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ORIGINAL

Employees' Well-Being in Accreditation Environments: A Comparative Analysis of Higher Education Accreditation and Chemical Industry Certification Processes

Bienestar de los empleados en entornos de acreditación: un análisis comparativo de los procesos de acreditación de la educación superior y de certificación de la industria química

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ABSTRACT

The increasing focus on institutional accreditation has raised a lot of concern among employee and employees particularly because of the stress accompanied by extended working hours, constant assessments, and intermittent inspections of the institution. With the pursuit of recognition and quality assurance among higher education institutions/ chemical industries , employees — in particular, female workforce — face greater stress and vulnerability to burnout. This paper offers an in-depth analysis on how accreditation processes create unique psychological and professional challenges for employees. Specifically, women professionals—whether employee or industry employees—experience disproportionate challenges due to dual responsibilities and systemic gendered expectations. In addition to this, the research also provides strategic interventions that institutions need to take up to balance the sustainability of work-life and contribute to workplace satisfaction at a greater level through an efficient knowledge management system. Through an integrated and comparative analysis, the paper examines stressors, emotional responses, and burnout risks among employee and chemical-industry employees. It also proposes institutional support mechanisms, gender-sensitive policies, and sustainable well-being strategies designed to mitigate accreditation-related stress.

Keywords: Employee Well-being; Accreditation Process; Mental Health of Employees; Work-Life Balance; Employee Stress Management; Certifications.

RESUMEN

El creciente enfoque en la acreditación institucional ha generado gran preocupación entre los empleados, en particular debido al estrés que conllevan las jornadas laborales prolongadas, las evaluaciones constantes y las inspecciones intermitentes de la institución. Con la búsqueda de reconocimiento y garantía de calidad en las instituciones de educación superior y las industrias químicas, los empleados, en particular las mujeres, se enfrentan a un mayor estrés

y vulnerabilidad al agotamiento profesional. Este documento ofrece un análisis profundo sobre cómo los procesos de acreditación generan desafíos psicológicos y profesionales únicos para los empleados. Específicamente, las mujeres profesionales, ya sean empleadas o empleadas de la industria, experimentan desafíos desproporcionados debido a la doble responsabilidad y las expectativas sistémicas de género. Además, la investigación también proporciona intervenciones estratégicas que las instituciones deben adoptar para equilibrar la sostenibilidad de la vida laboral y personal y contribuir a una mayor satisfacción en el lugar de trabajo mediante un sistema eficiente de gestión del conocimiento. A través de un análisis integrado y comparativo, el documento examina los factores estresantes, las respuestas emocionales y los riesgos de agotamiento profesional entre los empleados y los empleados de la industria química. También propone mecanismos de apoyo institucional, políticas con perspectiva de género y estrategias de bienestar sostenible diseñadas para mitigar el estrés relacionado con la acreditación.

Palabras clave: Bienestar del Empleado; Proceso de Acreditación; Salud Mental de los Empleados; Equilibrio entre vida Laboral y Personal; Gestión del Estrés Laboral; Certificaciones.

INTRODUCTION

Accreditation in the contemporary sphere of higher education has evolved into this form of a guiding mechanism for institutions in search of prestige and validated standards of quality. Accrediting bodies assess institutions against these criteria, focusing on the effectiveness of education delivery and governance, and continuous institutional improvement. Accreditation is a crucial part of an institution's development; however it is also very taxing on the employee. Whether in universities seeking NAAC grades or chemical industries targeting ISO or NABL certification, accreditation serves as an external validation of quality, safety, and performance. High-stakes accreditation has well-known negative impacts on the mental health of faculty and staff, with the burdens of long working hours, high administrative burden, and ongoing assessment likely contributing to poor overall well-being.[1,2,3]

In fact, female employee face unprecedented challenges in juggling both professional and personal responsibilities. This study problematizes these issues reflectively and forges structured ways to ensure that employee do not suffer significantly adverse mental health and professional sustainability behaviours arising from accreditation.[4,5,6]

Higher Education Accreditation: An Overview

Accreditation in higher education (HE) centres around evaluating:

- Curriculum Quality: documentation includes BoS and Academic Council minutes, curriculum revision reports, course outcome (CO) statements, program outcome (PO) mappings, syllabus copies, and industry-aligned content updates. Records of stakeholder feedback from employers, alumni, students, and experts, along with evidence of regular curriculum review cycles, ensure relevance, rigor, and continuous improvement.[7]
- Teaching–Learning Processes: records to be maintained include detailed course files containing syllabus, lesson plan and CO–PO mapping, attendance records, laboratory manuals, assessment sheets, samples of evaluated answer scripts and evidence of ICT-enabled and innovative teaching practices. Records of continuous assessments, tutorials, assignments and blended learning activities are to be systematically maintained for audit verification.[8]
- Research Output: the institution should maintain their records of faculty publications along with proof of indexing, citations, and impact factor; sponsored research project proposals, sanction letters, and utilisation certificates; consultancy and MoUs; patent

documentation, IPR filings, and technology transfer; and evidence of research at an institutional level, conferences, workshops, and student research.[9]

- Student Support Services: records to be maintained include mentoring and counselling reports, internship and placement records, scholarship details, grievance redressal reports, and evidence of remedial classes and bridge courses. Records regarding the various achievements of students in co-curricular and extracurricular activities, training programmes undertaken by them, and support services extended like career guidance and skill-development activities, should be duly preserved for evaluation.[10]
- Governance: institutions should maintain documents about governing body structure, statutory committee minutes, strategic plans, academic calendars, and institutional development plans. IQAC reports, audit statements, policy approvals, and annual reports should be archived. There are necessary records for demonstrating compliance with regulatory bodies, vision–mission statements, and quality assurance processes.[11]
- Infrastructure: it requires documents such as campus blueprint, Stock registers, laboratory facilities, maintenance logs, service and maintenance records and safety compliance certificates. Documentation regarding library records, ICT infrastructure details, internet bandwidth proofs, and AMC agreements has to be maintained. The documentation should outline the availability, adequacy, and upkeep of academic, administrative, and technological infrastructure.[12]
- Faculty Development: documentary proof of FDP and MDPS attended by the employees. Wion includes records of faculty participation in FDPs, refresher courses, and training programs, performance appraisals, professional development plans, and membership to academic or professional bodies. Evidence of organised training programs, orientation sessions, and pedagogical workshops is also to be maintained to justify continuous upskilling and faculty development.[13]
- Stakeholder Engagement: the institutions have to document various interactions conducted with stakeholders in terms of MoUs, minutes of the industry advisory board, reports on feedback from alumni and employers, and records of parent-teacher meetings. Outreach programs, community service, and stakeholder involvement in curriculum development should be documented with evidence to underscore meaningful engagement and collaboration that support institutional growth.[14]

Bodies such as NAAC, NBA, and international accrediting organisations assess institutions on various parameters, which are pre-defined and need a lot of coordination within the team / institution. Accreditation timelines involve preparatory phases, documentation collation, mock inspections, and external members' visits—which demand intense involvement of faculty teams.[15]

Accreditation and Certification in the Chemical Industry

The chemical industry, due to its inherent environmental and safety risks, operates under even more stringent accreditation and certification frameworks. Common accreditation systems include:

ISO Certifications

- ISO 9001 – Quality Management Systems
- ISO 14001 – Environmental Management Systems
- ISO 45001 – Occupational Health and Safety
- ISO 17025 – Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL accreditation)

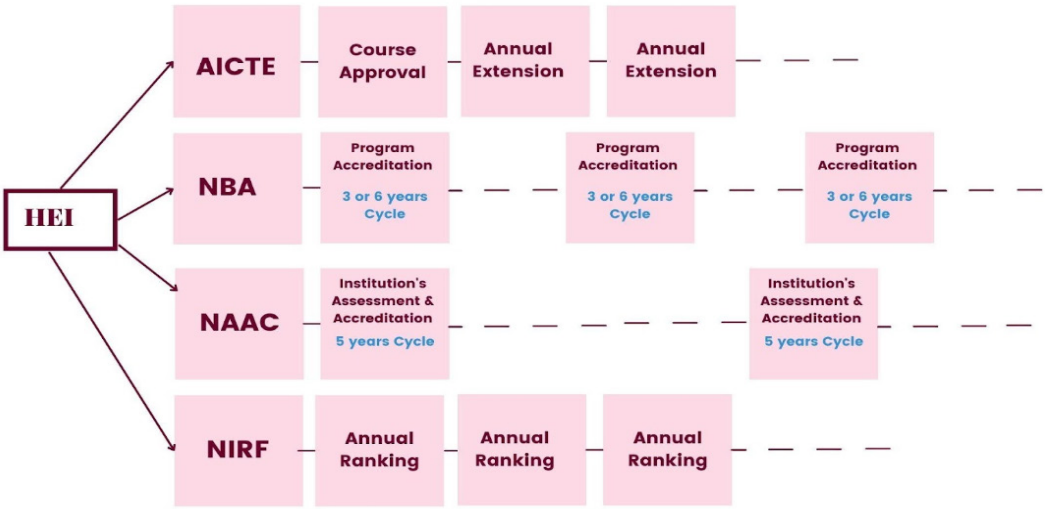


Figure 1. List of Accreditation bodies for Higher Education Institutions

National and International Accreditations

- NABL accreditation for chemical testing labs.
- Responsible Care Accreditation by the Indian Chemical Council.
- Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) for chemical and pharmaceutical units.
- REACH Compliance (EU) for chemical exports.
- Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) for hazardous chemical operations.

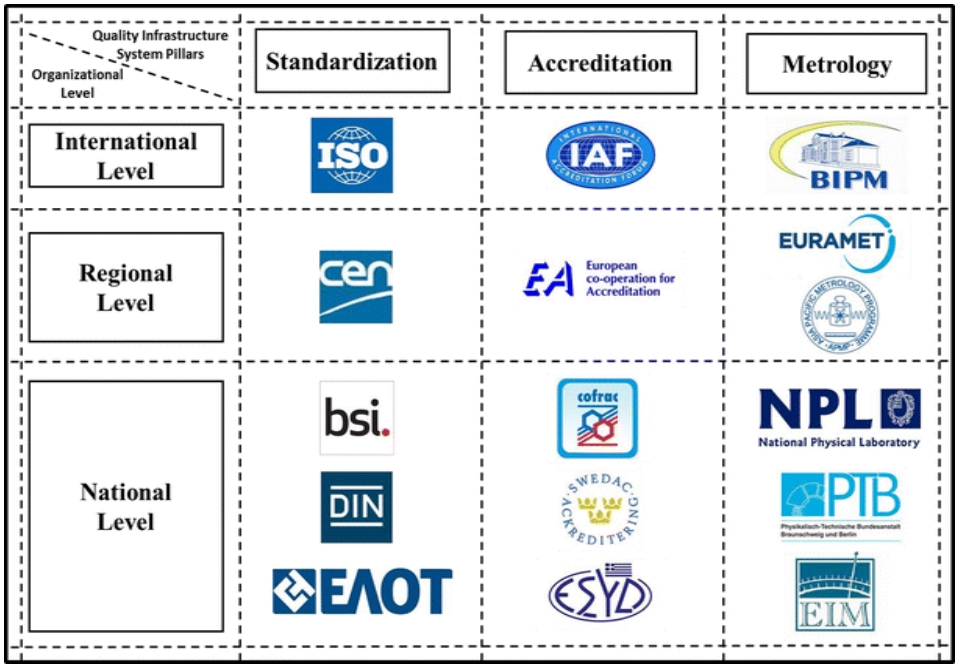


Figure 2. List of Accreditations for chemical industries

Routine and Surprise Audits

Chemical factories undergo

1. Safety inspections.
2. Equipment integrity checks.
3. Waste-management audits.
4. Hazardous material handling assessments.
5. Emission monitoring.
6. Risk analysis inspections.

Like educators in HEIs, industry employees must maintain continuous audit readiness, follow Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), and ensure documentation accuracy.

Issues Faced by Employee Due to the Accreditation Process

The accreditation process is one of the factors causing these areas of concern for employee.

Time management: with a high demand for enormous time to be dedicated in documentation and backup proof related to teaching, and lesson planning, in addition to time needed to engage with students, the educator's time table would be extended with both academic and administrative work . It will be very difficult to accommodate such demands within regular working hours (8:00/9:00 AM – 4:00/6:00 PM).[16,17]

Handling Complex Standards: the nature of the predefined standards for accreditation is complicated, which demand a clear understanding of the pedagogical strategies that are in line with various teaching learning practices in a particular institution. Much of the effort entails painstaking documentation of classroom practice as well as student feedback.[18]

Documentation is everything - the burden on employees is in gathering proofs of preparation /organised/ participated /coordinated various events and filed them with all back up as demanded by the institution. Employee face a heavy documentation burden because compliance with many of the accreditation criteria is repetitive. When the preparing lessons plan may vary during the delivery of the same. For which the deviation ned to be recorded and filed properly else explanation would be demanded with proof. So instead of effective delivery, the core profession might accidentally be eroded.[19]

Continuous Professional Development: the pre request of accreditation bodies insists that teachers undergo continuous professional development. This, in turn, calls for FDPs, Capacity building programs (CBP) workshops, and seminars. But if these sessions are planned outside of standard working hours, or in other institutions altering the classes or work load for other employees would be difficult. It may create a havoc on the shift system maintained by the institution . So this participation is reduced to just a formality, a box to check, rather than a chance to learn something new.[20]

Qualifying the Internal Sector: encouraging the stakeholders' participation includes students, parents, and institutional affiliates feedback and review about the institution practices and performance, which is a very critical aspect of the accreditation process, although relatively much more challenging. The comments from various stake holders are required back by institutional norms that reflect the requirement on employees to approach feedback about themselves through various lenses, which include whistles blown from professional bodies regarding their portfolios. It therefore created an unnecessary problem in data collection, compiling analysis and action plan for the same.[21]

More work, longer hours: the request to collect a lot of proofs and documents with large datasets and multiple reviews is extremely time-consuming. The faculty would be frustrated and irritated to iterate, edit, and re-edit the same documents with inputs and feedback from selection committees, core teams, and criterion heads, thus consuming huge amounts of time. It can be particularly gruelling for teachers to have to do documentation records after a whole

day of teaching before they are allowed to leave school.[22]

Beyond their instructional duties, academic staff carries other administrative duties that include coordination with the accreditation teams along with attending meetings as scheduled. Accredit comes with extended hours of work.[23]

Performance Anxiety and the Fear of Failure: institutional success is implicitly tied to the results of assessment in accreditation which reflects positive recognition and citations. Evaluative process for accreditation purpose piles immense pressure among employee who face tough performance-related demands. Similarly, the inspections put employees under a microscope, which negatively adheres to their mental and emotional health. Performance pressures on women employee are even more daunting, as this is a world where women are expected to prove excellence at a much higher level. A lot of people fall victim to something called "imposter syndrome, "which is doubting one mind despite objectively ample evidence of its competence.[24]

Women employees suffer with more stress and strain when compared to their male colleagues since they are conditioned to feel that they have to work harder in order to prove that their quality of professionalism is at par with male colleagues. The continued pressure adds to stress levels and emotional exhaustion, which in turn contributes to adverse job satisfaction and wellbeing.[25]

Chemical Industry

Employees must maintain

- Logbooks: these are used to record daily operational activities, equipment usage, maintenance activities, and observations to understand the activities in the industry or department. Therefore, to track the movement of each material.
- Calibration Records: records prove that the instruments cleared all testing procedures , adjusted, and are in working condition as per guarantee the reliability of measurement, consistency of process, and quality standards.
- Safety Documentation: the checklists, for safety documentation is filled as per the guidelines for safety documentation, assistance in safe operations, prevention of hazards, training of employees, and organizational or regulatory compliances.
- Process Control Charts: the process control charts monitor performance trends, discover variation, support quality monitoring, and allow timely corrective action to maintain processes in a stable and efficient manner.
- Waste Tracking Sheets: which document the type of waste generated, amount, method of disposal, and time of disposal are maintained properly . This helps in effectively managing wastes, maintaining compliance with regulations, and ensuring environmental responsibility.
- Incident Reports: incident reports capture the details of the unexpected event along with causes, impacts, and corrective action to support risk reduction, safety improvement, and prevent occurrences in the future.

Unique Challenges Faced by a Female Employee Due to Gender: the burden of accreditation normally falls disproportionately on female employee. Family responsibilities, which many women hold at home and many organizations relict at their shoulders, cannot be ignored in nurturing a child with empathetic parenting. With both responsibilities, the entrepreneurs face additional stress and cannot devote much time to focus on professional development and the process of accreditation.[26,27]

Also, the institutional leadership in academia remains largely male, providing few networks for female academics facing challenges in their careers. The absence of gender-sensitive

schemes creates an unfair division of work, thus aggravating work-related stress and discontent.

Women in the chemical industry face



Figure 3. Women at work place- multitasking

There are safety issues related to night shifts: inadequate security, isolation, limited transport access, and insufficient workplace monitoring in hazardous environments make women particularly vulnerable during night shifts:

- Limited access to leadership in technical audits: Women are often given fewer opportunities to lead technical audits based on gender bias, stereotypes, and assumptions regarding their technical authority or competence.
- Male-dominated audit panels intimidate them: These teams, dominated by men, can intimidate women by making them feel belittled, scrutinized, or hesitant to raise concern and display their expertise.
- Assumptions about their physical capability concerning chemical handling: Prejudices regarding women's physical strength result in unjustified restrictions to roles, which in turn limit hands-on experiences, growth opportunities, and equal participation in chemical operations.
- Emotional Burden to Stay "Error-Free" in Hazardous Environments: Women have to face pressure to be impeccable on account of gendered scrutiny, which raises emotional stress, self-doubt, and a fear of mistakes impacting one's credibility.

People working in the chemical industry often refer to an audit as: "the most stressful week of the year." "a period when everyone is on high alert. anxiety-filled days where even small mistakes feel dangerous.[28]

Inadequate health support and Resources: while awareness for mental health challenges has increased due to recent headlines, systems to support staff in schools continue to leave many wanting. This has become an issue of concern, contributing to burnout and anxiety, is a lack of access by many faculty to mental health counselling, stress management and well-being resources. The leaders in the roles of accreditation, however, may have higher levels of stress, and rarely are their pressure relief valves at the institutional level. This pushes the employee to adopt the short-term survival mechanisms like overwork, or failing to take good care of themselves, all of which cause the build-up of long-term mental health issues.[29]



Figure 4. Common causes of stress at Workplace

Methods to Reduce Stress About Accreditation

Addressing the Priorities: the responsibility to prioritise and address administrative work versus classroom responsibility in a balanced way will become overwhelming but a sound strategy on how to tackle this task is vital in mitigating the stress and time management problems.

Intentional Assignment: programs need to be properly channelled both academic / administrative activities for accreditation compliance, without placing undue demands on faculty for other professional development activities.[30]



Figure 5. Stress Management Techniques at workplace

Management of Stress and Burnout: tough it is a known fact that the Accreditation is stressful in the short run, and institutions need to be doing things in the long run to avoid faculty burnout, such as providing mental health support and workload distribution is a must.

Keeping Up with Changing Standards: by way of accreditation, faculty itself can learn and leverage on training to know the changes taking place with respect to newer standards being implemented and follow the same from day one of the schedule or work allocation.[31]

Collaboration-Friendly: when faculty collaborate and coordinate in their work related to accreditation, this helps distribute the workload and makes it easier to prepare documentation and meet standards for compliance.

Investing in Technology by Chemical Industries

ERP systems: institutions have to integrate procurement, production, and inventory with finance in real time, minimizing errors, for improving efficiency, and enabling quicker readiness for audits.

LIMS: would stream line the workflows by managing samples, maintaining test records, ensuring traceability, and increasing accuracy in quality control, research, and regulatory compliance processes.

QR-based documentation: in the present tech world almost all the documentations are having QR code so this would help in instant access to SOPs, safety guidelines, equipment data, and records; reduces paperwork; ensures transparency and traceability for faster audit verification.

Automated audit trackers: automated audit trackers monitor would support the team by giving alerts and sending reminders, document non-conformities, to help the teams close gaps efficiently, boosting preparedness for internal and external audits.

These drastically reduce the burden on educators and employees.

Institutional Support Options

Strategic Timing: institutions should clearly chart out time for academic and administrative work therefore the employees would get clarity on time for accreditation work in order to avoid the all-cramming-all-knighting and instead make continuous progress.

Network of professional support partners and academic networks would help them in guiding the team on the proper direction without any repetitive work.

Utilize Technology to report, document, assemble evidence, and communicate with stakeholders can also reduce the burden on employees and workload for accreditation.

Promotion of Self-Care: institutions should establish environments that would be adoptive for the well-being of employees, allowing them to practice self-care, have flexible workstyles and schedules, and be involved in stress-relieving programs.[32]

The Road to Accreditation - Strategy towards Sustainable Practices

Accreditation demands need to be aligned with goals of teaching: accreditation stipulations need to be incorporated into curriculum designing so that the curriculum synchronizes institutional goals with the requirements of accreditation.

Ongoing Self-Assessment: faculty are called to reflect on their teaching practices in relation to the standards for accreditation, for purposes of improvement and innovation.

An Opportunity for Growth: rather than linking accreditation requirements to educator burden, professional development activities should be positioned by institutions as high-return growth opportunities.

Building a culture of collaboration: institutions need to create an inclusive academic climate within which they can see the light at the end of the tunnel and be able to work together toward meeting targets on accreditation and quality improvement.

Clear Communication: communication with all stakeholders of the organization that is,

students, parents, and administrators helps to clarify the process of accreditation and the importance in maintaining educational standards.

Workload Management Strategies to implement

Once excessive workload issues are identified, institutions could manage such issues by implementing structured approaches creating administrative roles for non-teaching personnel to take over administrative responsibilities, use of task forces with specific accreditation-related tasks (mostly handling documentation), and introducing policies to simplify documentation to minimize faculty burden.

Finally, institutions might want to offer flexible work hours or post-accreditation leave for faculty so they have time to recover from the equivalent of taking an academic SAT. Balanced workloads enable employee to meet accreditation standards without negatively affecting their own teaching and well-being.

Offering Mental Health Guidance and Counselling Services

Schools need to invest in robust mental health support systems for faculty that are specific to faculty needs. Employee need to be engaged through workshops on stress management and mindfulness activities (yoga) as integrated components of the educational ecosystem. Moreover, female faculty may benefit from greater access to supportive environments and mentorship to address their unique experiences. 9 Foster a workplace culture of well-being Stress takes away the joy of work.



Figure 6. Stress by employees during the Accreditation process

A Mentality of Work-Life Balance

Those institutions that hope to maintain a growing and moving forward academic environment or industrial environment must ensure that there is an even distribution of work-life balance. Including more flexible work schedules, the ability to work remotely, childcare support, and a balance between professional duties and personal life. Avoiding burnout can only happen if employee have enough time for themselves and if systems enact policies that are visible in reducing work volume. The first and most fundamental step to supporting the mental and physical well-being of employee is to create clear boundaries and promote the use of vacation and self-care opportunities.

Focusing on the barriers women face and how to support them

- Gender sensitivity: institutions should have policies that particularly address the challenges women teachers face during the accreditation process. These should include, but are not limited to, limiting burdensome administrative tasks, mentorship opportunities for women faculty in leadership, and work-life balance programs. Then at the management levels they can ensure a sensitive and respectful atmosphere where the females are valued and supported for professional growth. The more women participate in decision-making roles, share workload equitably, and receive leadership training, the more balanced academia will be.
- Collaboration and Teamwork Play a Vital Role in Accreditation Preparation: accreditation is not an individual but an institutional task. Moreover, making collective teams for documentation, assessment, and meeting the compliance demands can reduce the burden on an individual educator. Group Work Lowers Stress, Prevents Burnout, and Improves Efficiency of the Accreditation Process When responsibilities are shared and institutional structures support communication, employee can navigate the accreditation demands more easily.

CONCLUSIONS

Accreditation forms the bedrock of institutional recognition and quality but also takes a high toll on employees' mental health and well-being. Educational institutions and industries must champion employee well-being-through the strategic design of workloads, mental health measures, work-life balance policies, gender-sensitive initiatives, and institutional frameworks that promote collective achievements-to help mitigate some of these challenges. These strategies not only will help mitigate the need for accreditation compliance but also will create an academic environment that moves institutions to a stronger foundation of educator satisfaction, retention, and productivity in the long run. The sharing of information and sharing of tasks will improve efficiency, eliminate duplication of effort, and allow teachers to concentrate on their primary duties and not worry without undue stress. Good time management, resource management, and responsibility management together help in creating a healthy work culture which, ultimately, leads to the functioning of any institution with ease. After all, valuing the health of employees will ensure better health of institutions, communities, and the more accountable public. As the saying goes, 'Health is ensuring that employees are healthy and serves as the base for a healthier, wealthier nation.

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