Workplace and mental health of workers/employees have a complex relationship. While on one hand, work can have a positive impact on mental health by providing job security, time structure, social contacts, improvising one's organizational abilities/skills which overall can benefit one's sense of well-being, workplace stress can result in adverse mental health issues in the workers leading to disruption of work and decrease in productivity in the long run. It has been seen that without a mentally healthy workplace, the team of workers experience low morale, workers become cynical, stressed, and remain anxious, there occurs increase in rates of physical health problems and sickness leaves resulting in decline in the productivity and deterioration of the organizational climate. Therefore, all organizations/industries should strive to maintain a mentally healthy workplace to get high productivity and efficient dealings.

Workplace/Job stress can negatively affect the mental health of the employees/workers. It can result in increase in workplace errors and accidents/injuries, impairment of interpersonal relationships between co-workers and seniors, and can also lead to increase in substance use disorders among the workers. In other words, the end result of excessive workplace stress can give rise to chronic or frequent absenteeism, sickness presenteeism, and poor mental health of the workers. There is significant evidence to suggest that depression in industrial workers has a negative impact on time management skills and productivity than any other health condition. However, another question which is important to be addressed is how can industry affect the family of the workers or in other words what are the implications of poor mental health of workers on their families and family atmosphere as well as vice versa.

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IMPACT ON FAMILY

To answer this, we need to understand how industrialization had affected families. Before rapid industrialization movement of the 20th century, the industrial workers’ families were relatively large, women tended to have more children (i.e. motivation to limit the family size was low), children often contributed to the family’s income, female members of the family supported the male workers by taking up tasks (such as sewing garments, working as housemaids, etc.) and there was more cohesion and harmony among the family members. However, the 20th-century industrial revolutionary growth has led to a decrease in the family size of the industrial workers, most of the workers stay away from their families and meet once in every 3–4 months with their partners/families, children usually do not contribute to the family’s income and are busy in their academic activities and there are more working females in the industries. Further, there are more monetary demands from family members for various needs from time to time which add on to the financial and mental burden of the workers. In addition, there are several domestic issues arising out of the difficulties in maintaining proper work-family balance.

In this regard, there can be two main types of work-family conflicts (WFCs) in the lives of industrial workers: (1) WFC occurs when commitments at work such as nonflexible working hours, interpersonal problems with colleagues at work or poor support from seniors, hampering family life, and (2) Family-work conflict occurs when an individual’s commitments in the family get in the way with work, such as responsibilities of young children, elderly parents care, problems in the relationship with spouse, etc.

Therefore, there are several work-domain variables (such as job participation, hours exhausted at work/industry, social support at workplace, flexible working schedule, and job-related stress) and nonwork domain variables (such as family involvement, hours spent at home, family support, family stress and conflicts, number of children requiring care, spousal employment, number of dependent family members, etc.) which have a complex interaction with each other resulting in an imbalance of work-family atmosphere. Such challenges on day to day basis often lead to significant conflicts between one’s family responsibilities and job responsibilities at the workplace. These problems

If we analyze the consequences of the WFCs, we can relate that such frequent conflicts can lead to initial lateness/unpunctuality on and off, which extends to chronic absenteeism, increase in alcohol/substance use behaviors, marital and family disharmony, and ultimately increase in the overall psychological distress of the worker as well as their family members/partners. These problems can lead to decrease to the productivity of the individual workers and if seen at the larger context, overall all these can increase the industrial costs due to the low productivity of its workers. Studies from different countries had found employees reporting balancing work and family demands to be a major stress and WFCs to be the main factor influencing employee well-being.

ROLE OF FAMILY IN IMPROVING THE MENTAL HEALTH OF WORKERS

The family of industrial workers can play a vital role in this regard. They can be the key persons in: (a) Identifying psychological distress of their personnel [see Box 1] (b) can provide mental healthcare support and thereby help in reducing psychological distress [see Box 2] and lastly (c) act as a bridge between the worker and organization/industry in facilitating good mental health care.

Box 1: Family’s role in identifying mental health problems in their working member

| Family members can often be the first persons to identify/recognize |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| The tell-tale symptoms of psychological distress              |
| Decrease in personal hygiene                                 |
| Frequent complaints of unexplained pain                       |
| Confused/distracted appearance                                |
| Expressions of strange ideas                                  |
| Excessive talkativeness                                       |
| Disturbed sleep and appetite                                  |
| Avoidance of social interactions                              |
| Difficulty in remembering things                              |
| Change in the worker’s behavior over a period of time         |
| Flushed appearance/excessive sweating                        |
| Blank stare                                                   |
| Slurred speech                                                |
| Unsteady gait                                                 |
| Red eyes                                                      |
| Puffy face                                                    |
| Tremors                                                       |
| Vomiting                                                      |
| Noteworthy change in the person’s decreasing efficiency at work|
| place                                                         |
| Increased injuries/accidents                                  |
| More problems at work relationships                           |
| Increased errors                                              |
| Appearing disinterested in work and family                   |
| Frequent late arrivals at home                                |
Box 2: Role of family in providing mental healthcare and support

- Family members provide significant support and care to persons suffering from serious mental illness/psychological distress
- Family members are often the primary and only source of social support
- Family support is important because
  - Individual speaks with family members’ everyday and spends a considerable amount of time with them
  - Family members boost up confidence and assist the individual in the treatment process and ultimately in the long term recovery process of any mental illness/addiction problems
  - Family members provide unparalleled and selfless emotional support
- Family help in maintaining good treatment compliance and rates of medication or therapy adherence are higher in patients with good family support
- Family has a crucial role to play in the vocational, social skills training and rehabilitation of the patient, not only because of close family bond that exist in traditional Indian families, but also because of the lack of rehabilitation services in developing countries
- Family need to be properly psycho-educated regarding mental health issues and in maintaining a cordial environment at home, supervising medications, reduction of critical comments and to encourage the patient on noticing improvement

ROLE OF ORGANIZATION/INDUSTRY IN TAKING CARE OF FAMILIES OF INDUSTRIAL WORKERS

Organizations should help the families of the workers in providing adequate support to take care of their workers. This can be done by (1) providing regular care and treatment from mental health professionals (who can be attached to their set up), (2) providing monetary/financial support in difficult times, (3) going through a mental health crisis, (4) developing a true partnership with the families and make the experiences of the family an essential part of their worker welfare programs and policies, (4) creating supportive environments for mental health promotion at workplace, (5) conducting frequent wellness programs for improving resilience and discussing strategies to handle job-related stress, and lastly (6) creating workplace accommodations for workers with mental illness that enables them to work effectively and safely.

Ideally, certain important provisions which should be taken care by every industry/organization to improve the mental health of their workers and families are as under:

1. Every industry should have industrial social workers who should educate working mothers/parents how to balance their work and family responsibilities to develop a sense of belonging in both domains of work and family
2. The supervisors of the workers should be adequately trained to notice any problems in the mental health of their workers/team members and to develop empathetic feelings toward them. They should be trained to give support to their subordinates when any work-family conflict is observed
3. Regular health checkups with a greater weightage on mental health screening (common mental disorders and substance use) need to be organized in all factories and conduct awareness programs about common mental health problems
4. Provide incentive/financial aids to the employees for settling near to the area of the workplace, encouragement for periodic visits, or connecting with their families in their native places (for migrant workers).

CONCLUSIONS

Common mental health issues and psychological distress among industrial workers are quite prevalent. The family often gets affected by the job/workplace stress of the worker. Family members are often the key persons in identifying tell-tale signs of mental health issues in workers. Families should be provided adequate awareness and support to deal with their member (worker) with mental health issues. Family acts as a buffer to de-stress workers and hence they should be adequately trained/educated to provide mental health support to their worker (member). Management/organization should liaise with families of workers to promote mentally healthy workplace and reduce WFC. The role of families in taking care of the mental health of industrial workers is pivotal. Therefore, the important role of the family should never be ignored and strategies/policies should be implemented aiming at improving the family atmosphere of industrial workers.

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