EDITORIAL

Employees Working Hours and Their Productivity

In India, a salaried person works 40 hours per week under the generally accepted norm of Nine to Five job schedule. In comparison, Indians log longer hours than the most others. Average weekly hours worked on the job as shown in the Pictorial (2014) indicate that Turkey topped the list at 49.1 hours followed by Mexico at 44.7 hours, South Korea at 43.3 hours, and Israel at 40.4 hours. At the other end of the spectrum, developed countries like Netherlands, Denmark and Norway reported the lowest hours at 28.9, 32.5 and 33.9 hours per week respectively. The question is whether long working hours means more progress, more productivity, and more development. The answer is “NO”, not at all. ILO Report-2007 “Working Time around the world” reveals that lesser percentage of workforce in developed economics put in long hours of work as compared to developing countries. For example, in Norway, only 5.3 per cent of total work force work more that the normal 48 hours per week whereas in Peru and Korea about 50 per cent people work more than 48 hours per week. In USA, it is 18.1 percent work force more than 48 hours as against India where 40 per cent of total work force works more than 48 hours per week. This only indicates that it is not the longer hours of work that matters but it is the Decent work done in the given time framework.

In an experiment conducted by Swedish Government (2016) found that those who worked for 6 hours a day took half as much sick-leave as those who worked 8 hours per day and 2.8 times less time off. In addition, in “six hours work a day” policy, people were found 20 per cent more happier and put more energy at their work. This, as a result, gave them time to do 64 per cent more activities other than the office duty. In Sweden’s private sector, the practice is taking root in places such as Toyato Service Centre at Gothmeburg. In UK, a marketing agency adopted a staggering Schedule to allow for reduced work hours. Six out of ten Bosses in UK agree that cutting hours improve productivity. The key result that productivity increases with fewer hours of work eliminates a major stumbling block to globalizing the shorter workday. These studies equate productivity with quality of care which does not necessarily translate to white-collar work.

Prof. Colin Mckenzie from Keio University in Australia reported (2016) that middle-aged people over 40 are most productive while working just for 3 days a
week. In his experiment, he found that the cognitive performance of middle-aged people improves up to 25 hours a week. When the week goes over 25 hours, overall performance decreases as “fatigue and stress” take their effect which potentially damage cognitive functions. He further says that those working 55 hours a week produced the worst result. This only suggests that middle-aged and old-age persons while working “Part-Time” can be more effective in maintaining cognitive ability. This research came amidst the moves when many countries are raising the retirement age. British State pension age is closer to 70. In USA, retirement age is 65 years and in Japan it is at 69 years. In India, government has raised the retirement age at 65 especially for Doctors and Scientists. This is by default out of choice, not necessity.

ILO has suggested that the Standards of Working Hours should be reduced from the Statutory time. The objective is to improve the quality of work through the reduced working time and the competitiveness through greater flexibility in working time schedule. In addition, strong regulation is necessary. There is also a great need for social dialogues so as to look after the workers needs and circumstances. Tertiarization, “the service sector, formal job, and informal employment” also need a policy document to curb exploitation. All these initiatives will enhance productivity. This is where the balance lies.

DR. O. S. VERMA
Chief Editor