

商业 零售和消费品

京东

## Illegal student labour fuels JD.com 'Singles Day' sale

数百名职业学院学生被招到北京和昆山的京东仓库，并被告知必须完成每次12至16小时的轮班，有时甚至要上夜班，但他们拿到的工资比最低工资低得多。



更新于2018年11月21日 16:26 By Tom Hancock, Yuan Yang, Nian Liu in Kunshan, in Beijing

More than 100,000 workers helped JD.com sort, pack and ship \$23bn of goods during China's annual Singles Day sales event this month.

But among them were hundreds of vocational school students, drafted into warehouses in Beijing and the eastern city of Kunshan, and told they had to work 12- to 16-hour shifts in some cases through the night, at a steep discount to the minimum wage, or face not being allowed to graduate.

Under Chinese law, the students should not have worked any overtime or night shifts.

Eight students from five training colleges said they were drafted in to fetch items and package them by the e-commerce giant, which had revenues of Rmb362bn (\$55.7bn) last year but did not report a profitable quarter until this May.

“We worked overtime for Singles Day,” said Zhang Yingjin, a student from the Rizhao City Science and Technology School in the eastern province of Shandong, who said he was paid Rmb14 (\$2) per hour at a JD logistics park in Kunshan.

The minimum hourly wage in the city is Rmb18.5, and vocational school interns should be paid at least 80 per cent of a “regular worker’s” salary, according to the education ministry.

Most of the students said the internships were of little educational value and were mandatory. “Our entire class has come here. It’s a school activity, they ask us come here to intern. It is not possible not to do the internship,” Mr Zhang added.

Two students from the Fuzhou Vocational Technical College in the central province of Jiangxi said they were paid Rmb14 per hour at the Kunshan facility, with shifts extending to 18 hours a day. “On Singles Day we were provided with food. As soon as we finished eating, we got back to work,” said Ouyang Luxiu, a student at the school.

Xu Youtian, the school’s Communist party secretary, visited intern students at JD.com, where he said that they had told him that working hours were long and “there was quite a lot of pressure”, according to a post on the school’s website last month.

Mr Xu said he hoped students would embrace the difficulties, adding “just like eating sugar cane, if you get through the pressure, your career will become more and more sweet”.

Fuzhou Vocational Technical College said that 42 students were sent to the JD warehouse in Kunshan. It said it found in September that students were working overtime and discussed the issue with JD at the time, but added that “all the [students] doing overtime are doing it voluntarily”.

“As Singles Day approaches, students from the business logistics department of our school went to the JD.com logistics base for an internship,” the Heze Vocational College in the eastern province of Shandong said on its website this month, adding that the students showed a “spirit of hard work”.

“If you don't intern, you won't get a graduation certificate,” said a student surnamed Liu, from the Heze school, who was eating noodles outside the Kunshan warehouse ahead of a 7pm-7am night shift. Working days of 14-16 hours were common around Singles Day, she said, with pay rising to Rmb15 an hour for overtime.

“We are here to help out with Singles Day, because there are more orders,” said a computing student from Bengbu Automotive Engineer School in eastern Anhui province. “You are on your feet for hours, which is tiring,” he said.

A spokesperson for JD.com said that “some temporary workers hired for to assist with peak time sales over a two to three-week period might not have been treated in accordance with our standards”.

“We are taking immediate action to investigate the situation within the relevant logistics parks, will enhance internal standards management and continuously improve management to our logistics parks,” the spokesperson added.

The practice of using student interns to lower labour costs has become widespread in Chinese manufacturing over the past decade, as average wages for migrant workers have more than doubled due to a decline in the working age population.

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JD.com is vulnerable to China's rising wages because of the huge numbers of delivery and warehouse personnel it employs, which reached 117,943 at the end of last year, up from 26,288 in 2013.

Foxconn, Apple's main iPhone supplier, last year said it had stopped school-age interns from working illegal overtime at its Zhengzhou plant in central China following a Financial Times report.

"In addition to manufacturing, student interns from vocational schools are also widely recruited in logistics and other low-end service work," said Jenny Chan, a labour rights expert at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

JD.com has relied on student interns from vocational schools to fill labour shortages during Singles Day since at least 2015, when an FT reporter spoke to several such workers at a logistics facility in the Beijing suburb of Tongzhou who described shifts of up to 16 hours a day.

The company persisted in the practice after China's ministry of education published regulations in 2016 banning employers from hiring vocational school interns to work overtime — more than eight hours a day — or night shifts.

A student from the Jiamusi Vocational College in Heilongjiang province said she worked more than 15 hours on Singles Day on an internship with 18 other students from her school at a Beijing JD.com facility, close to the company's headquarters.

“We have observed an overall tightening of the labour market and an emerging trend of shortage of labour supply,” JD.com noted in its most recent annual report.

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