

Nonstandard Work Schedules, Maternal Parenting Stress, and the Moderating Role of Child Care

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Background

- Millions of workers have regular or secondary work shifts that take place outside of traditional work hours – during evening, night, rotating, irregular, and/or weekend shifts. These individuals represent about one in five workers in the U.S. economy.^{1,2}
- Nonstandard work schedules are relatively common among parents, and unmarried women with young children are more likely to work nonstandard schedules, relative to other groups of women.²
- Previous research has produced evidence of a link between nonstandard work schedules and negative outcomes on measures of maternal wellbeing. Linking theories of the determinants of parenting stress³ and interrole conflict,⁴ this study theorizes that work characteristics are an important determinant of parenting stress and nonstandard work schedules have characteristics that create conflict between work and family roles.
- Given the importance of social support and family financial resources for maternal wellbeing, the challenges of nonstandard work schedules may be particularly salient for low-income mothers, single mothers, and mothers with irregular schedules. Nonstandard work schedules and child care may also come into conflict, depending on the type of primary child care arrangement used by a family.

Research Questions

- Is there an association between nonstandard work schedules and maternal parenting stress?
- Does the strength of any association between nonstandard work schedules and maternal parenting stress vary by: type of work schedule, the mother's relationship status, or family income?
- Does the type of primary child care arrangement moderate any association between nonstandard work schedules and maternal parenting stress?

Data

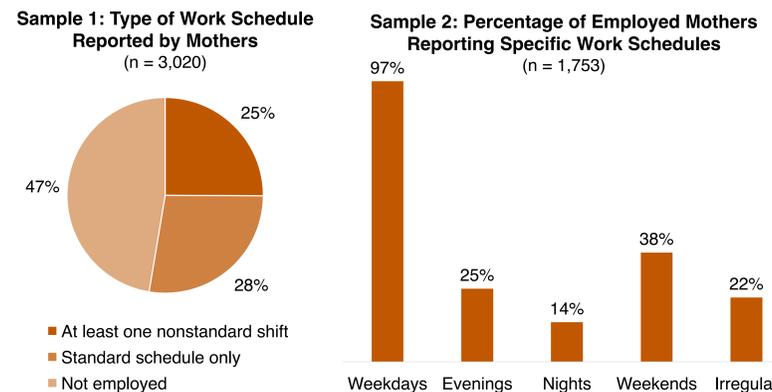
- Data are from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, a longitudinal birth cohort study following children (n = 4,898) from birth to age 15 in 20 U.S. cities.⁵ Data for this study are from the baseline and year 3 follow-up surveys.
- Mothers were excluded from the sample if they did not participate in the year 3 follow-up survey, reported living with the focal child less than half of the time at year 3, reported "other" for their primary child care arrangement at year 3, and were not included in the city sample. Analyses were restricted to complete cases.
- This resulted in a final sample of 3,020 mothers in sample 1. Sample 2 (n = 1,753) also excluded mothers who did not report current employment at year 3.

Methods

- Two sets of OLS regression models were estimated to measure the association between nonstandard work schedules and maternal parenting stress at year 3. Interaction terms were added to test variation by family income and relationship status, as well as moderation by primary child care arrangement.
- All analyses used replicate city weights.
- The first set of models using sample 1 used a binary indicator of nonstandard work schedules (1 = mother reported working at least one nonstandard schedule).
- The second set of models using sample 2 used non-mutually exclusive indicators for type of work schedule, including: weekday, evening, night, weekend, and irregular schedules.
- As a part of ongoing work for this study, these results will be re-estimated after multiple imputation is used to address missing data.

Descriptive Statistics

- Mothers' average parenting stress (range 1-4, alpha = 0.63 both samples) was 2.28 in sample 1 (SD = 0.64) and 2.23 in sample 2 (SD = 0.63).



Results

- Results of models 1a-1d for sample 1 and model 2a for sample 2 are shown in Tables 1 and 2, respectively. In each regression model, covariates were included to control for a range of mother, child, family, household, and work characteristics.
- Multivariate models do not suggest evidence of a statistically significant association between working a nonstandard schedule and maternal parenting stress.
- There is no evidence of variation in any association between different types of work schedules and maternal parenting stress. In models tested using variables indicating weekday, evening, night, weekend, and irregular schedules, there was no evidence of statistically significant associations with maternal parenting stress (model 2a).
- Similarly, there is no evidence that being single or not cohabiting with a romantic partner (model 1b) or residing in a low-income household (model 1c) are associated with maternal parenting stress, either alone or in interaction with nonstandard work schedules.
- There is no evidence that primary child care arrangement (model 1d) moderates any association between nonstandard work schedules and maternal parenting stress.
- These results were consistent with the second set of models tested using sample 2 of employed mothers (models 2b-2d, not shown). No statistically significant associations were found between the variables of interest and maternal parenting stress.

Discussion

- This study examined the role of nonstandard work schedules in influencing maternal parenting stress. The results did not provide evidence in support of the hypothesis that nonstandard work schedules, particularly night and irregular work schedules, are positively associated with maternal parenting stress.
- Results from the analyses in this study do not align with past research and suggest that nonstandard work schedules may not be an important factor in determining maternal parenting stress. Although this is contrary to my main hypothesis, it is possible that other work-related factors are more important in determining maternal parenting stress⁶ or that nonstandard work schedules are associated with different indicators of maternal wellbeing, rather than parenting stress.
- Despite these results, future research is warranted in order to better understand the implications of nonstandard work schedules for mothers' wellbeing, particularly for those who may lack social and financial support.

Table 1. Weighted Complete Case OLS Regression Results for Sample 1 (n = 3,020)

	Model 1a β (SE)	Model 1b β (SE)	Model 1c β (SE)	Model 1d β (SE)
Any nonstandard (NS) work schedule reported	-0.063 (0.098)	-0.059 (0.106)	0.042 (0.116)	-0.221 (0.205)
Low-income (< 200% FPL)	-0.013 (0.072)	-0.012 (0.072)	0.058 (0.060)	0.021 (0.061)
Mother single or not cohabiting w/romantic partner	-0.061 (0.065)	-0.056 (0.081)	-0.059 (0.065)	-0.080 (0.066)
Relationship status and income interactions				
Mother single or not cohabiting w/romantic partner * Any NS		-0.014 (0.099)		
Low-income * Any NS			-0.231 (0.161)	
Primary child care arrangement (ref: parent care)				
Relative care				0.092 (0.115)
Non-relative, family day care				0.255 (0.132)
Daycare/Head Start				0.106 (0.144)
Child care interactions				
Relative care * Any NS				0.242 (0.242)
Non-relative, family day care * Any NS				0.357 (0.367)
Daycare/Head Start * Any NS				0.184 (0.233)
Controls	X	X	X	X
R-squared	0.157	0.157	0.163	0.186

Table 2. Weighted Complete Case OLS Regression Results for Sample 2 (n = 1,753)

	Model 2a β (SE)
Type of work schedule	
Weekdays (standard schedule)	0.087 (0.245)
Evenings (6 pm – 11 pm)	-0.017 (0.133)
Nights (11 pm – 7 am)	-0.041 (0.138)
Weekends	0.121 (0.130)
Different times each week (irregular schedule)	-0.167 (0.108)
Controls	X
R-squared	0.175

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