

Work Characteristics, Personal Characteristics, and Working Hours Summary

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1. Background to and Objectives of Research

It is clear that long working hours present an obstacle to achieving a “work-life balance” for many workers. Japan has been working on the problem of long working hours over a long period of time, however, not always successfully.

The Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training has been engaged for many years in surveys and research relating to the issue of long working hours. As part of that process, we have clarified what type of workers are engaged in long periods of “unremunerated overtime,” and why they do overtime, in order to understand the state of basic issues of working hours in the contemporary labor market.

Surveys and research into working hours have clarified that the top reason for “exceeding scheduled working hours (engaging in overtime)” is “I have too much work to get it done within scheduled working hours” (referred to hereinafter as “heavy workload”)¹. For this reason, if it were possible to objectively measure “heavy workload” in numerical terms, it may be possible to understand the major factors behind long

¹ Sato (2008), JILPT (2005), JILPT (2006), JILPT (2009), Ogura/Fujimoto (2007), etc.

working hours. “Objective measurement of workload” means examining how many workers spent how many hours to achieve certain performances (assuming that all of the working staff has the same level of capacity and skills). In fact, however, individual workers have different levels of capacity and skills, and furthermore, if they work in different workplaces or at different tasks, the method required to measure “workload” will differ. For this reason, it is thought to be extremely difficult to measure “workload” in any format that will make it possible to compare diverse workplaces and workers.

On the other hand, the second most common reason for “exceeding scheduled working hours” is “Because I want to get my work finished properly².” This demonstrates the level of motivation among individuals in regard to their work. As a result, this high level of motivation raises the quality of the individual’s completed tasks (to above that required, in some cases), and it cannot be denied that this may be a factor in long working hours.

Ogura and Fujimoto (2010) investigated the various reasons for those who almost regularly work long hours, and considering the reasons as a working hypothesis, they saw the possibility of general application to a broad spectrum of workers. From the results of their interview surveys, they identified the following qualitative characteristics³:

- i. Relationships with clients, other departments of the company and partner companies, etc., have a significant impact on working hours and work styles. Consequently, if such relationships are not strong, working hours can be decided under workers’ discretion and appear relatively less likely to be long.
- ii. Respondents pointed out wasteful working practices and the lack of staff to undertake relatively simple tasks, but specific measures to improve these situations have not been considered or implemented.
- iii. “Lack of staff” is cited in almost all departments. As pointed out by Sato (2008), “gaps between initial planning and actual conditions after receiving orders” applies to a whole range of departments in the surveyed companies⁴. However, merely increasing the number of staff would not solve the problem. In other words, it is not the case that “anyone will do.” Rather, there is a common awareness that while everyone agrees that additional staff with abilities and skills would be welcome, the training of

² JILPT (2005), JILPT (2006), JILPT (2009), Ogura/Fujimoto (2007), etc.

³ See Ogura/Fujimoto (2010)

⁴ Sato (2008) points out that it is easy to use working hours (long working hours), rather than increased numbers of staff, as a means of solving the problem of the “disparity between initial planning and conditions after orders were received” (the fact that there are fewer staff in the department once the orders were received than were initially planned) and the fact that “management and regulation of working hours” is not connected particularly to “work management” (and therefore it is difficult to prevent long working hours).

- new staff also takes up time, and is therefore considered troublesome.
- iv. “Managed time⁵” allows a company to monitor the amount of time its staff spend at the workplace and those who exceed the prescribed hours are given a warning. This system and other company-wide measures designed to reduce overtime have contributed to reducing working hours, particularly among non-management employees.
 - v. Many people surveyed responded that they “do not aim to get a perfect score in pursuing their duties.” Furthermore, while all respondents felt that their current work was worthwhile, those regularly working late nights and on holidays expressed that they “would like to go home earlier” or “would like to get more rest.” However, some people whose working hours had been shortened even slightly compared to the previous year, and who therefore had better working conditions, responded “even if my working hours were shortened further, I would have nothing to do (in my time off)”.
 - vi. Despite the fact that all respondents were subject to discretionary working hours, or were in management position (or treated as supervising personnel), none of them changed their arrival or leaving times flexibly.

Of (i) through (vi) above, (i) and (ii) can be summarized as characteristics relating to ways of working and relationships with clients, etc. (hereinafter referred to as “work characteristics”). (iii) and (iv) relate to the facts that there are not enough staff in any department to avoid overtime work, the point that even if additional staff were brought in “the job cannot be done by just anyone,” and the issue of company-wide management of working hours as a whole, and can therefore be considered as long-term, constant “company problems with staff management.” Furthermore, (v) and (vi) can be summarized as relating to the characteristics of people who do not utilize a flexible working hours system even if they work under such a system. They complain about overtime work if it is too long, but at the same time, they take a certain amount of overtime or holiday work for granted, and they usually aim to achieve “80%” in their work. These are hereinafter referred to as “personal characteristics.”

The problem highlighted in (iii) seems to be common to most Japanese companies, and can be assumed to be one of the fundamental issues behind long working hours. Unfortunately, trying to explain this issue brings up a whole number of complications. Specifically, we can point to the fact that it is impossible to compare the abilities and

⁵ A system that monitors not working time, but the time between entering and leaving the company, and ensures that the Human Resources Department issues warnings, requests interviews or recommends health examinations for staff exceeding a specified amount of time.

skills of individual workers, and the fact that we cannot identify the actual disparity between companies' initial plans and the eventual reality of staff management. For this reason, there are unavoidably limits to the scope of analysis.

Despite this, however, (i) and (ii) (the "work characteristics") and (v) and (vi) ("personal characteristics") can be analyzed using individual workers' responses. In re-analysis of existing survey data, Ogura and Fujimoto (2010) found the following provisional results:

- i. Surrogate indicators⁶ for "work characteristics" have an impact on men. The surrogate indicator for "personal characteristics" (work/leisure-orientedness) showed clear results in both women and men. In other words, the strength of a worker's aspiration to work had an impact on the total length of their working hours.
- ii. When managers (who are often treated as supervising personnel) were surveyed to ascertain the impact of discretion to decide one's own arrival or leaving time to and from work, and their level of involvement in the employment or assignment of regular and non-regular employees, the former was found to have almost no clear impact, while the latter had some impact (in other words, if they were involved, this was likely to result in longer working hours for management staff).

As shown above, Ogura and Fujimoto (2010) demonstrated the impact of "work characteristics" and "personal characteristics" on the length of working hours, through interviews and re-analysis of existing survey data. They also indicated, however, the need for (1) verification of how the strength or weakness of relationships with clients, other departments within the company, partner companies, etc., impacted working hours, (2) verification of the relationship between "personal characteristics" (other than work/leisure-orientedness) and working hours, and (3) more detailed study of the characteristics of managerial work.

This paper reports on the implementation of a new questionnaire survey of individual workers, and the analysis of its results, in an effort to address the issues noted above.

2. Outline of Survey

In order to survey the working hours, awareness and other aspects of employed workers, we conducted a survey in February 2010 by utilizing a postal monitoring system operated by a private-sector survey company.

⁶ Using levels of "discretion at work" and "flexibility of workplace." See Ogura/Fujimoto (2010) for details.

From the “Basic Survey on Wage Structure” (2008), the ratio of men to women, and age groups, was calculated in line with the distributions of (1) “Division Manager class,” “Department Manager class” (managers at or above Department Manager), (2) “Section Manager class/Non-management staff” (staff under the level of Department Manager). A total of 5,000 people in each of (1) and (2) (10,000 people altogether) were surveyed. At the same time, a survey was also implemented of the wives (3) of men in the survey who were married. Survey documents were distributed to a total of 5,850 wives, equivalent to the number of men only in each age group multiplied by the rate of marriage in each age group (based on “Annual Report on the Labor Force Survey” 2007).

Responses were obtained from 4,423 (88.5%) of “managers” and 4,338 (86.8%) of “non-managers,” totaling 8,761 responses (87.6%). 640 responses were removed from collection and analysis since they came from people responding that they were not “regular employees,” meaning that the number of responses included in collection and analysis of data (regular employees) was 8,121⁷. The number of simple collection responses from wives was 5,318 (90.9% response rate)⁸.

3. Outline of Results of the Survey and Research

The survey responses were given in regard to January 2010, or for a period of a month. This report gives a simple introduction to the main discoveries in each section (for details, see Chapter 2 onwards).

(1) Working hours

Table 1-3-1 shows “Total monthly hours worked⁹.” The average (number of hours) is slightly longer for managers than non-managers. People working “fewer than 161 hours” are considered to be doing almost no overtime, and this accounts for around 30% of non-management staff.

⁷ This report collected and analyzed data separately for “non-managers” and “managers,” based on their position at the time of responding, rather than at the point of distributing the questionnaires. Furthermore, missing values are eliminated from the data collection, meaning that the number of responses in each table is different. Please see chapter 2 for details.

⁸ Responses from wives are intended for collection and analysis in a separate, future report.

⁹ “scheduled working hours per day” x “number of scheduled working days per month” + “monthly overtime.” See chapter 2 for details.

Table 1-3-1: Distribution of Total Monthly Working Hours

	Fewer than 161 hours	161 - Fewer than 181 hours	181- Fewer than 201 hours	201- Fewer than 221 hours	221 hours or more	Total (N)	Average (hours)
Non-managers	31.1%	26.8%	18.4%	10.4%	13.3%	100.0% (4733)	183.2
Managers	25.9%	29.2%	20.1%	9.9%	14.9%	100.0% (2623)	186.0

Table 1-3-2 shows the “time spent on overtime per month¹⁰.” The average (number of hours) is slightly longer for managers than for non-managers. Approximately 20% of non-managers responded that they worked “0 hours” of overtime. On the other hand, 12% of non-managers and 16% of managers responded that they worked long overtime hours of “60 hours or more.”

Table 1-3-2: Distribution of Monthly Overtime

	0 hours	1- Fewer than 20 hours	20 - Fewer than 40 hours	40 - Fewer than 60 hours	60 hours or more	Total (N)	Average (hours)
Non-managers	19.6%	32.3%	23.3%	13.1%	11.8%	100.0% (4733)	24.9
Managers	14.0%	21.1%	29.9%	18.0%	16.1%	100.0% (2623)	31.8

Table 1-3-3 shows the “time spent on unremunerated overtime per month¹¹.” The average (number of hours) is almost 30 hours for managers¹². 59% of non-managers responded that they spend “0 hours,” while only 21% of managers gave the same response.

Table 1-3-3 Distribution of Monthly Unpaid Overtime

	0 hours	1- Fewer than 20 hours	20 - Fewer than 40 hours	40 - Fewer than 60 hours	60 hours or more	Total (N)	Average (hours)
Non-managers	58.8%	16.7%	11.6%	6.5%	6.3%	100.0% (4733)	13.2
Managers	21.2%	21.0%	27.0%	16.3%	14.5%	100.0% (2623)	28.9

Table 1-3-4 shows the reasons for overtime¹³. For both non-managers and managers, the most common reason was “I have too much work.”

¹⁰ Number of hours worked outside scheduled working hours, regardless of availability or otherwise of overtime payments. See chapter 2 for details.

¹¹ Time remaining when “time for which overtime benefits are paid” is subtracted from “time spent on overtime per month.” See chapter 2 for details.

¹² Please see chapter 2 for “Unremunerated overtime” by managers.

¹³ This question was asked of people who responded that their overtime frequency was “almost every day” or “3-4 times per week.” Multiple answers (up to three) were allowed.

Table 1-3-4 Reason for Overtime (multiple answers possible, up to maximum of three)

	Insufficient staff	I have too much work	Work levels fluctuate heavily	Due to the nature of my job, I have to carry out some tasks outside of scheduled working hours	My superior's instructions and procedures cause a lot of wasted time in my works	There is too much pressure to get things done by tight deadlines	I want to earn more through overtime and holiday payments	People around me work overtime so I don't feel I can go home before them
Non-managers	30.2%	63.9%	17.3%	25.5%	8.5%	25.1%	3.9%	9.8%
Managers	23.7%	62.5%	15.7%	26.0%	3.7%	23.0%	0.1%	6.2%
	Unexpected work comes in suddenly	I want to get my work done properly	The details and objectives of my work get changed	I am not good enough at my job	I am training younger or less experienced staff	I am training my subordinates and younger or less experienced staff	Total	(N)
Non-managers	32.1%	24.1%	2.9%	8.4%	7.0%	3.2%	100.0%	(2515)
Managers	36.0%	30.9%	3.2%	3.2%	24.1%	2.9%	100.0%	(1766)

(2) Work characteristics, personal characteristics and working hours

“Work characteristics” surveyed included “nature of the job¹⁴” and “the nature of my superiors¹⁵.” The difference in monthly (average) working hours was seen in the extent to which respondents were positive or negative about the “nature of their job¹⁶.” People who responded that it “definitely applies” worked 10 or more hours longer than those who said it “does not apply” in such categories as “d. I spend a lot of time with clients or customers” (in the case of both non-managers and managers), “g. I attend a lot of conferences and meetings” (non-managers and managers), and “h. I can work in other places, not just the company” (non-managers). Among managers, those who responded that “a. Scope and objectives of work are clear” “definitely applies” to them worked 10 or more hours less than those saying it “does not apply.”

¹⁴ Responses given to the following eight statements: a. Scope and objectives of work are clear; b. I can set the pace and procedure of work by myself; c. I have a lot of work I can do on my own; d. I spend a lot of time with clients or customers; e. I spend a lot of time working with or coordinating with other departments in the company; f. A lot of my work requires planning or seeking decisions; g. I attend a lot of conferences and meetings; h. I can work in other places, not just the company.

¹⁵ Responses given to the following nine statements: a. I am instructed to produce more materials than are needed; b. There are more meetings than necessary; c. There is no sense of planning in the instructions I am given; d. The details of the work I am instructed to do are not clear; e. I am given instructions to do a job just before the end of my working day; f. I am given instructions to work that clearly assume I will work overtime; g. There is no standardization of the work given to different employees; h. I am forced to work overtime because others are doing so; i. The more overtime you work, the more highly you are evaluated.

¹⁶ Selected from “Does not apply,” “Does not particularly apply,” “Applies to a certain extent,” and “Definitely applies.” These responses apply to all further sections.

The difference in monthly (average) working hours was also seen in the extent to which respondents were positive or negative about each of the categories relating to the “nature of their superiors.” In all nine categories (a. I am instructed to produce more materials than are needed; b. There are more meetings than necessary; c. There is no sense of planning in the instructions I am given; d. The details of the work I am instructed to do are not clear; e. I am given instructions to do a job just before the end of my working day; f. I am given instructions to work that clearly assume I will work overtime; g. There is no standardization of the work given to different employees; h. I am forced to work overtime because others are doing so; i. The more you work overtime, the more highly you are evaluated) for both non-managers and managers, people who responded that it “definitely applies” worked 10 or more hours longer than those who said it “does not apply.”

In terms of “personal characteristics,” the survey looked at “Attitude to work¹⁷,” “Work/leisure balance (work-orientedness)¹⁸,” “Attainment level (%)” and “Attainment objective (%)¹⁹.”

The difference in monthly working hours (average) could be seen in the extent to which respondents were positive or negative in their “attitude to work.” People who responded that it “definitely applies” worked 10 or more hours longer than those who said it “does not apply” in such categories as “a. I have a strong desire to succeed” (among non-managers), “c. I can’t say ‘no’ if someone asks me to do a job” (non-managers and managers), “e. I strongly desire to work in a specialist profession” (non-managers), “i. I don’t go home until my superiors leave the office” (both non-managers and managers). In addition, managers who responded that it “definitely applies” to categories “b. I have a strong ability to manage myself”, and “d. I work quickly” worked more than 10 hours less than those who responded it “does not apply.”

In terms of the relationship between “work/leisure balance” and total monthly working hours, in both non-managers and managers, the average hours worked grew shorter in an almost straight line from those responding “I look for meaning in my work

¹⁷ Responses given to the following ten statements: a. I have a strong desire to succeed; b. I have a strong ability to manage myself; c. I can’t say no if someone asks me to do a job; d. I work quickly; e. I strongly desire to work in a specialist profession; f. I am good at cooperation; g. I feel insecure if I don’t have a work to do; h. I have a strong sense of responsibility for my work; i. I don’t go home until my superiors leave the office; j. My human resources assessments have been of a high standard to date.

¹⁸ One answer selected from “I look for meaning in my work and put all my energies into it,” “I put energy into my work, but I sometimes enjoy free time too,” “I think that work and free time are equally as important as one another,” “I work to a certain extent but enjoy my free time as much as possible,” and “I do not prioritize work, but rather look for meaning in my free time.”

¹⁹ “Attainment level (%)” and “Attainment objective (%)” were defined as “Look at your work and role, and award yourself an average percentage, where 100 would be the maximum. What is your percentage? And what percentage are you aiming for in your work, on average? Please answer within the scope 0 – 100.”

and put all my energies into it” through to those responding “I do not prioritize work, but rather look for meaning in my free time.”

The relationship between attainment level and total monthly working hours showed that among both non-managers and managers, those saying they attained “100%” had the longest monthly (average) working hours. In terms of the relationship between attainment objective and total monthly working hours, non-managers who were aiming for “100%” had relatively long monthly (average) working hours, but the same trend was not apparent among managers.

Having fixed the impact of a range of attributes, the authors next performed multivariate analysis to verify whether “work characteristics” and “personal characteristics” have an impact on working hours,²⁰ and found the following (see table 1-3-5).

- i. Of all “work characteristics,” in terms of the “nature of the job,” those who responded that their “Scope and objectives of work are clear” (managers), “I can set the pace and procedure of work by myself” (non-managers and managers) or “I can work in other places, not just the company” (managers) tended to have shorter working hours. On the other hand, however, those responding “I spend a lot of time with clients or customers” (non-managers), “A lot of my work requires planning or seeking decisions” (non-managers and managers), or “I attend a lot of conferences and meetings” (non-managers and managers) tended to have longer working hours. This demonstrates that “work characteristics” such as strength or weakness of relationships with other companies and people, as well as one’s own clarity of work objectives, and level of discretion over how work progresses, have an impact on working hours.
- ii. Of all “work characteristics,” respondents who said in terms of the “nature of their superiors” that “I am given instructions to work that clearly assume I will work overtime” (non-managers and managers), “There is no standardization of the work given to different employees” (non-managers and managers) or “I am forced to work overtime because others are doing so” (non-managers) tended to work longer hours. This indicates that in situations where a superior member of staff assumes “overtime” to be natural, and is not considerate of the burden of work placed on individual staff working under him/her, the working hours of those members of staff tend to be longer.

²⁰ See chapter 2 for details.

- iii. In terms of “personal characteristics,” when asked about their “attitude to work,” respondents saying “I have a strong desire to succeed” (non-managers), “I can’t say ‘no’ if someone asks me to do a job” (managers), “I don’t go home until my superiors leave the office” (non-managers), or “My personnel evaluation have been of a high standard to date” (non-managers and managers) tended to work longer hours. This indicates the impact that the “seriousness” with which a worker approaches their job has an impact on lengthening working hours.
- iv. Among “personal characteristics,” the stronger the attitude to work, the more likely they were to work long hours (both non-managers and managers).
- v. Among “personal characteristics,” we can see, from the impact of “attainment level” and “attainment objective,” that when non-managers set attainment objectives high for their own work and roles, and also evaluate themselves highly, their working hours tend to be longer. On the other hand, those aiming for a more mediocre attainment level tend to have shorter working hours.

Table 1-3-5: Impacts of Work Characteristics and Personal Characteristics on Total Monthly Working Hours

Main explanatory variable		Non-managers				Managers			
		Estimate 1	Estimate 2	Estimate 3	Estimate 4	Estimate 1	Estimate 2	Estimate 3	Estimate 4
Nature of the job (positive +2 to negative -2)	a. Scope and objectives of work are clear						-		-
	b. I can set the pace and procedure of work by myself	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	c. I have a lot of work I can do on my own					+		+	
	d. I spend a lot of time with clients or customers	+	+	+	+				
	e. I spend a lot of time working with or coordinating with other departments in the company								
	f. A lot of my work requires planning or seeking	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	g. I attend a lot of conferences and meetings	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	h. I can work in other places, not just the company					-			
Nature of superior(s) (positive +2 to negative -2)	a. I am instructed to produce more materials than are needed								
	c. There is no sense of planning in the instructions I am given								
	f. I am given instructions to work that clearly assume I will work overtime	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	g. There is no standardization of the work given to different employees	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	h. I am forced to work overtime because others are doing so	+		+					
i. The more overtime you work, the more highly you are evaluated									
Attitude to work (positive +2 to negative -2)	a. I have a strong desire to succeed		+						
	b. I have a strong ability to manage myself		-						
	c. I can't say no if someone asks me to do a job					+	+	+	+
	d. I work quickly								
	e. I strongly desire to work in a specialist profession								
	f. I am good at cooperation					-	-	-	-
	g. I feel insecure if I don't have job	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	h. I have a strong sense of responsibility for my work								
	i. I don't go home until my superiors leave the office	+	+	+	+				
	j. My personnel evaluation have been of a high standard to date		+		+	+	+	+	+
Work-orientedness (+2 to -2)		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Attainment level (1) (2) (80-89%)	1-69%								
	70-79%								
	90-99%								
	100%	+	+						
Attainment objective (3) (4) (80-89%)	1-69%								
	70-79%								
	90-99%								
	100%								

Note 1: + indicates an impact that leads to longer working hours. – indicates an impact that leads to shorter working hours.

Note 2: Figures in brackets are dummy variables (reference group).

Note 3: See chapter 2 for details.

(3) Characteristics and working hours of managers

The survey looked at “Freedom to decide the time at which one arrives at/leaves work²¹,” “Level of “play”²²,” “Number of regular employees managed,” “Number of non-regular employees managed²³,” and “Proportion of regular employees requiring

²¹ Responses to the question “Does your company system allow you to decide what time you arrive at and leave the company for yourself?” selected from “Able to decide” and “Not able to decide.” Those responding “Able to decide” were asked “Do you arrive at and leave the company at the same time each day?” the answer to which was selected from “Yes, roughly the same time” and “No, it changes depending on what I am doing.”

²² As in a player-manager of baseball, the percentage of your own work = “play” when assuming the sum of “play” and “managerial role” (managing others) is 100

²³ Total number of part-timers, casual employees, contract employees and other non-regular employees, as well as

guidance²⁴” as “managerial characteristics.”

62.8% of Department Managers and 56.2% of Division Managers replied that they were “Not able to decide” the time they arrive at or leave the company. 65.9% of Department Managers and 65.8% of Division Managers who responded that they were “Able to decide” responded that they arrived at and left work at “Roughly the same time” every day. The arrival and departure times of management are certainly not flexible.

The level of “play” (average) was 59.0 for Department Managers and 48.9 for Division Managers, indicating the tendency towards a higher score for those in lower posts. Division Managers averaged a higher number both of regular and non-regular staff they were managing. There was no particular disparity according to post, however, in the proportion of regular employees requiring guidance.

Within these “management characteristics,” the greater the number of regular and non-regular employees managed, and the “proportion of regular employees requiring guidance,” the longer the manager’s total monthly working hours (average) was likely to be.

Having fixed the impact of a range of attributes, the author next performed multivariate analysis to verify whether “management characteristics” have an impact on working hours²⁵, and found the following (see table 1-3-6).

Table 1-3-6: Impacts of Management Characteristics on Total Monthly Working Hours

Main explanatory variable		Estimate 1	Estimate 2	Estimate 3	Estimate 4
Arrival/departure time	Roughly the same each day				
Level of "play" (0 - 100)		+	+	+	+
No. of regular employees managed (4 or fewer)	5-9	+		+	
	10-19				
	20 or more	+	+	+	+
No. of non-regular employees managed (0)	1-9	+	+	+	+
	10 or more	+	+	+	+
Proportion of regular employees requiring guidance (0-100)		+	+	+	+

Note 1: + indicates an impact that leads to longer working hours. – indicates an impact that leads to shorter working hours.

Note 2: Figures in brackets are dummy variables (reference group).

Note 3: See chapter 3 for details.

temporary staff

²⁴ “When considering all the employees you manage as 100,” and breaking them down into “Those requiring guidance,” “Those who can work independently” and “Those who can offer guidance to others,” the proportion of “Those requiring guidance”

²⁵ See chapter 3 for details.

- i. Whether or not a manager is able to freely decide their arrival/departure times, and, if he/she is able to decide, whether or not he/she arrives at “roughly the same time each day” or vary “depending on what I am doing,” has no impact on the length of his/her working hours. If we consider managers to be in important positions of responsibility that require them to behave without being bound by restrictions in order to manage the company, we could understand that their right to decide, and be flexible about, their own arrival and departure times to and from work is acknowledged accordingly. In fact, however, the way a manager decides on his/her arrival and departure times to and from work does not have an impact on their working hours. This is either because the manager is not in a position to decide his/her arrival and departure times freely, and to move them around so that he/she can work longer on some days than others, and is already required to work long hours, or because, despite being in a position to decide arrival and departure times, managers tend to proactively engage in long hours of work.
- ii. Management staff who are “player-managers” work longer hours the higher their level of play. This may be obvious, since they are engaging not only in their primary managerial work, but also in their own “play.” It casts doubt, however, on whether Japanese managers are truly engaged in management.
- iii. Managers’ working hours are longer the more subordinates they are managing regardless of whether these subordinates are regular or non-regular employees.
- iv. The more subordinates a manager has who require guidance, the longer his/her working hours will tend to be.

(4) Subordinates with the longest working hours, and overtime remuneration

Responses of managers to the question “Please identify your subordinate with the longest working hours²⁶” (although this was not asked in regard to all departments). Managers were also asked about the remuneration given for overtime at their workplace. The major facts discovered are as listed below.

- i. The subordinates working the longest hours of overtime averaged 35 hours. In terms of occupations ²⁷, people working in “Communications/Transport” and “Manufacturing” worked long hours, and in terms of scale²⁸, people in large companies tended to work longer.
- ii. The more employees a manager had to manage, the longer the overtime hours of the

²⁶ Limited to hours worked during the month of January 2010

²⁷ See chapter 2 for occupational categories.

²⁸ See chapter 2 for details of scale.

subordinate working the longest tends to be.

- iii. The more positive attributes²⁹ the manager expressed in regard to his/her subordinates (“He/she can’t say no if someone asks him/her to do a job,” “He/she is good at cooperation,” “He/she shows a strong sense of responsibility for his/her work,” “He/she doesn’t go home until his/her superiors leave the office,” “His/her personnel evaluation is of a high standard”), the longer the subordinates were likely to work overtime.
- iv. Furthermore, the more positive the manager was about subordinates’ work qualities³⁰ (“He/she spends a lot of time with clients or customers,” “He/she spends a lot of time working or coordinating with other departments in the company,” “A lot of his/her work requires planning or seeking decisions,” “He/she attends a lot of conferences and meetings,” “He/she can work in other places, not just the company”), the longer the subordinates were likely to work overtime.
- v. The major reason given for overtime by subordinates³¹ was “They have a heavy workload.”
- vi. 64% of respondents stated that there was “no upper limit” to overtime payments, while of those who responded that there was an upper limit, 65% said that their upper limit was a “maximum of 30 hours.”
- vii. More than 60% of managers said that their evaluations of subordinates who worked long overtime hours were “not affected either way,” although in the “Construction” industry and in small and medium enterprises, slightly more respondents answered that they “evaluated them higher to a certain extent” (see table 1-3-7).

²⁹ Based on responses to the following 10 statements: a. He/she has a strong desire to succeed; b. He/she has a strong ability to manage him/herself; c. He/she can’t say no if someone asks him/her to do a job; d. He/she works quickly; e. He/she strongly desires to work in a specialist profession; f. He/she is good at cooperation; g. He/she feels insecure if he/she doesn’t have a job; h. He/she has a strong sense of responsibility for his/her work; i. He/she doesn’t go home until his/her superiors leave the office; j. His/her human resources assessments are of a high standard.

³⁰ Responses given to the following eight statements: a. Scope and objectives of work are clear; b. He/she can set the pace and procedure of work by him/herself; c. He/she has a lot of work he/she can do on his/her own; d. He/she spends a lot of time with clients or customers; e. He/she spends a lot of time with working with or coordinating with other departments in the company; f. A lot of his/her work requires planning or seeking decisions; g. He/she attends a lot of conferences and meetings; h. He/she can work in other places, not just the company.

³¹ Up to three responses possible from the following 15: “Insufficient staff,” “They have too much work,” “Work levels fluctuate heavily,” “Due to the nature of his/her job, he/she has to carry out some tasks outside of prescribed working hours,” “His/her superior’s instructions and procedures cause a lot of wasted time in his/her work,” “There is too much pressure to get things done by tight deadlines,” “He/she wants to earn more through overtime and holiday payments,” “People around him/her work overtime so he/she doesn’t feel he/she can go home before them,” “Unexpected work comes in suddenly,” “He/she wants to get his/her work done properly,” “The details and objectives of his/her work get changed,” “He/she is not good enough at the job,” “He/she is training younger or less experienced staff,” “Other,” “Don’t know.”

Table 1-3-7 Evaluations of Subordinates who Work Long Overtime Hours, by Industry
Type/Scale of Company

	Evaluate them higher	Evaluate them higher to a certain extent	Not affected either way	Evaluate them lower to a certain extent	Evaluate them lower	Total	(N)
Construction	3.0%	26.1%	60.3%	8.5%	2.1%	100.0%	(234)
Manufacturing	1.5%	20.1%	64.2%	11.8%	2.4%	100.0%	(802)
Communications/Transportation	0.7%	18.8%	61.7%	15.6%	3.2%	100.0%	(282)
Logistics/Food and beverage	1.5%	14.7%	63.9%	15.5%	4.4%	100.0%	(388)
Finance/Real estate	2.0%	11.1%	61.5%	18.9%	6.4%	100.0%	(296)
Academia/Education/Medicine	3.6%	19.6%	58.7%	15.1%	3.1%	100.0%	(225)
Other service	2.0%	17.7%	63.3%	11.2%	5.8%	100.0%	(294)
Total	1.9%	18.3%	62.6%	13.6%	3.7%	100.0%	(2521)
99 employees or fewer	2.8%	22.6%	57.1%	13.1%	4.4%	100.0%	(611)
100–999 employees	1.5%	18.0%	62.9%	14.6%	3.1%	100.0%	(918)
1000 employees or more	1.6%	15.8%	65.6%	13.2%	3.8%	100.0%	(1070)
Total	1.8%	18.2%	62.6%	13.7%	3.7%	100.0%	(2599)

(5) Workaholism and physical/mental health

The survey looked at the issue of “workaholics.” “Workaholic” is usually used to mean someone addicted to working, and therefore tends to be taken with a negative emphasis. In many research cases, long working hours is taken as indicating workaholism. Some research, however, suggests that workaholics are not necessarily defined by working hours, but rather by a psychological tendency to, and behavior indicative of, an addiction to work. A leading example of this research defines workaholics according to “Work involvement,” “Feeling driven to work,” and “Enjoyment of work³²,” and suggests that in comparison with ordinary workers, they (1) have a high level of work involvement, (2) have an internal compulsion in regard to work, but (3) do not enjoy their work.

For this survey, therefore, the author added questions relating to the three elements of “work involvement,” “feeling driven to work,” and “enjoyment of work³³,” and considered the relationship between workaholism and physical/mental health, with the result that the following facts were ascertained (see table 1-3-8).

- i. In the case of non-managers working 201 or more hours, in general, “enjoyment of work” provides a positive impact on mental and physical health, while “feeling driven to work” and “work involvement” has a negative impact.

³² “Work involvement” (“I have almost no free time between my workplace and any other activities in which I am involved” and six other categories), “Feeling driven to work” (“Even when I think I would like to leave work for a while, I often find myself thinking about work” and six other categories), and “Enjoyment of work” (“My workplace feels less like work and more like a place of enjoyment” and eight other categories). See chapter 5 for details.

³³ The previously noted “Work/Leisure balance” was used to measure enjoyment of work. For “feeling driven to work,” people were asked to respond to the statement “Even if I leave work I am always thinking about it and cannot get work out of my mind” with one of the following four responses: “Always true” (=+3), “Often true” (=+2), “Sometimes true” (=+1), “Almost never true”(=0). For “work involvement,” people were asked to respond to the statement “Work just keeps coming, and I have to process so many things at once” (using the same responses as for “feeling driven to work” above). See chapter 5 for details.

- ii. In the case of managers, the overall trends were similar to those of non-managers, but among people working 201 hours or more, only “feeling driven to work” demonstrated a statistically significant impact.
- iii. Among both managers and non-managers, the strength of their “feeling driven to work” had a negative effect on both mental and physical health.

Table 1-3-8: Impacts of Elements of Workaholism on Physical and Mental Health

Main explanatory variable	Non-managers		Managers	
	Overall	Total monthly working hours of 201 hours or more	Overall	Total monthly working hours of 201 hours or more
Total monthly working hours	+	+	-	-
Enjoyment of work (High +2 to Low -2)	-	-	-	-
Feeling driven to work (High +3 to Low 0)	+	+	+	+
Work involvement (High +3 to Low 0)	+	+	+	+

Note 1: + indicates a negative impact on mental and physical health. – indicates a positive impact.
 Note 2: See chapter 5 for details.

In addition to this, it is thought that a perfectionist personality is related to the way a workaholic works. To test this, the author looked at the relationship between the three elements of workaholism and employees’ own work evaluations. For this, the “attainment levels” and “attainment objectives” noted above were used to measure work evaluations (see table 1-3-9).

Table 1-3-9: Mutual Relationship between Elements of Workaholism, “Attainment Levels” and “Attainment Objectives”

	Non-managers		Managers	
	Attainment level	Attainment objective	Attainment level	Attainment objective
Enjoyment of work (N)	0.119** (4930)	0.220** (4927)	0.054** (2692)	0.148** (2683)
Feeling driven to work (N)	-0.115** (4896)	0.003 (4892)	-0.067** (2669)	0.025 (2660)
Work involvement (N)	0.003 (4900)	0.048** (4896)	0.005 (2673)	0.037* (2664)

* indicates 5%, * indicates 10% as statistically significant criteria

“Enjoyment of work” (work/leisure balance) showed a significant positive mutual relationship with “attainment level” and “attainment objective” for both non-managers and managers. In other words, the stronger the work-orientedness, the higher

attainment levels tend to be set. For neither non-managers nor managers, however, did “feeling driven to work” show a significant relationship to their “attainment objective.” It did, however, show a statistically significant negative relationship to “attainment level.” In other words, the higher the feeling driven to work, the lower the attainment level achieved.

From the results above, we can see that strongly work-oriented people tend to have higher levels both of attainment and objective, and that they are positive about getting on with their work. In contrast to this, people who are constantly thinking about work have a tendency to attain low levels in self-evaluation of their work.

In addition to this, we analyzed people considered to have high levels of “work involvement” with regard to their combined levels of “enjoyment of work” and “feeling driven to work,” and broke them down into 4 groups of “High enjoyment/High compulsion,” “High enjoyment/Low compulsion,” “Low enjoyment/High compulsion” and “Low enjoyment/Low compulsion.” As a result, the strength of a worker’s “feeling driven to work” was understood to have a negative impact on their physical/mental health, regardless of their level of “enjoyment of work” (see table 1-3-10).

Table 1-3-10: Impacts on Mental and Physical Health of Workaholic Types

Main explanatory variable		Non-managers		Managers	
		Overall	Total monthly working hours of 201 hours or more	Overall	Total monthly working hours of 201 hours or more
Total monthly working hours of 201 hours or more		+	+		
Workaholic type (A low B low)	A high B high	+	+	+	+
	A high B low				
	A low B high	+	+	+	+

Note 1: + indicates a negative impact on mental/physical health. – indicates a positive impact on health.

Note 2: For workaholic types, A indicates “enjoyment of work” while B indicates “feeling driven to work.”

This analysis was limited to respondents whose “work involvement” was already judged to be “high.”

Note 3: See chapter 5 for details.

Furthermore, the four types of workaholics were asked about five lifestyle habits (“Do you eat meals regularly?”, “Do you get enough sleep?”, “Do you undertake sports or exercise regularly?”, “Do you get enough time with your family and friends?” and “Do you have enough time to study or engage in hobbies?”). When responses were compared, the overall trend showed that a high proportion of people with high levels of “feeling driven to work” responded “I don’t think so,” in other words, indicating that they have not formed good lifestyle habits. It may be difficult to get them to change the way in which they work, but encouraging improved lifestyle habits may be a way to encourage

them to review the way in which they work.

(6) Countermeasures to long working hours

The survey looked at measures being implemented to counter long working hours, using the following six categories: “No overtime day,” “Announcement of closing time at end of work day/Compulsory switching off of lights,” “Use of ID cards, etc. to manage and monitor working hours,” “Systems that allow people to understand their own working hours simply,” “Warnings or advice issued to people working long hours, or their superiors,” and “Counseling regarding long working hours and stress, outside of regular health examinations.”

Within these six categories, it was found that the proportion of non-managers and managers working in workplaces that implemented “No overtime day” was 33.7% and 44.5% respectively; likewise, “Announcement of closing time at end of work/day/Compulsory switching off of light,” 23.6% (non-managers) and 28.1% (managers); “Use of ID cards, etc. to manage and monitor working hours,” 31.7% (non-managers) and 35.8% (managers); “Systems that allow people to understand their own working hours simply,” 41.3% (non-managers) and 47.4% (managers); “Warnings or advice issued to people working long hours, or their superiors,” 37.1% (non-managers) and 56.8% (managers); and “Counseling regarding long working hours and stress, outside of regular health examinations,” 30.1% (non-managers) and 46.0% (managers).

We looked at the average total working hours of employees in companies implementing these measures to reduce long working hours. The result shows that for both non-managers and managers, regardless of type of measures, those working at companies implementing measures work shorter hours than those working at companies not implementing measures (see table 1-3-11).

Table 1-3-11: Average Total Monthly Working Hours of Employees in Companies Implementing and Not Implementing Measures to Counter Long Working Hours

		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Non-managers	Implementing	175.0	175.6	179.6	178.6	177.6	177.3
	Not implementing	187.9	185.9	185.0	187.2	188.2	186.9
	Total	183.2	183.2	183.1	183.2	183.2	183.3
Managers	Implementing	180.4	182.3	184.6	182.5	181.9	181.1
	Not implementing	190.6	187.4	187.1	189.0	191.9	190.6
	Total	186.0	185.9	186.0	186.0	186.0	186.0

(1) "No overtime day"

(2) "Announcement of closing time at end of work day/Compulsory switching off of lights"

(3) "Use of ID cards, etc. to manage and monitor working hours"

(4) "Systems that allow people to understand their own working hours simply"

(5) "Warnings or advice issued to people working long hours, or their superiors"

(6) "Counseling regarding long working hours and stress, outside of regular health examinations"

Furthermore, once the impact of a range of attributes had been fixed, we made multivariate analysis to ascertain whether "measures to counter long working hours" actually had an impact on working hours³⁴, and had the following conclusions (see table 1-3-12).

- i. "No overtime days" and "Warnings or advice issued to people working long hours, or their superiors" were seen to be effective in the case of both non-managers and managers, while "Announcement of closing time at end of work day/Compulsory switching off of lights" was effective among non-managers.
- ii. Neither "Use of ID cards, etc. to manage and monitor working hours," "Systems that allow people to understand their own working hours simply" nor "Counseling regarding long working hours and stress, outside of regular health examinations" was seen to have a statistically significant impact.
- iii. While the effective three types of measures aim to directly eliminate long working hours, the other three types considered ineffective are indirect strategies relating to the concept of time management rather than to long working hours itself. In other words, truly effective measures to counter long working hours require methods that are applied directly on the issue of long working hours itself.

³⁴ See chapter 6 for details.

Table 1-3-12: Impacts of Measures to Counter Long Working Hours on Total Monthly Working Hours

Main explanatory variable (1 = implementing, 0 = not implementing)	Non-managers				Managers			
	Estimate (1)	Estimate (2)	Estimate (3)	Estimate (4)	Estimate (1)	Estimate (2)	Estimate (3)	Estimate (4)
No overtime day	-	-	-	-	-			-
Announcement of closing time at end of work day/Compulsory switching off of lights	-	-	-	-				
Use of ID cards, etc. to manage and monitor working hours								
Systems that allow people to understand their own working hours simply								
Warnings or advice issued to people working long hours, or their superiors	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Counseling regarding long working hours and stress, outside of regular health examinations								

Note 1: + indicates an impact that leads to longer working hours. – indicates an impact that leads to shorter working hours.

Note 2: See chapter 6 for details.

4. Conclusions and Policy-related Issues

This survey research confirmed that “work characteristics,” “personal characteristics,” “management characteristics” and other factors have an impact on the length of working hours.

From the major facts ascertained in relation to “work characteristics,” it is understood that (1) the strength of relationships with other companies and other people can cause working hours to become longer, (2) an understanding of one’s own work objectives and the discretion over the way of work contribute to shorter working hours, (3) a worker’s working hours will be longer if their superior considers overtime to be a natural matter of course, and (4) working hours tend to become longer if a superior does not give consideration to the distribution of workload among his/her subordinates.

From the major facts ascertained in relation to “personal characteristics,” it is understood that (1) the extent of a worker’s desire to achieve high levels of attainment in regard to his/her own work and role (seriousness) contribute to long working hours, (2) workers who have high levels of self-evaluation in regard to their own work tend to work longer hours, and (3) the stronger a worker’s work-orientedness, the longer his/her working hours tend to become.

From the major facts ascertained in regard to “management characteristics,” it is understood that (1) superficial flexibility in regard to the time a worker arrives at or leaves work have no real impact on the length of working hours, (2) the higher the level of “play,” the longer working hours become, (3) the higher the number of subordinate staff, the longer working hours are likely to become, and (4) the greater number of

subordinates requiring guidance, the longer working hours become.

From the major facts ascertained in regard to “workaholism,” it is understood that (1) the major factor having a negative impact on mental and physical health is “feeling driven to work” and (2) people with a strong “feeling driven to work” tend to have irregular lifestyle habits.

It is understood that “no overtime days,” “warnings or advice issued to people working long hours, or their superiors” and “announcement of closing time at end of work day/Compulsory switching off of lights” are effective countermeasures to long working hours. In other words, it can be concluded that truly effective measures to counter long working hours require methods that are applied directly to the problem of long working hours itself.

These discoveries lead the author to suggest that the following five points are important in countering long working hours: (1) Clarification of the objectives and roles of the job, (2) Simplification of meetings and conferences, and increased levels of discretion, (3) Focus on, and prioritization of, managerial job, which is the original task of a manager, (4) Care and physical/mental health management of serious workers, and (5) Implementation of effective countermeasures to long working hours.

In the case of (1), the clarification of objectives and roles within a job is significant because it makes it easier to see the “end of the task.” The “end of the task” equates to a “goal,” which, if it can be seen, allows the avoidance of the swamp that is long working hours associated with a “never-ending job.”

(2) Allows the reduction of interaction with others to the minimum possible level. It does not mean that meetings are not needed, but rather that they should be restricted to those conferences and meetings that are absolutely necessary, and that the contents should be simplified in order to minimize wasted time. If this can be done at the same time as increasing the amount of workers’ discretion over their own work, it will make it possible to correct the practice of long working hours.

(3) Aims to ensure that managers are less “players” and therefore able to be sufficiently “managers.” If they are able to manage the distribution of tasks and the allocation of the burden of work to their subordinates, this will contribute to the correction of the practice of long working hours throughout the division or section.

(4) Means being concerned for the damage that “overwork” can do to the health of serious workers, through encouraging healthy lifestyle habits on a day-to-day basis, and ascertaining which workers are likely to suffer from a strong “feeling driven to work.” It is also effective to introduce a system of allowing workers to take a certain period of holiday at appropriate points while working.

(5) Means that some measures have already been introduced by many companies and workplaces, but if their effectiveness were widely acknowledged and more companies and workplaces promoted such countermeasures, it could be effective in reducing long working hours as a whole.