

India Needs Workplace Mental Health Data

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INTRODUCTION

During a busy workday, a group of coworkers gathered near the coffee machine. With smiles on their faces, they exchanged stories about their heavy workloads and never-ending to-do lists, making light of the challenges they faced. Laughter filled the break room, forging a sense of unity in the face of workplace exhaustion. This is a usual scenario in most workplaces [1].

In India, the national mental health survey conducted by national institute of mental health and neurosciences under the purview of ministry of health and family welfare in 2015 is the only national level mental health survey conducted till date. The data was collected across 12 states. The survey found that “The overall weighted prevalence for any mental morbidity was 13.7% lifetime and 10.6% current mental morbidity.” However, the survey does not provide data on workplace mental health [2].

According to the data from centre for monitoring Indian economy, overall, 522 million people were employed in India in financial year 2022. International Labor Organization (ILO) ranks Indians fifth among the most overworked workers in the world, often working for more than 48 hours a week. The continuous work-related pressures and associated stressors can greatly undermine an individual's mental well-being [3].

In the first global analysis of the loss of life and health associated to prolonged working hours, the WHO and ILO calculated that in 2016, approximately 398,000 individuals succumbed to stroke, while 347,000 fell victim to heart disease, all attributable to working a minimum of 55 hours per week. Globally, an estimated 12 billion working days are lost every year to depression and anxiety at a cost of US\$ 1 trillion per year in lost productivity.

DESCRIPTION

Data is also pivotal in prevention. By identifying the factors contributing to workplace stress and mental health problems, proactive measures can be implemented. This not only alleviates

individual suffering but also curbs the societal and economic costs associated with untreated mental health issues. Moreover, data enables tailored interventions. It allows us to pinpoint specific stressors and challenges faced by different industries or demographic groups. Armed with this knowledge, organizations and authorities can design targeted mental health support programs and policies, ensuring they meet the unique needs of their workforce [4].

Despite there being plethora of evidence on consequences of work burden on mental health, India does not national level statistics on mental wellbeing of people participating in the Indian work force. One of the Big 4 firms Deloitte conducted a survey “Mental Health in the Workspace 2022” covering 3995 respondents across 12 key industries and demographics. The results were not unprecedented. Over 80 percent of the participants indicated experiencing at least one unfavorable mental health symptom, with over 65 percent reporting a minimum of two symptoms, and more than 50 percent revealing the presence of three or more such symptoms. Symptoms included depression, emotional exhaustion or burnout, irritability or anger, sleep issues and anxiety.

This alarming data underscores the urgent need for India to collect comprehensive workplace mental health statistics at the national level. These statistics would not only shed light on the extent of the problem but also serve as a crucial foundation for designing effective policies and interventions aimed at improving the mental well-being of employees.

Understanding the unique challenges faced by the Indian workforce and tailoring mental health support accordingly is essential. It's time for policymakers, businesses, and society to recognize that the mental health of employees is not just an individual concern but a collective responsibility. By collecting and analyzing data on workplace mental health, India can take significant strides toward fostering a healthier, more productive, and happier workforce. The time to act is now, for the well-being of our employees and the future of our nation.

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Received: 26-Sep-2023, Manuscript No. JDA-23-27178; **Editor assigned:** 28-Sep-2023, PreQC No. JDA-23-27178 (PQ); **Reviewed:** 12-Oct-2023, QC No. JDA-23-27178; **Revised:** 18-Jan-2025, Manuscript No. JDA-23-27178 (R); **Published:** 25-Jan-2025, DOI: 10.35248/2167-1044.25.14.559

Citation: Naidu DT (2025) India Needs Workplace Mental Health Data. J Dep Anxiety. 14:559.

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CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the well-being of the Indian workforce is at a critical juncture. As we've seen, the demands of the modern workplace are taking a toll on mental health, with alarming statistics revealing the prevalence of symptoms like depression, burnout, and anxiety among employees. Despite these clear indicators, India lacks comprehensive national-level data on workplace mental health.

The absence of such data not only blinds us to the full extent of the problem but also hinders our ability to implement effective solutions. It is imperative that we recognize the collective responsibility we bear toward the mental health of our employees. The time has come for policymakers, businesses, and society at large to take action.

Collecting and analyzing data on workplace mental health is not just a strategic move; it's a moral imperative. It's a step toward fostering a healthier, more productive, and happier workforce an investment in the well-being of our employees and the future of our nation.

The journey toward a mentally healthier workplace begins with acknowledging the need for data, followed by concrete actions and policies informed by that data. With a dedicated effort to gather workplace mental health statistics at the national level, India can pave the way for a brighter and more resilient workforce—one that can face the challenges of the future with vigor and vitality

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