

The Role of HR in Promoting Mental Health Awareness: A Mixed-Methods Study

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Abstract:

Mental health has become a growing concern in modern workplaces, demanding urgent attention from Human Resources (HR) departments. This study investigates HR's role in promoting mental health awareness using a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative data from 132 employee surveys and qualitative interviews with 12 HR professionals were analysed. Findings reveal that while awareness is high, stigma and limited program visibility hinder full engagement. The research offers actionable recommendations to embed.

Keywords: mental health, human resources, stigma, workplace well-being, employee assistance, HR strategy

1. Introduction

With mental health challenges affecting one in four individuals globally, organizations face growing pressure to support employee well-being. HR departments are increasingly central to these efforts. As frontline facilitators of workplace policy and culture, HR professionals are in a key position to normalize mental health conversations, provide access to support, and foster inclusive environments. This paper explores how HR promotes mental health awareness, identifies current practices, key barriers.

2. Problem Statement

Despite increasing awareness about mental health, a gap remains between policy and practice in many organizations. Employees are often unaware of available resources or too uncomfortable to seek help due to stigma. HR departments face challenges such as limited budgets, inadequate training, and a lack of leadership support, which hinder the effective promotion and utilization of mental health programs. There is a pressing need to investigate how HR can better facilitate mental health awareness and integr.

3. Scope of the Study

This study focuses on medium to large organizations across four sectors: IT, healthcare, finance, and manufacturing. The research is limited to formal sector employees and HR professionals working within structured organizational environments. It captures the perceptions, experiences, and practices related to mental health awareness and support at the organizational level. The study does not include small businesses, freelance workers, or informal sectors, which may have different mental health dynamics.

4. Objectives of the Study

The primary objectives of this research are: - To examine current HR practices in promoting mental health awareness. - To assess employee perceptions of HR's role in mental health support. - To identify key challenges faced by HR departments. - To recommend practical strategies to improve the effectiveness of HR-led mental health initiatives.

5. Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What current practices are used by HR departments to promote mental health awareness?
2. What are the main challenges HR professionals face in implementing mental health strategies?
3. How do HR-led mental health interventions influence organizational culture and employee well-being?
4. What actionable strategies can strengthen HR's role in mental health advocacy?

6. Literature Review

Mental health awareness is crucial for productivity, employee retention, and organizational resilience. Theories such as the Job Demands-Resources Model and Social Exchange Theory support the strategic integration of wellness into HR practices. Numerous studies emphasize that when employees perceive strong organizational support, they are more likely to engage, perform, and remain loyal. However, stigma and inadequate visibility of support programs remain widespread, especially in traditional or male-dom...

7. Methodology

A pragmatic, mixed-methods design was employed to allow both breadth and depth in the analysis. An online survey of 132 employees across diverse sectors (IT, healthcare, finance, and manufacturing) measured awareness, stigma, and HR engagement using structured questions and Likert-scale items. In-depth interviews with 12 HR professionals offered qualitative insights into real-world challenges, strategies, and cultural factors influencing mental health promotion. Data was analysed using SPSS for statistic.

8. Findings

-72% of employees reported awareness of workplace mental health challenges, while only 48% felt confident discussing these issues at work.

- 60% perceived HR as proactive in promoting awareness, though only 42% were aware of existing Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs).

- Persistent stigma emerged, with 30% fearing reputational harm upon disclosure, and 22% admitting to concealing mental health concerns.

-Interviews emphasized that leadership endorsement, transparent communication, and manager training were essential for building trust and improving program utilization.

9. Discussion

HR's involvement improves workplace psychological safety and reduces stigma, particularly when supported by visible leadership and coherent strategy. However, organizational barriers—such as inconsistent communication, insufficient training, and low program visibility—undermine effectiveness. The findings affirm that HR must adopt a more holistic, inclusive, and data-informed approach to mental health promotion, customizing strategies by sector and demographic profile to optimize outcomes.

10. Recommendations

- Institutionalize formal mental health policies and integrate them with performance and diversity frameworks.
- Provide ongoing training and awareness sessions tailored to different roles and departments.
- Increase visibility and usage of EAPs and digital wellness platforms through multi-channel promotion.
- Appoint mental health champions across departments to serve as peer advocates and resource guides.
- Embed wellness and mental health KPIs into leadership evaluations and HR performance metrics.
- Apply sector-specific adaptations to address the unique stressors and cultural norms of each industry.

11. Conclusion

HR plays a pivotal role in shaping the mental health climate of the workplace. While encouraging progress has been made in increasing awareness, significant gaps remain in the areas of disclosure comfort, trust, and program utilization. By aligning mental health strategies with leadership behavior, cultural norms, and HR policy, organizations can cultivate mentally resilient and high-performing teams. Future HR models must consider mental health as a strategic pillar rather than an ancillary concern.

12. References

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13. APPENDICES:

Survey Questionnaire

Raw data table