



Employee well-being and mental health support in private hospitals in Tamil Nadu: An empirical study

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.66856/ijssh.2026.8.3.8116>

Abstract

Employee well-being and mental health support have become increasingly important in the private healthcare sector, where employees operate in highly demanding and rapidly changing work environments. Private hospitals in Tamil Nadu function within a competitive healthcare ecosystem characterized by long working hours, shift duties, high patient expectations, technological changes, emotional demands, and the need to maintain continuous service quality. These conditions may expose healthcare employees to occupational stress, burnout, work-life imbalance, and reduced job satisfaction.

This study examines employee well-being and mental health support in the context of private hospitals in Tamil Nadu, India. The study focuses on employees' perceptions of counselling services, stress management programmes, wellness activities, work-life balance, management support, job satisfaction, motivation, work engagement, and ability to perform duties effectively. Primary data from 344 valid respondents were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, regression analysis, and One-Way ANOVA. The findings indicate that employee perceptions of mental health support and workplace well-being are moderate, with mean scores ranging from 2.82 to 3.19 on a five-point scale. Management support for wellness activities recorded the highest mean score of 3.19, while the organization of wellness activities recorded the lowest mean score of 2.82.

Correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between management support for wellness activities and work-life balance ($r = .196, p < .05$), as well as between management support and employees' ability to perform duties effectively ($r = .249, p < .05$). The organization of wellness activities was also positively related to employees' ability to perform their duties effectively ($r = .182, p < .05$). A positive relationship was observed between manageable stress and work-life balance ($r = .166, p < .05$). A significant negative relationship was observed between stress management programme conduction and job satisfaction ($r = -.226, p < .05$), which may indicate that employees experiencing greater stress and lower job satisfaction are more likely to perceive a need for stress management interventions. One-Way ANOVA results indicated no statistically significant differences among departments in perceptions of job satisfaction, stress management, motivation, work-life balance, work engagement, and ability to perform duties effectively.

The study concludes that private hospitals in Tamil Nadu need to adopt an integrated employee well-being strategy that combines organizational interventions with individual mental health support. Strengthening counselling services, improving workload management, developing structured wellness programmes, enhancing managerial support, promoting psychological safety, and regularly measuring employee well-being are recommended to create healthier and more sustainable healthcare workplaces.

Keywords: Employee well-being, mental health, private hospitals, Tamil Nadu, healthcare employees, workplace stress, work-life balance, wellness programmes, employee engagement, human resource management

Introduction

The healthcare sector is one of the most important service sectors in Tamil Nadu and plays a critical role in the social and economic development of the state. Alongside the public healthcare system, private hospitals constitute a significant component of healthcare service delivery, offering a wide range of medical, diagnostic, surgical, emergency, specialty, and super-specialty services.

The private hospital sector operates in an environment characterized by continuous patient care, high service expectations, technological advancement, regulatory requirements, competition, and the need for operational efficiency. Healthcare employees are therefore required to balance professional responsibilities with emotional demands and service expectations.

Employees in private hospitals include doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, laboratory personnel, pharmacists, administrative employees, billing personnel, human resource professionals, technicians, housekeeping employees, security personnel, and other support staff. Although their responsibilities differ, they collectively contribute to the quality and continuity of healthcare delivery.

The psychological well-being of these employees is increasingly important. Healthcare workers may face long working hours, night shifts, workload pressures, emotional exhaustion, difficult patient interactions, exposure to illness and death, and the responsibility of making or supporting critical decisions.

The World Health Organization (WHO) reported in 2024 that at least one-quarter of health and care workers globally

experienced symptoms of anxiety, depression, or burnout during the period from January 2020 to April 2022. The WHO further emphasized that stress and burnout remain significant concerns associated with staff shortages, inadequate working conditions, stressful environments, and insufficient workplace safeguards. (World Health Organization)

The WHO also identifies time pressure, lack of control over work, long working hours, shift work, insufficient support, and moral injury as important psychosocial risk factors for healthcare workers. These conditions can contribute to stress, burnout, fatigue, absenteeism, staff turnover, and reduced quality of care. (World Health Organization)

These concerns are particularly relevant to private hospitals in Tamil Nadu. The competitive nature of private healthcare can create pressure to maintain high levels of patient satisfaction, operational efficiency, service quality, and financial sustainability. Employees may therefore experience tension between patient-care expectations and organizational performance requirements.

Employee well-being should consequently be understood as a strategic human resource management concern. Mental health support is not limited to counselling or wellness activities. It also involves workload management, staffing, leadership behaviour, communication, psychological safety, work-life balance, employee participation, and organizational culture.

The present study examines employee well-being and mental health support in private hospital settings in Tamil Nadu. The empirical analysis is based on 344 valid employee responses and focuses on the relationships between mental health support initiatives and employee outcomes.

Objectives of the Study

The study has the following objectives:

1. To assess the level of employee well-being and mental health support perceived by employees in private hospital settings in Tamil Nadu.
2. To evaluate employees' perceptions of counselling services, stress management programmes, wellness activities, work-life balance support, and management involvement.
3. To examine the relationship between mental health support initiatives and employee outcomes such as job satisfaction, stress management, motivation, work-life balance, work engagement, and performance.
4. To identify the factors influencing employee well-being in private healthcare organizations.
5. To provide recommendations for strengthening mental health and employee well-being practices in private hospitals in Tamil Nadu.

Profile of the Private Hospital Sector in Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu has a well-developed healthcare ecosystem comprising government hospitals, private hospitals, specialty institutions, diagnostic centres, medical colleges, and a large network of primary and secondary healthcare providers.

The private hospital sector has become increasingly important in areas such as specialty care, emergency medicine, oncology, cardiology, orthopedics, fertility treatment, dialysis, diagnostics, and advanced surgery.

The expansion of private healthcare has also increased the demand for skilled healthcare professionals and support personnel. As hospitals expand their service portfolios and adopt advanced technologies, employees are required to continuously update their skills and adapt to changing work processes.

At the same time, healthcare organizations face challenges relating to: Workforce shortages, Long and irregular working hours, Shift work and night duties, Emotional demands of patient care, Occupational stress, Employee turnover, Work-life imbalance, Increasing patient expectations, Technology-related pressures and Workplace safety and security. These challenges demonstrate why employee well-being should be considered a strategic component of private hospital management.

The WHO's recent evidence reinforces this concern by identifying poor work organization, long working hours, time pressure, shift work, and inadequate support as important psychosocial risks for health workers. (World Health Organization)

Literature Review

1. Employee Well-being in Healthcare

Employee well-being encompasses physical, psychological, emotional, and social dimensions of the employee experience. In healthcare organizations, well-being is particularly important because employees directly influence patient care and service quality. When healthcare workers experience chronic stress and burnout, organizations may experience absenteeism, turnover, reduced engagement, and potential risks to service quality. The WHO emphasizes that protecting the mental health and well-being of healthcare workers is essential for maintaining resilient health systems. (World Health Organization)

2. Mental Health Support

Mental health support may include: Counselling, Employee assistance programmes, Stress management, Psychological first aid, Mental health awareness, Peer support, Wellness activities, Flexible work practices and Managerial support. The WHO recommends combining organizational interventions with individual-level support. This is important because mental health problems cannot be addressed only by asking employees to become more resilient while ignoring excessive workload or inadequate working conditions. (World Health Organization).

3. Management Support

Management support is an important determinant of employee well-being. Managers influence workload distribution, communication, recognition, conflict resolution, scheduling, and employee access to support. The present study's empirical findings reinforce this perspective. Management support for wellness activities recorded the highest mean score of 3.19, indicating moderate employee agreement that management is supportive of wellness. However, the score is not sufficiently high to indicate a highly developed well-being culture. The result suggests that management support exists but could be strengthened through more systematic interventions.

4. Wellness Activities

Wellness activities may include yoga, meditation, health screening, physical activity, counselling awareness, stress

management, team-building, and employee engagement programmes. In the present study, the mean score for the organization of wellness activities was 2.82, the lowest among the major assessed well-being support variables. This finding indicates a potential gap between management's general support for wellness and the actual implementation of regular wellness programmes.

5. Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance is especially important for private hospital employees because healthcare services operate continuously. Shift work, night duties, overtime, emergency situations, and unpredictable patient loads can affect employees' ability to maintain personal and family responsibilities. The present study found a statistically significant positive correlation between management support for wellness activities and work-life balance ($r = .196$, $p < .05$). Although the correlation is weak in magnitude, its statistical significance suggests that stronger management support is associated with better employee perceptions of work-life balance.

6. Stress and Job Satisfaction

The study found a statistically significant negative relationship between stress management programme conduction and job satisfaction ($r = -.226$, $p < .05$). This finding requires careful interpretation. It should not be concluded that stress management programmes cause lower job satisfaction. A more plausible explanation is that employees experiencing greater stress and lower job satisfaction may be more likely to identify stress management programmes as an important workplace need. This finding highlights the importance of examining the root causes of stress rather than relying only on individual-level coping interventions.

Methodology

1. Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive and exploratory research

design. The descriptive approach was used to assess employees' perceptions of well-being and mental health support. The exploratory component examined relationships between mental health support initiatives and employee outcomes.

2. Sample Design

The empirical analysis was based on 344 valid responses. The respondents represented different occupational and functional areas within the healthcare workplace. The study used departmental categories including: Medical, Nursing, Administrative, Laboratory and diagnostics, Pharmacy, Accounts and billing, Human resources, Support services. Stratified random sampling method was employed to collect data representing across departments.

3. Data Collection

A structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data. The questionnaire measured: Counselling access, Stress management, Work-life balance, Employee assistance, Wellness activities, Management support, Job satisfaction, Stress levels, Motivation, Work-life balance, Work engagement and Performance, A five-point Likert scale was used.

Analysis and Findings

1. Descriptive Statistical Analysis

The descriptive statistics indicate that employee perceptions of mental health support and workplace well-being were moderate. The mean scores for the major variables ranged from Minimum Mean = 2.82 and Maximum Mean = 3.19, this range is important because it demonstrates that employee perceptions are neither strongly negative nor strongly positive. The results indicate a moderate level of satisfaction and support, suggesting that private hospitals have established some well-being mechanisms but have substantial opportunities for improvement.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics Summary

Variable	Mean	Interpretation
Management support for wellness activities	3.19	Highest reported perception
Overall employee well-being variables	2.82–3.19	Moderate
Organization of wellness activities	2.82	Lowest reported perception
Job satisfaction	Moderate	Scope for improvement
Stress management	Moderate	Scope for improvement
Motivation	Moderate	Scope for improvement
Work-life balance	Moderate	Scope for improvement
Work engagement	Moderate	Scope for improvement
Ability to perform duties effectively	Moderate	Scope for improvement

The 3.19 mean score for management support suggests that employees perceive management as moderately supportive of wellness activities. However, the 2.82 mean score for wellness activity organization indicates that implementation is comparatively weaker. The difference between the highest and lowest mean scores is: $3.19 - 2.82 = 0.37$ points, although the difference is not large, it indicates that management support does not necessarily translate fully into regular or

effective wellness activity implementation. This finding provides an important managerial insight: supportive intentions must be converted into visible and accessible employee programmes.

2. Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine relationships between mental health support variables and employee outcomes.

Table 2: Key Correlation Results

Variables	Correlation (r)	Significance	Interpretation
Stress management programmes – Job satisfaction	-0.226	$p < .05$	Significant negative relationship
Management support – Work-life balance	+0.196	$p < .05$	Significant positive relationship
Wellness activities – Effective performance	+0.182	$p < .05$	Significant positive relationship
Management support – Effective performance	+0.249	$p < .05$	Significant positive relationship
Manageable stress – Work-life balance	+0.166	$p < .05$	Significant positive relationship

2.1 Management Support and Work-Life Balance

A statistically significant positive correlation was identified between management support for wellness activities and work-life balance: $r = .196$, $p < .05$. This indicates that employees who perceive greater management support tend to report better work-life balance. The correlation is weak but positive. The finding suggests that management support may contribute to a healthier work environment, although it is unlikely to be the only determinant of work-life balance. For private hospitals, this finding highlights the importance of: Fair shift allocation, Adequate rest periods, Leave support, Workload distribution, Supervisor flexibility and Employee-friendly scheduling.

2.2 Wellness Activities and Employee Performance

The organization of wellness activities demonstrated a significant positive relationship with the ability to perform duties effectively: $r = .182$, $p < .05$. This suggests that employees who perceive better wellness activities may also report better work performance. The relationship is relatively weak, indicating that wellness activities alone cannot explain employee performance. Nevertheless, the statistical significance suggests that wellness initiatives may contribute to employee functioning.

2.3 Management Support and Performance

The strongest positive correlation identified in the reported results was between management support for wellness activities and employees' ability to perform duties effectively: $r = .249$, $p < .05$. This finding suggests that managerial involvement may be more important than simply offering wellness programmes. In practical terms, employees may respond more positively when managers actively encourage well-being rather than when wellness programmes exist only as formal HR initiatives.

2.4 Work-Life Balance and Manageable Stress

The relationship between manageable stress and work-life balance was positive and statistically significant: $r = .166$, $p < .05$. This suggests that employees who are better able to maintain work-life balance are more likely to perceive their stress as manageable. Although the correlation is weak, the direction is theoretically meaningful. The result supports the argument that employee stress should be addressed partly through organizational work design.

2.5 Stress Management and Job Satisfaction

A statistically significant negative relationship was found between stress management programme conduction and job satisfaction: $r = -.226$, $p < .05$. This finding should be interpreted carefully. The negative relationship may indicate that employees who experience greater workplace stress and lower job satisfaction are more likely to report a greater need for stress management interventions. Therefore, the finding should not be interpreted as evidence that stress management programmes reduce job satisfaction. Instead, it may highlight a reverse relationship between workplace stress and employee satisfaction. This result emphasizes the need for private hospitals to address the underlying sources of stress, including workload, staffing, shift patterns, interpersonal relationships, and managerial practices.

3. Variance Analysis

One-Way ANOVA was used to determine whether employees from different departments differed significantly in their perceptions of employee well-being. The variables examined included: Job satisfaction, Stress management, Motivation, Work-life balance, Work engagement and Ability to perform duties effectively. The results indicated that the p-values for the tested variables were greater than .05. Therefore, there was no statistically significant difference among departments. This means that employees from different departments did not report significantly different perceptions of the assessed workplace well-being variables.

Table 3: ANOVA Interpretation

Variables	ANOVA Result	Interpretation
Job satisfaction	$p > .05$	No significant departmental difference
Stress management	$p > .05$	No significant departmental difference
Motivation	$p > .05$	No significant departmental difference
Work-life balance	$p > .05$	No significant departmental difference
Work engagement	$p > .05$	No significant departmental difference
Ability to perform duties	$p > .05$	No significant departmental difference

The result suggests that employee well-being is a common organizational issue rather than a problem restricted to one department. However, statistical similarity does not mean that every department faces identical challenges. Doctors, nurses, laboratory employees, administrative personnel, and support staff may experience different forms of occupational stress. The finding instead suggests that the organization's overall well-being strategy should be hospital-wide, while

allowing departments to develop targeted interventions where necessary.

4. Overall Statistical Interpretation

The statistical findings can be summarized through five key conclusions. Finding 1: Moderate Level of Well-being, Meanscores ranging from 2.82 to 3.19 indicate a moderate level of employee well-being and mental health support.

Finding 2: Management Support is Relatively Stronger, Management support for wellness activities recorded the highest mean score of 3.19. Finding 3: Wellness Implementation Requires Improvement, the organization of wellness activities recorded the lowest mean score of 2.82. Finding 4: Management Support is Positively Associated with Outcomes, Management support demonstrated significant positive relationships with: Work-life balance ($r = .196$) and Ability to perform duties effectively ($r = .249$). Finding 5: Employee Well-being is Broadly Shared Across Departments ANOVA results indicate no statistically significant departmental differences ($p > .05$) across the major employee well-being variables.

Discussion of Findings

The empirical evidence indicates that employee well-being in private hospital settings requires further organizational attention. The mean score range of 2.82–3.19 demonstrates that employees perceive existing support mechanisms as moderate. The findings therefore suggest that the private hospital sector has a foundation for employee well-being but requires a transition from fragmented initiatives toward a structured well-being strategy. The strongest finding is the relationship between management support and effective performance ($r = .249$, $p < .05$). Although the effect is modest, the result highlights the importance of leadership.

This is consistent with the WHO's emphasis on organizational interventions and supportive working conditions. The WHO identifies poor work organization, long hours, shift work, time pressure, and insufficient support as psychosocial risks for health workers. (World Health Organization)

The positive relationship between management support and work-life balance ($r = .196$, $p < .05$) further indicates that employee well-being is influenced by managerial practices. The relatively low mean scores of 2.82 for wellness activity organization suggests that private hospitals should improve the practical delivery of well-being initiatives. The findings also reinforce the need to distinguish between employee resilience and organizational responsibility. Employees may benefit from resilience training, mindfulness, and stress management, but organizations must simultaneously address the structural causes of stress.

Recommendations

Based on the statistical findings, the following recommendations are proposed for private hospitals in Tamil Nadu.

1. Develop a Formal Employee Well-being Policy

Private hospitals should establish formal policies covering: Mental health, Counselling, Stress management, Work-life balance, Psychological safety, Workplace dignity and Employee assistance.

2. Strengthen Counselling Services

Confidential counselling should be made easily accessible to employees.

3. Improve Wellness Programme Implementation

The relatively low mean score of 2.82 suggests the need to improve the frequency and accessibility of wellness activities.

4. Train Managers

Managers should receive training in: Mental health awareness, Stress recognition, Supportive communication, Psychological safety, Conflict management and Referral mechanisms.

5. Address Workload and Staffing

Because organizational factors contribute significantly to employee stress, hospitals should monitor: Patient-to-staff ratios, Overtime, Shift patterns, Workload, Staffing shortages and Rest periods.

6. Promote Work-Life Balance

The positive relationship between management support and work-life balance ($r = .196$) supports greater attention to flexible and employee-friendly work practices.

7. Create Employee Feedback Mechanisms

Regular anonymous surveys should be conducted to assess: Stress, Burnout, Job satisfaction, Work-life balance, Management support and Psychological safety.

8. Establish a Well-being Dashboard

Private hospitals should monitor employee well-being through measurable indicators. Possible indicators include: Employee satisfaction score, Well-being mean score, Absenteeism rate, Employee turnover, Counselling utilization, Stress levels and Engagement score.

9. Develop Department-Specific Interventions

Although ANOVA found no statistically significant differences between departments, hospitals should still recognize that different occupational groups may experience different stressors.

10. Integrate Mental Health into Strategic HRM

Mental health should become part of: Workforce planning, Talent management, Leadership development, Performance management, Employee engagement and Retention strategy.

Conclusion

This study examined employee well-being and mental health support in the context of private hospitals in Tamil Nadu using empirical evidence from 344 respondents. The findings demonstrate that employees perceive workplace well-being and mental health support at a moderate level, with mean scores ranging from 2.82 to 3.19. Management support for wellness activities received the highest mean score (3.19), while the organization of wellness activities received the lowest (2.82). This indicates that although management recognizes the importance of employee well-being, there is scope to improve the actual implementation of wellness initiatives. The correlation analysis provides further evidence of the importance of organizational support. Management support was positively associated with work-life balance ($r = .196$, $p < .05$) and the ability to perform duties effectively ($r = .249$, $p < .05$). Wellness activities were also positively associated with effective performance ($r = .182$, $p < .05$).

The relationship between manageable stress and work-life balance was positive ($r = .166$, $p < .05$), reinforcing the importance of work organization in managing employee stress. The significant negative relationship between stress management programme conduction and job satisfaction (r

= -.226, $p < .05$) requires careful interpretation and may indicate that employees experiencing greater stress and lower satisfaction perceive a greater need for stress management interventions. The ANOVA findings showed no statistically significant differences among departments, with all tested significance values greater than .05. This indicates that employee well-being should be treated as a hospital-wide organizational priority.

The study concludes that private hospitals in Tamil Nadu need to adopt a comprehensive approach that combines organizational prevention, managerial support, employee participation, and professional mental health services.

The future of healthcare depends not only on medical technology and infrastructure but also on the well-being of the people who deliver care. Creating psychologically healthy workplaces is therefore essential for employee sustainability, service quality, patient safety, and organizational resilience. A private hospital that cares for its employees is better positioned to care effectively for its patients.

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