

RESEARCH PAPER EFFECTS OF MENTAL HEALTH ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

The complex relationship between employee engagement and mental health is examined in this study report. Mental health is becoming more widely acknowledged as a crucial component affecting both corporate success and employee well-being in today's fast-paced workplace. This study examines the relationship between employee engagement levels and a number of mental health factors, including as stress, anxiety, depression, and general psychological well-being. Taking into account variables like job satisfaction, motivation, and productivity, the study will investigate the possible positive and negative relationships between mental health and engagement. It will also explore the fundamental processes—such as cognitive function, emotional control, and interpersonal relationships—through which mental health influences participation. By illuminating these relationships, this study hopes to offer insightful information to companies looking to create a welcoming and inclusive workplace that values staff mental health and encourages involvement. The results will aid in the creation of practical plans and initiatives that improve organizational performance and personal well-being.

I. INTRODUCTION

Background of the study:

Because it affects retention, creativity, and productivity, employee engagement is essential for corporate success. Strong commitment from engaged workers promotes a great workplace culture and better business results. However, participation is greatly impacted by mental health, thus it is imperative that organizations comprehend this relationship.

Emotional, psychological, and social well-being are all included in mental health, which influences relationships, stress management, and decision-making. Anxiety and depression are among the mental health issues that are brought on by factors including excessive stress, burnout, and a lack of work-life balance. These problems impair general performance, job happiness, and motivation.

Engagement among employees is a reflection of dedication, zeal, and proactive work practices. But mental illness can make it harder to concentrate, work together, and be enthusiastic. Because struggling employees experience disengagement, decreased productivity, and absenteeism, research indicates a clear correlation between mental health and engagement. By creating a culture of support, encouraging candid communication, lowering stigma, and offering mental health tools like therapy and flexible work schedules, organizations can mitigate these consequences.

Problem Statement:

Although research frequently ignores SMEs and vulnerable workforce categories like frontline staff and remote workers, employee mental health has a big impact on engagement. Due to a lack of funding, SMEs find it difficult to implement mental health initiatives, which leaves workers vulnerable to stress and disengagement. The majority of research employs cross-sectional methods, which leaves out long-term impacts on retention, productivity, and absenteeism. Furthermore, it's still unknown how beneficial workplace mental health programs are, especially when it comes to affordable solutions. Leadership is essential as workplaces change to accommodate remote labor and digital technologies. Longitudinal, context-specific research is necessary to create long-term plans for raising employee engagement and well-being.

Objectives of the study:

1. To examine how employee engagement is affected by mental health issues (such as stress, burnout, and anxiety).
2. To assess how well workplace mental health programs raise employee engagement levels.

3. To investigate how corporate culture and leadership might be used to alleviate mental health issues and promote involvement.
4. To provide scalable methods for raising staff morale by providing better mental health care.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1) **The World Health Organization** defines mental health as “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”. Over the years, researchers have developed variety of operational definitions. For example, Ford et al. suggest that mental health refers to an individual's affective experiences and behavior. Montano et al. define mental health as a continuum of neurophysiological and cognitive states related to thinking, mood and emotion, and behavior including negative and positive mental health states. Sharma et al. show that mental health is a positive expression, which is the absence of anxiety, social dysfunction and the presence of condition. Based on these definitions, scholars have developed a variety of measurement instruments that include both positive and negative terms in order to describe mental health more accurately. Although definitions and measurements differ among scholars, it is widely accepted that positive affective states are often described as ‘good’ mental health, while a state of emotional suffering such as depression and anxiety is often used to refer to ‘poor’ mental health.

2) **According to Ference (2009)** engaged employees work with passion and enthusiasm for performing their jobs properly. Mani (2011) has described that engaged employees put their all efforts and enthusiasm about their work and also care about the future of the organization. Larkin (2009) has stated that employee engagement has emerged as an important issue in recent years. It is termed as an umbrella concept. Engaged employees are not only happy in their job, but they also translate that satisfaction into higher productivity and profitability of the organization. Engaged employees think that their work can play an active role in making the organization a successful.

3) **Kim, Noh and Muntaner (2013)** conducted a study to look into the many sorts of emotional demands that homecare professional's face, as well as the link between these requirements and depression. Data was gathered from a randomly selected of 1,599 homecare employees in two surveys. Unequal treatment, client family abuse, unfulfilled care needs, client wellness, and emotional concealment all looked to be emotional demands for homecare professionals.

4) **Kang (2014)** has elucidated that engaged employees strengthen the organization's competitive advantage and generate favourable business environment. Therefore it is a challenging task for HR managers to create and maintain a healthy work environment that motivates the employees in their work and enable selection of the right employee at right place. Employee engagement is a technique to increase employee's productivity and reduce his/her intention to leave the organization. Haid and Sims, (2008) have reported that engaged employees understand the value of ensuring a positive customer experience and are more likely to demonstrate their commitment by delivering high quality products and services.

5) **Byrne et al., (2016)** in the research “The struggle with employee engagement: Measures and construct clarification using five samples.” In a study across 4 field samples, they examined 2 measures of engagement, the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) and the Job Engagement Scale (JES), in both factor structure and patterns of relationships with theoretically hypothesized antecedents and consequences. In a fifth field sample, they examined the construct-level relationships between engagement and related variables, while controlling for sources of measurement error (i.e., item-specific factor, scale-specific factor, random response, and transient). Results show that, although correlated, the JES and UWES are not interchangeable. The UWES, more so than the JES, assesses engagement with overlap from other job attitudes, requiring improvement in the measurement of engagement. They even offer guidance as to when to use each measure. Furthermore, by isolating the construct versus measurement of engagement relative to burnout, commitment, stress, and psychological meaningfulness and availability, they determined (a) the engagement construct is not the same as the opposite of burnout, warranting a re-evaluation of the opposite-of- burnout conceptualization of engagement; and (b) psychological meaningfulness and engagement are highly correlated and likely reciprocally related, necessitating a modification to the self-role expression conceptualization of engagement.

6) **Emotions and Mental Health at Workplace:** Mental health issues are becoming more prevalent among

customer-facing employees. Kang, Yang, Choi, Ham, Kang and Lee (2019) examined the symptoms of depression, sleep disturbance and anxiety, among workers and found that these symptoms are the result of client grievances and the containment of one's emotions at the workplace. The data for this study came from the fifth Korean Working Conditions Survey database, which was released in 2017. A total of 23,128 workers were included in the study (men, 11,007; women, 12,121). Results of the study revealed that emotional labor demanded more in customer-facing situations, as a result of dealing with client grievances as well as repressing one's emotions at the workplace, has been connected to the development of despair, sleep disruption and anxiety complaints in the working age people of Korea.

7) **Nguyen (2022)** determined the impact of employee attractiveness on employee engagement and employee performance in his study. In this work, a mixed-methods approach was used. Data was gathered using questionnaires from 937 respondents through survey questionnaires collected from 937 respondents who are working in Vietnam as employees. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling was used for data analysis. The findings of this research study demonstrated that the attractiveness of employees favours the levels of EE and EP variables. This research suggests that managers should foster a positive company culture that fosters relationships between co-workers, superiors, and subordinates as well as a cheerful, joyous, and friendly workplace.

Research Gap:

- **Lack of SME-Focused Research:** Most studies emphasize large corporations, overlooking SMEs, freelancers, and frontline workers, especially in non-Western regions.
- **Cultural and Regional Gaps:** Mental health perceptions and engagement levels vary globally, but research is primarily Western-centric, missing insights from developing regions.
- **Need for Longitudinal Studies:** Current research is mostly cross-sectional, lacking long-term analysis of how mental health influences employee engagement over time.
- **Quantitative Data Deficiency:** There is a shortage of standardized metrics to measure the direct impact of mental health on engagement indicators like productivity and absenteeism.
- **Unclear Effectiveness of Interventions:** The success of workplace mental health initiatives remains uncertain, particularly for SMEs with limited resources.
- **Impact of Evolving Work Environments:** Changes in remote work, digital tools, and leadership styles affect engagement and mental health, yet research on adaptive strategies is minimal.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design:

- **Research Type:** Descriptive Research Design
- **Research Approach:** Deductive approach
- **Research Method:** Survey Research Method

Sources of Data:

Primary Source

- **Questionnaires:** Structured surveys for employees and managers to assess mental well-being, engagement, and workplace support.
- **Interviews:** Semi-structured discussions with HR managers and well-being officers to explore mental health initiatives and their impact.
- **Observations:** Workplace monitoring to identify signs of stress, engagement levels, and responses to mental health concerns.

Secondary Source

- **Published Research & Academic Studies:** Studies on workplace mental health, engagement, and psychological theories explaining job performance.
- **HR Reports & Organizational Records:** Data on absenteeism, turnover, and performance to analyse mental health trends in workplaces.

- **Company Policies & Case Studies:** Analysis of wellness programs and engagement strategies to assess their effectiveness.

Data Collection Method

- **Questionnaire:** Structured and Standardised
- **Surveys:** Online (Google Form)
- **Focus Group Discussions:** Between small group of staff members
- **Secondary data:** Company reports, HR documents, and organizational statistics.

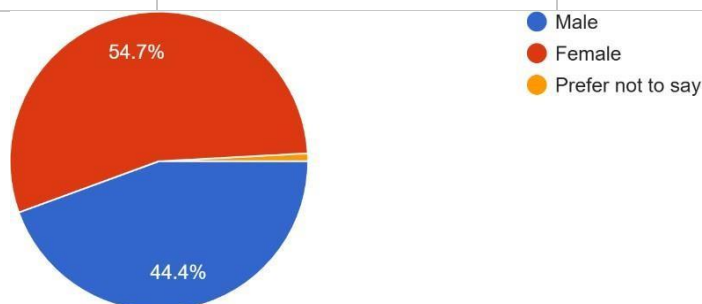
Sampling Strategy

- **Target population** - Employees and managers in selected company.
- **Sample size**- 117 respondents (employees and managers)
- **Sampling type** – Stratified Random Sampling ,

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

Q1) Gender

Options	Responses	Percentage
Male	52	44.4%
Female	64	54.7%
Prefer not to say	1	0.9%
Total	117	100%

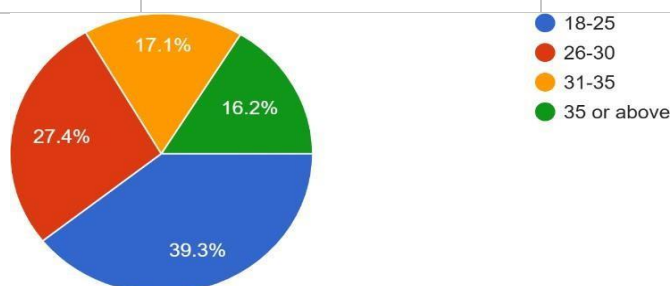


Interpretation:

The "Gender" pie chart, with 117 responses, illustrates a near-equal distribution between genders, although males hold a slight majority. Specifically, 64 males (54.7%) responded, while 52 females (44.4%) participated in the survey. A very small fraction, representing less than one percent (approximately 1 response), chose not to disclose their gender. This data indicates a relatively balanced gender representation in the survey, with a marginally higher male participation rate.

Q2) Age

Options	Responses	Percentage
18-25	46	39.3%
26-30	20	27.4%
31-35	19	17.1%
35 or above	32	16.2%
Total	117	100%

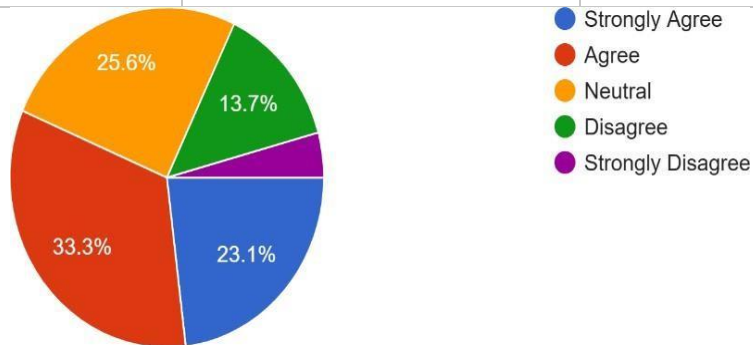


Interpretation:

The age distribution of 117 respondents is shown in the pie chart, which shows a mixed pattern. The largest group (46 respondents, 39.3%) falls within the 18–25 age range, suggesting a high representation of young people. People 35 years of age or over make up the second-largest category (32 responders, 27.4%), indicating a sizable proportion of elderly participants. The remaining percentage of respondents fall into the 26–30 age group (20 respondents, 17.1%) and the 31–35 age group (19 respondents, 16.2%), indicating a nearly similar distribution across both middle age groups. Overall, the data shows that the respondents' ages varied widely, with a noticeable concentration in the youngest and oldest age groups.

Q3) Do mental health challenges affect your ability to stay engaged at work?

Options	Responses	Percentage
Strongly agree	27	23.1%
Agree	39	33.3%
Neutral	30	25.6%
Disagree	16	13.7%
Strongly disagree	5	4.3%
Total	117	100%

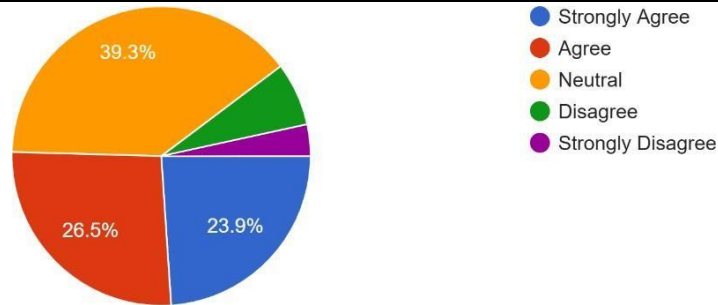


Interpretation:

Responses from 117 people about how mental health issues affect their involvement at work are summarized in the graph. With 39 respondents (33.3%), the largest group "Agree" that mental health issues have an impact on their capacity to remain involved. In second place, 30 people (25.6%) said they "Strongly Agree" with the statement. Of the respondents, 27 (23.1%) gave "neutral" answers. There are 16 people (13.7%) who "Disagree," and just 5 people (4.3%) who "Strongly Disagree." Overall, 69 respondents (58.9%) agreed or strongly agreed that mental health issues affect their ability to engage at work, indicating a high correlation between the two.

Q4) Do you believe mental health impacts your productivity at work?

Options	Responses	Percentage
Strongly agree	28	23.9%
Agree	31	26.5%
Neutral	46	39.3%
Disagree	8	6.8%
Strongly disagree	4	3.4%
Total	117	100%



Interpretation:

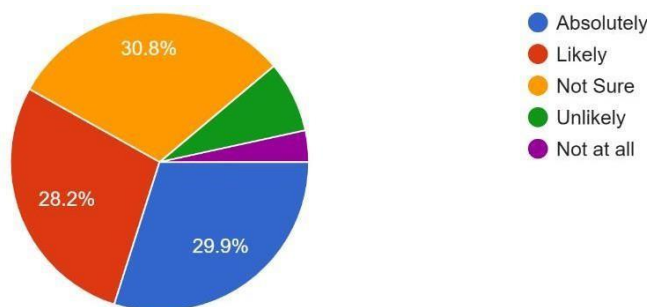
117 people's answers to the question, "Do you believe mental health impacts your productivity at work?" are shown in the graph.

46 people (39.3%) strongly agreed, demonstrating a strong belief in the link between productivity and mental health. 31 more (26.5%) agreed, albeit not as strongly. 28 respondents (23.9%) provided neutral answers. Just five respondents (4.3%) strongly disagreed, while only seven people (6%) disagreed.

In conclusion, the vast majority of respondents (77 out of 117, or 65.8%) agreed or strongly agreed that their mental health affects their ability to be productive at work. The combined agreement responses demonstrate the perceived significance of mental health in sustaining workplace productivity, even though a significant portion was neutral.

Q5) Do you think addressing mental health challenges could improve employee engagement in your organization?

Options	Responses	Percentage
Absolutely	35	29.9%
Likely	33	28.2%
Not sure	36	30.8%
Unlikely	9	7.7%
Not at all	4	3.4%
Total	117	100%



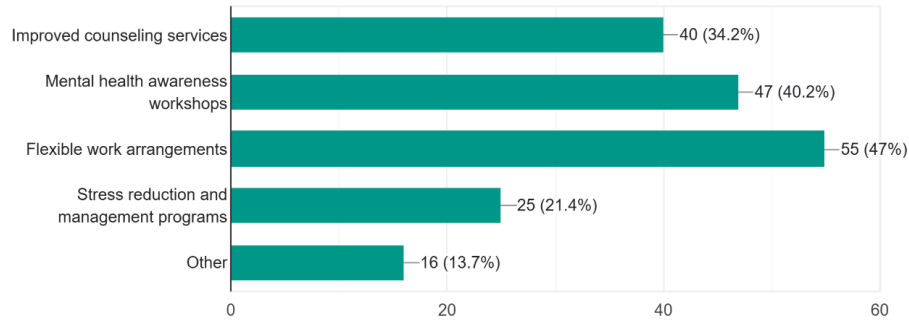
Interpretation:

The survey results from 117 participants about their propensity to suggest their company as a place to work are shown in the table.

A sizable percentage, 35 people (29.9%), said "Absolutely," suggesting that they would be highly likely to recommend their workplace. 33 respondents (28.2%), a somewhat smaller proportion, selected "Likely," indicating a favourable but less fervent opinion. However, with 36 responses (30.8%), the "Not sure" option had the biggest number of answers, suggesting some ambivalence or ambiguity. Just 4 people (3.4%) said they would "Not at all" suggest their company, compared to 9 people (7.7%) who indicated "Unlikely" referrals. In conclusion, although 58.1% of respondents choose "Absolutely" and "Likely" to show favourable attitudes, a sizable percentage (30.8%) is still unsure, and a lesser portion (11.1%) selects "Unlikely" and "Not at all" to

suggest unlikelihood. This indicates that the workforce is generally positive but not particularly enthusiastic, with a sizeable portion in need of additional involvement or development to promote stronger advocacy.

Q6) What mental health programs or initiatives would you suggest to enhance work quality and engagement at your workplace?



Interpretation:

117 respondents' recommendations for mental health initiatives or programs to improve job quality and participation are shown in the graph. With 55 responses, or 47% of the total, the most popular recommendation is "Flexible work arrangements." With 47 responses (40.2%), "mental health awareness workshops" are also very popular. The response "Improved counselling services" received 40 (34.2%). Twenty-five (21.4%) people responded to the question "Stress reduction and management programs". Last but not least, 16 respondents (13.7%) offered "Other" recommendations. In conclusion, the data shows a significant desire for both proactive and reactive mental health support in the workplace, with flexible work arrangements and workshops on mental health awareness coming in first, followed by better counselling services and stress management initiatives.

V. FINDINGS

Key Findings on the Effect of Mental Health on Employee Engagement

- **Mental Health & Productivity:** Poor mental health leads to lower productivity, absenteeism, and presenteeism, reducing overall work output.
- **Job Satisfaction & Engagement:** Employees with good mental health report higher job satisfaction, motivation, and commitment.
- **Mental Health & Disengagement:** Stress and emotional exhaustion reduce commitment and enthusiasm, leading to disengagement.
- **Psychological Safety:** A supportive work environment where employees feel safe discussing mental health boosts engagement.
- **Burnout & Engagement:** Chronic stress leads to disengagement, while strategies like workload management improve engagement.
- **Mental Health Programs:** Counseling, workshops, and Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) enhance employee well-being and engagement.
- **Managerial Support:** Training managers to recognize mental distress improves team morale and organizational commitment.
- **Work Environment & Engagement:** A positive, inclusive culture with strong social support enhances employee engagement.
- **Work-Life Balance:** Employees with a healthy work-life balance are more engaged and productive.
- **Stress & Anxiety Impact:** High stress reduces engagement, while coping strategies like mindfulness improve focus and motivation.
- **Retention & Mental Health:** Poor mental health increases turnover, whereas mental health initiatives improve retention.
- **Career Growth & Engagement:** Opportunities for career development boost mental well-being and job commitment.

- Mental Health & Organizational Culture: Companies prioritizing mental well-being see higher engagement and motivation.
- Leadership & Well-being: Leaders who model good mental health practices encourage a healthier and more engaged workforce.
- Empathetic Leadership: Supportive and empathetic leaders improve employee morale and workplace engagement.
- Organizational Performance: Companies promoting mental health see better productivity, customer service, and goal achievement.

VI. LIMITATIONS

- Sample Bias: Generalizability may be diminished by an exclusive focus on a particular sector, organization, or demography.
- Self-Reported Data: Recall mistakes or social desirability might skew surveys.
- Correlation vs. Causality: While there may be a correlation between mental health and engagement, there isn't a clear causal relationship.
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- Cross-Sectional vs. Longitudinal Study: Long-term studies are expensive and complicated, while single-time studies do not analyze trends.
- Assessing Mental Health: Current instruments might not adequately account for various mental health issues and how they affect participation.
- Cultural and Organizational Differences: Perceptions of mental health and levels of participation may be influenced by workplace culture and regional considerations.
- Confounding variables: Workload, leadership, and job security are a few examples of factors that might have an impact on engagement and mental health.
- Ethical and Privacy Concerns: Because of stigma or concerns about confidentiality, employees may be reluctant to provide information about mental health.

VII. CONCLUSION

- While good mental health increases engagement, poor mental health lowers productivity, work satisfaction, and retention.
- Wellness initiatives and supportive work environments improve employee wellbeing and engagement.
- Resilient and engaged workers with sound mental health are better able to endure obstacles at work.
- Engagement and mental health have an impact on one another, generating a cycle that can either improve or worsen both.
- Putting mental health first improves overall business performance by lowering burnout, absenteeism, and disengagement.

VIII. SUGGESTIONS

- Establish a Helpful Workplace: Raise awareness of mental health issues, provide EAPs, and lessen the stigma associated with asking for assistance.
- Offer Flexible Work Arrangements: To improve work-life balance, offer remote work, hybrid models, and flexible hours.
- Offer Managers Mental Health Training: Prepare leaders to identify, assist, and candidly address mental health concerns.
- Encourage wellness initiatives by putting in place stress management classes, mindfulness training, and mental health resources.
- By matching jobs to skills and promoting breaks, you can avoid burnout and promote job satisfaction and work-life balance.
- Frequent Monitoring and Feedback: To monitor and enhance mental health programs, hold surveys and feedback sessions.

Assure Clear Communication: Keep mental health policy and support networks open and transparent.

- Encourage Social Connections: To lessen loneliness and boost spirits, encourage cooperation and teamwork.
- Provide Opportunities for Career Development: To increase involvement, offer skill-building initiatives and growth pathways.
- Address organizational factors by resolving disagreements at work, defining responsibilities, and improving task management.

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