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Long hours hazardous to health

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19 August, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Long hours hazardous to health

BNE: Working long hours means workers may get more injuries and illnesses. This is the conclusion of a new study in the journal *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*. Researchers analyzed data from 110,000 job records. They found 5,139 work-related injuries. The team discovered that more than half of these were in jobs that required overtime or had demanding schedules. The authors of the report said that employees who worked overtime were 61 per cent more likely to be injured or ill than employees who did not.

The type of industry was not important in understanding where workers were most at risk. No single industry was riskier than another. The research team found that a major cause for accidents was fatigue and stress created by overworking. They said this was the same for hazardous jobs and boring ones. A 12-hour day increased the risk of injury by 37 per cent, while a 60-hour week led to a 23 per cent increase. They also said that commuting time did not affect the risk of injury.

Report: *The Impact of Overtime and Long Work Hours on Occupational Injuries and Illnesses: New Evidence from the United States* - Allard E Dembe, J. Bianca Erickson, Rachel G Delbos, and Steven M Banks.

WARM-UPS

1. WORKING HOURS: In pairs / groups, talk about how much time you spend working and / or studying. Do you think it's too much time or is it manageable? What is your idea of the perfect working / studying week? What do you think about working overtime?

2. OVER~: In pairs / groups, talk about whether and how often you overdo these things:

- Overwork
- Overeat
- Oversleep
- Overanalyze things
- Overdress
- Overcook food
- Over drink
- Overspend
- Overreact
- Overtake

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Working / long hours / injury / illness / hazardous jobs / overtime / risk / fatigue / stress / commuting / working hours

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. OVERTIME: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word "overtime". Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

5. OPINIONS: Talk with your partner(s) about these opinions. Do you agree or disagree with them?

- a. Overtime should be banned.
- b. Overtime will always be an important part of working. It will never disappear.
- c. Governments should create a maximum of 40 hours a week for all workers.
- d. Multinational companies should be banned from buying goods from developing countries where workers do more than 40 hours a week.
- e. Company profits are much more important than the health of workers.
- f. Working overtime is natural. It shows a worker's loyalty to a company.
- g. Without overtime, many companies would die.
- h. Workers should not complain. They should be grateful they have a job.

6. QUICK DEBATE: Students A are workers and think there should be a legal maximum number of working hours. Students B are employers and think there should be no legal maximum. Change partners often.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a. Working long hours puts your health at risk. | T / F |
| b. Doctors are most at risk from work-related illnesses. | T / F |
| c. More than half of work-related illness is because overworking. | T / F |
| d. Working overtime increases the chance of being injured six-fold. | T / F |
| e. White-collar industries were most hazardous. | T / F |
| f. The biggest cause of accidents was fatigue from overworking. | T / F |
| g. Working a 12-hour day increased the risk of injury by 37 per cent. | T / F |
| h. Lengthy commutes increased the chance of being ill. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|---------------|-------------|
| a. conclusion | resulted in |
| b. analyzed | discovered |
| c. found | tough |
| d. demanding | kind |
| e. authors | tiredness |
| f. type | examined |
| g. single | traveling |
| h. fatigue | opinion |
| i. led to | one |
| j. commuting | writers |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| a. Working long hours means | from 110,000 job records |
| b. the conclusion of | of injury |
| c. Researchers analyzed data | to be injured or ill |
| d. jobs that required overtime or | was fatigue |
| e. 61 per cent more likely | a new study |
| f. where workers were most | jobs and boring ones |
| g. No single industry was | at risk |
| h. a major cause for accidents | workers may get more injuries |
| i. the same for hazardous | had demanding schedules |
| j. affect the risk | riskier than another |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

WORD ORDER: Put the underlined words back into the correct order.

Long hours hazardous to health

BNE: Working long hours means get injuries may workers more and illnesses.

This is the study of a new conclusion in the journal *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*. Researchers analyzed data from 110,000 job records.

They found 5,139 work-related injuries. The team discovered that half more of these than were in jobs that required overtime or had demanding schedules. The authors of the report said overtime worked that who employees were 61 per cent more likely to be injured or ill than employees who did not.

The type of industry was not important in understanding where most at workers were risk. No single industry was riskier than another. The research team found for cause that a major accidents was fatigue and stress created by overworking. They said for same this the was hazardous jobs and boring ones. A 12-hour day increased the risk of injury by 37 per cent, while a 60-hour week led to a 23 per cent increase. They also said that commuting time risk did not affect the of injury.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'ill' and 'injury'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. WORD ORDER: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers.

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "WORKING OVERTIME" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about working or studying too much.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|---------------|-------------|
| • means | • type |
| • analyzed | • single |
| • 5,139 | • fatigue |
| • half | • hazardous |
| • demanding | • led to |
| • 61 per cent | • commuting |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. What did you think when you read this headline?
- b. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- c. What are your feelings about working overtime?
- d. Do you think there should be a maximum working week?
- e. What do you think of studies like the one in the article?
- f. Have you ever suffered a work-related injury?
- g. Is your job or study schedule demanding?
- h. Do you agree with the study's conclusion that no single industry is riskier than others?
- i. What do you think is the most hazardous job in the world?
- j. Why do you think people choose to work in that job?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Have you ever done a dangerous job?
- d. Have your employers always thought about your safety and health?
- e. Have you ever worked for any really bad employers?
- f. What do you think about working a 60-hour week?
- g. The report says commuting time does not affect stress and fatigue. Would you agree with this?
- h. Do you think there should be a maximum number of working hours all over the world?
- i. When have you been most fatigued or stressed?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

SAFER WORKING: You are head of the new government department on safer conditions in the workplace. In pairs / groups, think of two dangers to workers of the points in the left column. Decide on the regulations required to end these dangers.

	POSSIBLE DANGERS	REGULATIONS
Overtime		
Computers		
Office chairs		
Noise		
Deadlines		
Canteen		
Other		

Change partners and compare your dangers and regulations. Offer each other feedback.

With your original partner(s), take turns to role play a conversation between the government department head and the CEO of a company who is trying to cut costs.

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Long hours hazardous to health

BNE: Working long hours _____ workers may get more injuries and illnesses.

This is the conclusion of a new study in the _____ *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*. Researchers analyzed data from 110,000 job _____.

They found 5,139 work-related injuries. The team discovered that more than _____ of these were in jobs that required overtime or had demanding schedules. The _____ of the report said that employees who worked overtime were 61 per cent more _____ to be injured or ill than employees who did not.

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HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on working conditions in different countries. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

3. LETTER: Write a letter to the boss of a company you work for / have worked for. Tell him / her what he / she needs (needed) to do to make working conditions at the company much better. Read your letters to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all have similar suggestions?

4. DIARY / JOURNAL: Imagine you work in a very hazardous job. Write your diary / journal entry for one day in your job. Describe the dangers involved and the risks you take every day. Read your entry to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. T b. F c. T d. F e. F f. T g. T h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|---------------|-------------|
| a. conclusion | opinion |
| b. analyzed | examined |
| c. found | discovered |
| d. demanding | tough |
| e. authors | writers |
| f. type | kind |
| g. single | one |
| h. fatigue | tiredness |
| i. led to | resulted in |
| j. commuting | traveling |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| a. Working long hours means | workers may get more injuries |
| b. the conclusion of | a new study |
| c. Researchers analyzed data | from 110,000 job records |
| d. jobs that required overtime or | had demanding schedules |
| e. 61 per cent more likely | to be injured or ill |
| f. where workers were most | at risk |
| g. No single industry was | riskier than another |
| h. a major cause for accidents | was fatigue |
| i. the same for hazardous | jobs and boring ones |
| j. affect the risk | of injury |

WORD ORDER:

Long hours hazardous to health

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