



Newsletter – September 2022

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FLEXIBLE WORKING HOURS

SEE

In *Public Prosecutor versus IS Cleaning Service Pte Ltd*, “investigations revealed that the accused company had violated the Employment Act by deploying one of its cleaners to perform cleaning services for more than 12 hours a day for a period of time; and by deploying three of its employees to perform more than 72 hours of overtime work a month.” The accused company was charged and convicted and fined for the charges regarding excessive work hours. [from *EMPLOYMENT LAW IN SINGAPORE, CASES AND MATERIALS*, Edited by Benjamin Yim, 2016]

The above case is perhaps an extreme example of an unhealthy work hour schedule. Fortunately, in Singapore such cases are small in numbers.

We know that there can be many factors affecting the working hours. The main ones are:

1. The nature of the occupation;
2. The need for additional income to meet the expenses incurred;
3. The size of the family;
4. Essential services; and
5. Project-based jobs which need to be completed on time.

However, no one will deny that there is right now a dire need to maintain a work-life balance. Each employee has to decide how he/she wants to achieve it. Employers must be co-operative too. The website, **my careersfuture**, explains what a work-life balance is and why is it important:

“Work-life balance describes how working individuals divide time and resources between work and other aspects of their lives. The latter include family, social and leisure activities. Ensuring work-life balance is important because it separates work from home life.

This gives employees greater control over their focus – when they are with their families, when their attention should be directed towards their loved ones and not work. This prevents stress

and burnout caused by overworking when employees let their jobs encroach into their family and social life.” [this website is maintained by the WORKFORCE SINGAPORE]

This work-life balance with flexible working hours and sufficient rest is crucial in all occupations. For example, Nurses, Teachers and Security Personnel are greatly afflicted by unreasonable working hours and conditions. Furthermore, the shortage of manpower in such professions has made working conditions more unbearable. Consequently, employees quit and this further worsens the situation. For some Catholics, even working on Sundays is not acceptable as Sunday is the Sabbath day. For Christians, on Sundays, we need to spend time with God at home and in the church, individually and with our families.

Do employees need to be in the office during working hours? The topic on flexible hours also covers this area. The pandemic has taught us many things. One of the things is that we can work from home or have a hybrid work culture.

Another concern is that excessive working hours can lead to more workplace accidents. For example, a fork lift driver or a construction worker can lose his focus if he is too tired due to unduly long hours of work.

In her article in the Straits Times dated 11 July 2022, Kris Boo, a Senior Correspondent, reported that Singapore will have its own guidelines on flexi-work in two years time. This will, however, not be law. [BOSES, START WARMING UP FOR FLEXI-WORK GUIDELINES IN 2024, AT PAGE B11].

Thus, CFSM Singapore has an added reason to commemorate the Feast of St Joseph on 1 May every year. CFSM has always highlighted the need for a balanced work style – 8 hours of work, 8 hours of rest and 8 hours of self-development. Many lives had been killed to ensure that this work style is enforced. There is a definite need to protect the family i.e. the domestic church, from the onslaught of unreasonable working hours. We need to grow spiritually, as individuals and as families and also as a spirit filled community of love and care. The bible and the Social Teachings of the Catholic Church have also taught us the respect and concern that we must give to the dignity of life and the dignity of a worker. Human lives cannot be taken for granted.

Article by Gabriel

Causes:

1. Why are workers working excessive hours?
2. Apart from employers, who or what are the other causes?

Consequences:

1. What happens when a worker is too tired or not focused?

2. Is it true that the Singapore Economy will be seriously affected if we have flexible working hours? Discuss.

JUDGE

1. What do we learn from Jesus about workers' working hours and/or conditions? What would Jesus say about work-life balance?
2. What does the Bible, the Social Teachings of the Church and the encyclicals of the Vatican say about the above reality?

ACT

1. How can I
 - a. As a Christian
 - b. As a CFSM membercontribute to healthy working hours and work-life balance?
2. What can our Movement do to encourage the work-life balance culture?

Announcements

1. ***CFSM Singapore's 60th Anniversary Celebration***

Date: 24 September 2022

Time: 6pm

Venue: Our Lady of Perpetual Succour

Mass followed by Dinner

All CFSM members and their families are welcome to attend.

\$30 per person. Children below 12 FOC. A souvenir umbrella will be given.

2. ***There will be a Faith Formation Session in November 2022. Look out for more details.***