

Effect of Mental Health Issues on the Work Performance of Individuals and Strategies to Cope with it at the Workplace

HARPREET KAUR RAKHRA*

Department of Management, Jagan Institute of Management Studies, Rohini, Delhi, India

ABSTRACT

The term mental health is gradually getting accepted as a common health condition in the world. It is an acknowledged fact now that the mental health is as important as the physical health of a person. It includes our emotional well-being and has now become the topic of major relevance across the world. Employers in these times have recognized that good productivity at work can only be expected from a happy and relaxed employee. However, there is still not enough awareness on mental health issues because of inadequate resources. Many organizations do claim to be running a lot of initiatives in this regard yet they need to practically engage in the activities that spread awareness and promote mental health. These days the terms such as depression, anxiety, stress, and substance abuse are not uncommon among city dwellers. **The kind of lifestyle people are leading in big cities is the very cause of these problems.** This makes it important for everyone to be aware of their mental health so that these concerns can be addressed in time. The present study examines the effect of common mental health issues such as depression and stress on the work performance of an individual in an organization. It also suggests various strategies to deal with problems associated with the mental health of employees.

KEY WORDS: Mental health issues, Work performance, Emotional well-being, Productivity

How to cite this article: Rakhra, H.K. (2021). Effect of Mental Health Issues on the Work Performance of Individuals and Strategies to Cope with it at the Workplace. *Int. J. Behav. Sci.*, XX, 1–5

INTRODUCTION

It is much harder to identify the mental health problems as compared to the physical ones as it usually depends on self-disclosure. Usually, people label the mentally unhealthy person as “lunatic” which reflects the unfamiliarity of people with such conditions or terms. Although, there has been considerable advancement in medical science mental illness still remains a topic discussed behind closed doors in many societies. According to the WHO data in 2020 more

than 264 million people of various age groups suffer from depression. India is soon to become the no 1 country in suicides due to depression. Mental health of an employee is a vital factor in the professional success and workplace productivity of an individual. As per annual CIPD Absence Management Survey 2015, 41% of the organizations have seen an increase in the mental health problems among their employees. As per MFHA, England 2020 1 in 6 workers is suffering from stress, depression or anxiety and four in ten employees are afraid to disclose it. In fact, people with

*Corresponding author: E-Mail: harpreet.rakhra@jimsindia.org

mental illness face a risk of no income and salary. People with mental health issues often annoy their co-workers and the seniors for not being able to work according to their demands and expectations.

The work performance thus is clearly linked with the mental health of an employee. If the mental health is good, it has a positive effect on his productivity and if the mental health is not good the productivity is negatively affected. The repercussions of ignoring the mental health issues result in either the layoff of the worker or very low productivity by him. This fact makes this study very relevant.

Objectives

The objectives are as follows:

- To check the effect of mental health issues on the workplace performance of employees
- To suggest some strategies that can be adopted for the employees' good mental health.

METHODOLOGY

Methodology refers to the systematic procedure through which the research is carried out.

The data used in this paper are secondary. It is collected from several research papers, books, reports, etc. Since the data are secondary it is already tested and analyzed and is used to increase the overall effectiveness of this study. This data are summarized and connected to the topic in the paper.

Issues Related to Mental Health

The most common among all the mental illnesses are depression, stress, and anxiety. The common factors contributing to mental illness in people may include childhood abuse, poverty, debt, social isolation, and losing a dear one. Depression is a serious though a common disorder that affects about 264 million people in the world. Depression becomes a serious health condition if it lasts longer than a few days. It can become the cause of poor performance of the person at the workplace and can also lead to suicide.

In Rawal and Mhatre's study 2018, the study of Dr. Lazarus and Dr. Selye was mentioned that the stress is of two types positive and negative. Positive stress can be felt when an employee feels motivated to reach a certain level in his professional life and works hard to achieve his goals. Whereas the negative stress can be seen more as a threat and the employee may feel that he will not be able to work according to the expectations of his employer. There can be major physical signs of this kind of stress on the individual, the stress can create ulcers or cause vomiting. There may also be constant headaches and all this can

result in disorientation which finally results in low or zero productivity by the employee.

Porter, 2014 enlists the workplace problems related to stress, they are:

- Violence in the workplace
- Poor customer service
- Conflict between workers errors in judgment contributing to poor output Absent-mindedness
- Accidents absenteeism
- Presenteeism and turnover.

Similarly, an anxiety disorder can have a major impact in the workplace. People with social anxiety usually have problems with situations involving public speaking or social interaction. Such people may also have trouble making relationships. Anxiety at the workplace can also be a big hindrance in concentration and attention resulting in low productivity.

Literature Review

It is a well-known fact that people with mental health issues face serious career related threats. The mental health issues are more openly talked about now however people need to identify their emotional quotient as seriously as they care about their physical health as some people are more vulnerable to depression and work-related stress. It is true that only in a healthy mind will come best of ideas which ultimately help all of us grow in life.

Daud *et al.* aimed to study the role of mental disorders in the employee's innovative performance. They concluded that mental health does play a key role in employee performance. Employees with such issues cannot do well at work and eventually have no contribution in the overall growth of the organization. The mental health also affects the decision-making ability of the employee.

Guan *et al.*, 2017 attempted to study the job stress level among civil servants. They also examined the effects of job stress on the physical health of the employees. They found out that about 33% of the civil servants in their study were suffering from high or moderate job stress. Consequently, the employees with higher stress level exhibited higher rate of burnout and mental fatigue and all this eventually resulted in lesser productivity.

One of the aims of Tsuchiya *et al.* study, 2005, was to assess the impact of common mental disorders on the work performance of the Japanese workers. Their findings clearly stated that mood disorders, including major depressive disorder, and alcohol abuse/dependence were significantly associated with decreased on-the-job performance. The study made it clear that depression played a major role in the lowered work performance of the employees.

Inger and Birgitta, 2018, intended to identify and characterize the employer's perception of the impact of mental health problems on the work place performance. They came to a conclusion that although there are employees who are able to leave their problems aside and work in the office with a fresh mind set, the employee's ability to work is definitely linked with an employee's mental health. The study concluded with a discussion on some strategies that can help the employer become aware of the affected employees.

Hilton *et al.*, 2010, conducted a study to estimate the employee work productivity by mental health symptoms while considering seeking different treatment-seeking behaviors. They were able to draw a conclusion that employee productivity is directly affected by the mental health of the employees. They also concluded that effective treatment for such problems definitely increases the employee productivity.

Spending on such treatments would be a sound economic investment for the employer. Hennekam *et al.*, 2020, made an effort to examine the effects of mental health conditions on the job performance and how such employees deal with these conditions at work. They concluded that mental health does affect the job performance of an individual by affecting the quality of work and its pace. Most of the employees continue to work despite being aware of their condition. Things such as counseling, medication, and accepting oneself with such problems can help the employees feel and perform better.

Alvi, 2017, did a focused study on the relationship between the psychological well-being and the job performance of the employee. The study concluded that higher levels of psychological well-being are beneficial for enhanced job performance of the employee in projectized and non-projectized organizations. The job performance can be predicted too on the basis of the mental health of an employee.

Strategies to Deal with the Problem

There can be a mental health issue related to work life, that is, the environment at the workplace, behavior of colleagues and seniors, too much of work load. Apart from these issues related to work there can be mental health issues related to an individual's personal life too. Some strategies if adopted at the workplace can certainly ensure a more convenient environment at the workplace and reduce the levels of anxiety and stress among the employees to a great extent. Following are some of the strategies that have already been adopted by some famous organizations to help the employees deal with this issue better.

1. Keeping the employees self-motivated: Bajaj, 2020 asserts in her book that Google, one of the fastest growing companies in the world has set examples for

others in terms of employee satisfaction. The employees are considered most important in this organization as they are clearly the reason behind the company's success. Their engineers are given 20 percent of the time to work freely on what they are most passionate about. By giving them flexibility in their work the company ensures a stress-free work life for them which eventually lead to a relaxed state of mind. Adopting a strategy like this can be very beneficial for a company in the long run.

2. Free mental health sessions: Some companies have even started inviting the mental health coaches to their offices to deliver useful sessions for the workers. Heather, 2020, informs that the coffee giant Starbucks has decided to give as many as 20 free sessions with the mental health therapist in a year to its US employees. The sessions can also be accessed by their family members. By doing this Starbucks not only ensures sound health of its employees but also good productivity by them. A practice like this makes the employees feel valued by their company and keep him motivated. Gingras, 2020 Virgin CEO Richard Branson also feels strongly about the mental issues. His company offers workshop named "mindcoach" offering the workers some stress coping strategies. The managers in this company too are trained to handle and support employees suffering from any mental health issues.

3. Adopting work life balance practices: Not being able to give enough time to the family often becomes a reason for mental stress. McLaren, 2020, points out that the German multinational automobile manufacturer Volkswagen realizes this and ensures that the employees are not involved in anything related to work between 6:15 pm and 7:00 am. A technical arrangement deliberately made by the company does not let the internal server's route emails to individual accounts between this time periods. Like this the company ensures that no worker is tempted to work in non-work hours giving them ample time to spend with the family.

4. Creating awareness: Talking openly about mental health is another way of making people accepts their mental conditions as normal and treatable. Cohen, 2019, reveals that following this Deloitte appointed a chief wellbeing officer for its employees. This officer immediately launched a campaign which provides the mental health first aid. It also provides all relevant information related to mental health to its employees. When there are open talks related to mental health people become more aware of this

medical condition and all this leads to a better emotional health of the workers. Johnson and Johnson is another company which trained about 350 of their employees in mental health first aid training. Its Employee Assisted Programs provide resources in stress management. J and J extends these services to the family members of the workers also to ensure good mental health of its workers.

5. Making policies that support mental health: Chance, 2019 points out that the multinational technology company Apple Inc. understands that every one of us is different with different needs and motivations can help create a positive environment at the workplace. It offers flexible medical plans for its employees covering both mental and physical health. The paid leaves to new parents and return-to-work programs at Apple ensure the employees' relaxed state of mind which contributes to good productivity. The employees are assisted in preparing their retirement goals too. The company also reimburses certain educational expenses. With so many employee friendly policies, this organization has maintained a reputation of being among the top companies in employee satisfaction.

DISCUSSION

The strategies discussed above also include the mention of the companies where these strategies actually got implemented. Many big organizations understand the value of employee satisfaction and have developed policies ensuring a relaxed mind of the employee. Google is setting examples for others in taking care of the mental health of its employees by letting them get involved in the work of their choice during the office hours for certain time duration. Starbucks has shown a caring attitude towards its employees by arranging special sessions on mental health for not just the employees but their families too. A company mentioned above also ensures that the employees are not disturbed with the office work when they are with their families to let them enjoy the personal time at home. In another company, the employees are trained on the first aid of mental health and there are mental health related policies in practice in companies like Apple. The fact that mental health is important and can affect the productivity of the employee at work is being taken seriously by many companies all over the world now. Organizations are adopting policies that help the employee give his hundred percent in the job.

CONCLUSION

It is amply clear now that the issue of mental health needs to be addressed more seriously at the workplace. Mental

health problems are generally overlooked at the workplace but the success of an organization depends on its people and these employees need to be mentally relaxed and happy. Only such employees can be productive and contributing in the organizations' success. An employee spends more time in the office than at home; therefore, it becomes important to provide an environment in which he can work comfortably. It is through the workplace that people can be made aware of these issues and can be educated about how to control them that hamper their productivity. The strategies discussed in this paper can definitely raise the job satisfaction level among employees ensuring a happy state of their mind and eventually leading to better workplace performance. In today's time with advances made in mental health it makes complete sense to get these issues addressed by the employers and ensure a healthy, positive life of those who are connected with them.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to show my gratitude to my Director for motivating me to write this paper. I am also thankful to my colleagues who helped me in deciding the topic and suggested ways to gather the vital information for this piece of work. I also acknowledge the contribution of various authors who have studied this topic already and have conceived extremely useful research papers which I thoroughly studied while doing my work. It is only after going through their work that I got a clear direction for my study.

REFERENCES

- Alvi, U. (2017). The effect of psychological wellbeing on employee job performance: Comparison between the employees of projectized and non-projectized organisation. *J. Entrep. Organ. Manage.*, 6, 1000206.
- Bajaj, R. (2020). *Learning Management from Fables*. ???: Sunvick Publications, pp. 112–113.
- Cohen, E. (2019). *Companies Making Mental Health a Priority*. Available from: <https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/blog/post/companies-making-mental-health-priority>.
- Daud, I., Husnurrofiq, S. and Alifisah, E. (2020). *Effects of Mental Disorders on Employee Innovative Performance: Evidence from the Indonesian Fertilizer Industry*. Vol. 14. Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, pp. 552–562.
- Depression*. Available from: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/depression>. [Last accessed on 2020 Jan 30].
- Gingras, A. (2020). *Companies that Prioritize the Mental Health of their Employees*. Available from: <https://www>.

1 [ripplematch.com/journal/article/companies-that-prioritize-](https://www.ripplematch.com/journal/article/companies-that-prioritize-the-mental-health-of-their-employees-ebec5754)
2 [the-mental-health-of-their-employees-ebec5754](https://www.ripplematch.com/journal/article/companies-that-prioritize-the-mental-health-of-their-employees-ebec5754). 1
3
4 Guan, S., Xiaerfuding, X., Li, N., Lian, Y., Jiang, Y., Liu, J. and Ng, T. B. (2017). Effect of job strain on job burnout, 2
5 mental fatigue and chronic diseases among civil servants 3
6 in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region of China. *Int. J. AQ3*
7 *Environ. Res. Public Health*, **14**, 872. 4
8
9 Heather, L. (2020). *Starbucks Teams up with Startup to Extend*
10 *Mental Health Perks to US Employees*. Available from: 5
11 [https://www.fiercehealthcare.com/tech/starbucks-has-
12 teamed-up-startup-to-offer-u-s-workers-free-therapy-
13 sessions](https://www.fiercehealthcare.com/tech/starbucks-has-teamed-up-startup-to-offer-u-s-workers-free-therapy-sessions). 6
14
15 Hennekam, S., Richard, S. and Garima, F. (2020). Coping with
16 mental health conditions at work and its impact on self-
17 perceived job performance. *Employee Relat.*, **42**, 626–645. 7
18
19 Hilton, M. F., Scuffham, P., Vecchio, N., Whiteford, H. (2010).
20 Using the interaction of mental health symptoms and
21 treatment status to estimate lost employee productivity.
22 *Aust. N. Z. J. Psychiatry*, **44**, 151–161. 8
23
24 Inger, J., Birgitta, G.A. (2018). Employers views of the impact
25 of mental health problems on the ability to work. *Work*,
26 **59**, 585–598. 9
27
28 Lloyd, V. (2015) *Two-fifths of Organisations Report an*
29 *Increase in Workplace Mental Health Problems*. Available
30 from: [https://www.cipd.co.uk/about/media/press/091015-
31 mental-health#gref](https://www.cipd.co.uk/about/media/press/091015-mental-health#gref). [Last accessed on 2015 Oct 09]. 10
32
33 McLaren, S. (2020). *Five Ways Companies are Supporting*
34 *Employees Mental Health and Preventing Burn out*.
35 Available from: [https://www.business.linkedin.com/talent-
36 solutions/blog/company-culture/2020/ways-companies-
37 support-mental-health-and-prevent-burnout](https://www.business.linkedin.com/talent-solutions/blog/company-culture/2020/ways-companies-support-mental-health-and-prevent-burnout). 11
38
39 *Mental Health Statistics*. Available from: [https://www.
40 mhfaengland.org/mhfa-centre/research-and-
41 evaluation/mental-health-statistics](https://www.mhfaengland.org/mhfa-centre/research-and-evaluation/mental-health-statistics). [Lastaccessedon2020
42 Oct 15]. 12
43
44 Chance, M. (2019). *Apple Expands Employee Benefits for*
45 *New Parents and Mental Health, More*. Available
46 from: [https://www.9to5mac.com/2019/11/06/
47 apple-benefits-new-parents-more](https://www.9to5mac.com/2019/11/06/apple-benefits-new-parents-more). 13
48
49 Porter, J. (2014). *Preventing Job Stress*. Welcoa’s 2014 National
50 Training Summit. 14
51
52 Rawal, A. and Mhatre, S. (2018). Study on work stress and its
53 impact on employee’s productivity with respect to teachers
54 (self-financing). *IOSR J. Bus. Manage.*, **2018**, 15–23. 15
55
56 Tsuchiya, M., Kawakami, N., Ono Y. and Nakane, Y. (2012).
57 Impact of mental disorder on work performance in
58 community sample of workers in japan survey 2002-2002.
59 *Psychiatry Res.*, **198**, 140–145. 16
60

Received: 13 Mar 2021; Accepted: 01 Jun 2021

Author Queries???

- AQ1: Please review the sentence for more clarity.
AQ2: Kindly provide publisher location
AQ3: Kindly provide last accessed details