

# New study of freelance workers examines link between their well-being and hours worked

March 30 2015

---

A new study of freelance workers has discovered key factors that affect their well-being – either making them happier or increasing anxiety and risking depression.

The six-month study to be published in the journal *Human Relations* was conducted by Professor Stephen Wood from the University of Leicester's School of Management and George Michaelides from Birkbeck, University of London.

A key finding is that as the hours of freelance workers fluctuate so does the well-being of freelance or portfolio workers, such as copy editors, web designers, coaches, translators, personal trainers.

Professor Wood said: "Freelance workers are calmer and more enthusiastic when their hours are higher than their normal pattern of working.

"In contrast when the demands they face are difficult – for example, they experience conflicting or difficult requirements – their anxiety increases and their enthusiasm declines and they may even become depressed.

"Demands adversely affect people's work–life balance, in particular work interferes with fulfilling family and other non-work commitments

or pursuits. But so does the enthusiasm generated by longer hours. The enthusiasm may be at the expense of non-work activities, as, for example, people may not readily leave tasks uncompleted to be finished another time."

Dr Michaelides added: "Demands thus generate what has long been called stress-based work–family/non-work interference but hours generate a largely unrecognised phenomenon, enthusiasm-based work–family/non-work interference.

"The calmness associated with long hours has, though, the opposite effect - it decreases work–family/non-work interference."

The study is based on a diary study involving 47 freelance workers completing an identical survey every week for six months.

The study shows that freelance workers are subject to the same pressures as other workers, and thus conflicting demands that constrain and hinder people from smoothly fulfilling their tasks and achieving their potential adversely affect their work–life balance and well-being. In addition when they have control over and variety in their work they are happier, which is also true for most workers.

But the enthusiasm-based interference may be more limited to people whose opportunities for work and income associated with it fluctuate. For example people on piecework or commission may appreciate more hours. Zero-hour workers might be the extreme of this. The long hours needed to fulfil tasks may be seen as challenge and not a hindrance as conflicting demands may be.

Freelance workers, portfolio workers or independent contractors are self-employed individuals who do assignments, either in series or in parallel, for a number of different organisations or clients, on a (typically short-

term) commercial rather than employment contract basis.

The research is reported in a paper to be published later this year: S. Wood and G. Michaelides, Hindrance and challenge stressors and well-being based work–non-work interference: A diary study of portfolio workers, *Human Relations*, in press.

**More information:** S. Wood and G. Michaelides, Hindrance and challenge stressors and well-being based work–non-work interference: A diary study of portfolio workers, *Human Relations*, in press.

Provided by University of Leicester

Citation: New study of freelance workers examines link between their well-being and hours worked (2015, March 30) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-03-freelance-workers-link-well-being-hours.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.