

Numbers Suggest Employees in Most Companies Don't Necessarily Complain

Bulk of total complaints received by a few cos, which reported nearly 100% closure of plaints

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ET INTELLIGENCE GROUP: When it comes to complaining about working conditions or health and safety issues at the workplace, not many employees across companies are forthcoming.

As per Business Responsibility & Sustainability Reporting (BRSR) data sourced from Prime Database, India's top 1,062 listed companies received more than 220,000 complaints related to health and safety and nearly 75,000 over working conditions of employees and workers in fiscal 2023. While the numbers appear big, there is a heavy concentration. As many as 944 companies reported zero complaints related to health and safety, while 920 companies disclosed receiving no complaints about working conditions.

In fact, the bulk of the total complaints were received by just a few companies, which have reported nearly 100% closure of the complaints.

Disclosure of information on complaints made by employees and workers is compulsory for the top 1,000 listed companies from

FY23 under the BRSR framework. Since several companies have not disclosed data for the previous year of FY22, a year-on-year comparison is not tenable.

"This is a serious concern of employees not raising their grievances as it is unlikely that there would be zero complaints," said Bino Paul, professor at Tata Institute of Social Sciences.

"The evolution of industrial relations and personnel management into human resource management has led to strategy leaning towards maximising profits for the shareholders and undermining the autonomy of human resources. This is a concern since employees are a key stakeholder and there remains no neutral, au-

tonomous body that deals with labour issues," Paul said. "Services and knowledge sectors like IT neither come under the purview of the Factories Act nor there is a collective bargaining. In such a scenario, the management gains an upper hand. Employees prefer to quit rather than complain."

It is not just about employees not complaining.

"Complaints are not always captured systematically across companies," said Nagaraj Krishnan, managing director of Aparajitha Corporate Services. "This is not to imply that the grievances are not addressed but there is no systematic capturing and record of the complaints. Besides, employee grievances tend to be a non-issue for many companies. It

gets escalated to the board level only when it has become significantly critical or attracting undue attention," he said.

"There are various reasons for the high number of companies reporting zero complaints," said Vikram Shroff, partner at AZB, specialising in employment and labour laws. "To begin with, employers need to comply with multiple health and safety laws. In some cases, there is also a need to set up a committee on health & safety. Given the Covid experience, many employers have been proactive in ensuring a safer workplace. Some employers actively adopt various workplace measures to be featured in the 'best employer' surveys, as part of their overall recruitment and retention drive. These measures have reduced or eliminated workplace complaints on health & safety," he said.

ET ANALYSIS

Employee/Worker Complaints In Case Of 1,062 Listed Companies

Nature of woes	FY23	FY22	YoY % chg
HEALTH & SAFETY			
Complaints received from employees & workers regarding health & safety	2,26,916	2,14,191	6
Number of complaints received by five companies	2,19,468	2,09,100	5
Companies with zero complaints	944	965	-2
WORKING CONDITIONS			
Complaints received from employees & workers regarding working conditions	74,875	54,626	37
Number of complaints received by five companies	60,751	44,709	36
Companies with zero complaints	920	949	-3

Source: primeinfobase.com