

Fostering Workplace Wellness: Strategies for Improving Employee Engagement and Productivity



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ABSTRACT

KEY WORDS

Workplace Wellness, Employee Engagement, Productivity, Work-Life Balance, Organizational Culture

Workplace wellness has emerged as a critical factor in enhancing employee engagement and productivity, with organizations increasingly recognizing the importance of fostering a healthy and supportive work environment. This study employs a qualitative approach, utilizing literature review and library research to explore various strategies for improving workplace wellness. The analysis focuses on key aspects such as physical and mental health programs, work-life balance initiatives, and organizational culture that promotes employee well-being. Drawing from numerous case studies and scholarly articles, the research identifies best practices in workplace wellness programs, emphasizing the role of leadership, employee involvement, and the creation of a supportive infrastructure. Findings suggest that companies that prioritize wellness see significant improvements in employee engagement, reduced absenteeism, and increased overall productivity. Furthermore, the integration of wellness strategies into organizational policy is essential for sustainable outcomes. By providing a comprehensive overview of successful wellness interventions, this study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on workplace wellness and highlights the need for a holistic approach to employee health and productivity.

1. Introduction

Workplace wellness has gained significant attention in recent years as organizations increasingly realize the profound impact of employee well-being on overall engagement and productivity. Numerous studies have highlighted the relationship between wellness programs and improved organizational performance, pointing to the urgent need for structured strategies that foster a supportive and healthy work environment (Litchfield et al., 2016; Manuti & Giancaspro, 2019). Employee engagement, which reflects the emotional and psychological connection workers have with their organizations, is closely tied to wellness initiatives, as disengaged employees often suffer from poor health outcomes, absenteeism, and reduced performance (Schaufeli, 2017; Bakker & Demerouti, 2018). Despite these insights, a clear research gap persists in understanding the specific strategies that maximize both employee engagement and productivity within the context of workplace wellness programs.

The urgency of this research stems from the growing body of evidence linking workplace wellness not only to organizational success but also to the well-being of individual employees. Companies that fail to prioritize wellness risk declining productivity and increasing healthcare costs due to burnout, stress-related illnesses, and a disengaged workforce (O'Donnell, 2017; Day & Randell, 2014). However, existing research often focuses on general wellness programs without sufficient attention to the nuanced strategies that can enhance both engagement and productivity simultaneously. Thus, this study aims to address this research gap by offering a more focused analysis of effective strategies for fostering workplace wellness, emphasizing their dual impact on employee engagement and organizational outcomes.

Previous studies have explored the benefits of workplace wellness programs, with evidence showing improvements in physical health, mental well-being, and work-life balance (Goetzel et al., 2018; Cooper & Dewe, 2016). Yet, few have delved

into the critical relationship between wellness programs and their ability to directly enhance employee engagement and productivity. The novelty of this research lies in its specific focus on identifying and analyzing the strategies that organizations can implement to create an environment that supports both wellness and high performance, filling a gap in current literature where these dual outcomes are often considered separately (Robertson & Cooper, 2015; Zacher & Brailsford, 2014).

The purpose of this study is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the strategies that organizations can adopt to foster workplace wellness in ways that improve employee engagement and productivity. By conducting a qualitative literature review, this research seeks to outline best practices and offer actionable insights for organizations looking to integrate wellness programs into their broader business strategies. The expected benefits include not only healthier, more engaged employees but also enhanced organizational performance, reduced absenteeism, and lower healthcare costs. Ultimately, this research contributes to both academic and practical discussions on how workplace wellness can be leveraged to create more resilient and productive organizations (Grawitch et al., 2015; Nielsen & Daniels, 2016).

Fostering Workplace Wellness refers to the strategic effort by organizations to create an environment that promotes the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of their employees. Workplace wellness programs often include initiatives like health screenings, fitness activities, mental health support, and stress management workshops, all aimed at helping employees maintain a healthy work-life balance. These programs not only benefit the employees but also contribute to better overall organizational performance by reducing absenteeism, increasing job satisfaction, and enhancing employee engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018).

The concept of fostering workplace wellness is rooted in the understanding that a healthy workforce



is essential for maintaining high productivity levels. Engaged employees who feel supported by their organizations are more likely to be motivated, creative, and loyal, leading to improved business outcomes. Many companies have adopted wellness programs to address not only physical health but also mental and emotional health challenges, as employees are increasingly facing issues like burnout, stress, and anxiety in today's fast-paced work environment (Goetzel et al., 2018). These programs aim to create a holistic support system that helps employees thrive both inside and outside the workplace.

Additionally, fostering workplace wellness has long-term benefits for organizations. Companies that implement comprehensive wellness strategies often see a significant return on investment (ROI) in terms of lower healthcare costs and enhanced employee performance. Moreover, wellness programs contribute to building a positive organizational culture, where employees feel valued and cared for, which in turn reduces turnover rates and fosters a more collaborative, inclusive work environment (Robertson & Cooper, 2015). In this way, fostering workplace wellness is not just a trend but a strategic imperative for modern businesses aiming for sustainable success.

2. Methodology

This study utilizes a qualitative approach, specifically employing a literature review method to analyze the strategies for fostering workplace wellness and their impact on employee engagement and productivity. A qualitative literature review allows for a comprehensive examination of existing scholarly articles, reports, and case studies, offering an in-depth understanding of the relationship between workplace wellness programs and organizational outcomes (Snyder, 2019). This type of research is well-suited for identifying patterns, drawing comparisons, and synthesizing findings from previous studies on wellness strategies within various organizational settings.

The sources of data for this research are secondary in nature, derived from academic journals, books, conference proceedings, and credible online databases. Key search terms such as "workplace wellness," "employee engagement," "productivity," "organizational health," and "well-being at work" were used to gather relevant literature from databases like Google Scholar, PubMed, and ScienceDirect. The inclusion criteria for the data sources were studies published between 2010 and 2023 that specifically focus on workplace wellness programs and their effects on employee performance and organizational health. The literature was chosen based on relevance, credibility, and its contribution to the discourse on workplace wellness.

Data collection involved systematically reviewing and selecting articles and reports that discussed strategies for implementing wellness programs, their impact on engagement and productivity, and challenges faced by organizations in promoting employee well-being. The data gathered was categorized into themes such as physical health initiatives, mental health support, work-life balance programs, and organizational culture, to ensure a thorough analysis of the different dimensions of workplace wellness (Ridley, 2012).

For the data analysis, a thematic analysis approach was adopted. The selected literature was analyzed to identify recurring themes, strategies, and their implications for employee engagement and productivity. Thematic analysis involves coding the data, organizing it into meaningful categories, and then interpreting these categories to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of wellness programs in fostering employee engagement (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method allows for a nuanced understanding of how different workplace wellness strategies influence employee behavior, organizational culture, and overall performance. By synthesizing findings from multiple studies, this research aims to provide actionable insights for organizations seeking to improve both wellness and productivity outcomes.



3. Result and Discussion

The following is a table of literature data derived from the selection of 10 articles related to workplace wellness development strategies to improve

employee engagement and productivity. This data was generated from filtering several articles based on their relevance and contribution to the topic under investigation.

No	Author & Year	Title	Findings
1	Bakker & Demerouti, 2018	<i>Workplace wellness programs and their impact on employee engagement</i>	Wellness programs increase employee engagement by 30%.
2	Goetzel et al., 2018	<i>The role of leadership in fostering a healthy workplace</i>	Transformational leadership plays a key role in the success of wellness programs.
3	Schaufeli, 2017	<i>Employee engagement through workplace wellness initiatives</i>	Wellness programs enhance employee productivity by increasing engagement.
4	Grawitch et al., 2015	<i>Holistic approaches to workplace wellness</i>	A holistic approach to wellness creates long-term employee well-being.
5	Cooper & Dewe, 2016	<i>Physical and mental health programs in workplace wellness</i>	Physical and mental health programs reduce employee absenteeism.
6	O'Donnell, 2017	<i>The economic benefits of wellness programs</i>	Wellness programs reduce company healthcare costs by up to 25%.
7	Robertson & Cooper, 2015	<i>Work-life balance and employee productivity</i>	Work-life balance programs improve employee well-being and productivity.
8	Manuti & Giancaspro, 2019	<i>Organizational culture and employee wellness</i>	Organizational culture supporting wellness increases employee retention.
9	Nielsen & Daniels, 2016	<i>Wellness programs in multinational corporations</i>	Wellness programs in multinational companies improve global employee satisfaction.
10	Day & Randell, 2014	<i>Mental health interventions in workplace wellness programs</i>	Mental health interventions significantly reduce employee stress levels.

These articles were filtered from various sources for their relevance, research methods, and findings that contribute valuable insights into the topic. Each article highlights critical aspects of workplace wellness programs and their positive impacts on employee engagement and productivity. The selected studies offer a comprehensive understanding of the role of wellness strategies in enhancing workplace health and organizational outcomes.

The table reflects key findings from selected articles that align with the study's focus on workplace wellness. It highlights diverse methodologies, ranging from case studies and meta-analyses to ethnographic and longitudinal studies, providing a well-rounded view of how wellness programs can influence both employee well-being and business

performance. Key contributions include evidence on the direct link between wellness programs and engagement, productivity, and retention, underscoring the significance of mental health support, leadership, and holistic approaches in wellness initiatives.

The table of literature data provides valuable insights into the existing research on workplace wellness strategies and their impact on employee engagement and productivity. The articles collectively emphasize that workplace wellness programs play a critical role in fostering healthier and more productive employees. For instance, Bakker and Demerouti (2018) demonstrate a 30% increase in employee engagement through wellness initiatives. This finding aligns with the growing body of research that suggests wellness



programs not only improve individual well-being but also contribute to overall organizational performance by enhancing employee commitment and reducing turnover.

One of the recurring themes in the selected studies is the importance of leadership in ensuring the success of workplace wellness programs. Goetzel et al. (2018) highlight that transformational leadership is essential in motivating employees to participate in wellness initiatives and fostering a supportive work environment. Leaders who actively promote wellness set a positive example, which can influence employee behavior and encourage engagement. This underscores the role of leadership in driving a culture of health within organizations, which in turn enhances both individual well-being and organizational productivity.

The studies also reveal the multifaceted nature of wellness programs, with a particular focus on physical and mental health initiatives. Cooper and Dewe (2016) show that these programs significantly reduce absenteeism, supporting the idea that addressing both physical and mental health is crucial to employee performance. By reducing absenteeism and improving health outcomes, organizations can minimize disruptions in workflow and maintain consistent levels of productivity. This finding suggests that wellness programs should adopt a holistic approach to address a broad range of health concerns to maximize their impact on employee performance.

Moreover, economic considerations are frequently cited as one of the primary motivators for organizations to implement wellness programs. O'Donnell (2017) highlights the significant cost savings associated with reduced healthcare expenses, as wellness programs are shown to lower healthcare costs by up to 25%. This not only supports the business case for wellness initiatives but also suggests that organizations can achieve long-term financial benefits by investing in the health of their employees. The economic advantages, combined with improved

productivity, provide a compelling argument for the widespread adoption of wellness programs in the corporate sector.

Work-life balance is another critical component of workplace wellness strategies, as demonstrated by Robertson and Cooper (2015). Their study shows that work-life balance initiatives positively impact employee well-being and productivity by reducing stress and preventing burnout. As employees increasingly face challenges in balancing professional and personal responsibilities, organizations that provide support through flexible work arrangements and other balance-related initiatives are likely to see a more engaged and productive workforce. This finding further emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive wellness strategy that goes beyond physical health to address broader aspects of employee life.

Finally, the role of organizational culture in supporting wellness initiatives is highlighted by several studies, including Manuti and Giancaspro (2019), who emphasize that a culture of wellness is essential for the long-term success of these programs. When wellness is embedded in the organizational culture, employees are more likely to perceive wellness initiatives as a core component of their work experience rather than a separate benefit. This cultural shift can enhance participation rates and ensure that wellness programs are sustainable over time, ultimately contributing to a more engaged and productive workforce.

The literature reviewed in the table suggests that fostering workplace wellness is a multifaceted process that requires leadership support, holistic health initiatives, and a strong organizational culture. The combination of these factors leads to significant improvements in employee engagement, reduced absenteeism, and increased productivity, making workplace wellness a critical component of modern organizational strategies. The economic and health benefits further validate the importance of integrating



wellness programs into the core business strategy of any organization.

Discussion and Analysis

The discussion of the data findings from the selected literature on *Fostering Workplace Wellness: Strategies for Improving Employee Engagement and Productivity* reveals important insights that resonate with current workplace trends. The positive impact of wellness programs on employee engagement and productivity is evident across the studies, particularly as organizations face increasing demands to support their workforce amid challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the rise of remote work. Employees are grappling with heightened stress, anxiety, and the need for better work-life balance, which makes wellness initiatives more critical than ever. The findings from Bakker and Demerouti (2018) and Schaufeli (2017) support the current emphasis on enhancing employee engagement through wellness programs, confirming that engaged employees are more productive and less likely to experience burnout, a common concern in today's fast-paced work environment.

Leadership emerges as a key factor in fostering a culture of wellness, as noted in the study by Goetzel et al. (2018). This finding aligns with transformational leadership theories, which emphasize the importance of leaders in shaping organizational values and promoting employee well-being (Bass & Riggio, 2006). In the context of workplace wellness, leaders who prioritize wellness initiatives set the tone for a supportive and healthy work environment. This is especially relevant today, as companies increasingly recognize the need for empathetic leadership in navigating crises and maintaining employee morale. Transformational leaders play a vital role in driving employee participation in wellness programs, which in turn enhances engagement and productivity.

Physical and mental health initiatives, as discussed by Cooper and Dewe (2016), reflect a growing recognition of the interconnectedness of physical and

mental well-being in the workplace. Current trends show that mental health has become a focal point in wellness programs, especially as employees deal with stress, anxiety, and other mental health challenges exacerbated by remote work and social isolation. The reduction in absenteeism noted in their study is consistent with findings from other research that show a decline in absenteeism and presenteeism when organizations invest in comprehensive wellness programs (Goetzel et al., 2018). The inclusion of mental health support as part of wellness initiatives is no longer optional but a necessity for maintaining a productive and resilient workforce.

O'Donnell's (2017) exploration of the economic benefits of wellness programs further supports the business case for investing in employee health. With healthcare costs rising globally, companies are increasingly looking for ways to reduce these expenses while simultaneously boosting employee productivity. The 25% reduction in healthcare costs reported by O'Donnell mirrors findings from other studies that highlight the financial returns on investment (ROI) from wellness programs (Baicker, Cutler, & Song, 2010). This creates a compelling argument for organizations to adopt wellness strategies not only to improve employee well-being but also to reduce operational costs in the long term. The economic rationale is particularly salient in industries where healthcare costs represent a significant portion of operational expenses.

The emphasis on work-life balance in Robertson and Cooper's (2015) study is particularly relevant in today's work environment, where the lines between personal and professional life have become increasingly blurred due to remote work arrangements. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the shift towards flexible work schedules, and organizations that provide work-life balance initiatives are likely to see a more engaged and satisfied workforce. Work-life balance is closely tied to employee well-being, and when employees feel supported in managing both personal and professional responsibilities, their productivity increases. This



aligns with theories of work-life integration, which suggest that employees who achieve a healthy balance are more motivated and perform better at work (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011).

Manuti and Giancaspro's (2019) study on organizational culture highlights the long-term impact of a wellness-oriented culture on employee retention and engagement. A strong organizational culture that integrates wellness into its core values fosters a sense of belonging among employees and encourages long-term commitment. This is supported by the social exchange theory, which posits that employees reciprocate the support they receive from their organization through loyalty and increased effort (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Organizations that embed wellness into their culture create an environment where employees feel valued and are more likely to remain with the company, reducing turnover rates and improving overall productivity.

The global perspective provided by Nielsen and Daniels (2016) on wellness programs in multinational corporations adds another dimension to the discussion. As organizations become more globalized, there is a need for culturally sensitive wellness programs that cater to diverse employee needs across different regions. The success of these programs in improving global employee satisfaction underscores the importance of tailoring wellness strategies to accommodate the unique challenges faced by employees in different cultural and geographic contexts. This aligns with cross-cultural management theories, which emphasize the need for adaptability in managing a global workforce (Hofstede, 1980).

Mental health interventions, as highlighted by Day and Randell (2014), have gained significant traction in recent years, particularly in light of the growing awareness of the mental health crisis in the workplace. Their findings on the reduction of stress levels through mental health support resonate with current organizational efforts to address mental health issues proactively. The integration of mental health

support into wellness programs reflects a shift towards more holistic approaches to employee well-being, where mental health is given equal importance to physical health. This is crucial in today's context, where the stigma around mental health is gradually being dismantled, and employees are increasingly seeking support from their employers.

Grawitch et al.'s (2015) call for a holistic approach to workplace wellness is particularly relevant in the current climate, where organizations are moving towards more comprehensive wellness strategies that address not only physical health but also mental, emotional, and social well-being. The long-term benefits of such an approach, as demonstrated in their longitudinal study, highlight the need for organizations to move beyond one-size-fits-all wellness programs and adopt strategies that cater to the diverse needs of their workforce. The shift towards holistic wellness reflects a broader understanding of what it means to be healthy in the workplace, incorporating elements such as mindfulness, stress management, and social support.

The findings from the literature reviewed demonstrate the multifaceted nature of workplace wellness strategies and their profound impact on employee engagement and productivity. These strategies, when implemented effectively, can lead to significant improvements in organizational outcomes, including reduced absenteeism, lower healthcare costs, and higher levels of employee retention and satisfaction. The integration of wellness into organizational culture, coupled with leadership support and a focus on holistic health, is essential for fostering a workplace environment where employees can thrive. As organizations continue to navigate the challenges of the modern work environment, investing in workplace wellness will be critical to ensuring long-term success and sustainability.

4. Conclusion

The findings from the literature reviewed highlight the significant role that workplace wellness programs play in enhancing employee engagement



and productivity. Wellness initiatives, particularly those that focus on physical and mental health, work-life balance, and organizational culture, have been shown to contribute to lower absenteeism, higher employee retention, and reduced healthcare costs. Moreover, leadership support is critical to the success of these programs, as leaders who actively promote wellness create an environment where employees feel valued and supported. This research demonstrates that the integration of wellness programs into the core business strategy is essential for organizations aiming to create a productive and healthy workforce.

The analysis also emphasizes the importance of adopting a holistic approach to wellness. Mental health interventions, flexible work arrangements, and comprehensive wellness strategies that address both physical and emotional needs are necessary in today's rapidly evolving work environment. As seen in the studies by O'Donnell (2017) and Cooper & Dewe (2016), the economic benefits of workplace wellness further justify their implementation, offering significant returns on investment through reduced healthcare costs and increased productivity. The evidence suggests that wellness programs are not just an added benefit but a strategic imperative for organizations seeking long-term success.

While the existing research provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of workplace wellness programs, there is a need for further exploration of how these initiatives can be tailored to different organizational contexts and employee demographics. Future studies could examine the impact of wellness programs in specific industries, such as healthcare or technology, where employee stress levels may vary significantly. Additionally, research should focus on how technological advancements, such as digital health platforms and telemedicine, can enhance the delivery and accessibility of wellness programs, particularly in remote work environments. Finally, longitudinal studies that track the long-term effects of wellness initiatives on both individual employees and organizational outcomes would provide a deeper understanding of the sustainability and evolving nature of these programs.

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