requested Track: 7. International HRM and cross-cultural management

suggested Session Format: poster

Increasing quality time of dual career couples through flexible work arrangements

Increasing quality time of dual career couples through flexible work arrangements

Purpose – The purpose of the study is to demonstrate the increasing quality dimension in time through flexible work arrangements for structural planning and activity/person-centered dual career couples.

Dual career couples, defined as two partners who pursue an active family and career life (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976), become an increasingly important resource in the labor market due to the changing role of women and their participation in the workforce (Abele & Volmer, 2011). Thus, research should focus on dual career couples as important human resources. Dual career couples are faced with the challenge to fulfill family responsibilities together as well as coordinate work tasks and their individual career. Flexible work arrangements can improve the work-life balance as well as the effective use of time at work and at home by flexibly transferring resources to the work or home domain according to the temporary needs. That can be explained by the conservation of resources theory (Andresen, 2015; Hobfoll, 1989). The concept of work flexibility offers several opportunities and advantages for the employing company as well as for the employees (Galea, Houkes, & Rijk, 2014), especially for dual career couples. Analyzing the work-time flexibility in more depth, Andresen (2015) describes the flexibility concept two-dimensionally. The first dimension – flexibility – describes the employee's working-time adaptation according to the organizational targets and needs, which is an opportunity and advantage for the employing companies. The second dimension – autonomy – describes the employee's working-time adaptation according to their personal needs, which is an opportunity and advantage for the employees, especially for dual career couples. The conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989) as well as Andresen's (2015) differentiation of flexibility and autonomy emphasize that time can be valued differently. However, according to our knowledge, current management research does not clearly distinguish time in two dimensions (namely quantity and quality) yet. Contrary to the lack in quality time research in management, quality time is an established construct in parenting research. Snyder (2007) argues that time for raising one's children (parenting) is two-dimensional (in terms of quantity vs. quality) and that parents in general have three distinct views on quality time. Structured-planning parents (biggest subgroup; 44%) define quality time through scheduled family activities. On the other hand, child-centered parents (big subgroup; 37%) define quality time in meeting the child's needs in the best possible way. Lastly, time-intensive parents (smallest subgroup; 19 %) value all time spent with children as equally important. Thus, time-intensive parents do not distinguish between quantity and quality time and define time one-dimensionally. Contrary to this, we argue that structured-planning and child-centered parents distinguish between quantity and quality time. Furthermore, Snyder (2007) claims that structured-planning and child-centered parents try to compensate less quantity time with more quality time. That can be explained by the conservation of resources theory as well (Hobfoll, 1989). Other researchers argue in similar fashion, but name the two time dimensions differently (e.g. clock-time vs. family time) (StGeorge & Fletcher, 2012). Our purpose is to show that Snyder's (2007) time differentiation (quantity vs. quality time as well as the three distinct quality time views) are not only valid for raising children (parenting), but are also valid for a broader audience (namely dual career

couple) and in a broader context (namely work and private life). However, we name the three distinct views *structural planning, activity/person centered* and *time intensive* to be applicable for the above mentioned audience and context. The evidence of quality time during work goes along with Csikszentmihalyi's flow theory (for an overview see Csikszentmihalyi, Abuhamdeh, & Nakamura, 2014).

Brenke (2004) highlights that work-time flexibility is a key driver for an increase in the quantity time spent for working obligations. Our purpose is to demonstrate that quality time increases in flexible work arrangement if the employees have enough autonomy in the work and private domain, even though quantity time might decrease in the private domain.

Design/Methodology/Approach – We chose qualitative data analysis for clustering dual career couples into the three above mentioned groups. We have already interviewed one partner of each 15 dual-career couples who work in flexible work arrangements. Nonetheless, we will increase our sample size. In our study, we ask them to define quality time (in work as well as in their private life) and to describe how flexible work arrangements influence their perceived time (quality and quantity in work and private life). We analyze these qualitative data according to Mayring (2015).

Findings – The analysis of the first data confirms the two-dimensional structure of time for dual career couples as well as the three distinct dual career couples' views of quality time for work and private time. Although the dual career couples in flexible work arrangements work long hours, their perceived quality time increases in work and private life, especially if autonomy is present. We also confirm that some dual career couples try to compensate having less quantity time for their partner by increasing quality time. First analysis goes along with Snyder (2007) and confirms that most dual career couples are rather structured planning than time intensive.

Originality/Value – First, the study confirms the two-dimensional structure of time (quantity and quality) in the context of dual career couples by transferring findings from parenting research to a broader audience and broader contexts (dual career couples in work and private domain). Second, the study explains why flexible work arrangements are beneficial for dual career couples (namely by increasing quality time). Third, the study shows that flexible work time arrangements should increase the autonomy of employees in accordance to company's needs. Thus, practical implications are given to human resource managers as well as to policy makers.

References

Abele, A., & Volmer, J. (2011). Dual-career couples: Specific challenges for work-life integration. In S. Kaiser, M. J. Ringlstetter, D. R. Eikhof, & M. Pina e Cunha (Eds.), *Creating balance?* (pp. 173–189). Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg.

Andresen, M. (2015). A look into the future: Is working time freedom apt to add value for different stakeholders? In: M. Andresen, C. Nowak (Eds.), *Human resource management practices: Assessing added value*. (pp. 107-124). Heidelberg: Springer.

Brenke, K. (2004). Dauer der Arbeitszeiten in Deutschland. *Wochenbericht des DIW Berlin*

47(71), 731-737. URL: http://www.diw.de/sixcms/detail.php/42656

Csikszentmihalyi, M., Abuhamdeh, S., & Nakamura, J. (2014). Flow. In: Csikszentmihalyi, M. (Eds.), *Flow and the foundation of positive psychology*. (pp. 227-238). Dortrecht: Springer.

Galea, C., Houkes, I., & Rijk, A. de. (2014). An insider's point of view: How a system of flexible working hours helps employees to strike a proper balance between work and personal life. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, *25*(8), 1090–1111.

Hobfoll, S. E. (1989). Conservation of resources: A new attempt at conceptualizing stress. *American Psychologist*, *44*, 513–524. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.44.3.513.

Mayring, P. (2015). *Qualitative Inhaltsanaylse: Grundlagen und Techniken* (12th, updated and revised ed.). Weinheim: Beltz Juventa.

Rapoport, R., & Rapoport, R. N. (1976). *Dual-career families re-examined: New integrations of work and family*. London, UK: Robertson.

Snyder, K. A. (2007). A vocabulary of motives: Understanding how parents define quality time. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *69*(2), 320-340.

StGeorge, J. M. & Fletcher, R. J. (2012). Time for work, commuting, and parenting? Commuting parents' involvement with their children. *Community, Work & Family*, *15*(3), 273-291.