Maintenance of Physical and Mental Health in Workplace Environment

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Abstract

This article depicts and critically evaluates physical and mental health at different workplace environments. Several employees are exposed to work related physical exhaustion and mental agony and stress due to improper workplace environment like unventilated industrial buildings, poor infrastructure, improper facilities in offices, exposure to industrial wastages, environmental contaminants and lack of physical and mental health facilities. Employees working under such conditions with poor air quality, poor infrastructure management, heavy workload, lack of personal protective equipment and unhealthy management face physical and mental health related problems. Necessary precautions have to be taken in hazardous and stressful conditions. In relation to physical health; the hazards, occupational diseases, health screening and services, prevention and control strategies are dealt in length and breadth. Aspects related to mental health include causes, risk factors, consequences, warning signs and promotion of mental health in workplace environment. To tackle physical and mental health issues maintaining a healthy lifestyle is very essential for the productivity, quality of life, physical and mental wellbeing.

Keywords: Physical Health; Hazards; Mental Health; Workplace; Healthy Lifestyle.

Introduction

It is very clear that a person who works for any organization spends most of his time at workplace than at home and the environment of the workplace plays a reassuring role in the promotion of wellness among the employees within the organization [1]. There is very close relationship between mental and physical happiness either directly or indirectly. Physical health has a lot of impact on mental health and mental health also has same effect on physical health too [2]. If anyone suffers from physical illness, it may lead to mental health problems such as depression and schizophrenia. In case anyone suffers from mental illness it may lead to high blood pressure and heart attack [3]. A healthy lifestyle creates wellbeing both physically and mentally. A healthy lifestyle is an integral component in the promotion of both physiological and psychological wellbeing of the employees. So, maintenance of both physical and mental health is vital which can be facilitated through healthy environment at work and home [4].

Definitions

Health

Health is defined as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity [5].

Physical Health

Physical health means a person who is healthy and fit to perform the daily activities without any pressure [6].

Mental Health

Mental health can be defined as any person recognize his or her own strengths and cope up with pressure in daily life, work effectively and fruitfully, so he or she will be able to contribute to his or her community [7].

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Workplace Environment

There are two components in workplace environment i.e. physical and behavioral. Physical component consist elements that are related to the occupiers where the employees connect themselves to their office environment while behavioral component needs how the employees connect with each other in their office [8].

Maintenance of Physical Health in Workplace Environment

Health Problems in the Workplace

Generally, health of people is affected according to their positions and work in the workplace. It might be because of drinking alcohol, smoking, over eating and less physical activities etc. There could be many reasons for health problems in the physical work environment [9]. Here are some of them.

- *Physical-* e.g., sound, radiation, tremor, extreme heat, nanoatoms
- *Chemicals-* e.g., diluters, insecticides, asbestos, carbon monoxide, silica
- *Ergonomic-* e.g., extreme force, difficult posture, hefty lifting, forced inactivity/ staying long in the same place.
- *Mechanical-* e.g., machine dangers associated to cranes [10]
- *Biological-* germs, viruses, plants or animal handlers [11]

In order to stop these dangers or threats people should use personal protective equipment such as helmet, face shield, mask, gloves, apron, goggles, pain spray respirator, ear muffs along with safety belts [12].

Psychosocial Hazards

The psychosocial hazards experienced by the workers due to stress are

- Too much sleeping
- Using medicine without any prescription
- Intoxication
- Sadness
- Burden
- Frustration and recklessness (due to unfairness or injustice)

Common Occupational Diseases

- Contagions- HIV, hepatitis B and C
- Cancer
- *Persistence respiratory infections:* silicosis, asthma [13] and bronchitis [14]
- *Skin diseases:* malignant melanoma from sun exposure, or dermatitis
- *Physical neurologic disorders-* noise-induced hearing loss
- *Reproductive problems:* infertility and miscarriages resulting from contact with chemical or biological agents; and many others.
- *Musculoskeletal disorders:* repetitive strain injuries, traumatic injuries [13]
- Heart diseases
- Hopelessness [14]

Employee Health Screening

- *Pre-employment health checks:* Offer health check before joining in any organization.
- *Health surveillance:* Health checkups while working for any company in hazards in any workplace.
- *Health checks/lifestyle assessment:* Here are some of the checks to be done while working for any company.
  - Smoking
  - Consumption of alcohol
  - Obesity
  - High blood pressure
  - High cholesterol
  - High blood glucose
  - Diet
  - BMI
  - Glucose level in the blood [15]

Occupational Health Services

Apart from health screening, the basic occupational health services include

➢ Continuous health records for employees.

➢ Train workers to use first aid kit.

➢ Overall health care, healing and recovery services.

> ➢ Vaccination against endemic or work-related infectious diseases [13]

Prevention and Control Strategies

There are five steps to prevent and control to maintain mental and physical health in any workplace.

1. Identifying Hazards and those at Risk

The very first step is identifying the risks and problems in the workplace

For example:

- ➢ Slippery and wet staircases fall down and hurt yourself.
- ➢ Noisy places- hearing loss

2. Prioritising Risks

Assess the dangers or its risks based on the priority.

3. Deciding On Preventive Action

Decide regarding the preventive measures to be taken to reduce the risk. Identify whether these preventive measures protect the employees' health from hazards or its risks.

4. Taking Action

To execute preventive methods in the workplace.

5. Monitor And Review

To watch and check the dangers again and again to eliminate the maximum risks [16].

Healthy Lifestyle

1. Physical activity

At least thirty minutes of physical exercise is very necessary to maintain physical balance. There are some vital components of regular physical exercise.

- Reduce the risk factors of heath diseases
- To maintain standard muscle strength.
- To get flexible body and reduce the risk of injury.
- Decrease body fat
- Relief from the hyper tension
- Lower the blood pressure of people

- Reduces blood pressure in people
- Drops the risk of diabetes mellitus

Other components of physical activity are

- ➢ *Agility:* move direction time to time
- ➢ Balance
- ➢ *Coordination:* skill of using senses like sight and hearing.
- ➢ *Speed:* skill of moving quickly in short time.
- ➢ Strength [17]

2. Yoga and meditation

- Progresses coordination
- Develops flexibility and power
- Reduce stress level
- Balance blood pressure levels
- Improves metabolism [18]

3. Nutrition

Take a balanced diet which includes all the food groups along with eight to ten glasses or nearly 2litres of water each day.

- Proteins- meat, milk, beans and peas
- Carbohydrates- sugars and starches
- Fats
- Sodium, iron and phosphorus- milk and green vegetables
- Vitamin C- fresh vegetables, oranges and lemons
- Vitamin
- D- milk and cod liver oil

4. Sound sleep

5. Give up unhealthy habits such as smoking, alcohol, and drugs [11]

Maintenance of Mental Health in Workplace Environment

Mental disorder denotes changes in thinking, behavior, stress in problem solving, functioning in social and family activities [19]. There are mainly two types of mental illnesses those are depression and anxiety will lead disability among the employees in the work environment. Researchers found that depression is affecting three hundred million employees whereas anxiety is affecting two hundred and sixty employees [20].

Common Causes of Mental Illness at Work

The common causes which leads to mental illness at the work environment are

- Not able to cope up with stress
- Faulty job roles
- Lack of command over work
- Not able to manage work load at work and home
- Lack of interaction with management
- Lack of cooperation among colleagues at work
- Uncertainty about job
- Boredom in work
- Insufficient job opportunities [21]

Risk Factors of Mental Illness in Workplace

The associated risk factors of mental illness differs in every workplace but commonly include

- Insufficient health and safety schemes
- Lack of communication
- Improper communication
- Old management practices
- Not able to take part while taking decisions
- No command over one's area of work.
- Inadequate support for employees
- Busy working hours
- Indefinite tasks or unsuitable tasks for the person's abilities [22]
- Not appropriate roles
- No clarity in their jobs
- Insufficient knowledge to perform their work [23]

Psychosocial Risks in the Workplace

The psychosocial factors are the most difficult factors which stop not only the health of employees but also development of the organization. Here are 13 psychosocial risks.

1. Psychological Support

Psychological support is the main aspect of mental health concern at work. If there is not enough cooperation among the workers while working in any organization there will be chances for emotional withdrawal and may lead to less productivity. It causes stress in employees that may intern leads to sever tiredness, headache and nervousness

2. Organizational Culture

Culture plays vital role in any organization. Unless there is no trust, fairness and honesty they will certainly lead to stress.

3. Clear Leadership And Expectations

In order to lead any company in a successful way there must be a good leader. Effective leadership always has the main qualities of morality, faith and flexibility at workplace and they will create psychological well beings in organizations.

If the leader is not perfect in his duties it will create stress and conflicts among the workers.

4. Civility And Respect

Polite behavior and respect plays a vital role that increases pleasure, fairness, teamwork, good relationship and decreases absenteeism whereas lack of it projects disrespect, disputes and resignation of job. One of the disrespectful conducts is bullying.

5. Psychological Competencies And Requirements

A satisfied job is always accompanied with emotional health and it gives immense self- esteem, self- confidence that further leads to job satisfaction and provide ample of success to the organization. In case it lacks it may further leads to powerlessness and lowers self- confidence in employees.

6. Growth & Development

Growth and development always have a lot of impact in any organization and they give chance to the employees to reach higher stages in their lives. If there isn't any growth it stops the skills of employees and leads to agony.

7. Recognition And Reward

Every human being work on stimulus based and search for the rewards for their own work. It always gives a lot of confidence in anyone to improve their self-esteem in their own field. If the person is not rewarded for his or her work they may lose interest and passion over the work and it leads to psychological illness.

8. Job Involvement

It is well known fact that job involvement is a must. All employees should have commitment towards their responsibilities because it gives pleasure as well as relief from the stress or else it ends with powerlessness and tension.

9. Workload Management

Most of the companies are busy with productions so people have to work for a long time. The provided time is not sufficient for completion of gives tasks so employees feel over burden while working. To complete the work it is necessary that companies must support the employees.

10. Engagement

Employees should always engage in their work. Once they get encouraged they will be enthusiastic, cheerful, focused and committed to work.

11. Balance

Every employee should balance time at work and time. If any employee imbalance between home and work it may lead to mental stress, anger, and dissatisfaction. Once the person is not able to cope up with stress, it leads to high blood and pressure, cholesterol and mental illness.

12. Psychological Protection

Healthy and safe workplace is always encourages psychological protection and avoids risks disentanglement and psychological agony.

13. Protection Of Physical Safety

Employee's physical safety is very important in any organization in the work environment. It comprises training, plans, practices, replying to the event at the risk. If there is no safety related to physical it leads to injuries and emotional illness.

Issues that Affect Mental Health in the Workplace

There are many issues that affect the employees in the workplace. It includes

- Humiliation and misjudgment
- Pressure
- Effort versus reward
- Presenteeism

- Job Exhaustion
- Violence
  - Harassment
  - Bullying
  - Mobbing
- Substance abuse [24]

Types of Mental Illnesses at Workplace

The common mental illnesses at workplace are

- Mood disorders: Depression and bipolar disorder
- Anxiety disorders
- Psychotic disorders: Schizophrenia [25]

Effects of Mental Health Problems in the Workplace

Here are some of the effects of mental health at work place.

- Taking many leaves (due to short periods of sickness)
- Emotionally ill health (depression, stress, burnout)
- Physical infections
- Poor performance at work
- Too much error rate
- Met accidents
- Lack of decision making
- No control over work
- Lack of social relationship
- Poor motivation and less commitment to work
- Exhaustion
- Lack of time management
- Tension [26]

Warning Signs of Mental Illness

There are many symptoms of mental illness that may be found in any employee at workplace.

- Continuous pain
- Nonstop discouragement or dissatisfaction
- Oversleep or under sleep
- Pessimistic

- Failure in work performance
- Extreme anger
- Work and familial issues
- Physical illness

Work Related Stress

Psychological illness mainly comes from the over workload at work. If the work is too much and the person is not able to mage with it she or he will be under pressure. It may vary from person to person [23]. If the person performs well that stress is called positive stress or the person cannot cope up and get pressure it is termed as negative stress.

External Effects of Stress

The external or physical effects of stress are

- Headache
- Muscle pain
- Chest pain
- High heart rate
- High blood pressure
- Lack of immunity
- Extreme fatigue
- Difficulty while sleeping
- Digestive problems
- Increased glycemic levels
- High cholesterol

Internal Effects of Stress

The internal effects of stress include

- Forgetting
- Tension, distress and fear
- Restlessness, prickliness
- Mood changes
- Extreme outbursts of anger
- Not able to focus or distracted
- Separation or feel lonely
- Cannot perform the duties
- Lack of coordination between eye-hand
- No co-ordination between eye and foot [27]

Simple Ways to Deal with Work Related Stress

- Begin your day with high spirit.

- Have positive attitude.
- Be clear about your work.
- Don't argue with colleagues and have a good relationship
- Maintain time and organize well
- Don't get confused and be comfortable
- Don't do many tasks at a time.
- Try to complete extra work in your free time to manage stress.
- Be flawless at work
- Sometime listen to music if you feel stressed [28]

Mental Health Promotion in the Workplace

The promotion of mental health at the workplace

focuses on the following aspects to prevent the employees with mental illness.

1. Mental Health in the Work Place

Mental health denotes emotional, psychological and social well-being of an individual. It is subjective the way a person think, feel and act. It is a duty that the organization has to look after to promote positive and mental health in the work environment to improve the mental health of the employees. There must be awareness programmes in the organizations on mental health [29].

2. Understanding Mental Illness

It is very significant to know what mental illness is and have in-depth knowledge of causes, risk factors and signs of mental illness in workplace environment. If we are aware of it, it can be treated easily.

There is known fact that family history also one of the main causes that a person can be affected irrespective of age, social background, ethnic origin or intellectual level. Mental illness differs from person to person. Treatment always will be given according to the severity of mental condition, so there are chances for total recovery from mental disorder.

3. Management of Mental Disorders at Workplace

A. Culture of Openness

Cultural openness can be achieved through conducting meetings on stress management and mental illness whenever the employees have flexible time and inculcate positive thinking among the employees. Motivate the employees to get the works done time to time. Give ample of information about mental health day and programmes related to it.

B. Good Communication Strategies

Employees may encounter mental health issues at any time in the organization. If they encounter any problem it is the duty of the organization to make changes according to the needs of the employees. Moreover provide the guidance or counselling if the employees need at any time. There have to be special sessions for the employees who are affecting with mental illness.

C. Reasonable Adjustments

We do notice that roles of the employees will change time to time in the organization so it is very vital to make the person adjust who has mental illness in the organization. It includes

- Rotation of work
- Dividing the work among the employees
- Relocate the area of work

D. Managing Physical Symptoms

Since the individuals have got problem of mental illness, there are some physical problems. Here are some of them.

- Uncertain idea
- Discomfort, tremors
- Symptoms of heart attach
- Sleep too long
- Fatigue
- Late to work
- Ineffective work performance at certain times of the day

Strategies to deal with physical manifestations include

- Give some breaks in the middle of the work and sanction forced leaves for every six months or ask them to work from according their convenience.
- Provide some easy tasks.
- Allow them to get medical check-ups in the middle of the work.
- There have to be some speech recognition software to work on system

E. Managing Difficulties with Emotions

Most of the individuals with mental syndromes show problems with emotions such as

- Frustration
- Stress
- Anxiety
- Anger
- Agitation
- Switching mood

Strategies that should be considered to manage emotions are

- Appreciate and give constructive feedback
- Encourage and praise them
- Avoid arguing and unhealthy discussions
- Give respect to a person who has problem of mental illness
- Give some breaks during work hours
- Focus on stress management
- Prevent risks to health and safety (self-harm and harm to others)
- Give chance to communicate with either doctors or family members during work time.

F. Health and Safety of a Person with Mental Illness

The risk factors associated with higher risk of suicide is due to

- Feeling of hopelessness
- Feeling of helplessness
- Earlier suicide trials
- Severe substance abuse

Strategies to deal with suicidal tendency include

- Let the attempters know that there are people to help them.
- Seek if they already decided and planned. You are cared about them and offer help.
- If you find anyone who has got mental illness just provide counselling with the help of trained counsellors.
- In case they are ready to end their lives let them take immediately to the psychiatrist at the local hospital.
- Don't leave the patient unless the professional help has given.

G. Managing Individuals at Risk of Harm to Others

- Stay peaceful

- Make the situation calm by offering any beverages to get their trust.

- Keep up a reasonable distance

- Try to use some commands if they are trying to harm you.

- Don't hold they firmly if they are clam

- Consider pressures seriously.

- Communicate with counsellors and police for help[25]

4. Create a Healthy Workplace

There are mushrooms of organizations and they are quite different from one another. It is primary duty of all people including CEOs, managers, and other employees to maintain their own mental health. It can be achieved only when the organization provides good environment conditions at work place.

Features of a Healthy and Safe Workplace

- Reduces stress level

- Higher reliability

- Recognize and eliminate the obstacles related to mental health

- Building a culture of openness

- Career and personal development [30]

Maintaining Mental Health in the Work Environment

There are many types of techniques to maintain mental health in the workplace of the organization. It includes

A. Good Atmosphere

It is very important to have congenial atmosphere to do any work effectively and get it done easily. There are certain characteristics mentioned below to maintain good atmosphere at work place.

- Respect

- Social association

- Acknowledgment of work

- Rewards and awards

- Incentives

B. Living Wages

There must be minimum wages to be paid for the meeting day to day life needs of employees that motivates the individuals to dedicate to the work.

C. Accomodation

It is minimum concern of any organization to provide accommodation to physical or mental disability persons until they recovered from the illness.

D. Health and Wellness

It is very necessary to have health insurance policies for each and every employee in the organization. There should be some health campaigns on insurance policies and what they cover.

E. Open Access to Communication

It is a must to have free flow of communication among the employees without any discrimination in their designations from CEOs to security to achieve a lot within the organization.

F. Accountability- Employee and Management

In order to reach success and targets in the organization employees must be accountable for their own work that is assigned to them. There should be freedom to employees get feedback for their work.

G. Work-Life Balance

Each and every employee must have freedom at work place for communicating with family, friends and relatives.

H. Fitness

As we all know health is wealth. In order to be fit do some exercise to keep oneself healthy [31].

Advantages of a Healthy Work Environment

- Reduce stress

- Fewer injuries

- Gives job satisfaction

- Stability in work life

- Very good social relationships

- Increased team work

- Improved dedication towards work [32]

5. Resources

There are many NGOs and some government give a lot of information about resources. They do give enough information related to mental illness and health care.

- Employment Services and Schemes
- National Health Schemes
- Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)
- Mental Health Insurance [33]

Legal Responsibilities

Discrimination Act

According to The Disability Discrimination Act 1992, the employees should not be discriminated or harassed concerning mental illness.

Work Health and Safety Legislation (Whs Act, 2012)

This Act focuses on the protection and safety of the employee's physical and mental health at the workplace.

Privacy Act (1988)

Privacy and confidentiality of personal information regarding the mental illness of employees should be maintained. It should not be disclosed without the consent of the employees.

Fair Work Act (2009)

It's a Commonwealth industrial law to safeguard the employees from argumentative actions regarding their mental health status at the workplace.

Action Plan

In order to get rid of this mental illness at the work place there is an action plan. The 3 phases of action plan approach are

1. Recognize significant areas of action

2. Put forward action

3. Evaluate and monitor outcomes

1. Identify Priority Areas of Action

i.. Raising Awareness of Mental Health Issues

- Open communication
- Training

- Reachable facts
- Mental health days or events
- Assistance- (EAPs) Employee Assistance Programs, help lines, referrals

ii. Reducing Stigma

iii. Policy Development and Implementation

- Bullying at work
- Discrimination
- Equal opportunity
- Leave provisions
- Coming back to work
- Performance management
- Work health and safety
- Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)

iv. Workplace Risk Factors

2. Implement Actions

Plans to the priority areas of action are

- Plan schedules for mental health programs at work
- Handling the complications of employees with mental illness
- Carry out firm policy development
- Controlling the influence of workplace risk factors

3. Review and Monitor Outcomes

Set a target to evaluate and monitor the consequences of mental health strategies together with short-term and long-term executed activities [30].

Work-Life Balance

At Work

- Keep achievable goals daily and make a list of them.
- Make your work clear by dividing into parts.
- Request for the flexibility- work from home
- Be honest at workplace [34]
- Maintain healthy social relationship and avoid conflicts

- Don't be overload with work especially in the weekends
- Try to walk after lunch

At Home

- Use support from family and friends
- Be active by doing exercise
- Avoid smoking, consuming alcohol and drugs [35]

Tips for Mental Health

Mental Fitness

- Concentrate only on one work at time
- Avoid using mobile phone while walking, talking with friends
- Give a break for your worries
- Enjoy doing your free time activities
- Set pleasurable goals like reading novel, talk to friends
- Be expressive
- Enjoy cooking, cooking, playing, walking and spending time with family [27]

Healthy Lifestyle

➢ Physical Activity

If you do 30 minutes exercise a day gives

- Emerges positive emotions
- Increases optimistic relationships among the employees [36]
- Develops concentration
- Improves positive energy and mood
- Decreases sleeping disorders
- Reduce level of stress and tension
- Lowers anger
- Gets relief from depression and anxiety [37]

➢ *Yoga and Meditation*

- Swings bad mood into good mood
- Stray calm and balance emotionally
- Decrease stress and depression [38]

➢ *Nutrition*

Ensure yourself to have a very balanced diet with combination of fruits, vegetables, cereals, dairy products and meat [37].

➢ *Tobacco cessation*

➢ Attending wellness programs [39]

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is apt to state that occupational health and safety is the right of employees whether they work in an office, industry or in any other environment. The current international labor laws have to be implemented to curtail over ambitions of the employers to safeguard the human rights in the workplace environment and facilitate in the reduction of accidents, injuries and fatalities either physical or mental. Therefore, workplace environment and occupational standards have to be improved. It is the need of the hour to maintain the highest degree of precautions in the social well-being of the employees both physically and mentally. It is recommended that preventive measures have to be practiced in addition to the implementation of occupational safety and health international policies so as to enable the employees and employers families' well-being which in turn enhances the good workplace environment, occupational health and create global preventive measures to reduce the physical and mental workplace hazards.

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