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### Workplace Wellness: Assessing Organizational Return on Investment

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**Workplace Wellness: Assessing Organizational Return on Investment**

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LD 850: Leadership Integrated Capstone

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April 28, 2024

**Workplace Wellness: Assessing Organizational Return on Investment**

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### **Abstract**

This study examines the monetary and non-monetary return on investment (ROI) for organizations that invest in workplace wellness programs. This research is essential for understanding the impact workplace wellness programs can have on employee health and wellness, employee satisfaction and engagement, and healthcare costs for both employees and employers. Armed with this knowledge, business leaders can strategically decide on wellness initiatives, considering their potential effect on both employee well-being and organizational objectives. This research project confirms a strong connection between workplace wellness programs and the validation for organizations to invest in these programs. Furthermore, this review provides an overview of the evidence on the benefits of workplace wellness programs to employers, focusing on the outcomes of employee productivity, performance, satisfaction, and healthcare costs. The study also identifies the best practices and challenges for implementing and evaluating workplace wellness programs, as well as how to determine which components will ensure program success. Additionally, weaknesses in the research are discussed and include the lack of consistent tools to measure the success of workplace wellness programs, lack of data that demonstrate which program components are most effective, high resource and time requirements, and challenges evaluating the long-term benefits of workplace wellness programs.

*Keywords:* workplace wellness programs, return on investment, healthcare costs, employee retention, employee satisfaction

## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

Workplace wellness programs are increasingly popular among organizations that seek to improve their employees' health and well-being, as well as their financial performance.

Measuring return on investment (ROI) for workplace wellness programs is crucial, as the staggering \$150 billion annual cost of presenteeism to employers underscores the imperative to ensure these initiatives yield tangible benefits (Hemp, 2004). However, since not all wellness programs are equally effective or beneficial, it is critical for organizations to measure how these programs can increase employees' health and well-being, as well as provide fiscal benefits to organizations' bottom lines. Bolnick (2013) asserts that despite the advantages, wellness programs are often positioned as a solution to escalating employer medical care costs, without evidence of the feasibility of long-term savings and the obstacles in achieving ideal outcomes. Therefore, organizations must evaluate the outcomes and impacts of these programs, using appropriate methods and indicators, to ensure that they are achieving their intended goals and providing value for both employees and employers. Goetzel (2019) recommends the following five outcomes that are most important for organizations to evaluate:

1. Health improvement
2. Cost savings
3. Enhanced worker productivity and performance
4. Increased employee engagement
5. Other value-on-investment (VOI) gains

Workplace wellness programs are multifaceted initiatives designed to address the holistic health and well-being of employees across diverse organizational environments. In the research,

Astrella (2017) quotes the Center for Disease Control's definition that wellness programs serve as "a health promotion activity or organization-wide policy designed to support healthy behaviors and improve health outcomes while at work" (p. 1). Successful programs promote a healthy and supportive work environment through a variety of strategies aimed at improving physical, mental, and emotional well-being (Terry, 2019).

Wellness programs play a crucial role in cultivating a culture of health and vitality within organizations and cannot be overstated. By implementing these programs, organizations can showcase their commitment to caring for their employees' health and well-being. Further, by investing in wellness initiatives, organizations stand to reap a multitude of benefits, including increased employee engagement, reduced absenteeism, enhanced morale, and improved organizational performance (Emerson, 2017).

When considering which components to include in a workplace wellness program, organizations will recognize the importance of offering a wide variety of offerings. According to Terry (2019), the key to making wellness programs work is to include various components that cover a wide range of interventions to promote health and well-being. These components can include educational programs, fitness initiatives, mental health resources, and work-life balance initiatives. There are also comprehensive programs that take into account environmental health and safety, which shows a holistic approach to addressing the well-being of employees. In this study, we will discuss three major components:

1. Health promotion and education
2. Health screening and assessments
3. Health interventions and programs.

This research emphasizes the positive outcomes of workplace wellness programs, giving strong support to their effectiveness in combatting illness-related absences, rising healthcare costs, and decreased productivity. In the review of the research that follows, studies show that healthcare costs go down (Dement, 2015; Musich, 2015), absenteeism rates decrease (Emerson, 2017; Chen 2015), and employee morale and productivity improve after wellness initiatives are put in place. Additionally, employees who take part in wellness programs often say they feel more satisfied with their jobs and overall well-being, clearly showing the tangible benefits gained from these interventions (Ott, 2017; Lee, 2010).

Wellness programs offer numerous advantages, but they do come with their fair share of challenges and criticisms. This study will address concerns related to program implementation and participation, as well as challenges measuring program outcomes and return on investment (ROI). These concerns highlight the complexities that come with implementing and assessing wellness initiatives within organizations (Goetzel, 2014). Furthermore, there is also some skepticism about the long-term sustainability and overall impact of these interventions, which is why it's important for organizations to continuously examine and improve their approach to workplace wellness programs (Song, 2019).

In this research, the role of leadership emerges as an important factor in shaping the success of wellness programs within organizations. Effective leadership involves not only providing the necessary resources and support for wellness initiatives but also actively championing a culture of health and well-being (Seward, 2019). The authors recommend that employers consider the potential benefits and drawbacks of showers and other wellness facilities and design them in ways that foster a supportive and inclusive work environment. For example, showers could become an important aspect of an initiative that encourages employees to cycle to

work. The role of employee, supervisor, and organizational support in predicting employee participation in wellness programs is examined by Smidt (2021). When it comes to employee participation in wellness programs, strong support from both supervisors and the organization is crucial. High levels of supervisor support, along with organizational backing, are more effective in promoting attendance. However, even strong supervisor support cannot fully compensate for low organizational support. Therefore, alignment between supervisor and organizational support is essential to ensure employee engagement in wellness initiatives. Furthermore, organizational culture and communication play a crucial role in the effectiveness of wellness programs. For example, weekly emails from the office of the CEO could go a long way in helping employees realize the importance of wellness and not fear backlash for participating in wellness initiatives. When employee well-being is valued and prioritized by the organization, it creates a positive environment that supports the adoption and maintenance of wellness behaviors (Burke, 2017). Effective communication strategies can increase awareness, engagement, and participation in wellness programs, ensuring that employees are informed, motivated, and empowered to take proactive steps toward improving their health and well-being (Jenkins, 2015). However, the authors noted the article has some limitations, such as the low response rate, the self-selection bias, and the lack of generalizability to other settings or populations. This highlights an area for future research using larger populations and more strict reporting guidelines.

Wellness programs have different components, goals, benefits, challenges, and critiques, depending on the organizational environment and the implementation. While some organizations are looking to lower healthcare costs, other companies may prioritize health and wellness as a benefit to help recruit and retain top talent. They also require effective leadership, organizational culture, and communication to support their success. By gaining a comprehensive understanding



of these factors, organizations can leverage wellness programs to create work environments that are not only healthier and more resilient, but also more productive. This research study provides valuable insights into how wellness programs work, what they achieve, and how their benefits can be measured to ensure continued success.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review**

Workplace wellness programs have become integral components of modern organizations, focusing on enhancing employees' physical, mental, and emotional well-being within the workplace. These initiatives are designed to support and improve various facets of wellness, ranging from promoting healthy lifestyles to reducing stress and preventing illness. Typically, such programs encompass a diverse array of activities and resources aimed at fostering holistic health among employees.

Traditionally, workplace wellness initiatives include providing access to fitness facilities, offering nutritional guidance, conducting stress management workshops, and advocating for work-life balance. However, contemporary approaches have evolved to incorporate innovative strategies such as mindfulness meditation sessions, ergonomic assessments, and flexible scheduling options. Given the diverse nature of employees' needs and preferences, "a wellness program that fails to take this diversity into account is unlikely to be successful" ("The Importance of Diversity," n.d.).

By nurturing a culture of wellness, organizations not only prioritize the health and happiness of their employees but also enhance their overall success and sustainability. When employees feel supported in their well-being, they are more likely to be engaged, productive, and committed to their roles. Moreover, a focus on wellness can lead to decreased absenteeism, improved morale, and enhanced organizational performance. Thus, workplace wellness programs are essential investments that yield significant returns for both employees and organizations alike.

Workplace wellness programs are initiatives that employers can implement to promote a healthy and safe working environment for their employees. These programs are designed to improve the overall health and well-being of the workforce, including physical, mental, and emotional health. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, workplace wellness programs serve as “a health promotion activity or organization-wide policy designed to support healthy behaviors and improve health outcomes while at work” (Astrella, 2017, p. 1). Examples of workplace wellness programs include offering access to health screenings, stress management programs, and fitness classes. A variety of initiatives can be taken to promote wellness in the workplace, such as education programs, fitness programs, and fitness coaching (Ott-Holland, 2019). A comprehensive workplace wellness program may also include environmental health and safety issues (Goetzel, 2014).

By prioritizing employee health and wellness, organizations can enhance employee satisfaction, productivity, and retention while also reducing healthcare costs associated with absenteeism and chronic diseases. Embracing workplace wellness programs reflects a commitment to fostering a supportive and thriving work culture. Examples include creating a supportive working environment, enhanced employee satisfaction, and a positive work culture.

Strategic workplace wellness programs have also been shown to affect an organization’s bottom line. “Research has shown that well-designed and well-executed workplace health promotion (WHP) programs can improve employee health and well-being, which also influence business outcomes” (Goetzel, 2019, p.2). Furthermore, Lowenstyn (2018) asserts that given most employees spend eight hours a day at work, the workplace could prove to be an ideal setting for helping employees develop healthy habits. The authors report the results of a comprehensive wellness program implemented by a Canadian company, which included biometric screenings,

online health assessments, educational modules, and physical activity challenges. Findings revealed the authors found the program had high employee engagement and participation rates, and was associated with significant improvements in blood pressure, cholesterol, physical activity, stress, sleep, fatigue, and cardiovascular risk after one year. Several studies have shown that workplace wellness programs can effectively reduce modifiable cardiovascular risk factors. In one study, it was determined these programs can help identify and lower modifiable cardiovascular risk factors for a large segment of the population (Arena, 2013).

### **Components of a Workplace Wellness Program**

As organizations continue to evolve and become more diverse, successful workplace wellness programs will consist of a wide variety of offerings. These offerings will not just focus on physical health but also put a strong emphasis on mental well-being, emotional resilience, and personal growth. Successful workplace wellness programs will be recognized for their adaptability and inclusivity, encompassing a wide spectrum of activities and resources tailored to meet the diverse needs and preferences of employees. These programs go beyond traditional fitness activities and extend into holistic approaches such as mindfulness exercises, yoga sessions, and meditation classes, acknowledging that well-being encompasses more than just physical health (“The Importance of Diversity,” n.d.). They provide a supportive environment where employees can access personalized nutritional advice, dietary planning, and healthy eating resources, recognizing that dietary habits play a crucial role in overall wellness. Moreover, successful programs prioritize mental and emotional health by offering various stress management workshops, counseling services, and resilience training to equip employees with coping mechanisms for navigating workplace challenges. By embracing inclusivity and responsiveness, these programs create a culture of wellness that respects individual differences

and empowers employees to take ownership of their health journey, ultimately fostering a happier, more engaged, and productive workforce. Goetzel (2014) asserts that “program success depends on the goals of the program, program design and implementation, and how the program is evaluated” (p. 7). Further, as companies work to create and foster more diverse work environments, ensuring wellness program components are equitable and inclusive will be paramount. Goetzel (2014) proposes the following list of initiatives:

1. Health education – build awareness of lifestyle and behavior changes. This would be done by disseminating information to employees.
2. Social and physical support - rallying around a common vision and strategy, executing that strategy, and innovating and renewing the organization over time.
3. Benefits integration – weave initiatives into benefits, HR models, and issues related to health and safety procedures.
4. Connect – connect programs to other employee programs such as employee assistance programs (EAP).

The research proposed by Ayyala explores the significance of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives in the radiology workplace and their impact on promoting wellness among radiologists. “A key component of wellness in the workplace is creating a culture of inclusion and empathy” (Ayyala, 2022, p. 4). The study delves into the various dimensions of DEI, including demographic diversity, cultural competency, and fostering an inclusive environment, and discusses how these factors contribute to the overall well-being and satisfaction of radiology professionals. They also highlight the unique challenges faced by radiologists in maintaining wellness, such as long working hours, high-stress levels, and burnout, and propose DEI strategies to address these issues effectively. This study underscores the

importance of recognizing and addressing the unique needs and challenges faced by diverse healthcare professionals to create a more inclusive and supportive work environment.

Although implementing multiple components has advantages, Batorsky (2016) examines the relationship between the number and type of wellness program components offered by employers and the health outcomes of employees. The results suggest that offering more wellness program components does not necessarily lead to better outcomes and that some components, such as health risk assessments and biometric screenings, may have negative effects on employee health and productivity. For example, some wellness programs may inadvertently alienate employees who are already dealing with health issues, whether mental or physical. For example, a tobacco cessation program specifically targets smokers, while a *Fitbit* competition might unintentionally exclude non-walkers. The authors recommend that employers tailor their wellness programs to the specific needs and preferences of their workforce and that they evaluate the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of their programs on a regular basis.

Health promotion and education focus on promoting healthy behaviors and providing employees with the knowledge and resources they need to improve their health. It may include workshops, seminars, newsletters, and online resources covering topics such as nutrition, exercise, stress management, smoking cessation, and disease prevention. By offering diverse educational opportunities and practical resources, organizations can demonstrate their commitment to equipping employees with the knowledge and tools needed to make informed decisions about their health and well-being. Through these efforts, workplace wellness programs not only aim to enhance individual well-being but also cultivate a culture of health consciousness and foster a happier, more resilient, and more productive workforce.

Arena (2013) asserts workplace education, such as helping to promote an understanding of health, contributes a significant element that can help employees shift behaviors. In addition, encouraging participation in community-centered outreach initiatives can further education efforts and promote healthy lifestyle decisions among employees. According to Terry (2019), wellness education programs offer the best opportunity for workplace wellness program success and suggests waiting until the culture or timing is right to adopt these programs is akin to “wish bias” (p.4). The research proposed by Chen (2015) reveals that even though individual participation rates were low, implementing education programs on tobacco cessation and nutrition, along with policy changes like promoting walking steps and displaying nutritional information, can enhance employees' perception of organizational dedication to health. These studies revealed that improvements in perception occurred across groups, irrespective of individual participation in programs or adoption of health behaviors. Remarkably, these enhancements persisted even two to three years after the initial interventions.

Health screenings and assessments can play a crucial role in identifying health risks and guiding individuals toward appropriate interventions. These may include biometric screenings to measure blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and BMI, and include health risk assessments and questionnaires to identify lifestyle habits and health risks. According to Arena (2013), “Health risk assessments (HRAs) should be the initial component of a worksite health and wellness program” (p.1). The research also found workplace HRAs are effective for identifying individuals who may be at high risk and can help guide employees toward the right treatment. They may also help encourage those high-risk employees to make positive lifestyle changes that can reduce their risk of cardiovascular problems. HRAs are also beneficial in identifying workers who may have a disease that hasn't fully developed yet, which allows early intervention and the

ability to possibly prevent more serious complications. Results from Naydeck's (2017) study revealed that reducing future healthcare expenses and achieving a positive return on investment can be realized by implementing well-structured workplace health promotion programs that include screenings for health risk factors like physical examinations and cancer screenings.

The research proposed by Goetzel (2014) reports that according to *Healthy People 2010*, health screenings have been found to be one of the most beneficial components of comprehensive workplace wellness programs. Merrill's (2022) article reports the results of a longitudinal study that examined the effects of completing a worksite health risk assessment (HRA) on various health and employment outcomes. They found that HRA completers had significantly lower rates of turnover, healthcare costs, and healthcare utilization than non-completers over a four-year period. The authors suggest that HRA completion may reflect a higher level of health awareness and engagement among employees, which may lead to better health behaviors and outcomes. They also highlight the potential benefits of HRA completion for employers, such as reduced absenteeism, increased productivity, and lower healthcare expenditures. For this reason, employers should ensure workplace wellness programs include a health screening component. Reflecting on the research findings by Goetzel (2014) and Merrill (2022) brings to mind the profound impact that seemingly routine HRAs can have on an organization's ability to foster a culture of employee health and engagement.

Counter to the benefits of worksite health screenings and assessment, Song (2019) cautions against evaluation methods that include the wellness program as a whole. The author suggests measuring the different components of a wellness program would provide more comprehensive results and better direction to determine future offerings.



Utilizing health interventions and specific programs includes putting in place interventions and programs tailored to target specific health issues identified during screenings and assessments and may include:

1. Workshops focused on healthy eating habits, meal planning, and cooking demonstrations
2. Physical activity challenges such as step challenges and stretching classes
3. Smoking cessation programs
4. Stress management through meditation and workshops
5. Programs focused on the importance of sleep, hydration, and financial well-being

These interventions and programs have the potential to help reduce the risk of developing chronic diseases, improve well-being, and promote healthy lifestyle choices. Additionally, they can help to promote workplace morale and productivity (Lee, 2010). I believe these health programs can work together to empower employees to make healthier choices which, in turn, can create supportive environments that facilitate change and promote overall well-being.

One of the components studied by Arena (2013) discusses the benefits of implementing health and wellness programs to prevent and manage cardiovascular diseases (CVD). Programs focused on CVD have been found to reduce the burden of CVD on individuals, employers, and society by improving the cardiovascular health of employees and their families. They also provide evidence-based recommendations for designing and evaluating effective workplace health and wellness programs, such as assessing the needs and preferences of employees, providing tailored interventions, and monitoring outcomes. Some limitations of this study are the small sample size, the lack of a control group, the self-reported measures of health and wellness, and the potential confounding factors of workplace culture and environment. Therefore, the

results may not be generalizable to other settings or populations. Further research is needed to confirm the effectiveness and feasibility of implementing cardiovascular risk reduction programs in the workplace. Regardless of the limitations, the author concludes that “Given the societal burden of CVD, rethinking worksite health and wellness to focus on modifiable CV risk factor education may be highly advantageous” (p. 10). For these reasons, it will be important for organizations to consider the advantages and disadvantages of this approach.

A study by Chen (2015) revealed that employees who have a lower perception of workplace support for physical activity reported almost 7% more presenteeism than employees who had a higher perception of support for physical activity in the workplace. According to Baicker (2010), the two most common workplace wellness program components are adopted to combat smoking and obesity. The research proposed by Robroek (2009) provides information from the World Health Organization that reports “There are more than one billion overweight adults and at least 400 million obese adults” (p.2). The author concludes that employers should offer a wide range of programs to help employees combat overweight and obesity. To this end, the research proposed by Ovbiosa-Akinbosoye (2011), reports on a study that examined the factors influencing long-term weight loss and weight maintenance among employees who participated in a workplace wellness program. The results showed that the most important factors for successful weight management were motivation, social support, self-monitoring, physical activity, and healthy eating habits. The authors also identified some barriers and challenges that participants faced, such as stress, time constraints, work environment, and lack of resources. The authors concluded that workplace wellness programs can be effective in promoting long-term weight loss and weight maintenance, but they need to address the individual and organizational factors that influence behavior change.

A wellness program can play a crucial role in promoting the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of employees. By incorporating various components, a comprehensive program can be tailored to meet the diverse needs and preferences of employees, resulting in increased engagement, satisfaction, and overall performance. Using different methods such as assessing health risks, screening for diseases, educating about health, changing lifestyles, and rewarding employees who join the program can lead to substantial savings by reducing healthcare utilization and lowering healthcare costs (Bolnick, 2013).

According to Terry (2019), a comprehensive workplace wellness program consists of four elements: the culture and leadership of the organization, the engagement and empowerment of the employees, the policies and benefits related to health, and the interventions based on evidence. The four components suggested by Rubery (2022) are health risk assessment, biometric screening, wellness coaching, and wellness activities. The authors found that the program had positive impacts on several outcomes, such as physical activity, blood pressure, body mass index, absenteeism, presenteeism, job satisfaction, and workplace injury rates. Employees who participate in multiple wellness initiatives were found to have lower turnover rates. For this reason, Mitchell (2016) recommends that employers consider offering a variety of health programs to their employees to reduce turnover and improve productivity.

The research proposed by Emerson (2017) makes the case for strategically implementing physical activity to help employees combat issues with mental health. “Targeting workplace mental health through exercise and wellness programs may be an effective strategy for reducing indirect healthcare costs associated with absenteeism and presenteeism” (p.6). SantaBarbara (2022) found that employees prefer many different types of physical activity, therefore the authors suggest that designing a workplace wellness program that is tailored to the employees'

preferences and needs could reduce their cardiovascular risk and increase their work productivity.

### **Evidence of Positive Outcomes**

By measuring and demonstrating positive results, organizations can justify the costs associated with workplace wellness programs. According to Baicker (2010), “Understanding the factors that make them most successful and the barriers to their wider adoption could help smooth the path for future investments in this very promising avenue for improving health and productivity” (p. 7). However, to measure the effectiveness and return on investment of these programs, it is essential to determine how they reduce healthcare costs, improve employee retention, and contribute to organizations’ bottom lines.

Determining how workplace wellness programs reduce healthcare costs can help to justify their implementation, evaluate their effectiveness, and optimize their design and delivery. The literature on workplace wellness programs provides compelling evidence of their effectiveness in improving employee health and reducing healthcare costs. Baicker's (2010) study of a Fortune 100 company's wellness program demonstrated a substantial return on investment, with \$3.27 saved in healthcare costs for every dollar spent. The authors noted a few caveats when applying these results to a wider context. First, the companies that adopted these programs may have done so because they expected higher returns than others. Second, there may be a publication bias that favors programs and studies that report positive returns on investment. Third, most of the studies involved large employers, which have more resources and scale advantages to implement and benefit from employee wellness programs. It is not clear if smaller employers can also get positive returns on investment from wellness programs. This may partly explain why these programs are not more prevalent, although they are becoming more popular.

Similarly, Bolnick (2013) underscores the potential for significant cost savings through well-designed programs that incorporate various interventions such as health risk assessments, preventive screenings, and lifestyle interventions. The study has some limitations. It does not account for how wellness programs can affect risk factors, medical conditions, and costs in a dynamic and complex way over time. It also does not evaluate how wellness programs compare with other preventive or curative interventions in terms of cost-effectiveness or return on investment. The study does not consider the possible interactions or trade-offs among different risk factors and medical conditions. Bolnick concludes that calculating the exact future savings from workplace wellness programs is a complex task. However, the authors can confidently state some general trends. First, the avoidable cost of illness (COI) will be lower than the attributable COI. Second, the savings from medical care will grow over time as more wellness program members join, better risk factor management is achieved, and more risk reversal is possible.

Musich (2015) further supports these findings with a four-year evaluation of the Well at Dell program, showing lower health risks and medical costs among participants, yielding a positive return on investment of \$2.48. Naydeck (2008) contributes to this body of literature by reporting on a study of wellness programs in a large insurance company, revealing that wellness program participants had significantly lower healthcare costs than non-participants, saving an average of \$176 per member per year. The authors also estimated the ROI of the wellness programs, which ranged from \$1.65 to \$1.88, depending on the method of calculation. The article provides evidence that employee wellness programs can reduce healthcare costs and generate positive ROI for employers. Dement's (2015) research adds depth to the discussion by evaluating a comprehensive workplace health promotion program, which resulted in significant reductions in healthcare utilization and costs, emphasizing the program's effectiveness in

improving employee health and reducing healthcare expenditures. Together, these studies highlight the value of workplace wellness programs as a cost-effective strategy for enhancing employee well-being and lowering healthcare costs for employers.

By establishing how workplace wellness programs advance employee health, productivity, job satisfaction, and decrease absenteeism, employers can design and implement more effective and beneficial programs for their employees.

The study by Schwatka (2018) reports the results of a three-year longitudinal study that examined the effects of worksite wellness programs on employee health outcomes and productivity measures across different sizes of businesses. They found that wellness program participation was associated with lower health risks, lower healthcare costs, lower absenteeism, and higher presenteeism (i.e., working while ill) across all business sizes. However, they also found that smaller businesses had lower participation rates and less comprehensive programs than larger businesses. The authors suggest that smaller businesses may face more barriers and challenges in implementing and sustaining effective wellness programs, and they recommend strategies to overcome these obstacles.

Emerson (2017) examined how an exercise program for university employees affected their mental health, including depression, anxiety, and stress. They expected that the program would boost physical fitness, self-efficacy, and social support, which would in turn improve mental health. The findings confirmed that the program had positive effects on mental health outcomes as well as physical fitness, self-efficacy, and social support. The authors recommended that similar programs could be adopted in other workplaces to enhance employee well-being and productivity.

The research surrounding workplace wellness initiatives provides valuable perspectives on how these programs affect employee productivity, health results, absenteeism, and retention rates. Chen (2015) demonstrates a positive association between perceived workplace health support and job performance, absenteeism, and presenteeism, suggesting that comprehensive health support programs can enhance employee productivity. The authors propose that work productivity is positively linked to how employees view the organizational commitment to health. This implies that employers may have more reasons to provide wellness programs despite the difficulties of getting employees to join and change their behaviors.

Cheon (2020) and Rezai (2020) provide empirical evidence of the effectiveness of wellness programs in improving employees' health outcomes and reducing medical costs, highlighting the potential for cost savings for employers. The research by Cheon (2020) provides evidence that the wellness program had positive effects on employees' blood pressure, cholesterol, body mass index, smoking status, and physical activity. The program also reduced absenteeism and increased productivity, resulting in significant cost savings for the employer. Rezai's (2020) study found that the program had a positive effect on employees' blood pressure, cholesterol, body mass index, and self-reported health status. The program also reduced the medical costs of the intervention group by 18% compared to the control group. The authors concluded that the workplace wellness program was effective and cost-saving for the employer and the employees.

Lowenstyn (2018) and Mitchell (2016) further emphasize the positive effects of wellness programs on employee engagement, health indicators, and retention rates, suggesting that these programs contribute to a healthier and more satisfied workforce. The research proposed by Mitchell (2016) examines the relationship between employee participation in health programs

and their retention rate in a large US company. Authors found that employees who participated in any health program were 18% less likely to leave the company than those who did not, after controlling for demographic and job-related factors. They also found that the more health programs an employee participated in, the lower their turnover risk was. The authors suggest that health programs may enhance employee retention by improving their health, well-being, and satisfaction, as well as by signaling the company's commitment to its workforce. They recommend that employers consider offering a variety of health programs to their employees to reduce turnover and improve productivity.

Ott (2017) adds valuable insights into the relationship between employees' beliefs about wellness programs, organizational support, and workplace outcomes. The study found that beliefs about the value of wellness programs and perceived organizational support for wellness were linked to program participation, and those who participated had higher performance ratings, job satisfaction, and intention to stay. Furthermore, they find that wellness program participation is influenced by individual characteristics, such as age, gender, and health status, as well as organizational factors, such as leadership support and program design. They also find that wellness program participation is positively associated with health behaviors, such as physical activity and nutrition, and negatively associated with absenteeism and turnover. However, they do not find a significant relationship between wellness program participation and employee performance. The authors suggest that wellness programs may have long-term benefits for both employees and organizations, but more research is needed to understand the mechanisms and moderators of these effects.

The research proposed by McCleary (2017) reports findings of a national survey conducted in 2015 by Harris Poll Nielsen on the opinions of employers and employees about



workplace health promotion (wellness) programs. The survey included questions about the availability, participation, benefits, challenges, and preferences of such programs. The results showed that wellness programs were widely available and valued by both employers and employees, but there were gaps in communication, engagement, and satisfaction. For example, the lack of communication failed to provide information and awareness of programs. The authors discussed the implications of the findings for improving the design, implementation, and evaluation of wellness programs, and suggested areas for future research.

Lee (2010) offers a comprehensive review of the economic benefits of workplace wellness programs, emphasizing their potential to generate positive returns on investment through increased productivity, reduced healthcare expenses, and improved morale. However, Lee also acknowledges the challenges associated with implementing and maintaining these programs, highlighting the need for careful planning and evaluation to ensure their long-term effectiveness. Together, these studies provide a robust foundation for understanding the potential benefits and challenges of workplace wellness programs and underscore their importance in promoting employee health and well-being while also benefiting employers.

Finally, the article by Marin-Farrona is a review of the literature on the effects of workplace wellness programs that promote physical activity on workers' health and productivity outcomes. The results showed that workplace wellness programs based on physical activity had positive effects on some health and productivity indicators, but the evidence was low to moderate in quality and unrelated in terms of intervention characteristics, duration, intensity, and frequency. The authors concluded that more high-quality studies are needed to determine the optimal design and implementation of workplace wellness programs based on physical activity and to evaluate their cost-effectiveness and long-term sustainability.

Goetzel (2019) examines the relationship between the stock performance of American companies and their investment in a culture of health (COH). The authors use a COH index to measure the extent to which companies promote the health and well-being of their employees, customers, communities, and the environment. They compare the stock performance of forty-five companies with high COH scores to three benchmarks: the Standard and Poor's (S&P) 500 Index, a matched peer group, and a human capital index. They find that the COH companies outperformed all three benchmarks over a six-year period, suggesting that investing in a COH is associated with superior financial performance. The authors assert that more research is necessary to establish a solid connection between workplace wellness programs and how these programs affect stock performance. They warn findings could be a result of reverse causation. "Company performance affects its investments in employees' health and well-being, while at the same time, healthy and talented workers may be attracted to companies offering top-notch health promotion programs" (p. 8).

### **Challenges and Criticisms**

Despite their growing popularity, workplace wellness programs can be challenging for organizations to justify and may even elicit criticism as it relates to their significance and return on investment. The literature proposed by Reif (2020) contributes to increasing evidence that "workplace wellness programs are unlikely to significantly improve employee health or reduce medical use in the short term" (p. 8), highlighting the ongoing debate surrounding the effectiveness and impact of such initiatives on employee well-being and healthcare utilization. However, it is essential to recognize that while some studies may indicate limited short-term benefits, other research suggests long-term positive outcomes, including improved employee engagement, reduced absenteeism, and enhanced organizational performance. Therefore, a

greater understanding of the literature is imperative, guiding organizations to implement evidence-based strategies and measurement techniques that accurately capture the comprehensive impacts of workplace wellness programs over time.

In the pursuit of healthier and more productive work environments, the effectiveness of workplace wellness initiatives has come under scrutiny. Song (2019) presents findings from a randomized trial assessing a comprehensive workplace wellness program's impact on employee health, healthcare spending, and employment outcomes. While the program led to increased rates of positive health behaviors such as exercise and weight management, no significant effects were observed on clinical health measures, healthcare costs, or employment outcomes after an 18-month period. Building on this, Goetzel (2014) reviews evidence regarding workplace health promotion (WHP) programs, highlighting challenges in evaluating their effectiveness. Emphasizing the importance of program goals, design, implementation, and evaluation, Goetzel suggests that successful outcomes hinge on these factors.

Similarly, Reif's study investigates the impact of a workplace wellness program on health outcomes, health beliefs, and medical use. The authors found that the wellness program had no significant effect on any of the health outcomes or medical use measures, but it did improve some of the health beliefs of the employees who participated in the program. The authors concluded that workplace wellness programs may have limited effects on employee health in the short term, but they may influence health beliefs that could lead to behavioral changes and health improvements in the long term. Together, these studies underscore the complexities of evaluating workplace wellness initiatives and highlight the importance of considering various factors in program design and evaluation to maximize effectiveness.

The successful implementation and active participation of employees are crucial factors in determining the success of workplace wellness programs. It is essential for organizations to realize the importance of creating a supportive and inclusive environment that encourages employees to actively participate in these programs. Goetzel's (2014) study on workplace health promotion (WHP) programs reveals ongoing challenges in defining and implementing comprehensive approaches and proposes a framework for designing and implementing such evaluations. The article also discusses the potential benefits of WHP programs for employers, employees, and society, and provides recommendations for future research and practice in this field. Terry (2019) explores the evolution of WHP, highlighting confusion surrounding what constitutes a comprehensive program addressing multiple determinants of health and well-being. Advocating for a shift towards a socioecological or culture of health approach, Terry emphasizes the importance of incorporating social and environmental factors into program design.

Similarly, Robroek's (2009) review underscores the complexity of encouraging employee participation in worksite health promotion programs (WHPPs), noting that less than half of offered programs are utilized. There was limited evidence on what influenced their decision to participate or not, which makes it difficult to understand and address the barriers and facilitators of participation. However, the review suggested some possible ways to improve participation rates, such as tailoring the programs to the needs and preferences of the employees, involving them in the design and implementation of the programs, and providing incentives and feedback. The review also emphasized the need for more research on this topic, especially on how to reach and engage the most vulnerable and needy workers, and how to enhance the external validity of the results across different settings and populations. The literature proposed by Batorsky (2016) asserts that positive outcomes for workplace wellness programs can be achieved by providing a

modest number of programs “Supported by education of employees and management of the importance of health and well-being, promotion strategies, and opportunities for employees to participate during the workday” (p. 6).

Furthermore, Lee (2010) acknowledges barriers hindering the adoption and maintenance of workplace wellness programs, proposing strategies such as aligning program goals with organizational vision and utilizing evidence-based practices for evaluation. Collectively, these studies highlight the need for comprehensive, culturally sensitive approaches to WHP program implementation, along with continued research to address participation barriers and improve program effectiveness across diverse settings and populations. Measuring the return on investment (ROI) for workplace wellness programs is not a straightforward task, as there are many factors and variables involved. Therefore, it is important to recognize the challenges of measuring ROI for workplace wellness programs, such as defining the goals and outcomes, collecting, and analyzing data, and measuring program effectiveness.

Astrella (2017) delves into this complexity by reviewing the literature on the financial impact of such programs, with a focus on ROI and value on investment (VOI) metrics. The author identifies key challenges, including the need to define goals and outcomes, as well as the difficulties in data collection, analysis, and measuring program effectiveness. The evidence from the studies examined is not clear about the effect of WHPs on the total healthcare costs; some studies found a decrease, some found no difference, and one was unclear. However, all four studies that calculated the ROI for WHPs showed positive results. More research and data are needed to confirm this. Given that WHPs are becoming more popular and supported, healthcare leaders should assess the outcomes of the program in terms of cost/benefit and propose changes based on evidence. “In doing so, valuable and constrained healthcare resources will be

maximized for both health and financial gains” (Astrella, 2017, p. 4). One of the limitations of this study is that it only focused on the financial outcomes of workplace wellness programs, without considering other aspects such as employee satisfaction, productivity, or retention. Another limitation is that it relied on self-reported data from employers, which may introduce bias or inaccuracies. Furthermore, the study did not account for the variations in the design, implementation, and evaluation of different wellness programs, which may affect their effectiveness and return on investment.

Additionally, Horn (2020) proposes a comprehensive framework for evaluating the effectiveness of workplace wellness initiatives, advocating for an integrated approach that draws on disciplines such as health promotion, organizational behavior, human resource management, and psychology. Horn argues that existing evaluation methods often lack depth and fail to capture the nuanced and dynamic nature of wellness programs and their impacts. By advocating for a cross-disciplinary approach, Horn suggests that a more holistic and accurate assessment of wellness program success can be achieved, thus addressing the limitations of current evaluation practices.

Together, these studies underscore the need for comprehensive approaches to assessing the impact of workplace wellness initiatives, taking into account the complex nature of employee health and organizational outcomes. Such approaches should include both qualitative and quantitative data to capture the multifaceted effects of these programs. Furthermore, researchers should carefully consider the context of the workplace and the individual circumstances of employees when assessing the effectiveness of workplace wellness programs.

### **The Role of Leadership Support, Culture, and Communication to Predict Outcomes**

As we contemplate the return on investment for workplace wellness programs, identifying whether leadership support, culture, and communication are important components to ensure successful programs can be useful. Quantifying whether programs are supported and viewed positively by an organization's culture, and how programs are communicated, can identify areas for improvement and tailor strategies to ensure sustained support for workplace wellness initiatives. Leadership engagement, cultural alignment, and communication effectiveness can also be evaluated to identify specific challenges and opportunities for enhancing program adoption and participation. As a result of this comprehensive assessment, organizations are better able to implement targeted interventions and cultivate a wellness environment that maximizes the impact of wellness initiatives on employee health and organizational productivity. Participation in workplace wellness programs can have many benefits for employees, such as improving their health, morale, and productivity. However, these programs may not succeed without the active involvement and encouragement of leadership. Smidt's (2021) research underscores the pivotal role of employee and supervisor support in wellness participation, particularly in conjunction with high organizational support. Notably, Smidt highlights that organizational support cannot be compensated for by individual-level support. Additionally, the significance of employee, supervisor, and organizational support in predicting participation is emphasized, with findings indicating a positive correlation between perceived support and program engagement.

Similarly, Berry (2010) asserts that employee wellness programs are not mere add-ons but rather strategic imperatives, backed by compelling data showcasing substantial returns on investment. The authors argue that investing in employees' social, mental, and physical health

can yield significant benefits for organizations, such as lower costs, higher productivity, and greater morale. The paper explains six foundational pillars for successful programs, stressing the importance of strategic alignment, comprehensive design, accessibility, partnerships, communication, and leadership engagement. The authors provide examples of how wellness programs can improve employee health, reduce healthcare claims, enhance organizational culture, and build employee trust and commitment. Berry's insights underscore the transformative potential of holistic wellness programs in mitigating healthcare costs, boosting productivity, and fostering morale across diverse industries. Further reinforcing the importance of top-down support, Seward (2019) underscores the influence of institutional backing on program success. Employees express the need for active promotion and endorsement of wellness activities by leadership, which not only encourages participation but also alleviates concerns about diverting time from work responsibilities. Seward concludes that fostering a culture of wellness requires proactive engagement from higher-level management, creating an environment where employees feel empowered and supported in prioritizing their well-being.

Another aspect that will be important for organizations to consider is whether workplace wellness programs are accessible to employees with disabilities. Sears (2021) surveyed workers with permanent impairments to assess their interest in workplace wellness programs, the barriers they face to participating in such programs, and the associations between their sociodemographic characteristics, health status, and workplace factors. The authors found that most workers were interested in workplace wellness programs, but they also reported various barriers such as lack of time, transportation, accessibility, and employer support. The authors also identified several factors that were associated with higher or lower interest in wellness programs, such as age, gender, education level, income, health conditions, and job satisfaction. The authors concluded



that workplace wellness programs have the potential to improve the health and well-being of workers with permanent impairments, but they also need to address the specific needs and challenges of this population.

Robbins (2016) examined the effects of linking managerial salary increases to workplace wellness actions, such as encouraging healthy eating and physical activity among employees, rather than to wellness outcomes, such as reduced absenteeism and healthcare costs. The authors suggest that this approach can motivate managers to promote a culture of wellness in their workplaces and benefit both employees and employers. Counter to the somewhat controversial nature of this strategy, managers strongly supported this idea. The authors suggest that “Managers not only have favorable reactions but perhaps would leave their current job for a company that takes such a stand for employee health as to evaluate its leadership by what they do to promote health among their employees” (Robbins, 2016, p. 8).

To ensure program success, wellness initiatives should be aligned with the organizational culture and communicated effectively. A culture that supports wellness can foster trust, collaboration, and commitment among employees, while a communication strategy that informs, educates, and motivates can increase participation and satisfaction with the programs. Jenkins (2015) highlights the pivotal role of organizational culture in shaping perceptions of health and wellness among employees. Emphasizing the importance of communication strategies that reflect these cultural views, the study suggests leveraging "Wellness Champions" as influential figures within departments to promote healthy habits. These champions, drawn from various levels of the organization, serve as conduits for wellness resources, motivate participation in health-related activities, and emphasize the collective benefit of making healthy choices. By

highlighting the potential to support each other's well-being, alongside personal benefits, organizations can foster a culture of health that resonates with employees.

In a similar vein, Burke (2017) emphasizes the significance of peer influence in shaping healthy behaviors within the workplace. Contrary to top-down approaches, which often rely on leadership communication, Burke suggests that companies should prioritize fostering a supportive and collaborative culture among employees. This can be achieved through initiatives such as health mentor programs or exercise groups, which leverage social influence to promote wellness. Co-worker communication and socialization appear to be important factors in understanding individuals' health behaviors; thus, organizations that offer workplace wellness programs should provide opportunities for socialization and co-worker communication to facilitate employees' healthy behaviors. Although the authors only looked at one wellness program and did not examine these variables in programs of varying sizes and types, this study uniquely incorporates interpersonal and organizational communication perspectives to give new insight into co-workers' health-related communication. By recognizing the influence of colleagues and facilitating interpersonal communication around health, organizations can create a more inclusive and effective approach to wellness promotion, transcending traditional communication channels like wellness emails or flyers. As I reflect further, I believe acknowledging and leveraging the influence of diverse communication methods, organizations can promote a sense of community and connectedness among employees, which can have positive effects on overall morale, productivity, and job satisfaction.

The literature proposed by Dailey (2018) examines how employees of a large corporation navigate the competing priorities of health and work in the context of the importance of workplace wellness program communication. The authors found that employees raised two

distinct dialogues: one that emphasized personal responsibility and individual choice for health, and another that highlighted organizational demands and expectations for work. The authors argue that these conversations reflect the tensions and contradictions inherent in the belief in wellness, which promotes both self-care and productivity. Because employees are required to receive supervisor permission to participate in the free wellness program, communication is paramount. “If organizations do not thoughtfully consider the complexities of the communication process surrounding wellness time, WHP participation may generate explicit or perceived resentment from other employees” (p. 12).

The study by Harrison (2019) examines how organizational communication practices can affect the well-being of employees and organizations. The authors propose a new concept of wellness-in-work, which emphasizes the importance of creating a culture of wellness that is embedded in everyday work activities and interactions. The article reviews the literature on wellness, stress, and organization, and identifies four key dimensions of wellness-in-work: physical, psychological, social, and spiritual. The authors also provide examples of how wellness-in-work can be implemented in different organizational contexts, such as healthcare, education, and technology. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of organizational communication in promoting employee well-being and underscores the importance of proactive approaches to workplace wellness initiatives.

A key takeaway from McCleary’s (2017) research is that it is important to have open and two-way communication when discussing the value of workplace health promotion (WHP). This means that both senior executives and workers should regularly share their views, opinions, and attitudes for WHP programs to be successful. As mentioned earlier, strategic communication plays a crucial role in successful WHP programming, and it is essential to gather insights directly

from workers to have an ongoing dialogue about the issues that impact their health and the health of the organization. It is important to recognize that employees have unique needs and interests, and they are more likely to participate in wellness initiatives when they feel that they have been actively involved in the program design process. “Actively seeking employee input is a critical and foundational step toward improving the health of organizations and the well-being of their workers” (p. 7). Demonstrating this level of support will also help leaders gain trust and help employees feel comfortable taking the time to participate in wellness activities without fearing repercussions. In summary, measuring return on investment (ROI) for workplace wellness programs is essential. Evaluating program components, positive outcomes, and leadership support, culture, and communication are important factors in determining program success. These factors help validate investments, optimize resource allocation, and tailor interventions. Furthermore, the impact of leadership engagement, organizational culture, and communication strategies on program success is important for organizations to consider. Emphasizing robust ROI metrics informs evidence-based decision-making and ensures investments in employee well-being yield meaningful returns for individuals and the organization. Moreover, to delve deeper into this topic, it's essential to outline the methods used for measuring ROI accurately.

As we transition to the methodology section, we will provide insights into the systematic approach organizations can take to develop and implement successful wellness programs, outlining the specific steps, tools, and methodologies utilized to create and evaluate. A comprehensive understanding of the research framework and procedures will be presented in this chapter, laying the groundwork for analysis and results. By sharing insights into best practices and lessons learned, organizations can contribute to the collective knowledge base and inform the development of evidence-based strategies and interventions. This collaborative approach

fosters innovation and continuous improvement, driving advancements in workplace wellness management and promoting employee well-being on a broader scale.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Research Methodology**

The primary methods used for this study were a literature review and thematic analysis to obtain qualitative data. The research aims to explore the importance for organizations to determine return on investment (ROI) for workplace wellness programs. This will be achieved through the use of a literature review and a thematic analysis. Barends (2018) describes qualitative research as “exploratory research: we use it to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, motivations or mechanisms, or to generate hypotheses and/or theories that we can test through quantitative research” (p. 99). This approach offers a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter by collecting and analyzing knowledge from existing scholarly sources.

The first phase of the research involved conducting a thorough literature review to explore existing academic journals, theories, and empirical studies relevant to the research topic. The literature reviewed serves several purposes, including providing a theoretical framework, identifying research gaps, and informing the development of survey instruments for data collection. “It critically analyzes, evaluates, and synthesizes research findings, theories, and practices by scholars and researchers that are related to an area of focus” (Barends, 2018, p. 2). To conduct the literature review, the University of New Hampshire online library and Google Scholar were utilized to find numerous peer-reviewed journals. Keywords and search terms related to the research topic were used to ensure a comprehensive review of the literature. The inclusion and exclusion criteria were established by the relevance and quality of the data.

Following the literature review, thematic analysis was utilized to analyze the qualitative data obtained from scholarly sources. Thematic analysis is a flexible and systematic method for

identifying patterns, themes, and meanings within the data. Barends (2018) describes qualitative research as “exploratory research: we use it to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, motivations or mechanisms, or to generate hypotheses and/or theories that we can test through quantitative research” (p. 99).

The process of thematic analysis involves several steps. The first steps included identifying recurring themes. Next, we looked for patterns, common sentiments, and areas of concern, as well as highlighted connections between themes. The analysis was conducted manually, using descriptive coding to “summarize extracts by using a single word that encapsulates the general idea of the data” (“Qualitative Coding Tutorial,” 2022)”. Then we reflected on the findings to make interpretations. The final step was to report our findings and make recommendations.

The integration of a literature review and thematic analysis enhanced the comprehensiveness of this research methodology. The literature review provided a theoretical framework and contextual background for understanding workplace wellness dynamics, while thematic analysis offered insights into the nuances and complexities of determining ROI for employers as they manifest in real-world organizational settings.

With the research methodology established, the next chapter provides an analysis of the findings to discern the effectiveness and implications of measuring ROI for workplace wellness programs. By examining the qualitative data, we aim to uncover key insights into the impact of these programs on employee well-being and organizational outcomes.

**Chapter Four**

**Data/Results**

In this section, we sought to highlight the financial benefits and challenges associated with workplace wellness initiatives, aiding stakeholders in informed decision-making. This data-driven approach offers a valuable resource for employers, HR professionals, policymakers, and researchers, facilitating the development of tailored wellness strategies for organizational success.

Table 1 highlights the alignment among authors to incorporate diverse components into workplace wellness programs. Initiatives including physical activities, mental health resources, nutrition guidance, and stress management are identified as integral aspects contributing to a comprehensive approach to employee well-being.

**Table 1: Program Components**

<b>Component</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Key Studies/Evidence</b>
Social and Physical Support	Create a supportive environment for employees	Goetzel (2014); Ayyala (2022)
Health Promotion and Education	Promote healthy behaviors through education and resources	Arena (2013); Terry (2019); Chen (2015), Goetzel (2014)
Health Screenings and Assessments	Identify health risks and guide individuals toward interventions	Arena (2013); Naydeck (2017); Goetzel (2014); Merrill (2022); Song (2019)
Health Interventions and Specific Programs	Target specific health issues with tailored interventions	Lee (2010); Arena (2013); Ovbiosa-Akinbosoye (2011); Chen (2015); Baicker (2010); Robroek (2009); Bolnick (2013); Rubery (2022); Mitchell (2016); Emerson (2017); SantaBarbara (2022)



The data in Table 2 indicates positive outcomes for workplace wellness programs, including improvements in employee health, increased productivity, and favorable effects on organizational culture.

**Table 2: Positive Outcomes**

<b>Positive Outcome</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Key Studies/Evidence</b>
Healthcare Costs	Lowered medical costs and reduced healthcare expenditures	Baicker (2010), Bolnick (2013), Naydeck (2008), Dement (2015), Cheon (2020), Rezai (2020)
Health Improvements	Improved health outcomes and lowered health risks	Musich (2015), Schwatka (2018), Dement (2015), Emerson (2017),
Job Satisfaction	Increased employee engagement and retention	Lowenstein (2018), Mitchell (2016), Ott (2017), McCleary (2017)
Productivity	Lower absenteeism and presenteeism	Schwatka (2018), Lee (2010), Marin-Farrona (2022)

Table 3 provides data from multiple studies that indicate various challenges and criticisms surrounding workplace wellness programs, including limited long-term benefits, challenges in evaluation, defining comprehensive approaches, and barriers to participation.

**Table 3: Challenges and Criticisms**

<b>Challenge</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Key Studies/Evidence</b>
Measuring ROI	Lack of consistent evaluation methods	Lee (2010), Astrella (2017), Horn (2020), Song (2019)
Sustained Impact	Challenges measuring long-term benefits	Reif (2020), Song (2019), Astrella (2017),
Employee Adoption	Limited participation	Robroek (2009), Lee (2010),
Implementation	Lack of consistent program design and implementation	Goetzel (2014), Batorsky (2016),

Table 4 provides a concise overview of the key duplicated findings across the studies, highlighting the common themes related to leadership support, cultural alignment, and communication to determine workplace wellness program success.

**Table 4: Role of Leadership Support, Culture, and Communication for Program Success**

<b>Role</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Key Studies/Evidence</b>
Leadership Support	Leaders active involvement and promotion of programs	Smidt (2021), Berry (2010), Seward (2019)
Cultural Alignment	Program alignment with organizational culture and mission/vision/values	Jenkins (2015), Burke (2017), Dailey (2018)
Communication	Communication strategies and frequency	Jenkins (2015), Burke (2017), McCleary (2017), Harrison (2019)

**Discussions and Recommendations**

The discussion section focuses on the insights gleaned from Tables 1 through 4 and highlights the role of program components, positive outcomes, challenges and criticisms, and the role of leadership support, culture, and communication to determine program outcomes.

The data in Table 1 highlights the consensus among authors on the essential components of workplace wellness programs. These components, including social and physical support, health promotion and education, health screenings and assessments, and health interventions and specific programs, collectively contribute to a comprehensive approach to employee well-being. Authors such as Goetzel (2014), Arena (2013), and Lee (2010) emphasize the importance of these components in promoting employee health and organizational productivity.

Studies used to create Table 2 present data indicating the positive outcomes associated with workplace wellness programs. These outcomes include lowered healthcare costs, improved health outcomes, increased job satisfaction, and enhanced productivity. Studies by Baicker

(2010), Musich (2015), Lowenstein (2018), and Schwatka (2018) underscore the significant benefits of wellness initiatives for both employees and organizations.

The combined research of the authors listed in Table 3 provides insights into the challenges and criticisms surrounding workplace wellness programs. These challenges include difficulties in measuring return on investment, sustaining long-term impact, limited employee adoption, and inconsistent program implementation. Authors such as Lee (2010), Reif (2020), and Robroek (2009) shed light on these challenges and call for strategies to address them effectively.

And, finally, the data combined in Table 4 highlights the critical role of leadership support, cultural alignment, and communication in determining the success of workplace wellness programs. Authors such as Smidt (2021), Jenkins (2015), and McCleary (2017) emphasize the importance of active involvement and promotion by organizational leaders, alignment of programs with organizational culture, and effective communication strategies.

Based on the insights from the data presented in the above tables, leadership practitioners can implement various strategies to address the challenges related to implementing workplace wellness programs. To effectively measure program ROI, organizations can develop standardized evaluation methods to accurately measure the return on investment of wellness initiatives. This may involve tracking healthcare cost reductions, productivity gains, and employee retention rates attributable to the program. It may also include linking individual wellness data to organizational data. “With linked data, evaluators can analyze, for example, cost savings that result from specific program offerings” (Goetzel, 2019, p.6). To ensure the long-term success of wellness programs, leaders can implement sustainability measures by integrating wellness programs into the organizational culture and making them an

ongoing priority. Regularly assessing program effectiveness and adjusting strategies to maintain long-term impact is essential. To this end, we suggest fostering a culture of continuous improvement by soliciting feedback from employees and stakeholders. Use data analytics and employee feedback to identify areas for improvement and refine wellness strategies over time. As we address the challenge of boosting employee adoption and engagement, targeted communication and promotion campaigns can be effective. Additionally, implementing incentives, rewards, and recognition programs can encourage participation and foster a supportive environment for wellness activities. Providing tailored interventions by customizing wellness initiatives to meet employees' specific needs and preferences will also help with adoption and engagement. This could be accomplished by conducting surveys, focus groups, and needs assessments. Given leadership engagement was found to significantly increase program success, it will be important to secure leadership buy-in and active involvement in wellness initiatives. Leaders should champion the program, allocate resources, and lead by example to demonstrate the organization's commitment to employee well-being.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this research study underscores the critical importance of measuring return on investment (ROI) for workplace wellness programs. Across numerous studies, it is evident that ROI serves as a vital metric for evaluating the effectiveness, sustainability, and strategic significance of these initiatives, as it provides valuable insights into the effectiveness and sustainability of such initiatives, guiding organizations toward informed decision-making and the ability to allocate resources. By quantifying the tangible benefits resulting from wellness programs, organizations can justify investment decisions, assign resources efficiently, and optimize program design and implementation. Moreover, the literature emphasizes that ROI measurement goes beyond mere financial outcomes and includes broader indicators such as employee health, morale, productivity, and organizational culture. The literature also highlights the importance of aligning the objectives of workplace wellness programs with the organization's strategic objectives.

By linking wellness initiatives to core business goals, organizations can maximize the ROI and ensure the sustainability and longevity of the program. Additionally, it stresses the need for continuous evaluation and adaptation, enabling organizations to address emerging challenges and seize opportunities for further enhancement. As a result, organizations can foster a culture of learning and improvement, encouraging innovation and resilience to navigate dynamic workplace environments while also keeping wellness programs responsive to changing industry trends and employee needs.

The inclusion of ROI measurement in the discussion not only provides a holistic view of the impact of workplace wellness programs but also reinforces the need for evidence-based

decision-making in organizational health management. By incorporating ROI analysis into the evaluation process, organizations can demonstrate the value of their investment in employee well-being and make informed decisions regarding resource allocation and program optimization. For organizational leaders, this underscores the importance of adopting a strategic approach to workplace wellness, with an emphasis on quantifiable outcomes and tangible benefits. As leaders move from concept to practice, they should pay close attention to the alignment of wellness initiatives with overall business objectives, the cultivation of a supportive organizational culture that prioritizes employee well-being, and the utilization of data-driven insights to continuously refine and improve wellness programs. Ultimately, leaders will demonstrate the transformation of workplace wellness programs from optional perks to vital strategic imperatives within organizations, driving not only employee health and satisfaction but also organizational performance and sustainability

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