

# THE EFFECTS OF THE NON-STANDARD WORKING HOURS TO THE SPOUSAL RELATIONSHIP

Iina Auvinen

Bachelor's Thesis  
March 2014

Degree Programme in Nursing  
Social Services, Health and Sport



JYVÄSKYLÄN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU  
JAMK UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES



Author Auvinen, Iina	Type of publication Bachelor's Thesis	Date 24.02.2014
	Pages 22	Language English
		Permission for web publication ( X )
Title THE EFFECTS OF THE NON-STANDARD WORKING HOURS TO THE SPOUSAL RELATIONSHIP		
Degree Programme Degree Programme in Nursing		
Tutor Perttunen, Jaana		
Assigned by Families 24/7-research project		
Abstract <p>The aim of this Bachelor's Thesis was to find out, how the non-standard working hours affect the spousal relationship, and whether these effects are mainly positive or negative. The data for this thesis were gathered from the Families 24/7-research project, which was conducted during the November 2012 and January 2013. The research was a co-operating between the Jyväskylä University and University of Applied Sciences, National Institute for Health and Welfare, and the Universities of Manchester and Utrecht. The funding to the research came from the Academy of Finland.</p> <p>One third of the working force in Finland work during the non-standard working hours. Non-standard working hours include early mornings, evening- and night work, and working during the weekends and holidays. Total of 293 participants and their spouses, who were working during the non-standard working hours, were examined in the research. The study showed that the most significant effect of the non-standard working hours is the lack of time to spend together with the spouse. Not having enough time together lead to conflicts and arguments between the spouses, this was also increased by the tiredness.</p> <p>The results received from this study highlight the key issues related to the non-standard working hours and the effects they have on the spousal relationship. The awareness and knowledge of these issues help the employer to plan working conditions to support the employee's commitment, productivity and work satisfaction. As an employee the results pinpoint some of the issues they may be facing and can this way predict and prevent the possible effects before any conflicts occur.</p>		
Keywords Non-standard working hours, spousal relationship, families 24/7		
Miscellaneous		



Tekijä Auvinen, Iina	Julkaisun laji Opinnäytetyö	Päivämäärä 24.02.2014
	Sivumäärä 22	Julkaisun kieli Englanti
		Verkkojulkaisulupa myönnetty ( X )
Työn nimi EPÄSÄÄNNÖLLISTEN TYÖAIKOJEN VAIKUTUS PARISUHTEESEEN		
Koulutusohjelma Degree Programme in Nursing		
Työn ohjaaja Perttunen, Jaana		
Toimeksiantaja Perheet 24/7-tutkimushanke		
Tiivistelmä <p>Tämän opinnäytetyön tavoitteena oli ottaa selvää, miten epäsäännölliset työajat vaikuttavat parisuhteeseen, ja ovatko nämä vaikutukset pääasiassa positiivisia vai negatiivisia? Tulokset tähän opinnäytetyöhön kerätiin perheet 24/7-tutkimuksesta, joka suoritettiin marraskuun 2012 ja tammikuun 2013 välisenä aikana. Tutkimus tehtiin yhteistyössä Jyväskylän Yliopiston, Jyväskylän ammattikorkeakoulun, terveyden ja hyvinvoinnin laitoksen sekä Manchesterin ja Utrechtin Yliopiston kanssa. Tutkimuksen rahoittajana toimi Suomen Akatemia.</p> <p>Suomessa jopa kolmasosa töissäkäyvistä työskentelee epäsäännöllisinä työaikoina. Tällä tarkoitetaan aikaisia aamuja, ilta- ja yötyötä, sekä työskentelyä viikonloppuisin ja pyhäpäivinä. Yhteensä 293 osallistujaa ja heidän puolisoaan tutkittiin, jotka työskentelivät epäsäännöllisinä työaikoina. Tutkimus osoitti, että epäsäännölliset työajat vaikuttivat merkittävästi puolisoiden yhdessä vietettyyn aikaan. Yhteisen ajan vähäisyys johti riiteltyyn ja konflikteihin, mikä myös osaltaan johtui väsymyksestä.</p> <p>Tutkimuksesta saadut tulokset täsmentävät epäsäännöllisiin työaikoihin liittyviä ongelmakohtia, ja niiden vaikutuksia parisuhteeseen. Tietoisuus ja informaatio näistä asioista auttaa työnantajaa suunnittelemaan työolosuhteita, jotka tukevat työntekijän työolosuhteita, sekä sitoutumista, tuottavuutta ja tyytyväisyyttä työhönsä. Työntekijän kannalta tieto vaikutuksista auttaa heitä ehkäisemään mahdollisia haittoja jo ennen konfliktien syntyä.</p>		
Avainsanat (asiasanat) Epäsäännölliset työajat, parisuhde, perheet 24/7		
Muut tiedot		

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Growing number of men and women are working non-standard working hours. The irregularity does not only have an effect to the person's health and well-being, but it can also lead to problems within the family and spousal relationship. According to studies Bond, Galinsky and Swanberg (1998) the people working non-standard working hours have larger divorce rate. The people working non-standard working times may lead to increased amount of arguments about childrearing, responsibilities and household chores. There were also less positive communication, such as laughing and talking with one another, as well as lack of affection. (Jekielek, 2003, 52, 122)

The results for this bachelor's thesis are part of the Families 24/7 research conducted by Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences, Jyväskylä University, THL, University of Manchester and Utrecht University, and it has been funded by Academy of Finland. The aim of this Bachelor's Thesis was to find out, how the non-standard working hours affect the spousal relationship, and whether these effects are mainly positive or negative? The results for this thesis were gathered during the November 2012 and January 2013

The reason why I chose to study this subject was that the most of the research made on the non-standard working times and their effects on the family, children and workers individual effects, but less on how it affects the relationship. The subject is also relevant in my since I am graduating as a nurse, and most of our work is conducted during non-standard working hours.

## 2 WORK

People spend almost half of their time awake at work. That is why, it is important that the work becomes a natural part of the common everyday living. Work brings structure, income and well-being to people. When the person enjoys working, it enhances their physical- and mental health, as well as social connections to other people. (Hakkarainen & Rantanen, 2006; Sallinen, Kandolin & Purola, 2002, 24) Positive experiences and gratification received from the work does not only increase the total productivity. It has also been found out that when people feel that the work they are conducting is meaningful and enjoyable, the person's family is also happier. (Peltonen, 2009, 8; Rönkä & Kinnunen, 2009, 84)

In Finland, working hours are regulated by the FINLEX Working Hours Act 605/1996. In this act, working hours are defined as "the time spent on work and the time an employee is required to be present at a place of work at the employer's disposal". (Ministry of Employment and the Economy, 2011) Standard working time in Finland is eight hours a day and 40 hours a week. Lunch breaks, travel time and the time in which the person waits at home to be called for work are not calculated as working time. Although, if the employee has to travel a lot, they might get some financial compensation on the extra time they have to spend on those trips (Nieminen, 2012, 53).

### 2.1 Non-standard working hours

According to Tilastokeskus in the year 1984, 24 percent of the total work force was working in non-standard working hours. In the year 2003 the number has increased to 32 percent. The biggest changes can be seen in the agriculture, commercial, social and health, industrial and transportation sector. Non-standard working hours are more common among women than men. The differences can be also seen in different areas of work. Only three percent of the employees working in administration or regular office environment are working

non-standard working hours. On the contrary, as much as 48 percent of people working in transportation sector are regularly working non-standard working hours. (Hakola, Hublin, Härmä, M, Kandolin, Laitinen & Sallinen, 2007, 10-11)

It is typical for non-standard working hours, that the shifts usually do not follow any particular pattern. It is also very common that the employees are working longer shifts, their off-time is shorter and the amount of work days in a row can be longer than five days. (Hakola et. al. 2007, 93)

Non-standard working hours include morning, day and night shifts, but there has to be at least nine hours between the shifts. Night shift starts at eleven o'clock in the evening, and it lasts until six in the morning. The worker has to agree to work on these hours and they are not allowed to work more than seven nights in a row. Non-standard working times are flexible, but regulated. One is not allowed to work over 120 hours in three weeks, or over 80 hours in two weeks. (Nieminen 2012, 55-56)

Nowadays the work has become part of the family life, since the work is no longer only tied to one place or particular time frame. More and more people are working from home and they are expected to be available for reach around the clock. In the working environmental study conducted in the year 2008, 70 percent of the employees working in managerial level were bringing work to home. (Kinnunen & Mauno, 2009, 1) Surprisingly the studies have shown that most of the workers express concerns that the work is interfering their family life and free time, but the family rarely interferes the working time. (Rönkä & Kinnunen, 2009, 83-84)

## **2.2 Effects of the non-standard working hours to an individual**

Non-standard working times have an effect to the individual's health and well-being, as well as the spousal relationship and the family. Traditionally, much

emphasis has been put to the effects of the individual workers, as well as to the physical effects. Non-standard working times can cause problems in many different areas. People can have difficulties to adapt to the changing schedules, problems in fitting together family and social life. The employees are also faced with different physical risks that have been linked with non-standard working hours. (Työterveyslaitos, 2011, 3)

It has been found out that 20 percent of the people will never adapt to the irregular working hours. The studies have shown strong correlation between non-standard working hours and sleeping disorders, higher risk of cardiovascular disease, obesity, diabetes and even cancer (Hakola, Hublin, Härmä, Kandolin, Latinen & Sallinen, 2007, 10-11.) Comparing to the people working in regular working hours the shift workers also have increased risk of depression, chronic sleep deprivation and anxiety (Koski & Mäntynen, 2010).

The non-standard working hours may also interrupt other social relationships. In the research of Pylkkönen (2011) nurses who were working during the weekends, and doing night shifts, felt that they were not able to meet up with their friends and go out on social gatherings. It was also found out that majority of the people working in irregular working hours have had to cut down the time spend with their friends, spouse, relatives as well as time spend on hobbies, because of the irregular working hours. (Pylkkönen, 2011, 12)

### **3 SPOUSAL RELATIONSHIP**

The spousal relationship can be defined as affectionate and sexual relationship between two people. The key factors keeping the spousal relationship functioning are: love, intimacy and trust to one another. The quality of the relationship is often measured by relationship satisfaction, adaptation and persistence. (Sihvo, 2002) Unlike marital couples, who are in marital relationship, the definition of spousal relationship is much wider; it includes people who are dating, co-habiting and married (Kesti, 2000, 1).

In 2012 the amount of married couples increased in Finland, in total 28 878 marriages were entered into. This was 470 more than the year before. In 2004 the most common family type was a married couple with children. Nowadays the most common family type is married couples without children, altogether 36 percent. Eight percent of co-habiting couples have children, when fourteen percent do not have children. Although the number of co-habiting couples has increased the couples with children are usually married. (Tilastokeskus, 2013)

It was also found out that no particular age group was dominating the entries. Instead the marriages were evenly divided among the different age groups. In 2012 a total of 329 same sex partnerships were registered, which has stayed on the same level since the last two years. The number of divorces was 13 040 in the year 2012, which was lower than the year before. Although less people are filing for divorce, the amount is still considered high. (Tilastokeskus, 2014)

### **3.1 Relationship satisfaction**

According to Hawkins (1968) relationship satisfaction can be defined as person's subjective perception of happiness, satisfaction and pleasure related to spousal relationships. On the contrary Koski & Shaver (1997) defined that both the marital and the romantic relationships are satisfactory when the participants evaluate their relationship not to be in distress. As seen above, the actual factors that make one's spousal relationship satisfactory are hard to define and to measure. (Sihvo, 2002, 5-6) In the research of Karney & Bradbury (1995) the relationships were evaluated from the perspective of quality and sustainability (Malinen, 2011, 17). Although it should not be forgotten that sustainability in relationship does not always guarantee satisfaction and happiness in a spousal relationship (Sihvo, 2002, 8.)

In the FINSEX-research conducted by Väestöliitto during years of 1971, 1992, 1999 and 2007 it was found out that couples in Finland are highly satisfied in their spousal relationship. 83 percent of the women and 84 percent of the men who were interviewed evaluated their spousal relationship to be at least somewhat satisfactory. Fifteen percent of the people interviewed could not tell whether they were either satisfied or unsatisfied (Paajanen, 2003; Malinen, Härmä, Sevón & Kinnunen, 2005, 11-12).

It was also found out that the number of satisfied couples increased during the study period. The reasons for higher spousal relationship satisfaction may be explained by the ever rising divorce rates. The researchers believe that in the seventies it was more common to stay married even though the partners were unhappy with each other. (Kontula, 2009, 123-124)

According to Kontula (2009) in the 2003 FINSEX-research of Paajanen, the most common issues that caused problems in spousal relationships were financial issues, uneven division of household chores, child rearing, free time and when to spend time together. It has been also found that, apart from the disagreements and problems in the spousal relationship, people have higher demands. It is not enough just be together in a relationship, it should also be satisfactory and pleasant. With higher requirements it is likely that one gets disappointed, when ones wishes are not met. In some extent these also can explain the ever growing number of divorces (Kinnunen, Malinen & Laitinen, 2009, 127)

In a satisfactory relationship, the emotional bond between the two partners is warm and the household chores are divided equally. The partners can rely on each other, which can be seen as positive support towards to one another. (Juntunen & Krats, 1997, 46) According to Sihvo (2002) the key factors included to satisfactory relationship were; contentment, unity, mutual attraction, good communication, and ability to express ones emotions without restriction. On the contrary differences in personality, negative tension between the partners, lack of common attraction, disagreements in decision making and negative behavior may lead to decreased satisfaction. (Sihvo, 2002, 5-7)

Working men are linked to higher income and stability in the relationship. Surprisingly, working among women lead to higher divorce rates. Instability and fluctuating in women's careers lower the relationship satisfaction. For men the stress at work can lead to depression and communication problems in the relationship. People who are happily married and been found out to enjoy their work, and in the case of problems at work, they are more likely to discuss about them with their partners (Sihvo, 2002, 10). Low deviation, stress and uncertainty at work also increase the likelihood of having marital problems in both sexes (Sihvo, 2002, 23).

### **3.2 Non-standard working hours and spousal relationship**

In the vast majority of the research, made in the field of non-standard working hours and spousal relationships, the results of the effects have been mainly negative (Mills & Täht, 2010, 860; Kinnunen, Malinen & Laitinen, 2009, 128). Non-standard working hours have also been linked to strain the spousal relationship in many different ways: such as high levels of divorce, less time to spend with the spouse, unequal deviation of house work and responsibility of the children. The negative effects from the working hours have also been found out to cause stress, guilt, sleeping and other physical and mental disorders, and even depression. (Mills & Täht, 2010, 862)

In Finland work and family are perceived as the two main components of life. Growing demands of working life put the employee in a difficult situation. People may feel that they are lacking time with their family but at the same time they want to be successful in their careers. (Niemistö, 2005, 1) According to Jekielek (2003) non-standard working hours interfere with the quality and quantity of the time partners spend with each other. In the 1997 national study of changing workforce Bond, Galinsky and Swanberg (1998) came into even more dramatic conclusion. The study shows that the non-standard working hours are in direct correlation with increased divorce rates. The same study

also stated that as much as 70 percent of the mothers and the fathers interviewed felt that they did not spend enough time with their children (Jekielek, 2003, 5).

The most problematic shift of all seems to be the night shift. It appears to have the most negative effect on the relationship as well as person's health and mental well-being. (Jekielek, 2003, 61) Especially women, who were working during the evenings and weekends, had increased amount of relationship conflicts compared to women working regular hours (Mills & Täht, 2010, 867). In general, working during the evening has also been found out to have negative effect on the family time, sleep and even on health (Jekielek, 2003, 121). For men working during the weekends the negative effects increased, because of the lack of support from their spouse (Mills & Täht, 2010, 867).

For women non-standard and irregular working hours were linked to dissatisfaction in their spousal relationship, especially when the women are not able to decide the hours in which they work (Mills & Täht, 2010, 873; Jekielek, 2003, 119). Remarkably irregular hours have more of an effect on women, but when men are working irregular hours the effect indeed decreased the risk of conflict in the spousal relationship. (Mills & Täht, 2010, 867)

In the Paletti-study conducted in 2003 people had mixed emotions and guilt when working long hours and having to travel in their work. Especially mothers felt that the work was taking time away from the family and household chores, and when they had time to spend with their family the time together was not qualified enough. (Rönkä & Kinnunen, 2009, 84, 93-94)

#### **4 THE AIM AND GOALS OF THE RESEARCH**

The purpose of this study was to find out, how do non-standard workings affect ones spousal relationship.

The research questions were as followed:

- 1) How is the spousal relationship affected by the non-standard working hours according to the interviewed?
- 2) Are the effects of non-standard working times mainly positive or negative?

The results received from this study highlight the key issues related to the non-standard working hours and the effects they have on the spousal relationship. The awareness and knowledge of these issues help the employer to plan working conditions to support the employee's commitment, productivity and work satisfaction. As an employee the results pinpoint some of the issues they may be facing and can this way predict and prevent the possible effects before any conflicts occur.

## **5 IMPLEMENTATION**

### **5.1 Method**

The research method used in this bachelor's thesis was qualitative. In qualitative research the main focus is to study the different phenomena in their natural state without control and restriction (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara, 2005, 152). The advantage of qualitative research method is that we are able to explore people's attitudes, behavior and experiences. It gives the researcher deeper insight into the participants thoughts, although the number of people studied may be smaller. (Dawson, 2009) Results of qualitative research are gathered in interviews, questionnaires, observation, simulations and through experimental research (Karjalainen, 2010, 10).

The aim of qualitative research is not to test different theories or hypothesis. Instead the goal is to evaluate the data in detail from many variable perspectives. This gives the research valuable information of the real facts, which can sometimes be even unexpected, and surprising (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara, 2005, 152). Unlike in random survey questionnaires the people are chosen to take part in qualitative research. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara, 2005, 155)

### **5.2 Target group and data collection**

In Finland 483 parents took part in this study. Also total of 374 Dutch and 437 English parents took part in the comparative survey, where they answered to the same questions as the Finnish target group. 87 percent of the recruited were either married or co-habiting. The data for the study was collected between November 2012 and January 2013.

48 percent of the participants were acquired through children's daycare centers, when 34 percent of the participants got the link to the study via working

places and 18 percent through a friend, spouse, and internet or via Facebook. Also variable working places were selected to present different types of working arrangements.

The data was collected from the parents by using web questionnaire. To get as many people as possible motivated to answer to the survey, the parents had the opportunity to fill out the questionnaires at the child-care centre during their children were taken care of by the teachers. At the working place they had the opportunity to complete the survey during the normal working time.

### **5.3 Data analysis**

The questionnaire that was used in this study was a shortened version of the questionnaire concerning the daily living in the families with young children, which was previously used in the Palette study. Altogether the questionnaire had 129 questions in it. The questionnaire included the following topics: parental work hours and wellbeing at work (work autonomy and flexibility, time pressure, work exhaustion), parenting stress, child-centered parenting, family cohesion, sharing of parental responsibilities, quality of spousal relationship (DAS), form of child-care, satisfaction with care, and child wellbeing (SDQ).

In this bachelors thesis the research data came solely from the question number 46. The question was open ended, where participant was asked to describe, how do the working hours of you or your spouse affect your spousal relationship? To find out the answers to the research questions, and to restrict the researched data, participants who met the following restrictions were selected to further analysis:

1. The participant was part of the study conducted in Finland
2. The participant had to be either married, co-habiting, or in a relationship but not living together with their spouse

3. Either the participant, the participants partner, or both were working non-standard working hours

To analyze the large number of data I chose to use content analysis to find out the answers to the research questions. In the content analysis the aim is to analyze how and in which way people write and talk about the researched issue. The method enables quantitative results, where I was able to calculate how many times each word or sentence occurred, to find out the answer to the second research question. (Eskola & Suoranta, 2001, 185)

## 6 RESULTS

In total of 293 answers filled the requirements for further research (Table 1.), which added up fifty pages of text. The answers came from an open-end question that was not restricted by the length. Many of the answers were just one sentence or one word, but the longest answers consisted of up to eight sentences.

76 percent of participants were female (f=224), and 24 percent (f=69) were male. 68 percent were married (f=199), 28 percent were co-habiting (f=82), and four percent (f=12) were in a relationship but not living together. (Table 2.) Total of 79 people had not answered to the question, and were left out from the closer analysis. This gave us the response rate of 73 percent.

Table 1. Participants gender distribution

	f	%
Female	224	76
Male	69	24
Total	293	100

Table 2. Relationship status of the participants

	f	%
Married	199	68
Co-habiting	82	28
In a relation, but not living together	12	4
	293	100

The most common effect of the non-standard working time was the lack of time spent together with the spouse. It was said to be either too little or even nonexistent. The participants felt that the work was taking too much time from their relationship and from the free time spent together. In many of the answers similar pattern occurred: the spouses only had couple hours to spend together in the evening, and during that time one or both of them were tired from the day's work.

*"We don't see often, we rarely spend time together."*

*"...it happens often that one of us is sleeping when the other is at work, and in the morning the other has already went to work when the one is still sleeping."*

*"We see each other rarely, and when we do, we are tired. That causes unnecessary arguments easily. The expectations are high to our time together, disappointments are unenviable."*

The non-standard working times had also effect on the time spent together as a family.

*"Both of us spend much time alone with the children, and not as a family, as we would wish."*

*"There is not much time, when we would be at home together during the week. Of course that has an effect on the relationship. Sometimes I feel like I'm a single parent, when we don't see each other for days."*

The participants also felt that the non-standard working hours caused them or their spouse tiredness and stress. In most of the cases the tiredness was also seen to be the cause of arguments and tension between the spouses.

*“After the evening shift I can be so tired that I rather doze on the couch, I’m too tired to do anything else.”*

*“My spouse is often very tired and cranky.”*

*“Tiredness often leads arguments”*

There were also other negative effects mentioned in the answers. These included mental and physical restraint, atypical sleeping arrangements and resentment.

In many of the answers the participant had only written one word, which was either “negatively” or “bad”. In few of the answers the participants spouse would have not wanted the partner to work non-standard working hours, especially the weekends were seen troublesome.

*“-- shift work is restraining both mentally and physically, and that way also has an effect on the relationship.”*

*“My spouse doesn’t like that I have to be away during the evenings and weekends.”*

Non-standard working hours were also seen to cause arguments as mentioned earlier. The participants felt that the main cause of arguing was due to either them or the spouse feeling tired. The lack of time together also lead to arguments. The spouse may have wanted to spend time alone or go out to their hobbies, but the time would be away from the relationship and from the family.

*“The lack of time together causes tension and tiredness as a parent, which then causes more arguments”*

*“When we are home at the same time, my spouse uses the opportunity to go away to his hobbies. This causes arguments, because I think the little time what we have together should be spend with the family”*

The non-standard working hours were mentioned to cause friction between the spouses due to unequal deviation of household chores and parenting. The participants felt that the spouse is responsible of the family and children, this made them feel guilty, because they could not participate as much as they would have liked.

*“My spouse doesn’t participate in the household chores. It causes arguments. We argue easily because he is so tired.”*

*“During the busy weeks the wife has to drive the children to their hobbies, prepare food, clean...”*

*“I have a bad coincidence that I take too little part in the household chores --.”*

Non-standard working hours also required flexibility, planning and arranging. The changing schedules were seen as negative and restraining.

*“Requires continuous planning, discussion and flexibility”*

*“Day to day life usually rolls around, who picks up the children from the daycare, who takes whom, and who is able to take care of whatever thing. We have to agree and arrange time together.”*

*“Not well. We constantly have to arrange someone to take care of the children, or arrange their hobbies or our own”*

On the other hand few of the participants had irregular working hours, but they were in charge of the time they work, which made them flexible if needed. In one of the participants answer the working schedule was planned according to the spouses working schedule so that the children would not have to spend too much time alone.

Not all the effects were seen as negative. In some of the answers the non-standard working hours were seen to have positive effect of the relationship. The participants had longer periods free from the work to spend together with their spouse and family, but also time to spend alone was valued.

*“Doesn’t effect at all, shift work allows us to have longer holidays together”*

*“It suits us well that we both have our time alone...”*

Some of the female participants challenged the conception of the mother being the head of the family. They saw the non-standard working hours as an opportunity for the male spouse to have more time alone with the children, and on the other hand be in charge of the family life.

*“It has a positive effect. Even the father gets to spend time with the children without the mother.”*

*“I think it is a good thing that the man also has to take responsibility to run the family.”*

In few of the answers participants saw that the non-standard working hours were seen challenging on the relationship, but they were manageable due to the understanding and support from the spouse.

*“I am tired and because of it, I don’t do much anything. Gladly my spouse understands it and lets me rest.”*

*“When we both work irregular working hours, we understand each other’s tiredness -- There is no need to argue about little things, just live a balanced life and respect others as well.”*

The participants and their spouses were accepting the situation and saw that they are in charge on how they spend their free time together. They were able to enjoy the little moments with each other, and take time off together when needed.

*“There is not much time to take care of the relationship when there is children and work, but there is time for ourselves together if we both want it.”*

Some of the participants saw that the non-standard working hours did not have an effect to their relationship. For many of them irregularity was normal to them, and something that they were used to do.

*“I’ve gotten used to the irregularity.”*

*“It does not have an effect, because we have always worked this way.”*

There were similarities with the participants who saw the non-standard working hours to be challenging but doable, and with the participants who saw that the non-standard working hours did not have an effect to their relationship. Both of the groups felt strongly that they can influence the situation by making an effort and having quality time together.

*“We don’t let it have an effect; our time together is quality time.”*

*“It does not have an effect. Time to spend together is a matter of will.”*

To find out the answers to my second question of the research I calculated how many times each theme was brought up in the answers (Table 3.) In thirty-seven of the answer the non-standard working hours were perceived straight forward “negative”. Lack of time, requires planning and flexibility, causes tiredness, stress and arguments, bad coincidence and the household chores are seen to be divided unequally can also been seen negatively. These can be summed up together to bring total of 216 negative answers.

Positive effects were mentioned only seven times, and five people saw that the situation is manageable due to the spouses understanding of the situation. Seventy-nine people who did not answers to the question and the twenty-four who replied the non-standard working times not to have any effect, can be seen as neutral answers. As it can be clearly seen, the effects of the non-standard working hours are mainly negative.

Table 3. Classification of the themes

	f	%
Not enough time together	129	49
Has an negative effect	37	14
Does not have an effect	24	9
Requires flexibility and planning	23	9
Causes tiredness and stress	19	7
Causes arguments	12	5
Bad coincidence, unequal deviation of responsibilities	9	3
Has an positive effect	7	3
Spouse is understanding of the situation	5	2
Total	265	100

## 7 DISCUSSION

### 7.1 Discussion of the findings

The aim of this research was to find out what kind of effects does the non-standard working hours have on the spousal relationship, and whether the effects are mainly positive or negative. The study showed that the most significant result of the non-standard working hours is the lack of time to spend together with the spouse. Not having enough time together lead to conflicts and arguments between the spouses, this was also increased by the tiredness. The results are similar to the ones found on the Finnish "Work and Family"-research conducted in fifteen different working places during the years of 1996 and 1997 (Lammi-Taskula & Salmi, 2004, 30-35) and Paletti-study conducted in the year 2003 (Rönkä & Kinnunen, 2009, 84, 93-94).

According to the data gathered from the Finnish participants it is hard to say whether any of these participants working hours will increase their likelihood of divorce (Bond, Galinsky & Swanberg, 1998), but interestingly in one of the answers the non-standard working hours were seen to play a role in the couple's upcoming break-up. Total of 206 of the answers the effects of the non-standard working hours were seen negative. Only in 31 answers there were no effects or it was positive. When going through the previous studies made on the subject apart from the men's decreased risk of conflicts, when working irregular working hours (Mills & Täht, 2010, 867) no other positive aspects were mentioned.

In the results received from this study, total of twelve participants saw the non-standard working hours to have a positive effect on the relationship. If the person is not able to change their working schedules, the positive support from the spouse and ability plan when to work, and not to work was seen positive. It was also mentioned that there may not automatically be time for the family, but if one arranges it, it may be possible.

Total of 79 people did not answer to the question, how the non-standard working hours affect their relationship. It would have been interesting to know whether they did not answer. It is that their relationship is in a good condition, and there is nothing special to talk about out it? Or is the relationship suffering, but the participant is not willing to talk about them? Or was the questionnaire too long, and the participants was already too tired to properly answers to the question?

During my studies I have had my fair share of irregular working hours. Like seen in this study, people tend to react to the irregularity in different ways. I have had colleagues who love evening shifts and nights. They wake up early in the morning and it seems that they are living very active life. On the other hand I have colleagues, who hate all the non-standard working hours, and when they have evening shifts and nights, working, eating and sleeping is pretty much only things they are doing.

I think it would be beneficial that the effects of non-standard working hours would be discussed already at the nursing school. In my experience we do not talk about these issues enough. It seems like when starting the studies we should accept the fact, that it is likely that our working hours will be irregular. Information that, how to adjust to non-standard working hours and what are the effects to the individual and to their social life and family ought to be taught already at school.

The results gathered from this study supported my personal finding and experiences. What was surprising to me was the amount of negative answers. What I also believe is that this research shows that the workers should have more influence on the working hours they are doing. In some of the wards that I have been working the nurses were planning their own working schedules. If they have more control on when to work, even when working during the non-standard working hours, I would say that the effects would be more positive.

## **7.2 Ethical considerations**

The ethicality on this research is on high priority since it deals with the people's personal experiences. Work, relationships and people's personal lives are a very sensitive subject. The process of gathering data, analyzing it and presenting the findings are to be handled with care.

The participation to the research was voluntary and the participant were able to withdraw from the study at any stage. One could also leave an empty answer to the questions he or she does not want to reply. The provider of the child-care or the employer did not have the access to the data at any point of the research, and they will also not know who has taken part in the study. The researches, including me, did not have the access to the names or the addresses of the participants to ensure anonymity.

The raw data, in which I collected my findings, was handed to me personally by the head of the research on a memory stick. The only information which I had from each participant was the gender, type of working time he or she is conducting, the type of working time his or her spouse is conducting, and the answers to the question: how do the working hours of you or your spouse affect your spousal relationship? To ensure that no one would be recognized from the answers, sensitive information were either left out from the examples or shortened to maintain anonymity.

### **7.3 Reliability and validity**

As the results were only part of larger questionnaire not all the participants had answered to the question in much detail. The answers gathered from the survey were good and informative, but some extra questions would have brought more insight into the effects of the non-standard working hours to the relationship.

The number of participants taking part in this study, as it being a qualitative research was large. However, larger sample size brings greater accuracy on the results. (Dawson, 2009, 54) The aim of the qualitative research is not to produce statistical truths or find correlation between different phenomenon's, but instead understand the participant's perception on the particular matter. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara, 2007, 170)

### **7.4 Ideas for further research**

As the research was done only as bachelor's thesis the theory and the research itself was only small insight on the matter. To find out more about the effects on the relationship and how people perceive it around the world, a literature review could be made. To restrict the amount of work this study also excluded participants who were working during the regular working hours. To

understand more about the effects of the working hours to the relationship, compassion study should be made.

It would also be interesting to interview single parents and people whose relationship has suffered from the working hours. With their experiences and suggestions we might be able to collect valuable data to enhance people's well-being when concerning non-standard working hours and spousal relationships.

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