

## Mental Health and Well-Being: Moving Ahead Towards an Efficient Work Environment

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### ABSTRACT

A stable mental mind or health can be defined as the ability to cope up with daily stress of life. All human being possess mental disorder at one point of time due to various factors. We all experience stress, worry, anxiety, sadness, fear and fear which are all normal emotions. When an individual is unable to balance these emotions in their mind, it leads to depression resulting in inability to do mere daily tasks. Decreased work performance, absenteeism, various health issues and low commitment has been noticed in many bank employees. These bank employees usually face tremendous amount of work demand and pressure to meet various targets, which eventually result in unhealthy work-life balance and stress. The objective of this paper is to express the understanding of various mental illnesses, and the stigma related to it when comes to a workplace. In order to tackle such problems, Employee Wellbeing Programs are initiated by many organisations. It's background and different tools within the program, help to cater the mental health need of an employee. EWP has become a crucial strategy for Human Resource Managers all over the world, thus creating mutual benefits for both employer and employee.

**Keywords:** *Mental Illness, Employee Well-Being, Stress*

If an organization wants to grow and increase their productivity, they need to look after its employees. Manpower is the main backbone of any organization and to keep them mentally healthy, especially in today's world, a stable mental mind or health is extremely important. Well-being programs are known to increase the ability to cope up with daily stresses of life, interact positively with others, increase productivity and realise the employee's utmost potential. When we are mentally healthy, we can work better. The stigma of not sharing out mental health issues with others creates the biggest problem. It is inevitable that all human beings have mental health; it is as important as physical health. It is not only about mental illness or mental disorder.

Mental health is just a tiny part of the bigger picture. It is better to keep mental health as an epithet rather than calling someone mentally ill or mentally well. All employees are on a continuum of mental health. We all move up and down on our own pace with respect to

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various personal factors such as our upbringing, education, the life we have perceived and stress at individual level. At the end of the continuum, sometimes it creates a negative impact on the mental health of an individual such as depression, fatigue, etc. On the other end, we have positive mental health such as motivation, contentment, thriving, etc. The main aim of these mental health programs is to push employees towards the positive end of the continuum so that they will be able to work with their full potential and stay content in their lives. As per WHO, "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence or infirmity" Being mentally healthy means being resilient and being able to cope with difficult times, feeling in control, being confident, feeling good about yourself, managing and expressing emotions, building and maintaining good relationships.

We all experience stress, worry, anxiety, sadness, fear and anger, these are all normal emotions. When an individual is unable to balance these emotions in his/her mind, it will lead to depression, resulting in decreased ability to function daily tasks. There are various kinds of disorders; post-traumatic stress disorder, social phobia, anxiety, bipolar disorder, post-natal depression, post-partum depression, eating disorder, etc. However, very few people with mental disorders access existing treatment services. This may be due to barriers such as the stigma (a mark of disgrace) attached to people asking for help and lack of understanding of mental health problems. Uncertainty of how to get help or the fear of disclosing mental health problems have created a big problem for everyone.

In an organization, most of the time, supervisors may not be as supportive as they like to be. One of the things that I have understood is that most supervisors do not know how to help, they are never given the training to do so. It is better to train the supervisors on learning how to help their employees who are facing problems to cope up with their daily performance.

Different human beings have different sets of perceptions and energy to do action. Certain allotment of energy is for intellect and certain for emotion. Likewise, there are various allotments. But, generally the amount of energy allotted for physical action and emotional dimension are going completely unused. This is the main reason for depression. It is necessary for human beings to find expression to their emotional dimension and without enough exertion to the physical body. If not, they are bound to become depressive. Connection and correlation with nature is extremely vital to release their stress. Physical and psychological health can be very easily managed if a personal touch with the elements of nature like water, soil, and light is maintained with balance. Eating the right food helps maintain the mind and brings positivity. Proper food prevents diseases. Throwing toxins away from one's body is also very important. For example: We all must have experienced this at some point of time. Wherever a person's bowel movement is disturbed for 3-4 days, he/she experiences psychological stress and disturbance. This is also directly connected to the psychological well-being of a person. The experienced stress and mental disturbance leads to low productivity and decreased motivation. It could even lead to depression in due course of time.

There are only four elements with us right now that we can make use of – our body, our mind, our emotions and our energy. If we are successful in managing these four elements well, it will result in a certain type of lifestyle. Statistics have shown that, one in four people suffer from mental health issues. In any given year, this can be soaring high as over the past 25 years' anxiety and depression in teenagers has risen by 75%.

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However, for some people feeling of anxiety can be prolonged and even extreme which makes it difficult to carry out even simple everyday tasks. Some common signs to look out for, are reduced concentration and memory, avoiding certain situations, difficulty making decisions and irritability, and unmanaged anger. If a low mood does not go away on its own, it can be a sign of depression. An individual suffering from depression can be guilty, anxious, sad, angry, helpless and hopeless.

Live Science. “Our mental health will also affect how we feel in our body in more obvious ways”, explained Stephenson. “Sleep health, motivation and energy for exercise and appetite can all be positively and negatively impacted by our emotional state”. For example, studies have shown that emotional states such as anxiety and depression can increase insulin resistance, which over time can lead to not only diabetes but increase the risk for other chronic illnesses that are associated with insulin deregulation”. India Today, World Diabetes Day stated in “Why is India the world capital for diabetes?”

Due to globalization and immersive competition to have a bigger share of market capitalization, there is growing evidence of mental illness. Mental health problems are the main reason for employees’ low productivity, higher absenteeism, low engagement, and high employee turnover in any organization.

### **STUDY OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Mental illness is a common phenomenon and it is possessed by everyone. However, how an individual takes hold of mental illness and what triggers this illness is the biggest concern. A proper balance of mental illness would be the perfect way to take up all the healthy work organization culture for any individual to work. Some of the studies done on mental illness and well-beings are:

Dejoy et.al.(2010) indicated that some researchers’ social dimension of work is probably the least understood and the most intriguing. The perspective of an individual plays a significant influence on effectiveness and efficiency of the organization. The relationship between employees and managers is often overlooked, which also happens to be of utmost importance in employee empowerment strategies. Human resource management practices emphasis in the creation of a supportive work environment. Although effective mental health services are multi-dimensional, the workplace is an appropriate environment in which individuals can be educated about and made aware of mental health problems.

The main cause of stress in bank is high job role incumbents, i.e. high levels of role ambiguity and also anxiety, depression, etc. Jayashree, (2009), with some researchers researched and found out that employees with different job role felt tremendous pressure due to overload of work, target, achievement, etc. The fear of unaccomplished goals and achieving the departmental target make them overburdened with work.

Jayashree, (2011), the researcher conducted research by taking 100 employees as a sample size. All the information was collected from the bank employees from all levels of management. He divided the respondents into stressed and not stressed categories, where the output of this was 97% of employees are stressed. The factors of stress were feeling of inequality, work overload, lack of acceptability, time management, job difficulty, inadequate role authority, impatient customers and stress due to technology problems.

Tilottam, (2014), they have pointed out the cause of the stress, the banks' employees felt i.e. long working hours, organizational culture, role conflicts, and lack of management support.

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Excessive stress is proven to be harmful for an individual. It ultimately results in compromised health and loss of productivity.

Taylor and Don, (2010) observed that employee wellness programs are a way of promoting the maintenance of good health rather than correction of poor health. It includes recreational opportunities, social activities, fitness programs, and intellectual and spiritual development programs which in turn impacts on the company. Ultimately, employees' wellbeing is seen to greatly affect overall productivity.

### ***Objective***

The objective of the paper is to understand the concept of mental illness related to bank employees and stress. The theory of employee well-being helps an individual to cope up with their mental illnesses whilst correlating it with employee's performances. This research paper is an attempt of exploratory research, based on the secondary data sourced from websites, journal, magazines, articles, and media reports that helped to study the impact of bank stress on employee mental health and strategy of prevalent well-being practices.

## **MENTAL ILLNESS WITH BANK EMPLOYEES**

In recent decades Indian Banks have gone through various changes from digitalisation to mergers of banks. The high market demand and need for financial inclusion with an aim to map all the citizens under each account holder has created tremendous pressure on banking organisations and its employees. This has led to increase in work pressure, which pushes the employees to work for more hours than what is needed.

The stigma of an individual not being able to express his/her mental health problem to others in a workplace has a direct effect on health and productivity and this has long been underestimated. According to Health, Safety, and Environment (HSE) of Great Britain, total number of cases of work-related stress, depression, or anxiety in 2020/21 was 822,000, a prevalence rate of 2,480 per 100,000 workers. In 2000/21 stress, depression or anxiety accounted for 50% of all work-related ill-health cases. The burdensome of mental health disorders are among top health concerns in the United States. Nearly One in every Five U.S adults aged 18 or older (18.3% or 44.7 million people) reported mental illness in 2016. Treating people with both mental health disorders and other physical conditions, the costs are 2 to 3 times higher than for those without co-occurring illnesses. On World Mental Health Day, the disturbing stats revealed by a LinkedIn report shows that 55% of Indian professionals feel stressed. The gap between employees' needs and what employers are offering is very wide to cope with stress.

Mental illness can be triggered by various factors such as work culture, personal barrier due to which he/she fails to attain the target or is unable to complete the assigned target/task, lack of understanding, unable to balance his/her personal and professional life. Employers are unable to show career advancement chart to their employees. This subsequently develops into a type of frustration or depression which leads to mental illness. It is very difficult for an employee to discover a mental disorder in the workplace due to the stigma as it is often considered to be a disease that is not perceived. The moment the news of an employee of an organization falling victim to any mental illness such as anxiety, stress or depression goes out in public, it is perceived in a very negative manner. This further puts the already victimised employee in stressful situations, dealing with the stigma attached to it. This is the leading cause of absenteeism, reduced productivity and increased health care costs.

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The productivity of the workforce plays an important factor when it is concerned with the organization's goal that is to be achieved. In order to fight back against mental illness, employee assistance programs or employee well-being consider to be a holistic tool to tackle the mental problem of an employee.

### ***Relevance of Employee Wellbeing in Bank***

The earliest was Employee Assistance Programmes [EAP] were developed in the 1950s in America, initially in a bid to tackle alcohol abuse among the workforce. In the U.K, however, the current thinking around well-being at a workplace emerged from a preoccupation with stress management in the 1980s. Then, emphasis was created on employees managing their own stress levels. Perspectives shifted in the 1990s when the Health and Safety Executive's Management Standards for workplace stress prompted businesses to recognise their responsibility for identifying and addressing sources of workplace stress. The present-day well-being has penetrated global consciousness in a way that was unthinkable even 10 years ago. It has become a part of everyday discourse and this, in turn, has carried itself over into the workplace.

During the early stages of Indian industrialization, the workplace was mostly governed by strict employer rules that ended up being exploitative. With the rise of trade unions, several labour legislations, implementing ILO conventions, made strong changes in the industrial relation system. Some of the acts such as, the employee state insurance act 1948, the maternity benefit act, 1961, the payment of gratuity act, 1972, many more gave employees safety with mental contentment.

The concept of employee welfare and benefits started to emerge in the Indian scenario from the later part of the 19th century. All these labour acts referred to the mandatory minimum facilities to be provided by the employer to employee under the head of health and right of employee. But in some cases, due to tremendous work demands, employers went beyond the statutory requirement. The Indian company, Tata Steel, took the first initiative to go beyond the labour legislation and thought more about its' employees by establishing an employee-friendly workplace. The company was amongst the first to introduce an employee well-being initiative. Then slowly other companies in India also followed up with the trend and eventually showed positive growth with respect to productivity and employees' happiness.

The establishment of the National Institute for Health Promotion and Control of Chronic Disease under the Central Health Education Bureau as a subordinate organization of Directorate General of Health Service, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India proved that they are concerned about the workers' mental health. Besides Government of India, many non-government organisations are also taking wellness programs seriously for the betterment of the organization and employee well-being.

The idea to take care of employees plays a crucial role for any organization to grow healthy. Accessible and equitable opportunities for career growth and improvement of work-life in an organization brought the attention of researchers. Healthy work environment in organisations can include a supportive social organization that includes core organisational attributes, psychological work adjustment, employee health and well-being.

It is often seen that mental wellbeing and health are often affected by the environment and the organization culture in which the employees work in. Although it is difficult to quantify the impact of individual alone on identity, self-esteem and social recognition, most

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psychological state professionals agree that the workplace environment can have a significant impact on an individual's mental well-being.

### ***Employee Well-Being Program in Banks***

Global Health Organization, including the US Centres for Disease Control and the World Health Organization (WHO), have extended their interest in promoting health in workplaces that include the mental well-being of all employees. Employee Well-being program has a holistic approach in taking mental care and balancing the emotion of employees in the workplace. It acts to help the employees manage their physical health and social well-being, as well as cognitive and emotional well-being. As employees envelope themselves in midst of long working hours and work-family conflict due to the emerging work demands, the effect of these conflicts may affect employee commitment which in turn may affect organisational performance depending on the manager's role in supporting the employee to attain such balance. Employee Wellness Program consists of five major sub-divisions which cater different mental disorders of an individual working in an organization, which are listed as follows.

### **Physical Wellness**

Physical wellness program helps the smooth running of all physical bodily functions. This includes the skeleton muscular system as within the case of fitness, but also the digestive, circulatory and other systems. All the activities falling under this sub-division, addresses anything from exercising to nutrition to fall asleep which are of utmost importance for any human being to function properly. Only work and no physical activities will lead to health and mental problems. When an individual is active, it releases chemicals in brain that make a person feel good - boost an individual's self-esteem and help concentrate as sleep well and feel better.

### **Emotional and Mental Wellness**

It is very crucial for any employee to be emotionally well rather than just having the ability to handle stress. It also involves being attentive to one's thoughts, feelings and behaviour, whether positive or negative. Mental health encompasses all aspects of emotional and psychological well-being, affecting how an individual acts, thinks and feels. An individual's aptitude of managing life efficiently and creating satisfying relations. Positive feeling contributes towards successful emotion.

### **Financial Wellness**

It is a program that helps an employee to regain control of their finance. The program educates employees on efficient ways to correctly control their monthly spending, prepare for their retirement, pay their debts, family planning, better investment options and saving options for their future goals. Better financial control in their income will make an employee mentally content with the organisation's pay off to it's employee.

### **Social Wellness**

As we all are social animals, human beings depend on and need the surroundings of one another. In this aspect, some individual prefer to stay isolated in their workplace due to low self-esteem and glosso-phobia. Most of them work in an organization, which is based on teamwork and such mental problems can create a barrier to working together hence negatively affecting the performance of a team. This social wellness program will help and train individuals to adjust with others and blend in a healthy environment, creating a sense of belongingness. When an individual is a victim of low mental state, they often look at any

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given project from a negative perspective, which can be caused due to employees' shyness, low self-esteem and glosso-phobia. These kinds of actions can lead to permanent isolation in workplace ultimately affecting organizational performance. The program enhances relationship among the family members, employers and employees by developing a sense of connectivity. This program also helps individuals by conducting many team building events and incognito counselling so that they get encouraged to be a part of the overall system.

### Intellectual Wellness

It refers to the active participation of scholastic, cultural and community activities. It can be done by promoting creativity, curiosity and life-long learning. It is often seen that due to lack of understanding of the job role and lack of technical knowledge, it creates a barrier to work efficiently, which further adds up to mental stress. The program comes with many group activities and career assistance to recognise the abilities to improve creativity and finding different ways to enhance knowledge and skills.

### Spiritual Wellness

Everyone felt that spirituality and work are two different entities which do not exist together. Workplace spirituality creates conditions where employees and leaders can feel themselves to be as a part of something bigger. Organizations having higher values and beliefs provide purpose in life, which allows an individual to feel at peace and in harmony with themselves.

### Environmental Wellness

In this modern world of high carbon foot print, sustainability plays a pivotal role in any organization. Encouragement of sustainable living, raising awareness and implementing sustainable operations have always been a part of their wellness programs. It is important for an individual to interact between our environment, our community and oneself. Environmental wellness is a program that bring awareness to employees and employers regarding the sense of safety, comfort, and connection with our environmental surroundings.



*Figure 1 Wheel of Well-Being*

## CONCLUSION

Mental illness is inevitable and everyone has suffered from it at some point of their life. It is better to keep mental health at an equilibrium rather than being mentally ill or mentally well. All employees are on a continuum we all move up and down with own personal various factors. In such difficult situations, employee wellness program comes to rescue not as a solution, but to improve the mental health of an employee and bring sense of contentment in workplace. The program has not only been a good thing for the employees, but it has also proven itself to be of great benefit for employers as well. It has been seen that the health cost of an organization has reduced significantly, reducing the absenteeism, reducing injuries and most important improving employee morale and loyalty; all thanks to the holistic approach of the program.

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