

Research on Benefits of Regular Psychological HR Counseling at Workplace: Indian Context

Ms. Kriti Goel

1 Year PGDM, ISBR Business School, Bangalore, India

Dr. M R Jhansi Rani*

Professor, ISBR Business School, Bangalore, India
dr.jhansirani@isbr.in

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***Author for correspondence:**

Dr. M R Jhansi Rani ✉ dr.jhansirani@isbr.in
Professor, ISBR Business School, Bangalore, India

Abstract

The provision of psychological counseling for work-related problems has expanded in recent years, and organizations have recognized its value and hired trained HR managers to help in this matter. This paper explores the benefits of regular psychological counseling in the workplace. Organization and Counseling are two different worlds which are coming together and understanding each other for effective workplace counseling.

Studies have suggested that in spite of different values, both negotiate and come together to avoid clashes and work significantly. The study reveals that counseling can be an effective tool to improve employee well-being, productivity, and job satisfaction. The paper explores the different types of counseling available, the benefits of counseling, and the potential barriers to accessing counseling in the workplace. The paper concludes that regular psychological counseling should be a standard feature of workplace policies and practices.

Keywords: psychological counseling, HR manager role, job satisfaction, interpersonal relationships, well being

1. Introduction

Akshita, an employee of XYZ Ltd. is regularly coming late to the office, and when reason was asked she started crying and complaining about workload at home as well as at office. She also started to take anti-depression pills to cope up with the pressure.

The above example indicates the need for HR counseling as it is HR's responsibility to keep staff well being and their productivity up to date.

A counselor can help to create a culture for greater synergy in organizational learning and development. He can help employees increase their self-awareness regarding their

thinking patterns and behavioral tendencies so as to make them more effective as an individual and in turn effective in their job also.

2. Objectives

1. What are psychological counseling and the role of HR in workplace counseling?
2. Analysis of employees' point of view regarding psychological counseling
3. To identify the barriers between effective counseling by HR at workplace
4. Explore the perception of Indian employees towards workplace counseling
5. Does psychological counseling increase job satisfaction and productivity of employees

3. Literature Review

Improving Employee Well-Being and Effectiveness: This review is conducted by Carolan, Harris, and Cavanagh (2017) it provides evidence that occupational digital mental health interventions can improve workers' psychological well-being and increase work effectiveness and identifies intervention characteristics that may increase engagement. They recommend that researchers and intervention developers recognize that the workplace is a dynamic and complex environment that may affect the way that individuals receive and engage with digital mental health interventions.

Workplace Aggression and Burnout in Nursing—The Moderating Role of Follow-Up Counseling: A study conducted by Vincent-Höper, Stein, Nienhaus, and Schablon (2020) that Workplace aggression from patients is a prevalent issue in nursing that may have severe consequences for nurses' mental health. The availability of follow-up counseling in organizations seems to be an effective post-event intervention strategy for reducing the adverse effects of nurses' experiences of aggression from patients on their mental health. The findings of this study not only have implications for nurses' mental health but also for organizational outcomes, such as the quality of patient care and intent to leave, and for the profession's ability to attract, and retain nurses within the healthcare system.

A Qualitative Study of Employee Perceptions of HR Counseling at the Workplace: This qualitative study conducted by Lee and colleagues (2020) aimed to explore employee perceptions of HR counseling at the workplace. The study included 30 participants and found that employees had positive perceptions of HR counseling, with many reporting that it was helpful in managing their emotions and improving their mental health. The study also found that employees valued the confidentiality and non-judgmental nature of HR counseling and that they believed it was an important part of the organization's commitment to employee well-being. The authors conclude that HR counseling can be an effective tool for supporting employee mental health and that organizations should work to overcome barriers to its implementation.

A Systematic Review of the Effectiveness of HR Counseling at the Workplace: This systematic review conducted by Shrestha and colleagues (2020) aimed to evaluate the

effectiveness of HR counseling programs in improving mental health outcomes among employees. The review included 25 studies and found that HR counseling was effective in reducing symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress among employees. The review also found that HR counseling led to improvements in job satisfaction, productivity, and interpersonal relationships.

Workplace Counseling in Hong Kong: A Pilot Study- This study was conducted by Fung Kei Cheng to explore perception of Hong Kong employees towards workplace counseling and workplace counselors. The research reveals that success in counseling at work, as a tool for work-life balance, is of effort from various stakeholders cooperating with workplace counselors.

Arroggi in his paper also talked about short and long term effectiveness of individualized counseling at workplace. Dik in his book has also stated counseling and vocational psychology, industrial and organizational psychology, and the fields of executive coaching and management According to Neault employment counselors generally understand the benefits of workplace diversity; most are actively engaged in supporting diverse clients to attach to the workforce. Proper suggested that Individual face-to-face counseling at the workplace based on PACE protocols positively influenced physical activity levels and some components of physical fitness. Townsend wrote about the essence of workplace counseling. Whereas Sargeant focuses on lifestyle counseling which gave new dimensions to counseling all together. K.M. Page examines 'What' 'Why' and 'How' of employee wellbeing. Avey on other hand focused more on positive employee wellbeing over time. Weinberg judged counseling with perspective of sports management. Bauer on other hand talked about bridging occupational, organizational and public health. Irmayanti had a different point of view and measured employee counseling with employee engagement and employee loyalty. Joseph came up with innovative strategy of employee counseling. Lannin made everyone realized the importance of counseling self efficacy, physiologic stress. Tracey applied trained skills on the job and worked on environment.

4. Benefits of Regular Psychological HR Counseling

1. **Improved Mental Wellbeing:** Psychological counseling can help employees to manage their emotions, reduce stress, and improve their mental wellbeing. Counseling can provide a safe and confidential space for employees to talk about their issues, fears, and anxieties to their HR and find solutions for those problems. This process can help individuals to gain insights into their thoughts and feelings, and develop effective coping mechanisms to manage themselves.
2. **Enhanced Job Performance:** Employees who receive regular counseling by HR at the workplace are more likely to perform better at work. Counseling can help employees to identify their strengths and weaknesses, set achievable goals, and develop strategies to overcome obstacles. This process can help employees to be more focused, productive, and engaged in their work.

3. **Improved Interpersonal Relationships:** The workplace can be a challenging environment to navigate, with different personalities, opinions, and communication styles. Regular psychological counseling can help employees to improve their communication skills, develop empathy, and enhance their ability to work collaboratively with others. This process can lead to better relationships with colleagues, increased job satisfaction, and a more positive work environment.
4. **Reduced Absenteeism and Turnover:** Employees who receive regular counseling are less likely to miss work or quit their jobs. Counseling can help employees to manage their stress levels, improve their mental health, and reduce the risk of burnout. This process leads to better job retention, reduced costs associated with absenteeism and turnover.
5. **Positive Work Culture:** Organizations that prioritize the mental health of their employees are more likely to have a positive and supportive workforce. Regular psychological counseling by HR can help to create an environment that values employee well-being, promotes open communication, and fosters a sense of community. This process can lead to increased employee satisfaction, loyalty, and commitment to the organization.

5. Types of Counseling that HR Can Do

There are several types of psychological counseling that HR can offer at the workplace, including:

1. **Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs):** EAPs are employer-sponsored counseling services that provide confidential and free counseling services to employees and their families. They typically offer short-term counseling for issues such as stress, anxiety, depression, substance abuse, and work-related problems.
2. **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT):** CBT is a type of therapy that focuses on changing negative thought patterns and behaviors. It can be effective for treating anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues. HR can provide CBT through on-site counseling or by partnering with an external provider.
3. **Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR):** MBSR is a form of meditation and mindfulness training that can help employees reduce stress and improve their overall well-being. HR can offer MBSR programs through on-site classes or by partnering with an external provider.
4. **Trauma-focused Counseling:** Trauma-focused counseling can be helpful for employees who have experienced traumatic events, such as workplace violence, natural disasters, or accidents. HR can provide trauma-focused counseling through on-site counseling or by partnering with an external provider.
5. **Career Counseling:** Career counseling can help employees identify their strengths, interests, and career goals. HR can offer career counseling services to help employees develop their careers and improve job satisfaction.

It is important for HR to

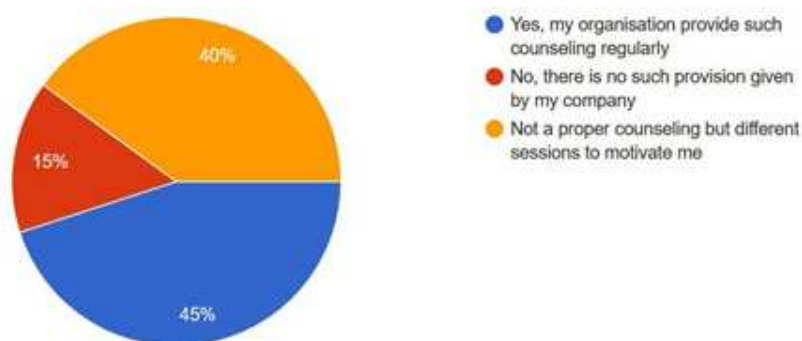
prioritize the mental health and well-being of employees by offering a range of counseling services that address various issues and concerns.

6. Research Methodology

The present study employed the qualitative approach for the following three reasons. Firstly, the literature review has shown that only few people know about workplace counseling in India. Secondly, learning directly from the participants what they thought about workplace counseling and the quality of HR counselors was one of the primary concerns of this project; and collecting qualitative data by connecting with HR and employees through personal contacts and sending them questionnaires to get a better picture of the issue. Thirdly, since the existing literature on workplace counseling is limited, it is necessary to adopt qualitative methods, to obtain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. This study used pie charts to analyze the responses received.

7. Results

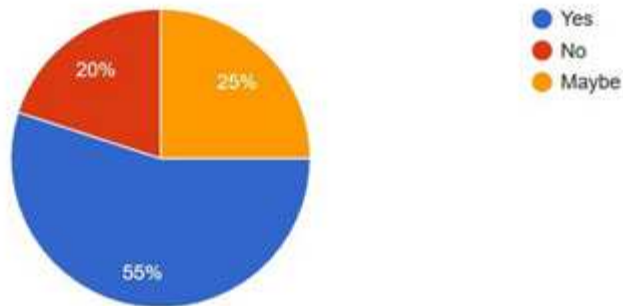
Have you ever availed the psychological HR counseling offered by your company?



The above pie chart tells that 45% employees have availed psychological HR counseling, whereas there are 40% employees who have not availed a proper counseling but have attended sessions organized by their HR to motivate them, and 15% employees who have never availed any counseling session by HR.

This data specifies that still there are organizations who don't give importance to psychological HR training for their employees. There is still a need to sensitize the organizations to create a space where employees can feel comfortable to talk about their mental health.

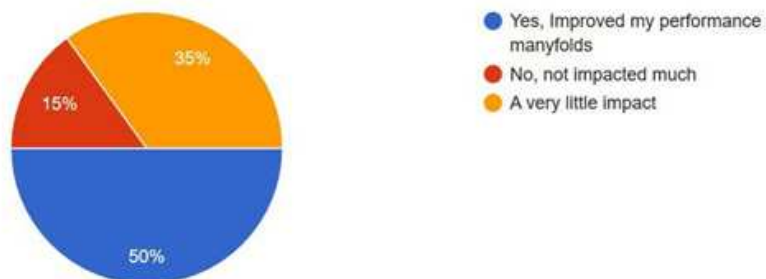
Did you find the counseling sessions helpful in addressing your concerns?



This pie chart shows that 55% employees find that counseling sessions have addressed their concerns but 20% employees think these counseling sessions are not at all useful to them whereas 20% employees are not sure.

This data reflects that just providing counseling is not enough but providing quality HR counseling is need of an hour so that employees feel that those sessions were useful.

Did the counseling had positive impact on your overall performance and job satisfaction?



From the data shown in the pie chart 50% employees agree that there was significant improvement in their overall performance after the counseling but 35% employees think counseling sessions had a very little impact on their performance and 15% employees even think that these sessions have not at all impacted their performance.

This data should be taken into consideration by organizations and they should look that these sessions should not go in vain but should increase the overall performance of the employees.

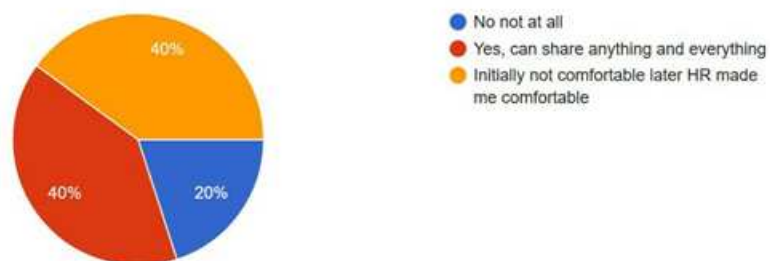
Did you find the sessions to be confidential and non judgemental ?



While assessing this pie chart we found that 50% employees find counseling sessions to be very confidential while 35% employees hesitate to talk about sensitive topics to their HR and 15% employees do not at all trust their HR.

This reflects that HR should work to gain trust of his employees and should make employees comfortable to talk to him on all kinds of topics.

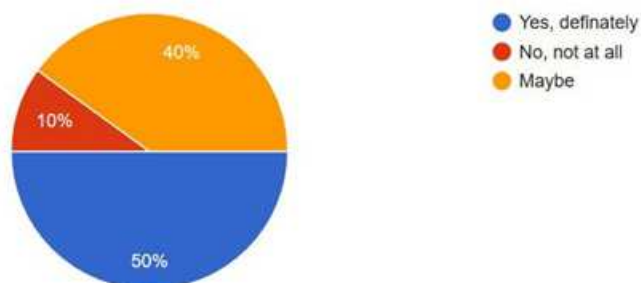
Did you feel comfortable discussing sensitive issues with your HR Counselor?



The above chart is the representation that 40% employees are very open to their HR, 40% became open when HR made them comfortable, and 20% employees was not open to their HR.

It is the duty of HR to maintain good repo with his employees and now target should be to focus on those 20% and make them comfortable as well.

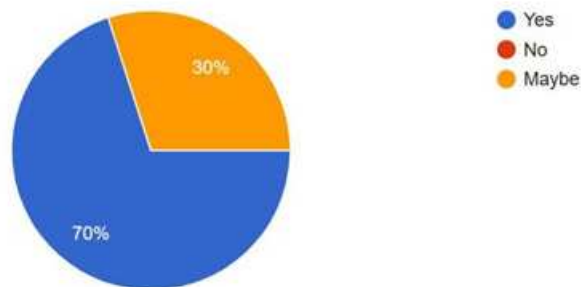
Would you recommend psychological HR counseling to your friends and colleagues?



This pie chart helped in the study to provide data that 50% employees will recommend psychological HR counseling to their friends and colleagues whereas around 50% will not recommend.

This shows that still people have a taboo that taking psychological counseling is sign of poor mental health or they will be considered weak. This is a high time when HR should work to remove this taboo.

Do you believe that providing psychological HR counseling at workplace is a sign of a caring and supportive work culture?



70% employees believe that psychological HR counseling at workplace is a sign of caring and supporting work culture and 30% still are confused or hesitating to accept the fact that mental well being should become part of organizational culture.

Now, it the duty of HR to convince these 30% employees that mental wellbeing is important part of good work space.

While conducting this study I also asked people-

According to them, what are the potential barriers that can stop an employee from taking psychological HR counseling?

So these are the answers I got-

- Discomfort in sharing personal issues with the organization
- Risk of exposing personal information in public
- Fear of being Defamed
- Breach of confidentiality
- Psychological counseling is viewed as a taboo
- Shy and introvert nature of employee
- Employees find HR uninterested in what they are sharing, it restricts them to share
- Employees find it difficult to approach HR easily

So, these are areas where HR needs to work and make sure all these barriers are removed and employees take these counseling sessions in a positive way and participate with enthusiastic spirit.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, regular psychological HR counseling in the workplace has a number of advantages for businesses as well as their employees. Psychological HR counseling can improve employee well-being, reduce stress and anxiety, increase job satisfaction, and enhance overall job performance by providing employees with a confidential and safe space to discuss their concerns. As a result, the company may see an increase in productivity and profitability as well as a decrease in absenteeism and an increase in employee retention.

Organizations can also benefit from regular psychological HR counseling to better manage and resolve workplace conflicts by identifying potential issues and concerns earlier rather than later. Psychological HR counseling can contribute to the development of a positive and supportive work environment by fostering trust and open communication between employees and management.

Overall, investing in regular psychological HR counseling should be considered an essential component of any comprehensive employee wellness program because it can have numerous advantages for both employees and organizations.

9. Future Scope

The future scope of the topic benefits of regular psychological HR counseling at the workplace is significant. There will always be a need for psychological HR counseling as workplaces develop and become more complicated. Here are a few potential developments in this field for the future:

- **Greater Emphasis on Mental Well Being:** As the stigma around mental health is decreasing workplace focus on supporting employees with counseling sessions and stress management training
- **Integration with Wellness Programs:** Many organizations conduct wellness programs, so psychological training should become a standard part of these programs.
- **Increased Adoption of Remote Counseling:** With the rise of remote work, people find it difficult to achieve work life balance so organizations should ensure that employees can access psychological counseling remotely as well.

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