

Exploring The Impact Of Epidemic Concerns On Employee Wellbeing, Performance And Commitment In Times Of COVID 19- A Cross- Sectional Analysis

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Abstract

COVID 19 can be classified as both global health and economic crisis. The impacts of COVID-19 on workers and workplaces around the world have been dramatic. The continued spread across different waves and the vaccination process has taken a long time, though we witness things returning to normal. The global lockdown of companies and industries that have been implemented and mandated to curb the spread of the virus has generated a wide range of unique and fundamental challenges for both employees and employers around the world. The study examines the impact of Individual level epidemic concerns on commitment, performance and well-being of employees in IT sector. The study investigates the mediating effect of employee well-being on performance and commitment. The data was collected from 144 employees working in IT sector through a structured questionnaire. 5 point Likert scale was used and the instrument was designed to capture respondents' self-assessment. Findings indicate that more than the physical concern, financial concerns had a greater significance on employee well-being. Psychological concern had higher significance on employee well-being than concern regarding social gaze. Regression analysis was used to assess the mediating effect of employee well-being on commitment and performance. It was found that employee well-being has stronger mediating effect on commitment than on performance.

Key words: COVID 19 Concerns, employee commitment, employee performance employee well being

I. Introduction

India's information technology (IT) industry has played a key role in putting India on the global map. The IT-BPO sector has become one of the important growth sectors for the Indian economy. In addition to fueling the Indian economy, this sector also positively influences the lives of its inhabitants through an active direct and indirect contribution to various socioeconomic parameters such as employment, standard of living and diversity. The IT sector has played an important role in the transformation India's

image of a slow bureaucratic economy to a place of innovative entrepreneurs and a global player in providing world-class technology solutions and business services. India's information technology (IT) industry has played a key role in putting India on the global map. Over the past decade and a half, however, the only segment that arguably has had the biggest impact on businesses and consumers around the world is information technology (IT). As per IBEF India's IT and business services market is projected to reach US\$ 19.93 billion by 2025. According to Gartner estimates, IT spending in India was forecasted to

be US\$ 81.89 billion in 2021 and further increase to US\$ 101.8 billion in 2022, a 24.31% YoY increase.

IT has the potential to increase long-term growth prospects through increased productivity in almost all sectors of the economy. Information technology can play a major role in the global economy development of the country. India has a comparative advantage in the global IT sector, at least in terms of cost. With a large pool of workers with software and language skills, it is able to move towards the production of goods and services with higher added value. In fact, it has just started to move towards goods and services with higher added value. IT service companies have integrated new service lines such as software package implementation, systems integration, R&D engineering and remote network management as ITES-BPO companies began to offer more complex services such as financial research and analysis, actuarial modeling, and business and enterprise research. The availability of a large number of workers with a combination of engineering and management skills certainly useful for moving towards goods and services with higher added value.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has caused drastic changes in many industries, and Information Technology (IT) industry is the major among them. The negative impacts during this situation are more compared to positive effects. The significant weaknesses the IT industry is facing now is due to the fall in the economy, as a lot of companies are forced to ask their employees to work from home (remotely) keeping in the account of the public health concerns. In many IT companies around the world, offices are closed and work is done from home. Internationalization has slowed down considerably. For the past two decades, the information technology industry has been India's leading economic growth sector. It

plays an imperative role in the realization of the various dreams of achievement and aspirational careers of the country's middle class. However, due to the Covid-19 coronavirus outbreak, Indian IT services players, according to industry analysts, will see a significant slowdown in growth during this financial year. Reports state that major software exporters, including Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, and HCL Technologies, will be hit the hardest by declining technology spending from customers in the US and Europe after shutdowns around the world. This article highlights the main impacts of Covid-19 on India's IT sector While working remotely many employees are demotivated and it is affecting the performance of employees as well as a commitment towards work. Employee well-being means the state of being happy and healthy. The study focuses on understanding impact of antecedents that affect employee well-being. At individual level these antecedents are conceptualized as physical concern of the employee, psychological concern of the employee, financial concern of the employee and concern regarding social gaze. The study also aims at examining the mediating effect employee well-being on the commitment and performance.

2. Literature review

2.1 Employee concerns about the epidemic (financial, psychological, physical and concern for social gaze)

self-rated mental health is the current mental condition of being free of illness in which and also state in which the physical, social and emotional wellbeing is fully achieved. Several factors can negatively affect mental health in the work environment. These factors can be related to social, financial, psychological and physical that emerge as concerns or thoughts that might affect the mental condition. These thoughts could be induced or influenced by external or internal environmental conditions. Such concerns could

be attributed to lower productivity and increased costs to the organizations.

Therefore mental health problems induced by concerns about different individual and social attributes can act as a great burden on companies and hence the studies in this regard assume significance.

2.2 Employee well-being

The success and survival of a business in the fast-paced and ever-changing service industry depends on the quality of its products and services and the ability of its employees to respond directly to customers. That is, the performance of the company is closely linked to the performance of the employees (Baptiste, 2008; Sirgy, 2017). Most people view their work as an important resource that affects their physical and psychological well-being (Kara et al., 2013). Furthermore, the perceived well-being of employees is closely related to the induction of positive attitudes and behaviors of employees (Kooji et al., 2013). There is no agreed standard for evaluating employee well-being, but when examining the general conceptual definition of well-being, it refers to an individual's assessment of the extent to which he or she contributes to improving their performance and quality of life (Grzeskowiak and Sirgy 2007; Hwang and Han, 2014; Sirgy, 2017). In other words, employee wellness refers to the idea that quality of life improves through the health, happiness, comfort, and peace of mind that employees experience while working. The Employee Wellness Study found that increasing awareness of employee wellness has a positive effect on mental health, job satisfaction, organizational engagement, and work-life balance (Baptiste, 2008; Sirgy & Lee, 2016). When awareness of employee well-being increases, productive results arise such as good quality of service and productivity improvements, and vice versa, when employee perception of well-being decreases, productivity

and quality of work decrease and capacity decision-making decreases (Edgar et al., 2017). The positive effect of increasing the perception of well-being is evident in the service sector, especially in hotels. In other words, customers who use products and services in the service industry, such as hotels, can feel the emotion of the employees at the point of contact of the service with the employee, and the perceived emotion influences the future behavior of the customer. (Chong and Ahmed, 2017). In other words, the degree of well-being perceived by hotel employees is closely linked to maintaining the sustainable profitability of a business (Baek et al., 2018). Therefore, the performance of the company is closely related to the performance of the employees, so it is necessary to increase the awareness of the well-being perceived by the employees to improve the performance of the employees. Self-rated mental health is a self-rated assessment of current mental health status (Lundberg & Manderbacka, 1996; Pietila et al., 2015). Also, mental health is more than just a condition of not having disease or illness and can be considered as a condition in which physical, mental and social well-being has been fully achieved. In other words, physical and mental health are not independent of each other, but are interdependent. Mental illness is one of the most common and costly health problems that affects a person's mood, thoughts, and behavior, causing severe pain and dysfunction over long periods of time (Dimoff & Kelloway, 2019). Anxiety and depression have been reported in 262 million people worldwide and are the leading causes of mental illness. Furthermore, the cost burden of these diseases has been reported to be more than \$ 1 trillion per year with decreasing productivity (WHO (World Health Organization), 2020c). In particular, service sector workers, such as hotels, have frequent contact with customers due to the nature of their work and may experience mental stress, such as frustration or hopelessness in this process (Lambert et al., 2010; Yu et al., 2020).

As such, self-rated mental health is becoming increasingly important because mental illness is a serious social problem. Several factors can affect mental health in the workplace. Examples include poor communication and practices, low levels of wellness, and inappropriate health and safety policies. Factors that negatively impact mental health can be attributed to decreased employee productivity (eg, employee turnover, passive attitude, decreased passion for work) and can also result in decreased productivity. business productivity and increased costs (Dimoff & Kelloway, 2019). In particular, inadequate health and stability policies are very important issues that can manifest as physical and mental health problems among employees. Therefore, mental health problems can represent a great burden for companies and, therefore, studies are urgently needed to help overcome these problems (Han & Hyun, 2018).

Well-being is a complex and multifaceted construction of subjective life satisfaction (Vaughan & Hogg 2008, p. 516). Well-being research focuses primarily on the areas of physical and psychological health, independence, social relationships, environment, and beliefs and is generally measured using subjective accounts (Heun et al. 1998). Increasingly, the topic of wellness in the workplace is attracting much academic interest (Bushnell 2007). Well-being is often measured as an outcome using JD-R theory, and results from the psychosocial safety climate model specify it as levels of psychological distress, emotional exhaustion, and depression (Dollard et al. 2009; Dollard et al. 2012).

2.3 Employee commitment and performance

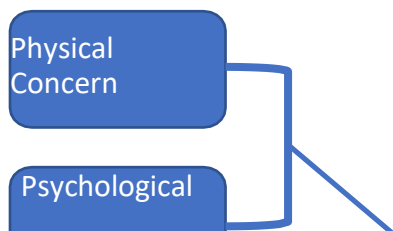
The existing literature positively associates the performance of human resources with the performance of the organization (Hitt et al., 2001; Moynihan & Pandey, 2007). Furthermore, motivation and job satisfaction are positively

correlated with employee loyalty and intention to stay with current employer (Rahman et al., 2008; Rust et al., 1996). Decreased job satisfaction has been firmly established as the main predictor of voluntary turnover (Griffeth et al., 2000). Job satisfaction is positively related to job performance (Miller et al., 2001; Moynihan & Pandey, 2007). The global shortage of employees has increased steadily over the past decades (Kingma, 2001). Studies have shown that job dissatisfaction is positively related to employees' intention to quit (Applebaum et al., 2010; Heinen et al., 2013). However, previous research determined that the well-being of IT employees depends on the internal services that are provided to their employees. Furthermore, the effectiveness and efficiency of employees increase as they become more motivated towards their work (Eskildsen & Dahlgard, 2000). Ultimately, this leads to the sustainability of organizations in the market (Berry et al., 2010; Mirabito & Berry, 2015). In management research, employee engagement is considered an essential aspect, as it has a direct link to employees and organizational performance. Several factors are associated with human resources and these factors play a fundamental role in the development of organizations through factors such as employee satisfaction, employee engagement, loyalty and communication. A higher level of employee commitment to their employer leads to a higher level of productivity. Employee performance and engagement are directly related and high employee engagement has a positive impact on their job performance. Some researchers viewed employee engagement as an employee psychological state that indicates a strong employee relationship with the organization and motivates them to work harder for their employer organization (Richardson et al., 2006). A higher level of employee engagement is beneficial to the organization as it leads to a high level of behavioral outcomes and helps the organization to achieve its overall goals

(Khan et al., 2011). The concept of employee wellness has emerged in recent years. Wellness includes different aspects that an organization covers, such as health and safety. Organizations are initiating productivity programs to improve employees. Health and wellness programs in the workplace have become essential not only for employees but also for the organization because they have a positive impact on employee performance (Guest & Conway, 2002). There are several possible ways through which the well-being of employees in the organization can be maintained, such as on-site fitness programs, flexible work arrangement to avoid frustration, financial education, professional training, training of emotional intelligence, providing healthy food to employees, establish a friendly work environment in the organization and so on (Renee Baptiste, 2008). Employee well-being also enables that they have a good relationship with other employees, so that they can work as a team and produce better results (Lawson et al., 2009). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the health of an individual is the combination of mental, physical and social well-being. For employees, wellness is the combination of mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Mental health is the designation for least depression, anxiety, and stress. Physical health problems include digestive problems, headaches, muscle aches, and

dizziness. Several researchers argued that employees who have to work under pressure and in stressful conditions would have a low level of performance that would have an impact on organizational results (Babic et al., 2020; Kinman & Johnson, 2019). According to these authors, employees must work under stress, fear, pressure, anxiety and tension in an unhealthy work environment. Consequently, such an organization would face greater absenteeism and employee turnover. Employee engagement seems to be a critical factor in corporate success. Low-commitment individuals will only do enough to work on it. They do not put their hearts into the work and mission of the organization. They seem to care more about personal success than the success of the entire organization. People who are less engaged are also more likely to see themselves as outsiders rather than long-term members of the organization. An attractive job offer elsewhere will very likely lead to their departure. In contrast, employees with a high level of commitment to an organization see themselves as an integral part of the organization. Anything that threatens the organization is also an imminent threat to it. Such employees are creatively involved in the mission and values of the company and are constantly thinking about how to do their job better. In essence, dedicated employees work for the organization as if the organization belongs to them.

Conceptual framework



3. Research Methods and tools

3.1 Research Gap

After the study of existing literature, it was found that there is a need on understanding the significance of impact of pandemic on the employee performance as the pandemic had a very strong worldwide influence on all the sectors of the economy. This study is an attempt to analyze perceived levels of concerns on the level of performance and also the mediating effect of perceived employee wellbeing. On the basis of review of literature, it is evident that most of the researchers focused on the benefits and challenges of employee engagement practices and its effect on the performance. Studies also have been conducted to establish the relationship between employee well-being and the perceived employee concerns. Nevertheless, empirical evidence from across geographies would definitely add value in terms of understanding employee behavior. The present study emphasizes on understanding and analyzing antecedents of employee well-being from their perspective in the context of sudden external environmental disturbance, associated internal

changes and its impact on employee performance.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has caused drastic changes in many industries, and Information Technology (IT) industry is the major among them. The negative impacts during this situation are more compared to positive effects. The significant challenges the IT industry is facing now is due to global downturn along with the compulsion of making their employees work from home (remotely) due to public health concerns. While working remotely many employees are demotivated and it is affecting the performance of employees as well as a commitment towards work. The outcome of the study would enable companies to understand and devise strategies to support with coping mechanisms and empower them to enhance their performance levels.

3.2 Objectives of the study

The following are the objectives of the study.

1. To assess the impact of the COVID-19 on different dimensions of employee perceived concerns that contribute towards wellbeing.

2. To analyze the significance of these perceived concerns on the perceived wellbeing of employees.
3. To analyze the mediating effect of wellbeing of the employee on their commitment and performance

Hypotheses of the study:

H1: Psychological concern and Physical concern of the employee has significance on Employee Well-being.

H2: Financial concern and Concern regarding social gaze of the employee has significance on Employee Well-being.

H3: There is significant impact of Employee Well-being on Employee Commitment

H4: There is significant impact of Employee Well-being on Employee Performance.

3.3 Data and methodology

Table 3.4.1 reliability statistics

Dimensions	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Perceived employee concerns	14	0.814
Employee wellbeing	6	0.821
Employee commitment and performance	12	0.871

4. Data Analysis and Results

Statistical elaboration and summary of distribution of the sample is presented in table 4.1.

Table 4.1 – Demographic profile of the respondents

The study is descriptive in nature. The study is based on primary data collected through closed ended structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent out in the form of online google forms to employees in IT sector working at different levels. Non- probability convenience sampling technique was used as the sampling procedure. The hypothesis was tested with the help of statistical techniques like descriptive analysis and regression analysis. The mediating role of wellbeing was tested using Baron and Kenny's method of mediation.

3.4 Instrument/tool

The questionnaire was carefully designed to meet the objectives of the research. The questionnaire consisted of two main parts; first was about basic information of employees & second part was on different dimensions of concerns, wellbeing, commitment and performance. Reliability statistics result of the data collection instrument was ensured to be acceptable using Cronbach's alpha which is presented as below. The items for the questionnaire were derived from various authors for improving validity. The items for measuring dimensions of employee concerns were adapted from Anjum, ming. The items for employee wellbeing were adapted from Ahmed and zehou whereas employee commitment items were adapted from Allen and Meyer, 1990.

The total numbers of respondents were 144. The sample displayed the following characteristics.

Demographic variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	78	54.17
	Female	66	45.83
age group	Below 30	24	16.67
	30 – 40	56	38.89
	31 – 40	48	33.33
	Above 40	16	11.11
Qualification	Diploma	21	14.58
	Graduate	78	54.17
	Post graduate	45	31.25
income per annum	Less than 3.00 lacs	12	8.33
	3,00,000 -500,000	36	25.00
	501,000 -700,000	74	51.39
	Above 700,000	22	15.27
Experience	Under 5 years	34	23.61
	5-10 years	89	61.80
	11-15 years	16	11.11
	16 years and above	5	3.47
Family size/Number of dependents	No dependents	27	18.75
	2-3	71	49.30
	4-6	17	11.80
	More than 6	29	20.14
Marital status	Married	96	66.67
	Unmarried	23	15.97
	Do not prefer to disclose	25	17.36

4.2 Dimensions of Concerns of employees due to COVID 19 and its impact on perceived Employee wellbeing

The results of the survey reveal that there are genuine concerns of employees on different

dimensions due to the outbreak of COVID 19. Table 4.2.2 shows the means and standard deviations of the responses towards questions pertaining to different concerns

Table 4.2.2 – Mean and Standard deviations for employee concern variables

Variables (Dimensions of employee concerns)	Mean	Standard Deviation
Physical concern	4.05	0.6531
Psychological concern	3.14	0.6145
Financial concern	4.27	0.6746
Concern regarding social gaze	4.16	0.6813

ANOVA was used to analyze significance of these concerns on the perceived wellbeing. The results presented below explain the relationship

between concerns of the employees and wellbeing.

Table 4.2.3 – Summary of Hypotheses result

Hypotheses	statistical test	Significant value	Result
H1a physical concern has significant impact on Wellbeing	ANOVA	P=0.038 (P<0.05)	Significant
H1b psychological concern has significant impact on wellbeing	ANOVA	P=0.018 (P<0.05)	Significant
H2a financial concern has significant impact on wellbeing	ANOVA	P=0.016 (P<0.05)	Significant
H2b concern regarding social gaze has significant impact on wellbeing	ANOVA	P=0.027 (P<0.05)	Significant

Based on the result shown in table 4.2.3, ANOVA test was conducted to study the impact the independent variables- concerns and the dependent variable - em

ployee wellbeing. As the value of P is less than 0.05, there is high statistical significance between different employee concerns on the wellbeing.

Impact of employee wellbeing on employee commitment and employee performance

SUMMARY OUTPUT
for employee wellbeing and employee performance

<u>Regression Statistics</u>	
Multiple R	0.684233
R Square	0.468175
Adjusted R Square	0.460577
Standard Error	36.44988
<u>Observations</u>	<u>144</u>

ANOVA

	Df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	1	81870.89	81870.89	61.62222	3.45E-11
Residual	142		1328.594		
Total	143	174872.4			

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%
Intercept	8.064998	4.841454	1.665821	0.100218	-1.59098	17.72097
% of Weightage for Employee Well-Being	0.770142	0.098107	7.849982	3.45E-11	0.574473	0.965811

It could be inferred from the table above as the p value is more than alpha value (0.05), the predictor variable i. e. employee performance is not statistically significant. So the hypothesis 4 is

rejected and concluded that the wellbeing does not have significant impact on employee performance.

SUMMARY OUTPUT
For employee wellbeing and employee commitment

<u>Regression Statistics</u>	
Multiple R	0.574323
R Square	0.329847
Adjusted R Square	0.320273
Standard Error	38.34398
<u>Observations</u>	<u>144</u>

ANOVA

	D	SS	MS	F	Significance F
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		f				
Regression		50655.94	50655.94	34.4537	1.33E-07	
Residual	142	102918.3	1470.26			
Total	143	153574.2				

	Coefficient	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%
Intercept	19.02332	5.093039	3.735162	0.000379	8.865579	29.18107
% of Weightage for Employee Well-Being	0.605789	0.103206	5.869727	1.33E-07	0.399952	0.811626

It can be observed from the table above the p value is 0.000379 which is less than the alpha value and thus is statistically significant. Thus hypothesis No. 3 is accepted and concluded that the perceived employee wellbeing has significant impact on employee commitment.

Managerial implications of the study

As we continue to witness new varieties of infectious variants of COVID virus worldwide, the fear of its impact and concerns continue to grow in absence of awareness, vaccines and treatments, it can be said that different sectors have different level of risk with regard to epidemics based on several factors.

As we continue to experience the impact of the epidemics, few studies have been conducted to understand the attributes of concerns and their impact on employee wellbeing. Thus the study presents the relationship between the attributes of concerns, their impact on perceived wellbeing and finally to commitment. The results show that the impact of wellbeing is not very significant on the employee performance.

Thus the performance may not be affected by the state of wellbeing but the level of commitment is affected by the same. So for organizations this will have significance in long term in terms of talent retention.

The results of the study show that the perceived epidemic concerns had significant impact on their perceived wellbeing. In other words, physical, psychological, financial and social concerns regarding the infectious disease perceived by IT employees causes negative impact on the overall performance of the employees. The attributes identified by Jongsik Yu et. al.(2021) can be applied to the IT sector employees as well with regard to understanding and managing their performance and commitment. In the light of mass resignation drives and increasing turnover rate in the sector, the results of the study are very significant for devising and implementing employee engagement and retention strategies.

Limitations and scope for future research

Despite the meaningful findings of the study, there are associated limitations. First, though the demographical characteristics were captured, they were not considered and analyzed to relate to the concerns and their impact. A more detailed study could be considered in future for enhancing the comprehensiveness of the study. This study only investigated 4 dimensions of the concerns amongst IT employees. This can be carefully adapted to the other sectors based on the applicability and the context to get generalized output.

Conclusion

The outbreak of COVID 19 and such infectious diseases continues, although the availability of vaccination or the treatment might be uncertain. This situation of uncertainty and high significance would definitely be a source of stress and concern. These concerns would be antecedents to influence their performance and career intentions including commitment towards their employer organization. This makes it necessary for companies to come up with measures that reduce their stress and associated concerns. This study considers the attributes of epidemic concerns as physical, psychological, financial and social and examines the significance of their impact on perceived employee wellbeing. It was also studied to assess the impact of wellbeing on the performance and commitment of employees. It was found through the empirical analysis that the concerns have significant impact on their perceived wellbeing. Further the study revealed that there is a positive relation between employee wellbeing and employee commitment during COVID 19 pandemic. And thus the companies have to focus on the wellbeing to avoid higher employee turnover in the post COVID period.

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