

Can You Work for 24 Hours?: Trade-off Between Health and Household Wealth Accumulation in Japanese Baby Boomer Generation*

Reo TAKAKU[†]

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Abstract

While many studies find positive association between socio-economic status (SES) and health, some other studies alarm adverse health effects from overworking and work-related stress which are both common among high SES occupations. Using pooled data from a national longitudinal survey during eleven years ($n = 231,074$), this paper shows that workers who worked for one company more than 20 years until his retirement under Japanese lifetime employment system (“LES workers”) could accumulate quite higher saving than other workers in their old-age period by 43 percent. Despite higher level of wealth accumulation, however, LES workers exhibit higher probability to have diabetes, hypertension, hyperlipidemia and cancer than other workers. More importantly, lower self-reported health status, increasing risk of non-communicable diseases and worse depressive symptom are found among LES workers who were not satisfied with workplace human relationship. Quantitative impacts for this subgroup is quite sizable. The overall results are robust for the inclusion of various covariates. Though it is quite difficult to establish the causal link between LES and later health by cross sectional framework, this paper suggests that working under poor human relations for one company over several decades is quite detrimental for health after getting old ages, despite better monetary prospect.

Keywords : Health; Work history; Lifetime employment system; Chronic condition; Japan
JEL classification : I10, I13

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[†]Institute for Health Economics and Policy, Japan. Email:reo.takaku@ihep.jp