Depression in the workplace in South Africa

Workplace depression is a major issue across different cultures and economies, with devastating consequences.

Lifetime prevalence of depression in South Africa: 9.7% or 4.5 million\(^1,2\)


Depression costs South Africa more than US$17 billion in lost productivity (absence from work, and attending work while unwell)\(^3\)

Over x1.5 higher than the total South African budget for social protection\(^2\)

US$17b
Lost Productivity

US$9.8b
South African Social Protection Budget

Depression-related presenteeism: costs South Africa US$14.8 billion\(^4\)

(*attending work while unwell)

More than the total value of South Africa’s tourism industry\(^2\)

Presenteeism: US$14.8b
Value of South African tourist industry US$12b


The cognitive symptoms of depression, for instance difficulties in concentrating, making decisions and remembering, are present up to 94% of the time during an episode of depression\(^1\), causing significant impairment in work function and productivity\(^2\)


Cognitive symptoms are a crucial factor affecting workplace performance in people with depression

McIntyre RS et al. Compr Psychiatry. 2015; 56:279–82

Almost 40% of South African employees are highly educated

Highly educated employees with depression are likely to...

• Work in a highly demanding job and therefore be severely impacted by the cognitive symptoms of depression

• Manage others so the impact of their depression has wider consequences


South African employees are likely to keep working during an episode of depression, impacting their productivity and performance at work

Days taken off work during an episode of depression


For more information on the IDEA Survey as well as the LSE Health and Social Care research centre, visit the centre’s blog: http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/healthandsocialcare/
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