Promoting Employees Well-being by Reducing Working Stress to Achieve Sustainability

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Abstract

SDG 3.8.1 (Service Coverage), 3.8.2 (Financial protection) and related indicators calls for a mandate to achieve global well-being through universal health coverage as reaffirmed at the UN high level meeting in 2023, nominating the WHO and the world bank as custodian agencies for UNSD SDG comprehensive review of the revised UHC indicators, its global monitoring report is expected to be released this year. To achieve target SDG 3.8 (Good Health and Well-being) by 2030, it is necessary to take accelerated, proactive, and targeted efforts by all stakeholders without making any further delay.

To nurture employees' well-being by reducing their working stress in the given business environment and resulted burnouts at the work place, it is considered necessary to promote and protect their mental health first, to achieve the sustainability of businesses, since the economic consequence of mental health conditions is highly significant with a huge cost of care and enormous loss of productivity.

720,000 suicide cases are reported per year. 970M of the general public were reported to have mental problems in 2019. A person dies 10-20 years early owing to a mental health condition, which amounts to at least one in six years living with the disability. Mental health conditions affect all aspects of life, increase the suicidal risk of suicide, and cause human rights violations.

This academic research paper qualitatively analyzes the available data and recent publications to focus on the core issue and seek the attention of stakeholders to dedicate themselves to achieving global well-being, where everyone can get quality health without facing hardship.

Keywords

Burn out, Global Well-being, Mental health, Universal health coverage, and Working stress.

1. Introduction

Everyone is quite familiar with the famous English Motto: "Safety-First", however, the recent pandemic has taught us a lesson to take it differently and say "Health-First" but the prevailing post-COVID-19 working environments has forced us again to change globally and rethink the issues and work very cautiously since "Safety-First, but Mental-Health, A Must for Well Being"! To justify the "Mental Health First" and a must for well-being the illustrious lyrics by Ulrich, James Hetfield Lars have to be recalled, which quite truly reciprocate one's mental health state, causing impairment in his day today thinking. As owing to stressful working conditions, it may lead to a high risk of triggering self-harm, which may end disastrously and prove fatal without being noticed by others. It says: "Life is ours, we live it, our way, Every day for us, Something new, Open mind for a different view, and nothing else matters, and nothing else matters". It is worth mentioning that Ulrich's lyrics to global music rights are patented by creeping death music (1991).

Working stress and burnout at the workplace in today's business environment have become sine qua non; they can neither be neglected by the employers nor by the employees themselves, since they severely affect one's well-being. Quoting a recent case of one of my colleagues, who post-graduated from the reputed Harcourt Butler Technical University, India, and was a working chemical engineer at the central government office in Maharashtra, India. Last year, one day he jumped from the top floor of his workplace and ended his precious life, succumbing to the high level of Mental Stress and burnout owing to the work pressure and stressful working environment in the office. His mental health conditions were not noticed by others, and in the absence of his mindfulness and lack of social support, we finally lost him.

Therefore, the mental health condition of an employee at the workplace has to be taken care of and dealt with top most priorities by his employer, which includes arranging counselling for any present mental disorder and recently developed psychosocial disabilities as well as other mental health conditions developed due to a non-encouraging work culture and a highly stressful working environment. Mental Health Conditions have been detailed in the ICD-11, International Classification of Diseases 11th Revision by the WHO (2023). The factor held responsible for deteriorating mental health conditions is also found in detail in the United Nations and APA's Council Policy Manuals. The prominently visible indicators are acute stress reaction, depression, difficulty in sleeping, experiencing distress, fatigue, feelings of anxiety, hopelessness, irritability, or anger, aches and pains, post-traumatic stress disorder, sadness,

bipolar syndrome, or schizophrenia. Neurological Conditions due to Disability Adjusted Life Years (DALY) account for about 9M deaths per year, and have been reported with an increased rate of 18 percent from 1990. An attempt has been made through this academic research paper by the researcher to showcase the efforts of the global community working on the global well-being issues to achieve sustainability.

2. Objective of the Study

The foremost objective of this research paper is to highlight the importance of employees' wellbeing at the workplace and to create awareness of their mental health conditions arising due to increased working stress and burnout at work, which need to be addressed as the top priority to achieve Sustainable Development Goals.

3. Research Methodology

The qualitative research methodology was adopted to explore the various factors that can affect the mental health condition of an employee at work. Available secondary data were personally compiled from various online sources at the sole convenience of the researcher, with limited funds to save time and energy. To carry forward the legacy of the onward journey to promote and protect the mental health of employees at workplace, a bibliographic approach to the current literature survey of published global studies were carried out to gather the various findings of the researchers across the globe to draw the conclusion for achieving the SDGs (3.8) target (Good Health and Well-being) for all people. Owing to the colossal availability of online literature on the subject domain only post Covid-19, publications were considered for the literature survey since it portrays the post-pandemic working stress and burnouts and found truly exposing the present mental health condition of an individual working in the stressful environment and experiencing daily burnout leading to his self-harm and increased suicidal attempts.

4. Review of the Literature

Owing to the post-COVID-19 business environment witnessed globally, the availability of online publications on the subject domain has no limits, since found increased multifariously in every segment. Thus, only recent papers published in the last year were referred to, which very clearly depicts the literature review of the past years. Hope the future researchers on the subject may explore it further to know the impact of working stress and burnouts on the

mental health condition of an employee at work, which is delaying the achievement of the desired level of sustainability goal.

The notion of UHC is a priority goal for many countries and is now emerging as an achievable SDG target 3.8 (Good Health and Wellbeing) by 2030, through monitoring of the revised SDG UHC indicators SDG 3.8.1 (Service Coverage), and 3.8.2 (Financial protection) under Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan (CMHAP-2030) for improving the mental health conditions of people by strengthening the governance, providing community-based care system, implementing the promotion and prevention-centric strategies, by strengthening the information systems, and conducting evidence-based research for prioritizing mental health promotion and prevention globally.

4.1 Global Studies

The recently published Lancet Neurology (2021) study claims that at least 3 billion people were living with neurological disorders in 2021. The neurological disorders were mainly responsible for disability, illness, and premature deaths. It has now increased by 18 percent since 1990. Nearly 80 percent of neurological deaths and health losses were reported from very low and middle-income countries due to the non-availability of proper treatment from trained neurological professionals, as they are few in number as compared to the affected population of the universe. The Cambridge Prism of Cambridge University Press, on behalf of the Royal College of Psychiatrists UK, has played a very important role by providing open access to the different studies published online globally on mental health and wellbeing issues. In one such CP-CUP publication, CUP on behalf of the Society for Disaster Medicine and Public Health Inc., Linnet Ongeri, Miriam Nyawira, qualitatively discussed reasons for suicidal behavior and offered their acclaim for the prevention of suicide cases in Kenya. A detailed scoping review done by Florence AC et al. (2023) on mental health issues in Brazil was also published by the Cambridge Prism. Ceren et al. (2023), in their recent research, have successfully established the relationship of depression, anxiety, stress, and PTSD with professional quality of life amongst the healthcare professionals working in the COVID-19 period and observed elevated levels of burnout among the healthcare workers in Turkey. Conservation Science and Practice, has published a very detailed study by researchers Pienkowski, T et al. (2023), on parameters of psychological distress and workplace risk inequalities among conservation professionals to know how the patterns of psychological distress varying between conservation job roles, particularly in three

countries namely India, South Africa and Cambodia. Similarly, Mark, Calra Baez (2023), has compared the mental health challenges faced by the Indian American and native of Alaska students during their cultural-emotional learning. The latest study by Ugwu et al. (2025) on sustainability and healthcare systems resilience, concerning challenges on public health and medicine in the conflict zone, was narratively reviewed by a team of researchers from Uganda and the Netherlands and have recently published in the Medicine Journal by Wolters Kluwer Health, Inc.

Cambridge University Press (CUP) has also launched some very meaningful books, for the benefit of its readers, which have been made available online and are a valuable addition to understanding the concepts of stressful working conditions, related burnouts, and developed mental health conditions. The most liked book by practising health care professionals is "Volunteering in Global Mental Health": A Practical Guide for Clinicians (2023), edited by Thomson Sophie, Peter Hughes, and Sam Gnanapragasam of Cambridge Medicine. Another publication on Youth Mental Health and Climate Change was found abridged by Haase, Elizabeth of the University of Nevada, Reno, and Hudson Kelsey, of Climate Psychology Alliance North America (2024). The Book: Out of Her Mind, written by Gask, Linda, of the University of Manchester (2024), describes how we are weakening women's mental health and what needs to be changed.

The Toxic Stress: by Wulsin R, Lawson, of University of Cincinnati winner, is the winner of choice awards and highly cited and bestseller book of year (2024), and Adultish: Body image book for life, Popular body image book series, by Markey Charlotte, of Rutgers University, New Jersey (2024). The "Adultish" author, is quoted as saying: "We need to think more about acceptance and contentment and realize that perfection does not exist in real life, we are all really works in progress". It gives quite a clear message to give up the working stress, move forward, live happily, and enjoy the life ahead. Lawson, R. Wulsin of the University of Cincinnati winner, describes how the harmful stress influences our systems. Due to the worrying rise of high stress-related conditions like depression, heart diseases, and diabetes, we are presently paying the price of highly stressful living, while new factors such as pandemics, global warming, and emerging technological threats like Generative AI, IOT, CC, BC, and ML etc. have brought new kinds of stresses into our present lives.

4.2 Indian Studies

Comparatively very few research studies have been found conducted locally in recent years, however, there are available publications on the farmer's suicide rates due to agricultural losses, coaching institute's student suicidal tendencies due to non-achievement of desired results as per their parent's expectations and other suicide cases due to business losses, debt related financial issues, social issues, and prolonged illness cases, but due to their non-relevance they have not been referred.

An extensive survey of literature was carried out by Mohammad Iqbal (2023), while presenting his research paper on promoting and protecting the mental health conditions of working professionals at work in the present era of global warming. Swami Amrut et al. (2023) studied the outcomes of health-care workers on their increased working hours per day, which were causing exhaustion and fatigue due to their prolonged working hours. Fatima, Gizal of Era University, India, has recently supervised the Magomedova Aminat's comprehensive research, published on 19 Jan 2025 by the renowned International Journal Cureus, which is part of Springer Nature, on mental health and well-being issues of the modern era by critically examining the factors affecting mental health and reviewing the challenges faced and interventions in details and offered quite innovative solutions for reducing the present stigma and suggested the need for fostering resilience through mindfulness activities and a strong social support system (Fatima et al. 2025). A survey on mental health among IT professionals about their job stress and adjustments found that job stress is the stronger contributor to the mental health on the job stress scale: Bell's adjustments and mental health inventories, was conducted by (Tehseen et al. 2023). Blesy Babu (2023) scaled the attitudes concerning mental health problems among the healthcare workers seeking expert advice while in emotional distress. (Aditya Mahindru et al. 2023) have significantly studied the role of regular physical activity in improving the mental health and well-being of working professionals.

An exploratory research on mental health and well-being issues of students was also conducted at higher education institutes of Telangana by Madhavi Bolla et al. (2023), which was published in the Saudi Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences by Scholars Middle East Publishers, Dubai, UAE. Raghu Raghavan et al. (2023), studied the stigma accompanying mental health and gathered the opinions of people having mental health conditions in urban, rural, and tribal areas of the state of Kerala and observed that self-

stigma imitates desperately on their family members as a whole rather than just on the victim with a mental disorder in finding a suitable match for marriages. Shahadevan V et al. (2023), studied the critical impact of urbanization on the mental health of individuals and found that the rapid urbanization was key factor responsible for increasing the risk of anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, and feeling of isolation, Neha A et al. (2023), examined the correlation between well-being, burnout, and coping style of mental health practitioners and highlighted the importance of promoting psychological well-being and effective coping strategies to reduce the high degree of burnout and enhanced ability to provide effective care. To address the present research gap, this detailed qualitative research study was conducted on employees' well-being issues.

5. Statistical Data

The available secondary data used in developing this research study paper was collected from the public domain site of the WHO's official websites as of the 16th April 2025, and were used with due citations and the publishing year of reporting. Since the secondary data is being used for academic purpose only, thus as per the current research practice, no formal written permission was sought from the source organization, as the same is found freely provided in open access mode for awareness and prevention of mental health across the life course for greater well-being and helping the society to generate encouraging societal and financial impact on the mental health issues to achieve the sustainability target (SDG: 3.8), Good Health and Well-being for all people.

Table 1:- Collected Secondary Data

Disorder's Descriptions	Available Worldwide Data	Reported up to the End of Year	Data Source available Online
Suicide: A global occurrence	720 000 People Die/Year	2021	WHO
Suicide accounted for 1.1% of all reported deaths	At least 1 in 100 deaths are caused by the suicide/ Year	2021	WHO
Living with mental disorder	At least 970 million people	2019	WHO
Mental disorders account for	1 in 6 years lived with Disability	2021	WHO

Disorder's Descriptions	Available Worldwide Data	Reported up to the End of Year	Data Source available Online
People with severe mental health conditions die early	Die 10-20 years earlier than the general population	2021	WHO
People in warzones for 10Yrs.	At least 22% (1/5) will have Mental depression disorders	2022	WHO
People in Refugee Camps	41% visit for Mental/ Neurological Disorders	2014	WHO
People in Refugee Camps	23% for Psychotic Disorders	2014	WHO
People in Refugee Camps	13% for Pts/anxiety disorder	2014	WHO
Anxiety and Depressive Disorder	26-28% increase in 1 Year/970 Million	2020	WHO
Anxiety Disorder	301M People+58M Child	2019	WHO
Bipolar Disorder	40M People Suffer	2019	WHO
Depression Disorder	280M People + 23M Child	2019	WHO
Depression Care Received	Is received formally by only 1 People at present	2019	WHO
Dissocial Disorder	60 Million people	2019	WHO
Eating Disorder	14 Million People including 3M Child	2019	WHO
Reported Mental Disorders	At least 1 in 8 people	2019	WHO
Mental Health Care Received	Only 29% people with Psychosis receives the formal treatments	2019	WHO
Schizophrenia Disorder	24M people or one in 300 People worldwide	2019	WHO

Sources:- Retrieved as of 16[th.] April, 2025 from the official website of WHO Head Qtr.,Geneva-27, Switzerland; https://who.int/

6. Discussions

970 million, or at least one in every eight people, were reported living with a mental disorder till 2019 (WHO), whereas 3 billion people were found to have neurological disorders in 2021 (Lancet Neurology). While in a recent quantitative research conducted across 6 Indian cities in 2023, it was observed that one in every four people exist with mental disorder, means just in a span of merely 4 years the numbers have just doubled and found increased to highly significant level, the 8 prominently noticed neurological conditions were found to be Anxiety, Aggression, Depression, Fatigue, Low Self-esteem, High Degree of Mental Stress, Sleeplessness, and troubled relationships (Mohammad Iqbal, IJRBS, Vol 8(2), Dec 2023). Keeping the above consecutive data recorded after a gap of every 2 years in mind, one can think of oneself, the level of working stress, and the type of mental health condition one has in 2025? Now, just compare it with the scenario of a war zone, like Ukraine, or a refugee camp like the situation presently prevailing in Gaza, or the post-earthquake scenario of Myanmar and Thailand. Imagine what will be the level of depression, anxiety, and sleeplessness of the abducted Israeli people? When will the aggression of the Manipur people engaged in ethnic clashes end? The answer is very clear: we are living and working under highly stressful conditions, we have to keep ourselves mentally strong to face future challenges and move forward to provide our productive contribution to society. Detailed guidelines on mental health at work is available, which facilitates people living with mental disorders to thrive in work. Organizational and individual intervention is required to be taken to improve the mental health conditions of employees at work. As an employer, organizations must inculcate the safety culture and frame policy document to address the well-being needs of an employee facing acute stress at work, take effective steps to reduce burnout, fatigues and take full care of any mental health conditions aroused at work due to discriminations, feelings of inequality, excessive workloads, job insecurities, and stressful working environments, as they are found to jeopardize the mental health conditions of employees at work. Therefore, it must be addressed globally as the top priority for achieving the sustainability target (SDG-3.8), i.e., good health and well-being for all.

7. Conclusions

The SDGs represent a global agenda for promoting human prosperity by respecting the planetary boundaries. However, mental health is a state of mental wellbeing that facilitates people to cope with the stresses of life, to realise their

abilities, to learn well and to work well, and to contribute to their community, thus doing what matters in times of stress. Being a WHO member country within South East Asian Region (SEAR), we have to achieve mental health for all people by the end of the year 2030 with its four major objectives, to reinforce operative leadership for governance of mental health, to provide the inclusive care for mental health in the social community, to implement policies for promotion and prevention of mental health and to reinforce the information system on the present status of mental health. CMHAP–2030 makes several endorsements for action, and shows three paths for transformations that focus on shifting the attitudes towards one's mental health condition, addressing the risks of mental health illness, and empowering the systems for the care and prevention of mental health. It includes taking action for deepening the importance and obligations of mental health, reshaping the environment that influences mental health, including homes, communities, schools, workplaces, health care services, natural environments, and strengthening the mental health care system by changing how mental health care is delivered and received.

Thus it is hitherto neglect for long to promote the robust future extensive research studies on mental health subjects in the present era of stressful working and high degrees of burnouts, so it is highly recommended to allocate sufficient budget for the related research and developmental activities on the ongoing projects related to the mental healths of individuals by supporting the health care professionals, health educators, health care service providers, trainers, entrepreneurs, and startups through the available CSR funds of PSUs, SMEs, BPOs and NGOs to make them dedicate for achieving global well-being, where everyone can get the quality health without facing any hardship. The employer must be made responsible under the laws for not ensuring employees' well-being, he must provide a stress-free working environment, and take actions to reduce employees' burnouts, as it is not merely an HR Manager's portfolio.

It is recommended to start at least a collective meditation session for all employees at work preferably in forenoon sessions and periodicity of networking activities for all employees may also be fixed during a lunch session to facilitate them to freely interact with their colleagues or seniors so that they can share their well-being with other employees of the organization. A counselling request box, or a dedicated email ID or Phone Number for specific purpose may perhaps be displayed at prominent and conspicuous locations at work so that any anonymous employee in need of such type of immediate help may perhaps contact the higher management confidently without being noticed

by others and may request to arrange his mental health counselling or may like to seek expert advice to resolve his mental health issues.

Employees too have to regularly engage themselves in the mindfulness and physical activities (Swamy, Mahindru 2023), like yoga (Singh, Shalini 2023), sports, playing music (Ulrich, Lars 2023), and remaining socially connected (Neha, Arora 2023), must take, healthier and nutritious diet and a sufficient amount of sleep to remains healthy, physically fit, and mentally sound and practice time management to adjust the work-life balance for facing the future challenges and rendering fruitful contributions to society with a high degree of devotion at works (Mohammad Iqbal 2023) and must not hesitate to discuss their mental health issues with family, friends, and colleagues and seek immediate professional help if the problem persists, without feeling any type of associated stigma due to their present mental health conditions and do not bother at all that what the others in the society will say and think about. Since maintaining personal health is one's topmost priority, as safety is first, but mental health is a must for wellbeing! At the last, just summon up the famous dialogue of the J R Tolkien's Fellowship of the Ring: "All we have to decide is what to do with the time, that is given us", or run through the recent Netflix feature film: Don't Look Up and act now, as our mental health is at stake! Act now, as time is running too fast, and we have only five years left on hand for reach the UNSD-SDG target 3.8: (Good health and well-being for all people). Act now, as by effective monitoring of our present system and related indicators working for achieving the SDG 3.8.1 (Service coverage), and 3.8.2 (Financial protection) targets, we can very well achieve the sustainability goal 3.8 good health and well-being for all where everyone can get the quality health without facing any hardship as now being deliberated by the world thought leaders for global well-being and envisaged by the UN.

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