



The impact of working time regulation on the quality of life of employees

Dr Magdalena Rycak
Lazarski University



The impact of working time regulation on the quality of life of employees

It makes a great difference from the perspective of the employee's health and life what job the employee performs, for how many working hours, under which conditions, and how work is distributed over days and months.

Among the factors that affect health are: the environment in which people work, including working time, the time schedule, shifts, breaks at work, and work rhythm.



The impact of working time regulation on the quality of life of employees

- The Committee of Experts of the World Health Organization in the classification of health conditions mentions the time-off, rest and recreation as the needs of which the level of satisfaction has a significant impact on the public health.



The impact of working time regulation on the quality of life of employees

- The evidence of what a dangerous impact working with no proper rest can have on health and life was found in the mid-1990s, when the press reported about the epidemics which over a few years attacked more than two million Americans.
- This chronic fatigue syndrome, also called “yuppie flu” to define the “disease of young professionals from urban areas, working themselves almost to death”, was characterized by great fatigue, loss of energy, lack of sense of spatial orientation, memory disorder, as well as physical and mental suffering, and affected mainly areas in which the intense and prolonged work was not balanced by proper rest.



The impact of working time regulation on the quality of life of employees

- The issue of working time is one of the most important if not the most important area of the employment relationship characterized by the stronger position of the employer.
- Historically, the experience shows that the lack of legal regulation of the maximum length of working time led to its excessive extension.



The impact of working time regulation on the quality of life of employees

- The Institute of Labour and Social Studies conducted empirical research in the 1990s within the framework of the Multiannual Programme “Security of the human health in the workplace”, which showed that the large majority of the questioned workers did not want to work on Saturdays at all (59.1% of women and 53.5% of men).
- About one-third of men and women reported that they could work on Saturdays, as before. The work on Sundays raised the biggest resistance, as 81.5% of the respondents did not want to work on Sundays at all.



The impact of working time regulation on the quality of life of employees

- There is no doubt that shift workers perform their work under the conditions which are particularly harmful to their health.
- The empirical studies confirm that the shift workers are constantly exhausted and more prone to accidents in the workplace on the road or at home than those working in traditional systems of working time.
- Shift work increases the tendency to make mistakes and is particularly negatively perceived by doctors and physiologists.



The impact of working time regulation on the quality of life of employees

- Shift workers have more difficulties in balancing work and family life and to combine it with the caring and educational roles and participation in the cultural life and sports activities as well as further learning.
- It has been scientifically proven that working at night is conducive to the formation of, inter alia, gastrointestinal disorders, gastric ulcer and duodenal ulcers, it increases the risk of heart attacks and other cardiac diseases as well as mood and mental health disorders, including depression and anxiety.



The impact of working time regulation on the quality of life of employees

- Shift work is negatively perceived not only by the doctors, but also by the employees themselves.
- Also, the wives of shift workers suffer from the shift work performed by their husbands and 50% declared that they are unhappy because of this.



The impact of working time regulation on the quality of life of employees

- The quality of life of the workers is affected not only by the length of working time, but also by its distribution on particular days or weeks as well as by the prediction of this distribution. The research shows that the employees prefer to work in accordance with the fixed and regular work schedules.
- They guarantee greater satisfaction from balancing private life and professional work, whereas any deviation from the regular distributions causes the raising of the level of dissatisfaction.



The impact of working time regulation on the quality of life of employees

- The most wanted type of work in terms of balancing the work and life is the regular work on 5 working days a week, during the day and the standard work for about 40 hours a week without long hours of work.
- “Regularity may be more important factor for workers than the flexibility from the perspective of adjusting their working hours to commitments outside work”



The impact of working time regulation on the quality of life of employees

- The fact of how much time in advance the employees are informed about the planned changes in the distribution of working time is also significant. The shorter the period of delivering the information about the changes, the worse assessed is the relation work/life.
- One of the most effective factors in promoting work life balance is the employee's ability to influence the employee's own work schedule.



The impact of working time regulation on the quality of life of employees

- The experience gained by some member states shows that part-time work does not always bring the expected positive results.
- An example could be the Netherlands, where for many years the Dutch government actively promoted the part-time employment, supporting it and conducting information campaigns. In the longer term, however, it turned out that a high level of part-time employment among women leads to their discrimination on the labour market. Most workers employed part-time were women.



The impact of working time regulation on the quality of life of employees

- Such employment often proves to be a trap, in which the professional potential of women is not fully exploited. Part-time work is less remunerated and limits the opportunities for promotion.
- The increase in the number of hours of work can be beneficial for raising the professional status of women.