Interviewer: Okay, so just to get us started, do you mind introducing yourself and telling me a little bit about who you are, and a little about your education and your employment background?

Participant 25: Yeah sure, so my name is Participant 25. I currently work at a pharmaceutical company out in the Boston area, working on data analytics insights and strategy. I’ve been in my current role for, coming up on two years. Before this I was in healthcare consulting for a couple of years. Before that, my background is an academic researcher, so I did my PhD in Microbiology from University of Georgia and then did a postdoc at University of California San Francisco for three years. So, that's sort of the educational background. Personally, I mean, I'm originally from India, came to the US for graduate studies. Married, have one kid, live over here in the greater Boston area.

Interviewer: Great, yeah. So, can you tell me a little bit more about your current role and what your day-to-day job looks like?

Participant 25: Yeah so, the biggest chunk of responsibility in my current role is around forecasting for how a portfolio of products that I support is going to do the next one years, three years, ten years. Essentially, it's vital for the company to understand how each of the different drugs is going to perform so that they account for how much money is going to come in, how much do they need to manufacture, how much sort of logistic capability they need to build in. So, there's a number of downstream and upstream factors that depend on that forecast that we put together. That's the biggest chunk, and in that process, I support a number of different colleagues who forecast the price and how that's going to work for the drugs, and then subsequently, how that translates into sales because that's sort of the ultimate goal that the company is looking for is how much money is each drug anticipated to bring in so that they can plan accordingly. So, that's the biggest chunk of responsibilities. Outside of that, I support other projects that are planning for new products that are not in the market, that are still in clinical development at different stages, or maybe are not even in clinical development, but are still just being researched upon in some academic lab, for example. So, I support... trying to understand, putting together a business case for those products as to whether there's potential, is there a need for such a product in the market, what particular diseases could a molecule provides immune therapies for, so that ultimately patients can be benefited from any new drug that we bring on the market. So, I support a number of projects along that and then, a smaller part of the responsibilities is just to help the leaders put together an overall strategy on the business area of where are we doing well, where are we not doing so well, what could we be doing differently or better in the places where we're not doing well to incrementally improve over the next month or the next six months or the next year. That sort of strategy aspect is a smaller portion of my responsibility right now.

Interviewer: Gotcha, and are you working in person right now or are you remote?

Participant 25: It's a hybrid approach, so I go into the office one to two times a week right now. But that's only... maybe as of the last couple of months? Before that, I was almost exclusively remote. I joined this company in August 2020 so in the middle of the pandemic, probably for the first 18 months I maybe went into the office twice.

Interviewer: Gotcha, that makes sense. Are you interacting with people pretty regularly in your role or is a lot of it solo work?

Participant 25: No. I mean solo workers are much, much smaller company. The majority of it is either understanding the workstreams that others have done, so diagnostic are explaining my work to other leaders or other companies. So, a lot of the time is spent in meetings and discussing basically what will be done, is that the best approach, are we thinking of everything else, etc. And then part of these forecasting cycles that are the big chunk of my role is putting together executive decks that are then used to communicate anywhere from the business unit head to the US head all the way to the CEO of the company. I present those slides, those executive decks that I put together multiple times through each leader to make sure we are telling a very coherent story, a very clear and compelling story. A good chunk of the work is just collaborating for the meetings and facilitating discussions.

Interviewer: Right, right. What would you say about the culture? How would you describe the overall atmosphere at your workplace? Would you call it like a pretty fun, laid back, casual, friendly type place or more formal, professional, serious, fast pace?

Participant 25: Yeah. Overall, at my current company the work culture is definitely on the more laid back side. It is because no one can really do the job well by themselves. A lot of stakeholders for input, as well as output and it's generally a very collegiate and collaborative atmosphere. Of course, with senior leadership, there is that dynamic of formality that comes up, but overall in the folks that I interact with on a regular basis for my work it's a very laid back, very friendly atmosphere. Very easy to work with, for the most part.

Interviewer: Cool, yeah. How do you feel about your job? Like if you could rate it on a scale from one to ten, with ten being the best and one being the worst, what would you give it?

Participant 25: That's a hard question, that probably changes day to day. Like today, I would say maybe an eight or nine. Maybe an eight. Because right now... So, the forecasting piece of my responsibility that's the biggest chunk, there are three sort of cycles, planning cycles that happen every year. Right now, we're in the middle of two cycles, so the workload is much lower, much more manageable. If we were in the middle of a particular forecasting cycle, my answer would be closer to like a five or six most likely, because just the amount of work that has to happen during those times, the demands on the hours become very intense. But yeah, right now it’s (…).

Interviewer: Fair, yeah. How would you describe your relationship with the people you work with? Would you say you are friends with them, friendly? Do you socialize with people, you know, outside of work at all?

Participant 25: Yeah, I mean, I would say there is a big group of people that I interact with on a daily basis, I mean I can't say that I'm friends with everyone, I can’t say that I absolutely hate everyone. It depends on person to person so, my immediate manager and my immediate report, the person that I supervise, I would say that I'm friends... between friendly and friends with, I mean I’ve not been in this particular role for too long or on this particular team for too long. So, it’s not like I have years and years of background with everyone. There are other folks in the broader team that I collaborate with on a daily basis, or maybe two to three times every week that I'm either friendly or friends with. So, it sort of spans the spectrum of every sort of... There are some people that I just have a working relationship with, a professional relationship. I don't really interact with them outside of my work responsibilities. But there are other people that I’m trying to meet with my outside-of-work hours.

Interviewer: Sure, yeah. Do you feel like you can just be yourself with your colleagues, or at work, or do you sometimes feel like you have to act a certain way?

Participant 25: Maybe that's too broad a question. I don't know how to answer properly. If we are talking about individual personality, I think I'm generally able to present myself. I don't have to sort of pose a different face, if that makes sense. Is that sort of along the lines of what you were asking about? Because when it comes to the work itself, sometimes you just have to pretend that you know things that maybe you don't have a full understanding of because maybe you're expected to, maybe they somehow assume that you know things, and then you just have to sort of go along with it, or you have to... In that one moment, you have to pretend that you know more than you do, and then maybe later on you try to figure out what's going on, so maybe there are times as part of like the work responsibility, as part of the fact that I'm managing and supervising someone. From the work knowledge base perspective, maybe there are times where you have to pretend, but from an individual personality perspective, I have never... I don't think I feel the pressure that I can’t be myself or I have to act a different way or act a particular way.

Interviewer: What about emotionally, do you ever feel like there are certain things that you can or can't express and based on the work situation?

Participant 25: Yeah... Let me see how to put this. I think when it comes to presenting or talking about emotions, positive emotions are more easily acceptable, more easily digested, more easily communicated than negative ones. So, I have a 15 year old who's wild on days, like go crazy. If I'm having a tough day at work because I mostly still work from home, whereas my wife mostly goes to work. Like maybe once in a while, I can say that: “I’m just having a tough day.” (…) If I’m distracted or I haven't been able to do something at a particular time, but I don't think I can always say that: “oh I'm I’m distracted because of my baby,” or something like that. I don't know if that's particularly unique to me, or if this state, the situation, I think that that's probably true in general, but yeah emotionally that's sort of the biggest... It’s not even a limitation, that's just the reality, I think there is a limited capacity from other people to sort of digest or to accept negative emotions from anyone, probably.

Interviewer: Sure, yeah. Do you ever vent or complained to colleagues, or do you ever listen to them vendor complain to you?

Participant 25: Yeah, I mean, it's happened about both work-related things and personal life things, more so work-related things because, as I said, I don't have years-long friendships with anyone on this team yet. So, I don't know if I would feel too comfortable venting about personal life. But I mean, work-related things definitely. If we are feeling frustrated because our laptops are not working because someone else is making silly mistakes, which they shouldn't be making based on their experience, based on their tenure, or whatever. Sure, there are venting sessions. On personal life, I gave the example of my baby. My person that I supervise, he has two kids of his own so, there's just that familiarity that I can (…) certain issues I can vent, but yeah. Definitely on the work side, less on the personal side.

Interviewer: Sure, yeah. Can you tell me a little bit more about the demographics of the people you work with, or like the composition of your overall workplace?

Participant 25: Um, sure...

Interviewer: Like in terms of gender, in terms of race, age, this type of thing.

Participant 25: Yeah, but are we talking company wide or more so, just like the team that I interact with on a daily basis.

Interviewer: Maybe both.

Participant 25: So, if we start at the company level, this is a global, multinational company. Honestly, we probably have like 40,000 employees, so I don’t really know good statistics around demographics. I know that DE&I has been a big focus of our company over the last couple of years, and generally the company... in a lot of public surveys, public rankings of good companies based on X, our company is generally... we are viewed pretty favorably. When it comes to gender equality, maybe just gender equality and inclusivity, at least on those two scales (…) generally viewed pretty favorably. I honestly don't know about racial diversity, I just don't know. If we focus on my immediate team, let's say... I’ll include my immediate team and then the folks from other teams that I interact with on a regular basis and combine them into one group. So I would call it, let's say a group of 14 people. So, starting with gender: ten males four females. We have probably five nationalities. If we talk about race, it becomes a harder question. The majority of them would be Caucasian, white. One African American, two of Asian descent. Yeah, so two Asian descent, one African American, the rest would be Caucasian. That would be the diversity from a race perspective. If you talk about age, I would say all of them fall somewhere between 25 years and maybe 50 years. Maybe we have one person older than that and I'm not sure, but majority of them would be 25 to 45 or 50, somewhere in that range, with more concentration between like 30 to 40. (…) Was there any other parameter on which (...)?

Interviewer: Not necessarily. No. So, it sounds like overall, your organization is probably pretty diverse, but in your department it's somewhat diverse but mostly white and more male than female slightly?

Participant 25: Definitely more male than female. More white than any other race.

Interviewer: Do you ever feel like your race or your gender matter or impact how you’re viewed at work?

Participant 25: I don't think so. At least in this role, I don't think there's ever been an overt occasion where I’ve felt that way. Has my gender or my race mattered... No, I don't think so, no.

Interviewer: That's good, yeah. Have you ever experienced any sort of racial comments or stereotyping at work?

Participant 25: I don't think so, no. I mean if I had, it would have immediately surfaced. I would have remembered it, but in general, because it's a big company because there's a decent diversity of all different kinds of backgrounds, I have personally, fortunately never been exposed to that.

Interviewer: That's good, yeah. So, as you know, in this study I'm particularly interested in how people feel and express emotions at work. So, one thing I'm asking people is what kind of person are you emotionally? At work or in general, do you consider yourself an emotional person, and are you someone who shares openly about what they're feeling or more reserved and private about that?

Participant 25: I mean, I'm definitely more reserved than an average person. I'm pretty sure about that. Yeah, I mean it's harder for me to communicate or express to most people overall, yeah.

Interviewer: Do you have a sense of why that would be or is that just kind of who you've always been?

Participant 25: I think that's just how I’ve always been? Yeah, I mean it's definitely gotten more and more like that as I’ve grown older.

Interviewer: Oh, really?

Participant 25: Yeah, I think that's how I've always been.

Interviewer: Sure, do you ever feel like race or gender impact that aspect of your personality at all or...?

Participant 25: I think, like societally, gender does play a role. I mean, definitely with my wife I wouldn't ever feel uncomfortable sharing anything, but beyond her, I don't think there are too many people that I would be able to share anything and everything with. I don't think so. Part of it is probably societal, part of it is just me, part of it is probably the way Indian culture and Indian society is, where men are not supposed to be emotional, express emotions, have emotions is probably too extreme. But yeah, I think that Indian society definitely, and my upbringing definitely plays a role that that. So maybe like overtly, maybe just subliminally, how you’re raised, what sort of examples you're exposed to in culture, in people around you, your elders, your family, youor relatives. I think that that probably does shape part of why I am the way I am.

Interviewer: That would make sense, yeah. Can you think of any times when you felt particularly emotional at work? And this can be any sort of emotion.

Participant 25: Interesting. Probably frustration is the most common one. When someone is being difficult, in terms of giving you the information that you want, or like things are not working the way you think they should. I mean, I do a lot of forecasting analytics so if I’m having difficulties working in excel... Yeah, frustration is probably the most common emotion at work, interspersed with other positive, happier emotions.

Interviewer: Sure. When you feel frustrated, do you feel like you're allowed to or able to express that or is that something that you tend to keep inside?

Participant 25: Yeah, I mean there are occasions where you can. It depends on what is the source of frustration. It depends on who or what is the source of that. But yeah, there are definitely occasions where I am able to express it with a number of different people. But I mean, yeah, there are definitely occasions where you just have to keep it to yourself because it's hard to sort of gauge how it will be received and whether it will be received negatively.

Interviewer: Can you give an example of that?

Participant 25: Sure. So, this was probably like two or one and a half months ago, the person that I supervised was just being difficult to work with, and instead of being solution-oriented or instead of trying to want to move towards a possible solution to the problem you're having, they were more interested in just finding more problems with the work that we had done till now. We tried a couple of times to say that: “Fine, this is a problem, but we need to quickly work (…) we need to figure out what's the best solution.” But instead of trying to move in that direction, they kept finding: “oh but this part is also a problem.” It seemed like they had a better alternative, but instead of being proactive about communicating what they thought the right solution was, they wanted some sort of acknowledgement or some sort of request. Like okay, why don't you tell us the solution? So, I mean that that was frustrating. This lasted probably for a full day, if not more. So yeah definitely, you know situations like that keep happening.

Interviewer: Sure, and what did you do in response to that situation?

Participant 25: Honestly, nothing except complaining to my wife. Partly it's because this person is the first time I have someone that I'm supervising, and I've only been supervisor this person for maybe three months total. So, I want to make sure that I don't say or give any feedback that's not received as constructive criticism. And I don't want to ruin the sort of relationship for the future because we will have to work pretty close together until something changes, right? So, in that moment until now I've not given any specific feedback about that situation. Maybe when it comes to like an annual review, I’ll mention something along those lines, but without specifics. But yeah, I didn't really do anything about it.

Interviewer: Gotcha. Do you feel like other people at work are expressive of their emotions, or do they tend to be pretty even keeled as well?

Participant 25: I would say in general, no one is very expressive. Yeah. I mean, in general, I would say no one is very expressive. Most people try to sort of stay on task about the work, maybe you have one comment here and there about personal emotions or feelings, but definitely not the norm.

Interviewer: Does that seem like an expectation in your workplace or is that just like people's personalities? Or both?

Participant 25: I don't know if that's an expectation of this specific workplace or just like workplaces in general.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Participant 25: At my previous workplace, it was even more reserved (…) Yeah I don't think it is necessarily everyone's personality to be that way, because we have people on our team who are very extraverted overall, but still staying focused on the work and not necessarily about a personal sort of feelings emotions.

Interviewer: Sure, sure. Can you think of any other times when you felt particularly emotional at work, or like a strong emotion that came out because of work?

Participant 25: Yeah, I mean there have been occasions of... I don’t know about happiness, but accomplishment when your work is well received and well acknowledged by senior leadership. I mean fortunately there have been several occasions of that, particularly in the last six months, I would say? Yeah, the last six months to eight months. So, I mean those are good days when someone takes their time out to personally say that the work was well-received, or that work was very helpful. Yeah.

Interviewer: That's great, yeah. Do you ever feel emotionally exhausted or experience any kind of burnout at work?

Participant 25: Oh, absolutely. I don't know if emotional exhaustion is more so the cause than just like workload exhaustion?

Interviewer: Sure, yeah.

Participant 25: So, workload exhaustion has definitely happened multiple times. Maybe, at least once a month, if not more. During those planning cycles that I was saying, there are weeks when you're just completely exhausted every day, but that's work that it takes. Emotional exhaustion sort of comes along with that, because if you're in a rush at work, you don’t really have the time or energy to do anything else. So, I am not able to spend time with my family, not able to like sit down and talk to my wife or anything, so that does bring emotional exhaustion. Yeah, I mean that definitely happened multiple, multiple times.

Interviewer: Do you have any particular coping strategies that you use during those sorts of moments?

Participant 25: I can't say that I have any well refined strategies in all honesty. When it comes to workload, because now I’m going through this for a couple of years, I know that it's temporary and overall (…) Every everyone acknowledges that it is a bad situation, so it's not like I'm the only one, that sort of dynamic. So, generally there's been good acknowledgment around that, and understanding that once that is done, the workload has gone down, you're free to take time off and no one's going to say: “No, you need to do work.” Then immediately, there's generally a lot of flexibility in terms of taking time off for whatever reason you want, at this current company at least. So that's one coping mechanism, just looking forward to your time off. Beyond that, honestly, I don't know if I have like any other great coping mechanisms, besides just maybe just taking some time out to watch random videos on YouTube or try and grab a couple of drinks, maybe that helps. Sometimes, sleep early, but not oftentimes.

Interviewer: Does it feel to you, like the workload when it gets really high, like that's normal and that's just kind of inherent to the job or does that seem like a problem you know with hiring or with the organization structure?

Participant 25: There have definitely been occasions for both. I mean, there are more reasons sometimes workload is more because I’m inefficient at certain tasks so it just takes me much longer than probably several other people. So that's one reason. There's definitely occasions where there's just that much work to do under some time crunch situation. So, I understand those situations are going to happen, sometimes they are planned, sometimes they’re unplanned. And there are definitely things that are... I don't know if it is unique to this company because I have not worked at many other companies, so I don't have that perspective, but that organizationally or sort of… Maybe not organizationally as like the global company, but the specific business area that we work under, it just feels like there are some inefficiencies and because of misguided asks from leadership, misguided expectations from leadership, inefficiencies in the process, and the different stakeholders that you have to include. So, all can be potential reasons and all have definitely happened in the last year, easily multiple times.

Interviewer: Yeah, so switching gears a little bit. In the past couple of years, there's been an increase in news reports of violence against Asian Americans. Is that something that has affected you at all, or that you've been aware of?

Participant 25: Personally, no. Definitely, no. I definitely read about a lot of these news articles. I remember in the beginning, a lot of those news articles coming out of San Francisco, particularly because of the heavier Asian American population over there, and I lived in San Francisco for four years, so I would definitely associate with that, could definitely even see that happening. My sort of one personal... not personal experience, but like first person knowledge of that is from my wife's best friend who is Indian, who was verbally assaulted randomly just walking on the road. The other.... this was a while ago, this was in 2016. I'm sure you can associate what happened in 2016 that led to it, but that's sort of my only first hand experience - it’s not first hand, but second hand experience with it, but it was in my immediate circle.

Interviewer: And this was in the Boston area as well or?

Participant 25: Boston.

Interviewer: Gotcha, yeah. So is there anything else that we haven't discussed about your workplace or about your job or anything that you'd want to talk about?

Participant 25: I don't know. I don’t think my workplace is much different from most places. It's definitely way less formal, way more laid back atmosphere than my previous company. So, it's definitely not on the worse side of things, on the bad side of that sort of spectrum. It's a big company, as I said it’s a multiglobal pharma company, so I'm sure that just brings some inefficiencies and some challenges that are maybe only true for big companies. So there are sort of that negative side of it. But overall, I've been pretty happy with my current company and I'm happy with... I see my work as rewarding, I like my team, so I think it's overall a pretty good workplace.

Interviewer: Good. Yeah, no that's great to hear. What about like your postdoc and your graduate school experiences? Where those pretty good as well or...?

Participant 25: My graduate school experience was definitely good, my postdoc not so much. I mean we can start with the postdoc. I ended up with a supervisor who was an extreme micromanager, who wanted to know anything and everything about everything, on sort of almost like a daily basis. So, that was definitely not a very pleasant experience. It ended abruptly when the lab shut down, the manager decided to shut down the lab and move to the industry themselves. So that experience has definitely like left a bad taste in my mouth, probably for the rest of my life. Yeah. So, graduate school, that was definitely a very good experience. At different times, we had anywhere from like five people in the lab to like fourteen. A mix of undergraduates, graduate students, postdocs, research associates or PI. And that was the that was sort of a learning atmosphere you were free to pursue any sort of curiosity, any line of experiments that you thought was interesting. Supervisor or PI never put undue pressure in terms of why things weren't working out the way you had it expected to. So, my previous experience was definitely a very positive experience and a formative experience.

Interviewer: Great, yeah. That's good to hear, and so that's about it for my questions for you. I had a couple of demographic questions, although I think we answered most of these. You're located in the Boston area, you were born in India, and you grew up in... where in India was that?

Participant 25: The city would be Lucknow. (…) Northern Central India.

Interviewer: Northern India. Okay and you would consider your ethnic background to be Indian or Indian American or?

Participant 25: Indian.

Interviewer: Indian. What is your age, if you don't mind me asking?

Participant 25: 36.

Interviewer: Okay, and do you go by, he/him gender pronouns?

Participant 25: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay cool. I think that is all my questions. Yeah, that's it pretty much. I don't know if there's anything else you wanted to say or know?

Participant 25: If you have any other questions, definitely happy to chat more. If you have any follow-up questions later, I’m happy to chat more.

Interviewer: Yeah, great! I'm also hoping to interview some more people if you have anybody that you could recommend or that who might be willing to be interviewed.

Participant 25: Yeah, sure. I can try to think.

Interviewer:: Yeah, you can just forward them the information and they can get in contact with me. Also do you have Venmo or PayPal or Zelle? Okay, hang on, let me. I don't know what I did with my phone, I'll be right back. To go get it, and then see if I can bend my you for this one. (...) Okay, I got it um do you want to chat me your Venmo ID. (...)

Participant 25: Think, I remember. (...)

Interviewer: Okay, I think. (...) Let me know if you get it. yeah you got it cool Thank you so much for your participation, I really appreciate it again.

Participant 25: No, of course, for other. People, is there any particular demographic you're trying to talk to like to diversify your sample to fill out your sample. Male versus female females for specific nationality.

Interviewer: yeah i'm i'm pretty open to anyone who the Asian American of any sort, although I would say that I do need more Indian American people, or if you know anybody. It could be male or female. I do need a few more men that I have women, I have, I have my women in my family so far um but yeah that would be about it in terms of like different demographic requirements yeah.

Participant 25: Okay, I can think to a few things to be interested.

Interviewer: that'd be awesome thanks so much. Okay. Well, anyway, I hope you have a great weekend and yeah I hope to hear from you soon, so thank you for.

Participant 25: You as well bye.

Interviewer: bye bye.