

Ideating Wellbeing: A Case Study of an Organisation in Delhi

SATJYOT GILL*¹ AND BINU SUNDAS²

¹Founder & Director, Wellbeing Action and Research Initiative, Noida (U.P.) India

²Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Miranda House, New Delhi (India)

ABSTRACT

Wellbeing has been a subject of debate and deliberation for a long time. It is looked at from various perspectives and different definitions and understanding of it has been formulated. In times of uncertainty, caused by the pandemic where many people are losing their jobs and security which are in turn affecting their physical and mental wellbeing, it has become essential for organisations to understand it, not from a top-down approach but from a bottom-up approach for the success and smooth functioning of the organisations. Understanding wellbeing from a gender perspective has become more important as women's experiences of wellbeing differ from that of men. Some scholars have looked at issues of wellbeing from a psychological perspective while others have evaluated it from a socio-economic perspective. This paper looks at both the psychological as well as socio-economic perspectives. It is based on a survey conducted among the employees of the an organization and focus group discussion. This paper tries to understand and analyse the perception of the workers and the management towards wellbeing on the basis of a case study of a small enterprise with young workers.

Key Words : Wellbeing, Workplace, Employees, Management, Psychological Factors, Physical and mental wellbeing

INTRODUCTION

Historically wellbeing has received tremendous attention both in academics as well as outside of it. It has been discussed and deliberated in different contexts and has also been conceptualized differently. Recently with the Covid-19 pandemic wellbeing of an individual as well as human beings have occupied the center stage as the pandemic proved that humans are vulnerable to many things and the ecosystem that they have created for themselves can be disturbed rupturing the equilibrium that they think to exist in their ecosystem. Wellbeing was initially conceptualized from the perspective of health and it has traversed a long distance to be considered from social, political, economic as well as psychological perspectives. Though from the health perspective, it

gained importance since the Alma Ata Declaration of Health for All, it did not capture the imagination of all until the pandemic. Moreover, wellbeing is today equated with fashion and beauty as well. Wellbeing is today, in the modern/industrial, post-modern/post-industrial society, intrinsically related to the existence of human beings.

The Covid-19 pandemic has forced us to rethink work, workers and workplaces. Wellbeing in the workplace has become a pressing concern for all with employee layoffs, and work from home-which penetrates the private spaces of the workers, being a few of the concerns. The 2021 HR Sentiment Survey has listed Employee Wellbeing and Mental Health as one of the five priority areas¹. For 68 percent of the Human Resources leaders, this was an important sphere to be considered². The wellbeing of the workforce is of

1. <https://futureworkplace.com/ebooks/2021-hr-sentiment-survey/> accessed on 12.12.2022
2. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jeannemeister/2021/08/04/the-future-of-work-is-worker-wellbeing/?sh=4beb8c484aed> accessed on 12.12.2022

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paramount significance for the effectiveness of the organisation which in turn depends on the workplace wellbeing. The International Labour Organisation defines workplace wellbeing as being related “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 organisation.”³

Workplaces have been a space where the wellbeing of an employee is vulnerable and has been sexually, physically and in every form exploited. Workers are in more ways than one alienated in the workplaces which has a direct consequence on their overall wellbeing. Keeping this in mind organisations are trying to provide the least they can for the wellbeing of their staff. As mentioned above, the workers’ wellbeing is the most significant aspect of the overall effectiveness of the organisation, many organisations and workplaces have started paying attention to the wellbeing of their labour force, for organisations the workforce is the source of their economic, social and symbolic capital. The wellbeing of the workers is being considered in most of the workplaces and among the progressives it has become a topmost priority.

This paper tries to understand and analyse the perception of the workers and the management towards wellbeing on the basis of a case study of a small enterprise with young workers.

METHODOLOGY

A small organisation working for the welfare and emancipation of women was taken as a sample for the study. Methodological pluralism was followed with the primary tools of research being surveys and focus group. A semi-structured interview schedule was used for the survey as well focus group. Interviews and focus group was carried out in Hindi and English. Interviews lasted for 30-50 minutes and focus group discussions lasted for hours. Focus group was conducted only with the staff of the organisation so that the organisation could in the future develop a policy of wellbeing based on the understanding of it derived from the staff. Two cohort groups, above and below 18 years of age were studied with the objective

to create an enabling environment in the organisation on the basis of the understanding and perception of wellbeing generated through the survey. Furthermore, this research also aimed at creating awareness and self-reliance among those the organisation works with so that they can mutually assist one another in achieving wellbeing. It also aimed at establishing a programme design and implementation of it among the community the organisation works for their wellbeing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Wellbeing is not a single entity on its own but comprises different aspects of people’s lives which put together construct a sense of wellbeing among actors. Happiness is sometimes construed as wellbeing but happiness is not measurable and is a one-dimensional phenomenon. On the contrary, wellbeing is multifaceted with elements that are subjective and objective, and can be measured. Therefore, wellbeing is said to be a result of measurable elements like positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and purpose, and accomplishment which are measurable⁴. These aspects of people’s lives contribute separately to the essence of wellbeing. Seligman (2011), considers these to be the foundational elements on which the life of people can flourish. However, these variables are not easily definable but significantly contribute to explaining the factors that are pertinent to the understanding of wellbeing. Wellbeing as a concept therefore is not well articulated and there is no universal consensus on what exactly constitutes it. Diener and Suh (2012) have made a significant contribution to the understanding of wellbeing when they argued that subjective wellbeing consists of three interrelated components: life satisfaction, pleasant affect, and unpleasant affect. By affect, they were making reference to pleasant and unpleasant moods and emotions, whereas life satisfaction refers to a cognitive sense of satisfaction with life. However, La Placa *et al.* (2013) has broadened the framework of wellbeing which includes individual, family, community, and societal wellbeing. By broadening the framework, he goes beyond the individual-dominated perspective of wellbeing. In this process, he is able to incorporate aspects of health

3. https://www.ilo.org/safework/areasofwork/workplace-health-promotion-and-wellbeing/WCMS_118396/lang—en/index.htm accessed on 12.12.2022

4. <https://www.authentic happiness.sas.upenn.edu/learn/wellbeing>, accessed on 10.09.2022

environmental, geographic, socio-economic, and political forces inside the framework he propounds.

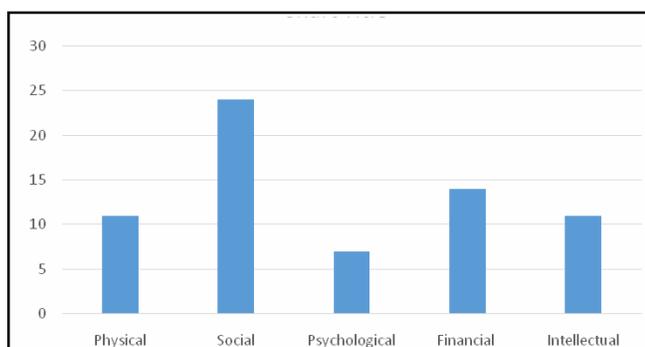
From the data collected through the survey and focused group discussions, it was established that three different parameters the social, psychological and intellectual were reported by the respondents as being essential for the enhancement of wellbeing. In the category of social the respondents said that inclusiveness in society was essential for an individual’s wellbeing. Exclusion or the lack of interaction and interconnectedness in society was seen as being detrimental to an individual’s wellbeing. Psychological factors that were related to the enhancement of the wellbeing of an individual were awareness and positive esteem about oneself. Though familial relations were not reported as being detrimental to the wellbeing of an individual but familial disharmony and rupture were reported as being detrimental to one’s wellbeing along with low self-esteem. Intellectual growth along with support and guidance within the organisation was also reported as factors that enhance wellbeing. Lack of intellectual growth and absence of support and guidance within the organisation was reported as being detrimental to one’s wellbeing. Financial insecurity was reported as a very important detrimental factor to wellbeing. Under the category of physicality pandemic and lack of physical fitness were reported as being detrimental to wellbeing.

On the basis of the above-mentioned five parameters of wellbeing, respondents were asked what was the most important and the least important parameters of wellbeing. The responses reflected the social reality in which we are living where material gain is of paramount importance and humans are achievement-oriented, with individual values are more significant than collective values majority of the

respondent listed social wellbeing as the least important parameter of wellbeing. The figure below illustrates the parameters that were least important for wellbeing in both the cohort above and below 18 years of age (Fig. 1).

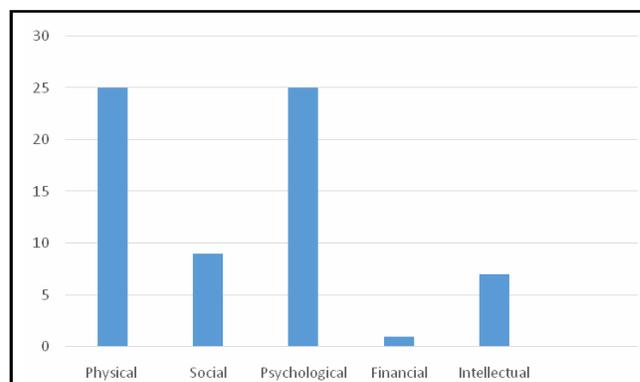
The pandemic had disrupted the social aspects of human life and people had to experience psychological and physical trauma along with financial hardships. The response to the least important parameter of wellbeing as mentioned by those above the age of 18 reflects these facts of existence. Twenty-two respondents above the age of 18 years reported that social wellbeing was the least important among the five parameters that were considered essential for the holistic wellbeing of an individual. Only two respondents below the age of 18 reported it to be the least important. Psychological wellbeing was given importance by the respondents. The pandemic had made it important for everyone to be physically healthy and for the survey conducted after the worse phase of the pandemic, it was natural for the respondents to mention physical wellbeing at the lower end of the least important parameter of the wellbeing spectrum. Seven and four respondents above and below 18 years of age considered financial wellbeing least important, respectively.

The Fig. 2 illustrates that the majority of the respondents in both age groups give priority to physical and psychological wellbeing. Financial wellbeing is the least favoured parameter of wellbeing in both cohort groups. The importance given to these two aspects can be the consequence of the uncertainty and difficulties experienced by these groups during the pandemic. None of the respondents below the age of 18 years reported financial wellbeing as being pertinent to them and only



Source: Field Data

Fig. 1 : Least Important Wellbeing Parameter



Source: Field Data

Fig. 2 : Most important Parameter of Wellbeing

one said it to be a significant contributor to their overall wellbeing.

Physical wellbeing was associated by many of the staff respondents of the organisation with their overall productivity in their work. They were of the opinion that their physical wellbeing was affected by long online working sessions which in turn got amplified during their menstrual cycle period. This further affected the relationships they had in the office with their colleagues. Many of the respondents were apprehensive that their physical state of wellbeing was responsible for the kind of connection they had with their colleagues. Working in a cordial environment in the office was considered to be of utmost importance by 96 percent of the respondents. However, their apprehension to develop cordial and friendly relationships with their colleagues led to their psychological understanding of wellbeing. They were of the opinion that when there was stress and pressure in the office their moods were affected which in turn affected their interaction and behavior with colleagues. Therefore, for the staff members of the organisation within the office environment and in the household, it was essential to be psychologically healthy to function smoothly and productively and to maintain and sustain a proper relationship with all.

The organisation gives priority to psychological wellbeing among its members and in order to further understand the psychological issues that were affecting the wellbeing of the employees a one-to-one session was organized with the latter so that the psychological issues and concerns could be understood holistically and acted accordingly. The table below reflects the issues that came to the forefront during the session.

Table 1 describes the psychological concerns that were identified during the one to one sessions where the participants were interviewed based on a set of questionnaire. The most dominating concerns identified during the interviews were trauma and anxiety. Cases of trauma were identified to be part of two categories, one being trauma due to childhood sexual abuse and the other being trauma due to gender discrimination over a period of time. Cases of anxiety again being a prevailing concern were related to multiple issues mostly rising due to

insecurity and fear of unknown. Next most prevailing concern was conflict in family which is a frequent concern encountered with youth due to gap in understanding and ability to communicate effectively. Communication issues were more or less identified due to similar reasons. Other concerns identified during one to one sessions were goal setting concerns and adjustment issues.

Financial wellbeing did not find much importance in the overall understanding of factors that contribute to wellbeing, as this organisation was a recently established one where there were newly recruited staffs. They were more concerned with the career prospects they had and also if they could further continue with their studies after gaining some work experience. The two most important aspects of wellbeing as per the respondents-physical and psychological- were related to the immediate environment and the contribution they could make towards the growth of the organisation.

Focussed group discussion was conducted to understand the expectations of the employees from the organisation and was instrumental in understanding what they considered to be detrimental to wellbeing and what enhanced wellbeing within the office setting. The table below highlights the issues and practices that were considered to be detrimental to and which assisted in enhancing wellbeing within the organisation.

From the Table 2, it is evident that the employees of the organisation were aware of what factors contributed and what acted as barriers to their wellbeing. The factors mentioned are subjective in nature like fear of failure and judgement based on those failures by the employers, working on Saturdays, long and odd working hours, and work overload which is related to a low sense of achievement. Though the organisation has an unambiguous leave policy, it came up as an impediment to wellbeing, this can be attributed to the participants lack of awareness and understanding of the policy as well as the good practices that the organisation follows for the wellbeing of the employees.

The employees have identified a very important practice of the organisation as a facilitator of wellbeing which is the freedom to express and be the self without any hesitation. This was one of the aims and objectives

Table 1 : Psychological Concerns Impeding Wellbeing

Trauma	Conflict in family	Anxiety	Adjustment issues	Goal setting	Communication issues
12	7	11	2	4	6

Source: One-to-One Session held on

Table 2 : Practices enhancing and detrimental to wellbeing within the organisation

Wellbeing Detrimental Practices at FAT	Wellbeing Enhancing Practices at FAT
Unawareness of Wellbeing	Community care
More focus on profession(intellectual Wellbeing)	Leave policy
No self-care	Daily community interaction
Lack of community awareness for Wellbeing	Regular discussion among teams
Lack community care	Guidance from mentor
Unable to give equal importance to all Wellbeing practices	Sense of safe space
Unable to utilize existing Wellbeing practices	No discrimination based on age
Team management while collaborating	Freedom to be oneself and to express
Workflow management within teams	Pride and connectedness in working for the cause together
Leave policy	Work from home policy
Long-term leave policy	Sense of acceptance in the community
Planning for weekly offs (regularity and preferences)	Skill-based support and guidance
Guilty of not being able to dojustice to work	Growth and learning
Following daily activity scheduling	Acknowledgment and appreciation in team meetings
Lack of skill-based support and guidance	Continueto work together despiteconflict
Working on Saturdays	Silent room in FAT
Working at odd hours	Working together in the same room
Inability to implement feedback	Celebrating together
Fear of failure and judgment	Physical exercise
Work overload	Openness to discuss trauma
Inability to ask for help and receive feedback	
Lack of personal acknowledgment among colleagues	
Low sense of achievement	
No structure for being prepared for the review process	
Issue related to time management and planning efficiently	
Working during holidays	
Trauma management	

Source: Focussed Group Discussion

of the organisation to facilitate the female staff to overcome the social, political, economic and gender discrimination that females generally experience in their lived experiences. The perception of equality based on all variables of existence and reality is a very important component for experiencing wellbeing and the staff perceive that there exists equality within the office ecosystem irrespective of age which reflect that the organisation provides an environment to the employees for experiencing wellbeing. Death is the ultimate sign of the absence of wellbeing and Durkheim (1897) argued that the absence of solidarity among the members of society leads to the individual not experiencing wellbeing and therefore committing suicide and in societies where people experience unity and togetherness among themselves they do not commit egoistic suicides which are a result of the nonexistence of solidarity. In the organisation there was a clear indication, during the group discussion, that there exists solidarity among the staff, and togetherness and unity are always encouraged. From

the discussion, it is also evident that the staff experiences social, intellectual, and psychological wellbeing.

The list of issues and factors that the participants have identified as being impediments and facilitators of wellbeing suggests that wellbeing is understood in a very subjective and individualistic manner. This, therefore, adds to the difficulty of conceptualizing wellbeing in a holistic and universal manner.

Recommendations:

Based on the current context and the work done so far in the Wellbeing project, given below are the recommendation to establish Wellbeing in the organisation community. These are time specific and need to be revisited and relooked while implementing.

– There are 4 important features of the Wellbeing program. The first one is individual counselling support, the second is group therapy sessions addressing various issues, the third is the structures and process to be set in different departments of the organisation to ensure

employee Wellbeing and the fourth is the organisation internal team as panel.

- Considerations to keep in mind for Wellbeing within the organisation community are to raise Wellbeing team within and from the organisation community, where these organisation members will work together closely to create Wellbeing.

- Regular process of individual counselling support needs to be established which will have orientation sessions that aim to establish rapport with an individual and identification of the support required. Thereafter follow up counselling sessions are required for the identified issues.

- Individually there can be a follow up call with Wellbeing conversation for 5 to 15 minutes to get the pulse of any support required. This can be set with the support of organisation's internal team to check mandatorily every 15 days to know how employees are doing.

- Individually there should also be a structure and processes for an employee to voluntarily seek counseling sessions when required as per convenience. This includes the availability of need-based counseling.

- Group support for trauma healing, to build community connectedness and overcoming co-dependency.

- Creating a strong base of safe space amongst community members to enhance social connectedness.

- Establishing a repository as a knowledge base to support different Wellbeing in the organisation.

- Wellbeing core team sends different Wellbeing mailers and activities to support the employees engaged in different Wellbeing components.

- Monthly plan to be formulated within core team and further to be implemented by Wellbeing community leaders.

- Identifying and fostering Wellbeing leaders in the organisation community for the 5 Wellbeing component

- Community session supporting every Wellbeing component through community Wellbeing leader on a weekly basis.

Conclusion:

The organisation has taken it upon itself to provide an ecosystem where the staff perceives and experiences wellbeing and this survey was the initial endeavor towards achieving this goal. From this study, it has become clear that the organisation is in the right direction to achieve its

goal, however, there is a lot to be desired if holistic wellbeing is to be achieved among its employees. This survey has also pointed toward the fact that wellbeing is a subjective experience and implementing a process to achieve has to be diverse, with many different variables taken into consideration.

Due to the diversity and variation in the subjective understanding and perception of wellbeing the organisation has taken upon itself to diversify the efforts to achieve this goal by designing and implementing policies separately for its different departments so that it can take care of the five basic but interrelated elements of wellbeing. However, from the analysis of the survey data and the one-to-one session, it is vividly clear that the individuals in the organisation prioritize psychological, social and intellectual wellbeing over others and in order to address these issues the organisation has taken a policy decision to seek assistance from experts and hire a counselor who could help the individual members in resolving the matter that concerns them.

This organisation is working with the objective of developing leadership and agency of adolescent girls through innovative use of technology, which is a very challenging task. In order to achieve the set goal in an environment where girls and females are constantly facing challenges to fulfil their potential and overcome the obstacles that are raised by the social, political and economic structures, it becomes imperative that those working with this objective set by the organisation experience wellbeing at all levels and all the time and the organisation is working sincerely and ingeniously to achieve that.

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