

## Abstracts

### Work-Life Balance Studies: Economic Concepts and Problems

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This article discusses an economist's interpretation of WLB, factors distorting WLB, and possible government interference. The individual is defined to achieve WLB when he/she maximizes his/her utility by choosing from "a variety of alternatives." The desired variety is exogenously determined by the individual. Collective models for intra-household allocation of time and goods aid our understanding of the intra-household factors preventing the individual's WLB. Hedonic price models aid our understanding of the market factors. The collective models assume that the household members have different utility functions, and suggest possible work-life conflicts and a new approach to explaining family formation and dissolution. Various factors, including WLB policies of the government and firms, changing social norms, and laws governing divorce, affect intra-household allocation of time and goods, and family formation and dissolution. The hedonic price models suggest that the free labor market could achieve WLB of workers by offering heterogeneous packages of job attributes. The degree of heterogeneity is determined by production technology, factor supplies and output demand. The tradeoffs exist between different job attributes among the packages. The high quality market does not evolve by itself. The development of market infrastructure is vital. Regulating the high quality market may result in work-life conflicts among workers. Few existing empirical studies by Japanese economists follow the collective model approach and even fewer focus on the hedonic market.

### Review of Sociological Research on Work-Life Balance

**Shingou Ikeda** (The Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training)

This paper reviews sociological research on work-family balance to reveal the problems with the research on "work-life balance". The results of the review are: (1) It is difficult for female workers to stay on the job during periods of childbirth and childcare, and a gap in paid employment tend to have a negative influence on both work and life after the childcare period is over. (2) It is becoming more important for male workers to shoulder family responsibilities, with both a decrease in childcare support from aged parents, and with an increase in the need for the care of elderly families with no female family members; (3) A common problem for work-family balance is the amount of working time, which is a deep-rooted problem in Japan. Overwork has been discussed for a long time — ever since the end of the postwar period of high growth. It is important to discuss how working time can be reduced in line with concrete life issues for all workers, not just those with families.

### On the Work-Life Balance from the Viewpoint of HRM Study

**Takashi Watanabe** (Kyoto Bunkyo University)

The basic paradigm of modern management (Human Resource Management [HRM] Theory) is the simultaneous realization of objective attainment by corporate organizations and self-fulfillment of individuals; the so-called "integration of effectiveness and efficiency." Therefore, in order for the corporate organizations to achieve their objectives by integrating individuals, it is best to establish a mechanism/system whereby the individual's contribution to attaining his/her organizations' objectives will simultaneously serve as a process of his/her self-fulfillment. However, the socialization of labor process in modern society has enlarged and expanded the scope and views of the individual's self-fulfillment and need to grow. It then appears as a "socialized self — achieving individual" model, whose motivation lies in "the individual's standing side by side and/or fulfilling his/her four aspects of life": ['work life' + 'family life' + 'social life' + 'individual life.']. Therefore, the organizations themselves have reached a historical point where, unless they cope with these four aspects accordingly through their "socialized human resource management" (by stimulating and maintaining his/her will to work and cooperate with others), they cannot receive the individual's contribution to the organization's

objectives. In other words, according to the paradigm of human resource management studies, work/life balance is considered as a HRM, whereby corporate organizations attain individuals' contribution to corporate organization's objective achievement by pursuing the individual's self-fulfillment and self-achievement of the individuals in the four aspects of his/her lives, and the corporate organizations stimulate and maintain the individual's motivation and will to co-operate. However, in order to realize (1) "standing side by side and fulfilling the four aspects of life" as well as "work/life balance in a broad definition," the following are essential: (2) "absolute and relative reduction of the work hours/work life hours," as well as (3) "gender equality and on-the-job cooperation among men and women in all area of life." This means that these three aspects, (1), (2) and (3) may be considered a "trinity." Although the three concepts are expressed in different ways, they share the same contents in relation to "a new way of working" and "a new way of making people work." Therefore, these aspects should be considered simultaneously.

#### Position of Work-Life Balance in the Labor and Employment Law

**Mutsuko Asakura** (Waseda University)

In the industrialized society where work and life are separated, working hours are merely one of the working conditions presented by an employer under the employment contract, that is, "contract made by others' decision." On the other hand, work-life balance (hereinafter referred to as WLB) is an innovative approach to bring the right to decide working hours back to workers, although it is partial. The Labor and Employment Law did not take private life of workers into consideration at first. However, the law now includes a future course of work balanced with life in a policy issue by gradually incorporating "gender-equality policy" and "support policy for the compatibility of work and family" reflecting the change in labor force structure and family form. Equal working condition regulations for men and women in "the gender-equality policy" and improvement of overall working conditions for all workers in "the support policy for the compatibility of work and family" are the key to eliminate sexual discrimination against women and those who have family responsibility. The modern-day WLB policy originates from there as well. Based on such a background, realization of "work" which does not obstruct the individual's freedom of choice and securing of life/health are essential premise for WLB, and care work at home is a high-priority issue of "life" in which the balance with work should be guaranteed. The legal norm grounds of WLB policy are found in the principle of equal labor-management decision on working conditions (Labor Standards Act, Article 2, Paragraph 1, Labor Contract Act, Article 3, Paragraph 1), the principle of equality and the principle of equal treatment (Constitution of Japan, Article 14), and the right to pursue happiness and the philosophy of human dignity (Constitution of Japan, Article 13). Among them, the most important thing is that all workers are treated reasonably in a balanced manner in proportion to value of each type of job, duty and employment status even if they are different in shape.

#### Measuring Trends in Allocation of Time over Two Decades

**Sachiko Kuroda** (University of Tokyo)

Using Japanese time-use data from the *Survey on Time Use and Leisure Activities* (STULA; from 1986 to 2006), this paper measures trends in average hours for work (market work) and leisure for Japanese over the past two decades. When we compare 1986 and 2006, we found that market work per week has been relatively stable for both male and female full-time workers. In the meantime, commuting time and home production had decreased by three hours since the mid-1980s for full-time female workers, indicating that the average hours of leisure had increased at least for females, even though market work remained the same. This finding suggests that observing just the number of hours in market work is not sufficient when assessing peoples' welfare. Interestingly, however, Japanese seem to have been consistently reducing their sleeping hours over the last two decades.

Empirical Analysis of Attitude toward Risks and Compensating Wage Differentials

**Koichi Kume** (Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry)

This paper empirically examines the theory of compensating wage differentials that workers who engage in hazardous jobs receive positive wage premium. In particular, we regard the relationship between attitude toward risks and occupational choices as a self selection mechanism, and we identify this mechanism by using a survey which measures risk preference of individuals, aggregate data contain industrial/occupational probability of death and injury, and an econometric model to deal with the self-selection mechanism. The results show that the relationship between risk preferences and occupational choices is not clear and that the evidences of wage premium to frequency or severity of injury are weak because they depend on the specification of estimation. We also find a positive wage premium to mental fatigue but a negative one to physical fatigue. Moreover, as additional analyses we calculate the value of statistical injury and discuss that risk attitude as unobserved productivity may cause an endogeneity problem when we estimate wage function.