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EXTENSIVE WORKING HOURS AND HEALTH-RELATED PROBLEMS

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Abstract:

According to the Factories Act of 1948, no adult (a person over the age of 18) can work more than 48 hours per week and no more than 9 hours per day. The spread over should not be more than 10-1/2 hours, according to Section 51 of the Act. Properly tracking hours might help keep your staff happy. It ensures that they are getting enough hours and that you are not pressuring them to work overtime week after week. That may wear a person, especially over the long term. An extensive study has revealed that working more than 45 hours a week is harmful to the average employee. As this number rises, so does your chance of developing health problems such as stroke or heart attack. Let's have a look at this subject in this article.

Keywords:

Working hours, Life, Health, Work-related problems, Risk factors, Safety.

Introduction:

In professional and popular discussions concerning working conditions and employees' lives in developing nations, the number of hours worked frequently comes up. In these discussions, there is concern that one aspect of unfavourable working circumstances is that many employees are forced to work unrelenting hours at the expense of their families, personal life, and health. These worries also include how the law may help to create better working circumstances.

Particularly when discussing the effects of globalisation, attention is given to how it will affect labour regulations, notably those that set restrictions on working hours and schedules. Various concerns regarding the future of legal regulation exist. For instance, it is noted that globalisation

may unleash harmful regulatory competition, which would lower the safeguards provided by labour regulations, notably those about working hours.

An alterability, however, does not call for a relaxation of national legal standards. Instead, it implies that the norms represented in legislative texts have minimal impact on working conditions in developing nations; in the instance of working hours, this long and uncomfortable hour may be common even in nations with exceptional legal standards.

The working time law's main mechanism for avoiding constant or routinely lengthy hours is weekly hours limitations. These restrictions have the most impact on how many hours are worked each week. As a result, they significantly contribute to maintaining health and safety and enabling workers to find a reasonable balance between their paid employment, home chores, and other responsibilities.

These legal requirements, however, are important in more ways than just the fact that they set boundaries for how working time agreements should be created. The government's expectations governments have for what constitutes appropriate working hours for their population. Even in cases where they are not consistently practice owed in practice, they are best understood as representing a national ideal of working hours.¹

Limits on normal hours:

Although national working time legislation favoured the 48-hour restriction after the close of World War I, by 1935, the 40-hour limit had gained a position among the international norms that were confirmed in 1962. By the time the ILO conducted its first full evaluation of national working time regulations in 1967, there was a trend toward the 40-hour limit in national measures (ILO 1967).

Only 35 of the 93 nations surveyed in 1967 had a legislated 48-hour work week, with the remainder having accepted lower limitations. As can be seen, the 40-hour limit had an impact on numerous industrialised nations and was also present in a considerable number of African countries. However, in Latin America, the 48-hour restriction was nearly universal. It was also

¹ Jon C., Sangheon Lee, and Deirdre McCann. *Working time around the world: Trends in working hours, laws, and policies in a global comparative perspective*. Routledge, 2007.

prevalent in Asia, albeit some nations, notably India, did not indicate the total number of hours worked.

Despite a recent trend toward shorter workweeks, the 48-hour week remains the legal minimum in a substantial number of nations. However, enthusiasm for reducing working hours is lacking in nations where statutory restrictions remain high, and robust arguments have taken place in some countries.²

Trends in Working Hours in OECD Countries:

The drop-in average yearly hours of labour per person in employment, which can be traced back over a century, has slowed in recent years. In certain nations, the average yearly hours worked per person has even increased. Legal action (for example, in France, Japan, and Portugal) or unusually aggressive discussion between the social partners can be connected to nations where ongoing decreases can be detected (for example, Germany and the Netherlands).

Both the United States and Sweden have increased their average yearly hours, with the former due in part to an increase in overtime hours and the latter due to an increase in the hours worked by part-time workers. The article demonstrates, for European nations, how the pattern of change in weekly working hours may be connected, among other things, to the institutional structures in place in each country.³

Major Reforms to the Legal Structure of Working Hours and White-collar Workers:

Following that, throughout the time of rapid economic expansion that began in the 1960s and ended in the mid-1970s, the pattern of working hours of white-collar workers was mostly ignored. This appears to be because such employees were favoured over other sorts of workers during a prosperous time. At the same time, because overtime was not properly controlled, there was little opportunity for criticising the working hours of either factory and other standard

² Jon C., Sangheon Lee, and Deirdre McCann. *Working time around the world: Trends in working hours, laws, and policies in a global comparative perspective*. Routledge, 2007.

³ Evans, J., D. Lippoldt and P. Marianna (2001), "Trends in Working Hours in OECD Countries", *OECD Labour Market and Social Policy Occasional Papers*, No. 45, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/674061356827>.

workers or non-standard workers, including white-collar workers. This also kept the problem from becoming public.⁴

In the case of working hours and overtime in Bangladesh:

However, a considerable number of working sectors of labour do not favour labour in terms of specified working hours. In Bangladesh, women and children are the most vulnerable victims. In terms of overtime, employees are required to work it. Unfortunately, they are not even compensated for overtime work.

Some employees are paid late, usually towards the end of the month, and they may lose their employment if they indicate a desire for extra compensation. These types of labour law infractions are frequent in most major industries in Bangladesh, including the textile and shipbuilding industries. Owners utilise the interval of working hours as they see fit.⁵

Mental health disorders:

Working hours have a significant impact on both physical and mental health. Long work hours might also have a detrimental impact on how well you sleep. Mental health issues can have a major negative influence on both an individual's and an organization's productivity at work. Workplace mental health issues have major ramifications not just for the person, but also for the organization's efficiency.

In nations that are members of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, between one-third and half of all long-term illnesses and disabilities among people of working age are caused by mental illness. Data indicate that many individuals with common mental health issues have difficulties at work. For instance, compared to 26% of those without mental health issues, 69% of those with moderate mental health problems report having trouble at work.⁶

⁴ *Working Hour Schemes for White-Collar Employees in Japan* Yoichi Shimada Professor, Waseda University. https://www.jil.go.jp/english/JLR/documents/2004/JLR04_shimada.pdf.

⁵ *Accumulation and Alienation: State of Labour in Bangladesh 2013*, edited by Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir to be published by Shrabon Prokashani, Dhaka in May 2013.

⁶ *Impact of working hours on sleep and mental health* P. Afonso, M. Fonseca, J. F. Pires <https://academic.oup.com/occmed/article/67/5/377/3859790>.

An individual's quality of life is significantly impacted by sleep disruption. Persons with persistent sleep disturbances are more likely to be involved in accidents, miss more work, perform worse on the job, have a lower quality of life, and use more medical services compared to people who get enough sleep. Numerous studies have demonstrated a dose-response relationship between working overtime and short or disrupted sleep as well as lower sleep quality.⁷

Despite evidence of a correlation between shift work and higher psychiatric morbidity, particularly among shift workers who consistently work more than 48 hours per week, there is a scarcity of research that focuses solely on the relationships between frequent overtime working and mental health status.

Schmitt et colleagues collected data on unexplained physical symptoms in over 800 patients from eight American companies where outbreaks of mass psychogenic sickness had occurred in one of the earlier investigations. Small but substantial connections were discovered between the number of hours worked overtime and the number of symptoms reported during an illness epidemic in the company. However, working hours were only one of several factors examined, many of which had a comparable relationship with symptom reporting. Consequently, the root of the issue was found to be multifactorial.⁸

The possibility of a rise in mental health issues among Japanese employees is causing significant alarm. This tendency is typically seen as a result of the extended economic downturn in Japan and changes to the labour market. In reality, compensation claims for workplace injuries brought on by mental health conditions have been rising quickly in recent years. It is well established that factors like working hours, personal connections, support from managers and co-workers, job pressure, job control, and salary have an impact on employees' mental health.⁹

⁷ *Impact of working hours on sleep and mental health* [P. Afonso, M. Fonseca, J. F. Pires https://academic.oup.com/occmed/article/67/5/377/3859790.](https://academic.oup.com/occmed/article/67/5/377/3859790)

⁸ *Health and safety problems associated with long working hours: a review of the current position* Anne Spurgeon, J Malcolm Harrington, Cary L Cooper. <https://oem.bmj.com/content/oemed/54/6/367.full.pdf>.

⁹ *A systematic review of working hours and mental health burden* [Yoshihisa Fujino, Seichi Horie, Tsutomu Hoshuyama, Takao Tsutsui, Yayoi Tanaka, https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16908956/.](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16908956/)

The negative influence on mental health manifests itself in a variety of ways, including stress, sadness, and suicidal thinking. These are significant challenges for society as much as for the individual. People who are regularly under stress may develop depression, which can worsen existing health conditions and lead to serious suicidal thoughts. In consequence, suicidal thoughts have a huge influence on the state of one's physical and mental health and can significantly increase the burden of sickness on the planet.¹⁰

Heart-related Disorders:

Long working hours have been identified as a potential work-related risk factor for illness, which has sparked research into the role of working hours on population health. Given that individuals who work longer hours are more likely than those who work shorter hours to be subjected to high job demands and to have less time for leisure activities, there is a strong presumption that extended working hours may be linked to coronary heart disease (CHD) occurrences. CHD is a leading cause of mortality at the moment, and predictions show that this trend will last for several decades.¹¹

The evidence on cardiovascular disease and long hours suggests that the relationship is not straightforward. Working hours, like other occupational stressors, appear to have an interactive or exacerbating effect on mental health disorders. There were significant connections found between work hours and both physiological and psychological health problems. Given the variety of factors that may influence the association between working hours and health, the authors concluded that the findings of such studies are likely to underestimate the strength of the relationship.

If lengthy work hours are assumed to be a primary cause of occupational stress, it is logical to predict a link between long hours and cardiovascular diseases. Although individual differences in cardiovascular reactivity in response to acute stress have long been acknowledged, the recognized mechanisms underlying the association between stress and coronary heart disease are thought to relate to multiple and sustained increases in heart rate and blood pressure as a result of

¹⁰ *The negative impact of long working hours on mental health in young Korean workers.* <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0236931>.

¹¹ *Long Working Hours and Coronary Heart Disease: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis.* <https://academic.oup.com/aje/article/176/7/586/122221?login=true>.

neuroendocrine activation. As a result, the evidence now available is unquestionably adequate to raise concerns about a probable relationship between long hours and the risk of important health consequences, such as cardiovascular disease, especially when those hours reach 50 per week. However, much needs to be discovered about the nature and interconnections of the variables at play.¹²

A total of 300 instances of heart and brain illnesses that were caused by excessive work-related stress were identified. Because they interfere with productivity, work-life balance, health, and safety, long work hours are divisive topics. We must carry out more studies on the effects of long working hours on employee health.

Safety of Working labours:

Labour productivity is increased by initiatives that promote worker welfare, health, and safety. The numerous welfare programs offered by the business will immediately have an effect on the employee's health, physical and mental efficiency, attentiveness, morale, and general effectiveness, which will lead to increased production. Adequate cafeteria facilities, lodging options, recreational facilities, medical facilities, and transit facilities for getting to and from work are just a few of the amenities and services that fall under the umbrella of labour welfare.¹³

Because of the frequent observation of deadly and non-lethal occupational injuries in the construction industry, it has traditionally been considered a notorious sector (Tam et al., 2004). It goes without saying that if the safety and health of the concerned personnel are compromised, the accompanying economics are also considerably harmed (Hinze et al., 2006). To put it more plainly, at least 60,000 of the workplace fatalities are reportedly attributable to the construction sector. Notably, in developed nations, this ratio ranges from 25% to 50% of all fatal workplace accidents (International Labour Organization, 2014).¹⁴

Owners of businesses or factories take advantage of the opportunity provided by impoverished workers in extreme poverty. Their health and safety institutions treat them like crazy people. The

¹² *Health and safety problems associated with long working hours: a review of the current position* Anne Spurgeon, J Malcolm Harrington, Cary L Cooper. <https://oem.bmj.com/content/oemed/54/6/367.full.pdf>.

¹³ Logasakthi, K., and K. Rajagopal. "A study on employee health, safety and welfare measures of the chemical industry in the view of Salem Region." *Management* (2013).

¹⁴ Mohandes, Saeed Reza, et al. "Assessing construction labours' safety level: A fuzzy MCDM approach." *Journal of Civil Engineering and Management* 26.2 (2020).

effects of working extra on exposure to workplace risks have also received little attention. For instance, the eight-hour day and 40-hour workweek are based on national and international exposure regulations for dangerous substances, which are intended to restrict exposure to levels below those likely to cause harm.

Shift work has been the subject of much research into tiredness and its effects, and it is obvious that the disturbance of regular sleep cycles is a big worry. The issue is complicated and requires careful evaluation of a wide range of physiological and social elements that may affect the worker's performance as well as several aspects that may affect the type of accident reporting.

The majority of research seems to agree that night shifts are more dangerous than day shifts, especially when night shifts are combined with long hours. There are few statistics on accident rates explicitly linked to extended hours, excluding shift work. There is the data from the munition's workers study, which showed a 2.5-fold decrease in accidents in women following the reduction in hours worked but not in males. However, it should be noted that these workers also worked shifts, including night shifts, and that the hours in issue were excessive by today's standards.¹⁵

Only in nations with market economies is the role of workplace safety as a factor that can increase output determined in this manner. Internal monitoring of the workplace is rather stringent, to identify risk factors there as early as possible and prevent the aim of identifying risk factors there as early as possible and preventing or lessening the impact of such variables on the safety and health of employees. Employees are exposed to hazardous situations, and physical, ergonomic, chemical, and biological factors in the workplace, and while modern scientific advancements do not guarantee the prevention of the impact of various risk factors, accidents, and occupational diseases, they do guarantee the provision of employees with safe and healthy working conditions. As a result, both at the state and corporate levels, there should be a clear and effective labour safety system.¹⁶

Working circumstances as per the Indian Child Labour Act :

¹⁵ *Health and safety problems associated with long working hours: a review of the current position* Anne Spurgeon, J Malcolm Harrington, Cary L Cooper. <https://oem.bmj.com/content/oemed/54/6/367.full.pdf>.

¹⁶ Polukarov, Yury O., et al. "Assessment of the Economic Effect from the Introduction of Labour Safety Measures at Enterprises." (2021)

Children must be safeguarded against additional organizational issues, such as excessively long working hours, night work, piece rate payment systems, etc., in addition to occupational threats. They should be given suitable tools, equipment, and at the very least, basic protective clothes. They should also be guaranteed access to social security, which includes health care and disability compensation.

The working environment should be kept hygienically free of smoke, dust, and other pollutants, and there should be regular medical examinations for youngsters who are employed. The legislation itself stipulates that children should not be required to work for longer than six hours every day.

To limit working hours, provide weekly off, minimum salaries, and equal compensation for men, women, and children, as well as forbid carrying excessively large loads, among other things, legal assistance may be sought.

The government must urge child labour employers to create a mandatory insurance program for them, taking into consideration the nature of their job. For the sake of the children, the government must ensure that all child employees have insurance coverage of at least Rs. 50000 and decrease their working hours.

The Act's Part III specifies how children are to be employed in foundations when none of the activities or processes mentioned in the area took place. No child shall be obliged to work or be permitted to work beyond the hours of 7 p.m. and 8 a.m.

No kid will labour for more than three hours without a break, and no season of work will last longer than three hours with a break of no less than one hour. The overall number of working hours per day, including rest breaks and waiting time for work, will not exceed six hours.¹⁷

Conclusion:

This evaluation assessed the strength of the evidence correlating prolonged working hours with medical concerns. Excessive overtime work is hazardous to one's health and safety. It is now vitally essential to adequately evaluate the nature and amount of such danger given the

¹⁷ Le P. Power, Beryl M. "Indian Labour Conditions." *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* (1932).

rising trend toward such excess. When attention is directed to it other fields, like shift work studies, it is astonishing how little is known about how human performance changes in response to tiredness in overtime conditions. In connection with this, there hasn't been much thought given to safety issues, either from a regulatory standpoint or in terms of the behaviour changes in worker behaviour which are probably caused by exhaustion. Because they interfere with productivity, work-life balance, health, and safety, long work hours are divisive topics. Further, a clear study is necessary to understand the effects of long working hours on employee health.

