

# The Impacts of Two-day Weekend System on Living Culture Along with Efficient Countermeasures - Taiwan Experience

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**Abstract :** The purpose of this study was to explore the amis of two-day weekend system, the attitudes of people towards the system, and people's actions taken under the system implementation in Taiwan. Several other factors together with the implementation of Two-day Weekend System and at least three interrelated factors are the spurs for families to adjust their family life styles. the interrelated factors are changing economy, changing demography, and changing technology. The strategies available for families are as follows: 1. Keeping simple family life 2. Looking for flexible jobs other than a fixed daytime schedule. 3. Taking the advantages of information technology. 4. Working and getting together with family members at home and outside of the home.

**Key Words :** Two-day Weekend system, Taiwan , family life style

## I. INTRODUCTION

Five-day Workweek System is entitled Two-day Weekend System in Taiwan. This system has been tried out and failed at six counties of Taiwan in 1990 because the related package to the system was unavailable. A resolution in regards to implementing the system was made by the joint meetings among the Committee of Law and Order, the Committee of Domestic Affairs, and the Committee of Frontier Administration in the Legislative Yuan on 1996/10/9. The resolution demanded that the Central Government implement the Two-day

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Weekend System on probation but not reduce workweek. Therefore, public officials began to enjoy Two-day Weekend twice a month from 1998/1/1. After three years of trial, the Two-day Weekend System has been implemented in all local and the central governments and institutions since 2001/1/1 (Department of Statutes, Ministry of Civil Service, 2002; Huang, 1996). Retrospectively, people in Taiwan worked at least 48 hours a week before 1966/7/16 and then 44 hours a week after that. Now it is 40 hours workweek, which is five working days a week and 8 hours a day in white collared sectors.

Two-day Weekend System has been developed in the Asia Pacific Region since 1930's. Compared to New Zealand (1936), Australia (1948), the Philippines, Thailand (1958), and India (1985), Two-day Weekend System in East Asia has lately been implemented in countries such as Japan in 1994, China in 1995, Taiwan in 2001, and Korea in 2002 (Huang, 1996). South Korea is one of the world's only industrialized nations to still have a six-day workweek until 2002. Reports on a proposal of South Korean President Kim Dae Jung to pass a law mandating a five-day workweek, it expected that the economy would benefit if Koreans had Saturdays off to spend shopping and pursuing leisure activities (Prasso & Ihlwan, 2002). The trial Two-day Weekend System in Korea has just started in April 2002.

In the United States, the average length of the workweek has not changed since the enactment of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938. However, Americans are moving toward a 24-hour, 7-day-a-week economy now. At least three interrelated factors, such as changing economy, demography, and technology, cause the demand for Americans to work late hours and on weekends (Presser, 1999). A law was passed on February 1st 2000 in France that fixed the standard workweek from 39 hours to 35 in businesses who employ more than 20 people to spur employment growth (The Economist, 2002). The Netherlands began a program in 1988 to reduce the workweek to a mere 36 hours in certain sectors (Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland, 1999). In Greece, a bill to reduce the workweek from 40 to 35 hours was opposed by Employer and Worker Confederations and rejected by the Parliament.

Workweek has been changed almost dependently on people's lifestyles in response to the diversity of economic development and information technology under certain context. On the contrary, the diverse systems of workweek shape people's lifestyles and interactions

among family members. As home economics educators, we are really concerned about the impacts of the implementation of the two-day weekend system on daily life of Taiwanese.

## **II. PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this study was to explore the aims of two-day weekend system, the attitudes of people towards the system, and people's actions taken under the system implementation in Taiwan. Through a review of the related literature from journals, data collection through internet access and observations of people's conducts in Taipei, document analysis supplemented by content analysis to deal with data from internet access and observation was used to construct the findings of this study.

## **III. THE AIMS OF TWO-DAY WEEKEND SYSTEM**

The idea to reduce working hours originated from the industrial revolution. Craftsmen's handiwork was replaced by mechanization and mass production. The context of workplace became so drab and unexciting that it influenced workers' health in both physical and mental aspects. The System of Three Eight-hour Day came with the tide of labor demonstration on May 1, 1886 in Chicago. Employees claimed that working time had to be declined to eight-hour workday with eight-hour recreation/education and eight-hour sleep accompanied by six-day workweek. After that, employers in the United States gradually agreed and implemented the three Eight-hour Day System. Employees in the United Kingdom and France followed in sequence. It was forty-eight working hours a week during six-day workweek. Then it has been changed to five and half day workweek until recent time with widespread implementation in East Asian Region. Now we can see that the workweek varies from country to country and business to business under the Two-day Weekend System. Most businesses keep flexible hours on forty-four working hours or less a week in Taiwan.

The purpose of implementing Two-day Weekend System has varied according to the philosophy of work and daily living in addition to the context of economic development in each country. In Europe and the United States, it is to provide employees with leisure activities and updating their expertise in order to have meaningful daily living (Lin, 1997). Several purposes have been emphasized as follows: It is to

1. promote quality of laboring and effectiveness of production;
2. enjoy recreational activities and pursue quality of life;
3. refresh labor forces through taking recreation, reeducation, and relaxation;
4. promote employment growth and slow down rates of unemployment;
5. save time and energy in both employee and employer effects;
6. follow the international conventions; and/or
7. adjust the pressure from Europe and the United States.

On the traditional perspective of management, reducing workweek would be detrimental to competitive strengths and profit of enterprises. This concept has been deep-rooted in the Orientals who work from dawn till dusk in general. Therefore, they would rather insist on lengthening than shortening working hours such as the implementation of Two-day Weekend System. Unless they really realize that competitive economic strengths with regards to efficacy, efficiency, and effectiveness in production are influenced by not only the length of working hours but also multiple interrelated factors.

In the era of knowledge economy and learning society, the fewer work-hours with more payment is the better policy to attract and recruit young people to enterprises. The restriction of maximum workweek may not guarantee efficacy, efficiency, and effectiveness in production due to indulgence in improper leisure activities with fatigue. Meanwhile, workers may not be happy with a shortage of overtime wage. However, reducing workweek is an important policy to protect employees from stress and to promote quality of production (Cheng, 1998; Fu, 1998). The arrival of recreational society will be full of a variety of innovative lifestyles. The employer will take advantage of employee's self-discipline, self-learning, physical and mental health promotion, potential development of creativity and innovation through their recreational activities and relaxation with their family or their colleagues. The key point to adopt Two-day Weekend System in Taiwan is to

promote quality of employees so both employers and employees would benefit.

According to my review of the related literature, three major thrusts have pushed Japan Government to implement Two-day Weekend System over a long span since 1960's. They are thrusts from the employees, the employers, and the international society. It is easy to understand the thrust from employee and the employer. But the critical thrust came from Europeans and Americans who have implemented the Two-day Weekend System since 1950's through 1960's. They would not be happy with Japanese winning the top one or two economic competitive strengths but still kept a system of long working hour. These three thrusts forced Japan to start a system of Six-day Weekend for Four Weeks in 1988 and followed the system of Two-day Weekend in 1994 (Chiang,1992).

The purposes of implementing Two-day Weekend System in China were different from those in Japan. Under the context of developing country in the 1990's China, they drastically adopted the system in 1995. The authority expected to attain the following goals through implementing the Two-day Weekend System: ❶ to enhance efficiency by reducing workweek, ❷ to promote quality of civic life, ❸ to increase time and expenditures in recreation, ❹ to expand opportunities of employment in tertiary industry, and ❺ to slow down unemployment in surplus manpower (Cheng,1995).

According to the evaluation by the Committee of Economics and Development in Taiwan Government, the implementation of a Monthly Six-day Weekend System in 1998 is anticipated to have comprehensive benefits. For instance, it would save 146 minutes a month for each person who would otherwise get stuck in traffic jams, increase getting along with family for recreational activities, promote parent-child relationships, decline juvenile delinquency, and prosper artistic, cultural, recreational, and physical activities in addition to the tertiary industry (Cheng,1998). The same evaluation also pointed out that the reason why people agreed to implement the Two-day Weekend System were as follows: it may provide employees with opportunities for recreation and reeducation, slow down the ratio of employees' lay off, promote quality of production and quality of employees' life.

The critical point of manpower has been put emphasis on intellectuality rather than labor force in order to keep superiority in competition (such as Japan) and push ahead with the development of tertiary industry (such as China) in the large scale (Chien,1999). And

refining the manpower to be autonomous, flexible, innovative, self-actualization, versatile, and harmonious with people are the positive outcomes of the system in the other scale (Lin, 2000; Lin, 1997; Liu, 1999; Young, 1998).

## **IV. AFFECTIVE ATTITUDES**

In general, people such as public officials, educators, employees, and students are happy to enjoy two-day weekend with the exception of working mothers/parents. The attitudes toward the two-day weekend system tend to be positive. Investigations related to this domain are described briefly as follows:

### **1. Attitudes of Public Officials**

Most public officials (94.7%) were satisfied with the Two-day Weekend System and enjoyed their leisure time during two-day weekend for recreational activities. There were 75% of public officials demanding the authorities to conduct recreational activities such as mountain climbing and sightseeing tours for pleasure. And about 73.3% of public officials were willing to attend training or in-service education with regard to their careers during two-day weekend. However, about 77% of public officials claimed they might refuse to attend those activities if they are mandatory (Department of Statutes, Ministry of Civil Service, 2002).

### **2. Attitudes of Educators**

Most educators felt both happy and concerned about the implementation of Two-day Weekend System in school. They were happy with five-day teaching in addition to family and community shared responsibilities for educating children. However, they worried about some students whose parents would be unable to care for children due to having no weekends. In this case, the students might indulge themselves in video arcades, arcade

games, Internet cafe, hallucinogen or drugs. Or more frequently, students may be forced to take extra lessons in cram schools after class (Chen, 1998; Chiang, 1998; Hsu, 1997; Kao, J. Y. 1997; Kao, K W. 1997; Wang, 2001; Wong, 1997).

### **3. Attitudes of Students and Their Parents**

A study conducted at Taipei City, Taipei County, Taichung City, and Kaohsiung City by King Car Education Foundation found that over 34% of parents with their 6-15 years old children felt inconvenient with two-day weekend. In addition, 40% of parents claimed they could not adjust to the system. Only 14% of parents were able to take care of their children during two-day weekend. And it was interesting that about 55% of parents demanded the school arrange extra-curriculum regarding parent-child program. The categories of the program they mentioned were Athletics (45%), Home Economics (18%), Fine Arts (10%), and the others (27%). The same study pointed out that students preferred joining outdoor activities with their parents (49%) to attending extra talent and skill classes (9%).

Another study conducted at Taipei City (Chen, 1997) showed that about 25% of parents agreed that teachers and schools should take care of their children during two-day weekend but 28% of parents disagreed. And 30% of parents complained that no one looked after their children during two-day weekend. On the contrary, about 40% of parents demanded that schools should provide extra guidance for students. The content of guidance included extra class for the development of talents and skills (54%) and academic achievement (29%). Only a few parents recognized that the Two-day Weekend system provides opportunity for them to enhance their relationships with children via better communication and socialization.

In addition, many chatters in website indicated most mothers/parents love two-day weekend but worry that their kids may not be satisfied with their arrangements for leisure activities. The arrangements should be changeable, fun, innovative, interesting, novel, adventurous, and special. Otherwise, children may complain that the activities are monotonous, boring, and unpleasant. Therefore, pursuing the updated information about recreation becomes very important to modern parents. Most children are happy to enjoy their two-day weekend in general. They may sleep free of intervention, eat delicious food,

read novels, watch TV, listen to pop music, talk, or take exercise with the person they like.

In conclusion, people in public domain are willing to enjoy two-day weekend whether they are public officials, educators, enterprisers, or subordinates. However, it is not really optimistic in the private domain.

## **V. BEHAVIORAL ACTIONS**

### **1. People make Friday to be a divide between weekday and weekend.**

A survey included responses from 150 executives with the nations' 1,000 largest companies conducted by Accountemps, a staffing service for accounting, finance and bookkeeping professionals, executives were asked for their opinions on which day of the week employees are typically most productive. According to the survey, 48% of responses pointed out that the most productive day of the week might be Tuesday, 26% claimed Monday, 9% said Wednesday, and Friday was seen as the least productive day of the week (Katz, 2002).

The situation in Taiwan is quite the same. Friday was considered a day when people are less productive in work but busier in family. People prepare everything for the weekend on Friday. For example, they go to their banks to get cash first, then they go shopping in the supermarkets, food stores, grocery stores, and huge sales outlets to prepare for barbecue, camping, hiking, picnic, and so on. They pass through gas stations to fill gas for long trips on Friday evening in urban area and vice versa on weekend in suburban/rural area. Friday becomes a divide between weekday and weekend.

### **B. People in Taiwan progressively use the two-day weekends to relieve fatigues, promote health, enhance interpersonal relationships, and achieve self-actualization.**

At the beginning, people identified the two-day weekend system as to relieve stresses and



fatigues; they sleep late, watch TV & MTV, sing in karaoke, play in video arcade, and use Internet access at home. Then people take advantage of two-day weekend to improve relationships between family members as well as friends via potluck, picnic, biking, hiking, mountain-climbing, fishing, sightseeing, camping, and traveling on weekends (Cheng, 1998?Fu, 1998). In advance, they spend leisure time on self-actualization in body shaping, emotional maturity, professional growth, spiritual purification, and public services. People tend to like to be away from home instead of staying home.

### **3. The tertiary and innovative industries become in great demand.**

To meet the needs of recreational activities, several commercial tertiary and innovative industries are getting prosperous. These industries include businesses provide consumers and clients with facilities and services to promote health, fun, taste, intelligence, aesthetics, literary and artistic creation, and/or quality of life. Those industries and services benefit health promotion include gymnasiums, health clubs, health centers, holiday resorts, beauty salons, spas, food courts, restaurants and so on. The other industries make people relax and have fun and relaxation have to provide sufficient and safe services and facilities such as shopping centers, recreation grounds, casinos, cyber cafes, race courses for horse racing, shallow areas for diving, surfing areas, tourists guides, hotel and restaurant, digital technology (such as digital communication, digital camera) and so on. It is urgent and important to improve related facilities and services in quantity and quality as well as to train professionals to engage in the tertiary and innovative industries.

### **4. Web walking and cyber-loafing become one of the most favorite leisure activities.**

The population of Internet access in Taiwan has been over eight million and eighty thousand at the end of June 2002. Web Walking and cyber-loafing become very popular for people to do on two-day weekend. It helps them update their knowledge and information in general and recreation in particular. Because people in Taiwan have easy access to websites, cyber schools and online literature become fictitious paths for lifelong learning.

Cybermalls and online shopping centers make a wave of “Webonomics” that totally changes consumer’s behaviors, money-style, and exchange mode. Cyber cafe becomes a place for young people to gather and cyber-loaf. They stay there every day which result in quitting their jobs/education or trouble for their family, schools, and communities. In addition, Internet time compression, web dating, cyber crime, cyberholic, cyber phobia, and Cyberpunk come with the tide of fashion and/or syndromes in the era of Internet. Traffic jams in Internet access and its charge by the minutes cause people to demand that Information Highway be express in speed and par in price.

#### **5. The need to improve public services and facilities increases drastically.**

People’s access to a variety of public services and facilities increases drastically due to the implementation of two-day weekend system. These include public amusement parks, campgrounds, beaches, swimming pools, wildlife sanctuaries, botanic gardens, zoos, national parks, libraries, museums, art galleries, opera houses, theaters, broadcasting stations, Mass Rapid Transit (MRT), Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC), super highway, Internet freeway, etc. These services and facilities are gradually improved in quality and in quantity. For instance, many toilet rooms in rest area become more user-friendly due to sufficient water supply and toilet tissue and regular cleaning services.

#### **6. Public Holidays have been adjusted for the implementation Two-day Weekend.**

The yearly legal public holiday has been cut from 21~23 days to 14 days in Taiwan since the implementation of Two-day Weekend. The original holidays included 3 days of new year, 6 days of lunar new year, the Women’s Day, the Arbor Day, the Youth Day, the Children’s Day, Tomb-sweeping Day, Labor Day, the Dragon Boat Festival, the Moon Festival, Confucius’ Birthday & Teachers’ Day, the National Day, Taiwan Restoration Day, the Late President Chiang Kai-Sheik’s Memorial Birthday, Dr. Sun Yet Shan’s Memorial Birthday, and the Constitution Day. In addition, a deferred extra day off will be become ineffective when the public holiday ran into weekend.

Now the number of public holiday has been reduced and there is no extra day off even the holiday runs into weekend. Fourteen holidays are the New Year (January 1st), the Lunar New Year (4 days included Lunar December 30th to January 3rd), February 28 Memorial Day, Children's and Women's Day (April 3rd), Tomb-sweeping Day (April 5th), the Dragon Boat Festival (Lunar May 5th), and the Moon Festival (Lunar August 15th), Dr. Sun Yet Shan's Memorial Birthday (November 12th), and the Constitution Memorial Day (December 25th).

Meanwhile, several enterprises related to people's livelihood also adjust their day off. For example, terminal market of agricultural products in Taiwan actually implemented two days off at the 3rd and the 17th of every lunar month. Now they have adjusted every Monday off to Two-day Weekend. Garbage collectors in Taipei have Sunday off now rather than four day off (during the Lunar New Year) a year before. In addition, the adjustment occurs in schools such as the presentation of students' performances, conferences of parent-teacher association, and teachers' in-service forums almost move to the two-day weekends.

## **7. People Strive for Efficacy and Quality Promotion in their Work on Weekdays.**

The growing recognition about spending longer hours on the job may have increased the chances of gaining weight, smoking or alcohol consumption, and may be putting certain aspects of workers' health at risk. Meanwhile, many professionals' employees are not entitled to overtime pay after a 40-hour workweek. Most of the enterprises and institutions maintain a rigid evaluation to their employees including presence and absence, diligence and laziness, productive and innovative efficacy in their performance. In addition, these enterprises and institutions lay off redundant personnel to increase heavy load of efficient personnel. Therefore, people have to learn how to take more burdens in weekdays squeeze rather than learn how to enjoy two-day weekends only. If the employee could not afford the heavy workload, layoff and unemployment will come up in the near future.

## **VI. CONCLUSIONS: COUNTERMEASURES ADOPTED BY FAMILIES**

Several other factors together with the implementation of Two-day Weekend System and at least three interrelated factors are the spurs for families to adjust their family life styles. Three interrelated factors are changing economy, changing demography, and changing technology (Presser, 1999). The strategies available for families are as follows:

1. Keeping simple family life: There are limited time, energy, and money to deal with everyday life under the fulfillment of Two-day Weekend System. People start to learn how to slow down and enjoy life and how to utilize tertiary industries to replace their housekeeping. For instance, workingwomen often choose the fast food or eating out rather than meal preparation by themselves at home for their families.

2. Looking for flexible jobs other than a fixed daytime schedule: In response to Two-day Weekend, many businesses are moving toward a 24-hour, 7-day-a-week economy. The widespread prevalence of nonstandard work schedules is a significant social phenomenon. People such as working couples, unemployed middle-aged people, and young new employees, start to find jobs during the evenings or nights, on rotating shifts, or on weekends for earning incomes, health promotion, domestic labor division, and well being of individuals and their families.

3. Taking the advantages of information technology: There are both advantages and disadvantages when people use information technology. We have to get rid of its detrimental effects and take its advantages. On positive aspect, people may fully utilize Internet to update knowledge and information for upgrading their quality of life with regard to job searching, money earning, life long learning, leisure activities, parenting, interpersonal relationships, global contact, and so on wherever they are. For example, a studio at home with sufficient facilities of computer and website at home or near home would be a better idea to run a favorite tertiary and innovative business. Meanwhile, it could be a great benefit to both work and family.

4. Working and getting together with family members at home and outside of the home: Much more attention has been given to family members on domestic labor division, leisure

activities, income creation, cyber-loafing, and lifelong learning. It will benefit family members in the development of potentiality, positive habits formation, and competencies of life management.

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