Organization of Work in the Company and Family Rights of the Employees

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ABSTRACT. The duty to respect, protect and help the family rights is related very closely with the organization of work in the firm. This paper summarizes and illustrates, using mini-case studies, the relationship between the organization of work in companies and the family rights and duties of employees.

Businessmen are well aware of the marked relationship between family affairs of employees and their behavior in the company. The organization of work and activities in the company considerably affect family life. Some work set-ups can lead to family problems, and family problems, in turn, affect employee performance in the company. This intrinsic relationship between the family and organization of work makes it a subject of great concern to both employees and managers.

In countries such as Spain, where the family is a deep-rooted institution, the family-company relationship arouses considerable concern. According to a survey recently conducted by IESE among two hundred Spanish managers, the study of the family-work relationship came out as one of the four or five most important subjects that must be taught in the business ethics courses.

Until now, very little attention has been given to the study of the relationship between the organization of work in the company and the family rights and duties of the employee. However, a number of interesting works are available, albeit focussed only on some particular problems and referring specifically to American society.

Some people consider that the family, by being a part of the employee's personal life, has no bearing on the company. Thus, any interference by the company in the employee's family life, is seen as an intrusion into the personal life of the employee. As such, it must be avoided. But in doing so, companies fail to take into account the importance of the family as the basic unit of society and its corresponding rights.

Others consider that it is sufficient to have flexible agreements between the company and its employees concerning family issues. In this situation, the rights of the family are taken into account only if the negotiating parties are conscious of them. Many times the family duties of the employees are viewed only as interests which are in conflict with the company's interests. They fail to realize, however, that the family is a source of real rights.

It must be pointed out that in the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" and in the "International Agreement of Civil and Political Rights", it is categorically stated that "the family is the natural and fundamental unit of society and is entitled to the protection of society and the State".

Other international texts on human rights are couched in similar terms, showing the existence of a wide international consensus on the intrinsic value of the family. In addition, a detailed Charter of the Rights of Family was published by Roman Catholic Church in 1983 and a European Charter of Family Rights is being prepared at the moment.

Nevertheless, some family rights can easily be infringed upon as a result of the organizational work
within the company. These rights can be enumerated as follows:

a. The right to find the necessary social support to consolidate the unity and stability of the family so that it may carry out its specific task.
b. The right to socio-economic conditions that enable it to carry out its duties with respect to the procreation and upbringing of children.
c. The right to working hours and periods necessary to devote to the other spouse, the children and to just being together.
d. The right to a quality of work life that does not affect the workers' genetic heritage nor their physical or mental health nor the necessary attention to their respective families.
e. The right to a sufficient compensation to start and maintain a family.

The following discussion deals with some aspects of work organization connected with the above-mentioned family rights illustrated in several scenarios taken from cases that have been published or that the author has direct knowledge of.

**Business and working environment must favor marital unity and stability**

Company policy on work organization may attack the family's unity and stability in a variety of situations such as those illustrated in the following scenarios:

a. **Bribery or extortion using extra-marital sexual relations**

The use of sexual favour is a well known way of bribery or extortion.

Scenario 1. A company invites several managers from client companies to a convention at which its latest products will be presented. The reception includes all kinds of entertainment, including callgirls, which are supposed to smooth the way for sales to the potential buyers.

b. **Sexual harassment**

Sexual harassment within the company is, of course, another form against the unity and stability of marriage. It usually happens with extortion from someone superior.

Scenario 2. A male supervisor sexually harasses a female subordinate. The subordinate is aware of the unfavorable consequences that would result from rejecting the supervisor's advances: loss of promotion, misleading information on her performance to their superiors, effect on salary increases, and perhaps, dismissal in a future restructuring.

c. **Situations that favor sexual attraction in the company**

Moreover, some company practices — work arrangement, business trips, etc. — can also lead to immoderate sexual attraction among employees, although, these company practices are not conceived to lead to such consequences.

Scenario 3. A fast-moving finance company specialising in high-risk loans wishes to recruit a recent Harvard MBA graduate. On his first visit to the company, the young MBA realised that most of the women in the office were young and very attractive. In fact, he had never seen so many pretty women in one place before. Later he learned that the company's vice-president (only him?) usually had some employee accompany him on his business trips, suggesting that they sleep together to "save the firm the price of a second room". The executives earned a lot of money but if they wanted to get to the top they had to work Saturdays and Sundays. With all this, it is not surprising that the company's divorce rate was somewhat high.

In all these situations, in addition to damaging the family, the business organization itself will suffer adverse consequences: distorted communications, hostile self-interests that go against the company's interest, impairment of the work unit's reputation, greater slowness in decision-taking, etc.

d. **Dual careers and prolonged separation of spouses**

In cases where both husband and wife work, a good working opportunity which requires relocation to