

A STUDY ON THE INFLUENCE OF STRESS FACTOR OF EMPLOYEE WELLNESS ON THE ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

Psychological wellbeing includes the personal problems like emotional exhaustion, burnout anxiety and depression that were not investigated in the current literature. This may be negatively affected by change in Job Type, unpleasant Workplace, less scope for Creativity and Innovation, distrust between Superior and Team members, personal attitude and many more. Moreover, the application of non-linear Structural Equation modelling techniques allowed simultaneous examination of psychological health outcomes that gives a holistic view of the work stress and employee wellbeing relationship.

Keywords: Stress, Wellness, Organization and Job stress

INTRODUCTION

In the recent times, Organizations have acknowledged the relationship between employee wellness and organizational performance is most vital to achieve success. Subsequently, Corporates have demonstrated their priority in building healthier workplaces with hope of retaining employees and thus increasing the productivity.

In reviewing the literature on wellness, the research findings reveal that employee wellness is suffering from problems related to mental health like depression, anxiety, stress etc. It has become apparent that virtually all the problems of the employees are called 'Global Distress' need substantial guidance and counselling. The research has demonstrated a strong relationship between symptoms of global distress and reduced workplace productivity. Exploring the existing scientific evidence for prevention of depression at the workplace should be of great importance to the employees. Hence, there is a need for employees screening for mental health tests to identify the number of employees at risk.

Eventually, the performance of the organisations depends on the involvement and commitment of the employees that are determined by various factors like family, peer relationship, leisure and other individual aspects. To increase the performance of an organisation, employees' satisfaction or dissatisfaction plays a major role. Wellness programmes are focussed at intensification of efficiency of the employees, will in-turn improve their productivity over a period. Thus, the organisations need to incorporate these wellness programmes in the policies for effective performance and output of organisations. According to Cieri (2006) there is a great need of analysis of employment policies of the multi-national IT companies and the global workforce.

Because of the emerging work demands, the employees are increasingly amidst in health, family conflicts that lead to stress at workplace. There is an urgency to take care of employees' work-life balance by the organisations. This is depending on the Managers role in helping employees to perform at their potential.

WELLNESS CONCEPT

Wellness has different meanings as per various contexts and is a result of a complex transformation process that cannot be defined with a single statement. Origins of wellness are traced back to the American movements held during 19th century. Development of employee wellness concept and its subsequent research was majorly driven in the USA. Dunn (1961) defined wellness as an integrated process of working that aims at achieving maximum potential any individual will be capable of.

Currently, the term wellness has been used widely to describe ideals linked to various forms of healthy living. This area needs more research to examine in the development of the term, particularly in the present proliferation of meanings for wellness. Wellness is a modern trend across the work, wellness centres, wellness coaching, a common name for all health products and emphasis on lifestyle for all positive and spiritual thoughts. This suggests employees to become self-responsible for own health and wellbeing.

FRAME WORK OF WELLNESS AND ITS DOMAINS

Physical wellness: According to World Health Organisations (WHO, 1948), human health is holistic state of an individual encompassing physical, mental and social health and does not constrain to the prevention of diseases only.

Three important components are important for the promotion of health viz,

1. Promotion of health
2. Prevention of diseases and
3. The factors which determines our health

It is the responsibilities of the adults to take care of the health of their families. To control the diseases and to improve the health of the families, the employees need assistance by various programmes like early childhood initiatives, effecting parenting, etc as parents are the most important role models of the “wellness” for the health of the family members.

Prevention of diseases ensures healthy life styles and living conditions. The tragedy is what is spent on treating illness called ‘opportunity cost’ in what do not spend is for prevention of diseases. Number of factors are there that may influence health like individual lifestyle choices, socio – economic status, nutrition, drug addiction, poor eating habits, lack of affiliation with the family, working conditions, healthy child care etc.

Wellness is more than the physical health care system. Many people suggested different ideas about wellness like self – care to protect their health, un turn saving healthcare costs.

Wellness focuses more on ‘upstream’ with preventive approaches than ‘downstream’ on the health care system. Wellness strategy programmes states that investment of health in improving the quality of life that naturally increases outcome in the workplace. Investment in the physical wellness not only decrease health care cost to get consistent good health for a long and extended time but also improves attendance at workplace and reduces the use of health benefits by the employees from implementation of wellness programmes at workplace.

Psychological wellness: Is emotional wellness which includes relationship, goals, behaviour, feelings and strength of employees. Psychological wellness includes control over one’s own mind, feelings, emotions, happiness, demands and stresses as a part of our life. Balancing the emotions of life, mental health, self – esteem etc., have positive effect on health and wellness of employee. This healthy attitude fights back all the difficult situations and reacts in a more resourceful way.

Social wellness: is our relationship with others and interaction in the community. Healthy, genuine, supportive relationships in the working place helps for good communication.

Social wellness can be improved by improving communication skills, creating positive social habits, balancing our emotions while interactions etc. Improves physical and mental health life in turn enhances quality of life. Organisations should allow their employees to develop communications with other employees which forms the relationships of trust. In the context of organisations, the sourcing interaction may take place between employees or between employees and employers they are working for.

Intellectual wellness: active participation of cultural, scholastic and community activities for successful life, expansion of knowledge and skills are very much necessary. This knowledge and skills of the employees motivates employees to discover their own potentialities in carrying out activities at work place.

Both education and literacy are important to achieve intellectual wellness to focus on acquiring of knowledge, applying in novel situations and to think critically. Readiness to learn awareness about cultural events, genuine interest in creativity and innovations and the employees who possess these qualities will be an asset to any organisation.

Spiritual wellness: values and beliefs are the guidelines to provide the main aim of human life. It deals with the faith, trust, and ethics to seek the purpose of human existence. By possessing the spirituality in the work place, employees work with intrinsic motivation and inspiration for the fulfilment of their job satisfaction or instincts. Goal – setting activities help the employees to identify their energy and excitement in their work to support growth of organisations and well-being of others. The important concern of any organisations should be employees. Spirituality in the work brings employee recognition and retention to keep present employee happy and to attract new talent.

Cultural wellness: a set of spiritual materials, intellectual and emotional wellness along with life style, tradition, customs, and beliefs together called as culture. Cultural wellness is important to measure the wellness in the societies where there exist a lot of differences. Cultural wellness accepts our own culture. That is enculturation gives identity to other culture i.e., Acculturation. It makes employees enjoyable by connecting the entity he works. By establishing cultural wellness in the workplace, one can see that work force that emerges is efficient and healthy. To make an organisation successful, the employer should adapt health and wellness as corporate values, establishment of individual cultural wellness in the work place. The employees should feel valued of cultural wellness is possible by creating or feeling of valued and appreciated for more achievement in the production.

WORK STRESS AND EMPLOYEE WELLNESS

Job stress is often linked with the challenge but the two are different as challenges, motivates and energizes employees physiologically and physically to learn new things. Great sense of accomplishment will be derived once a challenge is met. On the other side, risk factors for stress-illness related to personal, social and inter-personal factors. Lack of social support results in the development of stress related illness. Thus, employees are suffering that feelings of helplessness, fear, angry on themselves and cynicism.

Therefore, Stress in an individual is defined as anything that disrupts the normal persons physical and mental well-being. It occurs when the person facing extra-ordinary demands from the employer that is outside of employees' capabilities. Stress can manifest physically, emotionally and / or mentally. Physical body suffers as the result of stressful situation where as emotional stress can create anxiety, depression, irritability, frustration, over-reaction to everyday problems and most important being lack of concentration for any task. Sometimes, long-term stress few psychological problems like phobias, compulsive behaviour, withdrawal from society etc. It is observed that in all types of organizations. stressful environments result in lower job satisfaction and subsequent decrease in productivity. Hence, the stress management is an important part of wellness programs across industries including Information Technology.

Even though many researchers have been carried on job demands and employee wellness, very few studies in the organizations have empirically analyzed the relationship of stressful work environment and Employee Wellness on the Organizational Performance (Baun, Bernacki and Herd 1987; Baun, Bernacki and Tsai, 1986; Bernacki and Baun, 1984; Erfart, Foote and Heirich, 1992; Harrison and Liska, 1994)

The study conducted by Lovelace (2002) analyzed the relationship between stress and employee wellness. The "survival of the fittest" model was used to test whether stressful work environment leads to negative health outcomes. Job demands – Control model create stressful work environments (Karasek, 1979). Main effect and interaction effect models were tested by using hierarchical regression and non-linear structural equal modelling (SEM) analysis techniques. The results showed that the interaction effect of high stress jobs i.e., high role expectations with least control in the job. This study emphasized the importance of stress-free work environments to avoid negative effect on physical fitness and employee wellness. This work contributed occupational health and stress literature by offering conceptual and methodological improvements over past research.

Stress is anything that affects the physical and mental state of a normal person. Stress is a reaction to a situation which is not actual. Stress will be more when the demands of the situation are more than the available resources.

Psychologists felt that the workplace stress to some extent act as a challenge to the employee, when a challenge is met a person feels highly accomplished as satisfied and productivity increases. Contrarily, when stress cannot be managed by the employee, productivity decreases, not able to concentrate on the work and eventually takes wrong decisions. Hence, stress leads to several issues on mental and physical health. There are number of factors that influence the feelings and stress in the workplace as follows:

Physical: Stressful situation creates a lot of body pain, tensed muscles at neck, forehead and shoulder. Also, chronic diseases like ulcer, blood pressure, nervousness if exposed to prolonged stress. It also affects blood sugar, increased cholesterol, chest pain, stomach and digestive problems etc.

Emotional: Due to the stress over mind, anxiety, depression, frustration, memory loss will be caused. Depression is a severe emotional response in difficult situations like death, failure, illness etc. Stress often affects the mind like forgetfulness, restlessness, hyper sensitivity, mood swings, irritability, etc.

Psychological: Long term stress creates psychological disorders like compulsive behaviour, phobias, outbursts, insomnia, obesity, over medicate themselves, heart diseases etc.

Along with this, employees suffering from stress like hazards at workplace conditions, work-life imbalance, no recognition even for better performance, interpersonal, problems with Boss and Colleagues, lack of career development opportunities, role conflicts, overloaded tasks, inadequate time to complete a task, lack of appreciation, isolation at workplace etc. Therefore, stress negatively affects employees' overall health and safety.

COMPONENTS OF WELLNESS – STRESS

(i) Workplace: There are many strategies for stress control at the workplace. Job design being an importance factor involves mental and physical abilities of the employees to minimise workplace stress like reasonable demand from the job, there should be some scope for the employees to learn on the job for their career progression and social support through recognition to be included.

Many researchers opined that employers should treat their employees fairly respecting their self-esteem, involving them in decision making, incorporating mental health, stress prevention programs, clear job expectations and provide employee assistance programs (EAPs). Health camps, counselling services, preventive measures for occupational accidents etc manages stress at workplace.

(ii) Personal: Several researches have showed that personal relationships in the work place acknowledges the humanity among employees that leads to better commitment towards workforce. Employees feel over-stressed due to the lack of work-group relationship between Managers and Subordinates. Therefore, on priority, Managers and Executives must create a personal bonding with their teams. It is possible by small gestures from the Managers by providing an opportunity to have an open discussion honestly and nurturing relationships.

(iii) Trust: is the fundamental building block for any workplace. No one would like to work in a place where people are disloyal, inconsistent moods, and unreliable. This creates highly stressful environment that is undesirable. Trust gives a safe place for employees to share their feelings and ideas to achieve high goals individually. Transparency in their behaviour, respecting each other, tolerance, empathy, cultural values etc., will help employees achieve success in their work-life. Trust will make us understand how much others care for us. Building morality leads to enjoyment in their work, naturally that happiness leads to more productivity.

(iv) Learning: Employees working on their tasks should devote their free time to learn new skills. This drive to learn on their own reduces stress in the workplace. New skills give a sense of accomplishment and motivates for further learning.

(v) Change: being the dimension of stress may occur due to change in company structure, management, financial crisis, cut-back in workforce, elimination of certain departments, hiring freeze, ratio of revenue per employee, poor working conditions etc., will disrupt the Organisational performance. Is to make somebody different. It is a process of becoming. Even though employees hesitant about the change in the work place, change can bring good things to the employees by getting new opportunities and challenges. It is the task of the employee's expectations. The employees should positively accept the change as it will expose them to new ideas and approaches which are beneficial for the future career.

(vi) Job Type: When employees are satisfied and motivated in their jobs, they feel proud to identify themselves with their jobs.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CURRENT RESEARCH AND RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

1. Employee wellness is affected by current work trends (Kinicki et al, 1996; Reardon, 1998)
2. Decreases in the employee wellbeing translates into the higher Organizational costs through increases in healthcare expenses (Manning, Jackson and Fusilier, 1996)
3. The mechanistic structure of work has significantly contributed to the increase of preventable diseases such as Cardiovascular disease, due to the pattern of inactivity associated with the sedentary work and lifestyles (Rosato, 1990; Fine, 1996)
4. Government mandates such as 'Healthy People' of this year will bring employee wellness into the forefront (US Department Health and Human Services, 2001)
5. The aging workforce raises multiple health concerns reduces physical fitness, which may affect employees' performance and ultimately on organizations (Neck and Cooper, 2000)
6. Focusing on employee wellbeing by making them free from all types of stress has a humanitarian component. Increases quality of human life and enhances longevity, and encourages continued activity in the future (Neck and Cooper, 2000)

The main objective of the present study is to analyze the impact of an important Wellness component i.e., stress on workplace performance. The population of the study consists all employees working in the different companies and sample consists of 580 employees selected by post-stratification. These employees create values in their designated positions and have internalized values of the organization. The descriptive survey method was used to collect the relevant data from the subjects for analysis.

This study analyzed the impact of stressful work environment on performance-related employee wellness in turn on Organizational Performance. The purpose of selecting Stress as one of the variables was to determine the influence on wellness programs, workplace, job-type, personal traits and attitude.

Hypothesis being tested using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) includes Null hypothesis (H0): The hypothesized model has a good fit, while an Alternate hypothesis (H1): The hypothesized model does not have a good fit.

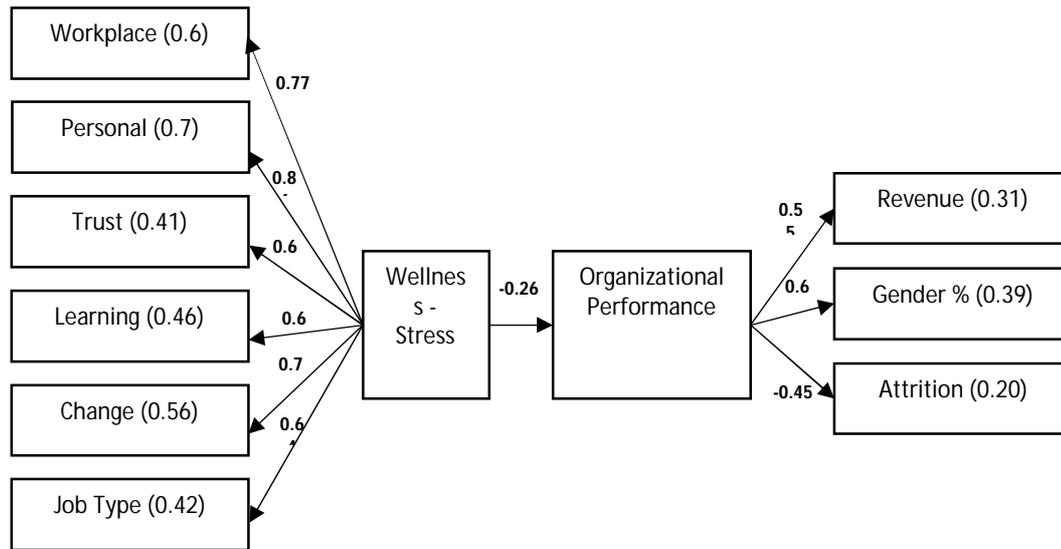


Fig 1: Structural Equation Model (SEM) based on Standardised Coefficient of Stress Wellness Dimension on

Organizational Performance

Table 1: Variables in the Structural Equation Model Analysis

Variables	Un-standardised Co-efficient (B)	Standard Error (S.E) of B	Standardised co-efficient (Beta)	t value	P value
Stress - Workplace	2.683	0.127	0.773	21.073	<0.001**
Stress - Personal	6.816	0.288	0.837	23.686	<0.001**
Stress - Trust	2.085	0.127	0.642	16.42	<0.001**
Stress - Learning	1.617	0.092	0.678	17.642	<0.001**
Stress - Change	2.222	0.11	0.749	20.158	<0.001**
Stress - Job Type	1.451	0.088	0.645	16.526	<0.001**
Performance - Stress	-0.417	0.069	-0.256	6.006	<0.001**

Unstandardised coefficient of Stress Factor is -0.417 represents the partial effect of Organizational Performance, holding the other path variables as constant. The estimated negative sign implies that such effect is negative that Performance would decrease by 0.417 for every unit increase in Stress and this coefficient value is significant at 1% level.

CONCLUSION

Today’s employees experience stress from variety of sources. Organizations can help employees to manage the employees’ stress by promoting their physical and mental health. Many Researchers have suggested that to drive optimal job performance, effective wellness programs are much needed on priority. A Meta-analysis proved that organisational commitment and role stress are significant predictors of turnover. According to the study conducted by Cooper (1994), absenteeism in the work place is related to stress and unhealthy environment in the organisation. It is imperative that organisations are at an advantage that are giving more importance employee wellness and bringing positive changes in the organisation to strengthen ethics, faith and ownership feelings for positive impact of innovative organisational practices. This study confirms that stress is constantly detrimental to the organisational performance. Significant results exhibited negative effect of stress on revenue, family, lifestyle and health. Therefore, the practice of long hours and hard work should be questioned. More researches should come forward to explore the dynamic nature of healthy organisation environments and more vigorous practices.

The significant findings of the research show the positive and significant relationship between wellness of the employees and its dimensions with organizational performance. Employee wellness is constructively associated with health, family, lifestyle and encouraging environment. The feeling 'very dissatisfied' may be reduced to 'satisfied' that improves the performance of individual employees. These findings may be instrumental in linking employees with their workplace that reduces the rate of attrition and increases revenue of the organizations.

This study has evaluated the employee wellness construct with a new dimension to facilitate increase organizational performance whilst increasing revenue and decreasing attrition. Present research has provided empirical evidence that four selected indicators of employee wellness are useful criterion for the prediction of organizational performance. The results of this study can help IT organizations expand their understanding of importance of health, family and life style. The confirmatory factor analysis using SEM supports the conclusion that pleasant and trustworthy relationship in the work place, very cordial, positive attitude towards job type and the boss, and healthy workplace practices for right attitude leading to high productivity.

This study contributed to the research of the organisational performance and employee wellness by providing support to reduce stress created in the work place. This study is focussed on the different companies of stress and the job demands. Organisations must understand the detrimental effects of stressful environments that have been verified in this study. Insights into the employees' aspirations, identity in the workplace, job satisfaction and job demands are few indicators of healthy workplaces.

This study contributed to the research on the Organizational performance and employee wellness by providing support to reduce stress created in the workplace. This study is focused on different components of stress and job demands. The practical applications of these findings are the guidelines for the Organizations to understand the detrimental effects of stressful environments. This study has provided insight into the employees' aspirations, identity in the workplace, Job satisfaction and Job demands.

Finally, this study did show that employee wellness is affected by the current work trends. Therefore, the employees must not emphasis on long and hard work but to explore the dynamic nature of smart work.

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