



## Mental Health at workplace

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In today's busy world human life has been reduced to mere mechanistic ritual of making a livelihood. Every adult's life is subsumed by the conundrums of their work which after some times have the greater likelihood of being monotonous. Being under the constant pressure of work, deadlines, pleasing the boss, yearning for extra bucks and recognition among colleagues can be deterrent for our mental health.

In this context to make us all aware of work related stress and its impact in our mental health, the World Health Organization (WHO) has decided to celebrate this year's World Mental Health day, October-10, with the theme 'Mental Health in Workplace'

### **Any work is better than no work?**

Undoubtedly, it's good for our overall wellbeing for us to be employed rather than staying idle.

But, at the same time, negative working environment can be the potential stressor in life threatening our mental health. The recent study conducted by Chandola and Zhang (2017) in the UK revealed a quiet insightful finding.

The study was done between the population who were re-employed in poor quality jobs and those who were unemployed. They found out that the population who were unemployed had lesser biomarkers of stress than those who were re-employed in bad working condition. This research has elicited the crucial understanding that any sort of job may not necessarily be better than no job. We need to focus on qualitative aspect of job rather than a job itself.

### **Cost of mental health problems**

Negative working condition can be stressful for the employees. The stress results from many sources. Some of the chief sources are: workload, inflexible work schedules, poorly managed shift works, intrapersonal conflict, low participation in decision making, job insecurity, poor pay, low social relationship, conflict with supervisors and managers, bullying and harassment.

All these factors can lead to mental health problems such as burnout, anxiety, depression, substance abuse and some may even resort to suicide. Stress always has a negative effect on productivity. WHO has attributed depression and anxiety for costing global economy US\$ 1 trillion each year in lost productivity.

One of the glaring evidence in Nepali context has been the news of suicide by those who went for foreign employment in the Middle East countries, Korea and Japan. As per the report, 'When the Safety of Nepal Migrant Workers Fails' published by International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2016 attributes suicide as the causes of about 10 percent of all deaths in foreign employment. The report compiled the number of deaths from the year 2008-2015. Out of many reasons, we can speculate negative work environment, work related stress and job dissatisfaction as main players leading to suicide.

### **Protecting rights**

Nepal is a signatory of The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Article 27 of The UN CRPD provides a legally-binding global framework for promoting the rights of people with disabilities (including psychosocial disabilities). Similarly the Constitution of Nepal, 2015 enshrines the fundamental rights of all Nepali citizens regardless of disabilities.

Nepal has recently introduced The Sexual Harassment at Workplace Prevention Act, 2015 which aims at preventing sexual harassment in the workplace, protecting the victims and punishing the culprit with the fine up to Rs 50000 and six month imprisonment. Such laws should be introduced to prevent other forms of workplace harassment such as bullying.

### **What needs to be done?**

An organization can start with hiring an industrial psychologist or counsellor who can provide regular counselling services for the employee. Any employees can be benefitted by such facilities regardless of their mental condition and can be effective shield against any mental health problems.

The management should be sensitive enough to understand the problem and accordingly design job flexibly for employees with mental health problems and have supportive as well as confidential communication.

In terms of work environment, we might be surprised to know that workers value more intrinsic motivations such as good relationship with supervisor, praise, respect, recognition than extrinsic motivation such as pay rise, bonus and good physical setting.

While we are busy in making a living, let's take break sometimes to live a life.

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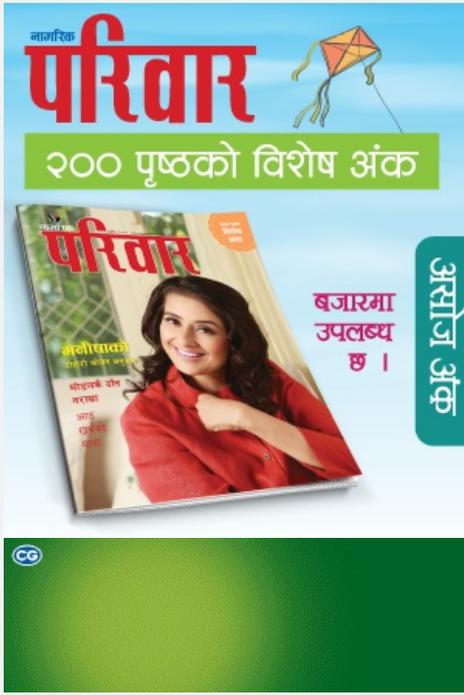
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