

‘This assumes the man is working, wife taking care of home’: Devina Mehra on 90-hr work week debate

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90-hour work week debate: PMS Global's Devina Mehra highlights the perils of extremely long working hours

First Global founder and chairperson Devina Mehra clapped back at the L&T chairman's suggestion of a 90-hour work week. At the outset, Mehra said that the recommendation of working extremely long hours for 'nation-building' and 'company building' is "bunkum" and defies all logic.

Highlighting the inherent aspect of gender inequality here, Mehra believes that such a suggestion on working hours assumes that the man is always working 24x7 whereas his wife is taking care of the home and children.

"This type of working hours recommendation assumes that the man (it is almost always the man) who is working around the clock while his wife is taking care of the home and children."

To substantiate her point further, she cited instances Infosys co-founder Narayana Murthy and his wife Sudha Murthy's familial life from a book by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni.

<https://tinyurl.com/yr3hvp6p>



"Mr Murthy completely outsourced parenting to not just his wife but also Sudhaji's sister and parents - so much so that the children thought of their grandfather as the real father and their father as only a 'backup' father."

She further said that the children had no doubt that their father loved them less than the company, which, of course, is considered fine given the big payoff. "This was one of the reasons I found it a disturbing book."

She said that such a suggestion could restrict the participation of Indian women in the workforce or that they would have to give up dreams of having children unless Indian men become equal partners in raising a family.

"The women then can have a career OR a family with kids, a choice which all these men didn't have to make."

Furthermore, Mehra noted that employees' productivity generally declines when they beyond a certain threshold, something backed by research on human efficiency and impacts on health.

She also cited the adverse impact of long working hours on the demography of Japan and South Korea.