

Abstracts

Isomorphic Introduction? Factors Affecting the Introduction of Flexible Measures at Japanese Firms

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Major companies in Japan have been implementing measures that enable more flexible work, commonly referred to as “flexible measures.” Although prior studies have found that the availability of such measures varies across companies and employment status, few papers have examined the factors that affect their adoption at Japanese firms. This paper posits one such factor based on the theory of institutional isomorphism and examines its effect through a quantitative analysis of panel data from major Japanese firms from the late 2000s to the early 2020s. The results indicate that a company’s adoption of these measures is facilitated when other firms in the same industry begin implementing them. We found this industry-level effect to be more pronounced in companies with dedicated diversity departments aimed at promoting diversity in management. These findings are consistent with the hypothesis that institutional isomorphism, specifically mimetic and normative isomorphism, accounts for the introduction of flexible measures in Japanese firms. This implies that such measures are adopted not only to improve a company’s efficiency but also to address institutional pressures within the organizational field.

The Legal Framework for Employees’ Interests in Requesting and Refusing Telework

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This paper examines the legal framework for employees’ “interest in requesting” and “interest in refusing” telework (working from home) under employment contracts in Japan, with reference to the legal situation in Germany. Building on the premise that these interests possess “social value” in the sense of societal significance, yet do not, by themselves, provide a direct basis for legal assessment, the analysis clarifies their “legal value” as an evaluative factor in determining the existence, scope, or validity of rights and obligations, and examines how this is reflected in employment contracts. Regarding interest in requesting telework, this paper demonstrates that its legal value is justified by principles such as continuity, flexibility, and work-life balance (Article 3-3 of the Labor Contract Act, “LCA”). Consistent with the Japanese legal framework, rights and obligations arising in connection with a request for telework should be established and concretized through the principle of good faith based on the views presented here. As to employees’ interest in refusing telework, this paper argues that it is grounded in the freedom of private life and spatial privacy (Articles 13 and 35 of the Constitution of Japan). Finally, it demonstrates that, when an employer orders telework, the employees’ interests must be given the utmost consideration and ensured through a review of the reasonableness of work rules (Articles 7 and 10 of the LCA) and the prohibition of abuse of rights (Article 3-5 of the LCA).

The Right to Request Flexible Working Based on the Flexible Working Act in the Netherlands

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Flexibility in working styles, which has drawn attention in Japan recently, includes two perspectives: flexibility in working hours and in working location. While Japan has implemented some measures to promote flexibility, it remains difficult for workers to achieve flexible working styles autonomously. In this regard, the Netherlands is notable for its Flexible Working Act, which grants workers the right to request adjustments to their working hours and working location to their employer. This paper aims to analyze the characteristics of this right in the Netherlands by surveying its background, the content of the current law as well as recent developments and social surveys, thereby deriving policy implications for Japanese law. As a result of the analysis, this paper reveals the following characteristics: the right is generally recognized irrespective of worker attributes; some requirements are stipulated in the law to balance the interests of workers and employers; and the law has functioned to promote voluntary consultation

between employers and workers. The policy implications derived from this paper are that it suggests the potential for a new approach of granting rights to workers, that it draws attention to the interests of employers, and that it emphasizes the importance of voluntary consultation between employers and workers.

The Effects of Blame-Free Communication: An Empirical Study of the Effects of Solution-Focused/Problem-Focused Communication on Psychological Safety and Work Engagement

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It is widely recognized that effective communication within organizations is closely linked to interpersonal relationships and work satisfaction. However, the specific characteristics of communication that enhance organizational effectiveness remain insufficiently understood. This paper focuses on solution-focused communication, characterized by “blame-free communication,” and empirically examines its relationship with work engagement and psychological safety as a mediating variable. The survey was conducted by an internet research firm, measuring solution-focused/problem-focused communication (independent variable), psychological safety (mediating variable), and work engagement (dependent variable) at three-week intervals. An analysis revealed that solution-focused communication not only enhances work engagement through psychological safety but also directly promotes it. Conversely, problem-focused communication tended to decrease work engagement by reducing psychological safety. Finally, we discuss the implications of these findings for practice and the direction of future research.