

Karoshi: death and japanese government assignment



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The Consequences of Putting Wealth before Health Abstract: The main objective of this essay is to define and analyze the negative aspects of the Japanese's Economical drive. Most specifically, it will describe a phenomenon that is occurring in Japan called "Karoshi" or "death from over-work", where thousands of Japanese citizens are dying due to stress from the harsh working conditions they endure.

This essay will prove that the proportioning of economic rookeries over individual well-being is damaging to society. In order to achieve this, I will disclose detailed information on the connection between excessive amounts of work and stress related death, as well as the social and political implications of this. If the reader accepts these consequences as truths, this phenomenon will serve as an eye-opening lesson. From afar, the Japanese cultural emphasis on academic success, work ethics and economic prosperity, appears to be worth aspiring to.

After all, Japan is the third largest national economy in the world, has achieved high technological advancement and is often considered to be one of the world's most groundbreaking countries. Unfortunately, Japan's success has come at a high price. Along with a booming economy, Japan's intense work ethic has brought a serious and growing phenomenon that has proven to be detrimental in Japanese society. Thousands of young Japanese workers have died due to high levels of work related stress.

This occurrence has become so prevalent that there is a specific word to describe it: "Karoshi". Karoshi is a preventable tragedy and with continued awareness it can serve as a worldwide lesson. In order to prevent the

number of work-related deaths of increasing and possibly spreading to other parts of the world, drastic changes must be made in Japanese society and lifestyle. Karoshi or "Death from over-work" is a fairly new notion in Japan, a concept that began in the 1980s.

Testiness That, the medical authority who coined the word, defines Karoshi as a "condition in which psychologically unsound work processes are allowed to continue in a way that disrupts the worker's normal work and life rhythms, leading to a buildup of fatigue in the body and a chronic condition of overwork accompanied by a worsening of pre-existent high blood pressure and a hardening of the arteries and finally resulting in a final breakdown" (That). In other words, excess stress and work load worsens a person's previous medical condition, causing premature death.

Most commonly, victims of Karoshi suffer from acute heart failure following high blood pressure, arteriosclerosis, or a cerebral hemorrhage (Raymond). Evidently, the physical and psychological distress of excessive work is extremely serious and should not be taken lightly. Statistics of Labor show that the average Japanese employee works 100-200 hours more than in the US or in Britain, and 400-500 hours more than in Germany, France or North European countries. This is not taking into consideration the many overtime hours that they call "service-overtime-work", which is an unpaid service to the company they work for.

According to the ILO Report, this overtime can reach up to 350 hours per year (Kate). If an employee refuses to participate, they will miss out on benefits such as bonuses and may even lose their job. For most, the pressure

from their company is overwhelming. According to a poll conducted by an insurance policy “ more than 40 percent of the employees the firm covered said they feared that overwork might kill them; few planned to do anything about it (Impose). ” Despite the focus on males being the main victims of Karoshi, evidence shows that it is not a gender specific occurrence, many women to suffer from it as well.

Japanese companies are not designed to accommodate the woman worker and women feel pressure to achieve equal status with men in their fields. This pressure amounts to large volumes of stress and fatigue. The Karoshi hotness have received more and more female callers as time goes by. Also, the first lawsuit filed to seek compensation in the name of a female who died due to harsh working conditions was filed in July of 1992. However, since then, no official ruling was made in favor of a woman (Women International Network News).

Proving that the government's harsh laws regarding labor is a setback in Japanese society. Although the Japanese Government has made some efforts to support the victims of Karoshi, they are insufficient. Few people have been acknowledged to have suffered Karoshi, and even fewer people have received compensation for their loss. According to a group of lawyers that handle the cases of affected families, it is estimated that some 10, 000 Japanese per year die from it. However, the Labor Ministry has only recognized 110 deaths over the past three [ears].

To legally be considered a Karoshi victim by the Labor Ministry, the victim must have died after a 24 hour work period or have worked 16 hour shifts for

seven continuous days preceding their death (Tidewater). Clearly, the priority of the Lebanese Government is to further expand and nourish their economy at any cost, not considering the consequence this has on the individual. The responsibility of finding a solution, however, corresponds equally to the Government as it does to the individual citizen.

While it is important for the Japanese government to implement strict laws that regulate the way companies treat their employees, the problem will not be solved until Japanese citizens change their way of thinking and re-establish their priorities. Because the Japanese have reached succeeded due to their corporate drive and work ethics, change seems unlikely. Fortunately, many have taken a stand and have made efforts towards transformation. According to the News and World Report, " Some Japanese want change. When a group of lawyers and doctors set up the nation's first Karoshi hotline in 1988, 135 people phoned in on the first day.

Since then, nearly 2, 000 cases have been reported to the 42 hotlines across the nation, and an international call-in center has been set up recently. " (Impose) Also, this group, along with the wives of victims, have published a book called " Karoshi: When the Corporate Warrior Dies" where detailed stories of Karoshi tragedies are recounted (Olympic). These efforts to support victims and spread awareness are of great value. Awareness will remind the world, not only the Japanese, that financial gain should not override the right to be healthy and happy.

The key to a better lifestyle can be found surprisingly close to these affected workers: In the Japanese Islands of Okinawa. Here, people live longer,

healthier, and are believed to be happier as a whole than anywhere else in the world. The average lifespan is 86 for women and over 75 for men. The New York Times wrote " Their population includes more than 400 centenarians of 1. 3 million (about 33 per 100, 000) compared with 5 to 10 per 100, 000 in the United States.

Heart disease is minimal, stroke rate is remarkably low, breast cancer is so rare that mammograms are not necessary and most aging men there have never even heard of prostate cancer (NY Times). The world can clearly learn much from these so called " Super centenaries" and most specifically, so could the modern Japanese corporate employee. So, what is the key to their longevity? The answer is in their humble, community orientated and healthy lifestyle. As it turns out, Kinsman's do their fair share of work, working sometimes up to 11 hours in a day in the fields, but they do so gladly and with little amounts of tress.

Many Okinawa attribute their long healthy lives to their stress free environment, all of the inhabitants act as a community and help each other. The Okinawa diet consists of seven portions of fruits, vegetables, two servings of soy products and fish several times a week. They exercise regularly and practice recreational activities such as martial arts. To them, it is just as important, or even more so, to spend time with their loved ones as it is to work (Geiger). When Okinawa people migrate to cities, their health deteriorates just as everyone else's does, due to the toxic surroundings of the city.

In comparison, the Okinawa lifestyle has proved healthier than the modern day Japanese lifestyle. In conclusion, the Karachi phenomenon has affected thousands of Japanese families. The pursuit of wealth and power at the consequence of the individual has cost many lives. Unfortunately, most of the world wishes to become an Economic superpower like Japan, the price of this may be the life of thousands their hardworking citizens. The power to change this way of thinking lies in each individual. Hopefully, with further awareness of the deadly consequences of too much stress, more people will adopt simple and healthy epistyles.

Geiger, Debbie " The Okinawa Centenarian Study: News: Newsman. " The Okinawa Centenarian Study: News: Newsman. N. P. , 23 July 2001. Ere world has become a power orientated place, the importance of material wealth, status, and economic prosperity is at an all-time high. I was interested in learning " hat people were willing to sacrifice in order to achieve these materialistic goals. I remembered a documentary I saw recently called " Happy', where different stories Nerve told of the things that made humans truly happy. The documentary spent some time talking about the phenomenon called Karachi, or death from over-work, in pan.

They contrasted this, with the people of Okinawa, who despite of not being an Economic power, live happily and healthy. I did not use direct information from this documentary; however this is where the idea of further researching Karachi came from. I believe many people are unaware of what the cost of being an Economic superpower in the would really is. As I continued my research, I found most of the numbers and statistics included in the various articles I read coincided, therefore, I could provide accurate information on <https://assignbuster.com/karoshi-death-and-japanese-government-assignment/>

the number of people who suffer from Karachi and on what is being done to solve the problem.