

Holistic Well-being of Employee: A way out for Sustainable Development in the BANI World

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The paper attempts to explore the various linkages between the literature on BANI world, and the role of employee well-being in creating a sustained workforce that can withstand the pressure and challenges of working in the BANI world.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The paper is based on the synthesis of the existing literature on the BANI world, Sustainable development, and the well-being of employees.

Findings: The paper establishes that for sustained growth of organizations in BANI world they need to devise interventions that address the holistic development of their workforce. Only employees who are happy and healthy (both physically and mentally) can withstand the pressure of the outside world and sustain and be engaged in work.

Originality/Value: The unique contribution of the study lies in the understanding that for an organization to become sustainable in a true sense in the context of the BANI world, they need to focus on various spheres of employee well-being to ensure holistic growth and development.

Paper Type: Case Based Study.

KEYWORDS: BANI World | Sustainable Development | Holistic Development | Employee Well-being | Mental Health

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Introduction

World and Workplace are changing rapidly. Digital transformations, multi-generational workforce, purpose driven work, 24X7 work culture, new ways of work organization, blurring boundaries between work and family life, fierce competition, prolonged working hours, increased pressure to perform are the contemporary workplace trends resulting in increased level of stress amongst employees (Findlay & Thompson, 2017; Wright, 2013) adversely affecting their mental health and well-being (Angrave & Charlwood, 2015). Similar is the scenario on the world front. Outbreak of pandemic, war, climate change, increased inflation all are adding to the challenges faced by people/ companies. There is high amount of uncertainty and instability across the globe. And a new concept has been coined to capture the changing scenarios. The current world is now referred to as the BANI world; where BANI is an acronym coined by American anthropologist and author, Jamais Cascio. The acronym BANI refers to B- Brittle, A- Anxious, N- Non-Linear and I- Incomprehensible. According to the author, the BANI world refers to 'world conditions that exhibit not only instability but also chaos. The world where outcomes are not only difficult to predict, but entirely unpredictable and the settings in which these events occur are not only ambiguous but also incomprehensible' (BANI – How To Make.....", 2023).

The fragile nature of world which is impossible to predict and difficult to understand is leaving people and companies anxious. The World Health Organization (WHO) has referred to stress as the "health epidemic of the 21st century," highlighting its global impact (Singh et al., 2019). As per the indices released by the World Health Organization (WHO), depression and anxiety result in the loss of 12 billion workdays each year, causing a cost of around US\$ 1 trillion to the worldwide economy (WHO, 2022). The Global Workplace Stress Index, published by Workplace Options (WPO), reveals that out of the total employees seeking emotional help for work-related issues- 74% of employees are experiencing stress, while 27% are suffering from anxiety. The Workplace Stress Index (WPO) is a comprehensive assessment of well-being data obtained from a sample of 17,000 employees employed in a range of small to Fortune 500 businesses (Economic Times, 2022).

In the context of India, Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu India LLP (DTTILLP) conducted a survey entitled "Mental health and well-being in the workplace," which gathered data from a sample of 3,995 employees. The survey result indicates that 80% of Indian employees experienced mental health problems within the previous year. Around 47% of these professionals ascribe workplace-related stress as the primary determinant affecting their mental well-being, with financial and COVID-19 difficulties being secondary factors. According to the survey, Indian firms incur an annual loss of approximately US\$14 billion due to the negative impact on employees' mental health (Deloitte, 2022). The above statistics are indeed alarming, and raises the concern that

when people/ employees are not healthy and feel a sense of well-being; how can an economy or organization think of sustainable development. Employees/ people are the most important asset and stakeholder of an organization/ economy; and without healthy and happy employees no firm/ economy can sustain long. Given the above scenario, the paper attempts to explore:

RQ: How ensuring the holistic well-being of employees result in sustained future growth and development of organizations/ economy at large?

Present study highlights the role of employees/ people in sustainable development. Previous researches have discussed the role and various strategies corporate/ organization is following for sustainable economic development, but there is limited literature that discusses the role of people/ employees in the sustained growth of organizations and the economy as a whole (Lamm et al., 2015, Macke & Genari, 2019). Thus, the present research attempts to not only highlight the importance of people/ employees in sustainable growth but will also discuss how focusing on holistic well-being of employees results in sustained growth and development in the BANI World.

Review of Literature

The review of Literature will cover two major sections: (a) Literature on Sustainability and (b) Literature on Well-being.

Sustainable Development

The term sustainability is often used in the context of the environment, but in the present work, the term is used in the context of employees who run an organization or an economy. The premise of studying sustainability in the context of employees is simple- if people/ workforce is not happy and healthy; how can an organization/ economy prosper or have a bright future? It is the 'People' that give an organization or an economy its true identity. Employee sustainability, as defined by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, pertains to the present and prospective capacity of employees or workers to sustain their presence within the labor force (Tenney, n.d.). The International Labour Organization (ILO) posits that the future economic well-being of a nation is essentially contingent upon the quantity of individuals engaged in employment and their level of productivity (ILO, 2010). The notion of sustainable development is rooted in the Triple Bottom Line framework (Elkington, 1997), which asserts that organizations should prioritize the well-being of individuals, the environment, and financial gains, rather than only concentrating on financial gains. (Miller, 2020). Thus, organizations have a key role to play in the sustainable development of employees. Hence it can be inferred that sustainable development of employees refers to creating a working atmosphere that keeps existing and prospective employees interested and motivated enough to perform successfully for the company (Ehnert et al. 2014).



K. Van Dam et al., (2017) report that work engagement, employability, and affective commitment are the indicators of the sustainable development of employees at work. They further assert that intrinsic job value and a supportive work environment are the workplace characteristics that lead to the sustainable development of employees. Craig (2018) also discusses that to ensure the longevity of the business and future success, it is imperative to build a sustainable workforce; because if there is high attrition and the team does not hold together for long; work and business will suffer. People/employees are the backbone of a sustainable organization/ community. And organization/ company sustainability is directly linked with community/ economic sustainability (Ruiz-Perez, 2021).

Given the importance of people for sustained organization and economy; organizations must develop a work culture where employees experience greater engagement, work-life balance, passion for work, autonomy, and empowerment, and thereby could contribute to meaningfully serving customers and the community at large (Lorincova et al., 2019). For sustained business performance, HR policies and practices must focus on the equitable treatment to all, development, and well-being of employees (Gollan, 2000). It is reported that in companies that provide challenging work environments; offer work-life balance, attractive reward policies, promote themselves as socially responsible and trustworthy, and encourage diversity and inclusion at the workplace, employees of such organizations are more engaged and experience a sense of well-being, resulting in sustained growth of the organization (Gollan, 2000; Macke & Genari, 2019). Based on the above discussion, it would be safe to say that businesses that promote and ensure the well-being of their staff and cultivate a positive and healthy work environment will not only have a competitive advantage but will be able to sustain the market forces for long.

Employee Well-being

Given the challenges posed by the BANI world in the form of fast-paced lifestyle, changing nature of occupations, increased levels of mental stress, rising cost of living, work pressure, fierce competition, 24X7 working culture, unpredictable economic environment and its associated consequences on health, 'Employee well-being' should be a priority for every workplace. According to Schulte and Vainio (2010), The notion of well-being encompasses the assessment of work-life quality, encompassing occupational safety and health, and is often regarded as a crucial determinant of productivity across individual, organizational, and societal domains. Experiencing happiness, satisfaction, and contentment is just one facet of well-being. It also involves personal growth, attaining a sense of accomplishment, and contributing to the community (Marks & Shah, 2004).

Workplace stress, employee burnout, deteriorating mental and physical health, and juggling between work and family obligations are all prevalent issues today (Faisal, 2023) which calls for organizations to take care of their employees as they are not only their most valuable resource but also ensure sustained growth and development of their businesses. It is incumbent upon businesses to provide their employees with the necessary support and care to promote their overall physical and emotional welfare. Despite this, a lot of companies still lack a comprehensive and dedicated well-being strategy. The benefits of promoting employee well-being are manifold and exist at all levels. At the individual level, employees with high levels of well-being will have better psychological and physical health (Waida, 2021). At the organization level because of their employees' higher performance and productivity, businesses can use their human capital to their advantage and gain an edge over their competitors. And at the society level, as people flourish it results in a society where people are happy, contented, enthusiastic about life, contribute meaningfully to others, and engage with each other (Kazemi, 2017). According to Fisher (2014), enhancing the well-being and satisfaction of employees, as seen by managers, supervisors, and workers, has a positive impact on their level of effort, contributions, and overall productivity. Hence, it can be inferred that ensuring the well-being of employees is a win-win situation, it offers competitive advantage, increased productivity, and sustained growth to the organization, and having happy and healthy people is good for society and economic growth as well.

Research Methodology

The present paper is conceptual and is based on the synthesis of the existing literature related to Sustainable development, Employee well-being, and the BANI world. Keywords such as "Green HRM", "Sustainable employees", "BANI World", "Employee Well-being", "Socially responsible HRM", and "Stress and Mental health" were used to search for relevant papers. Relevant literature was synthesized and a conceptual framework was proposed linking all the constructs under study.

Concept of Holistic Well-being: A Way Out for Sustainable Development

Rath and Harter, (2010) asserts that well-being encompasses an individual's subjective experience of satisfaction in their daily activities, the quality of their interpersonal connections, the stability of their financial circumstances, the vitality of their physical well-being, and the sense of satisfaction derived from their dedication to their communities. They defined well-being as a measure of the quality of life, mental health, emotional health, physical health, healthy habits, working conditions, and accessibility. In the extant literature, the concept of well-being has been

discussed but not in its entirety. Some of the dimensions discussed in the literature are physical well-being, social well-being, psychological well-being, career well-being and financial well-being (Grant et al., 2017, Wandell & Burton, 2006, Fisher, 2014, Gallagher et al., 2009). Mostly studies capture only 2-3 dimensions at a time. However, a more holistic framework was proposed by Sethi & Sinha (2020); which discussed six-dimensions of well-being on the pretext that the genuine and comprehensive growth and welfare of employees can only be achieved when there is tranquility and concordance at the emotional (heart), physical (body), cognitive (mind), and spiritual levels (soul) (Sethi & Sinha, 2020).

Organizations need to understand that there will never be true well-being until a person is at peace with themselves, capable of deriving value and meaning from the work they do, make a sense of the way their life is progressing, and able to connect it to a larger purpose in life. And measuring only a few aspects of well-being will only be misleading. Furthermore, such people cannot make meaningful contributions to the organization and society at large. Therefore, Organizations must ensure that their solutions/interventions are designed to address all four levels: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. Hence a dimension of Spiritual well-being was introduced to make it holistic. In light of the increasing prevalence of depression, stress, and anxiety among employees worldwide, as well as the evolving dynamics of work and the economy, it is imperative to develop a comprehensive approach that acknowledges the multifaceted and transcendent character of human beings. They are primarily spiritual, religious, and moral beings rather than just psycho-physical and socio-cultural ones. It has been observed that when people work with their hearts or spirits only than they find true meaning and purpose, a kind of fulfillment, and can make extraordinary contributions to organizations and society at large (Vayalilkarottu, 2012, Petchsawang & Duchon 2009). Based on the above discussion, the following conceptual model is proposed; which highlights that to deal with the challenges of the BANI world organizations need to design interventions at all the six levels of well-being, so that people can experience a sense of holistic well-being. And it is widely acknowledged and believed that happy workers are most productive; resulting in sustained employees, organizations, and economy at large.

Discussion

The framework proposed in the paper addresses the research question and asserts that it is only through holistic well-being organizations can have employees who are happy, healthy, productive and engaged; resulting in sustained growth and development of the organizations. Considering that increased competition, growing work pressure, technological advancement, innovative work practice, twenty four hours round the week work culture has resulted in increased stress, work family conflict, increased frustration and anxiety amongst employees (Sindwani, 2019; Sparks et al., 2001); and the fact that employees spend majority of their time at work and are increasingly encouraged to bring their whole self to work; it becomes important that organizations must treat workers as whole persons with “physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs” (Dehler & Welsh, 2003) and therefore must provide for mechanisms and practices that result in the complete and all-round development of employees. Because only such employees can withstand the pressure of the outside world and sustain and be engaged in work.

Conclusion & Implications

Our work highlights the mechanism of the sustained growth and development of organizations through focusing and ensuring holistic well-being of employees. The present study proposes a comprehensive framework to gauge well-being of employees, which is somewhat unique as most of the studies have examined two to three dimensions of well-being. Through this study an attempt is made to also explain that ensuring all-round development and well-being of employee is in favor of organizations only; work being central to human existence and given the fact employees spend maximum time of the day at workplace, everything that happens at work affects them personally and vice-a-versa. Thus, it becomes important for organizations to acknowledge that it is ‘One Integrated Whole Person’ organizations are dealing with, and that their satisfaction at work significantly impact/influence their satisfaction with life. And when employees are happy and satisfied they tend to be more productive, more engaged in work, and have less turn over intentions. Thus, they meaningfully contribute to organization success and growth and in turn of the economy.

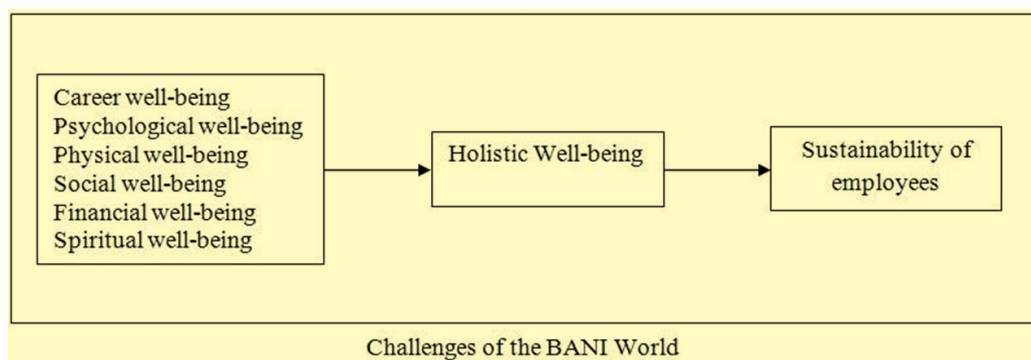


Figure 1: Conceptual Model



Implications

Study has some implications for the practicing managers. Firstly, factors such as meaningful work role; work-life balance; fair work practices; supportive leaders; open communication; free flow of information, amongst other factors significantly impact the sense of satisfaction at work. Everyone loves to work in a healthy work environment. Thus ensuring the presence of these factors is one way to ensure that employees will experience increased levels of well-being. Secondly, each person/ employee has a deep rooted need for peace, finding meaning and true purpose of their life through work. Thus, helping employees connect their work to larger purpose in life and contribute to the greater good, i.e., betterment of society, caring for the environment and ecosystem, will instill more stability, energy, positivity and fulfillment amongst employees. And lastly, Managers must understand the underlying mechanism that only when employees are happy, satisfied will they put their best efforts and energy to work which will offer competitive advantage to the organization and ensure its sustained growth and development.

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Annexure 16.1.4

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Reviewers Memorandum



Reviewer's Comment 1: The author came up with a contemporary idea of Holistic Well-being of Employees, especially in the BANI world. The paper attempts to explore the various linkages between the literature on the BANI world. Moreover, this review paper not only synthesizes existing literature on the Holistic Well-being of Employees within the BANI world but also provides valuable insights for theoretical development and practical applications in organizational settings.

Reviewer's comment 2: A good review of literature was done by the author. The author studied that Only employees who are happy and healthy (both physically and mentally) can withstand the pressure of the outside world, sustain and be engaged in work. Study has some implications for the practicing managers as well.

Reviewer's comment 3: Although the paper is quite well-structured, adding bibliometric analysis could provide a clearer image of the scenario. There are a few grammatical errors in some places that could be improved. The author has addressed nearly all significant factors contributing to employees' well-being, encompassing what can collectively be termed as holistic well-being.



Seep Sethi

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Conflict of Interest: Author of a Paper
had no conflict neither financially nor academically.

Editorial Excerpt



The article has 04% of plagiarism which is the accepted percentage as per the norms and standards of the journal for publication. As per the editorial board's observations and blind reviewers' remarks the paper had some minor revisions which were communicated on a timely basis to the author (Seep), and accordingly, all the corrections had been incorporated as and when directed and required to do so. The article presents a comprehensive mechanism of the sustained growth and development of organizations through focusing and ensuring holistic well-being of employees. This study contributes a novel approach by introducing a "**Holistic Well-being of Employee: A way out for Sustainable Development in the BANI World**". This approach stands out in the field, as many existing studies have typically focused on only two to three dimensions of well-being. However, the study could have been empirically verified, but the lack of verification ultimately opens the door for further research. After comprehensive reviews and the editorial board's remarks, the manuscript has been categorized and decided to publish under the "**Case Based Study**" category.

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