

Mental Wellbeing at Workplace: An Emerging Driver of Employee Performance and Organisational Success

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ABSTRACT

Mental health of workforce is a significant aspect of sustainable organisational performance. The study highlights the rising trend of mental health issues post pandemic that is creating an alarm for organisations to address the issue on urgent basis. The study tries to identify the critical factors affecting mental health of an employee. Inputs from published articles, research papers, global health surveys and organisational case studies shows that mental wellbeing reduces stress, anxiety, burnout, and absenteeism and promotes greater job satisfaction and organisational productivity. The study concludes that organisations should integrate mental health and wellbeing initiatives into strategic practices to build a resilient and productive workforce for greater competitive advantage.

Keywords: Mental health, Employee wellbeing, pandemic, productivity, strategic initiatives

INTRODUCTION

Employee well-being is one of the most important aspect that needs to be focused as it can affect both productivity and organizational performance or growth. It embraces various elements like physical, financial, mental, social, and community as well. Often its seen that organisations priotises all other aspects of employee wellbeing leaving behind the mental or psychological aspect. Mental or Psychological well-being ensures a positive emotional state that includes job satisfaction, job engagement/involvement, autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, purpose in life, commitment and strongly overcoming problems like stress, anxiety, frustration, etc. According to Dodge et al. (2012), Employee wellbeing is achieved when individuals have enough personal and workplace resources to successfully manage the challenges they face. Organizations that support employees' physical, emotional, social, and professional needs create a healthier, more engaged, and more productive workforce.

Mental health has become an increasingly important issue in recent years, as people grapple with rising stress levels, anxiety, and depression. The World Health Organization (WHO) reported that in 2019, 15% of working adults were diagnosed with a mental disorder. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the close relationship between work and employee wellbeing. During this period, workers worldwide experienced significantly higher levels of stress, with many reporting greater stress in 2021 than in 2020. As per reports there was a significant increase in anxiety, depression, social isolation, job burnout, and concerns related to food, housing, and income security between March 2020 and mid-2022. The pandemic underscored the importance of creating supportive workplaces that prioritize employees' mental health and overall wellbeing. WHO reported 25% increase in stress and anxiety-related disorders as a result of the pandemic situation. In the workplace, these issues impact significantly on productivity, morale, and the overall well-being of employees.

According to World Health Organization (WHO) mental well-being is a state where an individual understands his abilities, copes with normal life stressors, becomes productive, recognises his abilities, and contributes positively. Workplace factors such as work shifts, Job demands and workloads can push an employee towards higher risk of mental issues. Growing mental health issues impact not only employees but also the success of the

entire organisation. In contrast, Employees with healthy psychology tend to be more motivated, engaged, and productive in their work. They prove to be creative, and innovative, contributing positively to the organization's success and growth.

The 2022 WHO report highlights that the workplace is a key setting for transforming mental health. Organizations that prioritize employee mental wellbeing not only improve the quality of life of their employees but also enhance overall organizational effectiveness.

The theme for World Mental Health Day 2024, "It Is Time to Prioritize Mental Health in the Workplace," alarms a global call to take action for raising awareness and strengthen public understanding about the importance of mental health in the workplace. It stressed on the need for organizations to create supportive working environments that would promote employee wellbeing, prevent work-related mental health risks and promote a culture of psychological safety and inclusion.

Therefore, through a thorough review of the existing literatures, this study attempts to examine the significance of mental health as a key component of employee wellbeing and its contribution to organisational productivity. It explores the relationship between mental health and employee wellbeing, evaluates the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on workplace mental health, and analyses the role of organisational practices in fostering a psychologically healthy work environment. Further, the study aims to identify the critical factors influencing employee wellbeing and organisational performance. Drawing insights from secondary research, it proposes strategic recommendations for organisations to strengthen workplace mental health initiatives for enhancing employee wellbeing, increase productivity, and promote organisational effectiveness.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Employee wellbeing

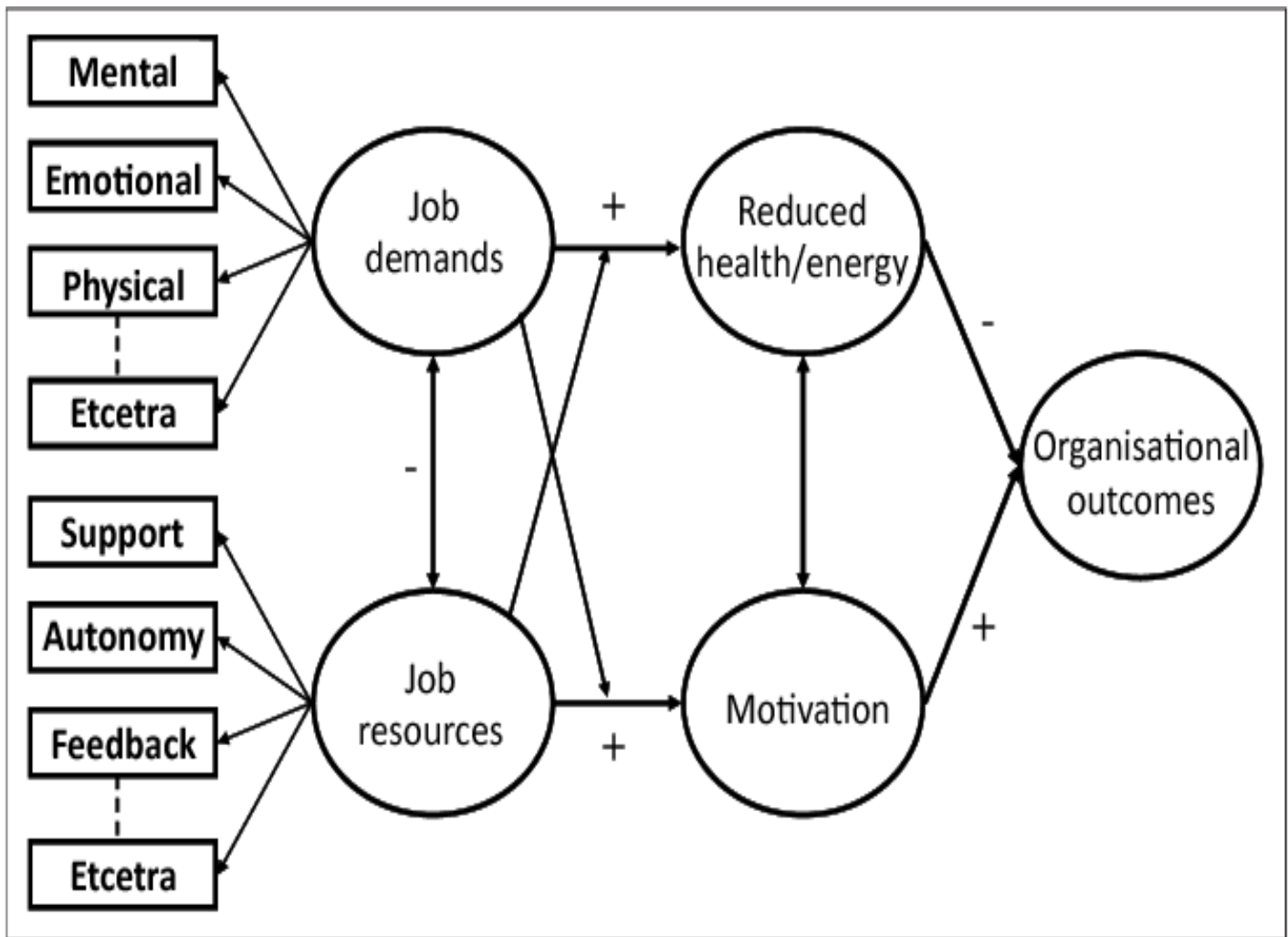
Employee wellbeing is a holistic state of psychological and physical health that enables individuals to function effectively, satisfy workplace demands, maintain positive interpersonal relationships and contribute effectively to organisational goals.

Dodge et al. (2012) define wellbeing as a dynamic balance between an individual's resources (such as personal strengths, social support, and coping abilities) and the challenges they face. According to the model, wellbeing is maintained when available resources are adequate to meet life and workplace demands. Therefore, employee wellbeing encompasses physical health, emotional stability, social relationships, and job satisfaction.

According to Psychological Capital (PsyCap) theory an individual's positive psychological state of development comprises of four psychological resources such as- Hope, Efficacy, Resilience and Optimism that contributes towards mental wellbeing, higher motivation, greater job satisfaction and improved work performance. Organizations can strengthen these psychological resources through strategic initiatives or practices for improved employee wellbeing and organizational success.

Mental wellbeing and Workplace impact

Job demands-resources theory (Bakker& Demerouti 2007) proposed that employee wellbeing depends on the balance between job demands and job resources. Higher job demands increase stress and reduce health, while increase in job resources enhance motivation and protect employees from stress or burnout. As a result, motivated and healthy employees contribute more towards organizational growth .



Source: The job demands–resources model adapted(pg.313) from State of the art. Journal of Managerial Psychology 22(3), 309–328

The diagram shows:

- Job Demands → (+) Positive relationship with reduced health/energy: As job demands increases, employees experience more stress, exhaustion or burnout.
Job Demands → (-) Negative relationship with job resources: Higher resources can reduce the negative impact of job demands.
- Job Resources (Support from supervisors, autonomy, career opportunity, training, fair treatment etc) → (+) Positive relationship with motivation: More resources increase employee motivation and level of job engagement.
- Reduced health/energy → (-) Positive Organizational outcomes: Poor health (mental as well as physical) and burnout reduces organizational performance.
- Motivation → (+) Positive Organizational outcomes: Motivated employees can contribute more towards organizational success.

According to research by Kinnunen et al. (2011), job resources have a positive impact not only on employees' work-related wellbeing but also on their personal and family lives.

Job resources are the physical, psychological, social, and organizational aspects of a job that help employees perform effectively and grow professionally. Some of the job resources include:

- Supportive leadership and supervision
- Opportunities for learning and career development
- Autonomy and decision-making freedom
- Positive relationships with colleagues
- Recognition and appreciation for good performance

These resources encourage personal growth and development, helping employees build confidence, skills, resilience, and motivation which results in Higher job satisfaction and work engagement, reduced stress and burnout ,better mental health ,Improved work-life balance and stronger family relationships with a positivity carried onto home life.

According to Nielsen et al. (2017), The workplace is more than just a place to perform job tasks; it can also be a powerful environment for promoting and maintaining employees' mental health. By creating supportive leadership, increasing employee autonomy, fostering teamwork, and ensuring meaningful work, organizations can improve both employee wellbeing and organizational success.

Juniper (2011) in his study found that employee wellbeing is a multidimensional concept that extends beyond the absence of stress and includes employees' physical, psychological, and social experiences at work.

The study highlighted that wellbeing is affected by workplace factors such as organisational culture, job design, workload, relationships, career development opportunities, and workplace facilities.

The study also suggested that organisations need to measure and manage employee wellbeing through a holistic approach rather than focusing only on stress reduction.

According to (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020).study COVID-19 pandemic witnessed significant challenges for organisations, especially in the field of human resource management. The sudden transition of work mode, increased uncertainty, concerns about employee health and safety led organisations to restructure their HR strategies inorder to support employee wellbeing, maintain productivity, and ensure organisational resilience.

Richardson and Rothstein (2008), through a meta-analysis of 55 stress-management intervention studies, concluded that workplace stress-management programmes showed significant improvements in employees' mental health, psychological wellbeing, and ability to withstand workplace demands.

These findings highlight the importance of evidence-based workplace interventions in promoting employee mental health and improving organisational outcomes. Similarly a systematic review and meta-analysis was carried out by by Joyce et al.

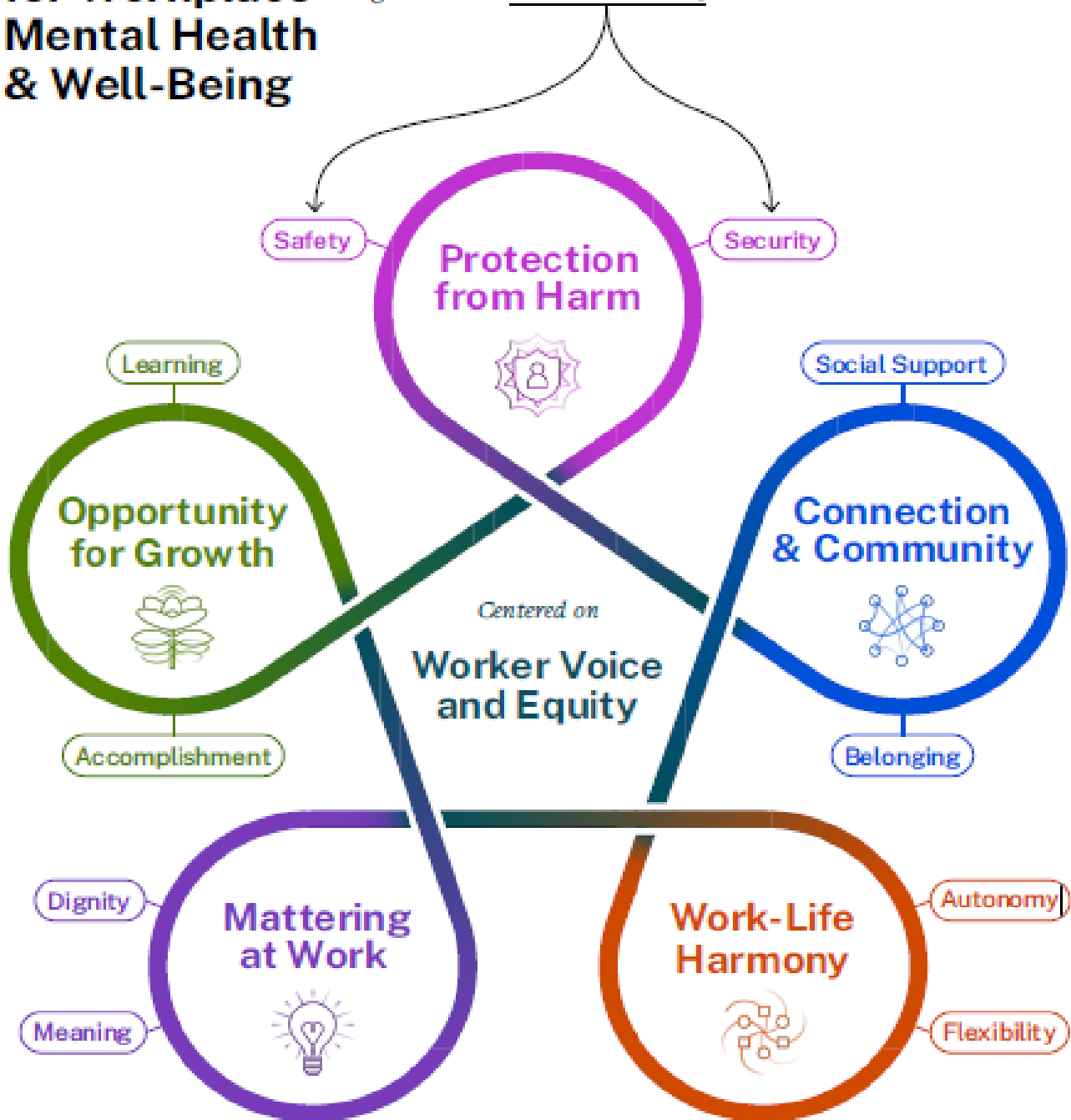
(2016) on workplace mental health interventions and found that cognitive-behavioural programmes and resilience-based interventions significantly reduced symptoms of depression, anxiety, and psychological stress and improved employee mental health and working capacity.

The Surgeon General's Framework for Workplace Mental Health & Well-Being has suggested five essentials and necessary components for addressing workplace mental health and well-being that is based on human needs.

The five components proposed by them includes : Protection from harm, Connection and Community, Work-life Harmony, Mattering ar work and opportunity for growth.

Five Essentials for Workplace Mental Health & Well-Being

Centered on the worker voice and equity, these five Essentials support workplaces as engines of well-being. Each Essential is grounded in two human needs, shared across industries and roles.



Source: Adapted from *The U.S. Surgeon General's Framework for Workplace Mental Health & Well-Being* (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the U.S. Surgeon General, 2022).

The first Essential is Protection from Harm that rests on two human needs: safety and security. Workforce cannot perform well if they feel physically or psychologically unsafe at work. Workplace safety indicates safe and healthful work environment, protected from physical harm, injury, illness, and death.

Second essential Connection and Community rests on two human needs that is social support and belonging. Supportive relationships with superiors, subordinates or peers at workplace provides emotional, informational or advisory comfort that fosters psychological wellbeing of the employee.

The third essential Work-life harmony is based on two human needs autonomy and flexibility. Organizations with higher work autonomy and less centralised control providing greater flexibility or the ability to work provides greater job satisfaction and increased mental wellbeing. Workforce subjected to irregular schedules are more likely to develop psychological distress and poor sleep quality that in turn has a negative psychological impact. The fourth Essential of the Framework is Mattering at Work which rest on two human needs of dignity and meaning. When employees feel valued and appreciated, they experience lower levels of stress, greater motivation, and improved mental wellbeing. Whereas feeling unimportant or ignored can increase stress and contribute to mental health problems such as depression. Therefore, creating a workplace where employees feel recognized, respected, and valued is essential for promoting positive mental wellbeing.

The final Essential of this Framework is Opportunity for Growth that rests on human needs of learning and a sense of accomplishment. When organizations provide employees with opportunities to achieve goals that match their skills and support their professional growth, employees elevates their confidence on their abilities and make them more optimistic about their future. This inturn contributes more effectively in enhancing their enthusiasm towards work, and improves their overall mental wellbeing and commitment towards the organization and its productivity.

According to Am. Psychol. Assoc. (2019) and Day & Randell (2014) the determinants of Employee Wellbeing at workplace are:

- Worklife balance
- Recognition
- Employee involvement
- Growth and Development
- Health and safety

Role of Leaders and Supervisors in Employee Mental Wellbeing

Leaders and supervisors significantly influence employee wellbeing by creating a positive organizational culture and shaping employees' daily work experiences. Effective leaders demonstrate compassion, empathy, and support while communicating openly and clearly. They prioritize employee engagement, recognize individual strengths, encourage professional growth, and promote a healthy work environment.

Benefits of these practices include:

- Reduced stress and workplace burnout
- Improved work-life balance
- Better employee engagement and job satisfaction
- Increased productivity and morale
- Stronger organizational culture and employee retention

Overall, supportive and wellness-focused leadership plays a vital role in enhancing employee mental wellbeing and organizational performance.

According to the reports Gallup Global Workplace Workplace Study (2022), Supportive culture promotes higher employee engagement which in turn increases employee performance and organisational productivity. According to its report companies that prioritise employee wellbeing report increased profitability, lower turnover, and stronger employer branding .

According to The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE, 2009) employee mental wellbeing is strongly influenced by organisational culture, leadership, job design, and management practices. It recommended an organisation-wide approach that includes supportive leadership, employee participation, effective stress management, and policies promoting work-life balance for effective performance at work.

Skakon et al. (2010) in his study examined 35 empirical studies and concluded that supportive, transformational, and relationship-oriented leadership styles were positively associated with better employee psychological wellbeing, lower stress, and lesser emotional exhaustion. In addition Montano et al. (2017) reviewed 63 studies and stated that positive leadership behaviours significantly reduces the level of stress and burnout while improving employee mental wellbeing, motivation, and job satisfaction that in turn improves performance at work.

Table 1. Statistical Evidence on Mental Health and Employee Wellbeing at Workplace

Source/Year	Area of Focus	Statistical Data/Finding	Implication for Employee Wellbeing
World Health Organization (WHO), 2022	Impact of COVID-19 on mental health	Global anxiety and depression disorders increased by approximately 25% during the COVID-19 pandemic at workplace among employees.	Emphasizes on the need for workplace mental health initiatives and preventive interventions post pandemic.
Global reports (2020–2022)	Workplace stress and insecurity during COVID-19	High level of anxiety, depression, social isolation, job burnout, and concerns related to food, housing, and income security were reported between March 2020 and mid-2022	Highlights the impact of influence of personal and workplace-related stressors on employee psychological wellbeing.
Deloitte Mental Health Report, 2023	Workplace stress and burnout	47% of employees reported experiencing workplace exhaustion and mental distress.	Reported workplace pressures significantly affecting employee mental health, job engagement and their productivity.
American Psychological Association (APA), 2022	Workplace safety and stress	More than two in five workers reported that health and safety concerns negatively affected their stress levels at work	Indicates that psychological and physical safety are important contributors to employee wellbeing.
Pan-India Workplace Mental Health Report, 2024	Anxiety among corporate employees	Over 90% of corporate employees below age 25 reported symptoms of anxiety, compared with 67% of employees above age 45	Exhibits the vulnerability of younger employees to anxiety issues and the need for appropriate workplace support.
State of Emotional Well-being Report, 2024	Demand for mental health support	Mental health counselling increased by 15% in 2024 compared to 2023 among employees.	Reflects increasing awareness and acceptance of seeking mental health support among employees.
State of Emotional Well-being Report, 2024	Workplace relationship challenges	23% of individuals sought workplace-related support. They wanted help for managing relationships at workplace.	Emphasizes the importance of positive workplace relationships and supportive leadership.
State of Emotional Well-being Report, 2024	Manager role in employee mental health	59% of employees referred by their managers showed signs of suicidal risk.	Highlights the need for training the managers to identify and support employees in distress.

State of Emotional Well-being Report, 2024	Effectiveness of counselling	53% showed reduced depression symptoms and 48% witnessed reduced anxiety symptoms within three counselling sessions.	This indicates the need of Counselling among employees identified with mental health issues for grater benefit of the organisation.
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Table-1 :Source Published reports

Impact of Mental health of workforce on Organisational growth

Burton et al. (2008) reviewed the literature on employee mental health and productivity and identified a strong relation between poor mental health and reduced workplace performance. He highlighted that an individual with depression and anxiety significantly decrease productivity, with presenteeism contributing more to productivity than absenteeism. The study concluded that workplace mental health interventions can improve employee wellbeing while enhancing organisational productivity.

The study by Lamichhane, Heo, and Kim (2018) found that mental health affects organisational productivity. Increased absenteeism resultant of severe depressive situations contributes to productivity losses, operational disruptions, and increased organisational costs.

According to Dodge et al. (2012) study, higher levels of wellbeing positively influence employee motivation, productivity, engagement, and overall organisational performance, while an imbalance between resources and challenges can lead to stress, reduced performance and burnout.

McKinsey (2023) in his study found that organisations that create supportive environments for workforce witness significantly higher employee motivation which leads to improved performance, greater productivity, and greater organisational outcomes.

According Gallup(2022) companies that prioritise employee wellbeing report increased profitability, lower turnover, and stronger employer branding .

The existence of strong relationship between employee mental wellbeing and organisational performance is supported by empirical evidence as well . For example, a meta-analysis by Ford et al. (2011), comprising over 320 independent samples, found a significant positive relationship between employee wellbeing and pleasing work-related outcomes. Again in the study of Harter, Schmidt, and Keyes (2003) 7,939 business units across 36 organisations were surveyed and the data revealed that organisations with higher levels of employee wellbeing and engagement experienced greater customer satisfaction, productivity, and profitability, alongside lower employee turnover and fewer workplace accidents. These findings provide strong empirical evidence that investing in employee wellbeing promotes both individual performance and overall organisational effectiveness.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts narrative literature review methodology based on secondary data to examine the importance of employee mental wellbeing in enhancing organisational performance. The review includes existing theoretical and empirical evidence to understand the correlation between workplace mental health, employee wellbeing, productivity, and organisational success. The study critically analyses and integrates findings from previously published literature to develop a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

The selected literature was analysed using a thematic synthesis approach. This enabled the identification of common findings, theoretical perspectives, and practical implications of employee mental wellbeing in enhancing organisational success.

Data Sources: Peer-reviewed journals, Research papers, Published Mental health reports , websites etc.

FINDINGS

- Mental health has a direct impact on overall wellbeing of an employee and his performance. The mental health concerns is found to have elevated to a great extent after COVID 19 due to increase level of stress and anxiety among the employees. This increase is more prominent among younger employees .
- Employee wellbeing is positively associated with organizational productivity. Employees with higher levels of physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing are more motivated, engaged, and productive, resulting in improved individual performance and enhanced organizational outcomes.
- Organizational support, leadership behavior, Job security, growth opportunities, work-life balance and sense of being valued are the critical factors affecting employee wellbeing positively.
- Integrating mental health initiatives into organizational strategy reduces stress, anxiety, burnout and promotes sustainable organizational performance. Embedding employee wellbeing into strategic human resource policies strengthens workforce resilience and enhances productivity that contributes towards long-term organizational goal.

Suggestions

Organisational leaders play a major role in developing a psychologically healthy working environment. They can initiate for psychologically secure environment through open communication, a cooperative engagement, unbiased transparent performance system and making room for work-life balance. They can promote employee growth by organising training programs to enhance skills and career opportunities in both work-related and personal areas of interest. One important strategy is establishing policies that limit digital communication outside working hours, such as restricting emails and messages after a certain evening time and on weekends. This helps employees maintain a healthy work-life balance, reduces stress and burnout, and allows them adequate time to rest and recover. Such policies would contribute towards healthy mental health, stronger employee engagement, and greater job satisfaction. A satisfied employee is always a healthy and efficient performer.

Limitations and Future Scope of the study

This study is based on secondary data and a narrative review of the existing literature, which provides valuable insights but limits the ability to identify the direct causal factor that establishes the relationship between employee mental wellbeing and organisational performance although few of them are considered to have an impact. Moreover, these cannot be generalized across countries and organizations because the organizational culture differs based on geographical location and organizational functional procedures or working policy. Industry-specific research would help identify sector-specific mental health challenges and appropriate interventions especially when the work modes have greatly transformed globally post pandemic . In addition, intervention-based and experimental studies are much needed to evaluate the effectiveness of workplace mental health programmes such as counselling, flexible work arrangements, resilience training, and leadership styles.

Future studies may adopt mixed approaches to examine the mediating roles of the predicted factors in providing a more comprehensive understanding of employee mental wellbeing and organisational performance.

CONCLUSION

Thus employee mental wellbeing is a critical determinant of organizational effectiveness. Organisations need to recognise mental health of employees as an important asset and develop strategies for promoting healthy working environment. Investments on mental health initiatives to be incorporated for achieving higher employee satisfaction, better performance, and sustainable competitive advantage.

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