NEXT IAS

DAILY EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

TOPIC

Healthy Workplaces: Key to Employee Well-being and Productivity

HEALTHY WORKPLACES: KEY TO EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING AND PRODUCTIVITY

Context

- In recent years, a troubling trend has emerged in several countries: **a rise in suicides among young professionals**, frequently attributed to overwhelming stress and tension at the workplace, has raised once again the **question of safety and stress at workplaces.**

About the Healthy Workplace

- It is one where employers and employees collaborate to continually protect and promote people's health, safety, and wellbeing and workplace sustainability.
- It is not just about physical health but also encompasses *psychological safety, open communication, and a supportive environment.*
- It has become increasingly evident with the rise in workplace stress and its severe consequences, including burnout, anxiety, depression, and even suicide.
- In today's fast-paced and competitive world, the relentless drive for profit and productivity often overshadows mental health and personal well-being.

Current Crisis

- The **phenomenon of '*Karoshi' or death from overwork,*** which originated in **Japan**, has found resonance globally.
  - In 2023, 2,900 people in Japan ended their lives due to overwork
- In India, the situation is equally alarming, with a significant number of professionals experiencing overwhelming stress due to excessive work demands.
- A **LinkedIn survey** conducted in India found that **40% of employees** were experiencing **high levels of stress at work**, further stressing the need for India Inc to focus on psychological safety.
- **Google's Project Aristotle**, a study on team dynamics, found that psychological safety was the most critical factor contributing to high-performing teams.

Ethical Perspectives of Healthy Workplaces

- Creating a healthy workplace is not only a matter of enhancing productivity and employee well-being but also an ethical imperative. Ethical considerations in workplace health encompass fairness, respect, and the moral responsibility of employers to provide a safe and supportive environment.
- **Fairness and Equity:** It involves ensuring that all employees have equal access to resources, opportunities, and support systems.
  - Discrimination or favouritism undermines the ethical foundation of a workplace and can lead to significant psychological stress among employees.
  - Ethical workplaces strive to eliminate biases and promote inclusivity, ensuring that every employee feels valued and respected.
- **Respect for Individual Dignity:** It means acknowledging their contributions, providing constructive feedback, and fostering an environment where they can express their thoughts and ideas without fear of ridicule or retribution.
  - **Psychological safety is** essential here that refers to a *work environment where individuals feel comfortable taking risks and sharing ideas.* It is crucial for innovation and high performance. It includes *Growth Mindset, Communication and Trust, Constructive Feedback, Vulnerability and Authenticity etc.*
- **Moral Responsibility of Employers:** It includes providing a safe working environment, addressing workplace hazards, and promoting mental health initiatives.

- **Transparency and Accountability:** Employers should be open about their policies and practices, and employees should feel confident that their concerns will be addressed fairly and promptly. It builds trust and fosters a culture of mutual respect and responsibility.

- **Promoting Work-Life Balance:** Overworking employees can lead to burnout, decreased productivity, and serious health issues. Ethical employers recognise the importance of allowing employees to maintain a balance between their professional and personal lives, which is crucial for long-term well-being and job satisfaction.
  - **Global Precedents For Work-Life Balance: Australia and France** have a regulation known as the **'right to disconnect'** which permits employees to disregard communications from their employers after hours.

Conclusion and Way Forward

- The ethical perspectives of healthy workplaces go beyond mere compliance with regulations. They involve a commitment to fairness, respect, and the well-being of employees.

- Creating a healthy workplace requires a concerted effort from both employers and employees. Employers must foster an environment of psychological safety, open communication, and trust, while employees must actively participate in maintaining this culture.

- By fostering an environment that prioritises these ethical principles, employers can create workplaces that are not only productive but also supportive and humane.

- By working together, organisations can create workplaces that not only enhance employee well-being but also drive productivity and innovation.

Source: BL

Mains Practice Question

[Q] How does a healthy workplace culture contribute to the overall well-being and productivity of employees, and what specific strategies can organisations implement to foster such an environment?

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