

Abstracts

Long Working Hours in Japan: International Comparison and Research Subjects

Kazuya Ogura (The Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training)

The long working hours in Japan are famous around the world. This paper reviews both the situation and the research subjects of long working hours in Japan. Firstly, the situation of Japanese working hours is described with an international comparison. The proportion of employees who work long working hours in Japan is not only higher among industrialized countries but also high compared to developing countries. Furthermore, the amount of overtime worked is huge and paid vacation is often not taken in Japan. Secondly, this paper looks at some research subjects of working hours in Japan. These include the functions of overtime and overtime premium rate, the complexity of measuring labour productivity, the adverse effect of long working hours on physical and mental health, the relationship between long working hours and pay-for-performance system, the problems of section managers, and the overdraft of consumers. This paper shows that these subjects should be considered and researched.

What Needs to Be Done to the Working Time Regulations in Japan?: A Legal Analysis of the Cause of Long Working Hours

Atsuko Kajikawa (Kobe Gakuin University)

In Japan, the number of workers working more than 60 hours per week and having health problems caused by long hours is increasing. However, the long working hours has been a problem in Japan for many years. What needs to be done to reduce them? This paper discusses the relationship between long working hours and working time regulations by comparing the situation in Japan with other developed countries and makes some suggestions for appropriate working time regulations in the future.

Work Management and Working Hours: Mechanism that Generate Prolonged Working Hours

Atsushi Sato (Hosei University)

This paper discusses the mechanism through which corporate management of work, the workplace, and working hours can cause prolonged or uneven working hours for workers. It has often been pointed out that a too-heavy workload for workers or a lack of management to ensure proper working hours forms the basis of prolonged working hours. In such situations, a simple formula, "workload = the number of workers \times working hours," is not applied to the process of work and personnel planning, and the danger signal of prolonged working hours is overlooked in work management. In addition, the problem tends to worsen with the addition of certain workplace management-level factors, such as an individual manager's particular managerial behavior (manner of assigning jobs to their subordinates, or their method of personnel evaluation), the nature of the job (e.g. satisfying customers), and worker perception of the work (oriented toward career advancement, or to earn overtime pay for living). Using case analyses and the results of a questionnaire survey, the present paper reveals the realities behind the problem and points out that in order to improve working hour situations, proper personnel management and appropriate job management are required at the workplace-level, in addition to the regulating of working hours.

Long Working Hours and Health Problems

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This paper examines the present situation and future needs for research on long working hours and health problems, based on several recent research and survey reports. The studies on brain and heart diseases suggested that long working hours are associated with brain and heart diseases. On the other hand, it was suggested that further studies are needed on the association between long working hours and mental disorders. The national surveys showed that long working hours were associated with shorter sleeping hours, fatigue, and subjective ill health. In the future, research should focus on the association of long working hours and mental health as well as the survey of long working hours and health for national representative samples.

Working Hours and Taxation: Implications of Prescott (2004) for Japan

Shigeki Kunieda (Hitotsubashi University)

The applicability of Prescott (2004)'s claim (tax rates can explain the difference of working hours in major industrial countries) to Japan is examined. While Prescott (2004)'s assumption of large labour supply elasticity cannot be ruled out for lack of sufficient empirical studies in Japan, the applicability of Prescott (2004)'s model to Japanese working hours seems to be limited. In Japan, the incentive structures of various benefit payments are more important to labour supply decision than the general tax rates. Since working hour reduction is a "coordination" problem, the roles of labour unions and government should be considered more deeply.