

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 WORKPLACE WELLBEING

#### 1.1.1 Global Context

Every day, over 3.2 billion of the world's 7.3 billion people go to work. In a lifespan, the average person will spend at least 90,000 hours working. Many adults spend anywhere from one-third to one-half of their waking hours doing work-related activities (Global Wellness Institute, 2016). Work provides for essential needs – food, clothing, shelter – and it can as well provide a meaningful purpose in life. Some people work to live, while others live to work. For most people, work is a major driver of both happiness and stress.

#### 1.1.2 Fourth Industrial Revolution

The world around us is changing at an unprecedented pace, that is fundamentally altering the way we live, work, and relate to one another. The scale, scope, and complexity of the transformation will be unlike anything humankind has experienced before.

The First Industrial Revolution witnessed use of water and steam power to mechanize production. The Second harnessed electric power to create mass production. The Third leveraged the power of electronics and information technology to automate production. Now a Fourth Industrial Revolution is occurring at an exponential pace- the digital revolution - characterized by a fusion of technologies that is blurring the lines between the physical, digital, and biological spheres. This is disrupting almost every industry in every country. The speed, breadth, and depth at which this is

happening, is forcing us to rethink and reimagine the future, as how countries should develop, how organizations create value, and even what it means to be human. In the end, at the centre of all this are people and values.

We need to have a holistic growth perspective and shape an inclusive human-centered future by putting people first and empowering them.

### **1.1.3 Workplace Wellbeing Definition**

World Health Organization(WHO) offers a holistic definition of health: “A state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease.”

International Labor Organization(ILO) defines – “Workplace wellbeing relates to all aspects of working life, from the quality and safety of the physical environment, to how workers feel about their work, their working environment, the climate at work and work organization.”

Global agencies highlight that workplace wellbeing is not only a matter of personal importance to individual workers and their families but also to the productivity, competitiveness, and sustainability of enterprises/ organizations, thereby leading to the national economy of countries and even ultimately to the global economy.

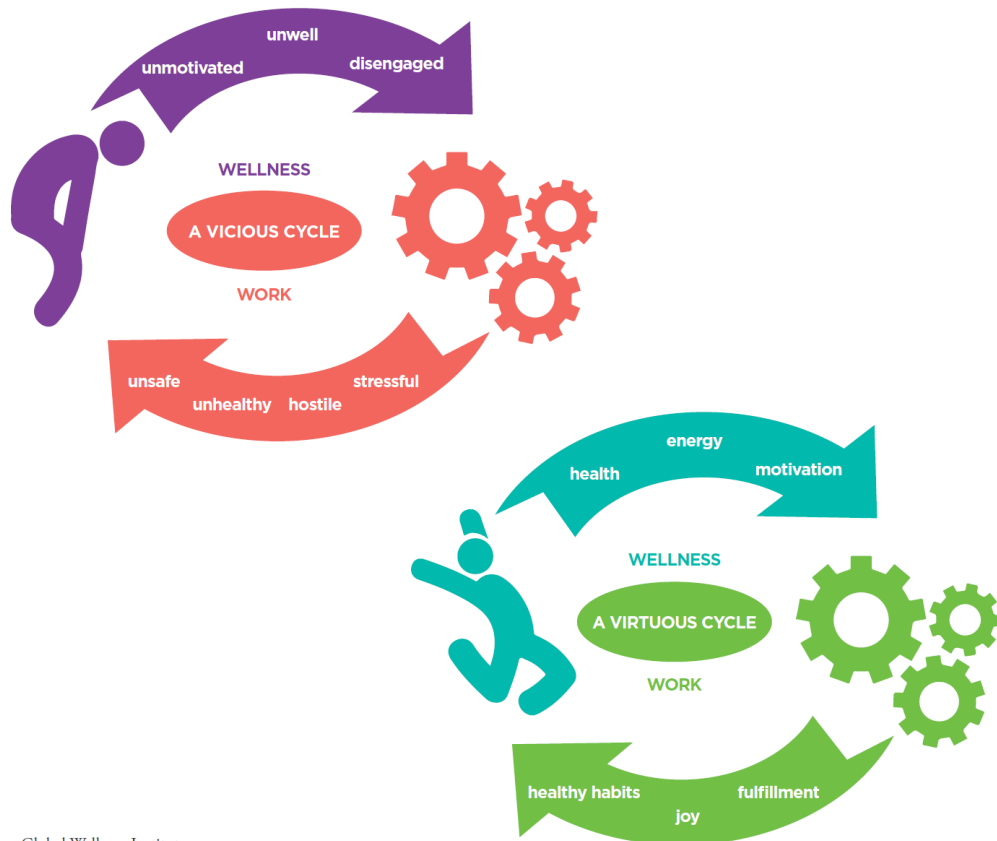
### **1.1.4 Workplace Wellness Economy**

The Global Wellness Institute (GWI) defines wellness from a holistic health perspective, achieved through an active pursuit of activities, choices, and lifestyles. Workplace wellness economy is valued at \$48 billion and the global wellness economy is valued at \$4.2 trillion in 2017, and this continues to expand faster than global economic growth (Global Wellness Institute, 2018). GWI provides an indicator on the size of the global workplace wellness industry by estimating the

expenditures made by employers to improve employee wellness. This can include a wide variety of expenditures on programs, services, activities, and infrastructure by employers aimed at improving their employees' health and wellness, such as addressing specific health risk factors and behaviors -e.g., lack of exercise, poor eating habits, stress, obesity, smoking etc. Broadly these programs aim to raise awareness, provide education, offer incentives and encourage employees to adopt healthier lifestyles.

## 1.2 WELLNESS AND WORK – AN INTERDEPENDENCE

### Wellness and work: A two-way relationship



**Figure 1.1: Wellness and Work –A two way relationship**  
Source: (Global Wellness Institute, 2016)

Work has an enormous impact on our personal health and wellness. Wellness and work are interdependent. When we are unwell and feeling stressed, we are less productive at work. Work can also create mental and emotional distress, example – long working hours, inability to unplug, work-life balance issues, difficult relationships with bosses and coworkers can be stressors that can also lead to physical illness. On the other hand, when we feel healthy and balanced, we bring energy, focus, and motivation to work, and we are more productive.

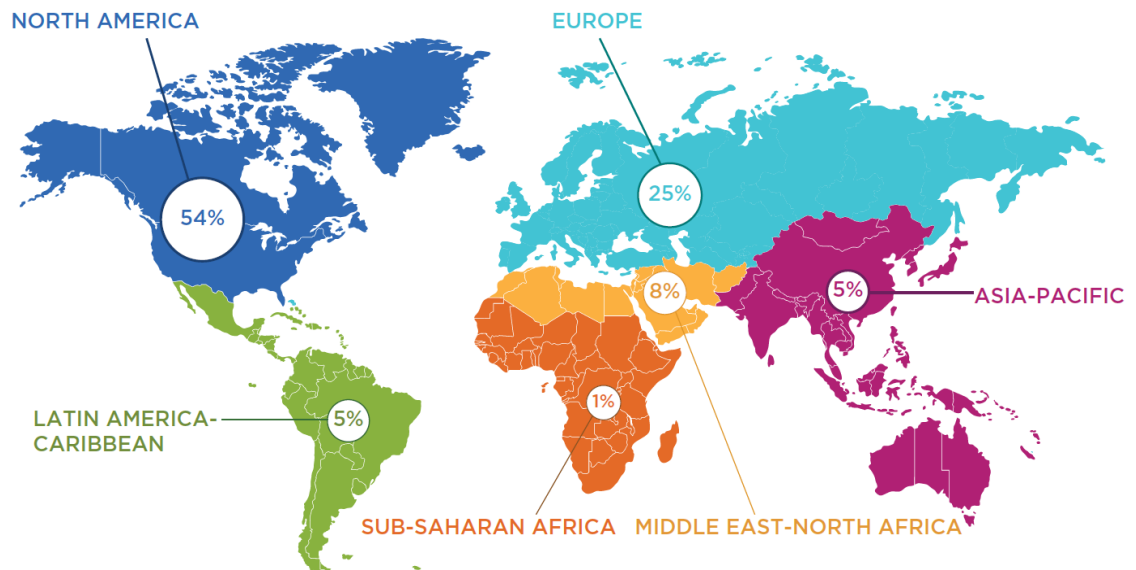
Work can also be a source of joy and satisfaction, example – when we feel appreciated, have a sense of purpose, a creative outlet, friendship, and a supportive environment, it can enhance our wellbeing.

### **1.3 WORKPLACE WELLNESS – CURRENT STATE AND CHALLENGES**

The current conversation is mostly centered on workplace wellness programs and these programs only address a sliver of the global workforce. More than 90 percent of the global workforce are not covered by wellness programs. Workplace wellness initiatives benefits primarily those who live in the world's wealthiest economies or work for large or multinational companies. The majority of workers around the world are more concerned with meeting basic needs, such as earning a living wage, job stability, workplace safety, and access to basic healthcare.

## Access to Workplace Wellness in 2017

Only **10%** of the world's workers have access to workplace wellness programs & services



Percent of employed workers in each region who have access to workplace wellness programs/services.  
Source: Estimates by the Global Wellness Institute, based upon data from the International Labour Organization, World Bank, and Conduent/Buck Consultants.

**Figure 1.2: Access to Workplace Wellness**

Source: (Global Wellness Institute, 2018)

Current workplace wellness programs are mostly compartmentalized and reactive in their approach. Most often Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) are brought into action once a problem already exists and rely on employees to proactively reach out for assistance. Workplaces will benefit from having systems and processes to identify when an employee is at risk of experiencing workplace stress and anxiety, and effectively intervene before it leads to more serious problems.

Employee interest in workplace wellness programs is tepid. Perceived outcomes of such programs on addressing real employee issues, along with skepticism on organizations caring for profit and productivity outcomes than for employee personal wellness could be potential reasons.

The current mindset aims for a work environment where employees are able to perform at their best, all the time. This outlook needs to be examined whether it is realistic. Without opportunities to recoup and recover from high volume periods of work, which is often the case in today's corporate world, burnout could be the end result.

Impacts of workplace wellness programs are mostly intangible and the focus on program ROI has been misdirected. Wellness initiatives offered in isolation from a company's core culture or operating environment are merely a "Band-Aid" solution. Employee health and wellness has not been a priority that is integrated into the mission and operations of most organizations. 'Future of wellness at work' report provides further details (Global Wellness Institute, 2016).

#### **1.4 EMERGING CRISIS – NEED FOR SHIFT**

“Valued at \$47.5 billion, the workplace wellness market is small when compared with the massive economic burden and productivity losses (10-15% of global economic output) associated with an unwell and disengaged workforce” (Global Wellness Institute, 2018).

# The world's **3.2 billion** workers are increasingly unwell



Source: ILO; WHO; Gallup; Gallup-Healthways; Towers-Watson; Tampere University of Technology/Workplace Safety & Health Institute Singapore/VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland

**Figure 1.3: Global Workforce Wellness Statistics**  
Source: (Global Wellness Institute, 2016)

The ILO estimates that occupational accidents and work-related illnesses account for death of two million men and women each year. WHO estimates that 160 million new cases of work related illnesses occur every year, and stipulates that workplace risk and conditions account for over a third of back pain, 16% of hearing loss, nearly 10% of lung cancer; and that 8% of the burden of depression. Every three-and-a-half minutes, someone dies from work-related causes in the European Union (EU). The number of accidents at work causing three or more days of absence is huge, with over 7 million every year (World Health Organization,2010).

## Unwellness at work is incredibly costly!



**Figure 1.4: Cost of Unwellness at work**

Source: (Global Wellness Institute, 2016)

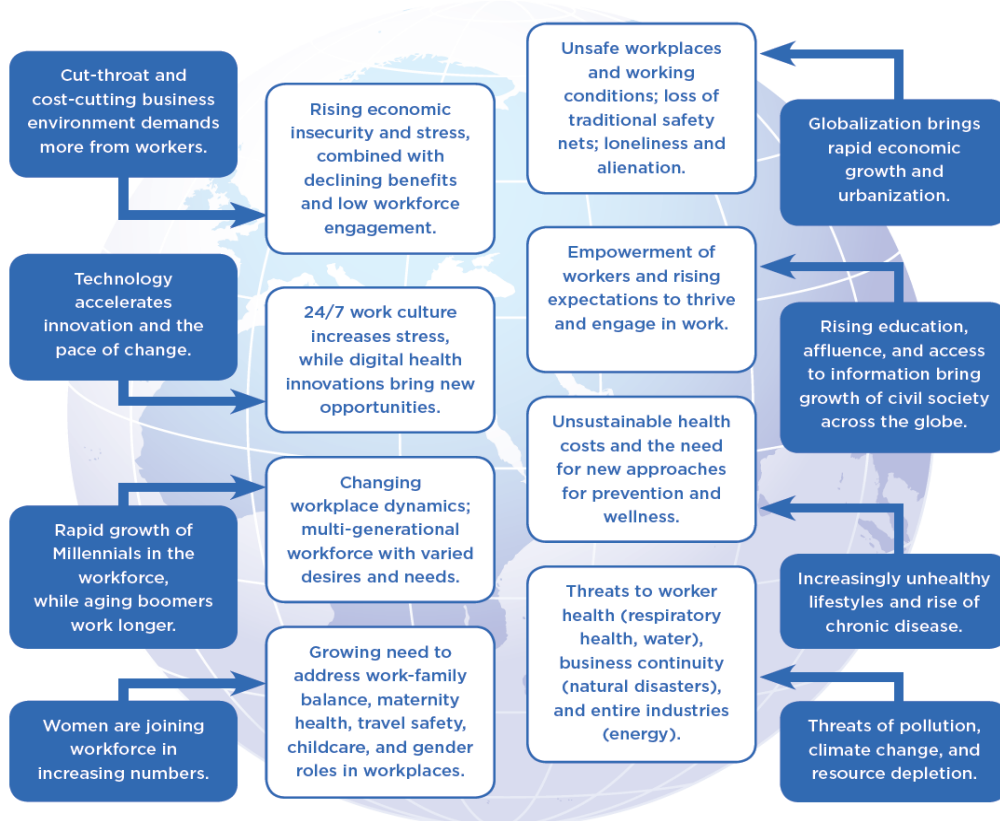
### 1.5 GLOBAL TRENDS AND KEY SHIFTS

In today's information age, digital technologies have cut across barriers of time, space and firm and virtual work is the new norm. While this brings in significant advantages to business, there is also a dark side to this and its impact on the modern knowledge worker who is at the centre of all this rapid transformation. Perpetual distractions, information overload, work life balance, impact of social media, fear of missing out in a highly volatile and uncertain business environment are all adding to the stress dynamics of today's knowledge worker. Optimizing the capacity, motivation and

energy levels of the modern knowledge worker becomes a crucial strategic requirement for organizations to survive and thrive.

Enterprises and organizations are increasingly recognizing the need to take active interest in the well-being of their workers. The more progressive organizations are doing so because they regard people as their most important assets. Other organizations are beginning to address well-being issues because of greater cognizance that many workplace problems draw from a lack of commitment to the needs of their workers. Workplace wellbeing is the new norm for workplace safety, and a holistic outlook to managing wellness will not only improve engagement, but also will drive productivity and create a winning environment. Organizations must shift from simply offering wellness programs as a 'nice to have' feature, to embedding wellness and healthy behaviors into how they do business.

# Global Trends Affecting Wellness at Work



Source: Global Wellness Institute

**Figure 1.5: Global Trends Affecting Wellness at Work**

Source: (Global Wellness Institute, 2016)

## 1.6 NEW “THRIVE” REVOLUTION AT WORK

Current conversations focus mainly on addressing workplace wellness issues, but there is an increasing shift in these conversations to focus around enhancing motivation, commitment, creativity, flow, cognitive abilities, etc. – in other words, thriving at work. The Global Wellness Institute’s whitepaper outlines many shifts driving this “thrive” revolution (Moorefield, 2018). Key among them are:

**Thriving and the wellbeing of “WE:”** Employers recognize that a thriving work culture is key to attracting and retaining talent and an essential core to sustainable success. Work needs to be reinvented in ways that enhance human potential while bringing people joy and wellbeing every day. As work units evolve to teams, global

networks, partnerships, and ad hoc project groups, we need a high-trust environment of mutual respect and psychological safety to improve shared outcomes.

**Purpose-driven workplace and conscious evolution of leadership:**

Leaders are increasingly realizing the vision beyond profits and are trying to cultivate more conscious and caring worldviews. Purpose-driven workplaces energize employees and increase business and social outcomes.

**Women-friendly workplaces and deep inclusivity:**

Harnessing all talent requires true diversity and deep inclusion. This can bring out more innovative, engaged, and high-performing teams; increase profitability; enhance brand appeal; and attract talent.

**Mental wellness and individualized wellbeing:** Employee mental wellness fosters happiness. A healthy, happy, engaged workforce can produce sustainable success. New technologies and scientific discoveries are facilitating an unprecedented degree of individualized and personalized diagnostics and employee wellbeing solutions.

**1.7 SUMMARY**

Employers that do not view human capital as their most valuable asset may not survive in business in the future economy. While the companies embracing these new philosophies are still an exception, these burgeoning movements reflect a larger trend: a collective, growing awareness that a purely profit-maximizing business model, without taking into account the human aspect, is not viable, sustainable, or ethical – for consumers, for employees, for shareholders and other stakeholders.

The future of work requires us to bring high levels of energy, motivation, enthusiasm and creativity in order to create value. It becomes even more imperative that, we must be in a good state of physical, mental, and emotional wellness to be able to bring these

qualities to work each day. Workplace wellness in future will be even more tightly woven with individual and organizational performance. For business and organizations to survive and thrive, it is essential that they nourish, cultivate and tap into this human energy and support the wellness of their employees in all dimensions.

## **1.8 SCOPE OF CURRENT STUDY - WORKPLACE PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING**

### **1.8.1 Psychological Wellbeing in Workplace**

WHO Global Strategy on Health, Environment, and Climate Change (2019) identifies workplaces as an essential setting for the prevention of a large number of modifiable risks, particularly for non-communicable diseases. Work, including working conditions, is identified as one of the key social determinants of mental health. Common mental disorders such as anxiety and depression disorders are estimated to cost the global economy US\$ 1 trillion each year (World Health Organization,2019).

### **1.8.2 Unique Challenges – Leadership & High Risk professionals**

Stress in an organizational setup is common, and more so among people who are in managerial or leadership positions. Managing complex stakeholder relationships, constant race against time, doing more with less, with limited and scarce resources, managing conflicts, competing demands and priorities, managing people and fulfilling organizational goals, all of this in a highly volatile uncertain business environment adds up to stress for managers and leaders.” Eighty-eight percent of leaders report that work is a primary source of stress and that having a leadership role increases the level of stress. More than 60 percent of surveyed leaders cite their organizations as failing to provide them with the tools and resources they need to manage stress” (Centre for Creative Leadership, 2015).

Situation can become more challenging when the nature of a company's work involves high risk operations. There are certain occupations that are inherently flagged to have higher stressful atmosphere. More than a decade back, in a study conducted in Canada, there were high risk occupations identified, which majorly involve using huge machineries, health, sales and services, and trade (Marchand, 2007). Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) is one such organization in India, that involves certain jobs which belong to high risk category. Many of their employees work in shifts, at offshore locations, for days together away from family. Working offshore usually involves working at sites in interior sea, far away from immediate land resources, maintaining high risk operations with high vigil. The nature of this working environment can pose significant challenge to the psychological wellbeing of the employees working in such conditions. High stress, fear of danger, working away from family, etc., may be some of the issues faced by these employees, which may impair the long-term productivity of the organization. Putting all of above in consideration, addressing psychological wellbeing issues in workplace, and to have a solution that can be effective in different work related contexts will be of great value to organizations and employees.

### **1.8.3 Role of Mindfulness and Yoga**

Eastern wisdom has for centuries espoused a holistic perspective on life and living. It offers a much wider perspective that man (or woman) is not just the physical but has a multidimensional existence. Tapping into this wisdom through yoga and mindfulness offers a promising direction to the modern challenges of workplace, more so on psychological wellbeing. Mind is considered as a gateway to the beyond, according to Eastern wisdom base and from a practical standpoint, key to happiness or suffering in

our daily living as well. The very definition of yoga is to gain mastery over the mind, according to the *Yoga sutras of Patanjali*, an original text of yoga. Mindfulness, rooted in Buddhism has a prominent emphasis on training of the mind to live in the present moment, moment to moment and thereby experience the fullness of life. Preliminary evidence in embedding yoga and mindfulness interventions in workplace shows promising results.

Mindfulness studies have grown exponentially over the past three decades. However, investigation into the beneficial effects of mindfulness interventions at workplace is still in infancy stage (Jamieson and Tuckey, 2017). Research suggests that mindfulness could be a trait that buffers against burnout (Taylor, Marjorie and Millear, 2016).

Yoga is another popular method of addressing stress and enhances overall wellbeing. According to International Yoga Federation, there are 300 million people practicing yoga worldwide. Yoga inherently includes mindfulness. Yoga is shown to have a positive effect on health in the workplace, particularly in reducing stress (Puerto Valencia *et al.*, 2019). Sitting meditation and mindful yoga are found to produce greater differential effects in psychological wellbeing (Sauer-Zavala *et al.*, 2013). In existing mindfulness interventions, the yoga component has been found to produce striking results that need further investigation.

#### **1.8.4 Scope for Current Study**

This research examines the efficacy of yoga based intervention for enhancing psychological wellbeing in working professionals. Mindfulness, perceived stress, emotion regulation, positive and negative affect were measured as indicators of psychological wellbeing. The study was conducted in two distinct employee groups.

Study one involved leadership professionals and study two involved offshore professionals who are engaged in a high risk work environment. The study was conducted with employees in ONGC, a large multinational Public Sector Undertaking in India. A 5 day yoga residential intervention was administered and the participants were enabled with resources for follow up home practice. The study further examined the follow up effect after home practice after 3 months. Definition of key terms used in the study follows further.

Mindfulness is defined as awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally (Kabat Zinn, 2015). The construct of mindfulness is multidimensional and the current study focuses on the attention awareness component of the mindfulness construct.

Emotion Regulation is defined as the process by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express them (Gross, 1998). The current study focuses on assessing individual differences in the habitual use of two emotional regulation strategies: cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression.

Perceived stress is defined as the degree to which situation in one's life are appraised as stressful (Cohen, Kamarck and Mermelstein, 1983).

Positive and negative affect is defined as the propensity to experience and express positive and negative emotions respectively (Watson, Clark and Tellegen, 1988).

### **1.8.5 Motivation for Current Study**

Having worked in the corporate world for over 20 years, as a researcher I bring in first-hand experience and a deep appreciation of real life challenges in the workplace. I had the privilege to work in premier multinational companies like Infosys and

Deloitte, in both business and HR leadership roles. Having grown through the ranks in the organization and being part of an exponential growth from an employee base of 5000 to 2,00,000 has given me deep insights and perspectives. This has also shaped the desire to contribute and give back to the industry by helping the employee community.

In a spirit of exploration and discovery and a passion for eastern wisdom, I was inspired to look at the challenges of modern day workplace and to examine for solutions from the time tested eastern wisdom base. The study attempts to look at yoga and mindfulness based interventions as a potential solution that can be delivered in a practical, scalable and sustainable manner.