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THE IMPACT OF EMPLOYEE MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE

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ABSTRACT

Over the years, numerous studies have highlighted various strategies for managing the mental well-being of employees in organizational settings. Despite this, there remains a lack of comprehensive understanding regarding how employee mental health impacts essential aspects of the workplace, including learning systems, participatory practices, expressions of gratitude, and emotional dynamics among employees. The primary objective of this research is to explore the broader implications of employee mental health on workplace processes and outcomes.

This study adopts a systematic literature review approach, analyzing 50 carefully selected and screened articles based on their relevance to the topic and key findings. The review uncovers diverse interpretations of both mental health and gratitude, indicating that mental health is predominantly understood through experiences and emotional responses, while workplace learning is often viewed as learning acquired through participatory practices and collaborative experiences. This study further outlines the intricate connections between mental health and workplace learning, revealing that employee mental health plays an active role in either facilitating or hindering professional development and learning in the workplace.

Interestingly, some research highlights a paradoxical relationship where gratitude can, in certain contexts, negatively influence workplace mental health. Additionally, mental health significantly affects employees' emotions, influencing workplace relationships, job satisfaction, and overall productivity. This paper proposes that organizations prioritize the mental well-being of their workforce by adopting effective human resource management strategies. Future research is encouraged to explore emerging trends, identify research gaps, and offer empirical evidence on this increasingly vital issue.

Keywords: employee mental health, workplace learning system, participatory practices, gratitude, employee emotions.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the importance of mental health within the workplace has drawn considerable attention from both scholars and practitioners. There is an increasing recognition that employee well-being is not only a personal concern but also a critical factor influencing organizational performance, workplace culture, and employee retention. Moreover, the role of mental health in shaping learning, decision-making, teamwork, and leadership has become an area of growing interest within the field of organizational behavior and workplace psychology.

Traditionally, workplaces were regarded as rational, task-focused environments, where employees were expected to perform their duties while leaving personal emotions and mental challenges outside the professional setting. This historical perspective was built on the assumption that human behavior in organizations is largely guided by rationality, logic, and strategic planning, disregarding the psychological and emotional experiences of

individuals at work. However, this view has undergone a profound transformation as contemporary research increasingly emphasizes the importance of mental health in shaping organizational dynamics and employee performance.

Recent studies have conclusively demonstrated that employee mental health directly influences workplace behavior, productivity, and leadership effectiveness. In high-pressure environments, the capacity of individuals to manage stress, maintain emotional stability, and foster positive interactions has a profound impact on organizational outcomes. Workplace psychology and organizational studies now prioritize mental health as a core determinant of both individual and collective success within organizations.

Despite this growing awareness, there remains a noticeable gap in the research focusing on the nuanced aspects of employee mental health, particularly in relation to work-based learning systems, participatory practices, and emotional well-being. Past studies have primarily concentrated on stress and well-being, yet the intricate ways in which mental health intersects with gratitude, workplace emotions, and collaborative practices have received limited attention.

In the Indonesian context, the issue is especially significant. Data from the 2013 national health survey revealed that the prevalence of serious mental disorders in Indonesia reached 1.7 per thousand individuals. This means that, statistically, approximately 12 out of every 1,000 Indonesians face serious mental health challenges. The complexities of mental health extend beyond medical or psychological concerns — they are deeply intertwined with cultural, spiritual, and social dimensions. Cultural beliefs and values play a significant role in both the onset and recovery process of mental health disorders, influencing how individuals experience, express, and address psychological distress.

The World Health Organization's intercultural studies have shown that individuals in developing countries, such as Indonesia, often have more favorable short- and long-term outcomes when managing mental disorders compared to those in developed nations. This observation highlights the potential influence of cultural factors, communal support systems, and alternative coping strategies rooted in traditional practices.

Given this background, it is essential to review existing research to understand the current landscape and identify areas that require further exploration. The primary aim of this study is to assess the diversity of existing research, identify emerging trends, uncover research gaps, and propose future directions for exploring employee mental health and its underlying issues. Through a comprehensive literature review, this paper not only highlights key findings from existing studies but also investigates the relationship between employee mental health and learning systems within the workplace.

Furthermore, this research examines the role of participatory practices, gratitude, and employee emotions in shaping mental health outcomes at work. It presents evidence of how mental health challenges can either support or obstruct workplace learning, collaboration, and innovation. By discussing these findings and offering recommendations, this paper aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how organizations can enhance employee well-being and optimize workplace productivity through strategic mental health management.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Importance of Mental Health in the Workplace

Employee mental health plays a critical role in ensuring organizational effectiveness and maintaining high standards of work quality. It directly affects productivity, interpersonal relationships, decision-making, and employee engagement. Recognizing and addressing

mental health is not merely about preventing illness but also about promoting a culture of psychological well-being that contributes to the overall growth and sustainability of an organization.

Several studies have emphasized the growing relevance of mental health management in professional environments. Given that the majority of adults spend a significant portion of their lives at work, it is unsurprising that the workplace has become a central arena for mental health issues to emerge, either as a result of work demands or as a platform for mental health interventions. When left unaddressed, poor mental health can lead to absenteeism, diminished work quality, disengagement, and increased turnover, all of which negatively affect both employees and employers.

This review categorizes the factors influencing mental health into three primary areas: work pressure, long working hours, and the impact of gratitude. Each of these factors plays a significant role in shaping an employee's emotional and psychological state at work.

Work Pressure and Its Psychological Impacts

Work pressure has consistently been identified as one of the most prominent factors contributing to poor mental health among employees. Work environments characterized by high levels of stress, demanding deadlines, multitasking expectations, and unclear job roles can place employees under immense psychological strain. The emotional burden generated by excessive work demands not only reduces productivity but also leads to physical exhaustion, increased mistakes, irritability, and emotional withdrawal.

A wide range of empirical studies supports this connection. Ugwu et al. (2020) conducted a survey on multinational company employees and found that responsibilities and career advancement pressures significantly increased stress levels. Employees frequently experience mental fatigue and emotional exhaustion when their responsibilities exceed manageable limits. Roe and Ziljlsatra (2019) confirmed that high-stress work conditions require effective stress management strategies to prevent long-term psychological consequences.

Research by Ohari et al. (2019) on government auditors in Malaysia demonstrated that time pressure directly impacts job performance, with persistent stress undermining both mental and physical health. Similarly, Dolcos and Daley (2020) noted that workplace stress reduces work accuracy and increases fatigue, which negatively affects both performance and health.

Interestingly, some studies reveal a more complex dynamic. Kundi, Sardar, and Badar (2021) suggested that employees with high emotional stability might perceive work pressure not solely as a burden, but as a motivating challenge that can increase organizational commitment. This insight highlights the moderating role of personality traits in how individuals experience and respond to work-related stress.

Moreover, HR management practices play a vital role in mitigating the negative impacts of work pressure. Dundon (2021) pointed out that human resource policies that promote fairness, job clarity, and emotional support can greatly improve employee well-being. Bronkhorst (2019) further suggested that fostering a positive work safety climate can help prevent emotional burnout, promoting both physical and psychological safety in unpredictable or demanding work environments.

The cumulative evidence suggests that while work pressure is unavoidable in most organizations, its psychological impact can be managed through supportive work environments, effective leadership, emotional stability, and organizational interventions that prioritize mental health.

Long Working Hours and Employee Well-Being

Another significant contributor to mental health challenges in the workplace is the length of time

employees are required to work. Extended working hours, particularly when combined with insufficient rest, can exacerbate stress levels and lead to a host of physical and psychological issues. Long work hours reduce opportunities for relaxation, social interaction, and family time, thereby disrupting the work-life balance that is essential for emotional well-being.

Schiller et al. (2017) observed that prolonged working hours lead to fatigue, poor sleep quality, and reduced mental health. Shields (2019) further found that women working excessively long hours were more likely to experience symptoms of depression. Among men, extended work hours were associated with unhealthy lifestyle choices such as increased smoking and lack of physical activity, both of which indirectly affect mental health.

Supporting these findings, Heitmann (2021) and Johnson and Lipscomb (2020) emphasized that irregular and excessive work schedules contribute to acute emotional stress, fatigue, and anxiety. Virtanen et al. (2021) conducted a prospective study involving over 2,600 employees and revealed that long working hours are a significant risk factor for the onset of depressive symptoms, anxiety, and psychological burnout.

Choi et al. (2021) examined over 7,000 workers in South Korea and found a pronounced link between working hours and moderate to severe depression, particularly among women and lower-income workers. This underscores the importance of regulating working hours to safeguard employee mental health.

In recognition of this issue, certain companies have started adopting progressive work policies. Amazon India, for example, has implemented a strict no-work policy beyond regular office hours to help employees maintain a healthy work-life balance. This move aligns with growing global awareness that employee well-being should be prioritized over continuous availability and excessive workloads.

The evidence strongly suggests that organizations need to rethink the structure of working hours and implement flexible policies that respect employees' personal time and need for recovery. Encouraging recreation, physical activity, and hobbies has also been identified as effective in reducing work-related stress and improving overall mental health.

The Role of Gratitude in Enhancing Mental Health

While work pressure and long working hours tend to have negative effects on mental health, the concept of gratitude offers a more positive angle. Gratitude, defined as a sense of appreciation for what one has or experiences, has been shown to foster positive emotions and strengthen personal resilience against stress and adversity.

Several studies demonstrate that employees who consistently practice gratitude tend to experience higher levels of happiness, job satisfaction, and overall well-being. Emmons and Crumpler (2001) argued that cultivating gratitude contributes to a more fulfilling, meaningful, and productive life. McCullough (2002) found that grateful individuals report more positive emotions, greater life satisfaction, and enhanced social relationships compared to those who are less grateful.

Research also indicates that gratitude is linked to prosocial behaviors, empathy, and tolerance in workplace settings. Highly grateful individuals tend to be more cooperative, supportive, and less materialistic (Snyder & Lopez, 2001). By focusing on the positive aspects of their jobs, employees are better able to cope with work-related stress and remain emotionally balanced.

Bono et al. (2020) showed that gratitude interventions helped lower-level employees manage challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, while Cregg and Cheavens (2020) demonstrated that simple gratitude practices reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety in private employees. Moreover, Wood and Skeggs

(2020) found a significant link between gratitude and improved subjective well-being among employees.

Gratitude not only enhances individual mental health but also positively impacts workplace dynamics. Employees who appreciate their work, colleagues, and opportunities are more likely to engage in constructive behaviors, show empathy, and maintain positive relationships. These factors contribute to a healthier organizational culture and improve overall morale.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a literature review methodology, a widely recognized qualitative research approach that involves the systematic collection, evaluation, and interpretation of previously published academic work related to a specific topic. A literature review enables researchers to synthesize existing knowledge, identify patterns and contradictions, and highlight research gaps, ultimately offering a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of a research area.

In conducting this study, the authors collected secondary data from a diverse range of published sources, including journal articles, academic books, conference papers, and organizational reports. The selection of these sources was guided by their relevance to the topic of employee mental health in the workplace and their focus on factors such as work pressure, long working hours, and gratitude.

The data collection process involved the use of digital academic databases, such as Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and reputable online journals. The primary keywords used for the search included "employee mental health," "workplace stress," "gratitude in the workplace," "long working hours," and "employee well-being." This keyword strategy was specifically designed to capture a broad and representative range of studies addressing the mental health experiences of employees in different industries and cultural contexts.

To ensure accuracy and relevance, a systematic filtering process was applied to the initial search results. The steps taken in the selection process are summarized as follows:

Step 0: An initial keyword search using the terms TITLE-ABS-KEY ("employee mental health *") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ("gratitude *") returned 75 articles.

Step 1: Duplicate entries were removed, reducing the total to 69 articles.

Step 2: Studies unrelated to the relationship between work pressure and mental health were excluded, leaving 51 articles.

Step 3: Studies lacking a connection between long working hours and mental health were excluded, resulting in 54 remaining articles.

Step 4: Articles without a clear link between gratitude and mental health were removed, maintaining 54 relevant studies.

Step 5: Articles that were inaccessible due to availability restrictions or language barriers were eliminated, leaving 48 articles.

Step 6: Additional relevant studies were identified through forward and backward citation searches, adding 2 more articles and bringing the final total to 50 articles.

This final pool of 50 carefully selected studies formed the foundation of this research. Each article was thoroughly reviewed, and key findings were systematically extracted, categorized, and compared. The descriptive narrative method was used to analyze the data, allowing the researchers to synthesize findings, identify common patterns, and draw meaningful conclusions regarding the impact of mental health in workplace settings.

The primary research variables in this study include:

- Employee mental health
- Work pressure

- Working hours
- Gratitude
- Employee emotions and well-being

The research design begins with identifying a contemporary problem, in this case, mental health issues in the world.

DISCUSSION

Based on the comprehensive review of literature, this study offers valuable insights into the complex relationship between employee mental health and workplace factors such as work pressure, working hours, and gratitude. It is evident that mental health not only affects employees on an individual level but also has a far-reaching influence on organizational productivity, employee retention, and workplace culture.

The findings confirm that work pressure is a dominant factor contributing to psychological strain in the workplace. When job demands are excessive and accompanied by limited autonomy, vague job descriptions, or unrealistic expectations, employees are prone to experiencing stress, depression, and emotional exhaustion. The studies reviewed consistently show that work pressure diminishes employee performance, reduces work accuracy, increases fatigue, and triggers negative emotions. Importantly, employees who possess high levels of emotional stability tend to perceive such pressures as challenges rather than threats, enabling them to maintain better mental health under stress.

The role of working hours emerged as another crucial factor influencing employee mental well-being. The evidence clearly indicates that long, irregular, and excessive working hours not only disrupt employees' work-life balance but also lead to fatigue, poor sleep quality, anxiety, and symptoms of depression. Studies in various cultural contexts, including Indonesia, Canada, South Korea, and Australia, all point to similar trends. While some organizations have begun addressing this issue by enforcing work boundaries, many workplaces still underestimate the damaging long-term effects of overworking their employees. The research highlights the importance of designing humane work schedules that allow time for rest, family, and personal interests — essential components for preserving mental and emotional health.

Interestingly, this study also emphasizes the positive role of gratitude as a psychological buffer against workplace stressors. Employees who practice gratitude report higher levels of happiness, resilience, and optimism. Gratitude enhances positive emotions, strengthens social bonds, and fosters supportive work environments. The studies reveal that grateful employees are better equipped to cope with professional challenges, more satisfied with their work, and less likely to experience depression or anxiety.

A particularly significant insight is that gratitude is not merely an individual trait but can be cultivated and encouraged within organizations. Gratitude-based interventions, recognition programs, and regular appreciation practices can contribute to building positive organizational cultures. In this context, gratitude emerges as a valuable tool for organizations seeking to boost employee mental health and overall workplace morale.

The cumulative findings of this study suggest that employee mental health is shaped by a combination of job-related stressors and personal emotional resources. While work pressure and long hours pose substantial risks, gratitude and emotional resilience offer protective factors that can be strengthened through organizational support systems and proactive human resource practices.

Organizational Implications:

For companies, the findings underscore the importance of integrating mental health initiatives into workplace management strategies. Human resource policies should prioritize workload management, reasonable working hours, employee counseling services, mental health awareness programs, and

workplace well-being initiatives. Simultaneously, fostering a culture of gratitude and appreciation can significantly improve employee morale, job satisfaction, and organizational loyalty.

Theoretical Contributions:

This study expands existing mental health literature by highlighting the combined effect of external (work demands) and internal (gratitude) factors on employee mental well-being. It adds nuance to the understanding that while job stressors cannot always be eliminated, organizations can mitigate their effects by promoting positive psychological habits and creating supportive workplace environments.

LIMITATIONS

While this study contributes important insights into employee mental health, it is not without limitations. The primary limitation lies in the research methodology, which relies exclusively on a qualitative literature review approach. Although this method allows for comprehensive synthesis and thematic analysis, it lacks the empirical verification that primary, quantitative research can offer.

Additionally, the findings are based on existing studies, many of which vary in sample size, cultural context, industry focus, and methodological rigor. As a result, while the study identifies consistent patterns and relationships, it cannot generalize the conclusions to all organizational settings without further empirical testing.

Another limitation is the focus on three primary factors work pressure, working hours, and gratitude. While these are undoubtedly critical elements influencing mental health, other important variables such as leadership styles, organizational justice, workplace bullying, financial security, career development opportunities, and personal coping mechanisms were not extensively covered in this review.

For future research, it is recommended to:

- Conduct quantitative, survey-based or experimental studies to validate these findings with statistical significance.
- Explore additional workplace factorsand their interaction with mental health, including job security, interpersonal conflict, and digital communication pressures.
- Investigate cross-cultural differences to understand how cultural beliefs, values, and norms affect the experience and management of mental health in the workplace.
- Assess the long-term effects of gratitude-based interventions and well-being programs on employee mental health and organizational outcomes.
- Such future studies would enhance the empirical strength and practical relevance of this research area, providing deeper and more actionable insights for organizations and policymakers.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, mental health is a critical concern in modern workplaces, directly affecting both the performance and well-being of employees. This study has examined the impacts of three major factors work pressure, long working hours, and gratitude on employee mental health based on a broad literature review.

The evidence highlights that work pressure significantly contributes to employee stress, emotional fatigue, and lowered job satisfaction. Without proper management, high-pressure environments can damage employees' mental and emotional well-being. However, emotionally stable employees tend to perceive work pressure differently, viewing it as a challenge that drives engagement rather than a threat to their mental health.

The issue of long working hours was also shown to have profound negative effects on mental health. Employees working extended hours

consistently report higher levels of stress, anxiety, depression, and dissatisfaction. This pattern is consistent across gender, age, and cultural contexts. It reinforces the necessity for organizations to carefully manage employee workloads and working hours to support mental well-being.

On a more optimistic note, gratitude surfaced as a protective factor that enhances mental health by promoting happiness, positive emotions, and resilience. Employees who regularly practice gratitude are more likely to enjoy their work, build stronger relationships, and manage stress effectively. Encouraging gratitude within workplace cultures can lead to significant improvements in employee well-being and organizational health.

Taken together, this study illustrates the intricate balance between workplace demands and psychological resilience factors. It suggests that while stressors may be inherent to many jobs, their effects can be mitigated through organizational interventions, supportive leadership, emotionally intelligent human resource practices, and the cultivation of positive emotions such as gratitude.

The findings provide valuable guidance for companies seeking to foster mentally healthy work environments and offer a useful foundation for future research into the dynamics of workplace mental health.

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