

MENTAL WELL-BEING OF EMPLOYEES: RESEARCH REVIEWS

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Abstract

Well-being of the individual is the real concern in today's time. This paper focuses on the journey of health through the centuries in the western and Indian traditions. Mental well-being is of cardinal importance for the holistic functioning of the individual. Mental health is an essential component of social cohesion, productivity, peace and stability in the living environment, contributing to social capital and economic development in societies. It refers to positive well-being including emotional and spiritual, living life to the fullest and facing the unavoidable encounters of life. Nature of Work place, gender, conditions of work life and stress have an effect on the mental well-being of the individual and how they strive to create the create a unique balance.

Keywords: Mental Well-being, Mental Health, Employees, stress.

According to the WHO (1948) health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. This definition is a widely acceptable one for the reason that it takes well-being into concrete consideration and more so because it doesn't restrict health as a mere concept of only illness. The present article focuses on the health citizenship in the eighteenth century as the right of man within democratic states. Through the centuries health efforts were tilted to benefit the elite class more than the sick poor. In the medieval period the panic, civil disorder and social breakdown caused by anti-plague resulted into civil administrative structures which became the model for European public health

which is followed even today. Health was identified as a pursuit of happiness in the nineteenth century by enlightenment thinkers and new investigative prophylaxes were facilitated (Porter, 1999).

Every culture has developed a system of medicine and that medical history is one of the aspects of history of culture (Siegerist, 1951). Along with the evolution of human beings the need of health also came into existence and the cumulative knowledge over the years resulted into medicines and medical science. The Indian system of health aimed at holistic healing from the natural resources and was designed on multi-dimensional approaches. India's ancient system of medicine was advanced with concepts borrowed from other civilizations that invaded India. Ayurveda and Siddha are two unique Indian indigenous systems of medicine that do not micro manage the illness.

Between the tenth century BC and the fourth century AD, the nine main philosophical systems or Darshana that compile the Indian tradition were formalized. These systems, despite their differences practically co-existed sharing a common core that is in the form of awareness of self in the society during the foundation and building of Indian culture. Health, disease and well-being have been conceptualized as multi-dimensional aspects of life and bringing philosophical guidelines into practice in the traditional health system of India – Ayurveda. According to Ayurveda, a balance at the biological, psychological level and also maintaining it at the environmental level is required to attain ideal level of adaptation. It is an ever changing process as it depends on the interaction between the individuals' biopsychic compositions and unending solicitations from the environment. Health and well-being are nurtured by the balance between the specific individual requirements and growth propensities in the context of nature. The concept of well-being is very close to the approach of Ayurveda as it is mentioned in eudemonic approach in Positive psychology (Morandi and Nambi, 2013).

Health and Well-being in the Western Tradition

Ancient Greeks had a dual view of health, Panacea; the pathogenic view harps on the absence of illness whereas Hygieia, the salutogenic view, the positive events are referred to as well-being and these have been inherited by the western culture. The changes in fertility based on mortality ratios, longer life expectancy, chronic diseases, population aging and cost of health care through the time has led to the significance of Hygieia (salutogenic approach) rather than Panacea or disease focused approach. (Keyes and Cartwright, 2013)

To promote the salutogenic view of health in the west, the psychosomatic view describes the most difficult approaches developed. The patient is considered from a bio-psycho-social point of view, stressing on the balance of life style and psychological dimensions to create healthy living. This approach shows conjunction of medical approaches from east and west (Sonino and Fava, 2013).

Health and Well-being in the Indian Traditions

It focuses on the western reductionist view that shows the transition from the bio-medical model to concepts of health and well-being. A holistic view of human nature, intervention programs aiming at optimal health and well-being are considered as vital rather than treating ailments. This is a proposed health model in the Indian system of knowledge. The health model is consistent with Ayurveda, the health related knowledge system of India. (Salagame, 2013)

Mental well-being is of cardinal importance for the functioning of an individual in different domains of life, especially in the work sector and it is absolutely essential for the normal functioning of the individual. Mental health has been defined by different organizations and one of the most widely accepted one is cited below, given by WHO European Declaration on Mental Health (2005).

“There is no health without mental health. Mental health is central to the human, social and economic capital of nations and should therefore, be considered as an integral and essential part of other public policy areas such as human rights, social care, education and employment” To sum up people have generally agreed that mental health is more than the absence of mental illness.

Mental Health Action Plan for Europe has been advocated by WHO and it promotes that Mental health is the emotional and spiritual resilience which allows us to enjoy life and to survive pain, disappointment and sadness. It is a positive sense of well-being and an underlying belief in our own, and others’ dignity and worth (Health Education Authority, 1997). According to World Health Report (WHO 2001) mental health is “A state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community”

Thus mental health and well-being are fundamental to quality of life, enabling people to experience life as meaningful and to be creative and active citizens. To put it in perspective, mental health is an essential component of social cohesion, productivity and peace and stability in the living environment, contributing to social capital and economic development in societies. The WHO proposition that there can be “no health without mental health” has also been endorsed by the Pan American Health Organisation, the EU Council of Ministers, the World Federation of Mental Health, and the UK Royal College of Psychiatrists.

US Department of Health and Human Services defines “Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.”

Oxford English dictionary defines mental health as “a person’s condition with regard to their psychological and emotional well-being *all this pressure seems to be affecting his mental health.*” According to Medilexicon’s medical dictionary, mental health is “emotional, behavioral, and social maturity or normality; the absence of a mental or behavioral disorder; a state of psychological well-being in which one has achieved a satisfactory integration of one’s instinctual drives acceptable to both oneself and one’s social milieu; an appropriate balance of love, work, and leisure pursuits”.

Felicia Huppert (2009), Director of the Well-being Institute at the University of Cambridge, defines mental health as a spectrum, At one end are the common mental disorders (of anxiety and depression) and at the other end is positive mental health, or flourishing, The terms “mental health”, “mental well-being” and “well-being” are often used interchangeably. Diverse areas would choose diverse terms that commune the same meaning. The term ‘well-being’ was used by The New Economics Foundation, and identified that it is more than simply feeling content or glad. Well-being refers to being content and enhancing oneself as a person and contributes to one’s society. Improved mental health and well-being includes a wide range of

improved results for people from all facets of life. These include better life prospect and physical stability, better performance in education and job, less health risk such as substance abuse, reduced rate of mental illness and suicide, improved employment rates, reduced criminal behavior and more social involvement. (No Health without Mental Health, 2011)

Like physical health mental health is equally important for all of us. Mental health always promotes healthy lifestyle and better living conditions that include a range of actions to promote better mental health among people. Mental wellness basically denotes positive aspects of life which help in achieving higher levels of mental health even when the individual is not sensed with any mental illness. Thus, mental health refers to positive well-being including emotional and spiritual, living life to the fullest and facing the unavoidable encounters of life.

The mind organization suggests that mental health is not what we possess but something that we work on. To be mentally healthy, the foremost thing is to accept and value oneself and it is the first step to good mental health. There are some basic steps that one needs to maintain positive mental health and these are listed below;

- Taking care of self and loving oneself for what one is, like eating timely, exercising, sleeping, medication, recreation and being concerned about one's routine.
- Having importance of oneself in one's own eyes and respecting one's own existence before others.
- Being reasonable to one self, setting achievable goals and being realistic if they are not achieved.

At the same time, it is important to understand mental health is not static, it is prone to change depending on the different factors that a person faces in his day to day life. It could range from personal to professional problems, health related issues, accidents or genetic difficulties a person is facing. It is basically when the balance between the demands and the resources of the individual is disturbed it affects the mental health.

Current Scenario of Mental Well-Being

Mental disorders contribute to the 14% of the global burden of disease. Earlier the connection between the mental illness and other health disorders had been unacknowledged; therefore the emphasis on the mental health as the contributor had been low. The significance of mental health had to be emphasized and mental health care had to be improved as well as implemented. Poor mental health affects the overall growth of the society and hinders the goal achievement. (Patel and Saxena, 2007). In an article they discussed the primary causes associated with health and well-being were the unsafe work settings, personality factors, work place, work-related stress, nature of the job and job role. They had further discussed that low levels of health and well-being led to increase in cost of health insurance, lost productivity and absenteeism along with the cost of compensable disorders. (Danna and Griffin, 1999)

Mental Well-Being and nature of Workplace

Research studies on psychological well-being have examined public sector and private sector banks in India on degree of job satisfaction among the employees. 25 subjects from these four banks (2 private and 2 public) were selected at random. The results of these banks were considerably different. It indicated that layoff fear, swift income, less welfare plans, and less scope for upright growth and increase of work related disappointment. It has been suggested that

the degree of job satisfaction could be enhanced through safe job environment, welfare policies, and permanent jobs (Srivastava, 2004). Findings further revealed that private sector employees face more role ambiguity as compared to the public sector counterparts. Moreover, occupational stress is directly related to health and psychological well-being and both are two extreme points of the same continuum (Poonam, 2009).

Few recommendations have been highlighted to promote well-being among the employees and they are the following:

- ▶ Organisations should work in partnership with employees to promote mental well-being into all policies and practices related to administrating people including those related to employment rights and working conditions.
- ▶ The mental well-being of employees should be monitored through systems so that areas of improvement can be known and risk caused by work can be curbed.
- ▶ Empowering employees by making them aware of their legal rights
- ▶ Flexible working hours for the smooth and effective functioning of the employees.
- ▶ Management styles that promote involvement, allocation, positive comment, guidance and instructions from the seniors are to be emphasized.
- ▶ Ensuring managers are able to encourage workforce and train them to enhance their performance and satisfaction at work. (National Institute of Health & Clinical Excellence, 2009)

Studies have found as job satisfaction increases, mental health as well as coping behavior of employees increases. But when the level of stress increases the mental health substantially decreases. The psychological well-being of the bank employees working in the public sectors was found to be better than in the private sector. (Rao, Chandrariah, Alam and Rizvi, 2012)

Mental Well-Being and Gender

Gender also plays a pivotal role in the status of the mental well-being of the individual as there are some differences in the personality traits, characteristics, and emotional quotient and also with the work responsibilities that one has to take up. Studies by Panigrahi, Padhy & Panigrahi, 2014; Deshmukh, (2011) have revealed that there was no significant difference in stress levels across gender. On the other hand, males were found to be better in emotional intelligence and mental health compared to the females. In addition, married working women were at a risk of poor mental health as they are overburdened with the responsibilities at the work and their family. Those women who had a favorable relationship with their colleagues, discussed problems with their husbands or practiced meditation or yoga or exercise had better mental health than their male counter parts.

Job dissatisfaction and mental health, social action and depression are positively correlated and it was also found that employed women are more satisfied with their jobs than the employed men. Poor work control, heavy work duty, short sleeping hours also lead to job dissatisfaction which further leads to burnout and poor mental health. (Nadinloyi, Sadeghi and Hajloo, 2013). Mental health of women who had faced domestic violence in any form, had poor mental health. It was also found that women who were poor and less educated were at a higher risk of domestic violence which further affected their mental health adversely. (Kumar et al; 2005)

Working women have much more responsibility on their shoulders than the non-working women. Work pressures had been increasing over the years and thus, expecting more commitment from the employees. It was found that the working women had poor mental health and higher depression compared to their non-working counterparts. More so, mental health is positively correlated to depression (Dudhatra and Jogsan, 2012)

Shanbhag & Joseph (2012) in a descriptive study of the mental health of the female workers in the garment industry, showed that there was no significant relationship between mental health and age or education of the women. Similarly no significant association was found between mental illness and marital status. The 12-item General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) is used routinely as a uni-dimensional measure of psychological morbidity and it was found that positive was found to be as high as 45% and 65% women reported positive mental well-being.

In an article, Yadav (2015) highlighted that the effect of conflict of work to family, and mental health of early adulthood and middle adulthood women working as teachers and bank employees. Work to family conflict was found to be high and mental health was low in case of early adulthood teachers as compared to middle aged teachers. Similar trend was found in the employed women in banking sector. Early adulthood teachers scored higher in overall mental health than the bank employees but the middle adulthood women from both the professions had no significant difference.

Mental Health Conditions of Work Life and Stress

Family to work conflict or work to family conflict had a major influence on the mental health of the person. Single parents report poor mental health due to their increased role responsibility. Mental health of the person depends not only by the responsibility one has to carry out but also in what environment one had to do so. If it is a restricted atmosphere with less leniency, facilities and unfriendliness, it would contribute to poor mental health, (Chandola, Martikainen and Bartley et al; 2004)

The presence of factors like quality of work life, occupational commitment and psychological well-being in optimum level was helpful for the organizations and the employees. It improved the organizational commitment and enhanced the psychological well-being of the employees. (Rathi, Rastogi and Rangnekar, 2011)

Studies by Singh (2016) have found some important implications that the dual career teacher couple's work role had effects on their mental health and they are negatively correlated to each other. Mental health was high among teachers with low work role stress and it was low with high work role stress. Thus, high role work stress among the teachers will lead to their low mental health, ending up at low productivity.

Work is an integral part of our life and mental health problems are associated with the work place. To cope with these problems, there are various coping behaviors and in this study the researchers chose to analyze transactional style of coping behavior among working men and working women. The coping style is very important as it becomes a deciding factor on how a person is able to take stress in life. But the result of this study indicated that there was no significant difference in the coping styles used by both the working men and women. Today everyone is dealing with stress but the only significant difference is how an individual copes with it. There are various factors which influence the mental health of every individual and stress

is one among them. There has been investigation of the mediating effect of organizational commitment of the employee on the connection among the organizational stressors, physical health and psychological well-being of the operators working in BPO's (Business Process Outsourcing) of India. The organizational stressors did affect the physical health and psychological well-being of the employee due to the perceived commitment. The young employees have complained about various physical diseases after working in these companies due to erratic working hours, work stress, deadlines and no time for relaxation.

The health and the well-being were greatly affected by the perceived commitment of the organization. The health and well-being are not only positively affected by the organizational support but it could also reduce the negative effects of the stressors. Similarly, a study identified that the role of social capital can guard mental health of the employees. Risk of depression was higher among employees with low social capital as compared to the ones with high social capital. (Dash & Patnaik, 2012; Jain, Giga & Cooper, 2013; Kouvonen, et al, 2008). For an organization to function smoothly and effectively, its employees are required to be committed at every level. Every job has its specific requirements and challenges. It is observed that employees working at lower level were dealing with more anxiety, depressive symptoms, job insecurity, less direction leading to lower physical health and mental health in comparison to employees working at higher level. It also further emphasizes that the poor mental health is associated with the work stressors that a person is facing, irrespective of the cadre that the individual is working at.

Mental health is always associated with the nature and load of work but the physical conditions, exposure to direct and indirect sunlight also affects the mental health and work attitude of the employee. It was found that natural element shielded the association of anxiety, depression, job satisfaction and role stressors. Thus Natural element had a significant positive relationship with job satisfaction and organizational commitment. (Patnaik, and Dash, 2013; Colarelli, O'Brien and Boyajian, 2016). The mental health of the worker is equally important like the other factors discussed above. Only when the workers are mentally healthy they are able to give best to the work and for this a conducive work environment is absolutely necessary. Poor mental health leads to adverse physical health which further results in absenteeism of workers. There is complete loss of work. Likewise there is also "presenteeism" where the employee is on the job but unable to achieve and accomplish his work. To promise mental health among the employees and to maintain it, Mental Health awareness should be created in the Indian scenario like the "Mental health First Aid" has been implemented in Australia and England. Effective management and productive environment are possible only when awareness is created among the managers about mental health (Srivastava, 2009).

Conclusion

The various reviews carried out on mental health shows life cycle approach could be effective in identifying policies to improve the mental health of the young people. Improvement in the education and the employment opportunities can further help in enhancing the mental health of the young employees. Policies made at the national level for this cause can promote it at a higher level. (Ganga and Kutty, 2013). Mental health is a vital for all the employees across organizations as it not only affects the organization's productivity, personal and professional life of the employee but also the overall work quality and the working capital of the country. The employees are definitely exposed to diverse stressors in their working environment, but it

depends on how the employee is able to manage, dodge and create a balance. The stressors are not only related to the nature of the work, cadre of the employee, personality, job insecurity, organizational commitment, marital status, work schedule, demographic influences but also on factors like coping mechanism used, natural element, direct and indirect exposure to sunlight. Life cycle approach should be used to enhance policies that could alleviate and promise the employment opportunities and education among the young masses of the employees thereby improving their mental health.

This paper is based on an earnest effort to help us to understand the journey of evolving of mental health through generations in the western as well as the Indian context. It provides a scenario to acknowledge the current state of mental health of employees and also its relation with the nature of workplace, gender of the employee and how it affects the work life balance. It shows the scope in mental well-being in regard to employees personality, designation, coping skills, self-concept, emotional quotient and how gender is also a dominant factor influencing the mental health. It is very essential to understand how every individual is trying to create balance in its unique way and this is a real challenge in today's time to remain physically and mentally healthy as well.

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