

Impact of Mental Health on Workplace Productivity in Sri Lanka: A Literature Review

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Mental health or its lack thereof, is becoming a major issue globally. Research has continually shown the adverse effect of the absence of mental health on workplace productivity. Studies show that several million workdays and billions of dollars in employee productivity are lost every year due to the adverse impacts of mental health. Studies also indicate higher incidence of mental health issues among millennials who are becoming a significant portion of the workforce with the progressive exit of Baby Boomers and Gen Xers which points to the fact that mental health is set to increase in importance as an organizational problem. Deficiencies in resilience and emotional intelligence among Millennials and Gen Zers also sees them struggling to cope with stress, leading sometimes to extremes of suicide even among those with high IQ. The stresses caused by downsizing, where employees left behind in companies must do more with less and the challenges of the current work from home regime due to the pandemic are seen to be exacerbating the problem. While the global consensus is that insufficient research has gone into the topic of mental health in the workplace, in Sri Lanka, there is a dearth of literature on the subject, despite mental health conditions being a significant issue with the populace, especially those affected by the ethnic conflict, the 2004 tsunami and evidenced by the high rate of alcohol dependence of Sri Lankan males as well as the high rates of suicide. Mental health however is yet to get onto the agenda of corporates in Sri Lanka with severe stigma attached to the elements of mental health issues without due differentiation from mental illness. The purpose of this paper is to review the existing literature on how mental health impacts on workplace productivity and to study the variables, concepts, and theories relevant to mental health and workplace productivity with an emphasis on the latter as measured by absenteeism and presenteeism.

Keywords: *Absenteeism and Presenteeism, Mental Health, Workplace Productivity*

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