to have a marked effect on the way an individual and his family lives (Dankert et al. 1965). Findings and theories from predominantly Western nations have suggested a clear link between working hours and health symptoms (Sparks et al. 1997). Long working hours have also been associated with both work- and nonwork-related accidents (Kirkcaldy et al. 1997; Trimpop et al. 2000), elevated job-related stress (Cooper et al. 1982), and decreased job satisfaction (Trimpop et al. 2000). Despite the vast amount of literature concerning working hours and various strain outcomes, the majority of studies have been conducted in North American and European countries, as evident by the studies included in the comprehensive review on the topic (Sparks et al. 1997). Employees in Asia on average work longer hours (Taiwan: 41.6; South Korea: 44.2; Japan: 35.4) than do North Americans (United States: 33.9; Canada: 31.7) and Europeans (Germany: 34.2; UK: 31.6) (Directorate-General of Budget 2012). Do they fare worse than people in the West?

10.1.2 Cultural Values: The Social Sanction to Work Harder

The Confucius culture, which still has a strong hold on societies such as mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, and Singapore, has traditionally sanctioned “hardworking” as a virtue, and working long hours is a norm in these

contemporary societies of the so-called Confucius Circle (Kanai 2009; Lu 2011). However, compared to individualists in the West, collectivists such as the Chinese and Japanese are more flexible in viewing work and family issues, and the demarcation between work and family is far from rigid in daily life (Yang et al. 2000). A recent qualitative study revealed that Taiwanese employees often view work as a means of maintaining and improving the living standards for their families, or as a way of fulfilling their duties and commitments to glorify the family name (Lu et al. 2012). In other words, working long hours and working hard are not only practicing a deep-rooted cultural teaching but also instrumental in consolidating the value of family as a building block of the society. Indeed, a few studies found that Chinese employees took a more integration rather than segmentation approach to work and family issues, and were more tolerant of spillover between the two domains (Yang et al. 2000; Olson-Buchanan and Boswell 2006). These cultural expectations and flexible role boundaries have further fueled the “norm of working long hours” in these Asian societies, and thus little research has been conducted in this part of the world on the potential adverse effects of long working hours (Lu et al. 2011 being an exception).

In addition to the indoctrination of cultural values such as diligence, one consistent finding in the past studies is that employees in different countries exhibit different responses to work stress dependent on the availability of social resources at the macro level, such as social welfare institutions. For example, Spector et al. (2004) found a significant relationship between working hours and physical health for Chinese but not for Anglo workers.

10.1.3 The Present Study: A Multinational Analysis Combining Economic and Social Factors

The purpose of this chapter is thus to extend the literature on working hours in the following ways. First, I examined the effects of *choice* or *fit*, rather than the mere length of working time (i.e., the number of working hours) on work outcomes. Specifically, I took into account personal preference of working hours, which has largely been overlooked in previous studies. Second, I explored whether the above effects varied in societies of different welfare regimes as a proxy of the availability of macro-level social resources. Specifically, I conducted a multinational analysis comparing nine countries encompassing a comprehensive classification scheme of social welfare systems, which has never been done before in the literature on working hours. Finally, I tested the effects of personal drive (i.e., financial needs) on the choice of working hours, after controlling for societal resources. This is the first study combining individual and societal factors in explaining the choice of working hours across cultural borders.

10.2 Choice Matters: The Benefit of Fit Between Preferred and Actual Working Hours

10.2.1 Fit as a Game Changer in the Linkage Between Working Hours and Strains

Although the connection between working hours and strains (e.g., work–family conflict, job dissatisfaction, and ill health) has been established, the effect size is uniformly small for Western employees (Bruck et al. 2002; Kirkcaldy et al. 2000; Sparks et al. 1997). This suggests that the mechanisms through which working hours produce strains remain largely unknown and critical factors may have been overlooked. Barnett et al. (1999) argued that “fit” may be one such factor, namely, whether an employee wants to dedicate these hours that he or she does to work. The congruence between personal needs and situation supplies correlates highly with improved job satisfaction and performance (Caldwell and O’Reilly 1990), strengthened organizational identification, and a strong intent to stay in the organization (Edwards and Cable 2009). This suggests that the fit between desired and real working hours may be an important explanatory factor for different work outcomes observed in the literature. However, personal preferences were rarely considered in the relationship between working hours and strains. The construct of working hours as typically measured fails to capture employees’ motivation and/or desire to do so. This lacking may explain the weak correlations with strains. More importantly, a person’s choice in time expenditure should be respected to enhance both personal well-being and societal welfare. Although employment is widely seen to promote social inclusion and societal values, integration and stability in society are also facilitated by living according to the same norms and values as other members of society. The family is a major integrating structure protecting both the physical and mental well-being of people (Stack and Eshleman 1998). The same holds true for other forms of social participation, such as voluntary associations and leisure activities (Argyle 2001; Lu 2012; Lu and Hu 2005). Therefore, if people are allowed to choose between spending time on paid employment and on family living or other activities, a state of fit so achieved can enhance both role satisfaction in diverse life domains and general well-being.

10.2.2 The Demand–Discretion Model

The issue of *choice* can also be understood within the framework of the demand–discretion model (Karasek 1979; Karasek and Theorell 1990). According to this work stress model, strain is highest among those who endure high work demands (e.g., long working hours) and suffer from a lack of control over work (e.g., lack of autonomy regarding working hours). For those who endure high work demands but enjoy high decision latitude, work may represent more of a challenge than drudgery.

A recent study based on a nationwide sample confirmed that autonomy in deciding working time (i.e., on- and off-time) was positively related to increased organizational commitment among Taiwanese employees (Lu et al. 2008). The issue of personal choice and control in relation to work schedule therefore merits further attention.

Applying the notion of personal choice and fit, Costa et al. (2006) compared the effects of two aspects of the flexible arrangement of working hours on health and well-being. They distinguished *variability*, which is subject to company control and decision, from *flexibility*, which is related to individual discretion and autonomy. Analyzing data from the Third European Survey on working conditions involving 21,505 workers, they concluded that the most favorable effects were associated with high flexibility and low variability. Furthermore, analyses of the impact of background variables such as demographics and working and social conditions revealed that flexibility is the most important factor influencing job satisfaction and the second important factor affecting family and social commitment. Therefore, suitable arrangements for flexible working time, taking employees' needs and desires into account, appear to benefit employees' health, role satisfaction, and general well-being, with positive results too for the company and for the society.

10.2.3 Voluntarily Working Longer: "Moonlighting"

Other studies have also produced evidence underlining the beneficial effects of personal choice. Literature on "moonlighting" has produced two hypotheses: the "energetic/opportunity hypothesis" and the "deprivation/constraint hypothesis" (Jamal 1986). The term "moonlighting" typically refers to workers who have a day job (typically salaried) but then take on further personally contracted work during their nonworking hours in the evenings or weekend: thus, they can be distinguished from regular night-shift workers. The first hypothesis proposes that moonlighters are a special breed, having more energy and higher socioeconomic expectations than others. To satisfy their higher aspirations, they voluntarily exert more energy and effort in their work than non-moonlighters. Thus, they may take a second evening or weekend job to earn extra. The "deprivation/constraint hypothesis," in contrast, proposes that moonlighters are generally financially underprivileged and socially disadvantaged and thus resort to moonlighting as a means of survival. In other words, those people take a second evening job to make ends meet because they could not find a decent-paying day job. In a review of the literature, Baba and Jamal (1992) concluded that empirical evidence supports the "energetic/opportunity hypothesis," thereby suggesting that moonlighters *choose* to work a second job or the night shift to increase their income. Moonlighters may not suffer negative health consequences from working long or unusual hours because they have chosen to work extra hours or unroutine schedules. Therefore, compared to non-moonlighters, moonlighters were not subject to increased ill-health consequences.

10.2.4 The Person–Environment Fit (P-E Fit) Theory

In the work stress literature, person–environment fit (P-E Fit) theory emphasizes the interaction between the individual and the environment (Caplan 1983; French et al. 1982). The core premise of P-E Fit theory is that stress arises not from the person or the environment alone but rather from the fit between the two. People who work for the hours they want are in a state of fit and thus are satisfied and content. Conversely, people who work *more* or *less* hours than they would like represent a state of misfit, which is likely to cause strains and ill-being.

Applying the P-E Fit theory to *choice* and working hours, Hall and Savery (1986) found that employees' ability to control their hours of work influences perceived stress levels. Kirkcaldy et al. (2000) found that, for people with a Type A tendency (hard-driving) and a stronger focus of internal locus of control, working long hours produced positive results, presumably because they *chose* to work so hard. *Choice* may thus differentiate people on their manifest strains and well-being.

10.2.5 The Present Study: Testing for the Ubiquity of Fit Effects

Although it is intuitive to infer that the fit of working hours should have beneficial effects on employees' work outcomes, previous studies have mostly all focused on stress and strains as the dependent variables, rather than work-related attitudes. Furthermore, few researchers have examined the effects of fit in non-Western countries (Lu 2011 as an exception). Thus, it is imperative to empirically test the ubiquity of the effects of fit in a large representative sample of employees across different nations, focusing on work outcomes as dependent variables. I thus hypothesized that

Hypothesis 1: People who have a fit between desired and actual working hours experience higher job satisfaction and organizational commitment compared to those who experience a misfit in working hours, regardless of the countries they reside.

10.3 Social Welfare Institutions as Providers of Macro-level Resources

10.3.1 Societal Environment: Another Game Changer?

Cable and Edwards (2004) noted that P-E Fit is a subjective experience which can be influenced by individual differences and elements found in the social environment (Cooper et al. 2001; Lazarus and Folkman 1984). In a rare

large-scale comparative cross-cultural study, Spector et al. (2004) found significant correlations between working hours and psychological health for both Anglo (Australia, Canada, England, New Zealand, and the United States) and Chinese employees (Hong Kong, mainland China, and Taiwan). They also found a significant relationship between working hours and physical health for Chinese but not for Anglo workers. These small and inconsistent effects ($r=0.01 \sim -0.09$) suggest that people in diverse social environments may respond differently to the pressure of working long hours and/or the fit or misfit of P-E. Research on the transactional stress model (Lazarus and Folkman 1984) has already noted that avowed cultural values (c.f., Hofstede 1991) as individual-level psychosocial resources play an important role in employees' reactions to the work environments (Lu et al. 2010, 2011).

Furthermore, Erlinghagen (2008) stated that social systems (e.g., political, economic, tax, and social welfare regimes) as macro-level resources protecting and sustaining the lives of society members also need to be considered in explaining cross-cultural differences in employees' work outcomes. Labor market regulations and state welfare provisions in particular influence people's work preferences and attitudes (Ginn and Fast 2006; Lu 2010). Erlinghagen (2008) proposed a fourfold typology of policy sets, typified by four welfare regimes (Aspalter 2006; Esping-Andersen 1999), based on a combination of labor market and social protection policies. I thus explore this specific dimension of the social environment, *social welfare*, as a proxy of the availability of macro-level resources.

10.3.2 *The Four Social Welfare Systems*

Esping-Andersen (1999) and Aspalter (2006) proposed a fourfold scheme of welfare systems including social democratic, liberal welfare, conservative corporatist, and East Asian welfare. The tenet of the theory is to classify social welfare systems along four focal dimensions: decommmodification, social stratification, marketization, and welfare serving economic development. Specifically, *decommmodification* is the strength of social entitlements and citizens' degree of immunization from market dependency. Deccommmodification is the process of viewing utilities as an entitlement, rather than as a commodity that must be paid or traded for. *Social stratification* is the categorization of people into rankings of socioeconomic tiers based on factors like wealth, income, social status, occupation, and power. Stratification is the relative social position of persons in a given social group, category, geographic region, or other social unit. *Marketization* is a restructuring process that enables state agencies to operate as market-oriented enterprises by changing the legal environment in which they operate. In the social welfare context, marketization refers to the creation of a functioning market system for the provision of various welfare services. Finally, *welfare serving economic development* refers to the purposive intention of the government in pushing forward economic progress through the

provision of welfare services. A brief comparison of the four welfare systems can be found in Table 10.1 along these four dimensions, and a more detailed explanation follows.

In *social democratic welfare* states, such as the Nordic countries, governments encourage people to work. For instance, governments implement policies and supply resources to care for young children and senior citizens, charge high taxes, and enhance job retention and reemployment opportunities to maximize manpower. Every citizen has an equal right to apply for welfare payment if he/she becomes unemployed or disabled. *Liberal welfare* states such as the United States and Australia, as opposed to social democratic welfare states, regard work as a civil obligation and set liberal markets with minor governmental intervention. Welfare payment applies only to minority groups who have passed strict reviews by the government agencies. In *conservative corporatist* states such as Spain, France, and Germany, men are still the main providers of the family, and women often choose peripheral jobs or stay at home (Ginn and Fast 2006). Since women are the major support providers to families, state welfare provision is typically limited and mainly available to men excluding unemployed women. Similar to conservative corporatist welfare states, East Asian countries such as Taiwan and South Korea emphasize the value of family, and support is provided mainly by family members. Furthermore, contrary to Western concepts of social welfare, *East Asian welfare* is construed as a tool for developing a nation's economy, rather than protecting its citizens. It needs to be noted that while the first three types of welfare systems are well documented and researched, the last (East Asian welfare) is less clearly defined and more elusive. However, its evolving nature makes it more interesting to chart and compare against the others. Furthermore, as it evolves, it has the potential to serve as an exemplar for other developing countries in different geographic regions other than East Asia.

Table 10.1 A brief comparison of the four welfare systems

Welfare systems	Key dimensions				Representative countries
	De-commodification	Social stratification	Marketization	Welfare serving economic development	
Social democratic	High	Low	Low	Low	Nordic countries
Liberal	Low	Medium	High	High	United States, Australia
Conservative corporatist	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Spain, France, Germany
East Asian	Low	High	Medium	High	Taiwan, South Korea

Adopted from Lee and Ku (2003)

10.3.3 The Present Study: Social Democratic Welfare Is the Best?

Based on the above description of the four welfare types, I believe that the social democratic welfare system provides the safest and most hopeful social environment for employees, reducing anxiety in the search for jobs and reemployment. Research has indeed shown that in social democratic welfare states, employees can afford to allocate more time to spend with families and friends compared to those in conservative corporatist and liberal welfare states (Ginn and Fast 2006). A study by Anderson and Pontusson (2007) also confirmed the benefits of social security in reducing negative reactions to job threats. However, no study has yet included East Asian welfare countries in comparison alongside the three Western social welfare regimes. I thus hypothesized that

Hypothesis 2: The effects of fit of desired and actual working hours (P-E Fit) on work attitudes (work satisfaction and organizational commitment) vary across different welfare regimes, such that the positive effect in a social democratic welfare regime is stronger than those of the other three welfare systems.

10.3.4 Financial Needs: To Earn More but Work Longer?

In addition, I explored the effect of personal financial needs on the state of fit between desired and actual working hours, over and beyond that of the macro-level social security provision. Many employees work longer hours in the current competitive business world because of increased workloads, job insecurity, performance pressure, and the rising cost of living (i.e., pressure to earn more). Lu (2010, 2011) showed that the state of personal/family finance played an important role in employees' preferences regarding working hours. Driven by the needs of merchandise consumption and maintaining living standards in the global economic recession, people worked harder than ever before. Recent studies found that the increase in nonstandard or contingent employment contracts, the decline of unions, and the widespread use of subcontracting all fueled financial strains and hardship (Green et al. 2000; Worrall and Cooper 2013). Furthermore, employees push themselves to report to work even when they are sick, in fear of financial (wage) loss, tarnished image which may lead to job loss, and other social repercussions (Lu et al. 2013). This is the rising phenomenon of "sickness presenteeism" in the modern working world (Johns 2012). The financial need to earn more or lack of it will be a proximal predictor of one's decision on working hours. I thus hypothesized that

Hypothesis 3: People who want to earn more or earn less will result in a state of misfit of desired and actual working hours, after controlling for the effects of social welfare regimes.

10.4 Method

10.4.1 *Selection of Countries and Participants for Cross-Cultural Comparisons*

I conducted a secondary analysis using data collected in the International Social Survey Program (ISSP) with a theme on *work orientation*. The ISSP, which involves 40 countries worldwide, is an annual survey that uses a uniform questionnaire with a stratified random sample from each country, addressing a different theme each year. Thus in theory, every country sample is a representative sample of the nation's general population. In the context of this study, it is worth noting that respondents were citizens of a particular country, not "guest workers" in that country. For example, if a person is from Denmark but is working in the United States, he would be classified in the *social democratic* welfare cluster (as for Denmark, see below). Constrained by the nature of the ISSP (surveying citizens), I could only focus on where the person is from, not where the person is working.

Also, in my exercise I included in analysis only respondents claiming that they held full-time or part-time jobs, identified by a particular question in the survey. Because of varying work demands and labor regulations in different countries, identical indices of working hours for full-time jobs were unavailable. To further complicate matters, in some Asian countries (e.g., Taiwan), the self-reported average working hours in credible anonymous research surveys exceed the government regulatory cap on working time, attributable to the covert practice of the "invisible working time" (i.e., employees working unrecorded unpaid overtime out of social pressure) (cf. Lu 2011). However, within the ISSP framework, full-time employment is defined as a workweek of minimum 30 h, and part-time employment is defined as a 10–29-h workweek (Ginn and Fast 2006). Using this type of grouping eliminates unwanted variations in working hours and thus avoids discrepancies between self-declared employment statuses and the actual time expenditure in paid positions. Consequently, the current representative national sample comprised of 8,525 respondents from 9 countries. Based on the fourfold scheme of welfare systems, I classified these countries into four clusters: *the social democratic* welfare cluster ($n=2,339$) including Denmark, Sweden, and Norway; *the liberal* welfare cluster ($n=2,121$) consisting of the United States and Australia; *the conservative corporatist* welfare cluster ($n=1,875$) including France and Germany; and *the East Asian* welfare cluster ($n=2,190$) consisting of Taiwan and South Korea.

10.4.2 *Measures Used for the Study Variables*

As an established ISSP practice, questionnaires were administered in face-to-face home interviews by trained interviewers (cf. Ginn and Fast 2006; Lu 2010, 2011). The data analyzed in this study were derived mainly from the following parts of the survey.

10.4.2.1 Actual Working Hours and Personal Preference

Two aspects of time expenditure were assessed: (a) *actual working hours* pertaining to the kind of job the participant held in the present (full-time vs. part-time) and (b) *desired working hours* expressed by the personal preference to choose either a full-time or a part-time job, without considering financial returns. Specifically, for the question “*If you could choose your working hours, and if you had only one choice, which of the following would you choose?*” participants were instructed to select one of the following options: (a) full time (work more than 30 h) or (b) part time (work 10–29 h). Note that both desired and actual working hours were assessed using the same discrete response options as above, rather than measured in the number of hours. To reiterate, this study is really about the fit (preferred vs. actual) between full-time or part-time work mode (because that is the data available) and not about the number of working hours (because the data are neither available nor compatible across countries). However, I keep the term “working hours” because it is not only the wording used in the original survey (see above) but also the terminology used in the relevant literature. The *fit* index in the present study was thus the congruence between the “current employment status” and the “desired option” of employment choice. Consequently, the following groups were identified:

Group A—fit: correspondence between desired and actual working hours, e.g., holding a full-time job and wanting a full-time job

Group B—misfit—wanting more: preferring more working hours than he/she actually does, e.g., holding a part-time job but wanting a full-time job

Group C—misfit—wanting less: preferring less working hours than he/she actually does, e.g., holding a full-time job but wanting a part-time job

10.4.2.2 Work Attitudes

In the survey, participants were asked to rate their (a) *job satisfaction* with the question “How satisfied are you with your job?” (1 = *completely dissatisfied* to 7 = *completely satisfied*) and (b) *organizational commitment* with three items tapping the affective, normative, and continuance aspects of commitment (Meyer and Allen 2001). Five-point rating scales were used, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), with high scores representing high levels of organizational commitment. The internal consistency of this three-item scale was 0.78 in the current sample, which is quite acceptable considering the limited number of items used.

10.4.2.3 Personal Financial Needs

Personal financial needs were measured with the item “If you had only one of these three choices, which of the following would you prefer?” (1 = *work longer hours and earn more money*, 2 = *work the same number of hours and earn the same amount of money*, or 3 = *work fewer hours and earn less money*).

10.4.2.4 Control Variables

Information on gender (0=*male*, 1=*female*), age, seniority (tenure on the job), marital status (0=*married*, 1=*not married*), rank (0=*manager*, 1=*nonmanager*), as well as the gross domestic product (GDP), unemployment rate, social security rate, and the legal working hours of these states was also collected. These variables are often included in sociological studies of work and employment (e.g., Ginn and Fast 2006).

10.5 Results

10.5.1 *The Beneficial Effects of “Fit” on Work Attitudes Across Countries*

To explore the relationship between P-E Fit and work attitudes and the variation of this relationship across different welfare systems, a series of ANOVAs was conducted, with the fit between desired and actual working hours as the independent variable and job satisfaction and organizational commitment as the dependent variables (see Table 10.2 for results). As can be seen in the first row of results in Table 10.2, for the entire sample, the main effects of the “fit” between desired and actual working hours were significant on both job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Post hoc comparisons further revealed that employees with a fit between desired and actual working hours (Group A) had the *highest* job satisfaction and organizational commitment, followed by those who wanted to work more hours (Group B) and those who wanted to work fewer hours (Group C). Consistent with my *Hypothesis 1*, the fit group (Group A) generally fared better than the two misfit groups (Groups B and C).

10.5.2 *The Finer-Tuned Effects of “Fit” on Work Attitudes in Different Countries*

However, when I decomposed the results within each of the four social welfare systems, the pattern was somewhat different in each sector (see results in Rows 2–5 of Table 10.2). Rearranging the three groups according to their level of work attitudes, shown in the last column of Table 10.2, it is noted that for employees in the *social democratic* and *liberal* welfare countries, Groups A and C reported the highest job satisfaction. For employees working in the *conservative corporatist* and *East Asian* welfare systems, Groups A and B had the highest job satisfaction. Mirroring the results on job satisfaction, in a *social democratic* welfare system, Groups A and C had the highest organizational commitment. In the *conservative corporatist*

Table 10.2 ANOVA: Effects of fit between desired and actual working hours on work outcomes

	1. fit (<i>n</i> = 5,463)		2. misfit-wanting more (<i>n</i> = 2,068)		3. misfit-wanting less (<i>n</i> = 994)		<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	Post hoc Scheffe test
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD			
All	4.27	1.05	4.08	1.08	4.08	1.13	29.60 ***	8,359	1 > 2 = 3
	10.10	2.44	9.79	2.43	9.27	2.70	47.03 ***	7,775	1 > 2 > 3
Social democratic	4.36	0.99	4.11	1.03	4.52	1.05	19.73 ***	2,306	1 = 3 > 2
	9.80	2.36	9.10	2.33	9.85	2.41	20.47 ***	2,073	1 = 3 > 2
Liberal	4.43	1.07	4.16	1.23	4.30	1.16	9.35 ***	2,078	1 = 3 > 2
	10.57	2.42	10.30	2.47	10.33	2.50	2.44	2,041	
Conservative corporatist	4.30	1.04	4.14	1.20	4.04	1.10	9.94 ***	1,815	1 = 2 > 3
	9.55	2.57	9.05	2.71	8.18	2.58	41.88 ***	1,649	1 = 2 > 3
East Asian	3.93	1.04	3.99	1.00	3.73	1.07	5.25 ***	2,157	1 = 2 > 3
	10.42	2.27	10.30	2.25	10.19	2.42	1.07	2,009	

Notes: (1) *** *p* < .001

(2) *JS* job satisfaction, *OC* organizational commitment

welfare system, employees in Groups A and B had the highest organizational commitment. However, employees in the *social democratic* welfare system did not show higher organizational commitment than the others. Therefore, *Hypothesis 2* was only partially supported.

10.5.3 The Interrelations Among all Study Variables: Individual-Level and Societal-Level

As a supplementary analysis, I computed the correlation matrix including all the research variables for the entire sample. Results are presented in Table 10.3. In this analysis, East Asian welfare regime was set as the comparison target for each of the other three systems. As can be seen in the table, compared against the East Asian welfare regime, the *social democratic* system and the *liberal* system correlated positively with employees' job satisfaction. Again, compared against the East Asian welfare regime, the *liberal* system correlated positively, while the *social democratic* system and the *conservative corporatist* system correlated negatively with employees' organizational commitment. These results corroborated the findings from the ANOVAs (cf. Table 10.2), showing that employees' work attitudes might vary in different social welfare regimes.

10.5.4 The Predictors of "Fit" of Work Hours: Individual-Level and Societal-Level Variables

To test *Hypothesis 3*, I used logistic regression, which allowed the criterion to be a categorical variable (fit or misfit). I used three steps to predict the fit status (0 = fit, 1 = misfit). First, I entered the country-level control variables for national differences (i.e., GDP, legal working hours, the unemployment rates, social security rates, and the type of social welfare regimes). Second, I entered individual-level demographics as control variables (i.e., gender, age, number of dependent children, and marital status). Third, I entered personal financial needs as predictors. The results showed that employees wanting to earn less money had a higher tendency to experience a misfit between desired and actual working hours (see Model 3 in Table 10.4). Furthermore, when all the individual-level and societal-level variables were taken into account in the same model (Model 3), employees in countries of lower unemployment rates, higher social security rates, longer legal work hours, social democratic welfare, liberal welfare, conservative welfare and employees who were female and nonmanagers also had a higher tendency to experience a misfit between desired and actual working hours.

Table 10.3 Correlation among all variables

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Unemployment rates	11.67	12.79	1												
2. GDP	32635.18	11049.46	-.12 ***	1											
3. Social security rates	19.38	7.46	.67 ***	.36 ***	1										
4. Legal work hours	41.71	3.52	.94 ***	-.28 ***	.47 ***	1									
5. Social democratic v.s. East Asian	.27	.45	-.28 ***	.49 ***	.44 ***	-.36 ***	1								
6. Liberal v.s. East Asian	.25	.43	-.31 ***	.41 ***	-.26 ***	-.45 ***	-.35 ***	1							
7. Conservative v.s. East Asian	.22	.41	.99 ***	-.12 ***	.61 ***	.95 ***	-.33 ***	-.31 ***	1						
8. Gender	.52	.50	-.03 **	-.04 ***	-.07 ***	-.02 *	-.03 *	-.01	-.04 **	1					
9. Age	42.01	11.84	-.04 ***	.10 ***	.03 **	-.07 ***	.08 ***	.04 ***	-.04 ***	.05 ***	1				
10. Marital status	.76	.43	-.05 ***	.04 ***	.03 *	-.07 ***	.07 ***	.02 *	-.05 ***	.01	.41 ***	1			
11. Job position satisfaction	.35	.48	.07 ***	.05 ***	.04 **	.04 **	-.06 ***	.07 ***	.07 ***	.17 ***	.06 ***	.08 ***	1		
12. Job satisfaction	4.20	1.07	.02 *	.15 ***	.09 ***	-.00	.05 ***	.09 ***	.01	.00	.07 ***	.06 ***	.11 ***	1	
13. Organizational commitment	9.94	2.49	-.16 ***	.03 *	-.22 ***	-.13 ***	-.09 ***	.14 ***	-.16 ***	.08 ***	.10 ***	.09 ***	.18 ***	.51 ***	1

Notes: (1). * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

(2). Social democratic vs. East Asian: Social democratic = 1, else = 0; Liberal vs. East Asian: Liberal = 1, else = 0; Conservative vs. East Asian: Conservative = 1, else = 0; Gender: female = 0, male = 1; Marital status: single = 0, married = 1; Job position: employee = 0, supervisor = 1

Table 10.4 Predicting the state of P-E Fit: Logistic regression results

	Misfit vs. Fit		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	Beta	Beta	Beta
Constant	-1.60	-.40	-.60
Unemployment rates	-.90 ***	-.85 ***	-.86 ***
GDP	.00	.00	.00
Social security rates	.10 ***	.11 ***	.11 ***
Legal work hours	.17 ***	.14 **	.14 *
Social democratic vs. East Asian	4.20 ***	3.71 ***	3.55 ***
Liberal vs. East Asian	3.59 ***	3.17 ***	3.11 ***
Conservative vs. East Asian	26.21 ***	24.82 ***	24.78 ***
Gender		-.72 ***	-.72 ***
Age		.00	.00
Marital status		.08	.06
Job position		-.14 **	-.17 **
Wanting to earn more			-.04
Wanting to earn less			1.02 ***

Notes: (1) * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

(2) Misfit vs. Fit: Misfit=1, Fit=0; Social democratic vs. East Asia: Social democratic=1, else=0; Liberal vs. East Asian: Liberal=1, else=0; Conservative vs. East Asian: Conservative=1, else=0; Gender: female=0, male=1; Marital status: single=0, married=1; Job position: employee=0, supervisor=1

10.5.5 *The Predictors of “Misfit” of Work Hours: The Finer-Tuned Analysis Contrasting the Two Different States of Misfit*

Repeating the above procedures, I conducted an additional analysis to predict personal misfit status of “misfit—wanting more” (1 = wanting more, 0 = else) and “misfit—wanting less” (1 = wanting less, 0 = else) respectively. As displayed in Table 10.5 (Model 6), people who wanted to earn more were more likely to experience the misfit state of working fewer hours than preferred, namely, wanting to work more hours. In contrast, as shown by Model 3 in Table 10.5, people who wanted to earn less were more likely to experience the misfit state of working more hours than preferred, namely, wanting to work fewer hours. Therefore, *Hypothesis 3* was supported, that is, personal financial needs contributed to a misfit between desired and actual working hours, after controlling for macro-level factors and individual-level demographics.

Table 10.5 Predicting the type of P-E misfit: Logistic regression results

	Misfit-wanting less			Misfit-wanting more		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta
Constant	.90	1.40	1.96	-7.59 *	-5.88	-6.88
Unemployment rates	-.44 ***	-.39 ***	-.36 ***	-1.25 ***	-1.22 ***	-1.26 ***
GDP	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Social security rates	.06 *	.06 **	.07 **	.12 *	.12 *	.12 *
Legal work hours	.03	.02	.00	.32 **	.28 **	.30 **
Social democratic vs. East Asian	2.27 **	1.87 *	1.38	4.85 **	4.43 *	4.91 **
Liberal vs. East Asian	1.49 *	1.13	.80	5.18 ***	4.87 ***	5.23 ***
Conservative vs. East Asian	11.40 ***	9.80 ***	8.79 **	37.56 ***	36.88 ***	38.00 ***
Gender		-.65 ***	-.64 ***		-.51 ***	-.55 ***
Age		.00	.00		.00	.01
Marital status		.21 **	.18 *		-.16	-.16
Position		.05	.00		-.42 *	-.41 ***
Wanting to earn more			.06			.54 ***
Wanting to earn less			.09 ***			-.02

Notes: (1) * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

(2) Misfit-wanting less: wanting less = 1, else = 0; Misfit-wanting more: wanting more = 1, else = 0; Social democratic vs. East Asian: Social democratic = 1, else = 0; Liberal vs. East Asian: Liberal = 1, else = 0; Conservative vs. East Asian: Conservative = 1, else = 0; Gender: female = 0, male = 1; Marital status: single = 0, married = 1; Job position: employee = 0, supervisor = 1

10.6 Discussion

10.6.1 A Summary of Main Research Findings

In this study, I examined the fit between desired and actual working hours and its association with employees’ job satisfaction and organizational commitment in a world undergoing rapid social and economic changes, focusing on the comparison of various welfare regimes. I also explored the relationship between personal financial needs and the state of fit/misfit between personal preferences and actual working hours. A brief summary of the tested hypotheses and results can be found in Table 10.6. Specifically, it is found that (1) for the entire sample, the main effects of the “fit” between desired and actual working hours were significant on both job satisfaction and organizational commitment, thus *Hypothesis 1* was fully supported;

Table 10.6 A summary of hypotheses and their test results

Hypotheses	Test results	Description of the findings	Results presented
1. People who have a fit between desired and actual working hours experience higher job satisfaction and organizational commitment compared to those who experience a misfit in working hours, regardless of the countries they reside.	Supported	For the entire sample, the main effects of the “fit” between desired and actual working hours were significant on both job satisfaction and organizational commitment.	Table 10.2
2. The effects of fit of desired and actual working hours (P-E Fit) on work attitudes (work satisfaction and organizational commitment) vary across different welfare regimes, such that the positive effect in a social democratic welfare regime is stronger than those of the other three welfare systems.	Partially supported	The effects of fit did vary across different welfare regimes, but the beneficial effect of fit in a social democratic welfare regime is not uniformly stronger than those of the other three welfare systems.	Table 10.2
3. People who want to earn more or earn less will result in a state of misfit of desired and actual working hours, after controlling for the effects of social welfare regimes.	Partially supported	People who want to earn less money had a higher tendency to experience a misfit between desired and actual working hours.	Table 10.4

(2) the effects of fit did vary across different welfare regimes, but the beneficial effect of fit in a social democratic welfare regime is not uniformly stronger than those of the other three welfare systems, thus *Hypothesis 2* was only partially supported; and finally (3) people who want to earn less money had a higher tendency to experience a misfit between desired and actual working hours, thus *Hypothesis 3* was again partially supported. Below is the more detailed description and explanation of these main findings embedded in the contemporary literature.

10.6.2 *The Confirmed Benefit of Choice and “Fit” on Workers’ Well-Being Across Countries*

Using the multinational samples in this study, I found that employees’ work attitudes varied depending on the state of fit between desired and actual working hours. This finding resonated with the positive relationship between P-J Fit (person–job fit) and work attitudes found in a meta-analysis (Kristof-Brown et al. 2005). The thrust of the present research is to underline the fit of *working hours* as an important aspect of the generic concept of P-E Fit, in addition to ability and needs. Furthermore, I extended the existing research to demonstrate that the importance of this particular aspect of P-E Fit is universal, regardless of culture and social infrastructures. Although researchers have identified fit as a mediator between working hours and

burnout in Western countries (Barnett et al. 1999), the potential beneficial effects of personal choice and the resultant state of fit pertaining to working hours have rarely been empirically tested for non-Western countries. To remedy this shortcoming, I included two economically viable East Asian societies, South Korea and Taiwan, in the present study. What I found involving a cross-nation sample of nine diverse countries are similar to those obtained by Lu (2011) among Taiwanese workers, showing that those who enjoyed a state of fit between desired and actual working hours generally had a better attitude toward work and lower strains, compared to those who were in a state of misfit, regardless of whether they wanted to work more or fewer hours. Together, these findings support the ubiquity of the favorable effects of achieving the psychological state of fit in one's choice of working hours.

10.6.3 Does Social Welfare Really Help? The Role of Family and the Responsibility of the State

In the present study, I found that the relationship between desired/actual working hours and work attitudes did vary across different social welfare types. Contrary to my expectations, employees who experienced congruence between personal preference and actual supply did not report the most positive attitudes toward work under the social democratic welfare system. It may be noted that the welfare regimes fell into two clusters, in terms of their influence on the association between the fit of working hours and work outcomes: social democratic and liberal welfare combined as one cluster and the other cluster consisting of conservative corporatist and East Asian welfare. Esping-Andersen (1999) and Lee and Ku (2003) did point out that the conservative corporatist and East Asian systems shared some common characteristics, wherein men were the main providers of the family and women provided the majority of caretaking and home maintenance. More importantly, societies adopting both the conservative corporatist and East Asian welfare systems greatly emphasize the value of the family as a "social safety net" and discourage their citizens to rely on state welfare/security. Under the threat of economic recession and organizational restructuring, people feel the even greater need to be employed and work more hours, thus earning more money to support the family. Hardworking and monetary successes are traditionally regarded as top priorities in the East Asian life. In accordance with the Confucian cultural heritage, workers in Taiwan and South Korea work harder and longer to provide their families a respectable living standard and to glorify their family names with career successes (Lu et al. 2011). It is conceivable that employees in East Asian and conservative corporatist systems may avow higher levels of positive work attitudes to increase their job opportunities.

Our findings corroborate the link between working hours and health consequences established for Western (Sparks et al. 1997) and Chinese (Lu 2011; Spector et al. 2004) workers, thus the impact of long working hours on both the employee and his/her family deserves more research attention and managerial interventions. Considering the early warning by Dankert et al. (1965), that working hours affect

not only the individual but also the family, any arrangements in working time should include both support for employees who are coping as well as the needs and responsibilities of their family life. Despite the existence of daycare and nursing homes, as well as assistance and training for reemployment supplied by Nordic countries to assist workers, employees were still struggling to maintain a full-time job and at the same time trying to spend more time to be with family and friends (Ginn and Fast 2006).

10.6.4 Important Determinants of Choice of Working Hours: Monetary Drive or Other Personal Needs?

In the present study, logistic regression was conducted to examine the association between personal financial needs and the state of fit between desired and actual working hours. As expected, I found that those with lower economic needs (i.e., wanting to earn less) had more chance of slipping into misfit of the desired and actual working hours. Supplementary analysis did confirm that some people wanted to earn more but had options to work less time than they desired. However, there may be critical factors other than financial needs contributing to the state of fit pertaining to work hours. Caplan (1987) proposed that an individual's ability and aspiration could be the most important factor influencing the fit between a person and the environment. Costa et al. (2006) also found that European workers considered individual autonomy in deciding working hours the most important factor affecting job satisfaction. These diverse human needs other than earning more money deserve more systematic examination in relation to working hours and well-being in future studies.

10.6.5 Limitations of the Present Study

Before drawing conclusions, certain methodological limitations should be noted. First, the present study was essentially an exercise in secondary data analysis, which has inherent limitations. For example, established theory-based multi-item measures of job satisfaction and organizational commitment should have been adopted. Multi-item scales for these variables were not used because of space constraints for a large-scale social survey with an embedded international core module. The true extent of the relationship between desired and actual working hours and work attitudes may thus be obscured by the use of single-item or lean-item measures; therefore, due caution should be exercised in interpreting the results.

Second, the missing variable bias may pose a threat to the generalizability of the findings. As mentioned above, certain factors other than financial needs should have been taken into account but unfortunately were not included in the original design of the ISSP survey to enable a cross-cultural comparison.

Finally, personal financial needs in this study were measured with the item “If you had only one of these three choices, which of the following would you prefer?” (*1=work longer hours and earn more money, 2=work the same number of hours and earn the same amount of money, or 3=work fewer hours and earn less money*). One may argue that “*work the same number of hours and earn more money*” is another realistic scenario, which is not captured. This is because the researchers who designed the original survey seemed to assume that it is human nature to maximize gains while minimizing costs, thus including the abovementioned option would create unwanted confound in the study.

However, considering the scarcity of cross-national probability samples and high-quality data collection in the field, the present study makes a contribution by bridging certain knowledge gaps regarding the issue of working hours and work attitudes from a cross-national comparative perspective.

10.6.6 Practical Implications of the Findings

Findings of this study offer useful insights to inform management practices. I found that the fit between desired and actual working hours was associated with higher job satisfaction and organizational commitment. However, misfit exists and may hinder work attitudes. In fact, a substantial proportion of the sample (43.32 %) wanted to work either more (29.32 %) or fewer hours (14 %). To respond to those who want to increase their monetary returns via working more hours, companies should review their compensation schemes to raise employees’ tolerance to extended working hours. In addition, providing employees with a say in deciding their working hours can foster perceived organizational support and individual control at work, which can consequently promote job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and work–family integration (Lu et al. 2008).

Indeed, situating the present study in the wider context of work–family integration, further suggestions and enlightenment may be drawn from the findings. The ultimate value of scientific research is to better human life. For some time now, researchers in the developed West (e.g., Scandinavian countries) have lobbied and successfully promoted family-friendly organizations (Dikkers et al. 2005). Incidentally, these are countries with social democratic welfare systems as identified in the present study. However, work–nonwork arrangements are an alien concept in most East Asian organizations (Chang et al. 2012), where working “extra-hour” is the social norm, such as in Taiwanese (Lu 2011) or Japanese (Kanai 2009) work settings. It is thus imperative to raise awareness of work–family integration basing on rigorous empirical research on work–family interference (WFI), and to further promote effective coping with WFI in traditionally hardworking East Asian societies.

To reiterate, although the Confucian cultural values promote diligence at work, the extraordinarily long working hours have been linked to heightened stress and WFI for the Taiwanese workers (Lu 2011; Lu et al. 2008), and even premature death

in Japan (Kanai 2009). Thus, organizations need to redesign the working hour arrangements to bring in more flexibility and personal control over the work schedule. Discretion pertaining to working hour arrangements has been proved to ameliorate the negative impact of WFI for Taiwanese workers (Chang et al. 2012). Autonomy in deciding working hours was found to be the most important factor affecting job satisfaction for European workers (Costa et al. 2006). Alternatively, organizations need to provide fairer compensations for those working long hours through personal choice, either out of financial necessity or social sanction. In East Asian countries, people may not yet have the luxury of working fewer hours than they do, or fear for tarnished image if they fail to conform to the hardworking norm. Then, better compensation for working extra-hour is at least some consolation and a “goodwill” gesture from the employer. Getting fair pay for working extra-hour is also conducive to “providing for the family through hardworking” mentality rooted in the traditional Confucian value system, which could offset detrimental effects of long working hours on well-being (Lu et al. 2012; Yang et al. 2000).

10.7 Conclusions

To conclude, both working hours and personal choices should be considered when devising suitable working time schedules to maximize employees’ well-being, organizational commitment, and societal integration. At the same time, societal macro-level provisions of support (e.g., social welfare system) need to be carefully designed and implemented to facilitate both economic growth and individual need fulfillment. The challenge in the contemporary world for organizations and individuals is to blend work and family needs and demands, to create a constructive circle of harmony and enrichment for every working individual, every operating organization, in every thriving human society. Taking into account the various needs of individuals and organizations, and the responsibilities of the state, using the social welfare system as a societal infrastructure should enable us to find a personal balance point in work and family, and help organizations survive and strive in the current global economic competition.

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