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## **"Yoga for Employee Engagement: A Holistic Approach to Mental Health and Well-being in the Workplace"**

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### **Abstract**

Globally, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a notable rise in mental health problems, especially for vulnerable populations and the general public. India faces a significant mental health crisis, with 48% of business employees at risk of poor mental health, contributing to 15% of the global mental health burden. The study found that poor mental health, primarily depression and/or anxiety, is linked to decreased productivity. Employees' mental health is influencing their engagement. Neglecting mental health in the workplace has a severe influence on employee performance and productivity, resulting in lower engagement, absenteeism, and worse decision-making. Thus, the objective of this study is to investigate the status quo of mental health and its impact on employee engagement in workplace and to suggest interventions.

The databases searched were Google Scholar, Researchgate, Sage, Scopus and PubMedCentral. The inclusion criteria involve the papers after COVID 19, that is, (2020-2024) as this issue has been majorly highlighted in the past few years. The findings reveal that mental health does impact employee engagement, productivity, and job satisfaction in the workplace. The interventions, which include yoga and exercises, improve mental health by enhancing clarity, tranquilly, and attention, as well as lowering stress and stress patterns, Yoga in the workplace can greatly increase employee health and productivity. Regular practice can help minimise stress, physical pain, and absenteeism. Yoga also helps to relax the body and quiet the mind, resulting in a more productive and peaceful work atmosphere. Yoga is a potentially effective treatment for depression, offering a structured environment to reduce symptoms. While not universally accessible, it can be a valuable alternative to traditional treatments, enhancing overall mental health, while some practitioners advocate for a maximal approach to physical activity and yoga. Instead, exercise and yoga should be done at optimal levels, which will lead to a more engaged workforce.

**Keywords:** Mental health, Employee engagement, Yoga, Physical Exercises.



## Introduction

Mental health :Mental health refers to our social, psychological, and emotional well-being, and it is an important component of overall wellness (PayChex, 2021).

In India, stigma around mental illness is still prevalent, and many people who are struggling with mental health difficulties are reluctant to get care out of fear of discrimination or judgement. This makes it challenging to spread knowledge about mental health issues and motivate individuals to get help (Shetty, 2023). The pandemic has raised awareness of the importance of mental health, There will be a lasting effect on mental health from COVID-19 and everything it changed about our sense of safety, connection, health, and wellbeing (Quaglia, 2022). Approximately 15% of the world's mental health burden is attributed to the severity of mental diseases in India alone. The emergence of COVID-19 has contributed to the steady increase in mental health problems that has been observed recently on a global scale (Deloitte, 2022). According to Mpower's report, 48% of corporate employees are in danger of poor mental health (Mpower, 2023).Two thirds of Indian private sector workers experience discrimination, and 42.5% of them have anxiety or depressive disorders (Clarence, 2023). According to World Health Organisation estimates, between 2012 and 2030, mental health issues will cost India's economy 1.03 trillion dollars (WHO, undated). The workplace environment significantly impacts mental health, with toxic relationships, inexperienced leadership, and unrealistic demands affecting productivity and longevity (PayChex, 2021). If an individual exhibits social anxiety, it can be a helpful early indicator of their overall mental health at work. Conversely, low levels of work engagement could be a sign of deeper problems with psychological health and mistreatment at work (Gan et al., 2023). Employees may exhibit a range of physical and psychological issues as a result of the stressful nature of their jobs (Salari et al., 2020). Neglecting mental health in the workplace has a severe influence on employee performance and productivity, resulting in lower engagement, absenteeism, and worse decision-making (Ramesh, 2023). There was clear evidence that poor mental health is connected with reduced productivity (de Oliveira et al., 2022). Mental health significantly impacts productivity, as poor mental health can lead to decreased motivation, increased stress, and negative consequences for individuals and relationships. Now “Employee engagement refers to the individual’s involvement and satisfaction with as well as enthusiasm for work” (Harter et al., 2002). There is a mutually beneficial relationship between mental health and employee engagement. Be it disengagement or poor mental health, both can have a detrimental effect on mental health (Murakami, 2023). Mental health is a critical factor in a workplace, affecting employee well-being. High levels of stress, pressure, and work-life imbalance can lead to anxiety and burnout (Kumari, 2023).Employers who place too much emphasis on things like work weeks and recognition are seeing a decline in employee engagement. Leaders in HR can push for a greater emphasis on mental health, enabling staff members to take advantage of wellness benefits without worrying about facing consequences. This creates a community and culture that encourage greater engagement and less stress (Harris, 2021). In the workplace, psychological distress and work engagement are frequently interwoven, which leads to lower levels of productivity, well-being, and job satisfaction as well as higher burnout rates. (Unda-López et al., 2023). Human resource specialists and businesses are realising that employee success, engagement, and retention are closely linked to their mental health and wellness (Meglio, 2023).



The HR Exchange Network State of HR survey revealed that burnout, a top concern for motivating employees, is the biggest challenge to employee engagement.(Meglio, 2023b).Burnout is characterized by spiritual and emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished personal accomplishment, with distress symptoms including depression and physical and mental exhaustion being the most common (Papathanasiou, 2015).Engaging in mental health exercises, such as yoga, can significantly improve employee engagement and overall well-being, reducing stress, anxiety, and depression (Woodyard, 2011). Yoga in the workplace enhances employee health, productivity, and overall well-being, promoting flexibility, reducing stress, and promoting a healthier lifestyle (Bhakuni, 2022).Yoga has been proven to effectively reduce stress and other mental health issues, including work-related stress and depression, according to study(Della Valle et al., 2020), providing a structured environment for symptom alleviation. Although not universally accessible, yoga offers a valuable alternative to conventional treatments, contributing to overall mental health improvement (Noetel et al., 2024). Some authors argue that yoga and exercise may not directly impact mental health but can enhance engagement. While they are not a panacea for all psychological issues, they can be integral components of a comprehensive clinical therapy approach, contributing to overall mental health improvement (Bös et al., 2023).

## Literature Review

Engagement is a positive attitude held by the employee towards the organization and its values. An engaged employee is aware of the business context and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organization.“A persistent, positive affective-motivational state of fulfillment in employees characterized by high levels of activation and pleasure” (Maslach et al., 2001).“Employee engagement refers to the individual’s involvement and satisfaction with as well as enthusiasm for work” (Harter et al., 2002). Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) proposed what is arguably the most often used definition of work engagement: an active, positive work-related state that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Vigor refers to high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, whereas Dedication refers to being strongly involved in one’s work and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, and challenge. Absorption is characterized by being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in work, such that time passes quickly.

Yoga According to (Ivtzan & Papantoniou, 2014), yoga has placed a strong emphasis on transcending towards ultimate reality, regulating awareness, and promoting holistic well-being (physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual).The Sanskrit scripture known as the Patanjali yoga sutra explains the intricate science of yoga, which seeks to bring together individual and global consciousness. Asana (physical postures), Pranayama (breath management), Pratyahara (withdrawal of the senses), Dharana (concentration), Dhyana (meditation), and Samadhi (absorption) are the eight limbs of yoga and Niyama (observations). It encourages defocused awareness, harmony with life and the cosmos, and balance between the mind and body (Bista & Bista, 2023).Yoga positively impacts organisational performance, particularly job satisfaction, through life management practices like Raj Yoga, detached action, faith in God's justice system, and self-discovery.(Mahadevan et al., 2010)



## STATUS OF MENTAL HEALTH

Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu India LLP conducted a survey on mental health and well-being in the workplace, which revealed that 47% of professionals regard workplace stress to be the most significant issue affecting their mental health. Poor mental health costs Indian employers over US\$14 billion each year in absenteeism, presenteeism, and attrition. Despite the worrisome amount of mental health disorders documented in the previous year, 39% of those affected do not take steps to control their symptoms due to societal stigma (Deloitte,2022). Mental health is a crucial component of overall mental well-being since it allows people to thrive in spite of a wide range of circumstances and experiences.(Freeman, 2022)

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted mental health, with 8.2% of the general population at risk of post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms. Economic concerns, social media influence, lack of social support, and inadequate education contribute to stressors (Bala et al., 2020). Lockdowns and social isolation aimed to reduce infections, but limited access to social support networks led to loneliness and mental health problems like depression and anxiety (Chhabra et al., 2022). The pandemic has highlighted mental health issues in India, including anxiety, depression, denial, anger, stress, insomnia, and fear (Roy et al., 2020). The pandemic has also impacted work and personal life, with short-term employment negatively impacting work life and working from home positively affecting private life (Tušl et al., 2021). In India, anxiety levels have risen due to job losses, family deaths, and price increases (Gulati et al., 2023). Mental illnesses among working people have been triggered by domestic concerns, lack of access to nutritious food, and confinement (Hasan & Yadav, 2023).

The Indian population is experiencing increased anxiety, stress, and depression, necessitating special attention for students and health professionals, urging governments, NGOs, and agencies to prioritize their needs.(Rehman et al., 2020)

Age was revealed to be a significant factor in the greater prevalence of mental diseases and psychological stress. Males had higher overall health scores, which may indicate that they are more vulnerable to mental health problems (Venugopal et al., 2020).

## WHY EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT?

Employee engagement is critical to an organization's long-term success. It involves looking for personal purpose, motivation, positive interpersonal support, and a productive work environment. A motivated workforce helps to boost corporate revenues and productivity. However, new statistics on worldwide employee engagement show that many firms are struggling. Employee engagement is more than just keeping people happy; it is also about encouraging them to work towards the organization's goals (Ramya, K.R.;Ganta, Vinay Chaitanya, 2014). Employee engagement is an important aspect in boosting work performance in an organisation. A literature evaluation conducted between 2013 and 2020 discovered that employee engagement promotes individual work performance, which eventually leads to the achievement of organisational goals (satata, 2021). The effectiveness of an organisation is greatly impacted by employee engagement (Ahmed et al., 2020). The employee engagement, long-term job attitudes, and trait positive and negative affect are the most reliable determinants of total employee performance, with trait negative affect, employee engagement, and work satisfaction being



the most significant factors (Dalal et al., 2012). Meaningful work significantly enhances employee engagement, with job diversity, advancement opportunities, autonomy, and feedback positively impacting engagement, while supervisor support negatively affects it (Albrecht et al., 2021). The significance of employee engagement cannot be overstated in today's post-COVID-19 era, as it fosters a sense of connection, appreciation, and support among employees (Gateway, 2021).

In the Industrial Revolution 4.0 era, companies must prioritize human resources, including Employee Engagement and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour, to improve performance and efficiency. (HERMAWAN et al., 2020)

## MENTAL HEALTH AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Employee engagement is significantly influenced by mental health, with 83% of Americans experiencing stress at work. This stress can lead to mental health issues, such as depression, disengagement, and emotional instability. Prioritizing mental health and well-being is crucial for workplace success, employee retention, and overall productivity (Cloud, 2022).

An early intervention (MENTOR) was created by the Mental Health and Productivity Pilot (MHPP) in 2020 to enhance the mental well-being and productivity of workers with mental health disorders. To increase psychological flexibility, interpersonal interactions, and engagement, ten sessions were given over a twelve-week period by certified Mental Health and Emotional Support Workers (MHELWs). The feasibility of the intervention was investigated, and preliminary results indicated improvements for managers' knowledge of mental health issues and staff productivity (Prudenzi et al., 2024). A study involving 8,837 older employees found that unfavorable work-related characteristics and high work engagement were linked to worsening mental and physical health, while positive work-related characteristics improved mental health. (Leijten et al., 2014). Work engagement and workplace vigour are crucial for employee health, enhancing physical and psychological well-being. Work engagement and workplace vigor reduces risks of hyperlipidemia, diabetes, and physical complaints. (Cortés-Denia et al., 2021).

## YOGA AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Employee engagement is critical to organisational success. Implementing an excellent well-being programme that incorporates yoga and meditation activities can increase engagement. Wellness initiatives, such as yoga or mindfulness training sessions, have been shown to dramatically increase employee engagement. These programmes not only increase productivity but also lower stress levels, which improve job satisfaction and create a healthier work environment. These benefits eventually result in higher employee retention and engagement. (Liokumovich, 2023)

According to the study, mindfulness techniques have a big impact on workers' well-being, perceived stress, and engagement. It showed that there was a moderate correlation with employee wellbeing and a strong, inverse link between mindfulness and felt stress. This demonstrates how crucial mindfulness is for reducing stress and raising employee engagement in workplaces. (Khan et al., 2020)



The workplace plays a crucial role in reducing psychological distress, as evidenced by a study involving 1321 individuals. Regular exercise, particularly once or twice a week, significantly enhances work engagement, especially among white-collar workers, promoting mental health and productivity (Jindo et al., 2020). According to a study, a three-day yoga-based programme enhanced the mental and physical well-being of urban education workers while also encouraging positive lifestyle choices and enhancing psychological stability (Dyer et al., 2020)

Reducing sitting time and encouraging physical activity are essential for employee engagement at work. Given that it is strongly associated with lower levels of sitting time, even modest physical activity may be advantageous for employee engagement. (Kiema-Junes et al., 2022)

### YOGIC INTERVENTION

Yoga is a centuries-old Indian practice that has become well-known throughout the world for its ability to enhance mental wellness. This study examines the significant benefits of yoga for mental health with an emphasis on India, the birthplace of yoga. It emphasises how crucial it is to include yoga exercises in mental health therapies, supporting a more thorough and culturally appropriate approach to mental wellbeing (Bansiya, 2023). Using mantras, meditation, pranayama, and asanas, yoga is a non-pharmacological way to improve mental health overall by enhancing self-control, emotional regulation, and self-assurance as well as lowering perceived exhaustion, stress, and stress-related lifestyle disorders like diabetes mellitus, hypertension, obesity, and many more (Shaw & Chand, 2021). Yoga, a personalized and comprehensive approach, has been shown to be an effective alternative treatment for depression and obsessive-compulsive disorder, offering a viable substitute for conventional mental health care therapies (Garg, 2024). Yoga has a significant impact on mental health, particularly during the pandemic, providing a means to mitigate psychological effects and enhance overall well-being and mental health (Shaw and Chand, 2021).

Supervised yoga interventions significantly improved wellbeing, fostering positive affect and reducing subsequent relapse risk, emphasizing the need for ongoing attention to maintain a sustainable wellbeing environment. (Sareekumar et al., 2021).

Yoga, a stress-management technique, can help executives overcome anxiety and stress, benefiting the organization by combining physical postures, breath expansion, relaxation, and meditation practices (Singh Kaswan et al., 2020). The workplace is increasingly incorporating yoga-based wellness programs to address health issues faced by modern corporate employees in desk jobs (Malik et al., 2022).

The efficacy and acceptability of a six-week online yoga intervention for women working from home, highlighting several health and stress-management benefits. (Wadhen & Cartwright, 2021).

Corporate employees' cognitive function was successfully improved by the fifteen days of cyclic meditation practice. (Kansara et al., 2021)



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## OBJECTIVES

1. To review the mental health scenario in india specially with reference to employee working in corporate sector.
2. To establish a relationship between employee engagement and mental health.
3. To ascertain the interventions with a positively moderate relationship between Mental Health and Employee engagement.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The primary goal of the current study is to analyse the literature in order to look into the current state of mental health, how it affects employee engagement at work, and possible interventions.

This exploratory study is based on secondary data that was gathered from a variety of sources, including books, journals, magazines, and the internet, The databases searched were Google Scholar, Researchgate, Sage, Scopus and PubMedCentral. The inclusion criteria involve the papers after COVID 19, that is, (2020-2024) as this issue has been majorly highlighted in the past few years. A thorough review of the literature on employee engagement, mental health, and yoga has been conducted in order to guarantee the accuracy and consistency of the findings.

## DISSCUSSION

Employee engagement, mental health, and well-being are all essential components of organisational success. The review of the literature emphasised the significance of these elements and their interactions. Employee engagement, as described by several scholars, is a positive attitude and involvement in the workplace that leads to better performance and organisational outcomes. It is distinguished by vigour, dedication, and absorption, all of which are necessary for organisational success. However, the COVID-19 epidemic has had a substantial influence on mental health, with stress, worry, and depression becoming more common among both the general population and employees. Employee engagement and productivity have decreased as a result of mental health difficulties, which can have a negative impact on job performance and general well-being.

Yoga, a centuries-old Indian practice, has been proved to provide significant mental health and wellbeing advantages. It improves overall well-being by combining physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions. The eight limbs of yoga, which include asana, pranayama, and meditation, have been shown to improve mental health and well-being. Yoga has been demonstrated in studies to reduce stress, anxiety, and sadness while also improving emotional regulation and self-control. It has also been shown to be an effective alternative treatment for mental health issues like depression and obsessive-compulsive disorder.

The literature review also emphasised the relevance of employee engagement in organisational performance. Employees who are engaged are more likely to be motivated, productive, and satisfied with their jobs, which improves organisational outcomes. However, mental health difficulties have a detrimental impact on employee engagement because stressed and nervous individuals are less likely to be engaged at work. As a result, organisations must prioritise mental health and well-being in order to maintain a motivated and engaged workforce.



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## CONCLUSION

It is concluded in the study that employee engagement, mental health, and well-being are indirectly interrelated and crucial to organisational performance. Yoga, with its multiple mental health and overall well-being benefits, can be a useful tool for increasing employee engagement and well-being at work. Although yoga and mindfulness programmes have been investigated and implemented by organisations to increase employee engagement, lower stress levels, and enhance overall wellbeing, more needs to be done in this regard. Yoga can be used in addition to medical therapy as a complementary or alternative approach to treat mood disorders like stress, anxiety, and depression.

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