

Delaying Bedtime: Positive Self-Regulation to Resist the Encroachment of Public Time from the Perspective of the Sociology of Time

Yujia Wang

Fuzhou University, Fuzhou 350116, China.

Abstract: This research analyses the delayed bedtime from a sociological perspective by using TV stations in City B as a case study, combining with Novotny's sociological theory of time. The research found that this is a trade-off between adequate sleep and leisure time, both in terms of subjective perceptions and objective criteria. Previous research has neglected the self-controlled behaviour that actually exists during this process. Therefore, this behaviour cannot simply be defined as the result of a failure of self-control or an excuse for self-pity. A new way of understanding is offered in this research, bridging the gap in this field of study: In some cases, it is a conscious, purposeful, active self-regulation, essentially, as Novotny posited, an behaviour of confronting collective time, of escaping its domination, of desiring some 'fragmented' individual sense of time. Finally, the research provides initial directions that may radically improve the negative impacts of this behaviour.

Keywords: Delaying Bedtime; Sociology of Time; Self-Control; Public Time; Private Time

Introduction

As society develops, public time is constantly squeezing on private time. People can only regain sufficient private time by encroaching on other time, such as sleep, which is harmful to the health. Some questions to ponder: How public time encroaches on private time? What are the reasons for delaying bedtime? It should be noted that "public time" means "work time" and "private time" means "leisure time in this study.

This study uses Novotny's sociological theory of time as a theoretical perspective and a qualitative approach to conduct a case study of delayed bedtime among young employees, verifying that delaying bedtime is not the result of negative self-control, but a positive self-regulation, a struggle against public time. It is hoped to fill the gaps in this research field, giving scholars new perspectives and ideas. Further, to help people get necessary sleep to protect their physical and mental health.

1. Literature Review

1.1 Encroachment of public time

Time is no longer private property in modern society and has been largely publicized. Rather than being controlled individually, it has even become a scarce resource^[1]. More and more 'private self' has been replaced by 'public self' hidden in the institutions and structures of society.

The encroachment of public time on private time, such as heavy workload, public transport and social interaction, as well as the negative effects of poor sleep have been clearly and fully understood by scholars in various fields^[1].

1.2 Private time crisis and delayed bedtime

People experience a 'loss of self' in the crush of public time. They feel 'time famine' so they crave some 'momentary' private time or 'customised time experiences'^[2], which essentially counteracts public time and escapes its domination.

Private time can only be replenished by shortening other personally controllable time, such as sleep time. It is extremely detrimental to health. However, many research gaps exist as to its causes. One aspect, focusing on the biological perspective of the negative effects and factors that may lead to bedtime excitement rather than the causes and processes^[3]. The process of private time compression was seen as an objective phenomenon that does not need much exploration, and the behaviour was treated as an

objective fact with no subjective factors.

In the sociological and psychological field, there are indeed some studies on the causes of delayed bedtime, but the total is small and scholars largely used quantitative methods. While acknowledging that delayed bedtime is a common and subjective behaviour, they attribute it as a failure of self-control^[4], self-regulation^[5], or a self-compassion that failed to resist temptation^[6]. Some psychologists define it as a new conscious bedtime procrastination^[3].

In conclusion, the biggest gap is the lack of full and clear understanding of the causes. This study proposes a new perspective from the sociological field.

1.3 Theoretical perspective: Novotny's sociology of time

Novotny points out that conflict between private and public time is an inevitable consequence of the social division of labour and collaboration, an alienation of time, which is in essentially an unequal oppression of the individual by capitalism, industrialisation, state and organisation power. But if we emphasis entirely on private time, it leads to the degeneration. So the ultimate aim is to find a balance between them.

2. Research methods

The employees of the TV station in city B, China, was selected as the sample in this study because the media industry works heavily in overtime. So it can represent the group well and fits the premise of this study of reduced private time due to increased working hours.

The study used acquaintance referrals, contacting interviewees in advance through a staff Z acquainted to obtain their willingness to participate. A semi-structured interview format was used for this study. A total of 21 interviewees were interviewed, aged between 18 and 30 years old, and the information obtained reached saturation at the 16th interviewee. Due to the epidemic, this study took approximately 15 minutes for each participant by telephone interview. Recordings were made with advance notice and with the consent of the interviewees. The data was processed by open coding.

3. Results

The study got different findings from previous studies, validating the research conjecture:

Interviewees generally delayed bedtime because work was encroaching on their leisure time. All interviewees were working overtime and had few long holidays. They consciously and purposefully chose to sacrifice sleep for lost leisure time, knowing the negative effects of it. Meanwhile, they felt in control most of the time and did show some awareness and action of self-control, albeit with varying effectiveness.

4. Discussion

Delayed bedtime cannot be defined in a simple way. Its causes are diverse. This study provides a new perspective which places more emphasis on individual purpose, behavioural need and self-control.

4.1 Public time and private time

All interviewees had extra work time, and some specific occupations, such as editing and internships, are more serious. Most interviewees basically do not have long holidays, or even weekends. A 25-year-old male said:

"We had 3-4 days duty on the New Year holidays, unlike others with 7 days. Even having holidays, it's short."

There are two categories in general: the backlog of work and unforeseen events, such as urgent activities or due date. Interviewees who were affected by the latter had a stronger sense of their private time being encroached upon, leading to more dissatisfaction and agitation. A 23-year-old female stated:

"When my dedicated work phone rings, my head goes numb. I hate ad hoc tasks and cracking up. I sometimes woke up at 4 or 5 a.m. dreading him messaging me."

4.2 Delayed bedtime behaviour

All interviewees slept later than their ideal bedtime except one, about 1-2 hours. A few are for work and family, most for relaxing, such as watching films, shopping, reading, drinking, etc. Interviewees generally insisted on their choice, despite knowing its negative effects. A 25-year-old female is even a revenge bedtime procrastinator:

"I'm a revenge bedtime procrastinator on weekends or Friday nights. I watched a variety show or chat with my boyfriend. It can be lasted to 3 o'clock."

Subjectively, interviewees indicated that they are on the soul-sapping to fulfill moral and legal obligations. In the evening, after all the work was done, they deserved some own time. Although they knew that the healthier bedtime did exist and were

anxious about the effects.

Objectively speaking, the importance and necessity of this behaviour is due to the extreme lack of more desirable and productive long holidays, which makes "sporadic" time more precious. Some interviewees stated that it was worth sacrificing other time in exchange. As Novotny said: it's essentially a confrontation and an escape from collective time domination. Interviewees felt they did a great deal to decide whether they needed, wanted or deserved it, not become slaves to desires.. A 22-year-old male said:

"The time you enjoy wasting is not wasted time'. Especially after a busy day. I'd rather have less sleep. I can't say it's ideal but it's very necessary and exciting in my life."

Although it's difficult to judge whether people really need this "private time" by an exact objective criterion, they subjectively see it as a necessary and vital life motivation. It is a conscious and purposeful act to relieve stress of the day.

4.3 Self-control

Whether this process is a logical thinking or a self-sympathetic is not entirely impossible to discern by objective criteria. Self-control is a way to confirm that delaying bedtime is not an irrational submission to temptation, but a positive regulation.

Interviewees did have sense and behaviour of self-control. They won't let bedtime be delayed indefinitely. Some people shortened relaxation when they have to get up early, someone forced themselves to switch off the phone, and some sacrificed lunch break to accelerate their work schedule. They had a 'bottom line' and tried not to exceed it. A 28-year-old female said:

"I'll force myself to sleep if I have to get up early. I worry I can't get up on time and it's indeed bedtime. Leisure time is still necessary. I can't stand it everyday."

It's also reflected in coping with its negative effects, such as difficulty concentrating, poor sleep quality and mood disruption. A 25-year-old female interviewee had dizziness and headaches and had even been to hospital. People thought work cannot be changed so can only adjust themselves by napping, drinking coffee or tea. A 25-year-old male mentioned:

"It's definitely no energy in getting up. So I'm heavily reliant on coffee."

The researcher proposes that the "leisure time" could be retained or even added. If it can relax and relieve stress earlier, the potential of sacrificing sleep can be reduced. People with a high need for autonomy may get better results.

Conclusion

This research proposes a new perspective that delayed bedtime behaviour is a conscious and purposeful behaviour. It's not a compromise of desires, nor can it be defined simply as the result of the failure of self-control or an excuse of self-compassion. Rather, it's the result of positive self-regulation based on a balance of the pros and cons of adequate sleep and self-time, as evidenced by both subjective perceptions and objective determinations of self-control.

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