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EMPLOYEE WELFARE PRACTICES IN CORPORATE ORGANIZATIONS: A SIMPLE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Companies are putting a lot of money into employee welfare. They are offering health insurance, wellness programs, flexible hours, training and more. This paper explains what these employee welfare items are, what research shows about how they work and what Indian law requires. The paper says the best employee welfare is the kind that tackles the causes of work stress, such as too much work, no voice and unfair treatment. Extra perks do not solve the stress problem.

Keywords: Employee Welfare, Employee Welfare, Work Stress, Employee Benefits, Work-Life Balance

INTRODUCTION

IMPORTANCE OF THIS ISSUE

There are three reasons for investing in employee welfare. First, when employees are sick or unhappy, they take days and are more likely to leave. Second, hiring an employee is expensive, especially in IT services where people often move on. Third, strong employee welfare makes a company look like a place to work.

We must also stay a little cautious. Some employee welfare programs may look good for marketing. May not actually help people manage stress. This paper examines what research says.

THREE SIMPLE IDEAS ABOUT WORK AND STRESS

Demands and support. Every task at work takes effort from you. That could be a workload, tight deadlines or a difficult customer. In return, work also gives you help from teammates, clear feedback and chances to grow. When the demands become too high and the support becomes too low, you feel worn out and unhappy. Employee welfare support alone cannot fix many demands.

Control. Research from the 1970s found that the most stressful jobs had high demands and very little control over how the work was done. Giving workers control over their time and schedules helped reduce stress more than simply cutting the workload. Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. (2026). Employee Benefits.

Defining the needs. Employees need to feel they can do their job well, that they have some freedom and that they belong to a team. Autonomy. Employees stay motivated when these needs are satisfied. Even good pay can be hurt by targets and tight control.

All of these points show that we should view employee welfare not as a list of perks but as something that must be understood through the way work affects the people who do it. Edmondson, A. (1999). Psychological Safety and Learning Behavior in Work Teams. Administrative Science Quarterly, 44(2), 350–383.

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TYPICAL WELFARE TRADITIONS

Most welfare practices fall into six groups.

Security. Good pay, health insurance, a pension and financial help. These are the things employees care about most when the pay is too low. When the pay is already good, fairness is not as critical.

Health, health and well-being. Medical coverage, counseling, fitness rewards and mental health training for managers. Only if these services are easy for employees to use and if they know the information will stay private

The other types are hours, flextime, home working and long or short leave. The biggest benefit is scheduling, and it works best when employees can set their own times.

Employment. Training budgets, mentoring and clear promotion paths. These help employees feel capable and are linked to tenure, but it is hard to know if training is given because employees are loyal or if loyal employees are chosen for training.

Group culture. Employees should feel safe to raise concerns, be treated with dignity and respect and be protected from harassment. This may be the important group and is largely under the daily control of managers.

Fair process. Clear ways to raise problems, open performance reviews and involving staff in change decisions. Research shows that employees care more about how decisions are made than about what the decisions are.

WHAT THE EVIDENCE INDICATES

Well backed. A workload that is not overwhelming and a good manager are linked to burnout and fewer resignations. When team members feel safe to make mistakes, learning happens faster.

A fair employee welfare process creates trust and engagement.

Partly in favor. Many people work better with hours if they control their own time. The result depends on the job type. How well it is implemented.

There is a link between career development and longer retention. The loyal employees may be the ones who receive training, so it is unclear which comes first.

The evidence is insufficient or inconclusive. Fitness challenges and other wellbeing programs have shown results. Early studies that reported savings were weak in design, because healthier employees were more likely to join and the comparison groups were not chosen fairly. Stronger studies usually find savings. A program that changes work organization and offers support works better than a program that only offers a wellness activity. Karasek, R. A., Jr. (1979). Job Demands, Job Decision Latitude, and Mental Strain: Implications for Job Redesign. Administrative Science Quarterly, 24(2), 285–308.

The impact may be small. Free food, gyms and game rooms can make a company look nice. There is no strong evidence that they really improve wellbeing or performance once pay and workload are considered.

CRITICISMS

The toughest criticism comes from Jeffrey Pfeffer. In his book *Dying for a Paycheck* (2018), he says that normal work activities, like hours and job insecurity, harm our health. He argues that employers shift that health cost onto workers and society. If this is true, some welfare programs might only treat symptoms of curing the problem

That is a point. A counselling helpline does little for a man who works eleven hours a day and tries to meet a goal. The real test is whether a company will change the sources of pressure, even if it is costly or difficult. Ministry of Corporate Affairs. (n.d.). Ministry of Corporate Affairs. Government of India.

Another problem with the approach is that the wellness program puts responsibility back on the employee to move, sleep well and de-stress while the work environment remains demanding and stressful. Individual support is helpful. It should not replace changes to the work itself.

A third issue is fairness. In some cases, benefits are given to staff but not to all, based on seniority, contract type or location. Contract employees and support staff may earn less, even though they do work. A fair assessment of wellbeing would look at who's left out. V. V. Giri National Labour Institute. (n.d.). V. V. Giri National Labour Institute.

THE INDIAN LEGAL CONTEXT

- Employees provident fund: The Employees Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act specifies savings contributions for employees.

- Health and sickness insurance: The Employees State Insurance Act gives medical aid and sick pay to employees who qualify.
- Gratuity: The Payment of Gratuity Act gives a lump-sum cheque after long service.
- Paid parental leave: Maternity Leave and pay. The Maternity Benefit Act was changed in 2017 to give 26 weeks of paid leave to women.
- Every employer must have an Internal Committee for harassment. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013 says that any organization with ten or more employees must have such a committee.
- Four labor codes, passed in 2019 and 2020, combine these laws. Their rules and limits are still being put into practice. Some relaxations extend social security to gig and platform workers. Talk to the employer to find out the status, because these rules can change.
- IT and services companies in India face special pressures. They often have attrition, grow quickly and hire many contractual workers. Some teams work night shifts to match clients in time zones.
- In this setting, welfare must consider shift work and young staff who live far from home and want to advance

PRINCIPLES OF GOOD WELFARE

- Address the demands. Ensure that workload, overtime and role clarity are handled before providing help. Reduce demands if the workload is already too high.
- Empower your workers. If possible, let staff decide how, where and when they work.
- Train managers. The direct supervisor is the factor that predicts most welfare results, so investing in manager skills is often worthwhile.
- Assess the program by outcomes. Track burnout, quitting rates and absenteeism, not participation. Remove programs that do not work.
- Simplify the support. Understand why people avoid help. People fear stigma. Are unsure about confidentiality.
- Treat similar staff the same. Consider the differences in jobs for contract workers, location and level to make eligibility fair.
- Listen to your staff. Those who can influence decisions that affect them usually have workplace wellbeing. World Health Organization, & International Labour Organization. (2022). Mental Health at Work: Policy Brief.

CONCLUSION

Employee welfare is not a cure-all. It is certainly not just a marketing exercise. The lessons are simple: reduce stress, give control and fairness, provide managers with the best training and offer support where it is needed. Perks and wellness programs are useful. They should not replace a bad working environment. The best question a firm can ask itself is not "What benefits do we provide?". What are we doing for the people we employ – and will we do anything different?"

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