Intense Work Hours Affecting Employees Health and Work Life Balance in MNCs

Work is worship. We must show our dedication to our work honestly. But there should be a limit as wise people say that excess to everything is bad. The recent EY death case is an eye-opener for all and serves as a reminder of the importance of setting healthy boundaries. It raises a critical question in today's fast-paced world: How much is too much when it comes to work? This incident reflects on the balance between productivity and well-being.

Dr. Malini Saba, a psychologist, businesswoman, philanthropist, human and social rights activist, global advocate for women and girls, environmentalist and founder of Saba Group and Anannke Foundation suggests that multinational companies should thoughtfully balance productivity and well-being. She says, "While companies across industries have different needs, it's universally acknowledged that overworking without proper rest can reduce long-term efficiency. Rest, including sleep, is essential for maintaining high performance."

Couldn't agree more with Dr. Malini! Sleep is so much underrated. But the reality is that it is essential for maintaining peak performance and overall well-being.

> *Similarly,* **Parth Gupta, one of the renowned psychologists specialising in behavioural and clinical psychology emphasises the importance of government-regulated time management.** *He mentions, "Rather than having a time-based approach, it's better to have a task-based approach, where a person is liable for tasks and not the clock hours. But the work must be capped at 7 hours, post 7 hours working practically becomes challenging and stressful for people. The timings should be strictly regulated by the government."*

Yes, we also buy the point of Mr. Parth. All the stakeholders like – employees, HR, management, regulatory bodies and the government should give serious thought to this. In addition, a window of 12- 18 hours per month with not more than 4-5 hours per week must be accorded to companies to meet critical business requirements. Employees should also have the option of taking flexible working hours and mandatory rest periods after putting in additional hours.

Also, the legal system should be the changemaker in such scenarios. Its enforcement should ensure that companies must maintain a balance between business demands and employee wellness.

<u>Addressing the Gaps in Existing Labor Laws</u>

> **Col. Gaurav Dimri (retired), Group Director, Human Resources at Sharda Group (Sharda University) underscores,** *"Although, Factories Act 1948, clearly lays down a clear 8-9 hours work shift with up to 48 hours per week (with overtime considerations applicable within daily/ weekly/ quarterly limits as per state regulations); however, gap exists in its applicability for non – industrial or non- factory workers including MNC employees who are largely grouped under nomenclature of 'white collar' workforce."*

Companies must ensure a sustainable workload that starts with good time management and clear communication. Effective delegation involves assigning tasks based on each employee's strengths, ensuring that responsibilities are distributed fairly. Regular reviews and discussions help maintain balance by allowing adjustments when someone is overwhelmed or underutilised.

<u>Promoting a Supportive Work Environment</u>

> *Dr. Malini emphasises, "It is essential for management to recognise and thank employees for their hard work. This recognition boosts morale. When employees feel appreciated, they are more engaged and productive. Moreover, providing access to mental health support within the organisation is crucial. Companies must staff wellness professionals to ensure that employees have an outlet for stress, promoting a healthier and more balanced work environment."*

Dr. Nikhil Nayar, Psychiatrist, Sharda Hospital suggests, "A *sustainable* workload starts with good time management and clear communication. Effective delegation involves assigning tasks based on each employee's strengths, ensuring that responsibilities are distributed fairly. Regular reviews and discussions help maintain balance by allowing adjustments when someone is overwhelmed or underutilised."

While Parth recommends that rather than having a hierarchal structure to become a leader, it must be more aptitude-based. Currently, to be in a management position, one must climb up the hierarchy by being good at their work, the person who's best at their job, also becomes in charge of the department."

As organisations expand globally, they encounter diverse workplace cultures that can create complexities around hierarchy and communication. It's important to recognise that workplace dynamics vary across cultures, and there is always room for improvement in how corporations support their teams.

Dr. Malini echoes these sentiments, **highlighting the importance of discussions and interactions.** "Successful multinational companies are those that promote open communication and empower employees to share their thoughts and concerns with management. When employees feel comfortable speaking up, it enhances organisational culture and strengthens team dynamics. In many regions, there is a growing emphasis on ensuring that staff are heard and that there is room for dialogue between all levels of the company."

> *Dr. Nikhil notes that the recent incident at EY is a growing issue, not just in large corporations but also more commonly in smaller companies. In such environments, a lack of defined job roles, coupled with a culture of insecurity, pressures employees to accept excessive workloads, often until it impacts their physical and mental well-being. To retain talent and avoid burnout, companies will need to adopt clearer role definitions and promote a healthier work-life balance, a more supportive workplace culture.*

<u>The Future of MNCs: Reassessing Work Culture</u>

Col. Dimri concludes the topic saying **MNCs must revise their organisational policies and realistically reform work schedules to focus on employee health**. It is high time that EY and other MNCs review their employee workload and realistically implement what they preach to address this critical systemic issue. The sad incident offers a wakeup to focus on resetting work culture, recreating healthier workplaces and re-establishing a supportive work environment.

The EY incident brings attention to the urgent need for a shift in corporate work culture. Companies need to prioritise employee well-being alongside productivity, creating a balanced environment where mental and physical health are protected. Now is the time for organisations to genuinely implement policies that healthier work-life balance.

'Because humanity is the foundation of every thriving workplace.'