

Weak November job data deemed 'alarming'

THE RISE in November unemployment indicates a loss of momentum sufficient to outweigh the pickup in holiday hiring, raising concerns about the health of the broader economy, analysts said.

John Paolo R. Rivera, a senior research fellow at the Philippine Institute for Development Studies, said the data indicate "a mixed labor market, not a collapse but a loss of momentum."

He added that while unemployment fell slightly month on month from October on the strength of holiday hiring, "the fact that it is still higher than a year earlier, despite the seasonal boost, suggests underlying weakness."

"This reflects slower economic growth, weather disruptions, and cautious hiring, meaning seasonal demand helped only partially. The labor market is stabilizing af-

tershocks, but not strengthening, which is a warning sign if growth and investment do not pick up," Mr. Rivera said.

The November 2025 Labor Force Survey confirmed a persistent pattern of fragile job generation, according to Sentro ng mga Nagkakaisa at Progresibong Manggagawa (SENTRO).

On Wednesday, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) re-

ported an unemployment rate of 4.4%, against 3.2% a year earlier.

"This outcome is particularly alarming because it comes at the start of the Christmas season, when stronger consumer demand should normally translate into more hiring," the group said.

"If jobs are weak during Christmas, the economy is clearly underperforming. The failure to generate robust employment

during a peak season highlights the fragility of current growth."

It added that Philippines continues to lag most ASEAN economies, which are reporting unemployment rates below 3%, leaving the Philippines an outlier alongside Indonesia.

"Domestic job creation is falling behind the region," SENTRO said.

Adding to the concern is the decline in job quality. Manufac-

turing continues to shed jobs, while wage and salary employment has slipped. More workers are moving into self-employment or into unpaid family work. — Erika Mae P. Sinaking

FULL STORY

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OPINION

When marital strife lands in HR's lap

IN THE WORKPLACE

REY ELBO

I'm the human resources (HR) manager at a medium-sized enterprise. This week, an employee's wife claims her cheating husband is withholding financial support. She requests that the husband's salary be paid directly to her. I declined the request for legal reasons. Now, I'm agonizing with that decision as I reflect on sympathizing with the wife. Please advise. — Red Lantern.

I'm not sure how you declined the wife's request. But you're right. That's a legal issue. But what about the ethical component? In today's complex world of modern employment, HR often finds itself acting as much more than just a recruiter, engagement promoter, or policy enforcer, among others.

From time to time, the personal crisis of an employee's private life spills into the professional realm. This includes a marital dispute, with an aggrieved spouse claiming the employee's salary. This is an ethical tightrope walk that requires a strictly policy-driven management response that most companies don't have.

So, how do we resolve the matter for your future guidance? First things first. Anyone in HR should understand the

absolute separation

The basic principle that must guide HR is the absolute separation of an employee's marital issues from their employment contract. The company has a contract with the employee, the husband, to compensate him for work rendered. Therefore, the salary is the property of the individual who performed the labor.

The wife's emotional agony — her husband's infidelity and financial distress — is deeply valid from a human perspective, but it is legally irrelevant to the employer-employee relationship. HR is not a family court, morality advocate, or marriage counselor.

Its mandate is strictly defined by employment law and company policy.

The single most critical factor in this scenario is the law governing the payment of wages. As a general rule, an employer is legally obligated to pay an employee's full wages directly to that employee unless there's a court-issued garnishment ruling, legal support order, government-mandated deductions, or any legally valid assignment of wages.

That means you're legally right in declining the employee's spouse if you gave those reasons. Doing otherwise would expose your organization to significant risks, including breach of employment contract.

I'm not sure how you declined the wife's request. However, HR must project an unequivocal, yet sensitive refusal based on legal constraints, including the Data Privacy Act. You must explain that the company is legally barred from intervening in an employee's personal finances.

In other words, HR must decline the wife's request but do it respectfully.

HANDLING THE ALLEGATIONS

The husband's alleged infidelity must be handled separately and with extreme

caution. Unless the cheating involves a coworker and has led to a demonstrable disruption of the workplace — such as creating a hostile work environment, violating anti-harassment policies, or breaching a conflict-of-interest rule (like an affair with a direct report), it is generally considered a private matter.

HR must resist the temptation to investigate issues of morality. Doing so sets a dangerous precedent, intrudes upon employee privacy, and distracts from the company's core business. HR may want to explore the following key questions:

Did the husband violate the company's Code of Conduct? Has his alleged infidelity negatively impacted his job performance or the work environment? If the answer to these questions is no, the husband's infidelity remains off-limits for disciplinary action. Therefore, a well-managed HR response includes the following:

One, ensure strict confidentiality. You, as the HR professional, must ensure the matter is not discussed with anyone else within the company, including the husband's boss, unless absolutely necessary for legal compliance or to alert management on its adverse effect on work performance.

Two, direct the matter to legal channels. HR may advise the wife to seek proper legal intervention to obtain the necessary court order that would grant her access to his wages. This reframes the problem from an HR issue to a legal one.

Three, offer counseling to the husband. The husband may be given optional access to the company's legal or counseling assistance program to help him manage the personal stress and financial fallout without forcing HR to act as a therapist or legal advisor.

In conclusion, HR must be ready to act on any matter involving a cheating employee and a salary dispute if such private conduct spills into workplace violations. This is a reminder of the blurry line between an employee's private life and professional obligations. The path forward is clear, though difficult — legal compliance must always outweigh sympathy.

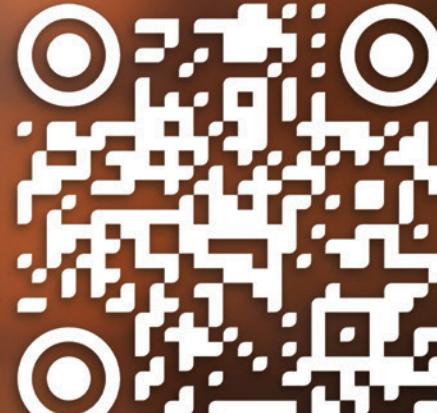
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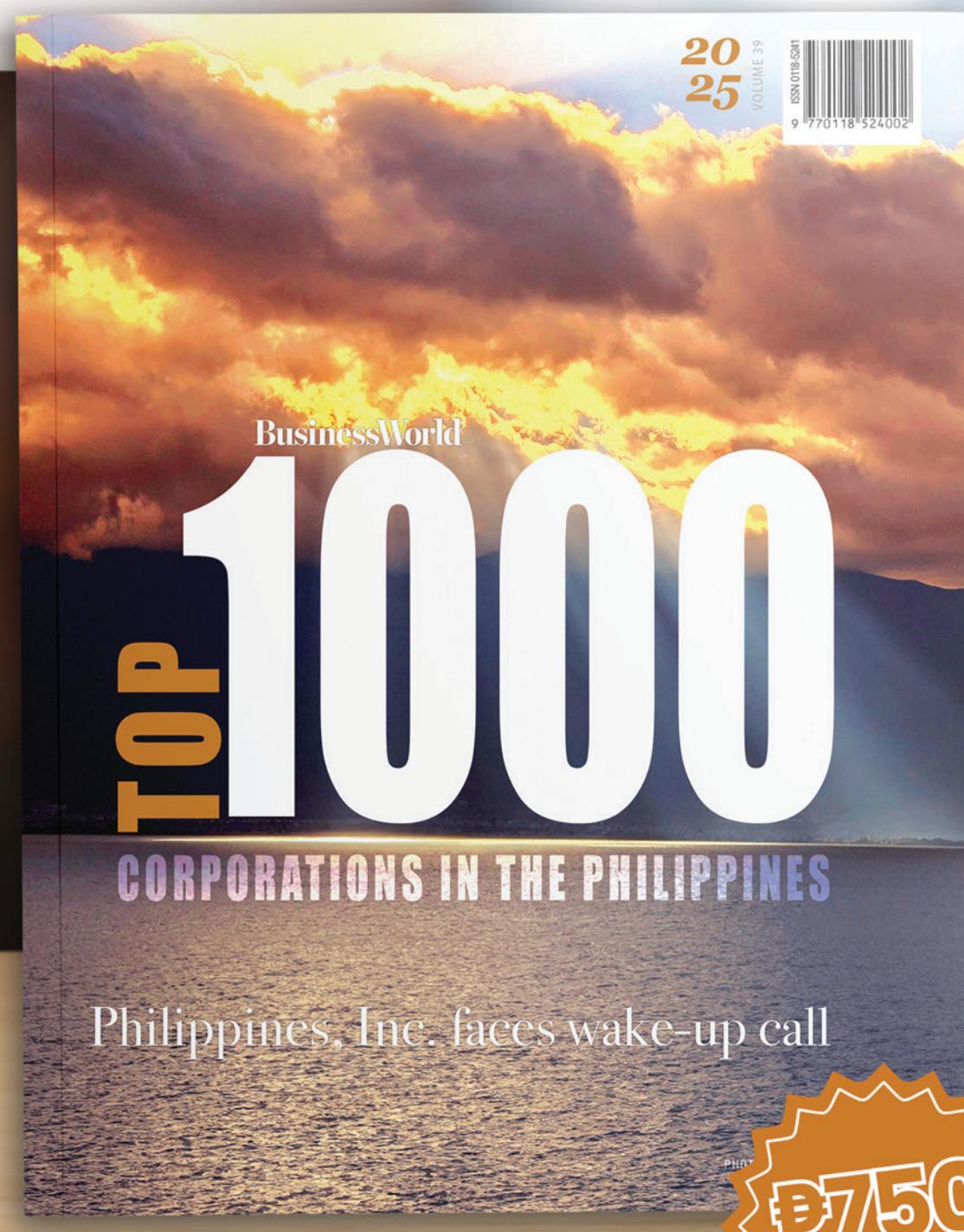


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