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Employee Engagement in Organizational Health Interventions in a Hybrid Work Context

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly altered work practices in the Indian information technology sector, growing concerns related to employee health, work–life balance, and work pressure. In this changed work scenario, organizations have realised that organizational health initiatives is an important intervention. This study examines employee participation in organizational health initiatives and some associated health-related outcomes. The data was collected from 120 employees using a structured questionnaire comprising of ten items. The findings state high levels of employee participation and indicate perceived improvements in physical well-being among participants. The data also reported the strong intentions of employees to continue participation and to encourage their peers to engage in such initiatives which suggests positive acceptance and sustainability. The results highlight the relevance of organizational health initiatives in the post-COVID work environment and their role in enhancing employee health and engagement in the IT sector.

Keywords: Organizational Health Initiatives, Employee Wellness, IT Sector, Hybrid Work

INTRODUCTION

Technology is one of the main contributors to economic growth and the creation of new jobs in India. In the last so many years have seen technology liberalisation, globalisation, and rapid progress in technology usage in India create a rapid growth path for India's IT industry, which has quickly become one of the largest service providers in the world. One way the industry's growth has been accelerated is through digital transformation and the increase in Remote & Hybrid Work (RHW) models that have been adopted globally following the COVID-19 pandemic. These changes have allowed a great degree of flexibility, as well as continuity in the operation of businesses. However, they have also changed the nature of work within the IT sector by increasing the amount of time spent in front of computers and the extent to which work and home life are blurring together.

Increased screen time, more expectations to be available at any hour of the day or night, and a reduction in physical activity have resulted in higher levels of both physical & mental health risks among IT employees (Wang et al., 2021). Flexibility and reduced travel time have also been linked with increased employee job satisfaction and improved employee work-life balance (Allen et al., 2015), but studies have documented higher levels of stress, loneliness, emotional exhaustion, and musculoskeletal problems, especially for employees working in highly knowledge-intensive roles typically found in the IT sector (Eurofound, 2020; Oakman et al., 2022).

Several difficulties faced by the employees in this industry prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as long hours of work, unreasonable performance pressure, the need for constant upskilling and sedentary

lifestyles, had negative consequences for employee health. After COVID-19, however, this problem became even more serious for employers as they began to consider employee health as a strategic priority in HR instead of just a wellness activity. Employers have turned to developing health programs as part of their HR practices in response to COVID-19; these health programs provide an opportunity for the employer to take a proactive approach and help employees improve their physical and emotional wellness. Most common practices include: health screenings, counselling services, employee ergonomic assistance, employee lifestyle awareness training programmes and stress management training programmes.

Recent studies demonstrate that health benefits play a key role in reducing the negative effects of health on employee engagement and commitment to their employer post-COVID (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020). From an organizational point of view, effective health programs lead to decreased absenteeism, lower healthcare costs, higher productivity, and a more active and engaged workforce. For employees, health programs create health awareness, motivate employees to adopt good lifestyle behaviour, and enable employees to cope with the demands of modern working conditions. Currently, due to the high-stress nature of today's technology-driven workplace, the understanding of the types of health programs provided by IT organizations and the amount of participation from employees has become of great concern.

The objectives of this research are thus, to know which are the common Employee Wellness Programs conducted by IT companies in Mumbai and to know about the utilisation of Employee Wellness services offered by the company.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

IT Industry Employee Health

The job requirements, fast changes in technology, and demand for performance in the IT sector are highly intense. According to multiple researchers, the IT sector is highly susceptible to the detrimental effects of stress, burnout, and obstacles to health caused by long working hours, an excess of sedentary time, and a continuous need for upskilling (Kumudha & Rani, 2012). Since COVID, the hybrid work models for employees have influenced the workers in the IT sector, presenting new opportunities and challenges to workplace well-being (Wang et al., 2021).

Hybrid Work Opportunities and Improved Well-Being

By providing employees with the flexibility of working from home or having reduced commuting times, it has been found to improve job satisfaction; remote work has a correlation to increasing stress levels, social isolation, and emotional exhaustion (Eurofound, 2020; Oakman et al., 2022). Therefore, the ongoing issue of well-being in the IT sector remains a top priority for HR and it is imperative that organisations take proactive measures to achieve this.

Organisational Health Initiatives and Employee Well-Being

Organisational health initiatives are proactive HR practices that promote physical and emotional wellness among employees. Initiatives include fitness, wellness programmes, health screening programmes, management training, and lifestyle seminars. Organisational health initiatives consist of preventive health management and align with all components of the organisations HR strategy.

Studies suggest that health initiatives contribute to positive organizational outcomes such as reduced absenteeism, lower healthcare costs, improved productivity, and higher employee engagement (Goetzel et al., 2014; O'Donnell et al., 2016). For employees, these initiatives increase health awareness, encourage healthier lifestyles, and support overall well-being (Laaksonen et al., 2010).

Employee Participation in Health Initiatives

Health initiatives in an organization rely on the participation of its employees to produce the desired results. The level of employee participation varies by industry and specific organization, which means that the extent of their involvement is dependent upon a variety of factors, including how supported they feel by the organization, how well the program has been developed, how accessible the program is to them, and how motivated they are personally (Nielsen et al., 2018). For example, the IT industry contains heavy demand and time constraints placed on the employees, which may therefore affect their ability to participate in health initiatives due to job pressures (Harter et al., 2002). Therefore, understanding the patterns of employee participation in regards to health initiatives will enable an organization to create an effective program that satisfies the needs of its employees and allows for the greatest amount of participation from its employees.

Employee Engagement's Connection to Health Initiatives

One of the key outcomes of organisational HR practices is employee engagement. This concept has been linked to organisational performance through several studies. It has also been demonstrated through the development of well-designed health initiative programs that they positively affect employee engagement because they provide evidence of an organisation's support and they also help to positively impact employee well-being (Saks, 2006; Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Furthermore, research has shown that employees who perceive a health initiative program as supportive and beneficial are more likely to feel motivated, committed and engaged in their work because of the perceived support provided by their organisation (Kuvaas, 2006). This is of particular importance in the IT industry because of the high job demands of employees and the potential for disengagement and burnout if these employees do not receive the proper support.

Hybrid Work, Well-being, and Organizational Health Initiatives

The move toward more flexible work schedules has drawn attention to different means of supporting organizational health. For instance, one effect of the transition to remote work is that it has disrupted traditional work and personal life divisions by enabling remote employees to work longer hours with little or no time for recovery (Wang et al., 2021). In addition, hybrid working arrangements can result in physical challenges such as back pain and other musculoskeletal discomfort due to lack of proper workplace ergonomics at home, resulting from poor ergonomics set up at home (Oakman et al., 2022).

Organizations have responded to these challenges by implementing a wide range of health initiatives, including the introduction of "virtual health" programs, online wellness programs, and e-counselling. The literature demonstrates that implementing these types of initiatives has the potential to reduce many of the negative health impacts of hybrid working, thereby improving overall employee health, so long as those initiatives are available and fully integrated into existing HR structures (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020; Wang et al., 2021).

In conclusion, the data reviewed suggests that although employee well-being is an important issue in the IT industry, which is characterized by high job pressures and an evolving hybrid working environment, the main focus of organizational health initiatives is on enhancing employee health, engagement, and productivity through strategic HR practices. However, whether or not the initiatives will be effective in achieving these goals depends greatly on the extent to which employees participate in the initiatives and the ease with which they can access them.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is descriptive in nature and is adopted to examine employee participation in organizational health initiatives by IT companies in Mumbai. The sampling method used is simple random sampling. The sample consists of 120 employees from different IT organisations in Mumbai. The primary data was collected by using a questionnaire consisting of ten items related to participation and perceived outcomes of health programs. Secondary data was collected from different research papers and. The data was analysed using descriptive statistical techniques to determine patterns of participation and perceived benefits of organizational health initiatives among employees.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile of Respondents

The data represents a diverse representation of employees working in IT companies in Mumbai. Out of the total 120 respondents 74% were male and 26% were female. In terms of educational qualification, majority of the respondents, 78% held a Bachelor's degree, 10% possessed a Master's degree. The remaining 12% reported having other qualifications.

With respect to age-wise classification, the largest proportion of respondents, 50% belonged to the age group of 25–35 years, followed by 28% in the 36–50 years age group. Additionally, 18% were below 25 years of age, while a small proportion, 4% were aged 50 years and above.

Employee Wellness Programs Conducted and Attended

Table 1: EWP's Conducted by the Employer

Initiatives Conducted	No. of Respondents
1	0
2	0
3	24
4	46
5	34
More than 5	16
Total	120

Table 2: Type of EWP's have you attended during the whole year

Type	No. of employees who have attended
Health assessment	52
Onsite healthy lifestyle coaching.	45
Yoga	98
Weight management programmes.	42
Stress management programmes.	101
Maternity support programmes	26

Interpretation:

The analysis of responses regarding the number of Employee Wellness Programs (EWPs) conducted annually indicates that wellness initiatives are organized regularly by IT companies. None of the respondents reported that their company conducted only one or two EWPs per year. A majority of respondents, 38% stated that their company conducted four EWPs annually, followed by 28% who reported five EWPs per year. Additionally, 20% indicated that three EWPs were conducted annually, while 14% reported that their organizations conducted more than five EWPs each year. This distribution suggests that most IT companies conduct three to five wellness programs annually.

Further analysis on the type of Employee Wellness Programs attended by employees shows different levels of participation across different initiatives. The highest participation was observed in stress management programmes, attended by 101 employees, indicating strong awareness and utilization of mental well-being initiatives. This was followed by yoga programmes, with 98 employees reporting participation, highlighting the popularity of physical and mindfulness-based activities. Maternity support programmes were attended by 26 employees, reflecting organizational support for employee life-stage needs. Participation in health assessments and weight management programmes was reported by 52 and 42 employees, respectively, while onsite healthy lifestyle coaching recorded comparatively lower participation, with 45 employees attending. Overall, the findings indicate that organizations not only conduct multiple wellness programs annually but also that employees actively utilize programs related to stress management, physical fitness, and work–life support.

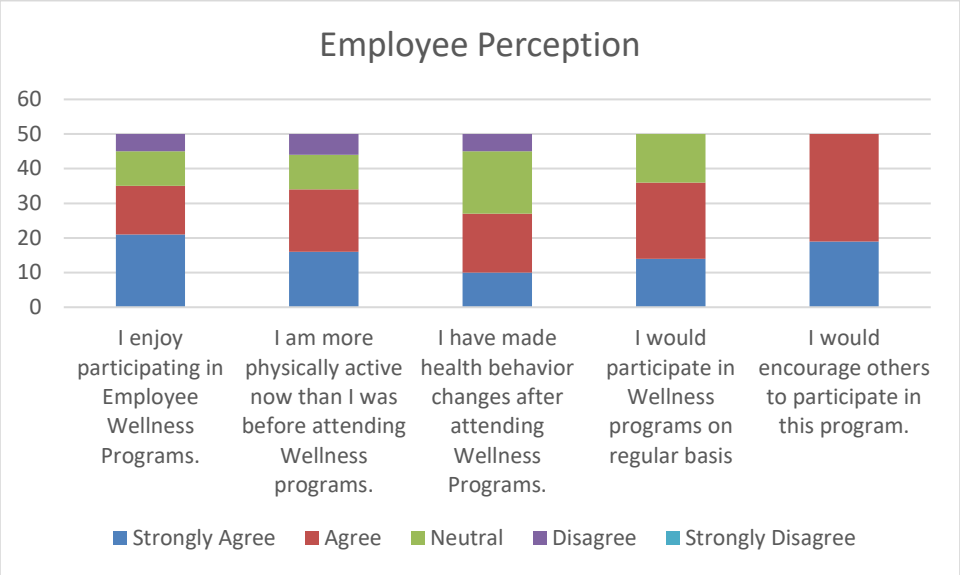
Descriptive Analysis

The data were obtained in aggregated form. For statistical analysis, responses were coded as Strongly Agree -5, Agree – 4, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 2 and Strongly Disagree – 1.

Table 3: Employee Perception Towards Wellness Programs

Particulars	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
I enjoy participating in organizational health initiatives	50	34	24	12	0	120
I am more physically active now than I was before attending the initiatives	38	43	24	15	0	120
I have made health behavior changes after attending the initiatives	24	41	43	12	0	120
I would participate in the initiatives on a regular basis	34	53	33	0	0	120
I would encourage others to participate in the initiatives	46	74	0	0	0	120

Chart 1: Employee Perception Towards Wellness Programs



Interpretation:

Participation and Enjoyment

42% of respondents strongly agreed and 28% agreed that they enjoy participating in Employee Wellness Programs. This indicates a high level of acceptance of EWPs, suggesting that wellness initiatives are perceived as engaging.

Physical Activity Outcomes

32% strongly agreed and 36% agreed that they are more physically active after participating in EWPs. Only 12% disagreed, indicating a positive physical well-being outcome associated with participation.

Health Behaviour Change

54% employees reported making health behaviour changes while 36% remained neutral.

Future Participation Intent

72% of the employees expressed willingness to participate in EWPs on a regular basis. This reflects strong continuance intention, an important indicator of program sustainability.

Peer Encouragement

100% of respondents (38% strongly agree, 62% agree) stated that they would encourage others to participate in EWPs. This highlights the presence of positive social influence and informal wellness advocacy, which can significantly enhance program reach and effectiveness.

Mean Score Analysis

Mean score analysis was conducted to determine the overall level of agreement for each statement.

Table 4: Mean Score Analysis of Employee Wellness Program Statements

Statement	Mean Score	Interpretation
Enjoy participating in wellness programs	3.92	Agreement

More physically active than before	3.88	Agreement
Health behaviour changes observed	3.64	Agreement
Willing to participate even if voluntary	4.00	Agreement
Encourage others to participate	4.38	Strong Agreement

Interpretation

In general, based on the average score analysis, employees view their companies' health and wellness programs positively. The average score was highest for "encourages participation" which represents a strong intent to advocate for wellness programs and a culture among peers to support wellness programs. Additionally, the high average scores for "liking to participate" and "wanting to consistently participate", indicate that employees find these types of programs valuable as part of the overall employee experience. The average score for "increased physical activity" is moderately high indicating that these types of programs lead to positive short term behaviour outcomes.

However, the average score for "sustained health behaviour change" is comparatively lower which indicates that while employees are encouraged to participate and enjoy participating in wellness programs; very few are able to sustain significant lifestyle behaviour changes. This demonstrates that providing strategic, integrated, and continuous health and wellness program initiatives to promote positive perceptions into lasting behaviour change is essential.

Overall Interpretation of Findings

Analysis of employee wellness programs as a whole show that most respondents perceive them positively. High means indicate strong support for continued participation and recommending wellness programs to coworkers. The increased amount of physical activity and improvement in health-related behaviour shows that wellness programs have a positive impact on employees overall. However, the presence of neutral answers in some areas demonstrates that many employees do not experience immediate and substantial benefits. Therefore, there is a need for more individualized interventions, continued motivation, and improved methods of communication regarding wellness programs.

DISCUSSION

The health programs offer employees tangible benefits, including increased levels of physical activity, a higher level of enjoyment when taking part, and a strong intention to continue being involved in these programs. These factors demonstrate the perceived value of such health programs and highlight the potential for a strategic direction of human resource management and employee engagement, retention, and sustainable performance through promoting employee health and wellness.

Programs that emphasize stress management, promote physical fitness, and support women in maternity scenarios also demonstrate the need to develop and align program design with the psychosocial demands of the IT work environment. Employees report high levels of enjoyment of taking part in health programs and perceive these programs to provide a supportive ecosystem that encourages positive links to the employee experience and support.

The results highlight the need for organisations to move beyond standalone initiatives and toward a more integrated approach where employee wellbeing is integrated into the daily workflow. To achieve sustained engagement and long-term impact, organisations must provide increased leadership engagement, implement ongoing follow-up measures, and create data-supported individualised programmes. In

summary, the study provides evidence that organisation health promotion/quality of life programmes are effective contemporary interventions to improve employee health in the workplace, as well as the necessity of ongoing strategic alignment and engaging employees daily to achieve maximum benefit.

LIMITATIONS

The sample size was limited to 120 employees from IT companies in Mumbai. It is relied on self-reported data collected through a questionnaire, which may be subject to response bias.

SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future studies can be done on larger and more diverse samples. Different cities and industries can also be considered for the same. Longitudinal research can also be conducted to see how health-related initiatives at work affect employee behaviour, wellness and engagement over time.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the design of health promotion programs is primarily to improve employee productivity and well-being by providing support for employees coping with work-related and personal stressors. Overall, employee satisfaction with their company's health-related benefits is generally good, according to this study. In particular, the health promotion programs are contributing to improvements in employees' physical fitness and positive participation intentions.

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