Enhancing Employee Well-being: Issues and Concern for Virtual Work Style

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ABSTRACT

The demand for virtual work is augmenting day by day. In the cognizance of a recent event which is pandemic demand of virtual work is the epicentre of all business. Many organizations want to adopt this policy to abate the cost of physical location. Despite the demand for virtual work employee well-being is also a growing concern for businesses. Employee well-being is a crucial part and if look at from a business perspective, the contribution of every employee is related to the success of an overall organization. India has limited amount of resources, with the help of sustainable policies we can use resources prudently. Most of the working employees are facing health issues in this new working style. In this paper dimensions of well-being are the most important part of the paper, which is Physical, Mental and social. The purpose of this paper is to study well-being and its effect on an employee in a virtual working style. The present study helps to understand the effect of well-being on an individual as well as an organization. The nature of this study is conceptual and descriptive. A significant part of this study emphasizes on causes of well-being at virtual work which will help to cope with well-being problems. This paper will help to gain insight into the practices to enhance the well-being of the employees at virtual work.

Keywords: *Virtual Work, Well-being, Well-being Dimension, Organization, Virtual work style.*

1.0 Introduction

Virtual employees are individual who spent the majority of their work time away from their office. Employee included in this group were customer service work, sales, software development, Human Resources, Management and training. In term of managing virtual work employee, a number of advantages and challenges have been identified.

The management process of virtual working includes both positive and negative aspects. Positive aspects are such flexibility, low operating cost and Less Absenteeism. Negative aspects on the other hand are isolation and lack of Work ambience. So, Negative issues create substandard well-being in employee. The overall effect of negative issues affects individual's employee as well as the organization.

A virtual working employee also feels socially isolated from their colleges because face to face interaction aid employees to build their social relationship among peers. Evidence also suggests that long term virtual work style negativity affects the relationship among the co-workers. Demand of virtual work is augmenting day by day. Most of the Businesses are planning to go for this robust plan because technology allows them to work from any place, which offers flexibility to the employee and abate the cost for employer. Virtual work environment has pros and cons so, employee well-being is a crucial part which can help overcome the cons of this concept. If we look at it from business perspective then contribution of every employee is directly related to the success of the organization. Virtual work is not only in demand but holds a better, future scope.

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Despite the demand for virtual work, employee well-being is also a growing concern for businesses. Virtual work policy can take its toll on employee's mental health and well-being as this drastic change can cause a feeling of isolation. Employee well-being helps the organization to improve the well-being of the workforce to enhance productivity. Most of the countries are trying to support virtual work policy because we have a limited amount of resources so, prudent use will lead to success.

2.0 Why Virtual Work has gained attention?

In cognizance of the recent event of a pandemic, work from home has been operated. For some employee this pattern is new and they are not able to balance personal and professional life. Due to low social connectivity, stress and physical health affected the performance of employees. This policy has gained attention in some businesses because of its less operating cost and future perspective. Virtual work has cons and pros such as it provides flexibility to the employees but it has some degrading effect on well-being. Due to its future perspective, it has gained attention.

2.1 Well-being dimension at virtual work
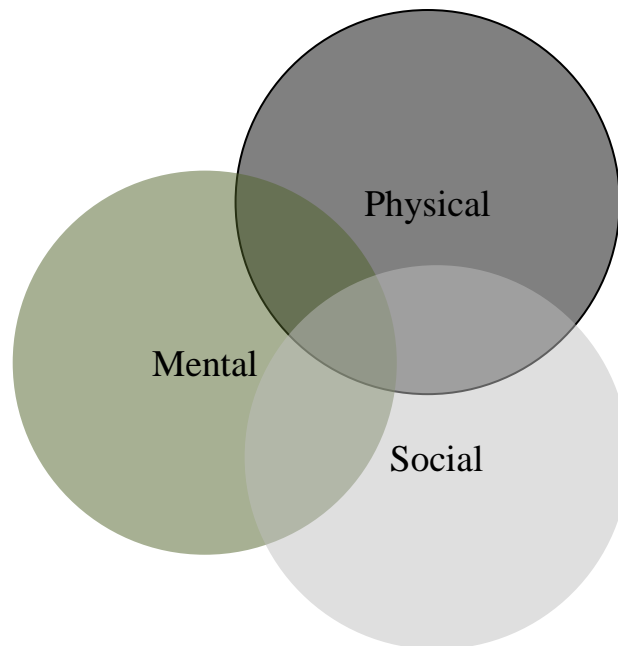
2.1.1. Physical well-being-

A balance of physical activity and nutrition that permits you to stay active and your body functions at its best. Physical wellness is not just the absence of illness due to hectic lifestyle, the chaos of labour, appointments, errands we barely notice our body gets exhausted which hampers the power of the body to take care of health, quality of life that helps us to perform our day to day activities. Physical well-being helps the body to stay away from illness, fatigue and risk of injuries. Physical wellness depends on healthy habits which help to stay body salubrious. If the employee will maintain good physical well-being then it will make them productive and self-esteemed.

2.1.2. Mental well-being-

Definition of Mental well-being isn't universal. It has different perception depends on individual, group, culture. Mental well-being is a crucial part of an employee's life because all the work done by the employee affects the overall organization. On an individual basis, the Mental well-

being of employees in virtual work gets affected a lot. It is key to augment the productivity of the employees. To understand this domain, we need the classify this domain into two major components:

- Cognitive Well-being: Cognitive well is the process of gaining knowledge and comprehension. The process consists of thinking, knowing, remembering, judging and problem-solving. Some people have this ability on the other hand it can be developed. But some factors can deteriorate this ability i.e. stress, anxiety etc.
- Emotional well-being: Emotional health is the ability to accept and manage feelings through challenge and change. It includes emotional intelligence and emotional regulation.

2.1.3. Social well-being

Social well-being means social connections and relationships. So, an employee needs to have a good social connection. The reason behind social connections is its human nature Social well-being focuses on social connectivity and supporting the social system in the workplace. Social connectivity at the workplace help to eradicate stress and negative effect of work pressure. social well-being individual need to build Gratitude, kindness, and communication. Social skills make it easier for us to have positive interactions with others, helping us to feel less lonely, angry, or disconnected. When we have developed our social well-being, we feel more meaningfully connected to others.

Causes of substandard well-being at virtual work

1. Employee isolation
2. The paucity of work ambience
3. Mental stress Augmentation
4. Less communication among colleges
5. Less physical movement
6. Lack of Motivation and Employee Engagement
7. Overlapping of personal and professional life
8. No proper assessment of employees i.e. competency, performance and achievement.

3.0 Literature Review

In research on Remote work and well-being, conducted on work from home during the pandemic and find how their health affected by loneliness, exhaustion, stress, and anxiety. In the result found that these are certainly related to certain personality traits and work context.

Mamta Gaur, N. Akbar Jan and A.K.Subramani in their research Impact Of Organizational Climate On Organization Citizenship Behaviour With Respect To Automotive Industries At Ambattur Industrial Estate, Chennai identified that Employees in the organizations have various attitudes that affect their behaviour in the organization. Organizational climate is the important determinant which may have the impact on their psychological environment and work-related attitude, whereas Organizational citizenship behaviour has a determinant role in the organizational process and in changing the traditional environment into a dynamic and efficient environment as one of the new concepts of organizational behaviour management which puts emphasis upon employees and climate of the organization.

Mamta Gaur, N. Akbar Jan and A.K.Subramani in their research Factors Impelling Job Satisfaction identified a major challenge faced by all IT organizations is job satisfaction among its employees, it would be beneficial for organizations and managers to make conscious efforts to develop human resource policies that are in alignment to the needs of the employees to motivate the employees. The job satisfaction is derived by well-being of the individual. The findings of this study have also pointed out that the key items in HR practices such as financial rewards, career advancement opportunities, working environment, training and development activities and

interpersonal relationship are having positive association with the employees' job satisfaction in the selected IT companies. It is imperative for IT companies and their managers to review their practices to strengthen the bond between employees and the organization, maintain good levels of motivation, increase job satisfaction(wellbeing) that would result in increase in commitment and minimize employee turnover.

Richard Gravelling (2020) conducted a study on "The Mental health of workers in the digital era" on how technical innovation affecting the mental well-being of workers and found that two most problem of muscle skeletal disorders and problems related to psychological are most prominent. Such a burn out psychological stress, psychological overload and fatigue.

Mamta Gaur conducted a study on Strong Social Impact and Creating Wealth of Wellness for its Customers & Consumers-a Focus Area to Sustain and Excel in International Business Competition- A case of Tupperware and found that as India experiences boom times, Tupperware has figured out how to share in the boom. The lessons from its success—focusing on a core business competency with a strong social impact in all spheres of well-being of individual, physical as well as social, promoting women economic and social empowerment, adapting to local costs, capitalizing on domestic talent, staying committed, and matching resources with the market's potential—could help multinationals in any industry win in Asia's emerging markets. Today, Tupperware is rated among India's top 3 percent of brands across all categories and segments by Super brands, a well-respected and independent organization, this status could be achieved only because of its strong well-being social impact.

Mamta Gaur and Narges Ebrahimi in their work on Understanding Workplace Relationships - With Special Reference to Superior-Subordinate Relationship – An Important Dimension Having Impact on The Success, Growth and Performance of the Employees and Organization highlighted that Workplace relationship is a very vital phenomenon at the workplace, particularly, the relationship between a leader/superior & his subordinates. A conscientious leader/superior can have a major impact on the performance of his subordinates. To get maximum performance out of his subordinates, he, therefore, has to set an example before them which they can emulate. An effective leader recognizes each person as an individual with different values & beliefs. He recognizes that influences, such as, childhood experiences, ethnic background & religious heritage determine an individual's well-being, personality, values & beliefs. This also ensures productive work on the part of the employees, so essential in today's fiercely competitive environment.

4.0 Methodology

The objective of this paper are:
1. To understand the concept of well-being and the effect of virtual work,
2. To understand the effect of virtual working style on the well-being of the individual as well as organization.

The paper is based on secondary data collected from the past work of various researchers, books, articles, journals etc. Descriptive and Conceptual approach used to analyze the data.

5.0 Data Analysis & Findings

The effect of degrading well-being, on Individual and Organization:

5.1 Individual

5.1.1 Stress

The role of stress is massive in anyone's well-being. Workplace stress can be two types,

physical and psychological. Causes of physical stress includes noise, poor lighting, poor work layout, and bad working postures. Psychological factors are most dominating in the well-being of employee which includes high job demands, poor job control, poor work design and structure, less social connectivity and job insecurity. Stress of virtual work, not only affects the employees but also has unfavorable consequence on the organization's performance also. The effects of job-related strain are evident in employee well-being.

5.1.2 Health issues

Working days are exhausting, and due to the lack of time management and other issues employees are not able to take care of proper, health. Such as high blood pressure, Allergies, High cholesterol, Back pain, Gastrointestinal disease, Headache, these are the most common health issues among the employees. Ignorance of these small issues can lead to detrimental effects. Some people forget to take an adequate amount of hydration due to hectic schedule and the virtual work environment doesn't provide any reminder on the other hand the physical working environment has regular breaks to relax and work on somebody requirements.

5.1.3 Unhealthy habits

This is the most common issue in the employee due to hectic schedule. Unhealthy eating habits can deteriorate physical well-being. Most of the employees engaged in alcohol and smoking habits. Which can affect the productivity level of the employees. One of the small Unhealthy habits can lead to serious consequences i.e. If someone has stress or work pressure, they opt for any such habit as smoking which harmful for well-being.

5.1.4 Emotional exhaustion

Personal and Professional life at the same place leads to emotional exhaustion. Which includes feeling Ove, emotionally drained, lacking energy, empty & unmotivated and unable to meet your daily demands. You may feel an increase in irritability, notice increased conflict in your relationships, or feel like you want to crawl into your bed and never get out. You feel stuck, exhausted and hopeless.

5.5.1 Isolation

Friendships and social interactions are basic psychological requirements for human well-being. With virtual work, employees "lose that incredible ability to gather and unite", So virtual work can't provide the original atmosphere of work. The biggest hurdles of isolation can when things aren't going according to the plan, there is no one to help you to gain the perspective. You can become a less effective worker as co-workers find you less approachable and stop collaborating. Isolation has more cons because if one is lonely then they start to lose their social skills and for any organization, social connectivity is a crucial part. Every organization seeks the best teamwork among their employees.

5.1.6 Lack of work environment

Employees are not able to switch off the work. Not knowing how to balance work and life because in a Physical working environment there is fix time and routine that every employee has to follow except in some cases. Virtual work provides flexibility in work but without prudent use of time management, it can make things complicated. Employees need to concentrate and focus to produce required results which are good as compare to the physical work environment. It also doesn't provide good working condition such as less disturbance, no unwanted noise, etc. In-office environment every employee has the same goal and purpose which isn't present in virtual work. Lack of equipment and security is a hurdle among virtual employees such as High-speed internet, sensitive company information access, fax/ printer machine and other equipment.

5.2 Organization

5.2.1 Low productivity

For any organization, productivity is the key to competitive advantage. It will be a risk for any organization in productivity with all temptation such as mental pressure, emotional exhaustion and other diseases. They can create a distraction and hamper the productivity of the virtual working employee. Productivity is subjective which can differ from person to person. But in general, terms degrading well-being is the most dominating factor which can hamper the productivity of the individual. If the productivity is not up to the marks then the organization will not get their desired result of work. For the employee amid work pressure and hectic schedule, it is difficult to cope with these problems. It is the responsibility of the employer to keep track of their employees and the factors which is responsible for it.

5.2.2 Less employee engagement

Employee engagement is also a looming factor in the virtual era. Most organizations are trying to introduced different policy to engage their employees. Virtual working style is not able to engage the employees in their organization. Mentally well-being is the factor that hampers employee engagement because happiness at work is what every want. Virtual work policy needs to improve eradicate stress and fatigue to improve engagement.

5.2.3 Health Insurance cost

Health cost employee takes a good amount of the overall turnover of the organization. Companies invest lots of money on employee's health expenditure without making any particular efforts to make sure their employees stay healthy. Many companies do not invest much in employee's health because there isn't any tangible return.

6.0 Recommendations and Suggestions

Integrative solution of Well-being in a comprehensive manner: -

Physical	Mental	Social
a) Nourishment: • Healthy diet plan • Hydration • Healthy eating habit b) Physical fitness: • Exercise • Physical movement	a) Cognitive: • Time management • Sleep • Relaxing techniques b) Emotional: • Personal & professional life balance • Counselling • Meditation	a) Social connectivity • Manage relationship with Connectivity

6.1 Practical Strategies

6.1.1. Physical activity
- Offer a customized plan to the employees according to their requirements. Combine activities that consist of physical activity and relaxation.

e.g. Yoga and Meditation

Aerobics and Meditation

- A reminder of the stretch break for those who sit a lot in virtual working. It will help to circulate blood and eradicate fatigue.
- Provide fitness membership and discounts to good performers.
- Design unique plans for substandard performance and engage employees in well-being activity.
- Provide an Exercise or Yoga plan for the employee as well as family. To increase the engagement of employees in health activities.

6.1.2. Nutrition knowledge
- Provide a diet plan to the employee, so that they can have knowledge about adequate diet.
- Provide seminar or webinar sessions to enhance nutrition knowledge.
- Send health food information to the employee via video.
- In a week send health tip through email.

6.1.3. Other strategies
- Conduct an annual or quarterly health sponsorship program for the employee. To augment the well-being participation.
- Annually reward to fit employee.
- Mind relaxation is crucial so, mandate to attend daily 15 minutes Meditation during a virtual video conference.

7.0 Conclusion

Virtual workstyle is the new normal in the cognizance of recent events. With the help of technology, an organization can utilize its resources prudently. To cope with well-being at virtual work organization can opt for some techniques. The well-being of the organization is directly related to the well-being of an employee. If the organization will enhance the well-being of employee then, they can augment productivity and engagement. Well-being at virtual work provides advantages to an individual in staying happy, competent and satisfied in their roles. In the above research well-being of employee can help the organization as well as employees to perform better.

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