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Workplace Well-being and Mitigating Burnout Using Technological Tools

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Abstract

In today's work environment, employee burnout is one of the major factors of concern. Burnout is a condition of extreme emotional, physical and mental stress, excessive work, or overwhelming feelings (Maslach, C & Leiter, 2016) and is a common problem in the workplace. This paper looks at different aspects of people and organisations in relation to workplace well-being and the use of technology to mitigate it. It also emphasises the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven solutions like chatbots and virtual assistants in offering employees personalised support to lessen burnout. Utilising the capabilities of advanced technology such as generative AI, organisations can develop innovative ways to improve workplace well-being, avoid burnout, and foster a better work environment. This paper attempts to understand the acceptance level of employees for using tech tools to support their mental well-being at the workplace. This being a preliminary study about their level of usage of technology for fostering workplace well-being, further study can be conducted to understand the impact on their emotional well-being and its impact on productivity at work. The study was conducted with employees from the Information Technology (IT) sector, and the results show that AI tools aid in identifying and reducing burnout and the acceptance and usage of such tools can impact employee well-being in an organisation.

Keywords: **Artificial Intelligence AI, Employee Burnout, Well-being, Work Environment, Work Stress**

JEL Classification Code: J28, M54, O33, I31, M15

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1. Introduction

Employee well-being has gained importance in the recent decade and has garnered a lot of attention from organisations to develop various strategies to address the issue. Also, post-2019, the pandemic has doubled the challenges in relation to both the physical and emotional well-being of the employees. In one of the studies by BCG, 48% of the employees in organisations surveyed across eight countries were grappling with burnout (Boston Consulting Group report, 2024). Employee burnout has emerged as a pressing issue in contemporary workplaces, posing significant challenges to both individuals and organisations. Recognised by the World Health Organisation as a syndrome and occupational phenomenon, burnout poses significant challenges to individuals, teams and businesses alike (WHO, 2019). Defined as a state of emotional, physical and mental exhaustion resulting from prolonged exposure to stressors, burnout permeates various industries and affects employees at all levels. Reasons for burnout could be many, notwithstanding the already identified role conflict, ambiguity, lack of personal growth, etc. (Vallasamy & Suriya, 2023).

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Though the term originated in the mid-1980s, there was extensive research work conducted by the end of the 20th century throwing light on the cause and the effect of burnout. Research indicates that burnout is not merely a personal issue, but it is influenced by various organisational and job-related factors, wherein excessive workloads are also characterised by an increased risk of burnout (Escalera.S,et al 2022). Exhaustion, Cynicism (Depersonalisation), and inefficiency are the three dimensions of Burnout (Christina Maslach *et al.*, 2001). With the advent of technological innovations, the usage of more and more technology and less human interaction has posed greater challenges to the physical and physiological well-being of employees. The degree of control over one's work, the workload, the working hours, various time zones, work-life balance, economic upheaval leading to job insecurity, and various other reasons could be the cause for both stress and burnout (Wilford, 2017).

The impact of burnout extends beyond individual well-being, manifesting in decreased productivity, eroded morale, and diminished organizational effectiveness. The prevalence of burnout is underscored by alarming statistics, with over half of high performers reporting symptoms of burnout. It could lead to increased absenteeism, lack of motivation towards work, and low morale. Left unchecked, burnout not only compromises an individual's health and job dissatisfaction but also jeopardizes organizational success. The quality of workplace relationships and the level of support from supervisors and co-workers play a significant role in mitigating burnout (Charoensukmongkol, P *et al.*, 2016) Therefore, addressing burnout has become a pressing imperative for contemporary workplaces, necessitating innovative strategies and proactive interventions to safeguard employee well-being and foster a culture of resilience.

2. Literature Review

There are three forms of core components for employee well-being and they are: subjective well-being, psychological well-being, and workplace well-being amongst these, employee well-being is considered a critical component (Page KM & Vella-Brodrick D.A, 2009). Employee wellness programs are planned to ensure that people unwind, refresh, rejuvenate and bounce back after de-stressing (Kathleen O Donnelle, 2023). Technology has aided in developing advanced tools and interventions to support employees to overcome stress and fatigue and handle situations better. Though well-being at work is restricted by organisational constraints (Lia Tirabeni, 2024), tools as simple as Slack, Zoom and Asana have revolutionised the way people interact even when they are working remotely like, monitoring workload and work scheduling which facilitates systematic planning of work schedules and managing it based on the availability of the employees. Personalisation and increase in computing capabilities have improved productivity in employees, and AI-enabled chatbots are the latest addition to such technological interventions (Nishad *et al.,* 2024). These bots provide real-time support to the employees by aiding in customised support in terms of assessing stress levels and providing assistance based on the level and time of stress. Personalisation is crucial in delivering effective support through virtual chatbots. By collecting information about each employee's role, workload and preferences, chatbots can tailor their responses and share recommendations to address specific burnout triggers. It can suggest time management techniques or recommend mindful exercise for people struggling with anxiety (Sourav *et al.,* 2024).

Today, many organisations use AI software that analyses the daily routines of employees, monitoring patterns like extended work hours, decreased engagement in collaborative platforms, or deviations in routine task completion times. It can scrutinize email and chat room sentiments which can address the negative implications that cause underlying stress or dissatisfaction. AI can be leveraged to such an extent that it can identify the level and potential risks of stress in an employee by assessing a conversation during the meeting. It can also suggest various interventions which may help mitigate the stress levels thus improving the employee well-being. AI-driven solutions offer timely intervention including stress management tips, mindfulness exercises, and workload prioritised to individual needs, Ankita (2024). Moreover, Gen AI leverages advanced algorithms and predictive analytics to proactively identify burnout risk factors and prescribe targeted interventions, thereby reducing the incidents and severity of burnout, Ravi (2024). To aid such interventions, organisations have to create a robust

employee experience model that will ensure targeted action to ensure both the emotional and the physical well-being of every individual employee.

3. Research Design

This paper explores the role of technology-based interventions in mitigating employee burnout, examining their potential applications, ethical considerations and implications for organisational practice. A qualitative approach is applied to analyse the inputs shared by interviewees. The respondents from the IT industry were interviewed to gather inputs regarding the usage of tech tools for mitigating burnout and the accessibility of various tools and techniques for the same. Ease of use and its effect were tested through various questions during the interview process. Forty-eight respondents were interviewed and questions related to the following were asked: awareness about various interventions in the organisation for aiding employee well-being and reducing burnout; their level of usage of those tech tools; the level of ease in accessing and using them; the overall outcome of the tools in aiding their workplace well-being and reducing burn-out. Their answers were recorded and analysed to derive some conclusions.

3.1 Problem Statement

With employee well-being taking the front seat in human resource management, organisations have taken huge strides in developing interventions to ensure that they are facilitated with the right tools. Technology has enabled this to a large extent and modern methods have been adapted to provide the right assistance. Nevertheless, the challenges of employee burnout, anxiety, and stress still prevail. There is a lack of information about how these tech tools are supporting these interventions and to what extent are the employees able to leverage these tools.

3.2 Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the availability of technological tools in organisations to recognise burnout.
2. To assess the levels of ease of use of the technological tools to mitigate burnout.
3. To assess the extent of usage of various technological tools to address burnout or pre-burnout.
4. To make suggestions to effectively use various technological interventions to address burnout.

4. Key Findings and Discussions

Technical tools are a very vital component in mitigating employee burnout through efficiency, Productivity and work-life balance and in creating a supportive environment to prioritise employee wellness and reduce burnout at work. The responses to specific questions related to the technological tools available, ease of use and their implications are as mentioned below.

1. The respondents felt that Communication platforms like Slack and Microsoft have contributed to reorganising the effectiveness of communication, i.e. it has enabled the users to spend less time on emails, focus on collaboration, and streamline resource sharing. Overall, it has contributed to quicker resolutions of issues. Through its unique features, it encourages them to step away and recharge through the help of virtual break rooms and reminders to take breaks. By leveraging these features the respondents think that they can mitigate burnout to a certain extent.
2. All the respondents expressed that Mental Health apps like Headspace, Woebot, and Calm assist in guided meditation and breathing exercises that can help them calm their minds. These apps also offer features to practice techniques like mindfulness which helps them manage their thought processes by integrating these techniques into their daily life, they can regulate and channel their thought process and they also feel that sleep aid and routine-building facility that these apps provide, helps them in reducing stress and anxiety and contribute to their overall well-being.
3. Most of the respondents opined that digital platforms like Coursera, LinkedIn Learning, and Udemy have helped them continuously update their existing skills. They feel that it also provides them with the platform to equip diverse learning options that aid in career advancement. With the

help of these apps, they can complete certifications that continuously update their knowledge, skills, and abilities, which contributes to their professional growth.

4. Most of the respondents stated that fitness apps like Apple Health Inc. and Fitbit help them build their physical health as these apps aid in developing comprehensive insights into their overall health and help them stay fit. These apps assist with activity monitoring, heart rate tracking, sleep tracking, goal setting about workouts and community support. They can build healthy routines which in turn makes them feel energetic at the workplace, thus combating workplace stress.

5. All the respondents opined that project management software like Trello and Asana helps them with task organisation, collaboration, progress tracking and deadline management which are vital aspects of the project management office. The listed features in these apps allow them to organise their tasks well and the automated notifications and reminders assist them in ensuring that they wrap up projects within the deadlines.

6. The respondent stated that HR Technical tools are helpful in employee burnout i.e. Recognition and Rewards Tools like Kudos and Bonuses provide ways to recognise and reward employees for their hard work and achievements, boosting their morale. Employee engagement platforms like Culture Amp and 15Five facilitate regular feedback and engagement surveys, helping HR identify and address burnout early. Time tracking and Paid Time Off (PTO) Management tools like TSheets and Kronos manage time tracking and PTO requests while encouraging employees to take time off and not overwork themselves. Some respondents mentioned the HR tools that provide employees access to Employee Assistance Programs (EAP). Interventions like counselling assistance and support services are provided to help employees manage stress and personal problems.

Most of the respondents opined that tech-based tools, virtual assistants and Chabot are beneficial for office management and employee well-being as they offer accessibility and support around the clock, potentially reducing burnout. They feel that with the help of virtual assistants, employees' issues can be addressed, and automating routine tasks with virtual assistants can alleviate the workload. The 24/7 availability of AI chatbots ensures that employees can access support whenever needed and offers emotional support, personalised experiences and skills development which are vital for reducing employee burnout. They also opined that the AI tools interface is friendlier for usage. Accessibility to all the tools is easy and at their convenience, but privacy about their usage and confidentiality is a matter of concern for some respondents. Though the respondents are confident of the operational efficiency of the tools, proper implementation and consideration of privacy and security will develop confidence among the employees.

Conclusion

Present-day leaders realise that giving priority to employee well-being benefits the employees and the establishment as well, with increased productivity and reduced turnover rates. When employees feel valued and supported, they are likely to be engaged and motivated, which impacts the overall growth and productivity of both the individual and the organisation. By leveraging AI-driven solutions, organisations can proactively address burnout risk factors and cultivate a supportive work environment conducive to employees' growth, leading to a sustained organisation. However, the integration of technology in mitigating employee burnout is not without its challenges. Striking a delicate balance between leveraging the potential of tech-driven solutions and safeguarding employee rights and well-being remains a critical concern. Despite the challenges, research suggests that tech-driven solutions have the potential to revolutionise workplace well-being initiatives by providing accessibility and scalable personalised support. This study could further lead to understanding the impact of technological tools aiding mitigation of burnout on the overall productivity of the employee and further impacting the organisation's growth. That would provide greater insights to organisations to equip themselves with the right tech tools to navigate the ever-evolving landscape of employee burnout, prevention and interventions, thus ensuring a

conducive workplace that sets employee well-being at the fore.

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