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Forty Hours Doesn't Work for Everyone: Examining Employee Preferences for Work Hours

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Abstract

Current economic conditions have caused many employers to reduce employees' work hours—a trend that will likely continue if the economy worsens. Yet research on work hours is limited, as most studies in this area have focused on the effects of employees' working in excess of a 40-hour work week. This report seeks to specifically examine the effect of "hours mismatch," which is defined as the mismatch between the number of hours the employee desires to work and the actual number of hours worked. Based on a study of 1,032 individuals, the results show that hours mismatch is an important predictor of attitudinal outcomes, including life satisfaction, work-family conflict, job stress, and intent to turn over. Moreover, the measurement of difference is generally more predictive than simply measuring hours worked. The results show that working either more than the desired hours or less than desired hours has effects on attitudes like job stress, intent to turn over, and life satisfaction. Although employees disliked working "over hours," a substantial shortage of work hours was far worse. Although employers may face the need to reduce workers' hours, this study suggests the importance of taking into account workers' preferences when determining work schedules, or at least understanding the kind of psychological impact that reduced hours will have on their workforce.

Keywords

work hours, employee schedules, job performance, job stress

Disciplines

Business | Hospitality Administration and Management

Comments

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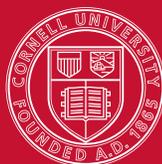


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by Lindsey A. Zahn and Michael C. Sturman, Ph.D.,



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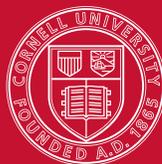
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Current economic conditions have caused many employers to reduce employees' work hours—a trend that will likely continue if the economy worsens. Yet research on work hours is limited, as most studies in this area have focused on the effects of employees' working in excess of a 40-hour work week. This report seeks to specifically examine the effect of "hours misfit," which is defined as the mismatch between the number of hours the employee desires to work and the actual number of hours worked. Based on a study of 1,032 individuals, the results show that hours misfit is an important predictor of attitudinal outcomes, including life satisfaction, work-family conflict, job stress, and intent to turn over. Moreover, the measurement of difference is generally more predictive than simply measuring hours worked. The results show that working either more than the desired hours or less than desired hours has effects on attitudes like job stress, intent to turn over, and life satisfaction. Although employees disliked working "over hours," a substantial shortage of work hours was far worse. Although employers may face the need to reduce workers' hours, this study suggests the importance of taking into account workers' preferences when determining work schedules, or at least understanding the kind of psychological impact that reduced hours will have on their workforce.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Lindsey A. Zahn is a senior at the Cornell University School of Hotel Administration pursuing a law concentration. She has researched since high school and has been recognized as a Cornell Presidential Research Scholar and Intel Talent Search Semi-Finalist. Lindsey's studies focus on work hours in relation to employee attitudes and have just recently concentrated on the idea of work hours misfit. She has a particular interest in labor and employment law and is thus presently studying discrimination lawsuits and how firms respond to such lawsuits. After graduating from Cornell, Lindsey plans to attend a law school and pursue her passion for hospitality law.

Michael C. Sturman, Ph.D., is an associate professor and The Kenneth and Marjorie Blanchard Professor of Human Resources at the Cornell University School of Hotel Administration (michael.sturman@cornell.edu). His research focuses on the prediction of individual job performance over time, the influence of compensation systems, and the impact of human resource management on organizational performance. He has published research articles in such journals as the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Academy of Management Journal*, *Personnel Psychology*, and *Journal of Management*. He has also published practitioner papers in the *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *Lodging Magazine*, *Lodging HR*, *A.A.H.O.A. Hospitality*, *HR.com*, and *The American Compensation Association Journal*.



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**"Workers Get Fewer Hours, Deepening the Downturn"¹;
"Under-employed Workers"²;
"Deepening Cycle of Job Loss Seen Lasting into '09."³**

Recent news headlines make clear that workers are losing scheduled hours, if not losing their jobs entirely. Similarly, the expectations are that employees will continue to face downsizing, layoffs, and reduced work hours and paychecks for the foreseeable future. As related by the above headlines many companies have already reduced their workforce through layoffs, cutting the amount of working hours, and assigning employees to part-time posts.⁴ With a minimal rise in the average weekly pay for workers, individuals have to face inflation issues including the rising cost of living, strongly driven by the costs of food and energy.

¹ Peter S. Goodman, www.nytimes.com/2008/04/18/business/18hours.html?scp=1&sq=workers+getting+fewer+hours&st=nyt, April 2008.

² "In the face of a slumping economy, many unemployed Americans or those who work only part-time are struggling to find full-time employment" Kelly Cobiella, www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=4316330, August 2, 2008.

³ Peter S. Goodman, www.nytimes.com/2008/07/02/business/02jobs.html?_r=1&fta=y&oref=slogin, July 2, 2008.

⁴ *Ibid.*

Since the hospitality industry is in no way immune to the impact of an economic downturn, we anticipate several waves of changes to employees' labor hours, whether that means reduced hours or outright layoffs.⁵ While research from the Center for Hospitality Research has argued that accommodating workers' preferences is expected to lead to better on-the-job performance and better customer service,⁶ research has yet to establish the extent to which matching workers' schedule preferences translates into workers' attitudes. In light of current economic conditions and workforce trends, this issue deserves focused research attention. Since companies may not be able to always accommodate workers' preferences, a better knowledge of the effects of failing to meet those preferences will (1) highlight the importance of considering employees' preferences when determining work-

⁵ D.S. Sherwyn and M.C. Sturman, "Job-sharing in the Hotel Industry: A Potential New Human Resource Tool Resulting from the Events of September 11th," *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 43, No. 5 (October 2002), pp. 84-91.

⁶ G.M. Thompson, "Workforce Scheduling: A Guide for the Hospitality Industry," *Cornell Hospitality Report*, Vol. 4, No. 6 (2004); and *Ibid.*

force schedules, and (2) better prepare organizations for the consequences of failing to meet these preferences.

In this study, we focus on the issue of how matching the number of scheduled work hours with employees' preferences influences their attitudes. While there has been a substantial amount of research that examines the effects of number of hours worked by employees, those studies have not taken into account employees' preferences regarding hours worked. Moreover, this research has focused on the effects associated with exceeding the traditional 40-hour workweek.⁷ With those issues in mind, this report offers a

⁷ See: C.C. Caruso, E.M. Hitchcock, R.B. Dick, J.M. Russo, and J.M. Schmidt, "Overtime and Extended Work Shifts: Recent Findings on Illnesses, Injuries, and Health Behaviors," U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, 2004; L. Golden and B. Wiens-Tuers, "To Your Happiness? Extra Hours of Labor Supply and Worker Well-being," *Journal of Socio-Economics*, Vol. 35 (2006), pp. 382-397; and P.E. Spector, C.L. Cooper, S. Poelamns, T.D. Allen, M. O'Driscoll, J.I. Sanchez, O.L. Siu, P. Dewe, P. Hart, and L. Lu, "A Cross-national Comparative Study of Work-Family Stressors, Working Hours, and Well-being: China and Latin American versus the Anglo World," *Personnel Psychology*, Vol. 57 (2004), pp. 119-142.

measure that expresses employee preferences in relation to working hours—a measure of considerable importance to hospitality businesses.

Work Hours:

Actual Numbers versus Misfit Numbers

Notwithstanding the personal and developmental reasons for working, the primary reason for obtaining employment is to earn money. For workers paid by the hour—a characteristic of most hospitality industry jobs—the number of work hours assigned is a double-edged sword. Regarding the downside of many hours, research has shown that working too many hours is related to a host of negative outcomes, including increased job stress, work stress, fatigue, turnover, mental health consequences (including anxiety and depression), and marital tension,⁸ as well as decreased job satisfaction and life satisfaction.⁹ On the other hand, hourly workers want to earn sufficient compensation by working as many hours as they find appropriate. Failure to obtain desired employment levels can mean inadequate compensation in comparison to what employees seek.¹⁰ Hospitality managers certainly recognize that dynamic when they use schedule assignments as a component of their reward system.¹¹ The

importance of work hours and the effects of scheduling on employee attitudes appears salient, as evidenced by research which shows that workers are dissatisfied when hours are extended¹² and also when they are reduced.¹³ In addition, despite arguments that companies should consider employees' preferences when scheduling work hours,¹⁴ there is substantial evidence that there exists a notable “misfit” between desired hours and actual hours worked.

We use the term “hours misfit” to indicate the mismatch of the number of hours employees desire to work and the actual number of hours assigned. Because of notable differences among individuals regarding preferences for work, it seems misleading to use the long-standing benchmark of forty hours as the chief measure of appropriate work levels.¹⁵ Although using a misfit measure in this way is relatively new, research has indicated that workers often experience a misfit with regard to preferred working hours. For example, a recent study that compared preferred hours and actual work-hour preferences among married couples found that only 41 percent of the wives and 44 percent of the husbands were working a schedule they actually wanted.¹⁶ Another study found that the correlation between ideal work hours and actual work hours was weak (correlated only .11).¹⁷

Hours misfit can occur either when excessive work hours or insufficient work hours are scheduled. Either way, the employee experiences stress. Whereas excessive work

⁸ K. Sparks, C. Cooper, Y. Fried, and A. Shirom, “The Effects of Hours of Work on Health: A Meta-analytic Review,” *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, Vol. 70 (1997), pp. 391-408; D.L. Hughes and E. Galinsky, “Gender, Job and Family Conditions, and Psychological Symptoms,” *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, Vol. 18 (1994), pp. 251-270; and Golden and Wiens-Tuers, *op.cit.*

⁹ H.V. Erkutlu and J. Chafra, “Relationship between Leadership Power Bases and Job Stress of Subordinates: Examples of Boutique Hotels,” *Management Research News*, Vol. 29 (2006), pp. 285-295; and R.C. Barnett, K.C. Gareis, and R.T. Brennan, “Fit as a Mediator of the Relationship between Work Hours and Burnout,” *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, Vol. 4 (1999), pp. 307-317.

¹⁰ J.A. Jacobs and K. Gerson, “Overworked Individuals or Overworked Families? Explaining Trends in Work, Leisure, and Family Time,” *Work and Occupations*, Vol. 28 (2006), pp. 40-63.

¹¹ Jerry Newman, *My Secret Life on the McJob* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2007).

¹² J.A. Jacobs and Gerson, “Who Are the Overworked Americans?,” *Review of Social Economy*, Vol. 56 (1998), pp. 442-459.

¹³ C. Negrey, *Gender, Time and Reduced Work* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993).

¹⁴ Thompson, *op.cit.*

¹⁵ Spector *et al.*, *op.cit.*

¹⁶ M. Clarkberg and P. Moen, “Understanding the Time-Squeeze: Married Couples' Preferred and Actual Work-Hour Strategies,” *American Behavioral Scientist*, Vol. 44 (2001), pp. 1115-1136.

¹⁷ M. Valcour, “Work-based Resources as Moderators of the Relationship between Work Hours and Satisfaction with Work-life Balance,” *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 92 (2007), pp. 1512-1523.

Employees' level of job stress was greatest when the schedule contained substantially fewer hours than desired.

hours can strain an employee's work-life balance, insufficient work hours may present a financial burden. Thus, we expect the variation of slopes expressing the interaction of hours and attitudes to be dependent on the type of hours misfit.

Since we are suggesting that employers should be aware of the consequences of their decisions when forming workplace schedules, we intend to make two contributions to the study of work hours and employee attitudes. First, we will examine the effects of hours misfit as a predictor of work-hour-related outcomes. Second, we will consider the potentially different effects associated with assigning more and fewer hours than desired. We will also examine the implications of this study for helping employers reduce the levels of employee stress caused by implementing reduced working hours. Our idea is that balancing work reduction needs with employee desires will increase work commitment levels.

Working More than Desired Hours

Most researchers have used forty hours as the gauge for excessive weekly work hours. That may, in fact, be the cut point when considering the legal definition of overtime, but to truly understand work hours, it makes more sense to compare the actual hours worked to the individual's preferred number of work hours. Work hour preferences will vary by individual and by job. For example, as Reynolds observes: "Academics and other white-collar employees may be comfortable working more than 50 hours a week, but waitresses and construction workers may find that working 50 hours a week is physically exhausting. The number of hours someone works is not necessarily the best measure of how taxing the work is."¹⁸ Beyond that, the worker's circumstances influence work hour desires, since some people want to earn as much money as possible and others value their personal time, have conflicts (such as with school schedules), have to meet specific child care schedules, or hold other jobs.

¹⁸ J. Reynolds, "You Can't Always Get the Hours You Want: Mismatches between Actual and Preferred Work Hours in the U.S.," *Social Forces*, Vol. 81 (2003), pp. 1171-1199.

The hospitality industry has a variety of jobs, including those that require extensive physical exertion, those jobs with potentially long hours constantly on one's feet, and jobs with "typical" 9:00 to 5:00 working hours during week days. The amount of desired hours for these positions may vary greatly.

Regardless of the standard used for "too much work," research has found that working more than a "typical" work week is a cause of overall decreased life satisfaction and increased stress levels.¹⁹ Furthermore, the problem of greater than desired employment is identified as expanding throughout the American workforce. Research has associated undesired, excessive hours with decreased job satisfaction, increased turnover, and mental health consequences, including anxiety and depression²⁰ and increased marital tension.²¹ In another study, excessive labor hours were connected with increased work stress, fatigue, injury, burnout, work-family conflict, and lower life satisfaction.²² In short, the negative consequences of working too many hours can easily offset any financial benefit.

Since it stands to reason that workers would like to escape the effects of too many hours, we also predict that unwanted work hours are positively related to intent to turn over. But as noted above, an arbitrary work hours measurement is a poor approximation of individual preferences. In other words, when considering work hours, employers should not assume that all employees prefer the same schedule, always want more hours, or even want a supposed "typical" schedule. As noted by Spector, "The fact that number of work hours fails to capture the employee's motivation to

¹⁹ For example, see: Golden and Wiens-Tuers, *op.cit.*; and Spector *et al.*, *op.cit.*

²⁰ Barnett, Gareis, and Brennan, *op.cit.*

²¹ Hughes and Galinsky, *op.cit.*

²² Golden and Wiens-Tuers, *op.cit.*; R.D. Iverson and C. Maguire, "The Relationship Between Job and Life Satisfaction: Evidence from a Remote Mining Community," *Human Relations*, Vol. 53 (2000), pp. 807-840; and J.H. Greenhaus, and N.J. Beutell, "Sources of Conflict between Work and Family Roles," *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 10 (1985), pp. 76-88.

do so may explain the weak correlation with strains.”²³ Thus, while we expect that work hours are associated with the outcomes listed above, we anticipate that hours misfit will be a better predictor of these outcomes. We will thus test whether hours misfit is a better predictor of work-related attitudes and outcomes than any particular number of work hours.

Working Fewer Hours than Desired

Needless to say, hours misfit can also occur if one is scheduled for fewer than the number of hours that one desires, but the consequences of this misfit are different from those of too many hours—starting with less income than desired. Even if the employee experiences reduced work-family conflict due to fewer hours at work, the failure to achieve needed or desired income levels can raise stress, and thus lead to less overall life satisfaction. Additionally, the lack of income will reduce calculative commitment, and may cause the individual to seek other job opportunities to obtain more stable income or at least the desired income.

We therefore expect that hours misfit in either direction will be related to a number of work-related and attitudinal outcomes, including decreased life satisfaction and increased intent to turn over. Again, we anticipate that simply measuring number of hours worked will not capture the full dimension of what hourly workers think of their schedules.

Sampling the Workforce

Data were collected using StudyResponse, which is a service that facilitates online research by emailing research participation requests to adult recipients (www.studyresponse.com). In exchange for respondents’ participation, researchers are asked to provide incentives, such as online gift certificates, and researchers who use the service are charged a licensing fee that is then used to support the website’s administration and operation.

As part of a larger study on worker attitudes over time, we collected two waves of data regarding hours worked and what workers thought about their jobs. While this survey needed respondents who were employed, they did not necessarily have to work in the hospitality industry. Instead, the study included individuals employed in a wide variety of jobs, both with regard to pay and complexity. The initial wave of surveys was sent in January 2007 to 3,286 people, of whom 2,571 completed the survey. Those respondents received one of the second wave of surveys in April 2007, to which 1,665 provided responses. In the end, we received complete data from 1,038 respondents. Seventy percent of those who responded to the survey were men, with an average age of 39 years ($SD = 10.6$). Most were Caucasian (83%), with small percentages identifying themselves as African American, Hispanic, Native American, Asian, or Pacific Islander.

²³ Spector, *et al.*, *op.cit.*

Measures related to hours worked. To begin our analysis of the effects associated with the mismatch of hours worked to hours desired, we asked respondents how many hours they work in a typical week and how many hours they desired to work. From these responses, we calculated hours misfit as the absolute value of the difference between desired hours and actual hours worked, as tallied on the second survey. For our subsequent analysis, we created two dummy variables. The first, called “under hours,” was coded as 1 if the actual hours tally was less than the desired hours and coded as 0 if the actual hours tally was equal to or greater than the desired hours. The other dummy variable, called “received desired hours,” was coded as 1 if the employee worked the same number of hours as he or she desired, and 0 otherwise.

Attitudinal measures. As outcome variables, we collected measures of employee attitudes on four topics. Specifically, we used measures of job stress, turnover intentions, life satisfaction, and work-family conflict, all of which have been used in other research (as explained below).²⁴

²⁴ First, we used a four-item measure on both surveys to capture respondents’ levels of job stress, scoring the items on a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The items were “I experience tension from my job,” “Aspects of my job are a source of frustration to me,” “There is no strain from working in my job” (reverse coded), and “I never feel pressure in my job” (reverse coded). The measure had acceptable reliability. Specifically, at time period 1, the coefficient alpha of the measure was .82; it was .85 at time 2. See: R.T. Keller, “The Role of Performance and Absenteeism in the Prediction of Turnover,” *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 27 (1984), pp. 176-183. Second, we collected information on respondents’ turnover intentions. Intent to turn over was measured with three items (again using five-point scale), which were “I am thinking about leaving my organization,” “I am planning to look for a new job,” and “I don’t plan to be in my organization much longer.” This measure had high reliability, with coefficient alphas for the measure equaling .95 at both time 1 and time 2. See: E.K. Kelloway, B.H. Gottlieb, and L. Barham, “The Source, Nature, and Direction of Work and Family Conflict: A Longitudinal Investigation,” *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, Vol. 4 (1999), pp. 337-346. Third, life satisfaction was measured using five items. Using the same five-point scale, individuals were asked “In most ways, my life is close to my ideal,” “The conditions of my life are excellent,” “I am satisfied with my life,” “So far, I have gotten the important things I want in life,” and “If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.” The coefficient alphas for the measure were .90 at time 1 and .87 at time 2. See: E. Diener, R.A. Emmons, R.J. Larson, and S. Griffin, “The Satisfaction with Life Scale,” *Journal of Personal Assessment*, Vol. 49 (1985), pp. 71-75. Finally, work-family conflict was measured with a three-item measure, adapted from prior scales. The items were “The demands of my work interfere with my home, family, or social life,” “The time I spend at work detracts from my family and social life,” and “Due to work-related duties, I have to make changes to my plans in other areas of my life.” Coefficient alphas for the measure were .90 at both time 1 and time 2. See: R.G. Netemeyer, J.S. Boles, and R.C. McMurrian, “Development and Validation of Work-Family Conflict and Family-Work Conflict Scales,” *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 81 (1996), pp. 400-410; and S.B. Bachrach, P. Bamberger, and S. Conley, “Work-Home Conflict among Nurses and Engineers: Mediating the Impact of Role Stress on Burnout and Satisfaction at Work,” *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, Vol. 12 (1991), pp. 39-53.

EXHIBIT 1

Summary correlation statistics

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Desired Hours (T2)	33.40	9.90	—												
2. Actual Hours (T2)	40.17	11.74	0.50	—											
3. Hours Misfit (T2)	6.76	10.89	-0.37	0.62	—										
4. Received Desired Hours (T2)	0.23	0.42	0.14	-0.20	-0.34	—									
5. Under Hours	0.14	0.34	0.12	-0.45	-0.59	-0.22	—								
6. Life Satisfaction (T1)	3.12	0.89	0.02	-0.03	-0.05	0.13	-0.07	(.90)							
7. Life Satisfaction (T2)	3.16	0.90	0.00	-0.08	-0.08	0.17	-0.03	0.75	(.87)						
8. Intent to Turnover (T1)	2.68	1.22	0.03	0.04	0.02	-0.11	0.05	-0.36	-0.31	(.95)					
9. Intent to Turnover (T2)	2.65	1.19	0.01	0.08	0.07	-0.14	0.00	-0.29	-0.36	.63	(.95)				
10. Work-Life Conflict (T1)	2.83	1.05	0.03	0.20	0.19	-0.22	-0.04	-0.21	-0.22	.36	.28	(.90)			
11. Work-Life Conflict (T2)	2.80	1.06	0.02	0.26	0.26	-0.24	-0.09	-0.20	-0.28	.26	.34	.65	(.90)		
12. Job Stress (T1)	3.48	0.78	-0.05	0.06	0.11	-0.14	0.00	-0.48	-0.45	.22	.19	.27	.23	(.82)	
13. Job Stress (T2)	3.43	0.80	-0.06	0.06	0.12	-0.15	-0.02	-0.37	-0.47	.11	.18	.22	.33	.60	(.85)

Note: T1 = time one, the time of the first survey. T2 = time two, the time of the second survey. $N = 1038$. Correlations greater than .06 are significant at $p < .05$. Coefficient alphas are reported, when appropriate, in parentheses on the main diagonal.

EXHIBIT 2

Effects of working more than the desired number of hours

D E P E N D E N T V A R I A B L E (T I M E 2)

Life Satisfaction Intent to Turnover Job Stress Work-Family Conflict

Intercept	0.98 (0.11)***	0.96 (0.11)***	0.75 (0.14)***	0.84 (0.15)***	1.16 (0.13)***	1.27 (0.13)***	0.51 (0.12)***	0.66 (0.13)***
Lagged Dependent Variable (T1)	0.76 (0.022)***	0.75 (0.022)***	0.62 (0.025)***	0.61 (0.025)***	0.63 (0.028)***	0.62 (0.028)***	0.64 (0.026)***	0.62 (0.026)***
Hours Worked (T2)	-0.0046 (0.0019)*	-0.0024 (0.0021)	0.0061 (0.0030)*	0.0022 (0.0035)	0.0021 (0.0021)	-0.0014 (0.0024)	0.012 (0.0026)***	0.0068 (0.0030)*
Hours Misfit (T2)		-0.004 (0.0024)*		0.00858 (0.0040)*		0.0079 (0.0028)**		0.013 (0.0034)***
R ²	0.50	0.59*	0.40	0.41*	0.36	0.38**	0.45	0.46**

Notes: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. $N = 890$. The first column for each variable represents results from the first test. The second column gives the second test. Standard error is shown in parentheses. The above sample comprises only those for whom hours worked is equal to or greater than desired hours. Significance in the R² row indicates that the model is significantly more predictive than the less-full model for the same dependent variable.

Results: Too Many Hours

Summary statistics indicate that our respondents are generally working more hours than they would like (see Exhibit 1). The correlations reveal some interesting findings. First, the relationship between desired hours and actual hours is .50. While there is still notable variance between these two variables, the correlation value is much higher than that reported elsewhere.²⁵ Far more respondents in the sample, 652 (63%), reported working more than the desired number

²⁵ Compare to: Valcour, *op.cit.*

of hours than reported working fewer than desired hours (142, or 14%). Nearly one-fourth (238, or 23%) reported actually working the number of hours that they desired. The hours misfit was much more substantial for those working more than the desired number of hours (overshooting by an average of nearly 12.8 hours, $SD = 8.3$) than for those working fewer than desired hours (undershooting by an average of 9.4 hours, $SD = 6.6$).

We used regression analyses to examine the relationships between hours misfit and our attitudinal measures, and to test whether hours misfit was a better predictor of these

EXHIBIT 3

Effects of working less than the desired number of hours

	D E P E N D E N T V A R I A B L E (T I M E 2)							
	Life Satisfaction		Intent to Turn Over		Job Stress		Work-Family Conflict	
Intercept	1.03 (0.15)***	1.35 (0.18)***	0.87 (0.20)***	0.65 (0.22)***	1.47 (0.19)***	1.35 (0.20)***	0.82 (0.18)***	0.76 (0.20)***
Lagged Dependent Variable (T1)	0.74 (0.036)***	0.72 (0.037)***	0.55 (0.041)***	0.54 (0.042)***	0.58 (0.044)***	0.57 (0.044)***	0.58 (0.043)***	0.57 (0.043)***
Hours Worked (T2)	-0.0030 (0.0031)	-0.0080 (0.0034)*	0.0051 (0.0049)	0.011 (0.0055)*	-0.0041 (0.0034)	-0.00067 (0.0038)	0.0042 (0.0040)	0.0059 (0.0045)
Hours Misfit (T2)		-0.020 (0.0061)**		0.022 (0.0097)*		0.013 (0.0067)*		0.0068 (0.0079)
R ²	0.52	0.54**	0.32	0.34*	0.31	0.32*	0.32	0.33

Notes: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. $N = 380$. The first column for each variable represents results from the first test. The second column gives the second test. Standard error is shown in parentheses. The above sample are only those for whom hours worked is equal to or less than desired hours. Significance in the R-square row indicates that the model is significantly more predictive than the less-full model for the

attitudes than simply hours worked. Because we are using longitudinal data, we could compare attitudes from the two survey times. In this instance, we used the attitude in time 1 to predict the attitude in time 2, and then looked for what additional variance could be explained by hours misfit. By controlling for the attitude at time 1, we are controlling for potentially unobserved variables that may affect the attitude at time 2 (e.g., the effect of other stable attitudes on the outcome, the effect of demographic characteristics, the effect of stable characteristics of the work environment). This provided a reasonably conservative test of the effect of work hours, because it had to explain variance in attitudes beyond what could be explained by those or other stable effects.

Overworked. Looking initially at those working more than the desired number of hours, the regression analyses (reported in Exhibit 2, on the previous page) largely supported our predictions and specifically demonstrate the importance of hours misfit. Hours misfit was negatively related to life satisfaction, and positively related to intent to turn over, job stress, and related to work-family conflict.²⁶

The results also support our prediction that hours misfit was a better predictor of these outcomes than is a simple measure of the number of hours worked. After controlling for hours misfit, actual hours had no additional explanatory effect on life satisfaction and intent to turn over. After controlling for hours misfit, however, the number of hours

worked does have some explanatory effect in the prediction of work-family conflict. Hours worked did not predict job stress, whereas hours misfit was significantly predictive. Thus, in all, the results are largely consistent with the view that hours misfit is a better predictor of employee attitudes in relation to work hours than is number of hours worked.

Underworked. The results for the respondents who worked fewer than preferred number of hours are shown in Exhibit 3. For consistency, we report results for job stress and work-family conflict, although we predicted no relationship for those outcomes. The results show that hours misfit, with fewer hours than desired, had a significant negative relationship to life satisfaction, and was positively related to intent to turn over. Contrary to what we expected, hours misfit had a positive effect on job stress.²⁷ Unlike the case of too many hours scheduled, after controlling for the effect of hours misfit for this group, working relatively few hours has a negative effect on life satisfaction and a positive effect on intent to turn over.²⁸

Looking at results of the entire sample (in Exhibits 4 and 5), we wanted to test whether the effect of hours misfit was different for under hours versus over hours. Exhibit 4 shows regressions predicting job stress and work-family conflict; Exhibit 5 shows regressions predicting life satisfaction and intent to turn over. These results were then used

²⁶ From the regression reported in Exhibit 2, the effect of hours misfit on life satisfaction was -0.0048 ($p < .05$); the effect on intent to turn over was 0.0085 ($p < .05$); the effect on job stress was 0.0079 ($p < .01$), and the effect on work-family conflict was 0.013 ($p < 0.001$)

²⁷ From the regression results presented in Exhibit 3, the effect of hours misfit on life satisfaction was -0.020 ($p < .001$); had an effect on intent to turn over of 0.022 ($p < .05$); had an effect on job stress of 0.013 ($p < .05$).

²⁸ The effect on life satisfaction was -0.0080 ($p < .05$), and the effect of intent to turn over was 0.011 ($p < .05$).

EXHIBIT 4

Test of the moderating effects of misfit type on job stress and work-family conflict

D E P E N D E N T V A R I A B L E (T I M E 2)

Job Stress

Work-Family Conflict

Intercept	1.30 (0.11)***	1.40 (0.13)***	1.38 (0.13)***	0.57 (0.10)***	0.77 (0.13)***	0.78 (0.13)***
Lagged Dependent Variable (T1)	0.60 (0.026)***	0.60 (0.026)	0.60 (0.026)***	0.62 (0.025)***	0.61 (0.025)***	0.61 (0.025)***
Hours Worked (T2)	-0.0008 (0.0018)	-0.0024 (0.0021)	-0.0012 (0.0022)	0.0096 (0.0022)***	0.0076 (0.0026)**	0.0072 (0.0027)**
Hours Misfit (T2)	0.0091 (0.0024)**	0.0085 (0.0030)**	0.0058 (0.0033)*	0.011 (0.0031)***	0.0063 (0.0037)*	0.072 (0.0040)*
Received Desired Hours (T2)		-0.051 (0.061)	-0.074 (0.062)		-0.19 (0.076)*	-0.19 (0.077)**
Under Hours (T2)		-0.11 (0.069)	-0.27 (0.10)*		-0.14 (0.085)*	-0.087 (0.13)
Under Hours * Hours Misfit			0.018 (0.0090)*			-0.0065 (0.011)
R ²	0.36	0.36	0.37*	0.44	0.45*	0.45

Notes: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. $N = 1,032$. The first column for each variable represents results from the first test. The second column gives the second test and so forth. Standard error is shown in parentheses.

EXHIBIT 5

Test of the moderating effects of misfit type on life satisfaction and intent to turn over

D E P E N D E N T V A R I A B L E (T I M E 2)

Life Satisfaction

Intent to Turnover

Intercept	0.98 (0.093)***	0.90 (0.11)***	0.93 (0.11)***	0.82 (0.12)***	0.95 (0.15)***	0.94 (0.15)***
Lagged Dependent Variable (T1)	0.75 (0.021)***	0.75 (0.021)***	0.74 (0.021)***	0.61 (0.024)***	0.60 (0.024)***	0.60 (0.024)***
Hours Worked (T2)	-0.0024 (0.0017)	-0.0017 (0.0019)	-0.0030 (0.0020)	0.0029 (0.0026)	0.0014 (0.0030)	0.0023 (0.0031)
Hours Misfit (T2)	-0.0061 (0.0023)**	-0.0034 (0.0022)*	-0.00045 (0.0030)	0.0089 (0.0035)**	0.0062 (0.0042)	0.0043 (0.0047)
Received Desired Hours (T2)		0.11 (0.056)*	0.14 (0.057)**		-0.12 (0.088)	-0.14 (0.089)
Under Hours (T2)		0.051 (0.064)	0.22 (0.096)**		-0.10 (0.099)	-0.22 (0.15)
Under Hours * Hours Misfit			-0.020 (0.0083)**			0.013 (0.013)
R ²	0.55	0.55	0.57**	0.40	0.40	0.41

Notes: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; $N = 1,032$. The first column for each variable represents results from the first test. The second column gives the second test, and so forth. Standard error is shown in parentheses.

to create the plots shown in Exhibit 6, which illustrates the relationship between hours misfit and those four dependent variables.²⁹

Our prediction that the effect of hours misfit on job stress would be stronger for over hours than under hours was not supported. Instead, working fewer hours than desired demonstrated a significant negative main effect on job stress, depending on the extent to which the respondent's schedule undershot the desired number of hours. In short, respondents' stress levels depended on the extent of the work hour shortage. Working more hours than desired was more stressful than working just a few hours less than desired, based on the regression results. However, the effect of "underworking" resulted in less job stress than overworking only as long as the shortage was eleven hours or less. Once that level was exceeded, the level of job stress was actually greater for those working under hours than over hours.

Similarly our prediction that under hours would have less effect on work-life conflict (than over hours) was not supported, but we make this conclusion because the interaction between under hours and hours misfit was not significant.

Our prediction that the effect of hours misfit on life satisfaction would be stronger when working under hours (than over hours) was supported. Again, this effect depended in part on the extent to which a respondent was under-scheduled. Although the main effect for under hours was positive, the negative effect of hours misfit on life satisfaction was stronger for those working fewer than the desired number of hours than for those who were overscheduled.³⁰ Again, the break point was eleven hours. Those working eleven or more hours less than desired hours reported lower life satisfaction than did any respondent in the group that was assigned more than the desired number of hours.

Finally, we found no significant effect for less than preferred number of hours on intent to turn over. This indicates that hours misfit leads to increased intentions to turn over, regardless of whether that means over hours or under hours. Neither affected the strength of this relationship. This suggests that workers who are uncomfortable about the level of their working hours have stronger intentions to turn over regardless of whether there is positive or negative misfit.

²⁹ Note that we used the results from the best-fitting regression that was statistically significantly better than the previous step. So, for life satisfaction and job stress, the plot is based on the results from the third step in the analyses. For work-family conflict, it is based on the results from the second step. For intent to turn over, we used the results from the first step.

³⁰ All else, equal, those working under hours had a life satisfaction that was .22 ($p < .01$) higher than others. Yet, as the number of under hours increased, the positive effect was offset by the negative effect (-0.02; $p < .01$) associated with each desired hour of work that was not received. The result is that, on average, those working 11 or more hours less than desired per week had a net negative effect on life satisfaction.

Implications of Hours Misfit

To begin with, the results of our study indicate that work hours misfit is, indeed, a stronger predictor of employee attitudes than is a mere tally of total work hours, whether that number is forty or some other arbitrary work week. Consistent with prior research on work hours, we also found negative effects associated with working many hours. Faced with the predicament of whether to save money by laying off workers or reducing hours, managers must consider the full consequences of those choices. While practices such as flex time and job sharing may be one means to soften the blow of receiving an unwanted schedule, the negative consequences to employees may be greater than initially expected, depending on the extent to which hours are cut.

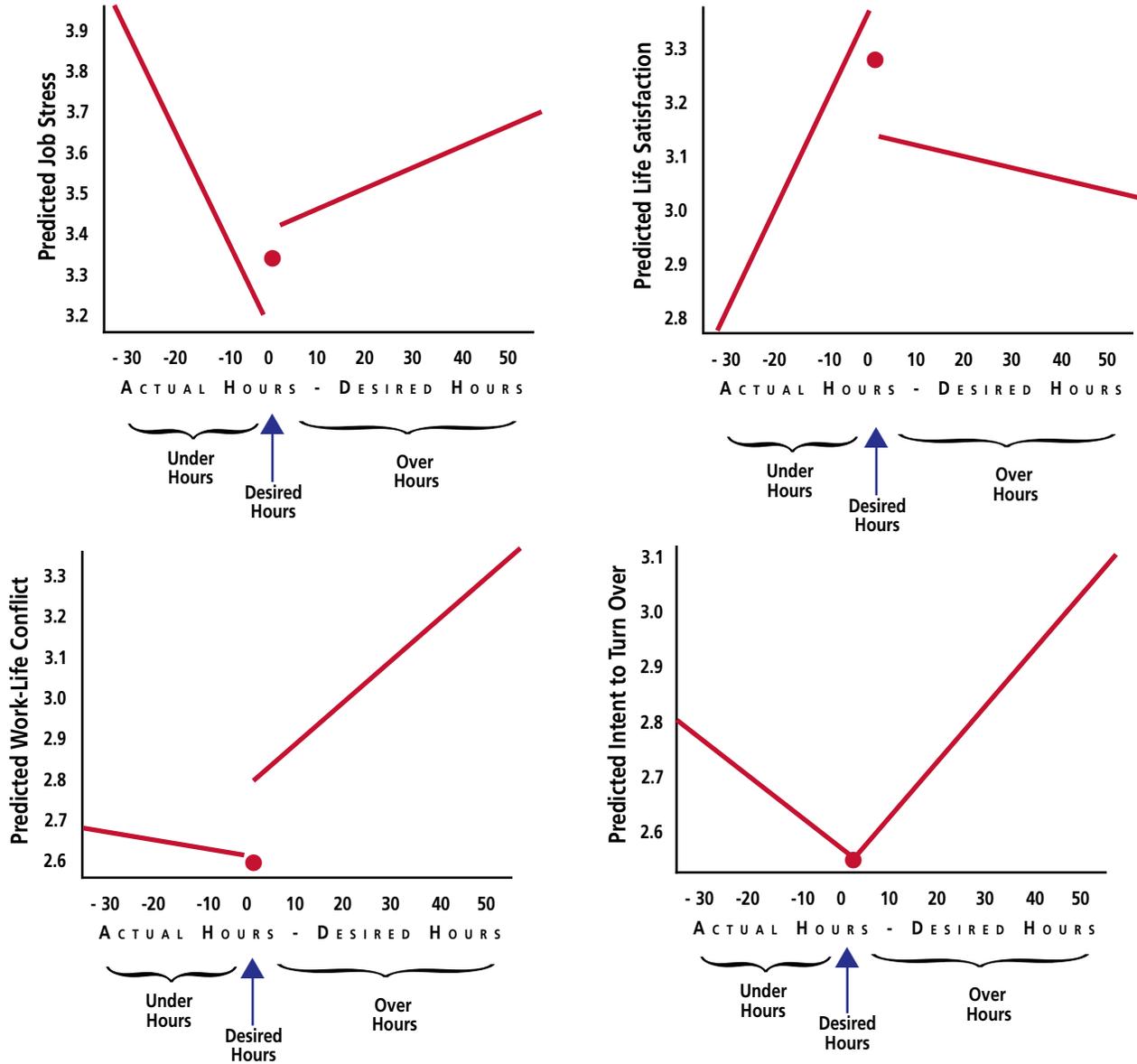
In any event, employers may want to give employees greater control of their own working hours when it is practical to do so. We know that is not always possible, especially with a shifting economic environment like the present one, but it is also likely that many organizations have simply not considered seeking input regarding employee scheduling preferences. While we expect many of our readers are at companies where this is done, there are numerous examples where such preferences are not considered.³¹ Furthermore, our finding that eleven hours of misfit was often seen as a break-even point of the positive and negative consequences of under hours, managers may be able to use this estimate to determine when to reduce work hours versus when to consider layoffs. Managing the fit between desired and assigned work hours may be an easy way to improve work conditions and employees' quality of life while simultaneously addressing the labor and financial needs of the organization. Managing reductions in work hours strategically can help maintain (or at least minimize the disadvantages in) employee attitudes and performance, and thus stimulate the business.

The conclusions of our study need to be tempered by the inherent limitations of this research. While SurveyResponse has been used elsewhere,³² we have little information on the nature of the original sample or the reasons individuals chose to participate in the survey. Consequently, the generalizability of the sample is unclear. It is also important to point out that we did not use a hospitality-specific sample. We purposely chose to sample people in a wide variety of jobs from a number of different industries so that we could capture a broad array of potential effects associated with work hours. The diversity of the sample afforded us the opportunity to study a larger array of respondents, and we feel the salience of hours worked is an issue that should gen-

³¹ See, for example: J. Newman, *op.cit.*

³² For example, see: R.F. Piccolo and J.A. Colquitt, "Transformational Leadership and Job Behaviors: The Mediating Role of Core Job Characteristics," *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 49 (2006), pp. 327-340.

Relationship between hours misfit and dependent variables



eralize across industries since this is a matter of individual preferences that are not specifically related to a particular industry. Even with these limitations, the consistent findings that the effects of hours misfit extend beyond those of the straightforward number of work hours does give us confidence regarding our conclusion on the importance of considering the effects of hours misfit on employees' attitudes about their jobs.

In conclusion, our study shows that hours misfit is a better predictor of work-related and life-related attitudes

than is a particular number of hours worked. Our study shows that working fewer than the desired number of hours diminishes employees' satisfaction and increases their stress. Since the economic conditions at this writing suggest an industry pullback, we anticipate that hotel managers are or soon will be in the uncomfortable position of reducing employees' hours. Our study suggests that this should be done while either trying to accommodate employee preferences, or at least proceeding with the knowledge of the type of effects on employee attitudes that they should expect. ■

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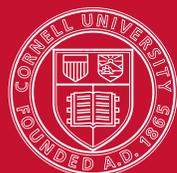
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