



A Study On Mental Health Awareness At Work: Hr's Role In Building Supportive Cultures

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Abstract- Mental well-being plays a crucial role in influencing both employee health and organizational productivity in the IT industry. This study, “Mental Health Awareness at Work: HR's Role in Creating Supportive Cultures,” examines how HR practices promote mental health awareness and build supportive work environments. The study uses a quantitative research approach, collecting primary data through questionnaires from IT employees. It focuses on work stressors, HR interventions, organizational support, and employee outcomes such as well-being, engagement, and job satisfaction. Statistical analyses, including descriptive analysis, reliability testing, and regression, reveal that factors like heavy workload, long working hours, and technostress negatively impact mental health. However, HR initiatives such as counseling, wellness programs, flexible work options, and managerial support significantly improve employee well-being. The study highlights the importance of reducing mental health stigma and fostering open communication. It concludes that HR plays a strategic role in creating supportive cultures, enhancing employee well-being, engagement, and overall organizational productivity.

keywords - study include mental health awareness, employee well-being, HR practices, supportive work culture, IT industry, work stress, technostress, organizational support, counseling programs, flexible work arrangements, employee engagement, job satisfaction, and workplace productivity.

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, mental health has become an important concern for both employees and organizations. Earlier, workplace health focused mainly on physical safety, but today's fast-paced, technology-driven work environment has made mental well-being equally important.

Mental health at work is not just about the absence of illness, but also includes emotional stability, resilience, motivation, and overall psychological well-being.

In the IT sector, employees face high work pressure, tight deadlines, constant connectivity, and continuous skill updates, which often lead to stress, burnout, and anxiety. While flexible and remote work offers convenience, it also blurs the line between work and personal life, increasing mental strain.

Mental Health Awareness at Work focuses on educating employees, reducing stigma, and encouraging early support. However, awareness alone is not enough—organizations must create a supportive culture where employees feel safe to discuss mental health without fear.

Human Resource (HR) plays a key role in this by designing policies, promoting well-being programs, and training managers to support employees. This study aims to examine how HR contributes to building a supportive work culture and improving employee well-being in the IT industry.

II. STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Despite growing awareness, mental health issues among IT employees continue to rise due to heavy workloads, long working hours, and constant connectivity. These challenges lead to stress, burnout, reduced productivity, absenteeism, and high employee turnover, negatively affecting organizational performance.

Although many IT companies have introduced mental health initiatives such as wellness programs, counseling, and flexible work options, these efforts are often poorly implemented or underutilized. A major reason is the stigma around mental health, where employees fear being judged or seen as weak if they seek help.



Additionally, the role of HR in effectively promoting mental health awareness and building a supportive culture is still not clearly understood. Many initiatives remain disconnected from actual workplace practices.

Therefore, this study focuses on understanding the effectiveness of HR practices in promoting mental health awareness, identifying existing gaps, and exploring how organizations can create a psychologically safe and supportive work environment.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Mental wellbeing has emerged as a critical determinant not only for the wellbeing of workers but also for the performance of organizations in such fields as IT where mental abilities of workers matter. Scientific findings suggest that mental wellbeing is an organizational phenomenon since it influences the productivity and retention of employees as well as organizational sustainability (Goetzel et al., 2018). The principal factors leading to the psychological distress of workers are workplace stressors, organizational culture, technological demands, and lack of adequate support.

The early findings revealed that there is a clear association between job-related stress factors and anxiety/depression which are CMDs. The study carried out by Chopra et al. (2009) showed that stressful job conditions act as important elements that lead to increased mental problems and decreased worker productivity. The results showed that mental health programs in workplaces ensure worker wellbeing and productivity.

In the model, Demerouti et al. (2001) indicated that workers get burnt-out as a result of too many job demands but insufficient job resources. The model is still relevant in today's IT organizations where employees have to be productive and deal with new technology.

IV. RESEARCH GAPS

Existing studies mainly focus on individual stress rather than HR-led organizational interventions. There is limited research on how HR practices, leadership, and workplace culture together influence mental health.

Additionally, most studies are cross-sectional and lack long-term analysis. There is also a shortage of research in the Indian IT context and limited evidence on how mental health awareness reduces stigma and improves help-seeking behavior.

V. THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

This study is based on key theories explaining workplace mental health. The Job Demands Resources (JDR) model states that high job demands cause stress unless balanced by resources like HR support.

The Transactional Model of Stress explains how employees respond to stress based on available support and coping resources. The Conservation of Resources theory highlights how loss of resources like time and energy leads to burnout.

Additionally, Social Support Theory and Psychological Safety Theory emphasize the importance of supportive environments where employees feel safe to discuss mental health issues.

VI. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main aim of this study is to examine how HR practices influence mental health and help create a supportive work environment in the IT sector.

The key objectives are:

- To analyze the impact of work-related stress on the mental health of IT employees.
- To understand employees' perceptions of HR support and mental health initiatives.
- To evaluate HR's role in creating a psychologically safe and supportive workplace.
- To examine the relationship between HR practices and employee performance, motivation, and satisfaction.
- To suggest recommendations for improving mental health awareness and HR practices in the IT industry.

VII. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Based on the study, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H1: Work-related stressors negatively impact the mental well-being of IT employees.
- H2: HR-led mental health initiatives positively improve employee well-being.
- H3: Perceived organizational support is positively related to employee engagement and job satisfaction.



- H4: Supportive HR practices and organizational culture improve employee performance by reducing stress.
- H5: Mental health-supportive culture influences employees' use of support services.

VIII. METHODS FOR DATA COLLECTION & VARIABLES OF THE STUDY (SHORT VERSION)

Research Design:

The study adopts a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to examine the relationship between HR practices, workplace stressors, and employee mental well-being in the IT sector.

Sample:

The study uses purposive sampling, targeting IT employees with at least one year of work experience. A sample size of 150–200 respondents is considered for analysis.

Data Collection (Questionnaire):

Primary data is collected using a structured questionnaire based on validated scales. The questionnaire includes:

- Demographic details
- Workplace stressors
- HR interventions
- Employee outcomes

Most questions use a 5-point Likert scale (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree), along with a few open-ended questions. Data is collected through online and offline surveys.

Variables:

- Independent Variables: Workplace stressors, HR interventions
- Dependent Variables: Mental well-being, employee outcomes (engagement, satisfaction, retention)
- Mediating Variable: Supportive organizational culture
- Moderating Variable: Mental health awareness culture

IX. DATA ANALYSIS & RESULTS

Despite the increasing attention given to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in organisational discussions, there is still a noticeable gap in research that clearly explains how DEI climate influences organisational commitment,

particularly in the Indian context. Most existing studies tend to examine diversity, equity, and inclusion as separate concepts, rather than understanding them together as a unified DEI climate within organisations. This limits a deeper understanding of how these elements interact in real workplace settings, especially in industries like Information Technology, where workforce diversity is high and continuously evolving.

Another important concern is that a large portion of existing research has been conducted in Western countries. These contexts differ significantly from India in terms of cultural values, organisational structures, labour market conditions, and employee expectations (Cooke & Saini, 2010). As a result, findings from these studies cannot always be directly applied to Indian organisations without considering these contextual differences. In India, workplace dynamics are shaped by factors such as collectivist culture, hierarchical organizational structures, and varying levels of openness toward discussions around fairness and inclusion. Therefore, there is a clear need for context-specific research that reflects the realities of Indian workplaces.

In recent years, many Indian IT companies have actively promoted DEI through policies, diversity hiring initiatives, and inclusion programs. These efforts are often highlighted as part of organisational branding and corporate social responsibility. However, there is still uncertainty about whether these initiatives are genuinely experienced by employees in their day-to-day work lives. Simply having policies in place does not necessarily mean that employees feel included, respected, or treated fairly. What matters more is how these policies are implemented and perceived at the individual level. Employees' everyday experiences, such as interactions with managers, access to opportunities, and fairness in decision-making, play a crucial role in shaping their perception of the organisational climate.

In this context, DEI climate becomes an important concept, as it reflects how employees collectively perceive the organisation's approach toward diversity, fairness, and inclusion. If employees feel that they are valued, respected, and given equal opportunities, they are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward the organisation. On the other hand, if they experience bias, exclusion, or unequal treatment, it can lead to dissatisfaction, disengagement, and a lack of trust. These perceptions directly influence how employees relate to their organisation and whether they are willing to remain a part of it.



Organisational commitment, in this regard, is a key outcome that may be influenced by DEI climate. It refers to the level of emotional attachment and sense of belonging that employees feel toward their organisation. When employees feel supported and fairly treated, they are more likely to develop stronger commitment and loyalty. However, when their experiences are negative, their connection with the organisation may weaken, leading to higher turnover intentions. Understanding this relationship is particularly important in the IT sector, where retaining skilled employees is a major challenge.

The context of Bengaluru makes this study even more relevant. Bengaluru is widely recognised as the “Silicon Valley of India” and serves as a major hub for IT companies, including domestic firms, multinational corporations, and start-ups. The workforce in this region is highly diverse, consisting of individuals from different cultural, educational, and regional backgrounds. While this diversity brings innovation and creativity, it also requires organisations to actively manage inclusion and fairness to ensure a positive work environment.

At the same time, the IT industry in Bengaluru operates in a highly competitive and fast-paced environment. Rapid technological changes, tight project deadlines, and global competition often result in high work pressure for employees. Additionally, job mobility is quite common, with employees frequently switching organisations in search of better opportunities. These factors make it challenging for organisations to build and maintain long-term commitment among employees (Agarwala, 2003). In such conditions, the way employees perceive their work environment becomes even more important.

Employees are more likely to stay in an organisation where they feel respected, included, and treated fairly. A positive DEI climate can therefore play a significant role in strengthening organisational commitment by creating a sense of belonging and trust. However, despite its importance, there is limited empirical research that examines this relationship within the Indian IT sector, particularly in Bengaluru. This highlights the need for a focused study that explores how DEI climate impacts organisational commitment in this specific context.

The present study aims to address this gap by examining the influence of DEI climate on organisational commitment among employees working in IT firms in Bengaluru. The study adopts a quantitative research approach and is based on primary data collected from IT professionals. By analysing employees’ perceptions of diversity, equity, and

inclusion, the study seeks to understand whether these perceptions are linked to their level of commitment toward the organisation.

Overall, this research aims to provide practical insights for organisations, especially HR professionals, on how creating a supportive and inclusive work environment can contribute to stronger employee commitment. It also adds to the existing body of knowledge by offering context-specific findings that reflect the realities of the Indian IT sector.

Research Outcome and Findings

This study examined how HR practices influence mental health awareness and supportive work culture in the IT sector. The findings show clear relationships between workplace stress, HR support, organisational support, and employee outcomes such as wellbeing, engagement, and job satisfaction.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

The study included IT professionals with at least one year of experience from different age groups, genders, and roles. Most respondents were aged 25–35 with 1–5 years of experience, representing early to mid-career employees who often face performance pressure. This reflects a typical IT workforce, supporting the relevance of the results.

Impact of Workplace Stressors on Employee Mental Health (H1)

The findings show that workplace stressors have a significant negative impact on employee mental health. High workload, tight deadlines, long working hours, and constant connectivity increase stress, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion. Technostress was identified as a major contributor due to rapid technological changes and continuous skill demands.

These results support the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Theory and Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, which explain how high demands and limited resources lead to burnout. Therefore, H1 is supported.

Effect of HR-Led Mental Health Initiatives on Employee Wellbeing (H2)

The results indicate that HR initiatives play an important role in improving employee wellbeing. Supportive HR practices such as flexible policies, counselling services, and mental health programs help reduce stress and improve overall wellbeing. This shows that organisational support systems can positively influence employee mental health.



Perceived Organisational Support and Employee Outcomes (H3)

The study found that when employees feel supported by their organisation, they show higher engagement, job satisfaction, and lower turnover intentions. Practices such as managerial support, open communication, and mental health initiatives increase trust and psychological safety. These findings support Social Support Theory and Psychological Safety Theory. H3 is supported.

Mediating Role of HR Interventions (H4)

HR interventions were found to reduce the negative effects of workplace stress. Employees with access to HR support handled stress better and showed improved performance. However, HR support could not completely eliminate stress, indicating partial support for H4.

Role of Mental Health Awareness Culture (H5)

The study shows that awareness culture influences how employees use available HR resources. In organisations with low stigma, employees were more willing to seek help. This confirms that awareness culture strengthens the effectiveness of HR initiatives. H5 is supported.

Overall Research Outcomes

The findings highlight that the IT sector involves high stress levels, which negatively affect mental health. HR support and organisational practices play a key role in improving wellbeing, engagement, and retention. Mental health awareness and supportive culture are essential for better outcomes.

Implications in IT Context

IT organisations need to move beyond basic wellness programs and adopt structured HR strategies that support mental health. HR should act as a strategic function that promotes employee wellbeing and organisational sustainability.

X. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The study contributes to existing theories in several ways: JD-R Theory: Confirms that high job demands lead to stress, while HR practices act as resources that reduce burnout.

COR Theory: Shows that continuous stress depletes employee resources, while HR support helps restore them. Transactional Model of Stress: Highlights that employee perception of support influences how they handle stress.

Social Support & Psychological Safety Theories: Demonstrates that supportive environments improve wellbeing, trust, and performance.

HRM Integration: Establishes HR as a key link between workplace stress and employee outcomes, especially in the Indian IT context.

XI. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings show that employee mental health should be treated as an organisational priority, not just an individual issue. IT companies must recognise that high workload, long hours, and technostress can lead to burnout and reduced performance. Managers should focus on better job design by setting realistic deadlines, managing workloads, encouraging breaks, and limiting after-work communication.

HR-led initiatives such as counselling, Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), flexible work policies, and awareness programs play an important role in improving employee wellbeing.

These initiatives should be easily accessible, regularly evaluated, and supported by proper communication.

Creating a culture of psychological safety is also essential. Employees should feel comfortable discussing mental health issues without fear of judgement. Leadership plays a key role here by showing empathy, encouraging open communication, and addressing stigma.

The study also highlights the importance of perceived organisational support. When employees feel valued and supported, they show higher engagement, job satisfaction, and retention. Therefore, organisations should build strong communication, recognition systems, and participative decision-making practices.

Overall, mental health should be linked to organisational performance. Companies that invest in employee wellbeing benefit from improved productivity, creativity, and reduced turnover.

XII. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study has some limitations. It used a cross-sectional design, so it cannot show long-term effects. Data was collected through self-reported questionnaires, which may lead to bias. The sample was limited to IT employees, so the findings may not apply to other industries.



The study also focused mainly on organisational factors and did not consider personal factors such as personality or coping styles. Additionally, the research was conducted in the Indian IT context, which limits generalisation to other countries.

XIII. CONCLUSION

The study confirms that workplace stress negatively affects employee mental health, while HR practices help reduce stress and improve wellbeing. Initiatives such as counselling, flexible work policies, and awareness programs support employees in managing stress effectively.

Perceived organisational support and psychological safety were found to be key factors in improving engagement, job satisfaction, and retention. The study also shows that mental health should be integrated into HR strategy rather than treated as a separate initiative.

Overall, organisations that focus on employee wellbeing can build a more productive, committed, and resilient workforce.

Scope for Future Research

Future studies can use longitudinal designs to examine long-term effects of HR interventions. Research can also include other industries to improve generalisation.

Further studies should consider individual factors such as personality, resilience, and coping strategies. Qualitative research methods like interviews can provide deeper insights into employee experiences. Future research can also use advanced techniques such as structural equation modelling (SEM) and explore the impact of remote and hybrid work on mental health. These directions can help in developing stronger and more inclusive workplace strategies.

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