

The state of corporate mental health in Zimbabwe: Time for employers to take action

As Zimbabweans head into the final stretch of the year, it's essential to shed light on a critical issue affecting the nation's workforce: corporate mental health and wellness. With employees spending a significant portion of their lives at work, it's crucial for employers to prioritise their mental well-being.

The Alarming Reality

In Zimbabwe, mental health issues are a pressing concern. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), approximately 1 in 4 Zimbabweans will experience a mental health disorder in their lifetime (WHO, 2019). In the workplace, occupational stress is a significant contributor to mental health issues. A study by Makoni and Mutanana (2016) found that 72% of employees in Zimbabwe's manufacturing sector reported experiencing work-related stress, citing factors like low income, poor working conditions, lack of training, and inadequate support systems.

The country's mental health landscape is concerning, with a staggering treatment gap. Zimbabwe has only 19 psychiatrists and 35 clinical psychologists serving a population

of approximately 15 million people (Chimbwanda, 2022). This shortage emphasises the need for employers to step in and provide mental health support to their employees.

The Impact on Businesses

The consequences of neglecting corporate mental health are far-reaching. Workplace stress can lead to decreased productivity, increased absenteeism, and higher turnover rates. A study by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimates that depression and anxiety disorders cost Zimbabwe's economy approximately USD 100 million annually due to lost productivity (ILO, 2019).

Positive Steps Forward

Encouragingly, some organisations in Zimbabwe are taking proactive measures. The Ministry of Health and Child Care (MoHCC), in collaboration with the World Health Organisation (WHO) have come up with initiatives to help individuals. This initiative trains employees, known as Mental Health Champions, to provide basic mental health support and referrals to their colleagues (Chimbwanda, 2022).



What Employers Can Do

So, what can Zimbabwean businesses do to promote mental health and wellness in the workplace?

- Provide Mental Health Training: Offer training programs for employees to recognise and manage stress, as well as identify colleagues who may need support.
- Foster a Supportive Environment: Encourage open

conversations about mental health, and ensure employees feel comfortable discussing their concerns without fear of judgment.

- Offer Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs): Provide access to counseling services, stress management workshops, and other resources to support employees' mental well-being.

- Promote Work-Life Balance: Encourage employees to maintain a healthy balance between work and personal life, and lead by example.

Call to Action

It's time for Zimbabwean employers to prioritise corporate mental health and wellness. By taking proactive steps, businesses can create a healthier, more supportive work environment, ultimately benefiting both employees and the organisation as a whole. Together, we can create a more supportive and productive work environment for all Zimbabweans.

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AI and cyberbullying: Understanding the intersection

By Prof. Stephen Mashingaidze

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has transformed the way we interact online, offering unprecedented opportunities for connection and self-expression. However, this increased reliance on digital platforms has also led to a surge in cyberbullying, a complex issue that AI is now being used to both combat and perpetuate.

The Role of AI in Cyberbullying

AI-powered tools can detect and flag abusive content, predict and prevent bullying, but also amplify harmful content. Machine learning algorithms can identify patterns and anomalies in online behavior, helping platforms remove harmful content more efficiently. AI-driven predictive models can identify potential victims and perpetrators, enabling proactive interventions. However, AI-powered bots can spread abusive content, making it harder to track and remove.

The Challenges of AI in Cyberbullying

AI models can perpetuate existing biases, leading to unfair outcomes and further victimization. AI may struggle to understand nuances of language and context, leading to false positives or missed instances of bullying. Cyberbullies are adapting to AI-powered detection tools, finding new ways to evade detection.

Combating Cyberbullying with AI

Collaborative approaches, transparency, and accountability are key. Tech companies, policymakers, and mental health



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professionals must work together to develop effective AI-driven solutions. Platforms must prioritize transparency in their AI-

Case Study: Zimbabwe's Approach to Cyberbullying

In Zimbabwe, efforts to combat cyberbullying are underway. The country's authorities have implemented laws and regulations to tackle online abuse, including the Cybercrime and Cyber Security Bill. However, more needs to be done to address the growing concern of cyberbullying, particularly among young people.

The Future of AI in Cyberbullying Prevention

As AI continues to evolve, it's essential to prioritize responsible development and deployment. By acknowledging the complexities of AI in cyberbullying and working together, we can create safer online environments.

Recommendations

1. Develop AI-driven solutions: Tech companies and researchers should develop AI-powered tools to detect and prevent cyberbullying.
2. Collaborate and share knowledge: Stakeholders must work together to share best practices and address the complexities of AI in cyberbullying.
3. Prioritize transparency and accountability: Platforms must prioritize transparency in their AI-driven moderation processes and be held accountable for outcomes.
4. Educate and empower users: Education and digital literacy programs should be implemented to empower users to navigate online spaces safely. By working together, we can create a safer online environment for all users.

driven moderation processes and be held accountable for outcomes. Education and digital literacy are crucial in empowering users to navigate online spaces safely.

By working together, we can create a safer online environment for all users