Depression in workplaces

What is the issue?

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Companies in India should recognise the problem of depression among its staff and put in place policies to help them.

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What is the status of mental health issues in workplaces?

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- The number of workers, severely depressed or vulnerable to taking their lives, is increasing in India.
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- India is on the verge of a mental health epidemic with employees across the corporate sector bearing the brunt of it.
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- Depression among employees is a big cause of lost productivity.
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- 50% of India's workforce suffers from some form of stress and of these, as much as 8% are showing a high tendency to commit suicide.
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What are the causes for depression?

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- Most of the people across the country are depressed by work, money and family issues.
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- Many people suffer from extreme stress as a consequence of pressure related to jobs.
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- A recent study by Assocham concluded that more and more professionals were experiencing workplace fatigue, sleep disorders and a general feeling of 'poor health'.

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- It also says that companies or HR departments rarely make any attempt to gauge employers from their mental health perspective.
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- Seniors in supervisory roles are also ill-equipped to cope with or respond to such scenarios.
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- According to a Wall Street Journal report, Indian millennials spend more time at work than their counterparts in 25 other countries.
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- Indian workplace is highly competitive with very little or no sensitivity towards the mentally unfit or those who have issues with performance.
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- However, employees might not be keen to seek treatment, fearing that it would jeopardise their career and even personal life.
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- Thus, corporate India needs to rethink in terms of the work style, work hours and opportunities at workplace.
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What should be done?

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- Companies in India have to frame policy that deals with the mental health status of an employee with an overall guideline from the government.
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- According to the WHO guidelines, common signs of depression include -
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1. Difficulty in concentrating
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2. Difficulty in making decisions
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3. A visible change in performance
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4. Inconsistent productivity
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5. Increasing errors and diminished work quality
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6. Overly sensitive reactions
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- Within the workplace, if the conversation becomes uncomfortable for the employee, he or she should be referred to a more clinically trained person.
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- Every employer must introspect his/her organisation regarding inadequate health and safety policies, poor communication and management practices, low control over one’s area of work and low levels of support for employees as laid down by WHO.
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- Thus, Corporate India must detect and recognise depression among its staff, intervene at the right time, support them with all kinds of programmes and help them to be productive.
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Source: Business Line

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