



INTEGRATING AYURVEDA'S PANCHAKOSHA FRAMEWORK IN EMPLOYEE WELLNESS PROGRAMS: PERCEPTIONS FROM HR MANAGERS

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the use of Ayurveda's Panchakosha model in wellness programs for employees from the perspectives of Human Resource (HR) managers of Dakshina Kannada district. With corporate life becoming increasingly high-stress today, it is increasingly recognized that it is not just the physical well-being that counts but the entire well-being. The Panchakosha model, taken from the Taittiriya Upanishad, speaks of five layers of human existence—bodily, energetic, mental, intellectual, and spiritual—those are a holistic and felt well-being model. This research attempts to synthesize ancient Indian wellness paradigms with modern-day corporate practices by assessing HR managers' awareness, perceptions, and readiness in implementing such paradigms. A mixed-method approach was employed, encompassing a survey questionnaire given to 45 HR managers and in-depth interviews with 15 senior HR professionals. Key findings are moderate awareness and high interest in holistic practices but knowledge and structural readiness gaps critical to implementation. The results also underscore the value of professional facilitation, organizational alignment, and creating measurable objectives. Despite sample size and cultural bias constraints, the research offers options for integrating traditional wellness principles with contemporary workplace programs. As human resource approaches evolve further, the Panchakosha model offers an integrative, culture-specific path towards sustainable employee engagement and organizational well-being.

Keywords: Ayurveda, Panchakosha, employee wellness, HR management, holistic health, workplace wellness

1. INTRODUCTION:

Modern business environments have witnessed a surge in employee well-being initiatives as companies strive to enhance productivity, manage stress levels, raise morale, and create a healthy work-life balance. With levels of burnout rising and

workplace stress becoming a global phenomenon, business organizations have taken a strong interest in wellness interventions that go beyond basic healthcare and physical wellness programs. These conventional strategies, while helpful, often ignore the multi-faceted components of human well-being



such as emotional strength, management of energy, intellectual acuity, and spiritual congruence.

Ayurveda, India's ancient science of medicine, offers a tested and integral philosophy of health to deal with these various aspects. Its core model, the Panchakosha system, is a nested model of human being. Panchakosha, according to the Taittiriya Upanishad, is composed of five sheaths: Annamaya (bodily form), Pranamaya (life force), Manomaya (mind and emotions), Vijnanamaya (wisdom and intellect), and Anandamaya (bliss and spiritual awareness). Each kosha describes an aspect of human experience that contributes to overall performance and health.

With more and more workplace wellness programs incorporating mindfulness, yoga, and stress management, these only manage to penetrate the outer koshas, i.e., Annamaya and Manomaya. Vijnanamaya and Anandamaya, the inner sheaths, go untouched due to cultural unfamiliarity, lack of formal frameworks, or apprehensions about spiritual interaction in a workplace environment.

This research assesses the reception of the adoption of the Panchakosha model in corporate well-being initiatives by HR managers. It also tests awareness levels, receptivity to holistic approaches to well-being, perceived organizational benefit, and challenges of implementation. Employing a mixed-method approach using surveys and interviews, the research strives to put into perspective the possibility of incorporating ancient wisdom into modern organizational systems and provides actionable implications for HR practitioners. By examining these opinions, this study also contributes to the broader discussions around culturally adaptive and spiritually inclusive wellness interventions in contemporary human resource management.

The current research investigates the perceptions of HR managers on the integration of the Panchakosha model into wellness initiatives. It aims to evaluate levels of awareness, acceptance, implementation challenges, and outcomes perceived.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

- To ascertain the level of understanding and awareness of the Panchakosha model among HR managers in Dakshina Kannada.

- To examine HR managers' attitudes and beliefs towards the adoption of holistic Ayurvedic principles as part of corporate wellness programs.
- To identify challenges and facilitators that influences the implementation of Panchakosha-derivative wellness strategies in modern organizations.

1.2 Scope of the Study

The study is limited to HR practitioners in various sectors working within the Dakshina Kannada district. The study employs quantitative and qualitative methods in collection so as to offer detailed descriptions with a special emphasis on the applicability of the Panchakosha model within present-day employee wellness programs. The study does not cover direct application of wellness programs but as a primary question of perception and idealism from the point of view of the HR practitioner.

1.3 Research Methodology:

A mixed-method design was used. The quantitative aspect entailed a standardized questionnaire that was mailed to 45 HR managers in Dakshina Kannada. The qualitative aspect consisted of semi-structured interviews with 15 top HR professionals from various industries (IT, manufacturing, healthcare, and education).

1.3.1 Participants Respondents were chosen by purposive sampling. All the participants had at least five years of HR experience and wellness program design involvement.

1.3.2 Instruments

- A 20-question survey assessed awareness and perception of Panchakosha dimensions.
- Interview guide probed further attitudes, feasibility of implementation, and receptivity to culture.

1.3.3 Quantitative Data Analysis Quantitative data were processed using SPSS for descriptive statistics. Thematic analysis was used on qualitative responses.

1.4 Limitations and Future Research:



- Sample size limited to 45 HR managers.
- Cultural bias toward Indian-origin respondents.

Future studies should involve longitudinal tracking of Panchakosha-based interventions, assess ROI, and expand to global contexts.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

The increased awareness of the importance of employee well-being has become an essential consideration in modern human resource management and organizational development. Contemporary organizational management has come to realize that the well-being of employees is an essential factor that influences organizational success. The traditional approach to corporate wellness management initially concentrated on the physical well-being of employees, including their engagement in physical exercises, nutrition, and disease management. Modern organizational management research, however, acknowledges the multifaceted nature of well-being that includes the psychological, emotional, intellectual, social, and spiritual well-being of employees (Grant, Christianson, & Price, 2007).

Holistic Perspectives on Employee Well-being

The concept of holistic wellness has gained popularity in organizational management research. The concept of holistic wellness defines the well-being of employees from an integrated system that comprises their physical, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual well-being. Ryff & Singer (2008) argue that the well-being of employees involves various factors such as self-acceptance, having a purpose in life, independence, self-growth, mastery over the environment, and positive relationships, which are essential in the holistic philosophy of human development.

Similarly, Rath & Harter (2010) suggested five essential elements of well-being, including career, social, financial, physical, and community well-being. The study found that individuals who excel in these different aspects tend to report higher engagement and lower burnout. However, it has also been argued that these Western approaches

tend to underrepresent spiritual or consciousness-based aspects of being, as is commonly found in Eastern philosophical approaches (Chopra & Tanzi, 2018).

However, with the rise of globalization, management studies, and research, organizations are increasingly looking at integrative approaches to wellness, combining aspects of Western psychology and Eastern philosophy. This is considered important in dealing with the complexities of mental health issues in contemporary workplaces, including stress, burnout, and emotional exhaustion (Quick & Henderson, 2016).

Workplace Stress and the Need for Integrative Wellness Models

Work stress has been recognized as one of the major issues in the workplace. According to the World Health Organization, occupational stress is one of the greatest health hazards faced by employees in the workplace. Studies have revealed that workplace stress can lead to reduced productivity, absenteeism, mental health issues, and reduced job satisfaction (WHO, 2020).

According to Maslach and Leiter (2016), burnout occurs when there is a mismatch between the employee and the environment. Conventional stress management techniques have been criticized for focusing on the surface level of stress and neglecting the psychological and existential aspects of stress.

Research on mindfulness-based stress reduction programs has shown positive outcomes in terms of better emotional control, resilience, and engagement at work (Good et al., 2016). Yoga-based wellness programs have shown positive outcomes in terms of reduced anxiety, better concentration, and better emotional stability among employees (Hartfiel et al., 2011).

Despite these positive aspects of various corporate wellness programs, it has been observed that most of these programs have been fragmented and have not been based on a holistic philosophy of well-being. This has led researchers to explore ancient holistic models of well-being, such as Ayurveda and Indian philosophy.



The Panchakosha Framework in Indian Philosophy

The Panchakosha model is rooted in ancient Vedic philosophy, as presented in the Taittiriya Upanishad, which describes the nature of human existence in terms of five interrelated aspects of being, referred to as koshas. The five aspects of being, or koshas, include Annamaya Kosha (physical body), Pranamaya Kosha (vital energy), Manomaya Kosha (mind/emotions), Vijñanamaya Kosha (intellect/wisdom), and Anandamaya Kosha (spiritual bliss) (Ranade & Frawley, 2001).

Unlike biomedical reductionist approaches, the Panchakosha model highlights the interrelated nature of different aspects of being. The kosha model, as described by Joshi & Hankey (2004), is a sophisticated model of consciousness, integrating physiological and psychological phenomena in a wider metaphysical context of being.

Annamaya Kosha refers to the physical body, which is similar to biomedical views of the body. Corporate wellness interventions, including fitness, ergonomic workplace design, and nutrition, impact this aspect of being.

Pranamaya Kosha refers to the vital life force or energy that regulates physiological processes, including breathing and circulation. Yoga, pranayama, and meditation are believed to regulate this energy dimension, thereby increasing life force.

The Manomaya Kosha deals with the mental and emotional sides of human experience. This includes thoughts, feelings, and behavioral reactions. This dimension is closely associated with emotional intelligence in the context of the workplace.

The Vijñanamaya Kosha is associated with intellectual awareness, ethical understanding, and decision-making abilities. This dimension has been linked with leadership skills, cognitive strategies, and learning processes in organizations.

Lastly, the Anandamaya Kosha is associated with the deepest level of human experience that deals with spiritual fulfillment, inner satisfaction, and high levels of well-being. This dimension is not commonly discussed in the corporate world but is

being recognized in the context of the latest debates on purpose-driven leadership and meaningful work (Gupta, 2019).

Integration of Eastern Wellness Practices in Corporate Contexts

Over the past two decades, there has been a gradual incorporation of Eastern wellness practices such as meditation, yoga, and mindfulness in corporate-level wellness programs. Multinational firms such as Google, Intel, and General Mills have implemented mindfulness training programs that aim at improving employee focus, creativity, and emotional intelligence.

Empirical research has demonstrated significant results in the improvement of employee well-being. For example, Hartfiel et al. (2011) have demonstrated that workplace yoga programs significantly reduced stress and improved life satisfaction among employees. Another study by Wallace et al. (1993) has demonstrated that the practice of Transcendental Meditation significantly reduced stress levels and improved psychological health.

However, despite the advancements in the incorporation of Eastern wellness practices in the corporate environment, the adoption of Eastern philosophical systems remains limited. Wellness programs have been focusing on the incorporation of meditation and yoga practices without the adoption of a conceptual model of employee well-being.

Scholars such as Sharma and Singh (2020) have demonstrated that the Panchakosha model offers a structured model that integrates these practices within a unified philosophical system. Through the consideration of various facets of human performance at the same time, Panchakosha-based wellness strategies might provide a more sustainable approach for the development of employees.

Organizational Implications of Holistic Wellness Models

Holistic wellness models have considerable implications for the management of human resources within an organization. Research



findings suggest that organizations that prioritize comprehensive wellness strategies for employees tend to have higher organizational performance, increased employee engagement, and reduced absenteeism (Grant et al., 2007).

Moreover, wellness strategies at the organizational level are essential for the development of organizational culture, including the promotion of organizational values such as empathy, mindfulness, and ethical leadership. Researchers argue that organizations that promote holistic wellness are likely to attract and retain the best talent in the market, considering the increased talent shortage in the modern workforce (Quick & Henderson, 2016).

In the context of culturally diverse nations such as India, the incorporation of indigenous wellness practices might enhance the cultural significance and employees' buy-in for wellness strategies. Traditional wellness practices such as Ayurveda are culturally relevant and resonate well with the experiences and values of employees.

However, the implementation of these models in the corporate sphere has several challenges. These challenges include low awareness among HR practitioners, the ability to measure intangible outcomes such as spiritual well-being, and the appropriateness of spiritual concepts in the secular work environment (Gupta, 2019).

Research Gap

Though there has been a tremendous increase in literature on corporate wellness and mindfulness interventions in recent times, there is a lack of empirical studies focusing on the practical application of the Panchakosha model. Most of the studies conducted so far have focused only on specific interventions like yoga or meditation, as opposed to a comprehensive philosophical model of wellness.

Additionally, there is a lack of studies focusing on HR professional perceptions of the viability of implementing traditional Indian wellness models in a contemporary corporate setting. It is important to understand these aspects, as HR managers play an important role in developing, implementing, and

evaluating wellness interventions in organizations.

This study aims to bridge this knowledge gap by focusing on HR managers' awareness, acceptance, and willingness to implement the Panchakosha model in corporate wellness.

3. DATA ANALYSIS:

Table 1: Awareness and Readiness Metrics

Parameter	Percentage (%)
Ayurveda awareness	64
Panchakosha familiarity	22
Belief in holistic relevance	70
Implementation readiness	35

Table 2: Interest in Panchakosha Dimensions for Wellness Programs

Panchakosha Dimension	Considered Important by HR (%)
Annamaya (Physical)	88
Pranamaya (Energy)	52
Manomaya (Mind)	79
Vijnanamaya (Intellect)	41
Anandamaya (Bliss)	26

Table 3: Anticipated Challenges in Integration

Challenge	% of Respondents Reporting
Lack of knowledge/training	61
Resistance from senior leadership	43
Difficulty in measuring impact	55
Budget constraints	37

Table 4: Preferred Modes of Integration

Mode of Integration	Preferred by (%)
Workshops/Seminars	62
Yoga and Meditation Sessions	58
Ayurvedic Consultations	33
Digital Wellness Platforms	47



Analysis:

Quantitative data collected from 45 HR managers provided data concerning the knowledge and acceptance of the Panchakosha model. While 64% of the participants were aware of Ayurveda, only 22% knew of the Panchakosha model, indicating a wide knowledge gap.

Despite this, 70% of HR managers believed holistic models would enhance employee engagement, which suggested openness to the use of such frameworks. Organizational readiness was not high, with just 35% reporting that their firms were prepared to adopt non-traditional wellness strategies.

Among Panchakosha levels, Annamaya (88%) and Manomaya (79%) were perceived to be most relevant. Pranamaya (52%) were moderately identified, while Vijnanamaya (41%) and Anandamaya (26%) were given lesser priority, possibly due to their intangible nature.

The greatest barriers were absence of training (61%), outcomes not being measurable (55%), and leaders' resistance (43%). Budget was a lesser factor (37%).

Introduction methods of primary preference for Panchakosha were preferred in workshops (62%), meditation and yoga (58%), and internet platforms (47%). Ayurvedic consultations (33%) were also of lesser preference but on the rise.

4. FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION:

4.1 Findings:

The research indicates moderate familiarity but great receptiveness to holistic structures such as Panchakosha from HR leaders. Although the physical and mental aspects are largely dealt with, energy, intellectual, and bliss elements are not fully explored.

Findings are consistent with past studies endorsing holistic wellness (WHO, 2020; Chopra & Tanzi, 2018). Nevertheless, there are challenges:

- Knowledge barriers: Insufficiency of standard training content.

- Organizational inertia: Reluctance toward spirituality or non-clinical interventions.
- Measurement challenges: Complexity in measuring impact on productivity.

In order to bridge these gaps, HR leaders may want to consider pilot programs, embed with mindfulness and yoga programs, and partner with Ayurvedic schools. The findings indicate rising interest in wholistic wellness with clear spaces for capacity building and strategic matching.

Qualitative Themes

- Theme 1: Conceptual Gaps - Largely, HR professionals appreciated the idea but had poor knowledge of kosha-based interventions.
- Theme 2: Trained Facilitation Needed - To integrate successfully, trained Ayurveda or yoga consultants would be required.
- Theme 3: Cultural Fit - MNCs' respondents were less open compared to Indian-owned companies' respondents.
- Theme 4: Scalability and Personalization - Concern regarding aligning Panchakosha practices with corporate cultures and KPIs.

4.2 Suggestions:

- Develop Awareness Campaigns: Periodically conduct awareness sessions, webinars, or in-house mailers on the Panchakosha model to create core knowledge among employees and HR professionals.
- Embed Panchakosha in HR Training: Embed courses on integral health as part of professional development workshops for HR managers so that they can act as wellness ambassadors in organizations.
- Pilot Kosha-Based Initiatives: Start with low-cost, replicable activities like yoga and guided meditation on specific koshas to track employee engagement and collect feedback.
- Partner with Wellness Professionals: Work with Ayurvedic schools, yoga studios, and certified wellness coaches to ensure quality and effectiveness in program delivery.
- Infuse Metrics for Evaluation: Develop or adopt tools that may be used to assess kosha-based outcomes—like energy levels, emotional balance, or mental satisfaction—to enhance one's knowledge about program impact.



4.3 Conclusion:

Integration of the Panchakosha model in workplace wellness initiatives is a healthy and culturally relevant path toward enhancing workplace well-being. In this study, it was found that while HR managers are most amenable to holistic wellness, there is a significant awareness gap, institutional readiness gap, and implementation gap. The increased awareness of physical and mental koshas indicates that companies are more comfortable with tangible, surface-level wellness aspects at this time.

However, underestimation of deeper koshas such as Vijnanamaya and Anandamaya means a missed opportunity to address intellectual and spiritual issues that result in long-term health and innovation. Matters such as absence of training, measuring issues, and skepticism about leadership must be addressed strategically.

With the changing modern workforce, there is a growing demand for wellness initiatives that impact not just physical well-being, but also energy control, emotional resilience, intellectual stimulation, and spiritual growth. By adapting Ayurveda's Panchakosha model, companies can create a more comprehensive and people-centered wellness initiative.

With proper training, alignment with policy, and coordination among traditional wellness professionals, HR departments can progress step by step toward integrating this system into organizational culture. This not only enhances individual health outcomes but also builds a stronger, more engaged, and more productive workforce. The implementation of Panchakosha integration, thus, is not merely an improvement in wellness but a conscious investment in long-term organizational well-being.

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