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WORKPLACE WELLNESS PROGRAMS: IMPACT ON EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND PRODUCTIVITY

~ *Mimansa Pandey*

The landscape of work has evolved significantly over the years, leading to a growing emphasis on the overall well-being of employees. In this context, a Workplace Wellness Program emerges as a pivotal strategy for the organisations looking to enhance the health and productivity of their workforce. This paper will delve into what constitutes a workplace wellness program, the reasons behind their implementation, how they function, and the impact these programs have had throughout the years, supported by various statistics that underscore their importance

First, let us understand what the program is about and who all it targets. So, a Workplace Wellness Program is a strategic organizational intervention aimed at promoting the overall health and well-being of employees. Such programs are intended to target various aspects of health—physical, mental, and emotional—through a range of activities, materials, and policies. The main objective is to foster an environment that promotes healthier lifestyles, thus contributing to employee satisfaction, productivity, and retention.

Essentially, a Workplace Wellness Program is designed to enhance employees' quality of life by offering them tools and resources that create healthier lifestyles. This might mean anything from in-facility gyms and fitness classes to medical screenings, nutrition counseling, mental health assistance, and stress reduction seminars. Through the provision of these types of services, employers encourage their employees to adopt and sustain healthy behaviors that can avert chronic illness, lower stress, and enhance overall mental and physical health.

Although the benefits of an employee wellness program might be difficult to discern from the surface, healthy employees typically make a variety of positive contributions to other workers and the businesses they work for.

¹The following are some of the **advantages** of an employee wellness program.

1. There is increased productivity

Healthy employees who exercise regularly are apt to be more productive than unhealthy workers. Unhealthy eating habits are typically associated with excessive unproductivity and eventually create greater health risks and chronic illnesses.

2. There is High employee morale

Wellness programs make employees appreciate and feel valued. Employees are more content when they appreciate and feel valued by their employers. Offering wellness programs tends to result in more positive employees in the workplace.

3. It just enhances employee recruitment and retention

Good health plans will assist companies to recruit, as well as retain, the best talent. Most employees are greatly impacted by the availability of health options and other advantages when they select an employer. Wellness programs also contribute significantly towards employee retention, by ensuring the employees remain loyal.

4. It also results in Decreased absenteeism

Organizations with complete wellness programs have reduced absenteeism, as employees are healthier and less stressed, and this results in cost reduction.

5. It Decreases the health risk

Encouraging employees to engage in healthy habits like proper diet, exercise, and abstaining from tobacco reduces health risks. Low health risks translate into decreased health care expenses.

6. Creating team spirit among employees

Some programs allow workers to try other activities besides work, including playing on a sports team, visiting a gym, or sharing a lunch break. The interaction between co-workers allows bonding that makes teams collaborate better.

¹ How employee wellness programs impact workplace productivity

<https://www.onmanorama.com/lifestyle/health/2023/11/30/employee-wellness-programs-impact-workplace-productivity.html> (30 my 2025)

In the fast-paced world of work, productivity has become the measuring stick of success. Yet, a frequently ignored but vital aspect that plays a significant role in workplace productivity is the mental and physical health of workers. When unlocking potential both at the individual and organizational levels, it is important to realize the interrelation between health, wellness, and productivity. Mental health has a direct effect on how we function from day to day, how we relate to others, and how we make decisions. Stress, anxiety, and burnout aren't individual problems—they are killers of productivity. When employees are under high levels of stress or burnout, their capacity to concentrate, think creatively, and work efficiently is greatly diminished. Organizations that value mental health experience improved levels of engagement, lower absenteeism, and improved job satisfaction. Investment in mental health services, including Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), mindfulness training, and stress management training, can result in a more productive and engaged workforce.

²Physical Health and Its Impact on Work Performance

Physical health is of equal concern to mental well-being is the physical health of employees. Physical health issues, like chronic pain, tiredness, or sickness, can lower energy and concentration, resulting in reduced productivity. Promoting habitual exercise, healthy eating, and ergonomic working settings can minimize these problems. For example, a regular exercise routine has been shown to increase mood, decrease anxiety, and enhance cognitive function—all things that can be translated into increased productivity in the workplace. Businesses that support a culture of wellness by offering health benefits, gym memberships, and wellness challenges tend to benefit the bottom line.

There are some steps to Implement an Employee Wellness Program which will also be successful.

Below are some simple steps to implementing a **successful employee wellness program** in the workplace.

1. Establish goals that will advance the company and the employees

² **Boost Employee Performance with Workplace Wellness Programs in 2024**

<https://www.kumospace.com/blog/wellness-affects-productivity#:~:text=The%20impact%20of%20wellness%20programs,healthier%2C%20more%20productive%20work%20environment> .(30 May 2025)

When developing a wellness program, make sure you do not forget your central goal. Make sure all sections of the program benefit both the employees and the business. It is essential that wellness programs match the audience of your employees.

2. Organize a dedicated team for the work

Creating a complete wellness program requires a great amount of time and effort. It is advisable to have a good team that can manage the project. Although the team may likely be led by HR, it should also comprise individuals with a good knowledge of the employees as well as those with an interest in fostering a healthy working environment.

3. Gather data of the employees and survey

Do sufficient research by speaking with workers to determine what issues should be tackled. This can be conducted through one-on-one meetings and employee surveys.

4. Develop a plan for everything

Once data is gathered that is appropriate, the next thing to do is craft the objectives of the wellness program and the tactics that can be employed for implementation. Measures for regularly reviewing the initiative should be outlined.

5. Promote the program as much as possible

The wellness program must be conveyed to the employees. They should be made aware of the schemes that are involved, why wellness is crucial, and how it will have a positive impact on their lives.

6. Get feedback of the program and improve the wellness program accordingly.

An ideal employee wellness program is optimised for constant improvement. The team ought to always be ready to receive new thoughts and feedback to enhance the program and make the employees healthier.

Furthermore, as technology continues to evolve, the nature of work has transformed. Many employees now work in sedentary jobs, increasing the risk of lifestyle-related health issues. Workplace wellness programs that include initiatives promoting active breaks, stretching exercises, or walking meetings can counteract some of the negative impacts associated with prolonged sitting. In conclusion, Workplace Wellness Programs serve as a crucial investment in the well-being of employees and the overall success of organizations. By addressing

physical, mental, and emotional health, these programs foster an environment of productivity, satisfaction, and retention. The numerous benefits, from increased morale and productivity to decreased absenteeism and health risks, illustrate the profound impact that wellness initiatives can have on both employees and organizations as a whole. As the understanding of workplace wellness continues to grow, organizations that prioritize and implement comprehensive wellness programs will likely stay competitive in attracting top talent and achieving long-term.

Now we will know how does this work wellness programs work-

Work wellness programs also employee wellness programs are intended to promote the health and well-being of workers, aiming to enhance productivity, lower healthcare expenses, and promote job satisfaction. This is how work wellness programs generally operate:

Assessment & Planning - Employers begin by determining employee wellness needs and health risks.

This could involve anonymous surveys, health risk assessments (HRAs), or reviewing absenteeism and insurance claims.

Program Design - According to the research, the organization designs a customized wellness program. Universal components are:

Area	Examples
Physical Health	Gym membership, fitness competitions, yoga sessions
Mental Health	Stress management sessions, counseling sessions
Nutrition	Healthy foods, nutritional counseling, cooking demonstrations
Preventive Care	Flu vaccination, biometric screening, health exams
Lifestyle Support	Smoking cessation, sleep programs, weight loss assistance

Incentives and Engagement - In order to promote participation, businesses can provide:

- Incentives (e.g., gift cards, fitness trackers)
- Discount premiums on health insurance
- Compensated time off for health activities
- Award programs or wellness competitions

- Implementation
- Programs can be offered in person or through the internet (e.g., via wellness portals or applications).
- Communication is vital: HR teams market the program through emails, posters, webinars, etc.
- Monitoring & Evaluation. Employers monitor the success of the program by measuring:
- Attendance rates. Health outcomes (e.g., weight reduction, decreased stress). Business outcomes (e.g., reduced absenteeism, increased productivity). Feedback is collected and utilized for improving the program in the long run. Benefits for Employers and Employees
- Employers: Reduced healthcare expenditures, better productivity, improved morale
- Employees: Improved health, less stress, better work-life balance.

Let us also have a look on what are the functions of the work wellness program –

Functions of a workplace wellness program are the primary roles or functions it plays within a company. Here's the simple breakdown:

1. Health Promotion

- Motivates workers to make healthier lifestyle choices through:
- Dietary counselling
- Exercise programs
- Help to quit smoking
- Preventive services

2. Disease Prevention

- Reduces the risk of chronic diseases (e.g., diabetes, heart disease) by:
- Conducting regular health screenings
- Detecting risk factors early
- Encouraging vaccinations and health education

3. Stress and Mental Health Support

- Enhances mental health through:
- Availability of counseling or Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)

- Reducing stress activities (yoga, meditation, flexible work hours)
- Encouraging a balanced work-life situation

24. Productivity and Performance Enhancement

- Increases productivity at the workplace by:
- Cutting down sick days and presenteeism (sick days worked)
- Enhancing concentration and energy levels
- Facilitating sound sleep and clear thinking

5. Employee Engagement and Morale

- Boosts job satisfaction and loyalty through:
- Building a health-supportive work culture
- Promoting team activities and challenges
- Rewarding health-related accomplishments

6. Cost Reduction

- Assists in cutting long-term costs by:
- Reducing healthcare claims
- Reducing absenteeism
- Reducing turnover and recruitment costs

7. Education and Awareness-Educates and provides resources on health issues such as:

- Nutrition
- Fitness
- Mental well-being
- Chronic disease management

Now I will throw some light upon the **history** of the workplace wellness program

Workplace wellness, or corporate wellbeing in non-US English usage, is a general term for activities, programs, and/or organizational policies aimed at promoting healthy behavior in the workplace. This typically includes health education, medical screenings, weight management programs, and onsite fitness programs or facilities or off site retreats. It can also incorporate flex-time for physical activity, offering on-site kitchen and dining space, offering healthy food

choices in vending machines, conducting "walk and talk" meetings, and providing financial and other rewards for taking part.

Firms most typically subsidize occupational wellness programs in the expectation that they will save costs on employee health coverage such as medical insurance in the long term. Previous research has not found a clinically significant difference in health outcomes, evidence of a return on investment, or demonstration of causal effects of treatments. The greatest gains have been seen in populations that were already trying to address health issues, which suggests a high likelihood of selection bias. Workplace wellness initiatives may be classified as primary, secondary, or tertiary prevention interventions, or a combination of more than one type. Primary prevention initiatives are typically aimed at an employee group that is already deemed to be healthy and that motivates workers to engage more often in health behaviours that will promote continued good health (e.g., stress management, exercise and nutrition). Secondary prevention programs seek to decrease behaviour that is deemed a risk factor for ill health (e.g., smoking cessation programs and blood pressure screenings). Tertiary health programs are geared towards dealing with problems of current health (e.g., by encouraging workers to improve adherence to certain medication or self-care regimens).

³There are some statistics to show the

1. General Workplace Wellness Statistics 2025

- **72%** of organizations report having a formal wellness program in place in 2025. (Global Wellness Institute)
- **81%** of employees believe their employer's wellness initiatives have a positive impact on their health. (Gallup)
- **65%** of HR leaders say wellness programs have significantly reduced turnover. (SHRM)
- Companies that invest in workplace wellness see an average **\$3.80 return** for every dollar spent. (RAND Corporation)
- **54%** of workers prioritize employer wellness benefits when choosing a new job. (LinkedIn Talent Solutions)

³ **50+ Critical Workplace Wellness Statistics of 2025**

[50+ Critical Workplace Wellness Statistics of 2025 | HR Lineup](#) (30 may 2025)

2. Mental Health & Emotional Wellness Statistics

Mental health has taken center stage in workplace wellness efforts.

- **1 in 3** employees report experiencing moderate to severe stress weekly. (APA, 2025)
- **62%** of employees want more mental health resources from their employer. (Mind Share Partners)
- **78%** of HR managers increased their mental health budget in 2025 compared to 2024. (Forbes HR Council)
- Companies that offer mental health days see a **24% increase** in employee satisfaction scores. (Gartner)
- **29%** of employees have used employer-provided therapy or counseling services in the last year. (Mental Health America)

3. Physical Wellness and Fitness Initiatives

Supporting physical health remains a foundational part of wellness programs.

- **49%** of companies now subsidize gym memberships or wellness apps. (SHRM Wellness Survey 2025)
- Employers offering virtual fitness classes saw a **19% higher participation rate** than in-person-only options. (Wellable Report)
- **70%** of employees who participate in corporate fitness challenges say it positively influences their habits. (Virgin Pulse)
- On-site fitness facilities increase employee satisfaction by **31%**. (Global Wellness Institute)
- **46%** of workers say they exercise more consistently thanks to employer incentives. (CDC 2025 Workplace Study)

4. Financial Wellness Statistics

Financial stress remains one of the top wellness concerns.

- **61%** of employees cite financial stress as their top source of anxiety. (PwC 2025 Financial Wellness Survey)
- Companies offering financial education programs see a **30% drop** in employee financial stress levels. (PwC)
- **42%** of employers now offer retirement planning workshops as part of wellness benefits. (EBRI, 2025)
- **38%** of Gen Z employees say financial wellness tools are their most valued benefit. (LinkedIn Talent Solutions)
- Workers with access to financial counseling are **25% more likely** to stay at their current job for 5+ years. (SHRM)

5. Stress Management and Burnout Prevention

Work-related stress and burnout are serious threats — but effective programs can make a difference.

- **58%** of employees report feeling burned out at least once a month. (APA 2025 Stress Survey)
- Companies with robust stress management programs report **35% lower absenteeism** rates. (CDC)
- Offering flexible work hours reduces burnout symptoms by **41%**. (Gallup)
- **44%** of employees say access to mindfulness resources helps manage daily stress. (Headspace for Work)
- Only **22%** of employees feel their company effectively recognizes early signs of burnout. (Deloitte)

6. Hybrid and Remote Work Wellness Trends

Remote and hybrid models have permanently reshaped wellness needs.

- **67%** of remote workers expect wellness benefits tailored to home setups. (Buffer State of Remote Work)
- **55%** of organizations offer virtual ergonomic assessments for home offices. (SHRM)

- Remote employees with wellness stipends report **28% higher job satisfaction**. (Owl Labs 2025)
- **36%** of companies now host virtual wellness retreats annually. (Wellness Council of America)
- Employers with hybrid wellness programs see a **23% increase** in [employee retention](#). (FlexJobs)

7. Nutrition and Healthy Eating Support

Good nutrition fuels better work performance.

- **40%** of employers provide access to healthy food delivery partnerships or cafeteria options. (SHRM 2025)
- Offering healthy snacks at the workplace boosts employee satisfaction by **18%**. (Workplace Wellness Council)
- **51%** of wellness programs now include nutrition coaching. (Global Wellness Institute)
- Workers participating in employer-sponsored nutrition programs report **11% higher energy levels** during the workday. (CDC)
- **27%** of employees actively use healthy eating apps reimbursed by employers. (Forbes)

8. Preventive Health and Screening Initiatives

Early intervention saves lives — and costs.

- **74%** of large employers offer on-site flu shots and preventive screenings. (National Business Group on Health)
- Employees participating in annual health screenings are **26% less likely** to experience chronic illness flare-ups. (Mayo Clinic)
- **62%** of employees are more willing to attend health screenings if incentives are offered. (Gallup 2025)

- Preventive care programs reduce overall healthcare costs by an average of **\$1,200 per employee** annually. (RAND Corporation)
- **48%** of employers now provide DNA health screenings or personalized risk analysis. (HR Technologist)

9. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in Wellness Programs

Wellness must be inclusive to be effective.

- **60%** of employees say their employer's wellness offerings feel culturally inclusive. (Mercer 2025)
 - Companies investing in DEI-focused wellness initiatives saw **19% higher engagement rates**. (McKinsey Wellness Report)
 - **45%** of LGBTQ+ employees say inclusive mental health support has improved their sense of belonging. (Out & Equal Workplace Advocates)
 - **52%** of companies include DEI training as part of their holistic wellness approach. (SHRM)
- Minority employees with access to tailored wellness resources are **33% more likely** to report positive mental health outcomes. (Gallup)

10. Technology's Role in Workplace Wellness

Tech-driven wellness is the new norm.

- **73%** of organizations use wellness apps to support employees' physical and mental health. (Gartner)
- Companies using AI-driven wellness tools report **27% higher program participation rates**. (Forbes Tech Council)
- Wearable fitness trackers are subsidized by **49%** of companies. (Wellable)
- Gamified wellness programs lead to a **32% boost** in engagement. (Virgin Pulse 2025)
- **39%** of employers offer VR-based stress reduction and meditation programs. (CB Insights)

11. ROI and Business Impact of Wellness Programs

Wellness isn't just good for employees — it's good for business.

- Companies with strong wellness programs report a **17% higher employee productivity** rate. (Gallup)
- Comprehensive wellness strategies reduce employee turnover by **22%**. (SHRM)
- Businesses that prioritize wellness see **23% higher profitability** on average. (Harvard Business Review)
- Healthcare costs are **lower by 30%** among companies with robust wellness programs. (CDC)
- **64%** of organizations plan to increase wellness program funding over the next 3 years. (Global Wellness Institute)

These stats are not just numbers but they also show the impact of this program on the company and how much was it useful for the people.

Workplace wellness programs have evolved from optional employee perks to strategic investments that drive both individual and organizational success. As demonstrated, these programs not only improve physical and mental health outcomes but also enhance productivity, engagement, and retention. The integration of wellness into workplace culture reflects a broader understanding that employee well-being is essential to sustainable business performance. With rising awareness of mental health, financial stress, and the importance of work-life balance, organizations must adopt holistic and inclusive wellness strategies. As technology advances and employee expectations continue to shift, the future of workplace wellness lies in personalization, accessibility, and data-driven interventions. Ultimately, organizations that prioritize employee well-being are better positioned to thrive in an increasingly competitive and dynamic global market.