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Factors Affecting Mental Health at Workplace – A Review of Literature

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Abstract: Most of us spend a large part of our lives at work, so it plays a big role in our overall well-being. Because of this, it's very important to have a job that supports both our mental health and general health. Workplaces that support employees' mental health and help those going through tough times usually see their teams work better and get more done. Mental health refers to how someone thinks and feels about themselves and their life. It also includes a person's ability to do their best and stay connected with family, friends, coworkers, and their community (Mental Health Foundation, 2008). Today, one of the main reasons people struggle at work is because of mental health challenges caused by their job. Issues like anxiety, stress and depression are becoming more common in the workplace. In fact, depression is expected to become the second most common health issue in the world, right after heart disease (Murray & Lopez, 1996). This paper aims to explore and highlight the key factors—based on existing research—that are most likely to affect mental health at work.

Index Terms - mental health, workplace, employees, anxiety, depression

1. Introduction

For a long time, people believed that being healthy only meant taking care of their physical body. Most of the focus was on physical health. However, in the current years, a growing understanding has been there regarding the importance of mental health. More people and even society as a whole are starting to pay attention to it. Without good mental health, a person can't truly be healthy. Mental well-being is now seen as a key part of overall health. Mental health isn't just the absence of mental illness. It's about feeling emotionally well, being able to handle everyday challenges, and having a positive view of yourself and your life. It also includes your ability to work well, enjoy time with family and friends, and stay connected to your community and the people around you. Mental and physical health are closely linked — one often affects the other, both directly and indirectly (Mental Health Foundation, 2008).

Since we spend a large part of our day at work, our jobs and workplaces are an important part of our lives. Work is not just where we earn money, but also where we form friendships and build social connections. Because of this, having a job that supports both mental and physical health is very important. Today, one of the primary causes of work-related problems is mental health issues like anxiety and depression, which are often linked to job stress or difficult work environments. In fact, depression is expected to become the second most common health issue worldwide, after heart disease (Murray & Lopez, 1996). The connection between work and mental health is complex. Many work-related pressures can harm

employees' mental well-being, which in turn can lower their productivity and performance at work (Mihretu & Gopal, 2009).

1.1 Objective Of The Study

To find out the work-related factors affecting mental health at workplace through literature review.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Definitions of mental health

The World Health Organization (WHO) says that mental health means feeling good about yourself, being able to handle life's challenges, working well, enjoying life, and helping others (World Health Organization, 2001). WHO also says that health includes feeling good physically, mentally, and socially — not just being free from sickness. So, mental health is more than just not having a mental illness.

Mental health is about how a person thinks and feels about themselves and their life. It also includes the ability to do your best at work, and to stay involved with family, friends, and your community (Mental Health Foundation, 2008). It's seen as a balanced and peaceful state where a person feels happy, gets along with their surroundings, and can manage both basic needs and bigger life goals (Bhugra et al., 2013).

Studies show that mental and physical health are closely connected — each one can affect the other (Mental Health Foundation, 2008). Mental health also means being able to keep emotional balance, understand your own feelings, and care about how others feel. It's about keeping a healthy connection between your mind and body (Galderisi et al., 2017).

2.2 Determinants of mental health

2.2.1 Socio-Economic Determinants

Income inequality is found to be one of the social determinants of how one's mental health can be affected in terms of an increase in mental disorders. A strong relationship is there between socioeconomic status and one's health. (Robert, 1998). Besides, inadequate health care facilities, unsupportive families, racial gender discrimination, and unemployment play a huge role in the increase in mental health problems (Jain & Orr, 2016). People facing unemployment have got an increasing tendency in developing mental health issues. (Warr, 1987)

2.2.2 Psychological determinants

The loss of a loved one, catastrophic life events, physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, anxiety, sadness, and ongoing stress are examples of typical psychological indicators. Therapies that help people feel good about themselves and believe in their abilities can improve and manage behaviors that are good for mental health.. (Lister-Sharp *et al*, 1999)

2.3 Factors affecting mental health at workplace

In many wealthy and developed countries, mental health issues have become one of the main reasons why people take extended time off from their jobs (Whiteford et al., 2010; Harvey et al., 2009). Over time, several models have been created to explain how certain job conditions can lead to mental health problems such as anxiety and depression (Karasek, 1979; Siegrist, 1996). Most mental health challenges at work are related to issues like stress, depression and anxiety (Knudsen et al., 2013; Lelliott et al., 2008).

Research has found strong links between certain job-related factors and mental health. These include:

- **High job demands**
- **Low job control**
- **Low supervisor support**
- **Workplace conflict**
- **Unfair treatment at work**
- **Job insecurity**
- **Long working hours**
- **Not feeling rewarded for your efforts**

(All supported by: Stansfeld & Candy, 2005; Nieuwenhuijsen et al., 2010; Netterstrom et al., 2008; Theorell et al., 2015;).

High Job Demands

Job demands are things like tight deadlines and heavy workloads. Job control is how much say a person has in how they do their job. The most stressful jobs are those with high demands and little control. (Belkic et al., 2004; De Lange et al., 2004).

When the workload is too much, people can become mentally and emotionally tired, feel less interested in their work, and become more stressed. This can hurt both their well-being and work performance. (Chen et al., 2017).

Low Job Control

When employees have little control over how they work or make decisions, it can cause stress and increase the chances of mental health issues like depression and anxiety (Akbari, 2017).

Low Supervisor Support

Having a supportive boss can help reduce stress and improve motivation. When workers feel valued and supported, they're more likely to stay mentally healthy. (Netterstrom et al., 2008).

Workplace Conflict

Arguments or disagreements at work can cause stress and sadness, lowering motivation and productivity. (Fisher et al., 2014; Theorell et al., 2015).

Job Insecurity

When people worry about losing their jobs, it can cause anxiety and lower their confidence and motivation. This leads to more stress and worse mental health. (Menendez-Espina et al., 2019; Keim et al., 2014; Virtanen et al., 2011; Meltzer et al., 2010).

Long Working Hours

Working too long can lead to stress, poor sleep, high blood pressure, and even thoughts of suicide. It also affects focus and work-life balance. (Amagasa et al., 2012; Park et al., 2020).

Effort-Reward Imbalance

When employees work hard but don't feel fairly rewarded, they may feel unappreciated and stressed. This imbalance can lead to mental health problems. (Siegrist et al., 2004).

Job Role Ambiguity

If employees aren't sure what their job duties are, or if their role isn't clearly defined, it can cause stress and confusion, which can lead to depression. (Schmidt et al., 2014).

Workplace Bullying

Workplace bullying has been shown to lead to stress, anxiety, and depression. (Verkuil et al., 2015; Theorell et al., 2015).

Job Loss

Losing a job or being unemployed is strongly linked to anxiety, depression, and feeling less satisfied with life. (Riumallo-Herl et al., 2014; Berchick et al., 2012).

Low Income

People with lower income are more likely to face mental health problems and may even experience thoughts of suicide. (Sareen et al., 2011; Banks et al., 2018; Lund et al., 2010).

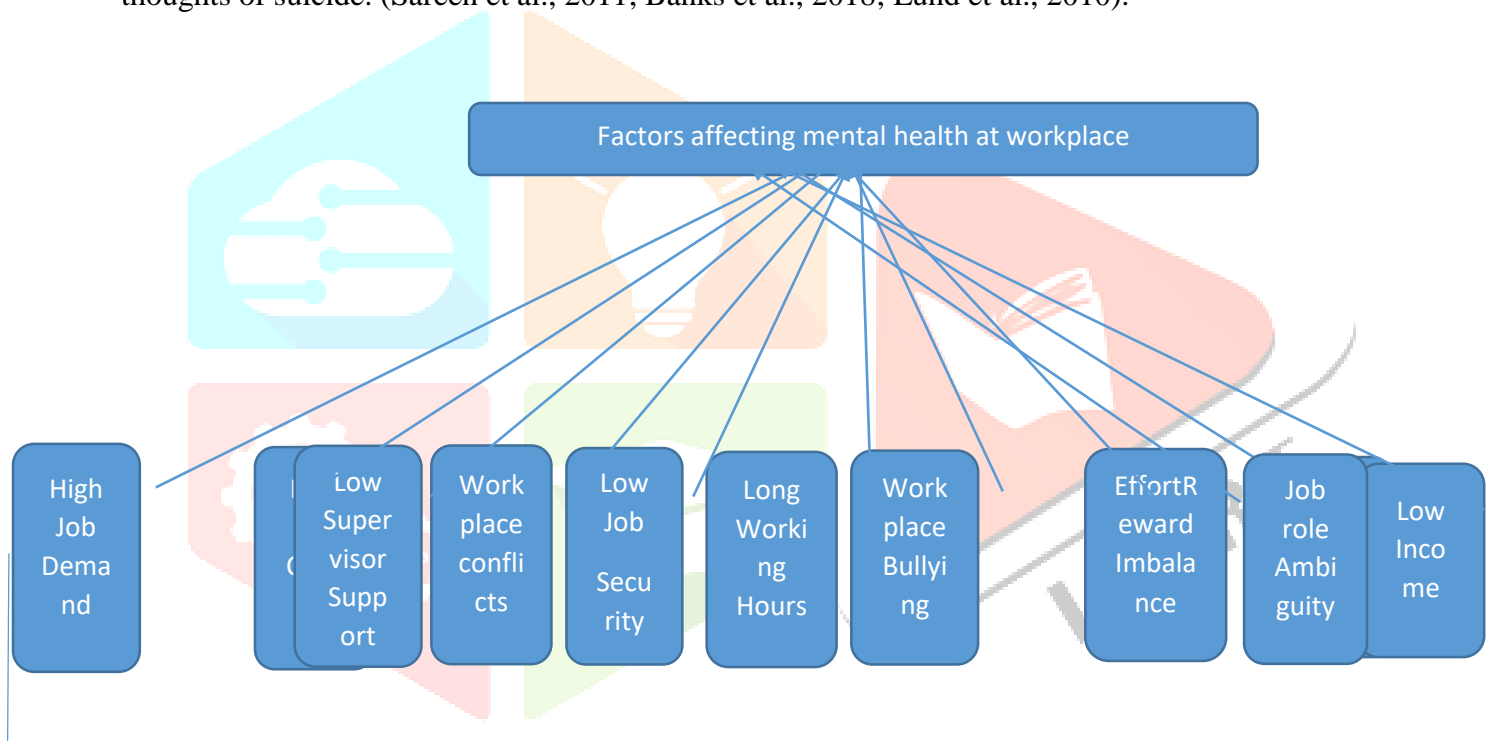


Figure . showing the factors affecting mental health at the workplace

3. Findings

After looking at different studies and sources, the most common things that affect employees' mental health at work are: high job demand, low job control, low supervisor support, workplace conflicts, low job security, long working hours, unfair balance between effort and reward, job role ambiguity, job loss, bullying at work, and low income. These issues have been shown to increase stress and depression, which harm employees' mental well-being.

4. Conclusion

Mental health is considered one of the most important parts of overall health. After reviewing many studies, it's clear that work-related factors negatively affect employees' mental health. Most research agrees that more studies are needed to find ways for management to help employees cope with mental health issues at work. This will not only improve employees' mental health but also boost the productivity of the whole organization. Maintaining good mental health at work has become crucial, as it's where people usually

spend a lot of their time. Therefore, it's important to put in place effective strategies that create a supportive work environment, helping to keep employees mentally healthy.

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