

Comparative Assessment of Voluntary Unpaid Overtime Behavior in Turkish and German Organizations

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Abstract. Voluntary Unpaid Overtime is an interesting employee behavior in all types of organizations. Although it is significantly common, it has been recently recognized by the social scientist. After recognition of its existence we focused on the influence of culture on voluntary unpaid overtime. This study assesses the voluntary unpaid overtime behavior both in Turkey and Germany by using empirical data and compares Turkish and German Organizations accordingly.

Not only the employee behavior but also the organizational atmosphere is influenced from the culture. In this study we also assess the organization atmosphere in German and Turkish organizations which is also mainly one of the reasons of voluntary unpaid overtime.

1. Introduction

Unpaid overtime may be defined as the amount of time someone works in excess beyond normal (contracted/agreed-upon) working hours without additional monetary compensation [1]. Many studies to date have focused on both paid and unpaid overtime work. However, studies considering the voluntary unpaid overtime are very rare [e.g.2,3]. Unfortunately, voluntary reasons of unpaid overtime is either ignored or underestimated in the extant literature. The purpose of this research is to compare voluntary unpaid overtime behavior in Turkey and Germany.

Voluntary Unpaid Overtime (VUO) is a new phenomenon in the literature. Predate studies focused on non-voluntary unpaid overtime but almost none addressed the existence of VUO. Our purpose is to track VUO in different countries and compare. In this particular study we focused on German and Turkish organizations. We aim to prove that VUO exists and is significantly common both in Turkish and German organizations. Our result proved that although at different levels, VUO exists both in Turkey and Germany as well as other countries. However, this study focuses especially on the comparisomal assessment of voluntary unpaid overtime behavior in Turkish and German cultures.

2. Research

2.1 Voluntary Unpaid Overtime

Unpaid overtime is the amount of time someone works in excess beyond normal (contracted/agreed-upon) working hours without monetary compensation [2]. Unpaid overtime initially called the attention of business people just after The Industrialization Revolution especially due to its enormous economic value [1]. It is only the second half of 20th century when more and

more academicians started to focus on or take into consideration unpaid overtime [e.g.4, 5, 6, 7]. But almost all of the predate studies were focused on economic value of unpaid overtime [e.g. 8, 9] or on non voluntary reasons of it [e.g. 10, 11]. But even the existence of voluntary unpaid overtime has not been considered. This is also the case among the Turkish and German researchers.

Both paid and unpaid overtime labor significantly impacts work culture and employee satisfaction and has been studied by academics [e.g. 8, 11, 12]. However, studies considering the voluntary reasons of unpaid overtime moreover even the existance of voluntary unpaid overtime are lacking. To date, voluntary reasons of unpaid overtime is either ignored or underestimated in the extant literature [3]. The purpose of this research is to compare voluntary unpaid overtime in different cultures (Turkey and Germany) and gain cross cultural understanding and correlate the quantitative data with both quantitative and qualitative findings.

Some employees work extra hours without additional payment because they believe it is necessary or even required, whereas other employees work extra hours because they enjoy their work [12]. The following are working definitions of common terminology used in this research: “Non-voluntary Unpaid Overtime (NUO)” signifies when employees are forced to work overtime without any additional payment and “Voluntary Unpaid Overtime (VUO)” signifies when employees work unpaid overtime autonomously and voluntarily without additional pay [2]. Comparatively limited effort has been allocated to Voluntary Unpaid Overtime (VUO) where most of the predate studies were focused on the non-voluntary reasons of unpaid overtime [e.g. 11]. An empirical study on a group of employees from varying organizations with divergent demographics in Turkey and Germany where significant results were obtained. One important output of that study was that “VUO does exist and it is significantly common.” This study does not include any additional empirical data. However reassessment of existing data highlights significant differences from the perspective of comparisational analysis of Turkish and German business culture.

This study reveals that VUO exists both in Turkish and German cultures and is significantly common. It is an interesting phenomenon that workers put in overtime voluntarily even if they are not paid. Furthermore, paid overtime workers were not necessarily happy. (According to study findings both in Turkey and Germany). Unveiling deeper reasons of VUO will yield useable management insights for employee motivation as well as enhanced worker well being.

2.2 Methodology

Methodology for this study included developing a questionnaire for data collection. Questions are included in Appendix A [2]. The questionnaire measures the VUO in terms of the amount of estimated overtime hours worked per week:

- a. Voluntary Unpaid Overtime
- b. Voluntary Paid Overtime
- c. Non-voluntary Unpaid Overtime
- d. Non-voluntary Paid overtime

2.3 Data Collection

In the process of this empirical study, initially a survey has been conducted among 188 employees from different organizations in different German and Turkish countries. Respondents were presented with a questionnaire via e-mail. The questionnaire was developed as a Microsoft Excel document and included three sections. First section was about the descriptive parameters. Second section measures the existence of different types of overtime work (paid/unpaid and voluntary/non-voluntary). Finally the third and the last section is an instrument for voluntary unpaid overtime.

The third section of the questionnaire includes nine questions where each question was accompanied by a nine-point interval rating scale (Likert type). Each question is used for the measurement of one particular voluntary reason of unpaid overtime and the responses are collated into a nine-point bar

chart ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. Summarily, The use of nine-point bipolar scaling method measures positive and negative responses to a statement. Additionally, by not wording the middle category as “neither agree or disagree” this instrument produces a force-choice method of data collection.

2.4 Findings

This study expands the VUO research and aims to track VUO in different countries and compare. Our hypotheses are:

- a. VUO exists and it is significantly common.
- b. It exists both in Turkey and Germany.
- c. VUO results may be used for the comparitional assessment of Turkish and German business cultures.

Below are the results that are obtained from German and Turkish organizations.

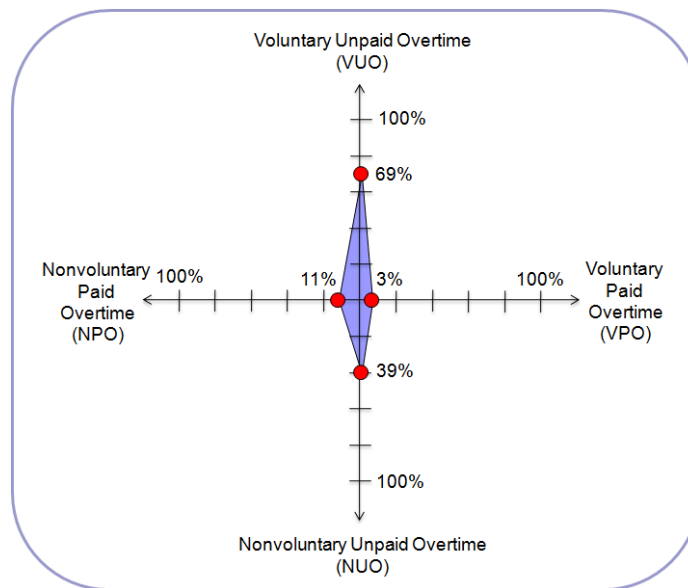


Fig. 1: Preliminary Results of Existence of VUO in Turkey [1].

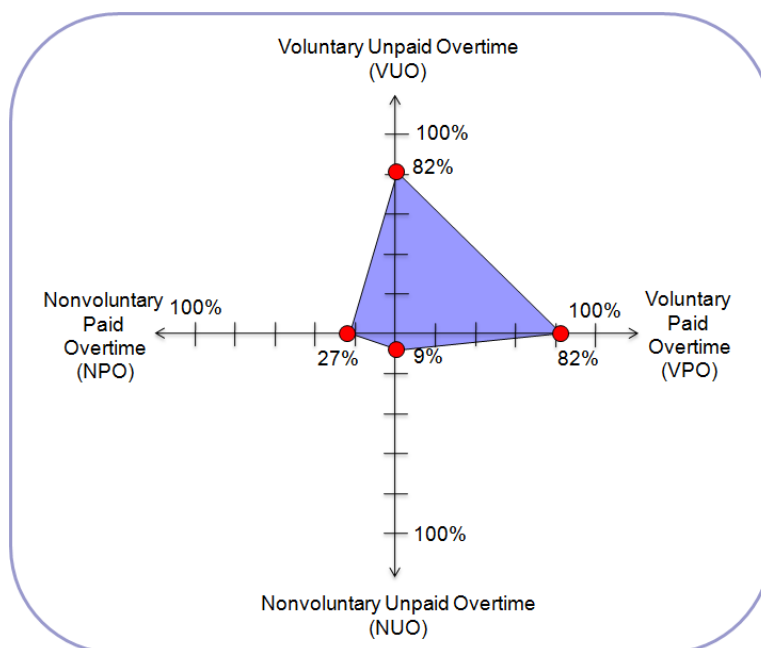


Fig. 2: Results of Existence of VUO in Germany [1].

The purpose of this research is also to examine both the voluntary and non-voluntary reasons of unpaid overtime. Existing literature on unpaid overtime is mainly focused on various non-voluntary reasons [e.g. 10, 11, 13]. For example unpaid overtime is assumed to be a criterion for promotion which is mostly expected from white collar employees [11]. According to this approach if firms use promotions to sort workers within hierarchies, workers exert effort in terms of current unpaid overtime among others to be promoted to better paid positions in the future [10]. Booth et.al [14] show that the amount of overtime correlates with subsequent promotions in a significantly positive way.

Anger [13] claimed that there is a correlation between unpaid overtime and likelihood of pay rise. He also claimed that unpaid overtime would reduce the risk of losing job [13] probably because in some firms performance is measured more by the number of hours worked than by how well the job is done. [11].

Work pressure also appears to be an important predictor for working overtime [15 cited in 16]. Fluctuations in market demand are often compensated by working extra hours and when workloads are high, employers prefer to let employees work overtime instead of hiring new staff because overtime is either free or less costly than hiring new workers [15].

In today's economy many companies are reengineered, reorganized, and downsized often leading to requiring the remaining employees to work longer hours, more days each week, and to maintain this pace for longer uninterrupted periods [11]. This might be interpreted as the employer or manager pressure for unpaid overtime. Company and organizational culture as well as peer pressure may represent reasons for the existence of VUO. Working under great time pressure may also force employees to work overtime. [15].

Following nine reasons of non-voluntary unpaid overtime are derived from the analysis of the existing literature [2]:

1. Higher likelihood of promotion
2. Higher likelihood of pay rise
3. Reduced risk of losing job
4. Work pressure
5. Employer/manager pressure
6. Peers pressure
7. Company culture
8. Time pressure
9. Subordinates pressure

Comparatively, limited number of studies on voluntary reasons of unpaid overtime exists. Most researchers accept that there might be some voluntary reasons for unpaid overtime but they preferred to focus on more apparent non-voluntary reasons.

Babbar and Aspelin [11] for example claimed that *in many Japanese organizations, working overtime has become a ritual of obedience and subservience*, in other words a kind of voluntary dedication. According to their study not all overtime is mandatory and many workers, especially white-collar employees, put in long hours of overtime work as an expression of their dedication to their companies.

Unpaid overtime is also considered as a part of a gift exchange between an employer and an employee; e.g., employees respond to employer-financed on-the-job training with unpaid overtime [10].

Depending on the observations of the author following nine reasons of non-voluntary unpaid overtime are derived [2]:

1. Dedication
2. Employer loyalty
3. Peers pressure
4. Job loyalty
5. Work needs
6. Work environment (organizational culture)
7. Nothing better to do
8. Lack of urgency to return home
9. Self improvement

3. Summary

Preliminary results from the initial two studies conducted in Turkey yielded valuable insight into the existence of VUO in organizations as a common phenomenon. By extending additional research in two additional countries we seek to unveil cross-cultural assessment of VUO and unveil cross-cultural significance that can aid international managers to promote employee satisfaction with regards to issues surrounding overtime practices and expectations.

Within social research, different research problems require different research approaches [16]. This research design was based both on an exploratory and conclusive research. It is exploratory because the research aimed to provide significant insight into the indistinct conditions of voluntary reasons of unpaid overtime. This study was conclusive, because it was meant to provide information that was useful in reaching conclusions.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire

Section One						
Gender	<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> Female				
Organization	<input type="checkbox"/> Public	<input type="checkbox"/> Private				
Total workers in your organization	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-10	<input type="checkbox"/> 11-50	<input type="checkbox"/> 51-150	<input type="checkbox"/> 151-500	<input type="checkbox"/> Above 500	
Age	<input type="checkbox"/> 20 and under	<input type="checkbox"/> 21-30	<input type="checkbox"/> 31-40	<input type="checkbox"/> 40-50	<input type="checkbox"/> Above 50	
Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Primary (K-8)	<input type="checkbox"/> High School	<input type="checkbox"/> Associates degree	<input type="checkbox"/> Bachelors degree	<input type="checkbox"/> Masters degree	<input type="checkbox"/> Doctorate
Job status	<input type="checkbox"/> Employee (non supervisory)	<input type="checkbox"/> Supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/> Manager	<input type="checkbox"/> High level manager	<input type="checkbox"/> Senior Executive	
Marital status	<input type="checkbox"/> Married	<input type="checkbox"/> Not married				
Experience	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1 year	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-3 years	<input type="checkbox"/> 4-6 years	<input type="checkbox"/> 7-9 years	<input type="checkbox"/> Above 9 years	

Section Two					
Have you ever worked overtime voluntarily for which you were paid?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No			
If you've worked voluntary-paid-overtime, on average how many overtime hours per week do you work?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-3 hours	<input type="checkbox"/> 4-6 hours	<input type="checkbox"/> 7-9 hours	<input type="checkbox"/> 10-12 hours	<input type="checkbox"/> More than 12 hours

Have you ever worked overtime involuntarily for which you were paid?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No				
If you work involuntary-paid-overtime, on average how many overtime hours per week do you work?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-3 hours	<input type="checkbox"/> 4-6 hours	<input type="checkbox"/> 7-9 hours	<input type="checkbox"/> 10-12 hours	<input type="checkbox"/> More than 12 hours	
Have you ever worked overtime voluntarily for which you were not paid?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No				
If you work voluntary-unpaid-overtime, on average how many overtime hours per week do you work?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-3 hours	<input type="checkbox"/> 4-6 hours	<input type="checkbox"/> 7-9 hours	<input type="checkbox"/> 10-12 hours	<input type="checkbox"/> More than 12 hours	
Have you ever worked overtime involuntarily for which you were not paid?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No				
If you work involuntary-unpaid-overtime, on average how many overtime hours per week do you work?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-3 hours	<input type="checkbox"/> 4-6 hours	<input type="checkbox"/> 7-9 hours	<input type="checkbox"/> 10-12 hours	<input type="checkbox"/> More than 12 hours	

Additional Comments:

NOTE : Please put an "X" in the dedicated (yellow) area and do not change other cells.

Section Three						
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Control
I voluntarily work overtime even if I am unpaid because...						
1 of my dedication.						0
2 of my loyalty to my employers/managers.						0
3 of my loyalty to my fellow workers.						0
4 of my loyalty to my work.						0
5 it is expected of me.						0
6 the workplace culture dictates it.						0
7 I don't have other competing things that I'd rather be doing.						0
8 I like to delay going home.						0
9 I am driven by the desire to become a better employee.						0

Additional Reasons:

