Research on Operation Mode and Management of Shared Employee Driven by Platform Economy

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Abstract

As a new economic model in the context of digital economy era, platform economy provides great support and driving force for the development of shared employee with its multilateralism, strong scale, publicity and data relevance. Influenced by the COVID-19 epidemic in 2020, shared employee, as a new flexible employment mode in China, have attracted wide attention from the society. Shared employee benefit from the support of the platform economy, which on the one hand has contributed to the economic development of our country during the epidemic period and has promoted the pace of social development, but on the other hand, the existing problems are gradually exposed with the maturity of the shared employee mode. Based on the background of the rapid development of digital platform economy in the new media era, this paper studies the new flexible employment model of shared employee, which was spawned by the epidemic. On the basis of the exploration of the platform economy and the theoretical knowledge of shared employee as well as related literature, this paper mainly analyzes the operation mode of shared employee based on platform reliance and gives the corresponding management strategies in conjunction with the content, focusing on the future normalization of shared employee mode.

Keywords

Platform economy; Shared employee; Operation mode

Research Background

With the rapid development of the new technological revolution and the electronic information industry, the digital economy with the Internet as the medium has accelerated its rise. Since Premier Li Keqiang first included the platform economy in the government report at the 13th National People's Congress in 2018, the platform economy has increasingly become an important form of industrial organization in the new economic era. Internet platforms have also become the leaders of the new economy. Home quarantine under the epidemic has made people's daily life more dependent on digital platforms. By the end of 2020, China's digital platform enterprises with market value exceeding 1 billion US dollars had reached 197, an increase of 23 compared with 2019, with a value of 350 million US dollars, an increase of 56.3% over the same period last

year. Platform economy is creating more diversified scenarios for the booming development of China's economy. In recent years, along with the social crisis brought by the epidemic, 'shared employee' has entered the public's vision, giving rise to a new wave of platform economy. Especially in the aspect of being the media for the operation of shared employee mode, platform economy has played a huge role, making people more deeply appreciate its impact on human life and social order. The successful popularity of the shared employee mode is driven by the platform economy. Platform enterprises have a large number of human resources, and shared employee use the platform as a connection point to flow across borders among enterprises and industrial chains, realizing large-scale 'flexible employment'.

In 2020, the spread of the global COVID-19 epidemic has affected people's income levels in general. The demand for jobs from unemployed and non-working employees has shown an explosive growth, and many enterprises and industries have appeared the unbalanced situation of labor shortage and idle employment. In February 2020, Alibaba's industry Hema Fresh took the lead in reaching a shared employee cooperation with Yunhai Cuisine, and absorbed 5000 employees from nearly 40 enterprises by using the shared employee mode, which greatly alleviated the employment pressure of employees and enterprises. Subsequently, enterprises in various industries, such as Jingdong, Meituan and Harrow Travel, followed suit and jointly explored a new mode of sharing employees across borders. By 2021, China's working-age population will be about 900 million, multiplied by the labor participation rate, about 700 million + will participate in the work, with about 300-400 million formal employees (with formal establishment or contract) and other working groups (about 300-400 million) will be in the sharing economy system. Shared employee mode has been extended from e-commerce, online retail industry to logistics, manufacturing and other industries, and has a greater application in people's lives.

Table 1. Popularity of shared employee life areas in 2020

Fields	User size (10,000 people)	Internet usage rate (%)
Online car	34011	36.19%
Shared Accommodation	6983	7.43%
Online takeaway	40903	43.52%

Note: Source: "China Sharing Economy Development Report (2021)

In addition, the shared employee mode has also achieved geographical progression, gradually spreading from first-tier cities to second-tier and third-tier cities, and using the platform to publish and promote to quickly solve the imbalance between supply and demand of talents. The data suggest that in the event of a significant drop in the growth rate of the sharing economy in 2020 due to the impact of the epidemic, the growth rate is expected to rebound significantly in 2021, with a rate expected to reach 10%-15%, considering a possible strong macroeconomic recovery; in the next five years, the average annual growth rate of China's sharing economy will remain above 10%. The shared employee mode, with its advantages of mobility, flexibility and sharing, coupled with the platform economy's use of multilateral markets to scale up, helped stabilize the country's economy during the epidemic, while achieving win-win cooperation among employees, companies and society. Although shared employee has contributed greatly to the development of society by easing the sinking economy in the short term and by solving some of the unemployment problems caused by the epidemic, however, more and more people have discovered the flaws and drawbacks of the shared employee em-

ployment mode, such as complicated employment relationship, management informatization, organizational flattening and so on. Recently, with the passage of time and the gradual improvement of the epidemic, the concept of 'shared employees' has been questioned by the public, believing that it is 'a human outsourcing in the guise of sharing economy'. While such a statement may be too absolute, it is undeniable that since the epidemic, shared employee mode has only been used as a temporary transitional measure in the face of the crisis, and whether it will become a normal employment mode in the future is still unknown. Therefore, in this paper, we will analyze the mode and give reasonable solutions for the management strategies by combining the current situation of shared employee in China, and study the development space and possibility of the mode in the future.

Theoretical Review and Prospect

Theoretical Research on Platform Economy

Platform economy is a new economic system based on digital technology, which is composed of data-driven, platform-supported and network-coordinated economic activity units. Based on Xu Lupeng's (2015) literature research on media economy and platform economy, the theoretical framework of platform economy includes two dimensions: two-sided market theory and network externality theory. Among them, the bilateral market theory emphasizes the ability of the platform to measure the transactions specified by the two users directly involved in the transaction, and the total number of transactions varies with the price proposed by both users. With the digital transformation of the Internet in the past five years and the rapid development of platform economy, China's platform economy has expanded from two-sided market to multilateral market, which can achieve more complex transactions. Network externality emphasizes the impact of external factors on transactions under the concept of network, mainly focusing on the impact of consumer behavior on new users' decision-making.

Li Ling (2015) believes that the platform economy has smashed and repackaged resources, integrated and classified complex information, so that consumers have massive information on the platform, breaking the traditional situation of information asymmetry. Ye Xiumin (2016) proposed that the development of platform economy presents the characteristics of hierarchy (basic layer, platform layer, application layer, user layer), zero-cost replication (the mystery of rapid growth of platform), division of labor and cooperation, openness and externality (improving free user experience, retaining users).

The Nature of Shared Employee

Although shared employee has not yet formed a perfect practice mode and operation mechanism of management system, its formation and development process are based on a certain foundation. Pei Min (2020) believes that shared employee is not a new thing under the epidemic of COVID-19. As early as before 2020, the embryonic form of shared employees has appeared in China's labor market, such as seasonal employees. Professor Zhou Yu, Department of Human Resources, Renmin University of China, said that the sharing of employees among enterprises balanced the uneven employment in the market in the short term, which is a form of flexible employment, and there is no essential innovation. Yang Qin (2020) likewise said that shared

employee is not new. Different from the existing flexible employment mode in China, the shared employee is larger than the traditional flexible employment mode in the context of COVID-19 epidemic and has had a definite positive impact in alleviating the market downturn and reducing unemployment by taking advantage of cross-industry advantages and flexibility, which has amplified the social awareness and definition of "shared employee". Sharing employees is not only a way of flexible employment and new forms of employment, but also one of the important measures for some enterprises to resume production and work under the epidemic situation of COVID-19. There is not yet a unified definition of shared employees in academic circles, Li Dongxu (2021) believes that shared employee is a process of adjusting the shortage of employees between labor shortage enterprises and employee surplus enterprises under the condition of fully respecting the wills of employees. According to Tang Xiaohua (2021), shared employee refers to a new employment model in which the employment subject scientifically regulates the employment issue at a special stage and does not take profit as the orientation, and achieves the purpose of optimizing the allocation of human resources by restricting the sharing of employee resources. Most of the current studies on shared employees are based on the background of epidemic and involve three subjects, namely, employers, labor units and employees. Combined with the above views, the author believes that, conceptually, shared employee is a kind of labor resource allocation based on resource allocation theory, enterprise collaborative development theory and cost-benefit theory.

Current Status of Research on Shared Employee

During the epidemic period, shared employee responded well in the society, having made great contributions to the progress of individuals, enterprises and society. For individual employees, the shared employee mode transformed employment concepts, enriched careers, and alleviated employment and economic stress (He, 2020; Yan, 2020; Guan, 2020). For enterprises, it reduced the personnel expenditure of export enterprises and the employment pressure of import enterprises (Mo, 2020; Li, 2020). For the society, the mode of sharing employees stabilized employment, reduced unemployment rate, and improved the flexibility of the labor market and the stability of the employment market. In addition, although the shared employee mode was spawned by the epidemic, it can also be used to resist the impact of uncertainty, transfer idle labor force, and improve the efficiency of social resources allocation. (Yang, 2020; Wu, 2020; Luan, 2020). However, due to the low social threshold of shared employee, its problems emerge in endlessly. Zhao Wenze (2020) and Feng Jun (2020) pointed out that the mode is relatively lagging behind in laws and regulations, has low employment quality and lacks the power of a specialized platform. Lu Yang (2020) argues that compared with the traditional employment mode, the division of responsibilities and obligations among the subjects of shared employee is unclear and there is not enough legal protection, which increases the possibility of labor disputes among the participating subjects. Synthesizing the above views and other literature, this paper argues that although the shared employee mode has played an important role in China's economic development under the epidemic, its drawbacks are still obvious, among which, legal risk is the most significant and frequent problem in the study of the shared employee mode, and corresponding measures need to be taken to minimize its risks in order to ensure the sustainable operation of the mode.

The Development Trend of Shared Employee

The academic community still holds different opinions on whether shared employee can become a normal-

ized form of corporate employment in the future. Huang Xiurong (2020) believes that the rise of shared employee mode is due to the epidemic, and as the epidemic improves, the market demand for shared employees will be significantly weakened, and whether shared employee can be normalized is still subject to be tested by time and market demand. According to Zhou Wenhua, founder of the flexible recruitment platform Wisdom Bird Jobs, "shared employee" is only a temporary solution to balance supply and demand, not a regular employment method. However, on the contrary, some scholars hold a positive attitude towards the future development of the shared employee mode. Li Huirong (2021) believes that in the future, with more young workers entering the workplace, informal employment may go hand in hand with formal employment, and shared employee will become a normalized form of employment. Lai Yang, executive vice president of Beijing Business Economics Association, said that sharing employees is not only an emergency measure, but also a mode of work in the future. Because with the change of working mode and mechanism, people's working concept has changed, and they tend to choose a working mode that fits their needs better. Shared employee mode in the context of COVID-19 epidemic has shown its superiority and played an important role in solving the short-term structural imbalance in the market. Data show that the market size of China's flexible workforce industry is nearly 50 billion in2019 and is expected to exceed 60 billion in 2020 due to the impact of COVID-19 epidemic. Although the mode exhibited some drawbacks during its operation, it still has a huge room for growth from a long-term perspective. This paper holds a positive attitude towards the development trend of shared employee mode, and believes that it is possible to normalize in the future.

Comprehensive Review

Combining the realistic data with the previous literature and theoretical research on platform economy and shared employee, this text believes that the promotion of the platform economy to the shared employee mode is mainly embodied in the following points: first, integrating market resources (integrating the existing market resources and then distributing them to both sides of the transaction); second, providing a transaction media (linking shared labor subjects through building a shared platform and building a transaction bridge); third, locking specified demand (to clarify the shortage of labor in enterprises, so as to realize the allocation of human resources). These three functions together support the framework of the shared employment mode, which makes it survive and develop. However, the mode has its flaws and drawbacks. The platforms are unable to make comprehensive adjustments, so further research is needed on how to adopt corresponding management strategies to maximize the advantages of the shared employee mode.

The Operation Mode of Shared Employee

First, platform resource integration. The sharing of employees needs to go through a certain process, with the help of external forces and technical foundation, in order to meet the needs of multiple parties in a standardized and reasonable manner. The flexibility and mobility of shared employee do not come into being out of void, they need to use the platform as a medium to achieve flexible mobilization of employment. The sharing platform integrates employee information, enterprises and human resources intermediaries together, and then matches suitable employees through the recruitment demand information released by enterprises.

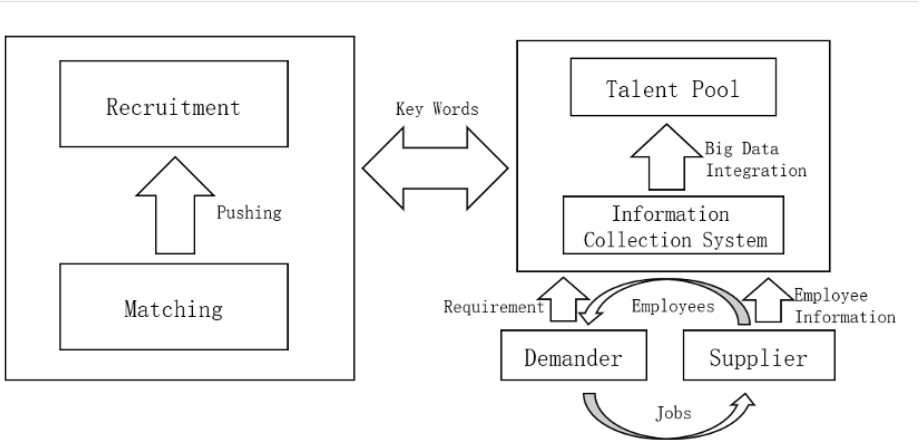


Figure 1. Shared Employee Platform Architecture

The intervention of the platform supports more diversified employees to participate in the operation of shared employees, and employees can decide their own working hours, negotiate and communicate with enterprises. According to the China Shared Economic Development Report (2021), the market economy sharing transactions in 2020 were about 3377.3 billion yuan, up 2.9% year-on-year; the number of participants in the sharing economy were about 830 million people, including 83 million service providers, up 7.7% year-on-year; the number of employees of platform enterprises were about 6.31 million, up 1.3% year-on-year.

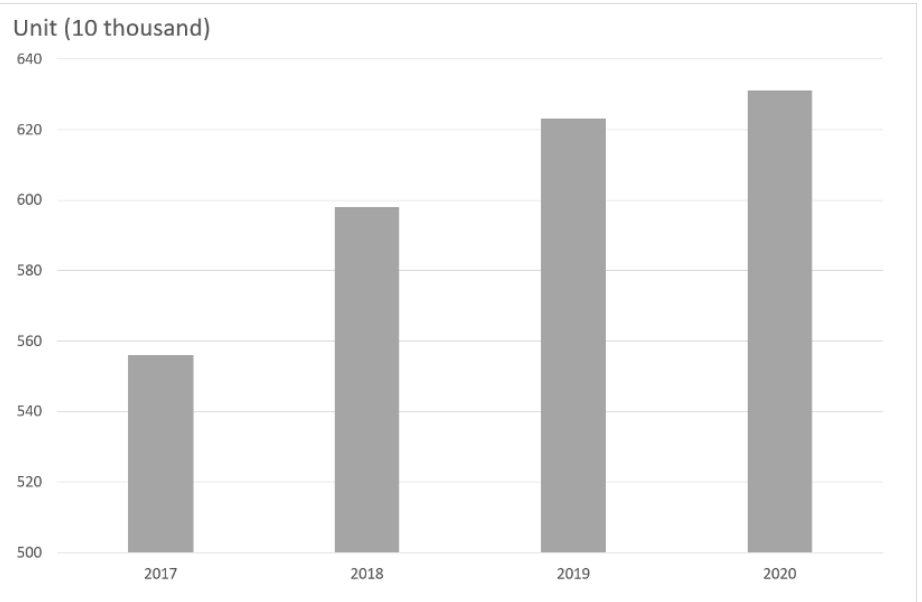


Figure 2. Number of Shared Employees in China, 2017-2020

From the data, we can see that the linking role of the platform has made great contributions to the development of the shared employee mode in China in recent years. In 2021, Beijing has issued relevant circulars and policies to encourage the sharing economy and give full play to the role of "sharing platform" to provide online job matching and transfer of surplus and shortage of jobs to promote the employment between enterprises. Sharing platforms take advantage of the multilateral nature of the platform economy, where the number of shared employees, hiring enterprises and employing enterprises promote each other, allowing participants

to enjoy a more convenient way to obtain higher benefits at lower cost. On June 8, 2020, Fengze District Enterprise Human Resources Sharing Platform was officially launched, with five modules in the registration page, namely High-level Talents, Enterprise Employment Demand, Enterprise Surplus Employees, Personal Short-term Employment and Human Resources Intermediary Agencies Recommending Shared Employees. Registrants can enter and complete the registration from the entrance according to their own conditions. This approach is equivalent to introducing all registered users into a reservoir to integrate resources. The employing enterprises can directly connect with the hiring enterprises so as to realize the use of employees. This operation mode establishes a bridge for the communication between enterprises and employees of both sides, constructs a complete operation structure, and ensures the fairness, equity and openness of sharing.

Second, dynamic pricing based on demand scenarios. In the traditional form of employment, most enterprises adopt a single full-time fixed employment mode, which has a more stable number of employees but high labor cost consumption. After the epidemic, more and more enterprises have deeply realized the serious risks caused by the fixed mode to the sustainable operation of enterprises. According to the survey of China Enterprise Social Security White Paper 2018, 53% of enterprises have a labor cost proportion of more than 30% of total cost, and 16.27% of enterprises have this proportion of more than 50%. The high proportion of labor cost makes enterprises seek a new low-price and high-efficiency labor mode - shared employee. Employee sharing is actually the transaction of human capital between the two enterprises. After the sharing platform integrates the existing resources, the transaction between the two enterprises would start. Employers from different industries post different demand scenarios on the platform, and according to these specific scenarios, the platform would match them with employees who can meet their needs, and then build a bridge of cooperation between the two subjects. However, the current mode of sharing employees has not yet been fully marketized, usually by enterprises to organize and price. Since price, or profit, is directly related to the attitude and willingness of both enterprises to cooperate. In order to avoid the situation that the demander needs manpower but the supplier cannot ration in time, the platform can carry out a relatively more flexible pricing by analyzing and comparing the proportion of supply and demand quantities and the fluctuations in demand so as to pursue a balance between supply and demand. For example, in 2012, Uber found that the number of passengers increased significantly in the early hours of the weekend, but at that time the drivers had already gone home. In order to avoid the loss of customers, Uber tried to raise the price appropriately at this time to incent e drivers to work. In just two weeks, the supply of driver services increased by 70%, meeting the demand of 2/3 more users. From this case, we can see that the advantage of dynamic pricing is not only to improve the willingness of employees to cooperate, but also to expand the market size of enterprises and reduce the loss of customers.

Third, the two-way evaluation of commercial credit. By using the two-way evaluation and selection mechanism of the sharing platform, each transaction can receive timely feedback. The two-way here is not limited to the establishment of business trust between the two enterprises, but also includes the establishment of cooperative relations between employees and enterprises. After borrowing, both sides will evaluate each other and feedback to the lender enterprise. If they are satisfied with the cooperation with the employing enterprises, the employees will improve their enthusiasm for work and perhaps get more job opportunities in the future. If the cooperation with the employing enterprise is not satisfactory, or the employing enterprise is not satisfied with the employee, it will lead to the estrangement between the two sides and reduce the possibility of follow-up cooperation. It is essential emphasized that on the sharing platform, employees are not the goods

traded between enterprises, but the service providers of equal docking. With the help of the connection of the platform, employees should be placed in the same important position as enterprises, so as to maximize the advantages of the shared employee mode over traditional employment methods.

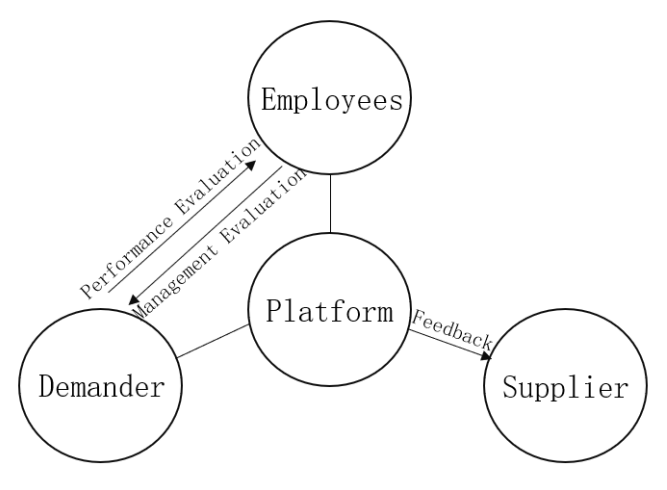


Figure 3. Shared Employee Evaluation Model

Shared Employee Management Strategies

First, actively build sharing platforms. China's platform economy has broad prospects for development, and the Internet platform provides a channel for the economic development of the commercial market. As the transformation of enterprises enters a critical period, platform enterprises thrive and platform market transactions become increasingly standardized. Among them, the establishment of sharing platforms has also greatly facilitated the operation of the shared employee mode. Ouyang Rihui, vice president of China Internet Economy Research Institute of Central University of Finance and Economics, stressed that although shared employment is not a new concept or practice, vigorously developing sharing employment platform is a new model. On March 18, 2020, the shared employee leading enterprise FreshHema launched the construction of the shared employee platform, which went live in April. As of the end of February, 200 employees had left Hema and returned to their original company, said Chong Xiaomeng, Hema's public and customer communications officer. FreshHema hopes to normalize the shared employee mode through digitalization. The Internet+ and platform economy are important supports for employment. On March 17, 2020, the State Council executive meeting decided to support the development of a shared employee employment security platform to provide online services and channels for flexible employment.

Second, improve the relevant laws and regulations. The biggest defect of the shared employee mode is that there is no complete law explicitly stipulating the specific identity of employees in the labor relations. Therefore, the government should promulgate relevant laws and policies as soon as possible to clarify the relationships among the three parties in the shared employment, and clearly stipulate the responsibility for the rights and interests of employees, such as wages, insurance and pension. At the same time, the administrative subject should strengthen supervision, exercise its power reasonably according to law, and achieve prior permission, post-event supervision, remediation and punishment.

Third, improve employee identity. To begin with, establish an employee protection system. As mentioned earlier, in fact, the benefit guarantee system for shared employee is not perfect. Under such circumstances, the interests of many employees cannot be fully protected, which makes it difficult for employees to serve the company wholeheartedly, because once problems arise, employees will definitely be the party with the greatest losses. Shared employees are part of the workers, and the social security they should receive cannot be divided just because of the particularity of their work form. The society and the market should give more understanding to the shared employees and protect their labor rights and labor achievements. At the same time, enterprises should give certain rights of independent choices to employees in order to maintain free labor relations. Without violating laws and regulations, shared employees should have the right to decide whether to accept or reject part of the work business. In addition, to strengthen the main responsibility of the platform. As the node for the operation of the shared employee mode, the platform has the obligation to provide a certain degree of protection for the rights and interests of registrants, such as giving the cooperation plan between suppliers and demanders and providing policies to ensure the compliance of enterprise operation and employee services. Next, improve the incentive mechanism. Incentives are for employees, which is the same as traditional employment, and usually requires hiring enterprises to set up incentive systems to improve the enthusiasm of employees. It should be noted that the establishment of incentive mechanism needs a certain method. Some platforms in the evaluation of the results of the staff incentive were not in place, could not improve the motivation of employees to work or even led to a decline in the sense of belonging to the situation. In the setting of incentive mechanism, enterprises need to start from the needs and psychological point of view of employees, pay attention to the combination of spiritual incentive and material incentive in form, and stimulate the enthusiasm of employees to the greatest extent. It is better to adopt a hierarchical progressive reward in terms of quantity to cultivate the sense of internal competition among employees in order to select more outstanding employees. Employees are ranked in terms of performance and rewarded according to feedback and actual conditions of the hiring enterprise. Such an open and transparent measure can help optimize the management of employees. Finally, provide channels for consultation among labor subjects. The labor subjects include the employing enterprises, the hiring enterprises, and the employees. Consultation is very crucial in either process of operation. However, in the background of the existing shared employee mode, negotiation mainly takes place between the two enterprises, and the contents of employees' work business, working hours and salary distribution would be decided through enterprise negotiation. Consultation is a process of communication and exchange, which can help both sides understand each other and establish a relationship of trust. As well as after the transaction is completed, two-way evaluation through the platform is also a part of consultation of labor subjects. Especially when it comes to situations involving labor disputes, consultation is the most direct solution. Due to the absence of relevant explicit legal provisions, labor disputes can lead to serious consequences if they are not handled in time. Therefore, at the first time of discovering the problem, both enterprises should organize the employees to conduct a consensual consultation, and it is better to work out a solution acceptable to all three parties, and then gradually maintain the subsequent cooperative relationship.

Fourth, government macro control. The management of the shared employee employment form is inseparable from control and support of the government. During the epidemic, the market was damaged and the market order was disrupted, which covered up many drawbacks of the shared employee mode. Nowadays, as the shortcomings of shared employee mode are gradually revealed, the government should intervene in the management of shared employees with appropriate means, such as formulating relevant laws and regulations to

regulate the behavior of enterprises, employees and platforms, and clarifying the obligations and responsibilities of all parties. At the same time, the government should formulate corresponding policies according to the economic development of the society. For example, nowadays, most of the employee sharing activities take place among large enterprises, small and medium-sized enterprises cannot meet the conditions or do not have channels to participate, then the government can provide them with some policy subsidies to help them develop and participate in the employee sharing mode. It also contributes to the development of social economy. On December 25, 2020, the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Human Resources and Social Security issued the Guidelines for Shared Employment and Service in Beijing, under whose guidance many enterprises reached employment intentions and solved the shortage of employment in some catering service enterprises in Beijing during the Spring Festival of 2021.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

This paper takes the operation mode and management of shared employees driven by platform economy as the main research content, analyzes the current situation and operation mode of shared employee mode in China, and gives the corresponding management strategies. With the further development of the platform economy and digital economy, shared employee mode has become a rapidly expanding business mode, bringing disruptive changes to individuals, enterprises and society. In the background of platform economy, shared employee mode as a new form of flexible employment provides great opportunities for the development of enterprises and individuals, but at the same time, it also faces challenges. Even though this mode has played a positive role in economic development, there are still many formal and technical problems that need to be solved. This paper argues that the operation and management of shared employee should be based on the compliance operation of the sharing platform, reasonable pricing according to the needs of liquidity and timely feedback and evaluation, in order to effectively carry out this mode systematically.

In the perspective of this paper, due to the influence of platform economy and digital economy, the scale of shared employee mode is gradually expanding, and even appears to catch up with the traditional employment form. With its flexibility and mobility, the shared employee mode promotes resource mobilization among enterprises, maximizes the efficiency of human resource allocation, greatly reduces the burden of employment during the epidemic period, and provides new employment opportunities for the unemployed. The wave spawned by the platform economy has not yet stopped, and technological developments have further driven the digital economy. Currently, there are controversies in society about the future development of shared employee mode. Combining data analysis and literature views, this paper argues that as long as it is properly managed, shared employee mode still have a broad prospect within the market. In terms of management, in order to achieve the future long-term development of the shared employee mode, the government should actively invest in the construction of the platform and improve relevant laws and regulations. Enterprises should strengthen the training of employees' ability, improve the performance assessment mechanism, motivate employees and pay attention to the protection of employees' rights and interests. Stabilizing the employment relationship to achieve comprehensive management of employees is a breakthrough to balance employees, enterprises, platforms and markets.

Recommendations

First, correctly understand the media role of the shared employee platform. The operation of shared employee is actually a process of reusing resources after integration, except that the individual unit of resources here is person. In the process of the operation of the shared employee, the platform connects the enterprises and the employees, and builds a bridge for the communication among them. Because of this, this paper argues that the shared employees are mainly driven by the platform economy, and once the bridge is lost, the overall operation structure will fall apart.

Second, pay attention to the management of shared employee. At the individual level, employees should appropriately enhance their awareness of their rights, familiarize themselves with relevant labor laws and regulations and safeguard their rights on the premise of knowing and understanding the law. At the same time, employees should take the initiative to absorb new knowledge and learn new skills to improve and upgrade themselves. At the enterprises level, they should pay attention to the protection of employees' rights and interests, and enhance the workers' sense of identity as shared employees. At the government level, relevant laws and regulations should be enacted to macro-regulate the operation of the mode.

Third, objectively evaluate the future trend of shared employee mode. Although the mode of sharing employees was spawned by the epidemic, it does not mean that its scope of application is limited only to the context of social disasters. The market demand for shared employees has not proven to fluctuate significantly as the epidemic has improved. This paper argues that in the case of the growing scale of platform economy development and the continuous improvement of management plans, the shared employee mode still has good prospects for development in China.

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