
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Employee Performance Impacted by Mental Health and Employee Wellbeing in INGOs Jordan

Dr. Nasser Assaf

Assist. Prof., Talal Abu-Ghazaleh University College for Innovation, Amman, Jordan

Corresponding Author: Dr. Nasser Assaf, **E-mail:** nassaf@taguci.edu.jo

| ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to study the relationship between mental health and employee performance and productivity in INGOs in Jordan. The methodology used is a qualitative approach. Data collection was conducted based on a structured one to one interview method. An inductive narrative analysis method of analyzing interview transcripts was used. The findings show that there was a significant relationship between employees' job performance and mental health. In the meantime, the study confirmed that INGOs in Jordan don't put enough effort "in reality and on the ground" to maintain the mental health of their employees although it is, in some times, written in their policies. Based on the results, one can conclude that low mental health level among employees can reduce their performance. Managers should use proper methods to decrease the negative consequences resulted from the lack of mental health in workplaces and senior managers should put in more effort and include the mental health in their strategic and business plans.

| KEYWORDS

Mental health, employee performance, business strategy, employee wellbeing, mental health strategy, INGO

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Mental health, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), is "a condition of well-being in which each individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with normal life stresses, can work creatively and fruitfully, and can contribute to her or his community." Depression and anxiety are two of the most common mental illnesses that interfere with our capacity to perform efficiently. (The 6Q Blog, 2017). The global impact of mental illness is becoming more evident. Mental health issues are one of the most significant contributors to the global burden of disease and disability. Mental health issues account for five of the top ten causes of disability worldwide. They are as relevant in low-income countries as they are in high-income countries, and they affect people of all ages, genders, and social classes. Furthermore, all forecasts imply that mental health problems will skyrocket in the future (World Health Organization, 2000).

Nongovernmental institutions have become one of the most important pillars for public well-being as a result of worldwide changes in families and communities. Many basic social functions are derived from the job they accomplish. However, they are not intended to take the position of government agencies. Nongovernmental organizations have a wide range of goals. Despite remaining within the realm of general public well-being, they play critical roles in humanitarian aid, human rights defense, economic development management, natural catastrophe response, and environmental protection. According to (Navajas-Romero, Caridad y López del Río and Ceular-Villamandos, 2020), NGOs have grown rapidly on the international landscape over the previous three decades. According to the Union of Worldwide Associations, there are about 40,000 active international nongovernmental organizations. Humanitarian aid workers are frequently exposed to stressful experiences that have been linked to

mental health problems such as depression, burnout, and anxiety. Workplace stress, which includes exceptionally heavy workloads, long hours, and little time for self-care, is increasingly being identified as a primary cause.

2. Literature Review

According to (www.cdc.gov, 2019), mental illness is one of the most common health problems in the United States. In 2016, nearly one in every five adults in the United States (18.3% or 44.7 million people) reported having a mental illness. Furthermore, 71% of people experienced at least one stress symptom, such as a headache, feeling overwhelmed, or being apprehensive.

Aid workers are regularly subjected to high levels of stress and strain, which is nothing new. Working in combat zones, assisting during disasters, and experiencing the effects of extreme poverty firsthand all leave an indelible mark, whether we realize it or not. While human resource departments are often in charge of employee health and wellness programs, discussions at the EISF Forum in Berlin last September highlighted the link between employee happiness and good risk management. How can we better mitigate the psychological impact of our work? Security managers are constantly striving to assist personnel in delivering physical safety programs; how can we better mitigate the psychological impact of our work?

As emphasized by ReliefWeb (n.d.), lack of resources prohibits the great majority of organizations from implementing the separate and particular staff care policies required to address the problem. Simple actions, on the other hand, can start to improve things, and security and HR managers have a lot of resources at their disposal. These can have a significant impact on worker health in the field and at headquarters when used in a systematic, rather than piecemeal, manner. The Antares Foundation assists humanitarian organizations with the establishment of staff care and psychological support programs. A more proactive monitoring system could be an effective method to guarantee that mental health issues are treated, as well as to reduce the stigma associated with requesting treatment. According to InterHealth, recruitment procedures that incorporate psychiatric clearance and resilience profiling may help to lower the risk of PTSD. It's also inspiring to work in an environment where employees are encouraged to think about their own well-being. According to Emmanuelle Lacroix in an intriguing CHS Alliance post, the Headington Institute offers free online training with tools on stress, burnout, and resilience, which could be useful additions to a staff member's "self-care toolbox." Achilles Resilience training can help persons working in war zones cope with trauma and build psychological resilience. Staff support surgeries, such as those run by the British Red Cross HR team, can assist to open up a dialogue about issues that affect relief workers

2.1. Employers Perspective and Role

According to (Hatch, 2019), measures an organization should take to begin addressing mental health and wellbeing for personnel deployed overseas include having a strategy - in comparison to the corporate and public sectors, NGOs have fewer wellbeing plans in place. Having a written promise from your company will reassure your employees that they can bring up any problems or concerns they may have. Moreover, pre- and post-employment steps as employers must be aware of the trauma and experience that people bring to new jobs, particularly if they have previously worked in the area. In-house counseling programs can be beneficial, but they can be costly. Measures also can include surveys - Wellbeing surveys help companies better understand their employees and their needs. While monitoring tools can provide valuable insight into how your employees are feeling, you must be prepared to act on the data and make changes to assist your employees if they are having difficulties, in addition to another important measure which is taking small-scale initiatives such as awareness months, lunches, massage sessions, and desk exercises can all help improve your employees' spirits.

(Hatch, 2019) concluded additional measures as well including the managerial support - Stress management workshops assist in the integration of wellbeing into management structures. Understanding professional boundaries, eliminating barriers to support, and equipping managers with the tools to recognize the indicators of persons suffering from mental illness can all help. MHFAs (Mental Health First Responders) - In an emergency, having properly trained MHFA can also be very beneficial. They can also raise awareness and recognize warning indications of someone in distress. People in the office who require emotional support can benefit from having someone who can provide resources, refer them to resources, and talk them through their difficulties and last but not least, employee assistance programs (EAPs) and free resources such as Konterra, the Headington Institute, and Disaster Ready are available to organizations.

2.2. Strategic Plans and Mental Health

According to (Manning, 2020b), The cost of mental health has risen significantly over the past couple of years. It is estimated that employers could lose up to £44.5 billion annually due to the lack of proper support and intervention. Having the right mental health strategy can help reduce this cost. It will help protect employees from mental health issues, and reduce the risk factors that can affect their well-being. Also, promote mental health by developing positive aspects of work.

Aside from being an essential part of any business strategy, (Manning, 2020b) clarified that mental health can also act as an overlooked factor. This can have a negative impact on a company's performance. From the various risks that come with mental

health, it can also affect a person's ability to reach their goals. Having the right support and resources for staff members can help keep them mentally healthy and contribute to their success.

On another note, (Manning, 2020b) highlighted that aside from being beneficial to any business, incorporating mental health into the business strategy can also help boost the morale of employees. Having the proper support and resources can help keep them mentally healthy. Being able to ask one-on-one questions can be a simple yet effective way to start a conversation about mental health. Having this type of discussion can help an individual identify their own shortcomings and start the process of improving their mental health.

One of the most important factors a business should consider when it comes to supporting people is making sure that they feel supported. Having a monthly check-in can help people keep track of their progress and provide them with the necessary support. Other simple yet effective ways to support people are by encouraging them to take a walk or spend some time reflecting on their hobbies or activities (Manning, 2020b).

According to (Manning, 2020b), before implementing a comprehensive well-being strategy for a company, it's important to first set realistic goals and plan on ensuring that employees are well-being is supported. This can be done through the development of a well-being plan and an action plan. Having a well-defined risk management strategy can help minimize the impact of mental health on employees.

2.3. Implementing mental health strategies and Culture

According to Campbell (2018), mental illness is a significant cause of absenteeism. However, it is also a cause of presenteeism, where workers continue to perform despite their conditions. This can lead to loss of productivity and affect the people around them. This is often the case in organizations with a culture of working long hours, as employees are more likely to go to work when they are sick, instead of taking a day off. In 2015, work-related stress was responsible for 37 percent of all ill-health cases, and 45 percent of all working days lost. The stigma attached to mental health problems means at home and in the workplace.

To effectively promote and retain mental health in the workplace, a wide approach is required. This can be done through the establishment of a dedicated mental health and wellbeing department at the top.

Despite the various steps that can be taken to promote and retain mental health in the workplace, the most common obstacle to progress is the stigma attached to it. This is because many senior executives are reluctant to share their personal struggles with the public. This can be overcome by allowing them to share their experiences and helping others in the organization (Campbell, 2018).

As stated by (Campbell, 2018), a culture change is also needed in order to improve the level of employee wellbeing. According to a study, organizations that have high levels of employee well-being have outperformed the market over the years. Being able to hold yourself accountable for your well-being can help boost the performance of an organization. It can also help improve the attitudes and behaviors of the people around you.

All organizations, regardless of size, should work towards developing and implementing a mental health strategy through. (Campbell, 2018) concluded that communication of the mental health strategy as well as education, campaigns and role modelling in the workplace can facilitate a culture shift in the organization, placing a focus on the importance of good mental health. A comprehensive approach to wellness includes both physical and mental health. This can be done through programs that promote the use of various forms of exercise, such as yoga and meditation. Although there are no single strategies that can address the various aspects of employee well-being, it is important to implement a program that is geared toward addressing the needs of each individual.

One of the most important factors that employers consider when it comes to implementing a comprehensive program for employee well-being is the training of managers. This can help them identify and prevent potential issues before they become a problem. Having the right support and resources can help keep employees and the entire organization happy, according to (Campbell, 2018).

2.4 Mental Health and the Human Resources Strategy

According to (Cassidy, 2021), besides being the first point of contact for employees who might need help, HR departments should also be proactive about providing support and resources to their employees. This can be done by reviewing their company's health insurance coverage and promoting mental health services.

A well-being strategy can also help position an organization as a leader in the field of mental health. It can also create a plan for implementing multiple mental health solutions within a workforce. Having a well-defined strategy can also help an organization

establish a network of support and resources. One of the most important factors that an organization can consider when it comes to implementing a mental health program is partnering with an experienced EAP.

2.5 Goal Global partnership with Konterra

Established in 1977, GOAL is an international humanitarian and development agency committed to working with communities to achieve sustainable and innovative early response to crises and to assist them to build lasting solutions to mitigate poverty and vulnerability. GOAL has worked in over 60 countries and responded to almost every major humanitarian disaster. We are currently operational in 13 countries globally. This research will study the case of Goal Global – Jordan Office to analyze the importance of mental health and how it’s linked to employee performance and productivity. (GOAL Global, n.d.)

GOAL has engagement with KonTerra Group in commitment to supporting the health and wellbeing of its staff. The aim of this initiative is to assist staff with managing stress and staying resilient, especially while working in difficult environments and it is totally voluntary. GOAL has engaged The KonTerra Group to provide staff with access to one-on-one confidential consultations on a range of topics, at no cost to the staff member. Topics addressed in one-on-one consultations often including chronic stress, resilience, work stress, anxiety, depression, sleeplessness, substance misuse, witnessing or being affected by a traumatic event, or any other topic that staff members may wish to speak about. Each staff member is eligible for 16 counseling sessions per event pre-approved.

The KonTerra Group is a specialist group of counselors and coaches. In addition to holding the highest qualifications and credentials in their field, KonTerra counselors and coaches have also lived and worked in a high-stress humanitarian or development environments themselves. This experience helps their understanding of the challenges Staff face, especially those working in difficult parts of the world. The KonTerra Group is bound by professional standards regarding confidentiality and does not disclose details of individuals who have contacted the service (The KonTerra Group, 2019). Any information an employee will not be shared with GOAL.

3. Research framework and Hypotheses

3.1 Research Framework

This research proposes relationships among the factor of mental health, employee wellbeing and employees’ performance.

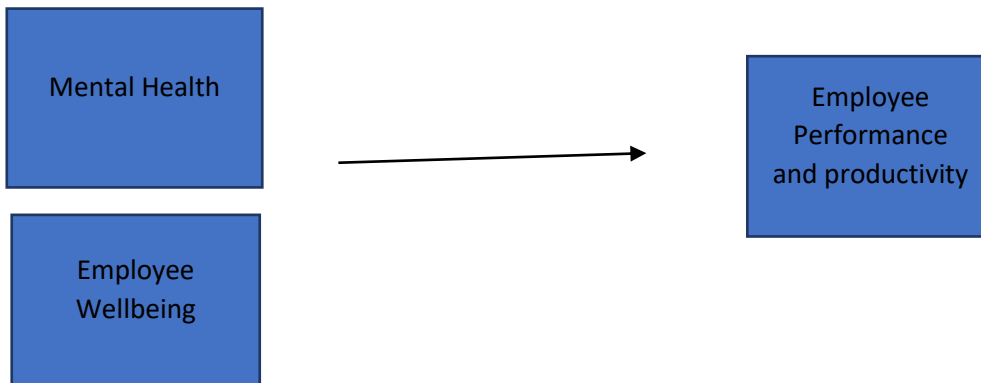


Figure 1: Research Proposed Framework

3.2 Research Proposition Development

H1: Mental Health has a huge impact on INGOs employee performance and productivity in INGOs in Jordan.

Being mentally healthy is a vital component of people's overall health, and it is becoming more apparent that poor mental health can lead to various health conditions. Aside from being detrimental to one's physical health, poor mental health can also affect one's ability to contribute positively to their professional life and can negative impact their performance level and productivity. This hypothesis was developed to evaluate and confirm this in the INGOs sector in Jordan.

H2: INGOs and/or Goal Global put in enough effort to maintain the mental health and wellbeing of its employees has mental health embedded in their strategic/business plans.

Having a comprehensive mental health policy and a strategic plan are two of the most important tools that can be used to implement mental health practices in workplaces. This hypothesis was developed to confirm if INGOs do put in enough effort to maintain the mental health and wellbeing of their employees and mental health embedded in their business plans.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

The research is designed to investigate the impact of mental health and employee wellbeing on INGOs employees' performance and productivity. This is based on a qualitative methodology. The present research reflects relevant views from the perspective of the employees as well as senior managerial staff. This research uses secondary and primary data. Secondary data is analyzed following an extensive review of books and peer-reviewed journals. Secondary data investigated the importance of mental health on employees' performance whether with INGOs or in any other field. It also clarified the importance of embedding the mental health in the strategic plans of organizations. For primary data, a structured interview method is a rich source of explanation of the employee's feedback. The employees answered anonymously due to the sensitivity of the research topic. The questions covered two areas; the role of the employee as well as the role for the employer.

The researcher analyzed the data collected in the interviews and did the interviews coding.

4.2 Data Collection

The target population of this research is INGO employees with a main focus on Goal Global – Amman office. Structured interviews were conducted with 8 employees, 6 of which are Goal employees, in English. The researcher reached out to more than 15 colleagues but only 8 colleagues accepted to set for the interview, from their perspective, the topic is very sensitive and personal. Confidentiality was assured to the respondents using two methods; first, they were assured of the confidentiality issue at the beginning of the interview, and second, the data collection process was carried out personally by the researcher. An inductive narrative analysis method of analyzing interview transcripts was used. The interview consisted of seven questions:

1. Do you think mental health and your wellbeing really affect your performance and productivity? How?
2. Did you ever suffer from a mental health that really affected your performance? Tell me more.
3. As an employee, what do you do to maintain a good mental health?
4. Regarding your mental health, what do you receive from your manager/employer?
5. Regarding your mental health, what do you wish to receive? What do you think your employer's role should be?
6. Do you take care of the wellness of your team members, what practices would you do?
7. Based on your experience, do you think that Goal and INGOs in Jordan do put enough effort to maintain the mental health of their employees? Is it part of their strategic plans?

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Demographic Profile

According to the data in Table 1, 75 percent of the sample consists of females, with the remaining 25 percent of males. According to the study's findings, 25% percent of the sample is between the ages of 20 and 29 years old while 63% of the sample is between 30 and 39 years old. It is also discovered that 75 percent of the sample hold a Masters degree. 50% of the sample are junior staff, 25% are senior level staff, 12.5% are mid-career staff and 12.5% are director level.

Table 1: Demographic Profile

Gender		Frequency	Percent
	Female	6	75%
	Male	2	25%
	Total	8	100%
Age			
	20-29	2	25%
	30 – 39	5	63%
	40 – 49	1	12%
	50 and above	0	0%
	Total	8	100%
Education Level			
	Bachelor Degree	2	25%
	Finished School	0	0%
	Secondary School	0	0%
	Master Degree	6	75%
	PhD	0	0%
	Total	8	100%
Career Level			
	Junior staff	4	50 %
	Mid Career	1	12.5%
	Senior Level	2	25%
	Director level	1	12.5%
	Total	8	100%

5.2 Data Analysis

An inductive narrative analysis method of analyzing interview transcripts was used, details are shown in table 2.

Table 2: Interview Coding

Code	Code Description	Some Interview Excerpts
performance and productivity	mental health really affects your performance and productivity	<p>“ Yes, if the person wasn’t stable situation (life work balance, enjoying his work) the performance will be limited or even less than expectations.”</p> <p>“Yes, if the person wasn’t stable situation (life work balance, enjoying his work) the performance will be limited or even less than expectations.”</p> <p>“For sure I do believe that mental health really affects your performance and productivity; usually if I am distracted by many tasks so, that will effect my concentration and the ability of focus on one thing. then it will directly effect my productivity and performance ”</p> <p>“Mental health plays a big part in my daily routine, especially in my performance and productivity on the job, mainly due to lack of concentration resulting from my mental health status, also feeling low and not energetic affects my performance and productivity.”</p> <p>“Yes, when feeling anxious or stressed out I don’t feel</p>

<p>Mental health factors</p>	<p>What do you do to maintain a good mental health</p>	<p>focused or motivated to accomplish anything at work, even the basic day-to-day tasks feel so heavy to be done”</p> <p>“I trained myself to figure out the reason of my distraction and then disconnect from it. take a good break, sleep or contact my family.”</p> <p>“When I am at work I am in the mental state for work so you try not to let it get into you.”</p> <p>“I have tracking emotional intelligence tool, I fill it in every month or quarterly and it helps me track where I put my energy.”</p> <p>“ I seek professional advice when needed, I enjoy some “alone” time, and try to give and receive love with the ones around”</p> <p>“ Meditation, seeking support from my closed friends and family members, and when I feel it is unbearable, I seek professional support.”</p> <p>“ keeping myself busy, participating in outdoor activities, stay in touch with the people I love, doing Emotional Freedom Techniques, and above all prayer and stay close to God”</p>
<p>Employer Role</p>	<p>What support do you receive from your manager/employer in order to maintain mental health</p> <p>What do you wish to receive?</p> <p>Do you take care of the wellness of your team members?</p>	<p>“Usually I have different experiences of my managers and employers,,, some managers the really do care and ask if you are not feeling good and offer to help or advise, but many other don't, while as I am now know that this matter really important I always try to look to my employees to ask, offering to support even some of them I noticed that they have some mental health difficulties but they try to hide not to show explicitly”</p> <p>“ Helped me take care about work-life balance. Openness to share the thoughts and special arrangements for example when I studied Masters I received huge support. And also I had access to Konterra who could provide support whenever needed.”</p> <p>“Many times I would be thankful if somebody just ask or offer to help, this point for me is important to show the empathy, but what I wish to see or receive is a specialist advice that really make a difference, maybe there are some drills or practices can extract you from a poisonous environment, or make you fell mentality better. I do believe that sharing stories between close friend or inside the family units is very helpful.”</p> <p>“This part of taking good care of your team is very effective and helpful for the teamwork concept to reach our team goals. there should be a specific designated planned sessions to set together from time to time to check out team wellness health, also encourage the staff to express of their feelings, and to set a time for recreation activates.”</p>

		<p>" The last NGOs I worked with, supported the employees with free psycho social support sessions. My current supervisor is showing flexibility in working hours and deadlines for deliverables, he is supporting also by delegation and taking a part of my job."</p> <p>" Nevertheless, the whole system in the organization didn't provide enough space for my manager to be fully supportive"</p>
<p>Mental Health in Strategic Plans</p>	<p>Do you think INGOs (based on your experience) in Jordan do put enough effort to maintain the mental health of its employees, is it part of the strategic plan?</p>	<p>"No. Work environment plays a role in the mental health, the negative energy will spread"</p> <p>"They Try to, but not in a systematic approach, they still need to organize that in policies and to be adopted in a comprehensive approach"</p> <p>"Partially yes, they don't prioritize this on the ground usually but from my experience, only two employers recruited specialist for this matter, this depends on the vision and the budget availability."</p> <p>"No, on papers it is usually there, but not on the ground"</p> <p>"No, it is there in the strategy, but not implemented on the ground"</p> <p>" No, the organization has a proper set of policies and guidelines; however, I believe policies alone are not enough, they should be combined with training and a compliance program to ensure that people are abiding these policies."</p> <p>"Yes, many INGOs do"</p> <p>"Yes I do believe they do, they understand how much important this is, especially since NGOs workers, work under pressure of deadlines, meeting donors and organization's compliance issues, also working in hard environments, and working with refugees."</p> <p>"It's part of some of the organizations' strategies, yet, it is not well implemented. They strive to provide some psychosocial services to the staff, retreats, and so, however, they don't maintain a healthy environment on day to day basis to protect their staff mental wellbeing"</p>

5.3 Testing hypotheses and Conclusions

The findings of this research conclude what follows:

H1 Mental Health has a huge impact on employee performance and productivity. This hypothesis is **accepted**.

All Interviewees confirmed that mental health really affects their performance level and productivity. Most of which also confirmed that they have been through tough experiences before.

H2 INGOs and/or Goal Global put in enough effort to maintain the mental health and wellbeing of its employees. This hypothesis is **rejected**.

Most interviewees confirmed that INOGs usually have policies in place which includes mental health policies , but they are not properly implemented nor monitored.

6. Managerial Implications

This research highlights the strategic importance of mental health and wellbeing on employees performance and productivity. Through this research, employers and senior management staff learn to put in more effort to embed an integral part that is concerned with employee mental health in their strategic plans and to make sure they have policies set in place to implement it and monitor the relevant achievements.

7. Research limitations

In this research, best efforts have been undertaken to minimize limitations. Authors conducted this research based on one INGO that cannot represent the whole INGOs working in Jordan due to nature of work, size, employee number, and location. Only 7 interviews were conducted due to the sensitivity of the topic for some employees as well as time restrictions. This number considered to be low and is not dependable for acquiring accurate results, also not sufficient due to which the generalizations cannot be made. Most of the respondents were females, as the researcher has limited access to male respondents, although both female and male colleagues were invited for an interview.

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