



Employee Well-being: A Comprehensive Overview in Indian Post-COVID Context

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Received 08 Mar., 2024; Revised 20 Mar., 2024; Accepted 22 Mar., 2024 © The author(s) 2024.
Published with open access at www.questjournals.org

The well-being of employees is a fundamental component of an organization that wants success and establishment. Both physical and mental health, including more complicated concepts of satisfaction and engagement levels, can be considered salient factors of employee well-being. Promoting workplace well-being can empower employees to effectively manage stress and uphold a productive and positive work atmosphere (Waida, 2021).

"Well-being can be understood as how people feel and how they function both on a personal and social level and how they evaluate their lives as a whole" (Michaelson *et al.*, 2012).

The concept of well-being has been approached from two primary perspectives. The hedonic perspective defines well-being as happiness, highlighting key components like life satisfaction, the presence of a positive mood, and the absence of a negative mood (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Diener *et al.*, 1998). On the contrary, the eudemonic stance characterizes well-being by attaining self-actualization, proposing that authentic happiness is derived from embodying virtuous traits (Dewe & Cooper, 2012). The eudaimonic perspective highlights engagement in activities that facilitate human growth, encompassing autonomy, personal growth, life purpose, mastery, self-acceptance, and positive relationships, as fundamental elements of well-being (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). To put it concisely, employee well-being encompasses the holistic health of an organization's employees, including their physical, mental, emotional, and economic well-being.

Five essential elements make up employee well-being, according to Gallup researchers:

Career well-being. Individuals feel a sense of gratification, happiness, and fulfillment with their work and responsibilities and how they spend their entire day at work.

Social well-being. The involvement of people to maintain healthy, positive, and significantly sincere relationships with their friends and family.

Financial well-being. It is the ability to take care of personal finances effectively.

Physical well-being includes sufficient health and energy for the basic functioning and accomplishment of daily tasks.

Community well-being. The state of being connected to people and having a sense of place where you live.

The concept of well-being is subjective. In a professional setting, it refers to an individual's perception of overall satisfaction and positive emotions toward their job tasks. A significant aspect of an individual's positive

experiences in the workplace is the quality of social relationships, which should be considered when defining well-being at work (and in a broader context) (Fisher, 2014).

Numerous studies have shown that employees with a high level of well-being tend to invest more thought and effort into their work (Canaff & Wright, 2004; Keyes & Grzywacz, 2005; Day & Randell, 2014). On the other hand, poor psychological health, including anxiety, depressed mood, and fatigue, can lead to a reduction in cognitive resources and a heightened focus on negative or irrelevant information (Ford et al., 2011). This, in turn, negatively impacts performance (Taris, 2006). Furthermore, inadequate psychological health also results in a lack of energy and motivation to engage in positive behaviors at work, leading to unsatisfactory outcomes such as organizational citizenship behaviors (Cropanzano et al., 2003; Ford et al., 2011). Employee well-being is also associated with positive organizational attitudes, including team cohesion and engagement (Bakker, 2015). Therefore, effectively promoting well-being can benefit both employees and the organization.

Good health and well-being are at the core of employee engagement and organizational performance. Employee well-being can help prevent stress, absenteeism, and presenteeism, improve the productivity of an organization, etc., and create positive working environments where individuals and organizations can flourish. So, nurturing employee well-being is very important for people and the organization. Employee well-being is important because it results in:

Reduced absenteeism and healthcare costs - Poor physical health directly contributes to more absenteeism and insufficient results. It has become clear to companies that proactively avoiding issues linked to poor well-being, such as burnout, stress, and illness, is a more profitable approach than dealing with these problems after they have already surfaced.

Increased engagement levels: Employee engagement is significantly boosted through a comprehensive employee well-being program. This initiative not only enhances the health and well-being of employees but also strengthens their bond with the organization, leading to a greater sense of contentment and satisfaction. Employee engagement is also increased when employees are recognized and given meaningful feedback.

Improved employee productivity increases when people feel better and employees are less likely to get distracted at work. However, regardless of their job description, workers can only perform better if they are physically and mentally healthy. Presenteeism means when an employee is physically present at the job but not doing any work. Presenteeism has a significant impact on business turnover and employee's time. By investing in employee well-being and taking a proactive approach, organizations can demonstrate genuine care for their employees and promote a healthy work-life balance that leads to productivity.

Improves staff retention -Bringing down the staff turnover rate is one of a company's most critical functions. Investing in the employees' future ensures they feel appreciated and secure in their roles. A heightened sense of professional well-being ensures employees stay in the company, saving much money.

Improved employee morale -The significance of physical activity cannot be overstated when it comes to promoting workplace morale. Since a positive morale level is directly linked to higher employee retention rates, organizations can significantly uplift their employees' morale by implementing initiatives prioritizing employee well-being, such as mental health workshops or engaging in fitness competitions among various departments or teams.

Attractive employer branding -Top-notch candidates have numerous choices when selecting their future employer, as everyone desires to work in a thriving work environment. Job seekers are often the first to identify the most robust companies. Attracting the best candidates for the future workforce and providing employee well-being ensures the company's business success.

Initiating wellness programs faces many challenges. Setting and measuring goals is one of the biggest workplace challenges of an employee's wellness initiatives. Getting a clear idea about an employee's well-being is subjective, and some employees may feel uncomfortable responding truthfully in fear that they will have to face their employers, whom they have complained about, later. Therefore, not even anonymous and confidential surveys can make them trust. So, it is not easy to know about an employee's wellness.

Another issue is that of execution. Some companies may need help providing the facilities of a program they promised to offer at the initial stage or later. The resources and policies they endorse may not be widely used. Even if they do take action. A consistent record of an employee's reactions to the program and obtaining feedback can help solve this problem (Waida, 2021).

Ways to Improve Employees' Well-being in a Workplace:

In order to tackle specific concerns, it is essential for a company to fully understand the advantages of prioritizing employee well-being when creating a successful employee well-being initiative. Given this fact, nowadays, it is a crucial business priority for all companies to have an employee well-being strategy program to improve employee health.

Conduct Employee Surveys -Employee surveys are a valuable tool for team members to address particular issues regarding their welfare, enabling organizations to collect input directly from their workforce. This platform empowers employees to communicate their difficulties, worries, and requirements, such as insufficient assistance, job-related pressure, and limited resources. Through survey responses, employees can highlight these issues effectively (Allen, 2023).

Providing Health screening -Conducting regular health screenings is highly beneficial in improving the likelihood of disease prevention. By undergoing health screenings once a year, individuals have a greater chance of detecting and treating potential illnesses early. For example, if the company, through health screening, finds out that an employee has high blood pressure, it helps safeguard his or her health if he or she is working in a specific environment.

Flexible Work Options and Workload-Balance -By providing flexible working hours or remote work options, a company can enhance the work-life balance of its employees. In today's technology-driven society, many organizations are implementing flexible work arrangements such as remote work options, flexible scheduling, or compressed work weeks to appeal to potential employees (Allen, 2023).

In order to promote work-life balance, it is important to encourage employees to take breaks and vacations for rejuvenation, as well as to implement other organizational strategies when remote or hybrid work is not an option. Furthermore, organizations must prioritize workload balance to enhance employee well-being. (Allen, 2023).

In other words, companies must assure their employees that workloads are reasonable and manageable (Allen, 2023).

Psychological counseling services – There has been a stigma for a very long period about not asking or talking about psychological issues and how to resolve them. Nowadays, companies can guarantee their employees that their mental well-being is not solely their responsibility but also that of the company. By providing access to psychological counseling services, they can reassure their staff that their mental health concerns will be addressed and that professionals will assist them in finding resolutions.

Foster Career Development –Offering training, mentorship initiatives, and well-defined opportunities for advancement within the company helps employees enhance their abilities and progress in their careers and cultivates a supportive work atmosphere. This strategy empowers individuals to discover meaning, fulfillment, and self-improvement. Additionally, recognizing and incentivizing these achievements is crucial.

Acknowledging and rewarding employees for their contributions- Employees can acknowledge and celebrate their achievements through employee recognition programs. These programs consistently acknowledge and commend employees for going above and beyond their assigned tasks.

Health insurance –Providing various insurance options, including health insurance, for employees to select based on their requirements can prove highly advantageous for the employees and the organization.

Offering Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)- Organizations ensure the well-being of their employees by offering confidential resources and counseling services. Implementing these measures aims to assist in employees' mental and emotional well-being. Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) support employees in managing personal or work-related challenges, stress, and various difficulties. Another effective approach is training and supporting managers to become effective leaders who prioritize employee well-being.

Financial benefits – Most employees seek good financial support for their own and family's future. Assisting employees in making wise financial choices for their future can also improve the company's appeal. As a result, employees seek options such as life insurance, pension, or student loan repayment.

Support Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion -It is essential to prioritize improving employee well-being and establishing a positive work environment that encourages diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). It is important to acknowledge and appreciate employees' various backgrounds and cultures by actively cultivating a diverse workforce that values not only different races, genders, and sexual orientations but also the diverse perspectives, ideas, and experiences of each team member.

Organizational Culture -Incorporating enjoyable activities within the workplace, whether in a remote or virtual setting, is an additional approach that employers can adopt to enhance the well-being of their employees. By organizing office parties and engaging in semi-regular gaming sessions, fostering friendly conversations, or arranging happy hours, employers can effectively alleviate work-related stress and provide a refreshing respite for their workforce.

Gym membership - Maintaining a healthy body mass index shows active investment in health and well-being. By going to the gym, workers can maintain a healthy and fruitful lifestyle, which is considered a standard benefit. Implementing a gym membership program is an effective strategy to enhance the well-being of employees.

The significance of employee well-being has reached new heights as companies have come to recognize its transformative impact on their employees' lives and its ability to mitigate costs associated with absenteeism, presenteeism, and healthcare expenses while fostering a positive and healthy company culture. The global health crisis caused by COVID-19 has highlighted the critical nature of mental well-being, fostering a deeper sense of empathy and comprehension for the future. Consequently, we anticipate a growth in the diversity of employee well-being perks available in the upcoming years.

The significant costs associated with employee disengagement, absenteeism, and healthcare make it imperative for employers to address these issues. Consequently, employers will increasingly recognize the importance of employee well-being and prioritize their employees' mental, physical, and financial health.

Objective of the study:

Big and small companies understand how important employee well-being is and its various aspects. Especially after COVID-19, it has become more prominent. Nowadays, every organization wants their employees' good health, both physical and mental health, through various programs. A healthy, happy, and satisfied employee will be more productive and reduce company turnover, absenteeism, etc. An employee's well-being can be affected by many factors, and it can also vary from employee age group to organization. During the pandemic, many companies attempt several programs to maintain their employee's health, even AI techniques and many other strategies they can apply to enhance employee well-being. Below are some pieces of evidence provided to understand employee well-being and its factors, importance, and what and how to increase it.

A Glimpses of Past Researches on Employee Well-being During 2020-2023

Sapra and Bora (2023) - The primary objective of this study is to ascertain the impact of employee well-being programs on the overall health of an organization. Most of the survey participants were male employees in IT companies with 0-2 years of work experience and aged between 20 and 30. The research highlights a connection between workplace recognition and rewards, encompassing non-monetary forms (public and private) and financial benefits as key motivators, particularly within the 20-30 age group. Most respondents across all age ranges generally favor and accept monetary incentives, although individuals in other age groups also express satisfaction and motivation toward receiving rewards.

Simranand Das(2023). - This study aims to examine, broaden, and enhance the understanding of theories and research on EWB that have been previously documented. Therefore, this research paper provides an exploratory and confirmatory analysis (EFA and CFA) based scale to measure the EWB of IT employees and a lot of new perspectives for EWB studies in India for the first time. The construction of the presented EWB measurement tool as a component of the study contributes to the improvement of Indian society's existing conceptualization of the organizational behavior of Indian IT industries. Based on the findings, a substantial positive correlation was observed among the EWB groups.

Panda(2023). - The primary objective of this research is to assess the impact of psychological capital on the overall well-being of employees. The organization or management practitioners can facilitate the creation of different PsyCap sub-elements for improving employee well-being at work through intervention strategies, ultimately leading to increased organizational effectiveness. Human resource development in a competitive market places equal emphasis on building an employee's psychological capital in addition to their knowledge,

skills, and capacities inside the company. Through self-reflection, people can learn about themselves and what areas of their lives they can still progress according to Pyscap study and theory.

Rohilla(2022)-In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, organizations have been obligated to implement remote work arrangements as a precautionary measure to protect their employees from the risk of infection. Consequently, this shift has resulted in heightened levels of stress and suffering among employees, leading to a decline in job satisfaction. The primary goal of this study is to examine the link between employee well-being, stress levels, and job performance in the private and healthcare sectors during the COVID-19 crisis. The results demonstrate a positive correlation between employee well-being, occupational stress, and job satisfaction. Furthermore, the study indicates that the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak have impacted both private and public sector employees.

Saharan&Sharma(2022). - This study seeks to analyze the influence on employee well-being within a dynamic work environment through implementing spirituality training. 392 survey responses were obtained from employees working in cutting-edge technology and highly automated corporations. The research findings indicated that the introduction of spirituality training in the workplace has established a noteworthy correlation between employee well-being, mindset, and self-determination.

Kaurand Sharma(2022) - This research paper aims to investigate, gather, and present the different methods of engaging employees commonly employed by companies and the innovative approaches utilized during the COVID-19 pandemic. Employee engagement is crucial in determining their dedication to the organization, well-being, and job performance, establishing the groundwork for organizational triumph. While engaged employees have always been instrumental in achieving organizational success, how companies support them during times of uncertainty will leave a lasting impact for years.

PM,and Philip (2022) - The primary objective of this study was to evaluate the consequences of implementing a culture of employability within the organization, the perceived internal employability that employees developed, and its influence on their well-being. The findings demonstrate a favorable correlation between an employability culture and the various aspects of employee well-being.

Purandare(2022) - This study aimed to analyze the various approaches to employee well-being that the industrial and IT sectors apply. The analysis's conclusions demonstrate that businesses see effective employee well-being initiatives as one of their key strategic pillars for luring and retaining talent.

Gadhaviet al. (2021). -This study primarily investigates the correlation between employee well-being and key factors, including life satisfaction, interpersonal relationships, self-affirmation, physical and mental health, and overall happiness. The study was conducted with three hundred sixty-two employees from a prominent private university in Gujarat. Upon analysis, the researchers found that employee happiness levels varied based on different factors. The study uncovered a constructive link between personal happiness, physical and mental wellness, and life satisfaction when viewed from an individual's standpoint. However, no significant relationship was observed between interpersonal relationships, self-affirmation, and employee happiness.

Anithaet al. (2021) - The main objective of this paper is to validate the importance of employee well-being initiatives in talent retention. It emphasizes the integration of AI to optimize these initiatives and raise employee retention levels. As per the study's discoveries, organizations can establish employee well-being as a valuable approach to retaining their workforce, which is currently a prevalent global HR strategy. Moreover, integrating artificial intelligence techniques like chatbots can amplify the impact of well-being practices on employee retention outcomes.

Krishnan(2021)- Through industry interviews, the current study aims to ascertain what changes in corporate India's well-being plan focus, rollout, funding, and assessment might be expected in the upcoming year. Following the investigation, they concluded that the breadth and budget of workplace wellness programs are growing; as a result, many organizations will be reevaluating their programs and will need to redesign them entirely. The services they provide and how they are provided will change significantly; the individuals in charge of corporate well-being programs will probably report to different roles than they do now.

Mahajan(2020) - An organization can gain competitive advantage, productivity, and work relationships from employee well-being. This study focuses on past, present, and future employee well-being. This paper delves into the historical, current, and future aspects of employee well-being. Previous research has provided compelling evidence in favor of prioritizing employee well-being. Currently, various factors rely on employee well-being, such as the company's financial performance, turnover rates, absenteeism, employee engagement,

and job satisfaction. In the future, the sole competitive edge organizations will possess will stem from devising innovative strategies to enhance employee well-being.

Patil(2020) - This paper delves into employee well-being's historical, current, and future aspects. Previous research has provided compelling evidence in favor of prioritizing employee well-being. Currently, various factors rely on employee well-being, such as the company's financial performance, turnover rates, absenteeism, employee engagement, and job satisfaction. In the future, the sole competitive edge organizations will possess will stem from devising innovative strategies to enhance employees' welfare, which is of utmost importance.

Conclusion

Employee wellness has been overlooked for a considerable amount of time. Nowadays, all organizations acknowledge the immense value of employee well-being. It is imperative to prioritize the upkeep of an employee's physical and mental health, fostering their happiness, contentment, and job stability. A satisfied and happy worker would trust his or her organization and supervisors more, and it will also increase productivity, employee engagement, employee commitment towards the organization, and less absenteeism, retention, etc. Much research has been done on employee well-being in its various aspects globally. Especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, it has become more profound.

Based on the provided research evidence, the implementation of employee well-being practices is widely adopted by HR professionals as a highly effective strategy in the current competitive landscape. The objective of this strategy is twofold: to retain current employees within the company and to attract and retain exceptional individuals, especially in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is because a significant and favourable correlation exists between HRMPs and EWB. Sometimes, they can use artificial intelligence techniques like chatbots to enhance employee well-being practices and gain momentum in employee retention.

In addition, they prioritize cultivating the employee's psychological capital, in tandem with their knowledge, skills, and abilities, to promote the overall well-being of the workforce. This, in turn, fosters organizational effectiveness.

Moreover, the deterioration of employee skills can have adverse consequences on the overall performance of a company, resulting in a decline in employee welfare. In order to sustain their operations, contemporary organizations heavily rely on the employability skills exhibited by their human resources. This is because there is a positive association between a culture of employability and the different components that contribute to employee well-being.

In light of the COVID-19 outbreak, companies have been compelled to shift towards remote operations due to the increased levels of stress and declining job satisfaction among their employees. However, following the pandemic, there has been a renewed focus on the mission, engagement, and well-being of employees. Consequently, many organizations, including small businesses, have restructured their engagement strategies and allocated more resources to these initiatives. Furthermore, a variety of well-being support is currently being provided by them. This includes webinars conducted by doctors, wellness check-in applications, and promoting mental and emotional well-being through engaging activities like yoga, body fitness and Zumba sessions.

The importance of rewards, money, and recognition, including monetary and non-monetary perks, should be considered in boosting motivation and morale among employees, especially those in the 20-30 age bracket. Furthermore, a significant relationship is observed between employee well-being, mindset, and self-determination in the workplace with the inclusion of spirituality training.

India has achieved an impressive score of 76%. According to a recent study conducted by McKinsey Health Institute, it has been ranked as the second-best country globally for employee well-being. However, a joint report by job search companies Indeed and Forrester Consulting highlighted that only 24% of employees in Indian organizations experience high levels of well-being. Managers must consider their subordinates' opinions on job insecurity and negative psychological well-being, as these aspects can greatly affect employee commitment and overall well-being (Ma et al., 2019).

Prioritizing employees' happiness, health, and satisfaction is crucial for organizations to enhance productivity and mitigate problems such as absenteeism. As mentioned, this approach is vital to achieving overall success and fostering a positive work environment. Companies can address life satisfaction, subjective well-being, psychological well-being, work-life balance, and more.

They can also use various AI techniques and try to find out various techniques and scales for measuring employee well-being and related aspects. Organizations can also explore some unexplored factors to enhance employee well-being.

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