

Abstracts

Long-term Trends in Leisure and Hours Worked: Economic Theory and Empirical Evidence

Naoki Mitani (Kobe University)

This paper investigated the long-term trends in hours worked and backgrounds by reviewing economic theory and literature, including international comparisons. There were four main findings. (1) In Japan, the reduction in hours worked of regular workers has typically been during periods of labor shortage. (2) The reform of the Labor Standard Law in 1987 contributed to the reduction in hours worked by Japanese workers to the level of their American counterparts. Nonetheless, the hours worked by regular workers have been stable since 1993. (3) It is difficult to explain the differences between Japan and continental European countries in per capita hours worked only by those in tax wedges. It is necessary to take into consideration the differences in the use and benefits structure of tax, including payroll tax. (4) The reduction in hours worked in continental European countries is largely due to collective agreements as well as governments' regulations on working hours based on the idea of "work-sharing" to create jobs by reducing working hours. In reality, hours worked were reduced but at the detriment of employment.

Legal Concept of the Leave and the Policy on the Leave - Absence or Leave?

Susumu Noda (Kyushu University)

In the field of Japanese employment law, Japanese workers don't get sufficient leaves worthy to be evaluated as the right to take a leave. It is especially a defect of the law that they don't have any medical leaves based on the law. However, there are a number of companies that provide medical leaves or other leaves to their employees based on enterprise's work rule. But Japanese workers at small companies or those who have irregular employment (part-time workers, temporary workers etc.) don't obtain medical leaves and other "special leaves" at all. From the viewpoint of contract theory (suspension of contract), giving a worker leave doesn't mean to give it with payment. Therefore, financial cost cannot be a reason for the refusal to allow leaves. A common and comprehensive scheme of various leaves should be established.

Measuring Trends in Leisure of Japanese Workers: A Long-term View

Sachiko Kuroda (Waseda University)

Using several statistics, this paper provides a long-term view of trends in leisure for Japanese full-time workers. The main findings are as follows. First, we showed that life expectancy of Japanese has increased drastically. Therefore, the amount of leisure after retirement has increased significantly over this century. Second, we showed that due to the increase in a five-day work week during these several decades, the number of days off has also increased. Given these observations, we pointed out that the total amount of leisure in terms of years or the lifetime of Japanese workers has increased tremendously over this century. Third, however, when we measured leisure in a shorter time span, we found that leisure per weekday of prime-age workers has decreased significantly over these decades. To sum up, the allocation of leisure for Japanese workers has changed considerably: leisure per weekday during prime-age has decreased while total amount of leisure after retirement has increased tremendously. Fourth, we showed a widespread increase in inequality of leisure by education status, with the highly educated group having decreased their leisure to a greater extent than the less educated group. This finding is consistent with previous results for other countries.

Summer Vacation and Annual Leave in France

Hiromasa Suzuki (Waseda University)

While the development of summer vacation and annual leave is naturally interrelated, summer vacation came first in France as a way of life for a rich bourgeois class in the second half of the 19th century. The first legislation for annual leave in 1936 was

intended to democratize the summer vacation to the whole working class. After World War II, vacation and annual leave increased hand in hand; public authority and social bodies made a considerable effort to improve the social infrastructure for affordable vacations (reasonably priced housing and transport) so that the working population with families could enjoy summer holidays. The length of annual leave was gradually extended by collective agreement and by law (third week in 1956, fourth week in 1969 and fifth week in 1982). However, the law on 35 hours per week - adopted in 2000 - added confusion by giving compensatory days off (often one to two weeks) in lieu of shorter weekly hours, to be used in addition to the annual leave. In comparison with other EU countries, the legal French annual leave is not lengthier, but if compensatory days for the reduction of working hours are added, then France is definitely at the higher end in terms of length of leave and shortness of annual working time. A lesson from the French experience for Japan would be the following: in order for Japanese workers and their families to benefit from a real summer vacation (“vacances”), much is needed to develop a cheap social infrastructure for long stays. “Otherwise, Japanese workers cannot afford to take their families on week-long vacations that are considered a worker’s basic right today”.

The Impact of Reasons for Not Using Annual Leave on the Acquisition Rate of Annual Leave

Kazuya Ogura (Waseda University)

We analyzed the micro data for the survey on annual paid leave conducted in 2010, and verified the impact of “Reasons for not using annual leave” on the acquisition of annual paid leave by regular employees. Reasons for not using annual leave were separated into four categories: passive factors, work environment factors, busy factors, and emergency factors. Upon analyzing the impact of these reasons for not using annual leave on the acquisition of annual leave, it was found that passive factors and emergency factors posed a significant positive impact, while work environment factors and busy factors posed a significant negative impact. In short, the stronger the level of passivity toward annual leave, or the more a person feels the need to take annual leave for emergency reasons, the stronger their inclination to “use at least a little of the annual leave.” With regard to the former, the inclination would be to use some of the annual leave despite a strong degree of passivity toward annual leave. Among work environment factors and busy factors, rather than reasons such as “busy at work” and “no one to take over the work,” it was found that workplace atmosphere, including factors such as “supervisor shows displeasure” or “other colleagues do not take leave,” had a stronger impact on the action of “not taking any leave at all.” Furthermore, looking at the impact of these factors on annual leave acquisition rate, it was found that passive factors did not pose a significant impact on acquisition rate. Taking this into consideration alongside with the impact on taking annual leave, it may be inferred that although the strength of passivity toward leave contributes to a tendency toward taking some annual leave, it does not have an impact on the rate of acquisition of annual leave. Moreover, both work environment factors and busy factors posed a significant negative impact. The strength of factors such as “supervisor shows displeasure” or “other colleagues do not take leave,” as well as the strength of factors such as “busy at work” and “no one to take over the work,” had the effect of reducing the rate of annual leave acquisition. However, the impact of busy factors was stronger than that of work environment factors. Conversely, emergency factors posed a significant positive impact. People with a stronger tendency of not using annual leave due to illness or emergency factors are probably more likely to use their annual leave in actual situations of illness or emergencies.

Activities of the Japan Productivity Center during Japan’s Rapid Economic Growth : Complex Effect on the Forging of Mutual Trust between Labor and Management

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This paper analyzes the activities of the Japan Productivity Center (JPC) in order to

examine the forging of mutual trust between labor and management during the period of rapid economic growth in Japan. Before WW2, both labor and management had recognized that their collaborative relationship improves the productivity of companies. Labor unions, however, had strong mistrust with regards to the distribution of profit. In the mid-1950s, the JPC's productivity movement was launched. This movement took over the intra-company democratization movement of Keizai Doyukai and significantly influenced the formation of new labor-management relations in post-war Japan. By documenting the oral history of the period from the core staff at the JPC, this paper analyzes the organization's efforts to restore mutual trust between labor and management. Three characteristics of this movement clearly emerged, and they are summarized as follows. (1) At the persuasion of labor and management, the JPC adopted a "detached neutrality" that favored neither party. Because of this policy of neutrality, which was established using a "scientific" and "evidence-based" approach, both employers and employees could trust the JPC as a mediator for their deliberations. (2) In an effort to restore mutual trust, the JPC increased the frequency of its communication efforts, and extended them beyond employer's associations and national trade unions to employers and employees at individual firms by using overseas study missions and the labor-management consultation system. (3) The JPC regarded its educational campaign as essential. It initially focused its campaign on training union leaders, and gradually extended it to union members and its general employees. If distrust of the productivity movement arose in the workplace, rank-and-file workers were required to be persuaded in order to restore mutual trust. During the process of this training, transparency of objective information was emphasized.