

**THE IMPACT OF AN EMPLOYEE WELLNESS
PROGRAMME ON EMPLOYEE WELLNESS
AND PERFORMANCE: A KWAZULU-NATAL
MUNICIPALITY CASE STUDY**

by

Buhle Makhanya

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SUPERVISOR: DR. A VAN NIEKERK

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DECLARATION

I, Buhle Rose-Mary Makhanya, student number 31511317, for the degree, Master of Commerce, declare that

“The impact of Employee Wellness Programme on employee wellness and performance: A KwaZulu-Natal municipality case study”

is my own work, and that all sources that was used and quoted in the dissertation have been indicated in the text and acknowledged by means of a complete reference list.

I declare that ethical clearance has been obtained from the College of Economic and Management Sciences Ethics Research Committee at UNISA (Annexure D) at the University of South Africa and that informed consent (Annexure B) was given by all participants to conduct the research.

Furthermore, this is a dissertation of limited scope (50% of the total master’s degree) for which the Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology prescribes an article format. This format involves four chapters – a scientific orientation to the study, a literature review chapter, a research article chapter, and a conclusion/limitations and recommendations chapter. The department further recommends a page limit of approximately 80 pages (excluding front pages, references, and annexures).

This dissertation adopts the APA 7th edition technical editing and referencing style. For chapter three, the article, the publication guidelines of the South African Journal of Industrial Psychology (SAJIP) were adopted.



19 January 2021

SIGNATURE

DATE

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SUMMARY

THE IMPACT OF AN EMPLOYEE WELLNESS PROGRAMME ON EMPLOYEE WELLNESS AND PERFORMANCE: A KWAZULU-NATAL MUNICIPALITY CASE STUDY

by

R.B. Makhanya

Degree: Master of Commerce (Industrial and Organisational Psychology)

Supervisor: Dr A van Niekerk

The general aim of this study was to gain insight into the perceptions and experiences of line managers regarding the impact of an employee wellness programme (EWP) on employee wellness and performance at a selected municipality in KwaZulu-Natal. As a purposive sample, ten line managers were selected to participate in the study by means of semi-structured interviews. The literature review aimed to conceptualise wellness, employee wellness and employee performance, as well as to explore the impact of EWPs on employee wellness and performance. The specific empirical study aims were to determine line managers' level of awareness and knowledge of the municipality EWP and its purpose, to explore the challenges faced by line managers within the EWP, to explore if the line managers perceived and experienced the municipality EWP as being beneficial to employee wellness and whether participating in the EWP improved employee performance. Lastly, the aim was to make recommendations for improvement that can assist the municipality in enhancing the impact of the EWP on employee wellness and performance within the industrial psychology discipline, and in particular when it comes to employee wellness.

The research findings reveal that line managers were aware of and had knowledge about the existence of the EWP through marketing campaigns, inductions and activities. They also confirmed they had personal engagement experience through participation in the programme. They perceived the main purpose of the EWP as being to support employees in achieving a work-life balance and providing counselling and advisory services. Participants noted certain challenges with regard to participating in

the programme, such as fear of being judged, victimised and stigmatised, and a lack of confidentiality and trust, which affects employees' privacy and security. Also, they doubted wellness officer competence, which included the necessary skills and training for dealing with complex cases. Lastly, gender and cultural beliefs also posed challenges. Line managers found it beneficial to participate in the EWP. It improved employee wellness and performance. Employees developed mechanisms to cope with work, personal and emotional problems. Wellness officer availability, competence and skills were recommended by participants as ways of enhancing the EWP. Involvement of other stakeholders was another recommendation for improvement. This involvement would include wellness champions, organised labour and line managers. Programme managers should consider increasing EWP awareness by improving marketing, while emphasising programme benefits and confidentiality.

KEY WORDS

Wellness; employee wellness programme; employee wellness; performance; interpretivist paradigm; qualitative research; case study

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
EWP	Employee Wellness Programme
HR	Human Resources
SA	South Africa
SABPP	South African Board of People Practices
SALGA	South African Local Government Association

CHAPTER 1

SCIENTIFIC ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH

The dissertation explores line managers' perceptions and experiences regarding the impact of an EWP on employee wellness and performance at a selected KwaZulu-Natal municipality. Chapter one provides the background and motivation for the study, the problem statement, and the research questions. The general and specific aims of this study are described in terms of theoretical and empirical outcomes. Below is a discussion of the paradigm perspective, which forms the guiding framework for the research design. Lastly, an outline is provided of the chapters in this dissertation, followed by a chapter summary.

1.1 BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

The working life in the current employment setting is characterised by pressures of globalisation, competitiveness, and uncertainty (Kalliath & Kalliath, 2012). These developments impact every organisation, be it private or public sector. The trends affect workplace conditions and ultimately affect employee health regardless of the sector (Landsbergis, 2003). Organisations require employees who are both mentally and physically balanced in terms of their health status to perform and survive the constant changes taking place in the 21st-century world of work (Ferreira, 2012). Hence, organisations of all sizes make use of different health management solutions to respond to the modern work life. According to Nel et al. (2011), current health and safety hazards require organisations to take a proactive step and implement interventions to deal with health and safety issues.

A study conducted by Ho (2017) indicated that organisations need to prioritise investing in employee wellness programmes (EWP's) and interventions. The performance of any organisation depends on how well its employees perform (Abe et al., 2016). As such, employee performance is supported by various organisational strategies and initiatives (Mungania et al., 2016). EWP's are driving performance in the long-term (Mungania et al., 2016). The EWP concept is widely used in the human resources (HR) discipline in most organisations in South Africa (SA). According to

Conradie et al.(2016), EWP's in SA began as safety initiatives in the mining industry and later the programme was revised to include the promotion of health, wellness, and productivity. Surujlal and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2015) described workplace wellness as a process that is aimed at changing the emotional, spiritual, and psychological and health levels of the employees in the organisation. Employee wellness has become a priority for modern organisations due to the strength it adds to the bottom line by improving productivity (Surujlal & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2015). These programmes are also designed to improve organisational output, performance, and the bottom-line, as well as impact the talent management strategy (Matlhape, 2003; Nyati, 2013). Additionally, a study conducted by Zheng et al (2015) proves that wellness interventions have an impact on performance scorecard and profitability. This has led to both local private and public organisations promoting and prioritising employee wellness.

In SA, the South African Board for People Practices (SABPP) and industry HR leaders have taken the initiative in elevating the wellness debate regarding the importance of EWP's in organisations. This has resulted in the development of the wellness standards aimed at ensuring that organisations continue to implement and prioritise wellness. The SABPP identified EWP as one of the thirteen HR Standards aimed at addressing safety, health, and wellness-related issues and tasks to form part of a comprehensive wellness strategy (Abbott & Meyer, 2015). Therefore, it is critical to incorporate EWP into the HR strategy. EWP allows organisations to have a competitive advantage and survive the pressures of globalisation (Chenoweth, 2011). Comprehensive and effective EWP is key to ensuring employees perform at their maximum level (Soldano, 2016).

In a report published by PriceWaterhouseCoopers (2015) on wellness, Chief People and Change Leader, Barry Vorster, said the international experience has, among other things, led to a greater awareness about the importance of wellness and its enormous advantages on the organisational scorecard. He mentioned that it calls for wellness to be recognised at a strategic level, and most importantly, executive support is necessary for successful wellness strategy implementation (Clark et al., 2015). This statement indicates that wellness is an international issue and that it needs to be prioritised at an executive management level as pointed out by Soldano (2016).

According to Sieberhagen et al. (2011) organisations are mindful of employee wellness related issues and the negative impact that overlooking wellness strategy can have. The negative effect is demonstrated in the annual organisational reports, for example, high absenteeism rates. Thus, EWP's should be taken seriously by organisations, and they should continue to be part of the HR strategy, including the public sector, particularly in municipalities.

A study of the management of wellness in 16 organisations in SA conducted by Sieberhagen et al. (2011), showed that organisations invested between R140 000 and R5 million per annum on EWP's, which points to the importance of, and commitment to, wellness strategies. Wellness interventions include programmes like resident counsellors, promoting a healthy lifestyle, onsite gyms, drug and alcohol abuse rehabilitation, and employee assistance programmes (EAP's). The 2015 Robert Walters Whitepaper entitled *The Value of Promoting Employee Health and Wellbeing* reported that over 90 professionals surveyed indicated that it was fundamental for them to join an organisation that promotes wellness. The findings of the report concluded that organisations could increase their productivity by 15% by encouraging employee wellness.

Otuonye (2014) indicated that participating in EWP yielded positive results and improved employee wellness, which, in turn, leads to improved employee performance. It is against this rationale that the researcher is interested in conducting a study at the municipality to gain insight into line managers' perceptions and experiences regarding the impact of an EWP on employee wellness and performance.

The researcher is a former wellness manager who worked at various big mining companies across SA. Her responsibilities included designing, promoting, and implementing EWP strategies, and ensuring there was a high utilisation rate and that employees benefited from the programme. In the role, the researcher learned that EWP's could contribute to employee wellness and performance if line managers play an active role in the process. This led to her developing a keen interest in exploring this topic further by conducting this study. However, she acknowledges that her previous experience, and subsequent bias, could impact on the research findings. This will be addressed by reflecting on her role throughout the research process. The

municipality has implemented the EWP to reduce costs associated with psychosocial challenges experienced by employees. The municipality is uncertain about whether the EWP is yielding positive results and therefore it is critical to conduct this study.

Organisations are still facing employee wellness related issues (Sabharwa et al., 2019). According to Ott-Holland et al., (2017), there are limited studies that focus on how EWP's are linked to other organisational scorecard measures. Studies conducted by LeCheminant et al. (2015) as well as Von Thiele Schwarz and Hasson (2011) concentrated on how health habits and behaviours related to individual productivity rather than the relationship between EWP's, employee wellness, and performance.

EWP can have a direct impact on employee wellness and performance. Research conducted by Churchill et al., (2014), Gubler et al., (2018) and Koruda, (2016) revealed that EWP plays a significant role in enhancing employee wellness and performance. By having an EWP strategy in place could assist the organisations to manage employee wellness and performance (Mungania et al., 2016; Radler et al., 2015; & Griggs, 2017). The municipality is in the right direction by implementing EWP as a tool to drive wellness and performance which in turn could improve service delivery. Most of these studies were not conducted in SA, in particular the municipalities. It is against this rationale that this study is required.

The outcome of this study will assist management in improving service offerings and helping policy developers in developing informed EWP policy that encourages management to invest in EAP's and health promotion programmes for their employees. Lastly, it will allow the wellness manager and HR management to develop employee wellness strategies and practices that will have a positive impact on employees' wellness and performance.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The public service wellness framework alluded to above has resulted in municipalities implementing EWP's for over ten years in the form of EWP and EAP as a compulsory initiative from the national government (Abe et al., 2016). The programme has benefited municipal employees in several ways, including HIV/AIDs counselling

sessions, financial skills, stress management, and legal advice (Salga, 2018). However, there is a great need to explore whether the EWP positively impacts on employee wellness and performance. According to Mattke et al. (2012), there is a lack of evidence for linking employee wellness programmes with their expected benefits in organisations. Both the public and private sector are experiencing challenges in terms of having employees that are clouded and affected by economic, social, political, and environmental changes. Thus, employees are unable to perform at their maximum levels which in turn affects organisational performance. According to Hoque and Dawad (2016), employee health is a priority in this competitive environment, both at a local as well as an international level. Municipalities have a huge responsibility to deliver quality service to SA citizens, in this case, the KwaZulu-Natal community. Healthy employees are required to fulfil this mandate.

The current SA local government landscape, with its increasing service delivery protests, leadership challenges, and law enforcement issues, put municipality resources under a lot of stress, including HR. If the wellness programme is not designed to support employees to perform well under pressurised circumstances, the impact can be negative and hinder service delivery. As EWP's have been implemented in the municipality, the question remains whether it improves employee wellness and performance.

This study will firstly provide data on the perceptions and experiences of line managers regarding the impact of EWP on employee wellness and their performance. It will also contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the topic in the Industrial and Organisational Psychology discipline and more specifically its sub-discipline of employee wellness. It will indicate which areas of wellness strategy deserve more investment to address wellness challenges in a municipality. The study will provide findings and recommendations to help the municipality implement a well-informed EWP. From the researcher's recommendations, the municipality may review systems, action plans, policies, and procedures to ensure improvement in the wellness programme. This study will enlighten management on the benefits, challenges, and concerns encountered by line managers who participate in the wellness programme. According to Zula (2014), in most cases, organisations do not have sufficient mechanisms internally to assess the impact of EWP. Furthermore, Zula (2014) points

out that line management participation and engagement is one of the success factors of the EWP. Therefore, this study aimed to answer the following literature review and empirical research questions below.

The literature review research questions were as follows:

Literature question 1: How is wellness and employee wellness and its related constructs conceptualised?

Literature question 2: How is employee performance and its related constructs conceptualised?

Literature question 3: What is the impact of EWP's on employee wellness and performance?

The empirical research questions were as follows:

Empirical question 1: What is the level of EWP awareness?

Empirical question 2: What is line managers understanding of the purpose of the EWP?

Empirical question 3: What are the main challenges faced within the EWP?

Empirical question 4: How do line managers perceive and experience that employees' wellness benefit from participation in the EWP?

Empirical question 5: How do line managers perceive, and experience employees' performance improve from participating in the EWP?

Empirical question 6: What recommendations can be made to improve and assist the municipality to enhance the impact of the EWP on employee wellness and performance?

1.3 AIMS

The research aims consisted of one main aim and a few specific aims. The aims were developed from the above research questions.

1.3.1 General aim

This study aimed to gain insight into the perceptions and experiences of the line managers regarding the impact of an EWP on employee wellness and their performance at a selected municipality in KwaZulu-Natal.

1.3.2 Specific aims

The specific literature aims of the study were as follows:

- Specific literature aim 1: To conceptualise wellness and employee wellness and their related constructs.
- Specific literature aim 2: To conceptualise employee performance and its related constructs.
- Specific literature aim 3: To explore the impact of EWP's on employee wellness and performance.

The specific empirical study aims were as follows:

- To determine line manager's level of awareness and knowledge of the municipality EWP and its purpose.
- To explore the challenges faced by line managers within the EWP.
- To explore if the line managers perceive and experience the municipality EWP beneficial to employee wellness.
- To explore if line managers perceive and experience participating in the EWP improved employee performance.
- To make recommendations of improvement that can assist the municipality to enhance the impact of the EWP on employee wellness and performance.

1.4 PARADIGM PERSPECTIVE

According to Bhattacharjee (2012), a paradigm refers to the worldview of how researchers view, plan, design, and conduct studies. Researchers like Tracy (2013) defined a paradigm as a series of assumptions that informs individual beliefs. Most scholars have used the concept of a paradigm and philosophy interchangeably to explain an individual's way of seeing and making meaning of the world.

1.4.1 Research paradigm

In this study, an interpretive paradigm was adopted, in other words as stated by Thanh and Thanh (2015) the main focus was to explore how the municipality's line managers perceive and experience the impact of the EWP on employee wellness and their performance. From line managers' experiences and interpretation, different views of understanding wellness were uncovered and these made the findings of the study richer (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). Creswell (2014) lists three main assumptions in research, namely ontological, epistemological, and methodological.

Ontology is a "branch of philosophy concerned with the assumptions we make to believe that something makes sense or is real, and the very nature or essence of the social phenomenon we are investigating" (Scotland, 2012, p. 9). The ontological assumption of this study was that line managers' EWP experiences are real, varied, and worth being understood. This study enabled the researcher to gain insight into the unique, perhaps complex, lived experiences of line managers of an EWP. For this study, the researcher believed that there was more than one reality to be explored.

The epistemological assumption is focused on the individual's way of finding knowledge and becoming aware of the truth of the world. In other words, it is concerned with the researcher exploring the participant's internalisation of their realities and how they conceptualise and make meaning of the topic being studied (David & Sutton, 2011). The epistemological assumption of this research was to interview and listen to line managers to understand their experiences and interpretations. Engaging with them served as the main source of data collection.

Methodological assumptions include the research design, research methodology, approach, and procedures applied in a study, or the steps followed during an investigation of an issue (Scotland, 2012). The methodological assumptions adopted for this study are outlined in Chapter 3.

1.4.2 Theoretical paradigm

This study adopted the interpretivist paradigm as its theoretical paradigm. Interpretivism assumes that individuals can interpret their own world, and their experiences could be better explained through understanding their context (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Therefore, the interpretivist paradigm was applied to this study, and it assisted the researcher in achieving the literature aims, which were firstly, to conceptualise wellness and employee wellness and their related constructs, and secondly, to conceptualise employee performance and its related constructs. Lastly, the aim was to explore the impact of EWP's on employee wellness and performance.

1.5 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

The following definitions will serve as a central point of discussion in this study:

- Wellness is related to optimal health and well-being of an individual (Sieberhagen et al., 2011).
- Employee wellness is defined using the six dimensions of the National Wellness Institute (NWI), which includes (1) spiritual, (2) occupational, (3) intellectual, (4) emotional, (5) physical, and (6) social wellness (NWI, 2018).
- EWP was defined as the HR support strategy intervention crafted to support line managers in improving employee wellness and performance through various health and wellness related interventions (Sieberhagen et al., 2011).
- Employee performance is defined as the state of achieving an individual goal and organisational effectiveness (Pradhan & Jena, 2017).

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN

Leedy and Ormorod (2015) described research design as a detailed plan used by researchers to conduct research. It involves the researcher's approach, strategy, data collection and data analysis methods, and ethical considerations. A case study research design approach was adopted. Creswell (2017) explained it is a design of inquiry derived from philosophy and psychology, whereby the researcher explored and described the lived experiences of participants involved in an EWP as defined by the participants themselves.

1.6.1 Research approach

A qualitative research approach was adopted for this study and drew on interpretivism principles. This study is qualitative and inductive (Bhattacharjee, 2012). The approach enquired into line managers lived experiences of EWP. Its impact on employee wellness and performance was also explored, and in so doing it contributed to knowledge. The data was organised, interpreted, analysed and communicated to address real-world concerns of EWP beneficiaries (Tracy, 2013). A qualitative approach enabled a detailed and in-depth analysis of the line manager's perceptions and experiences regarding the impact of an EWP on employee wellness and performance (Creswell, 2014).

1.6.2 Research method

According to Viswambharan and Priya (2016), the researcher's choice of methodology is guided by the questions being formulated. For the proposed research questions, the qualitative research method was chosen to gain insight into the perceptions and experiences of the line manager regarding the impact of an EWP on employee wellness and performance. The nature of this type of research is exploratory, and open-ended questions were used (see Annexure C) to allow participants to relay their experiences. Participants were interviewed using semi-structured interviews to collect rich data and this allowed the interviewer to ask clarifying and probing questions (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

1.6.2.1 Research strategy

An interpretivist strategy was applied in this research which is exploratory in nature. An interpretivist approach was deemed to be the most appropriate as the researcher aims to explore a contemporary phenomenon in real-life experiences, as explained by the participants themselves (Creswell, 2014). The aim was to gain insight into the perceptions and experiences of the line manager regarding the impact of an EWP on employee wellness and performance. In most cases, this type of study is used to explore areas in which the researcher has no or little knowledge (Guerrero-Castañeda et al., 2017).

1.6.2.2 Research setting

The research setting is defined as the place where the data is collected from the research participants in a specific environment (Creswell, 2014). This research targeted a municipality that has implemented EWP's. The municipality is one of the largest SA municipalities and employs approximately 20 000 employees. The municipality has nearly nine divisions called clusters. It has implemented a comprehensive EWP for all employees at no cost as part of the HR strategy, that is headed by the Wellness Manager. The EWP, among other objectives, is aimed at assisting employees with regards to their wellness and performance. eThekweni municipality offers strategic services to the community and is working towards achieving priority goals as outlined in its 2030 vision. Vision 2030 states that the municipality is striving to become Africa's most liveable and caring city (www.durban.gov.za). To accomplish this vision, EWP was implemented to ensure employees stay healthy. Although the municipality has EWP in place, the EWP report 2018/2019 reflects that line managers are referring employees for various reasons, and the link with employee performance is uncertain. The municipality allocated resources towards the EWP and there was a need to gain insight into the perceptions and experiences of the line managers regarding the impact of an EWP on employee wellness and their performance.

1.6.2.3 Entree and establishing researcher role

The municipality required the researcher to apply for permission to conduct the study among its employees. Therefore, permission was obtained to conduct the proposed research (see Annexure A). Possible participants were approached, and background information was shared with them, after which they were invited to participate in the study. They were each e-mailed a cover letter and informed consent forms beforehand (see Annexure B) with a written explanation of the terms and conditions to participate in the study. After that, appointments were scheduled between the researcher and the participant via telephone, in which the research process, as well as research protocols during the COVID-19 pandemic, were discussed. Online interviews were conducted immediately after the virtual consent confirmation was obtained. Participants were requested to sign and e-mail the consent forms. Before conducting the research, the interviewer's role was clarified as that of a University of South Africa master's student and not their HR Manager. In this study, the researcher collected data, and interpreted and reported on findings and conclusions.

1.6.2.4 Sampling

There were about 150 line managers at the selected municipality site, which is regarded to be the population of the case study (Saunders et al., 2012). The sampling methodology that was followed in this study is a non-probability sample in which participants were chosen according to their experiences of the phenomenon (Pandey et al., 2017). The sample was a purposeful sample (Creswell, 2014) and the researcher's knowledge of the population was utilised to choose the participants. For an interpretivist study, 5 to 25 interviews are deemed suitable (Creswell, 2014). This increases the probability of gaining rich data. A sample size of 10 line managers, 2 from each unit, were selected according to the following inclusion criteria: (1) holds a line management position at the head office; (2) line managers that had 5-10 years' experience in managing employees and since the inception of the EWP; (3) line managers that were a task grade 14 and above and (4) line managers who had interacted with the EWP, by referring employees to the programme.

The exclusion criteria for the sample were as follows :(1) line managers from other divisions due to geographical location; (2) line managers that had less than 5 years' experience and were not in employment since the inception of the EWP; (3) line managers that were below task grade 14; and (4) line managers who had not interacted with the programme, in other words had not referred employees to the programme.

The sample size was further guided by data saturation. Thus, the researcher stopped recruiting participants when themes were repeating themselves during the data analysis phase. The process was repeated until no new themes emerged, or no additional insight was provided. According to Ness (2015), it is important for the qualitative researcher to indicate when data saturation is reached.

1.6.2.5 Data collection

The primary data collection method applied in qualitative research is conducting interviews which assist in getting rich data about the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Therefore, in this study, data was collected in the form of semi-structured interviews and were scheduled for approximately 60 minutes each. Due to COVID-19 and social distancing protocols during qualitative research, participants were advised of such, including zero human interaction (Greeff, 2020). One-on-one interviews were conducted with the participants via Microsoft Teams which is an online platform, and an interview guide was used (see Annexure C) (Creswell, 2014). Semi-structured interviews were scheduled over the course of two weeks. These 10 participants were requested to attend semi-structured interviews, and to elaborate on their experiences of participating in the EWP within the municipality context.

Creswell and Poth (2017) recommended that a qualitative researcher conduct a semi-structured interview, record the interview proceedings, and take notes for ease of reference. This was done to ensure that the findings adequately explained the research problem being studied.

1.6.2.6 Recording of data

Creswell (2014) emphasised the need for developing an interview protocol to assist in conducting the interviews smoothly. During the interview process, the interview schedule was used to ask questions in sequence, and Microsoft Teams recorder was used to record the participant's responses. Participants consented to the recording before the start of the interview session and taking of notes. Since the interviews were audio-recorded, the recordings were transcribed verbatim in advance to perform data analysis. They provided a full record and ensured objectivity (Creswell, 2014).

1.6.2.7 Data analysis

During the analysis stage, researchers must examine and make meaning of data (Creswell, 2017). The study employed thematic analysis as it is effective in detecting, analysing and reporting themes from the data collected (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data were organised and displayed as themes and categories (Creswell, 2009). The six-step thematic data analysis process outlined by Creswell (2014), was utilised as a guideline to analyse the data. The steps followed are detailed below:

- Step 1: Data was organised and prepared for analysis, which involved verbatim typing of the interviews and clarifying unclear responses with the participants.
- Step 2: The researcher read carefully and reviewed all the data from participants, which included picking up ideas of participants and getting a general sense of what participants were saying, and reflected on it.
- Step 3: The researcher in this step started to generate codes of all data. Here the researcher used different highlighters to connect the themes and sub-themes and highlighted key comments. These comments were categorised and labelled using a unique code. A codebook was developed at this stage.
- Step 4: At this stage, the researcher began to work on the coding process and generated a detailed description of the participant's information. Themes were created and used as main headings in the findings section of the research report.

- Step 5: The researcher in this step started to plan how the themes were going to be organised and presented narratively. In this step, the researcher began to include and exclude certain contents. This involved an in-depth discussion of themes, subthemes, quotations, and tables as a supplement to the discussions.
- Step 6: This last step included understanding and interpreting the findings of the study. Identifying and pointing out some lessons learned from the data analysis. At this stage, the researcher confirmed the objectives of the research in comparison with the literature review (Creswell, 2014).

1.6.2.8 Strategies employed to ensure quality data

Creswell (2014) argues that the researcher should consider several validity and reliability strategies to be discussed at the proposal stage to show precision and ensure the correctness of the results of the study. In this study, the following aspects helped ensure the quality of the data:

Transferability refers to a situation where the results of the research can be replicated to other environments. The researcher ensured that a comprehensive explanation of methods used in the study was provided to allow other researchers to repeat the study in other environments (Creswell, 2014).

Dependability refers to whether the results of the study remain the same. It focuses on the consistency of the results if a similar study was to be conducted again using similar methodology and respondents. The research process was detailed and documented in length. This allowed room for detailed reviews to be conducted by other researchers. The researcher also conducted quality checks on the data (Creswell, 2014).

Confirmability refers to whether other researchers can confirm the findings of the study and eliminate researcher bias. The transcripts and audio files were made available to the researcher's supervisor for review and quality checking. In reporting the findings, verbatim quotes were used to substantiate the interpretations of the researcher (Creswell, 2014).

Credibility refers to the extent to which the findings represent the originality or truth-value of the participant's responses. This was achieved by building a relationship with the participants prior to the interview. Spending time with participants allowed the researcher to understand the culture of wellness. The researcher's interpretation was sent to each participant to confirm if their transcripts reflected what they said and to verify its accuracy (Creswell, 2014).

Reflexivity refers to the fact that the researcher should be mindful of the relationship with the participants and how this could impact the findings of the study (Haynes, 2012). In short, the researcher was aware of her role throughout the process. In this study, the researcher kept notes of the research site and behaviours of participants using a diary to reflect on her role as a researcher, her experience while interacting with the participants, and her experiences as HR manager in the municipality. This enabled the researcher to separate out the two roles of researcher and HR manager.

1.6.2.9 Reporting

A qualitative research writing format was employed. Findings of the study were reported through themes and sub-themes. Extracts and verbatim quotes from the semi-structured interviews served as a foundation from which the sub-themes and themes were developed (Creswell, 2014). In all cases, verbatim quotes from participant responses were used to substantiate interpretations.

1.6.3 Ethical considerations

It is a requirement that the researcher receives ethical clearance from the UNISA College of Economic and Management Sciences Ethics Research Committee to proceed with the proposed study. An application was filed accordingly. Once ethical permission had been granted (see Annexure D), the researcher approached the identified participants and obtained their consent (see Annexure B) to participate in the study (Mertens, 2016). Participation in the study was voluntary, and participants could withdraw whenever they wished to do so (Mertens, 2016). The researcher used pseudonyms to protect the individuals' anonymity (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams using the researcher's office, and participants

used their own offices to ensure participants' anonymity, confidentiality and privacy (Creswell & Poth, 2017). This was also done to ensure social distancing and to comply with qualitative research COVID-19 protocols (Greeff, 2020). The relationship that existed between the line managers and the researcher was acknowledged, clarified, and understood by the participants prior to conducting the study.

The researcher transcribed the audio recordings herself to ensure participant anonymity and confidentiality. Notes and records were secured in a lockable cabinet at home and electronic copies were password protected. This data will be stored for a period of five years in case the data is required for verification purposes in future. After five years, all hard copies of the data would be shredded, and all electronic copies and files would be permanently deleted from the computer. In addition, the data collected was only accessed by the researcher and her supervisor to guarantee confidentiality.

1.7 CHAPTER LAYOUT

The chapters for this study were outlined as follows:

Chapter One: Scientific orientation to the research

The first chapter was an introductory chapter that provided a scientific overview, the background and motivation to the study, the research problem, research questions, aims, and paradigm perspective and research design applied in the study.

Chapter Two: Literature review

This chapter focused on providing a review of literature related to wellness, EWP, employee wellness, employee performance and the impact of an EWP on the wellness and performance of employees in SA organisations and in the global context.

Chapter Three: Article

This chapter was presented in the form of an article and followed the guidelines as provided by the South African Journal of Industrial Psychology. This chapter discussed the theoretical background of the study, the research design and methodology applied, and the findings of the study. The chapter concluded with the main contribution of the study and limitations and recommendations to industrial and organisational psychologists, HR managers, and EWP managers, as well as for further research.

Chapter Four: Conclusions, limitations, contributions, and recommendations

This chapter linked the findings of the study by providing a conclusion on the findings of the study with contributions made to the field of employee wellness, organisations and further research. It also discussed the limitations of the study and made recommendations aimed at improving EWP's.

1.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter briefly explained the scientific orientation to the research of this study, which was followed by a detailed discussion of the background and motivation of the study and the problem statement. Literature, as well as empirical aims, were crafted from the background, motivation, and problem statement. The aims of the study were

preceded by a brief discussion of the paradigm perspective, which served as a foundation for the research design. Thereafter, the research design was discussed, as was the research approach, research strategy and research methodology, all of which was followed by a brief discussion of specific limitations and recommendations. Finally, the chapter layout of the dissertation was outlined.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents definitions of its key constructs. It then proceeds to present a discussion on how wellness, employee wellness, and their related constructs are conceptualised through literature. Thereafter, it will explore how performance and its related constructs are conceptualised. Finally, it will present a review of literature exploring the impact of EWP's on employee wellness and performance.

2.2 DEFINITION OF KEY CONSTRUCTS

2.2.1 Wellness

In general, wellness is an active process of becoming aware and making choices towards a healthy and fulfilling life. More than being free from illness, it involves a dynamic process of change and growth and a good or satisfactory condition of existence - a state characterised by health, happiness, prosperity and welfare (www.globalwellnessday.com). Wellness is described as “a holistic integration of physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing, fuelling the body, engaging the mind and nurturing the spirit” (Stoewen, 2017, p.1). Further, wellness is defined as a holistic, precautionary lifestyle chosen by individuals to take care of their health and minimise the chances of developing an illness, as well as to enhance the quality of life (Altwaijri et al., 2019). For this study, both definitions are essential as they prioritise the integration of all individual elements, self-care, and self-commitment, to improve one's lifestyle. They are applicable in understating the impact of EWP on employee wellness and performance in the workplace.

2.2.2 Employee wellness

Employee wellness depends on organisational factors and individual capacity to respond to workplace situations. According to Joubert, Grobler, and van Niekerk (2014), employee wellness is significantly impacted by how the environment and their capacities influence individuals. Employee wellness is "life satisfaction" (Bumhira et al., 2017, p. 223) or a level at which an individual's experiences joy in all areas of their life (Bumhira et al., 2017). For this study, Bumhira et al. (2017) and Joubert et al., (2014) definitions of employee wellness will be adopted because they look at employee wellness as a holistic process consisting of the environment, individual psychological capital, and experiences.

2.2.3 Employee wellness programme

According to Martinez-Lemos (2015), EWP refers to a mixture of organisational, educational, and environmental wellness initiatives by employers to support employees and their immediate families in improving their health. EWP is described as the company's health-related initiatives to reduce employee's health risk behaviours and encourage healthy behaviours (Kunte, 2016). For this study, both Kunte (2016) and Martinez-Lemon (2015) definitions will be employed to enhance the understanding of the municipality's comprehensive EWP as well as the role of the line managers in supporting employee wellness, which could later result in improved performance.

2.2.4 Employee performance

Many authors have defined the concept of employee performance differently. They would include Pawirosumarto et al., (2017) who said that employee performance is determined by other factors such as the individual's capability, motivation, and the organisational climate. On the other hand, Rodriguez and Walters (2017) define employee performance as the general attainment of specific tasks assessed against fixed and pre-discussed standards, usually from top-down in line with organisational objectives to achieve budget and service delivery targets and in real-time. This study will adopt an inclusive definition of employee performance as unpacked by both Pawirosumarto et al. (2017) and Rodriguez and Walters (2017). They viewed

employee performance as the individual's responsibility. At the same time, the organisational environment should be conducive and allow for effective performance.

2.3. WELLNESS

The concept of wellness developed post World War II after employers realised that unhealthy and poor working conditions harmed employee's well-being and their performance (Kunte, 2016). From the beginning, wellness focused on physical activities, promoting healthy behaviours and weight management, but now wellness focuses on many initiatives within the wellness scope (Otenyo & Smith, 2017). Some of these recent wellness initiatives include financial wellness technology such as finwelltech, which provides financial education to employees (Moran, 2019).

After undertaking a thorough literature search, three wellness models stand out, among many others. They will be discussed briefly to provide a better understanding of the topic and include: (1) High-level wellness model (Dunn, 1959); (2) Holistic wellness model (Els & De La Ray, 2006); and (3) National Wellness Institute (NWI) six dimensions of wellness (NWI, 2018).

The models have some similarities and to some extent, the same content and meaning. They describe wellness as an ongoing process which comprises of numerous factors which cannot be studied in isolation. The models view the environment as the most significant contributor to employee wellness. Even though there are several wellness models with their own assumptions, principles, and dimensions, it is evident that wellness is associated with completeness where individuals are measured on more than one aspect to improve healthy living and quality of life (Kumar, De Bruyn & Bushney, 2020). The dimensions must be interrelated and communicate with one another to represent a complete person (Oliver et al., 2018). These models influence the design, including various wellness dimensions, and implementation of numerous EWP's in the workplace. Each model is further discussed below.

2.3.1 High-level wellness model (1959)

Louis Dunn coined the term *wellness* and described it as the construct that has a different meaning to individuals. He termed his model the *High-Level Wellness model* and further mentioned that wellness involves the following key elements (Dunn, 1959):

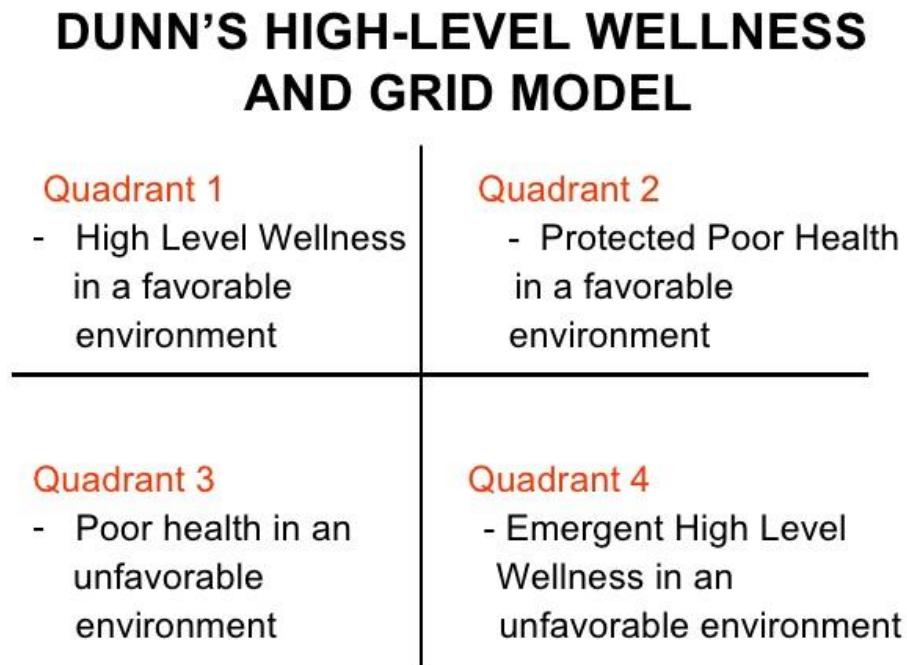
- Promotes individual responsibility in terms of wellness,
- Recognises health as a journey and comprehensive process towards achieving an individual's highest potential of functioning, and
- It involves everybody, that is the individual, colleagues, family, and society.

The model (Figure 2.1) has four quadrants referred to as Q1, Q2, Q3 and Q4:

- Q1 - this quadrant represents individuals who practice healthy lifestyles. These individuals are privileged and have all the resources to support their healthy behaviours.
- Q2 - this quadrant represents individuals whose health requirements and needs are met in a form of government-sponsored primary health care.
- Q3 - this quadrant represents individuals like children who are undernourished due to the country's poverty and unfair distribution of resources.
- Q4 - this quadrant represents individuals who have enough knowledge and education regarding healthy lifestyle but do not prioritise health and wellness due to family challenges.

Figure 2.1

High-Level Wellness Model (Dunn, 1959)

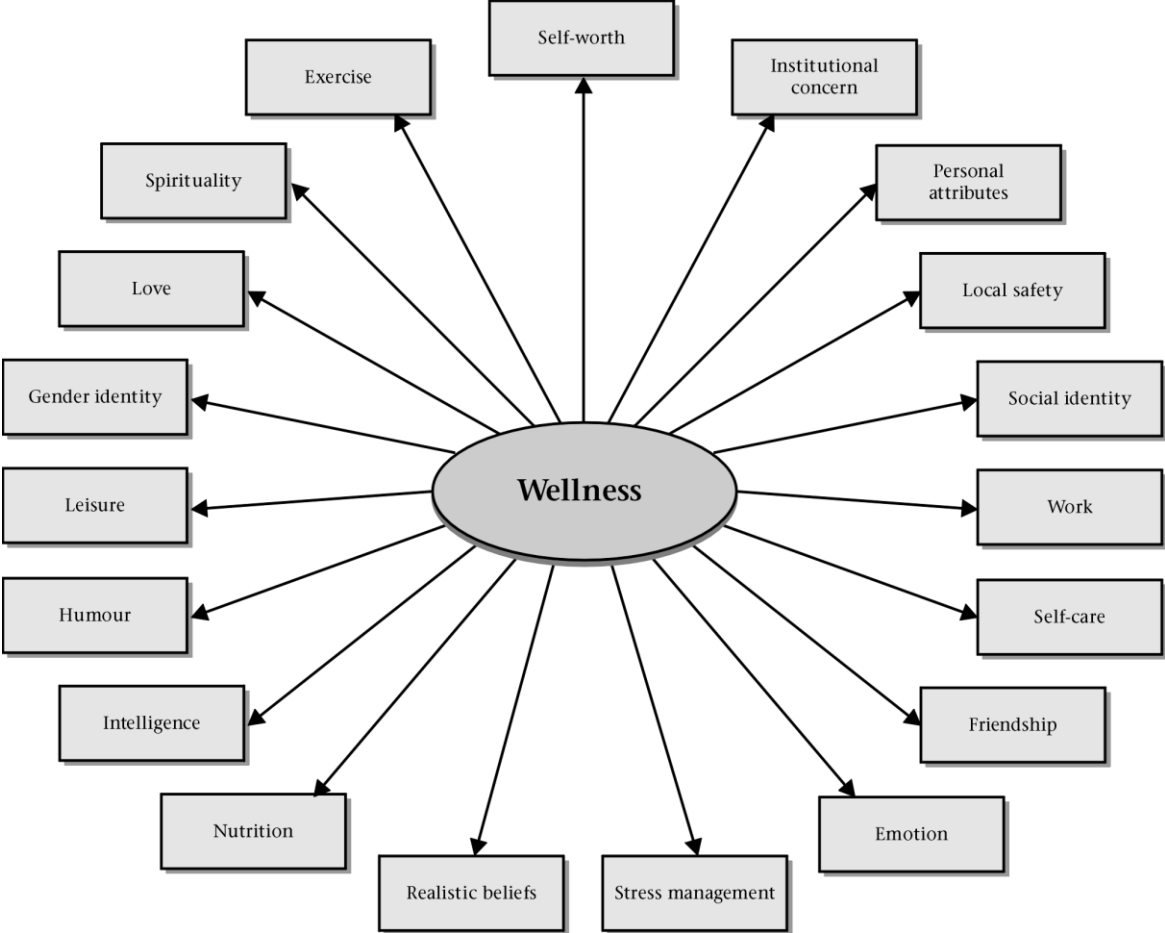


2.3.2 Holistic wellness model

Els and De La Rey's (2006) conducted a holistic wellness study in SA which led to the development of the Holistic Wellness Model. The researchers described wellness as "an integrated construct that cannot be researched in bits and pieces at any particular time" (Els & De La Rey, p. 48, 2006). Holistic Wellness model arose from the examination of the Indivisible Self Model of wellness and has played a significant role in theory development in organisational and positive psychology space. The outcome of the examination produced 19 dimensions to enhance the understanding of wellness, as illustrated in Figure 2.2. It also promotes an understanding that employee wellness is a creation of more than one factor, 16 wellness and three contextual factors that influence individuals' maximum functioning (Els & De La Rey, 2006).

Figure 2.2

Holistic Wellness Model (Els & De la Rey, 2006)



2.3.3 National wellness institute wellness model

The National Wellness Institute developed a wellness model in a university setting focusing on a notion that wellness is interdependent and that there is more than one wellness dimension. These are physical, spiritual, occupational, social, emotional, and environmental (NWI, 2018; Oliver et al., 2018). Figure 2.3 illustrates these six dimensions of wellness developed by NWI (2018):

Figure 2.3

Six Wellness Dimensions (NWI, 2018)



The dimensions of employee wellness programmes, according to NWI (2018) and Oliver et al. (2018) are as follows:

- **Social wellness** – deals with how employees interact with other employees. It encourages employees to contribute to other people's lives and the environment positively rather than being selfish.
- **Occupational wellness** – It encourages individuals to choose careers, which are in line with their values, rather than to choose jobs that are salary driven.
- **Spiritual wellness** – This dimension encourages individuals to search for purpose and meaning in life, including faith and hope, and commitment to one's beliefs that give a sense of meaning and purpose.
- **Intellectual wellness** – This dimension encourages individuals to be creative and stretch their minds to be more productive, for example, developing critical and innovative thinking skills.
- **Emotional wellness** - This dimension encourages individuals to be aware and accept their emotions as well as feelings, rather than ignoring them.

- **Physical wellness** – This dimension encourages individuals to opt for nutritional meals and physical exercises that improve health, rather than compromising it.

Out of the three models discussed above, in this study, the impact of EWP on employee wellness and performance is guided by the NWI wellness model, which categorises wellness into six dimensions. The researcher views this model as the most significant and relevant to outline the purpose of this study. NWI model is one of the many wellness models that comprehensively looks at the most critical parts of wellness in any sector. The model is also crucial for assisting with answering the study's research questions. It will help the researcher gain insight on the line manager's perspectives and experiences regarding the impact of the EWP on employee's wellness and their performance.

2.4 EMPLOYEE WELLNESS AND EMPLOYEE WELLNESS PROGRAMMES

At an international level, the rise of fatalities globally by approximately 4,500, stems from workplace injuries, and around 20% of cardiovascular diseases among working-class occur in the workplace (CDC, 2017). Job stress is a prominent health challenge and the leading occupational health hazard. This situation has led to organisations focusing more on EWP as a strategy to support employee wellness in the workplace (CDC, 2017). EWP's started around the 1970s because of an occupational health and safety drive and workplace health promotion by government. This included specialist conducting onsite safety checks. These movements were influential in the workplace and as a result, the employers viewed it as a mechanism for improving employee health. Programmes were then formalised to offer wellness services to employees (Chung et al., 2017; Harlin, 2013). In recent years, EWP's have progressed from providing health screening and education, and offering counselling, to focusing on physical activities to utilising cash to promote and incentivise employee wellness (Rucker, 2016).

In South Africa, the development and implementation of EWP's date back as far as the 1980s, when mines used it to promote the health of employees and improve production levels in this sector. The main challenge that was affecting the mining sector was

substance abuse (Sieberhagen et al., 2011). As such, multinational companies conducting business in SA have included EWP in their human capital plans to support individual and company performance goals (Sackney et al., 2012). The public sector is no exception. Government endorsed the wellness management framework through the Department of Public Services and Administration to support employees in their wellness journey and improve service delivery (DPSA, 2016). This framework has been cascaded to municipalities nationally for adoption. Therefore, the goals of EWP can be implemented in any organisation regardless of the sector.

Different pieces of legislation were developed in SA with interest, especially employee health and wellness in the workplace. Most of the EWP's in the workplace are rooted in these pieces of legislation, namely: (1) The South African Constitution Act (108 of 1996); (2) Occupational Health and Safety Act, (85 of 1993) ; (3) Employment Equity Act (55 of 1998); and (4) Labour Relations Act (66 of 1995).

Their main aim is to facilitate, support, and protect employee wellness, and serve as legal frameworks for employers in the implementation of employee wellness in the workplace. Patel et al. (2013) argued that organisations are not legally obliged to provide or support employees through EWP's, except in terms of relying on the provisions of the Occupational Health and Safety Act, (85 of 1993). Apart from the absence of a specific piece of legislation to regulate wellness, the SABPP tried to develop a wellness standard as a framework for organisations to standardise wellness practices in SA.

EWP's comes in different forms and levels and are subject to specific organisational wellness strategies. As previously discussed, EWP's are aimed at encouraging employees to reach wellness goals. Huang et al. (2016) indicates that EWP's consist of limited screening intervention and prevention-focused programmes. They focus on providing services related to physical activities and weight management, health risk assessments, and disease prevention approaches (Huang et al., 2016; McGrady et al., 2012) such as nutrition education, smoking cessation programmes, and stress management talks (Griggs, 2017).

A study conducted by Mugari et al. (2016) in the municipality sector indicated that wellness initiatives like EAP's were not well marketed, and they did not involve employees in policy development. However, employees were happy about the service. In contrast, employees argue that EWP's are not necessary, and such programmes are not designed to support employees' needs and preferences (Sieberhagen et al., 2011). Chen et al. (2015), argued that unhealthy employees cause poor performance.

Several studies have indicated that EWP can be advantageous and valuable for both the employer and the employee (Hasijani & Sabale, 2018; Kocakulah & Powers, 2015; Soldano, 2016). Employers benefit from the programme in various ways, namely: (1) reduced absenteeism; (2) improved industrial relations; (3) less health and safety accidents; (4) lower health bills; and (5) improved employee performance and productivity (GWI, 2016; Madison, 2016; Mello, 2014; Ngeno & Muathe, 2014; Wein, 2015).

Global companies like Apple, Facebook, and Google offer incredible wellness benefits to their employees in the form of world-class wellness centres that provide onsite laundry services, healthy meals, nap areas, and massages, among others, at no cost (Zhang, 2018). The examples mentioned above show that employees could enjoy huge benefits from the programme, and these could assist them in dealing with work-related challenges and perform better. If the programme is well implemented, the stakeholders could benefit a lot. However, no programmes are implemented without any challenges.

A lot of studies focus on how proper management of EWP can benefit and add value to both the employer and employees (Rucker, 2016; Soldano, 2016). Despite the benefits derived from the EWP, numerous studies present the contrary. Makgato (2016), Maletzky (2017) and Zhang (2018) note the generic challenges as time constraints, reluctance to participate, and lack of confidence to do physical activities, as well as not wanting to be observed by other colleagues. These challenges may impact negatively on programme implementation, by causing employees not to be keen to participate, which in turn compromises the sustainability of the programme (Zhang, 2018).

However, to maximise the effectiveness of the programme and minimise the challenges mentioned above, De La Torre and Goetzel (2016) recommended the following six approaches that can change EWP in the workplace and ultimately add value to employee wellness and ultimately performance:

- Leadership support and commitment;
- Creating a health culture;
- Developing employee wellness voice interventions;
- Spread a clear message about the programme throughout the organisation;
- Implementing a proper reward system; and
- Developing clear metrics to measure programme effectiveness (De La Torre & Goetzel, 2016).

2.5 EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

Performance in general, according to Business Dictionary (2020), involves the accomplishment of a specified task and is measured against the predefined standards. The four principles that are key to measuring performance are (1) correctness; (2) completeness; (3) within budget; and (4) within a time frame.

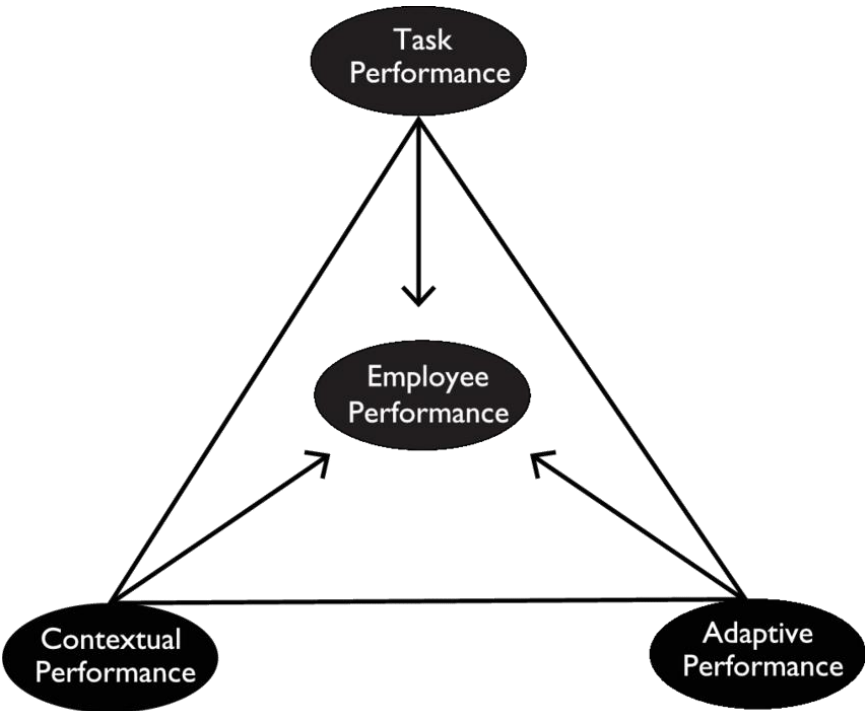
An in-depth understanding of the performance concept would first require a discussion of its dimensions. Pradhan and Jena (2017) mentioned three critical aspects of employee performance (Figure 2.4):

- Task performance-deals directly with the requirements of the job profile.
- Contextual performance-deals with factors and behaviours that are beyond the requirements of the job profile, for example, going the extra mile doing tasks that are outside of one's job description without being written in black and white.
- Adaptive performance or an employee's ability to successfully adapt or adjust behaviour in line with work changes including new colleagues, systems, and leadership.

The three dimensions mentioned above gave rise to the so-called triarchy model developed by Pradhan and Jena (2017) (Figure 2.4). The model provides a comprehensive understanding of the nature and background of employee performance as well as essential factors to consider when designing strategies to improve employee performance (Pradhan & Jena, 2017).

Figure 2.4

Triarchy model of employee performance (Pradhan & Jena, 2017)



For this study, employee performance is a construct that consists of various behavioural elements from the employee's side that need to be nurtured by line managers for better service delivery and success of the organisation. The absence of these clusters of behaviours can impair performance (Pradhan & Jena, 2017). It requires careful attention and referral to EWP to improve such behaviours. Hence, it is critical to gain insight into line management regarding the impact of EWP on employee performance.

According to Na-Nan et al. (2017), performance management refers to an ongoing process of setting organisational objectives that are directly in line with the overall strategy to support and promote individual performance. On the other hand, performance management refers to "the wide variety of activities, policies, procedures, and interventions designed to help employees to improve their performance" (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017, p. 421). Therefore, it is a process that line managers continuously use to bring out the best in individuals and achieve organisational objectives.

Na-Nan et al. (2017) lists five steps as part of the performance management process that are fundamental to this study and discussed them in detail as follows:

Step 1: This step is a prerequisite process that encourages the line managers and the employees to collect performance-related information at different levels of the organisation.

Step 2: In this step, management start planning, and each business unit's performance outcomes are outlined.

Step 3: In this step, the performance evaluation process begins, and initial performance goals are measured to demonstrate whether the performance standards were met as discussed in step 1 and 2.

Step 4: In this step, both management and employees engage and discuss performance issues, gaps, targets, and possible interventions to address shortfalls.

Step 5: After step 4, the performance application step begins, which includes developing an organisation's procedures and strategies (Na-Nan et al., 2017).

For this study, the above performance management process is more relevant as it provides user friendly and manageable steps that are easy to understand. Therefore, it is line management's responsibility to ensure that employees are aware of the different categories of performance management and how they differ. Performance management is the process whereby line managers provide good direction to the employees in attaining organisational goals and a complete understanding of performance expectations (Mbanga, 2018; Rees & Smith, 2014; Tasmin & Akkas, 2017). Accordingly, the line manager and the employee play critical roles in the performance process. For organisations, including municipalities, to maximise their

efficiency in today's economy, employees need to perform their best in given job descriptions and be efficient (Patel et al., 2013).

Pote (2016) asserted that line managers should apply performance management in a way that supports employee growth and development to improve performance. Management should schedule feedback sessions, in which a line manager highlights the highs and lows of the tasks performed in a specific period against initial standards set. In these sessions, performance gaps are identified, and employees who do not meet performance standards are managed differently, including being referred to EWP (Mungania et al., 2016). As a proactive tool, it provides a benefit to the managers by allowing them to diagnose problems early and take corrective measures in time (MSGÉ, 2013).

Poor employee performance impacts negatively on productivity, service delivery, and profit in the organisation (Assiri, 2016; Okoye & Ezejiolor, 2013). In most cases, poor performance is caused by the environment that employees operate in, for example, family problems, job stress, and substance abuse (Assiri, 2016). As a result, line managers are expected to notice behavioural changes in employees like sick leave days taken (Assiri, 2016) and they have the responsibility to refer employees to EWP to show care (Passey et al., 2018). These programmes are designed to assist employees in dealing with personal and wellness issues that harm their performance (Abe et al., 2016).

2.6 INTEGRATION OF THE IMPACT OF EMPLOYEE WELLNESS PROGRAMMES ON EMPLOYEE WELLNESS AND PERFORMANCE

Literature shows that EWP is especially useful in improving employee wellness and performance (Churchill et al., 2014; Gubler et al., 2018; Koruda, 2016). For this study, only studies conducted to evaluate EWP in bringing about improved employee wellness and performance are discussed. A survey on the influence of EWP on organisational performance conducted among 43 banks in Kenya concluded that EWP's impacts on performance (Mungania et al., 2016). Also, findings by Tuwai et al. (2015) on EWP in the commercial banking sector in Kenya shows a positive relationship between employee wellness and performance.

Radler et al. (2015) conducted a study on the twelve-week university EWP, which focused on employees whose body mass index was above 25. It was reported that about 66% of employees improved on weight loss, and little improvements were noted in blood pressure and cholesterol levels. Similarly, Healthy Bean EWP managed to improve employee wellness by reducing the smoking rate to 6%, which was 13% lower than the US average of 19% in 2013 (Griggs, 2017). In a study conducted in the City of Houston, it was found that EWP added value with regards to employee wellness, for example, by improving weight loss and making for more participation in physical activities (Wright, 2017). The research mentioned above are examples of EWP's that realised their objectives.

Yet, there is another recent study in the literature that did not realise the benefits of implementing EWP, which was conducted by Jones and his co-authors at an Illinois workplace and showed no positive effect on employee wellness and performance after two years (Song et al., 2019). Hochman and Cohen (2019) noted that various studies in the past showed that EWP's have not been successful in producing significant wellness benefits. Instead, they have caused unintended outcomes, such as further testing and other interventions. From the above researchers, not all the EWP's yield positive results like improving employee wellness and performance. Street and Lacey (2018) confirms that EWP's fail if there is a misalignment between organisational objectives and employee wellness needs, which could harm employee wellness as well as employer productivity (James & Zoller, 2017).

Other researchers caution that at times some organisations misuse the EWP and make the criteria to participate in the programme very steep for employees, which can be damaging to employee wellness and result in poor performance. Brown (2017), Ford and Scheinfeld (2016), and Madison (2016) commented on certain criticisms of EWP including, financial stress, mistreating employees, forcing participation and compromising confidentiality, and damaging employee's livelihoods. Thus, organisations should exercise care, fairness and be more vigilant when implementing EWP in the workplace to ensure that wellness goals are achieved (Madison, 2016).

Therefore, in the South African context, EWP managers should be mindful of various legislation related to employee wellness and employee's rights such as the Occupational Health and Safety Act (85 of 1993); the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (75 of 1997); the Labour Relations Act (66 of 1995); the Protection of Personal Information Act (4 of 2013); and the Employment Equity Act (55 of 1998) to avoid labour disputes related to employee wellness issues

Most EWP's in the United States of America are very punitive. Employees who do not achieve health and wellness goals nor participate in the programme are fined or pay high premiums, for example at Flambeau Inc. and Honeywell (Koruda, 2016). Such wellness practices can be harmful, unlawful, and discriminatory to employee wellness and performance. As such, they take away the concept of voluntarism in the programme as they were initially developed with that in mind (Ajunwa et al., 2016; Koruda, 2016). Besides, this approach is biased towards the employer, in that the employer benefits more than employees, who are left vulnerable (Koruda, 2016). Thus, outcomes regarding whether EWP impact on employee wellness and performance remain inconclusive, which calls for the need to conduct this study, to gain insight into line managers' perspectives and experiences regarding the impact of the EWP on employee wellness and performance.

The literature stresses the crucial role of line management in shaping and influencing employee wellness and promote EWP to assist employees in reaching their wellness goals (Churchill et al., 2014; Marschke & Mujtaba, 2014; Wein, 2015). For example, in an analysis of about twenty-one peer-reviewed articles, researchers concluded that participation and support by line managers in the EWP were critical for evaluating the effectiveness of the programme (Passey et al., 2018). From the literature above, line managers are essential for enhancing employee wellness and excellent performance. If line management does not support the EWP, employees will view the programme as not valuable nor essential for their wellness (Griggs, 2017).

Madikologa (2014), on the other hand, conducted a qualitative study in the department of roads and transport in Gauteng. Overall, the study revealed that line managers were not willing to participate nor support the EWP due to miscommunication and failure to consult with relevant stakeholders (Madikologa, 2014). This could pose a massive

challenge to the successful implementation of the programme, which in turn could compromise employee wellness and performance.

2.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided an extensive definition of the constructs, as well as an overview of wellness theories and models. It showed how the six-wellness model shaped the existence of EWP's. It explained the introduction of EWP's in the workplace, including the advantages, challenges, services, SA labour laws guiding the wellness practices in the workplace, and SABPP standard guiding organisations in implementing EWP's. This chapter also looked at the EWP support from management employing previous research. Performance, employee performance and performance management processes were outlined. The last part of the section reviewed the integration of employee wellness and performance using previous studies, in particular indicating some of the critical points in the literature to create awareness when using EWP's as an enhancer of employee wellness and performance, as well as the consequences of mismanaging EWP.

CHAPTER 3

ARTICLE

THE IMPACT OF AN EMPLOYEE WELLNESS PROGRAMME ON EMPLOYEE WELLNESS AND PERFORMANCE: A KWAZULU NATAL MUNICIPALITY CASE STUDY

BUHLE MAKHANYA

Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology

UNISA

SUPERVISOR: Dr A Van Niekerk

ABSTRACT

Orientation: An employee wellness programme has been identified as a crucial organisational strategy aimed at enhancing employee wellness and performance.

Research purpose: The aim is to gain insight into line managers' perceptions and experiences regarding the impact of an EWP on employee wellness and performance at a selected municipality in KwaZulu-Natal.

Motivation for the study: The study is crucial for the municipality to understand EWP and enhance employee wellness and performance. Employee wellness may impact positively on performance and ultimately improve service delivery.

Research design, approach, and method: An interpretivism case study using qualitative research was conducted using semi-structured interviews. A purposive sample of 10-line managers were selected who met the inclusion criteria. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to capture the experiences of line managers. Thematic analysis was used to extract themes.

Main findings: Five important themes emerged, namely awareness of EWP, line manager's understanding of the purpose of EWP, challenges faced in contributing to the EWP, EWP benefits to employee wellness and performance, and recommendations of EWP to enhance EWP.

Practical implications: The municipality, wellness specialists, and industrial and organisational psychologists can use these findings as a basis for reviewing EWP strategy. The EWP framework is proposed to enhance EWP for employee wellness and performance.

Contribution/value add: The study makes an important practical and scientific contribution to understanding the EWP and its impact on employee wellness and performance in the workplace.

Key words: Wellness; employee wellness programme; employee wellness; performance; interpretivist paradigm; qualitative research; case study.

INTRODUCTION

Key focus of the study

Organisations globally spend up to \$8 billion per year on employee wellness programmes (EWP), although the benefits and the understanding of the programme are still lacking (Purcell, 2016). Employees continue having wellness challenges. A study published by Mayo Clinic Proceedings in 2016 clearly shows that individuals are battling to stay healthy, and it later affects performance (Purcell, 2016). Researchers believed that if employees are well, employee performance can improve (Wu et al., 2017). As a result, organisations aim to implement effective EWP to improve both employee wellness and performance (Tang et al., 2016). EWP is the responsibility of HR and is managed by wellness officers. Line managers support the implementation of the programme to ensure that employees are well and perform optimally (Purcell, 2016). It is, therefore, critical to understand the impact of an EWP on employees' wellness and performance.

Background to the study

The rise of mental health issues, burnout, depression cases, and other chronic diseases in South Africa (SA) and globally has urged all sectors in the economy, including municipalities, to take serious action to prevent such conditions (Mazur & Mazur-Malek, 2017). According to a report published on the Health24 website by Occupational Care SA, absenteeism costs seem to range between R12 and R16 billion each year and the root causes seem to be related to employee wellness (Zakiyah, 2019). According to the Communicable Diseases Centre, it is envisaged that the control of tobacco use, unhealthy diets, and chronic diseases like heart disease and strokes could be reduced by 80% (Condon & Edwards, 2018). If this prediction materialises it should be noted that organisations stand to benefit by improving employee wellness and performance. More organisations will probably implement EWP's. The results of the survey mentioned above could assist the programme managers in enhancing employee wellness and performance (Clack & Fraser, 2019; Sangachin & Cavuoto, 2016).

The Future of Wellness at Work report produced in 2016 by the Global Wellness Institute indicated that around 3.2 billion employees across the globe are in poor health and not well (GWI, 2016). Organisations are finding it difficult and challenging to manage employee wellness, and it is a primary concern for HR. Since HR's role is people care and management, they assist and provide line management with the tools and programmes to deal with wellness in the organisation. Given the current international wellness scenarios and statistics, EWP should be a main concern and strategic item for every sector and company, whether it be privately or government-owned (Mazur & Mazur-Małek, 2018).

Organisations are obliged to design and implement interventions to improve employee wellness (Bophela & Govender, 2015) and enhance employee performance (Sangachin & Cavuoto, 2018). Condon and Edwards (2018) suggest that organisations should move from traditional EWP to include principles of employee compensation and safety to receive more benefits. The benefits that organisations can expect are resulting in new metrics that will assist in aligning hiring processes and ergonomics (Condon & Edwards, 2018).

The municipality, in this case, is one of the biggest employers in KwaZulu-Natal and relies on healthy employees to ensure that service delivery is achieved as per the South African Local Government Association guidelines. The success and effectiveness of the municipality EWP are also dependent on line management commitment and support (Harry & Gallie, 2019). This statement was confirmed by a study by Quirk et al. (2018) at National Health Service, which revealed that massive support from line management is crucial for the successful implementation of the organisation's health-related interventions and EWP's.

Research purpose

Supporting and prioritising wellness and investing in employees remains top of the agenda and is becoming ever more sophisticated, considering the 21st-century changes that adversely affect organisations (Kowalski et al., 2015). Furthermore, industry 4.0, a competitive economy, socio-economic factors, and demanding citizens impose unreasonable challenges on employees which could negatively affect their

wellness and performance (Mathekga & Sekudu, 2019). Wu et al. (2017) argued that employee wellness is a competitive strategy that is normally ignored by management.

To assist employees in coping with community demands as well as environmental dynamics, the municipalities HR management has invested resources in developing an EWP policy and strategy. EWP is also a priority at a national government level, hence, the municipality programme was developed in line with government's Wellness Management Framework which was implemented in 2008. The framework outlines wellness goals to promote employee wellness among municipal employees and ultimately improve performance (DPSA, 2016). In the municipality, a formal EWP has been in existence for a couple of years. Given the lack of knowledge and awareness of the EWP, different views regarding its purpose, challenges faced in implementing the programme, and the benefits associated with participating in the municipality programme, the researcher deems it important to evaluate the impact of the programme on employee wellness and performance.

Therefore, the purpose of this research was to gain insight into line managers' perceptions and experiences regarding the impact of an EWP on employee's wellness and performance at a selected municipality in KwaZulu–Natal.

The specific literature aims of the study were to:

- conceptualise wellness and employee wellness and their related constructs;
- conceptualise employee performance and its related constructs; and
- explore the impact of EWP's on employee wellness and performance.

The empirical research aims were to:

- determine line managers' level of awareness and knowledge of the municipality EWP and its purpose;
- investigate whether there are challenges faced by line managers in implementing the EWP;
- explore if the line managers find the municipality EWP beneficial to employee wellness;

- explore if line managers found that participating in the EWP improved employee performance; and
- make recommendations for improvement that can assist the municipality to enhance the impact of the EWP on employee wellness and performance.

TRENDS FROM LITERATURE

WELLNESS AND EMPLOYEE WELLNESS

Wellness has been described as a multidimensional phenomenon (Baldwin et al., 2017). According to Mirriam-Webster (2020), wellness involves the key steps taken by an individual in life to achieve a healthy goal. It is “the complex and multifaceted nature of physical, mental and emotional health and well-being of employees and their personal resources (ability, knowledge, motivations) to strive toward well-being” (Solnet et al., 2020, p.2). On the other hand, Mayol et al. (2017) state that wellness is a holistic and self-driven process comprising of multi-dimensions of well-being. Weinhold (2018) state that employee wellness is not about managing absenteeism in the workplace through disease management, but focuses on implementing proactive strategies that change wellness behaviour and attitudes. Schiavo (2020) argues that the definition of employee wellness is growing to include student loan debt aid and pension benefits.

EWP refers to management-initiated wellness interventions to help employees cope with wellness challenges and improve their wellness to deliver on key performance areas (Schneck, 2016). Halloran (2017) describes EWP as employer-focused programmes intending to teach and train employees on correct healthy behaviours, nutritional choices, wellness coping mechanisms, and organisational policies to enhance employee wellness and performance in the organisation. Schneck (2016) and Halloran (2017) definitions point out that EWP is the responsibility of both the employee and the employer as they strive to achieve employee wellness and performance in the workplace.

To explore wellness further, it is necessary to consider wellness models and gain a deeper understanding of the various dimensions that encompass the concept of

wellness. The definitions of wellness discussed above relate to the National Wellness Institutes (NWI) wellness model which proposes six dimensions of wellness and which serve as a theoretical framework for this study. These are physical, emotional, spiritual, social, occupational, and intellectual wellness (NWI, 2018) and the multicultural wellness wheel (NWI, 2019). The six dimensions model was utilised to promote wellness among university students (Baldwin et al., 2017). The dimensions of wellness are mutually dependent and add to balanced healthy living (NWI, 2018):

- Physical Wellness, for example diet;
- Emotional Wellness, for example self-identity;
- Spiritual Wellness, for example peace;
- Social Wellness, for example social support;
- Occupational Wellness, for example job satisfaction; and
- Intellectual Wellness, for example developing creative skills (Baldwin et al., 2017).

Another recent wellness model is the multicultural wellness wheel also developed by NWI. It stresses the importance of three pillars for best and constant wellness; namely personal and family; community; and workplace wellness (NWI, 2019) and is explained as follows:

- Personal and family wellness, focusing on the six wellness dimensions, self-efficacy and medicine, body, spirit, and mind.
- Community wellness, focusing on supporting underprivileged communities and closing healthcare inequalities using skills and policy approaches.
- Workplace wellness focusing on organisational culture awareness and promoting work-life balance (NWI, 2019).

After a literature review of these models, the wellness concept seems to include all six domains of wellness. Personal, family, community, and workplace wellness are also critical for individual wellness.

In the United States of America, EWP was developed as a response to the rise of substance abuse-related cases and to help employees gain coping strategies (George, 2017). Lately, these programmes have included mental, emotional, and financial issues (George, 2017). In the SA environment, EWP started with the objective to prevent labour turnover and, most importantly, assist employees in dealing with political dynamics after 1994 (Kruger & Jacobs, 2019). EWP was also developed in the public space because of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and alcohol abuse (Rakepa, 2012). In most organisations, interventions consist of health screening, weight management, awareness, and education (Ajunwa et al., 2016; Schneck, 2016).

According to Milner et al. (2015), the growing worldwide incidence of chronic diseases which affect employees, further prompted the emergence of EWP as a health-promoting intervention in the workplace. In agreement with this statement, Buxton et al. (2020) emphasise that EWP are both a matter of business and social change strategy.

Although there is no specific wellness legislation, except the Occupational Health and Safety (Act 85 of 1993), it is not compulsory for SA organisations to provide EWP (Patel et al., 2013). SA laws passed by government to provide a framework for establishing EWP's include the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, the Occupational Health and Safety (Act 85 of 1993), Labour Relations (Act 66 of 1995), Basic Conditions of Employment (Act 75 of 1997), Compensation for Occupational Diseases and Injuries (Act 130 of 1993), and the Skills Development (Act 56 of 1997). The Employee Health and Wellness Strategic Framework for the Public Service was implemented in 2008 to provide a holistic policy and strategy to promote employee wellness among public servants and their families (Kruger & Jacobs, 2019).

The EWP benefits include lowering employer healthcare bills, improving retention, managing absenteeism, and improving employee wellness and performance (Kruger & Jacobs, 2019; Madison, 2016). Like any other programmes, EWP's have experienced challenges or barriers that hinder their successful implementation regardless of the sector. Some of the programmes' failure can be attributed to the misalignment between organisational vision, objectives, and employee wellness needs

(Street & Lacey, 2018) as well as reduced participation and high attrition rates (Caperchionea et al., 2015).

Although various researchers hold positive views about EWP, there are a few who are concerned about its effectiveness and how it is approached. When the EWP is executed incorrectly, it can result in grievances and discrimination against other employees (Tang et al., 2016). According to Ajunwa et al. (2016), the incentives and penalties included in the EWP's are making employees worse off and forcing them to participate in the programme. Further, organisations are challenged for invading employee's privacy and using big data to solicit health information (Ajunwa et al., 2016; Madison, 2016). Ajunwa et al. (2016) suggest an ethical wellness framework that consists of (1) signing of the consent form (2) correct use of data collected and (3) fair employment practices to assist an organisation to minimise labour disputes. Dlamini (2015) and Spoonheim and Pronk (2016) argued that everyone in a management position must participate and play a role in the EWP. It is considered the line manager's responsibility to manage, coordinate, plan and facilitate EWP activities (Harry & Gallie, 2019). For this study, line management was viewed as a critical resource, and it was crucial to get their insights into the municipality EWP.

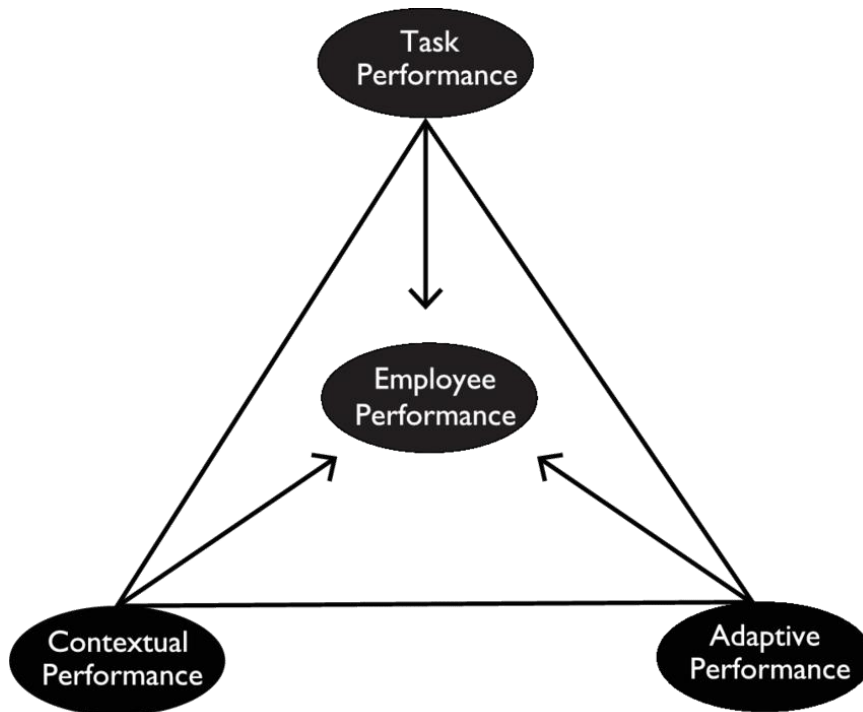
EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

Employee performance as defined by Soriano et al., (2020) and Tomczak, et al., (2018) refers to the outputs attained, and accomplishments of tasks at work by individuals or teams in line with the goals and values of the organisation. According to (Wassem et al., 2019), employee performance includes the portfolio of evidence produced for specific job tasks within a specified period. For this study, both definitions are used to provide a better understanding of employee performance.

According to Waititu et al. (2017), employee performance is influenced by both the individual and external factors such as personality, work environment, skills, knowledge, experience, and rewards. Line managers measure employee performance in terms of quantity, reliability, value and understanding of the job (Waititu et al., 2017).

Pradhan and Jena (2017) explored the concept of employee performance further and proposed an integrated triarchy model to understand employee performance better in the workplace. The model acknowledges three dimensions namely task, contextual and adaptive performance that can be used by organisations to enhance performance.

Triarchy model of employee performance (Pradhan & Jena, 2017)



Performance can be divided into two categories, namely (a) in-role performance which refers to tasks that are job-related and (b) extra-role performance which refers to functions that are crucial in achieving organisational objectives but that are not compulsory (Soriano et al., 2020). Employee performance is measured by line management annually or every quarterly to ensure that key performance criteria are met (Wassem et al., 2019). The main aim of this research was to explore the EWP impact on employee performance.

THE IMPACT OF EMPLOYEE WELLNESS PROGRAMME ON EMPLOYEE WELLNESS AND PERFORMANCE

Research globally has revealed that EWP influences an individual in the workplace, both in their wellness and performance. A study conducted by Martinez (2017), found that participants scored favourably in some dimensions of wellness like intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual wellness, but unfavourable for physical and occupational wellness.

A systematic review conducted between 2000 and 2009 on the EWP effectiveness showed inconsistent results regarding the effectiveness of EWP's in health-related behaviours and reported a negative impact on absenteeism rates and mental health issues (Tang et al., 2016). In another study conducted by Morgan (2017), multiple case-study designs found that participants significantly improved several healthy behaviours such as weight, Body Mass Index, eating habits and blood pressure. The University of Rochester conducted a study to measure the long-term effect of the university EWP in minimising cardiovascular disease risk. The results revealed that the majority of participants' wellness improved. They were able to manage cardiovascular disease and reduced the risk of developing it in future (Pesis-Katz et al., 2020).

The study conducted by Waititu et al. (2017) at Kenya Railways Corporation showed that welfare programmes impact employee performance. The researchers found that the five variables of the programme, including occupational health and wellness, influenced employee performance. Wu et al. (2017) conducted a survey study on investigating the effects of employee performance and found that there is a positive relationship between the two constructs. The studies mentioned above confirm that the outcomes and the impact of EWP continue to be diverse as alluded to by Tang et al. (2016). The impact of an EWP on employee wellness and performance were explored in this study.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design has to do with a documented plan that is intended to guide the researcher during the research project, and includes a methodology and strategy. Most

importantly, the objective with a research design is to get participants to respond to the research questions objectively and achieve the research aims (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). The research design for this study was an exploratory, qualitative research design. According to Saunders et al. (2016), qualitative research refers to data as realities expressed through participants' voices. Also, Leedy and Ormrod (2015) indicate that qualitative research involves a detailed analysis of the topic, presented in words and not figures. The next section will discuss the research approach, research method, and research strategy selected.

Research approach

An interpretivist paradigm was employed in this study wherein the researcher plays a significant role in making meaning by interpreting the participant's experiences (Pulla & Carter, 2018). This specific paradigm and approach allowed the researcher to gain deeper insights into how line managers experienced and perceived EWP impact on employee wellness and performance (Pulla & Carter, 2018).

According to Kamal (2018), the inductive approach is best suited for qualitative research of this nature. For this study, line managers' lived experiences were interpreted through the inductive, interpretive approach to provide insight into how line managers view, experience, and perceive EWP and its impact on employee wellness and performance.

The following assumptions underpinned the study:

- Ontological assumption means that individuals experience reality differently, and they will define it as such (Kamal, 2018). The researcher studied line managers' experiences individually as they presented them during semi-structured interviews.
- Epistemological assumptions consider individuals and their subjective reality as the primary sources of data (Kamal, 2018). The researcher adopted an interactive stance to discover line managers' subjective experiences by exploring their experience of the impact of EWP's on employee wellness and performance.

- Methodological assumptions refer to the types of methods employed by the researcher to gain knowledge. The researcher used interpretive, case study, and qualitative research approaches for this study (Kamal, 2018).

Research method

This section provides an overview of the research setting, a description of the entrée, and establishment of researcher roles, sampling, and data collection methods. Additionally, how data was recorded, five strategies employed to ensure data quality, ethical principles, and the data analysis methodology applied are also included.

Research strategy

This study employed a single case study, using interpretivism to gain a deeper understanding (Mohajan, 2018) of line managers' lived experiences and perceptions regarding the impact of EWP on employee wellness and performance. In general, an interpretive study is based on individual experiences and aims to understand the experiences, while making meaning out of those life experiences (Mohajan, 2018).

Research setting

Research setting refers to the place where the research is conducted (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). This research was conducted at the municipality based in KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. The selected organisation was a municipality with various departments located in its municipal borders, providing support to its more than 20 000 employees and service delivery to the community. The municipality employs a range of employees from various occupational categories, including unskilled, skilled, professionally qualified, senior, and top management. All the participants selected were line managers employed permanently by the municipality from professionally qualified, senior, and top management.

Entree and establishing researcher roles

Firstly, the researcher obtained permission from the municipality to conduct the research (see Annexure A). The researcher commenced with the research project after receiving ethical approval from the University of South Africa (ERC REFERENCE: 2020_CEMS_IOP_007) research ethics committee (see Annexure D). The participants were recruited at the municipality head office from June 2020. Line managers were identified from the HR list and were contacted via email by the researcher to request their participation. Interested participants were provided with a cover letter detailing the research aims and process as well as the researcher's role.

An informed consent form was also attached to inform and protect participants, and they were made aware of their role. Participants were advised to read and sign the informed consent form prior to the commencement of the semi-structured interviews. Upon receiving email confirmation showing their willingness to participate voluntarily, the interviews were scheduled. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using Microsoft Teams. This online platform was chosen to eliminate human interaction during the COVID-19 pandemic as per the UNISA COVID-19 position statement on research ethics (Unisa, 2020). Before proceeding with the online interviews, the researcher's role was outlined as a student researcher fulfilling the master's mini dissertation's requirements, and not as line manager (Senior HR Manager).

Sampling

Purposive sampling was used in this study, which involved the researcher's judgment in selecting participants. The participants deemed it fit to participate in the study because of their involvement in the EWP and their knowledge of the topic (Lui, 2016). The researcher selected 10 participants from the head office to represent the population of 150 line managers based on the principle of data saturation, which is a point where nothing more can be added to the themes by the participants (Lui, 2016). Table 3.1 outlines the characteristics of the participants. Out of the ten line managers who were identified and interviewed, five were managers, three were project managers, and two were senior managers.

Table 3.1**Characteristics of the participants**

Participants	Race and Gender	Designation
P1	African Male	Manager
P2	African Female	Senior Manager
P3	African Male	Manager
P4	African Female	Project Manager
P5	African Female	Manager
P6	African Female	Project Manager
P7	African Female	Project Manager
P8	African Male	Manager
P9	Indian Male	Senior Manager
P10	African Female	Manager

The researcher followed specific criteria in selecting and excluding participants for this research. The participants described above, all met the inclusion criteria, as indicated in Table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2**Inclusion and exclusion criteria of selecting participants**

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Line management based at the head office	Line managers from other divisions due to geographical location
Line managers that have 5-10 years' experience in managing employees and were in employment since the inception of the EWP	Line managers who have less than five years' experience and were not in employment since the establishment of the EWP
Line managers that are task grade 14 and above	Line managers that are below task grade 14

Line managers who have participated in the programme by referring employees to the programme.	Line managers who have not participated in the programme due to not referring employees to the programme
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Data collection methods

Aurini et al., (2016) argued that semi-structured interviews are the most preferred method to achieve the objectives of an interpretive study. Semi-structured interviews were developed by creating open-ended questions in advance during the extensive literature search, followed by formulating the interview schedule, which consisted of six main questions. The questions were shared with the supervisor for input to see if changes were required. Finally, the input of the supervisor was incorporated in the final draft of the interview schedule as presented in Annexure C.

They allowed the researcher to probe during the interview sessions and the participants to answer unrestrictedly regarding their experiences of the phenomena under investigation. For the participant's safety and because of COVID-19 and lockdown and social distancing research regulations, all interviews were conducted virtually through Microsoft Teams (Greeff, 2020).

The development of questions was in line with Creswell's (2014) suggestion that interview questions should be limited to 12. Six questions were used to facilitate the discussion. The researcher was guided by the interview schedule (see Annexure C) to ensure consistency during the interviews and to ensure that all questions were aligned with the research aims. The literature review revealed factors that contribute to successful EWP's, including line management support. Therefore, it was critical to ask the audience the following questions:

- In your experience, are line managers aware of the EWP?
- What is your understanding of the purpose of the EWP?
- What are the main challenges you face in contributing to the EWP?
- In your experience, how do you find employees' wellness benefits from participation in the EWP?

- In your experience, how do you find employees' performance improvement from participating in the EWP?
- In your understanding, what recommendations can be made to improve and assist the municipality to enhance the impact of the EWP on employee wellness and performance?

Recording of data

Semi-structured interviews were recorded electronically using Microsoft Teams' recording function (Greeff, 2020). Field notes were also taken throughout the interview process to strengthen the process of data collection. They were also used to note any other relevant, exciting observations and support the interview information while analysing the data (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018).

Data analysis

Different researchers (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell, 2014 ; Percy et al., 2015) argue that qualitative data analysis shares similar guidelines and processes, including familiarisation of data, generating codes, and searching for themes and subthemes. Thematic analysis is an approach to analysing qualitative data that involves examining and identifying themes or patterns (Percy et al.,2015). In this study, the researcher followed a six-step thematic analysis process described by Creswell (2014).

The process started with step 1 in which all participants' responses were arranged, sorted, and broken down into more manageable parts. In step 2, the researcher then read through all the data collected from the ten participants to get a general sense of the information. Step 3 was to code the data. This was achieved by labelling and identifying data using highlighters and identifying common themes as they emerged from the semi-structured interviews. After completing steps 1-3, the researcher started with Step 4 and 5 combined. The researcher linked, established relationships between, and interpreted the meaning of themes in the case study. A draft written report regarding the research was put together using themes, subthemes, and categories as headings and sub-headings. The last step, Step 6, was intended to validate the accuracy of the information and ensure trustworthiness. This was done by employing

strategies to ensure quality data throughout the data analysis process (Hammarberg et al., 2016).

Strategies employed to ensure quality data

For this study, trustworthiness was achieved by addressing six criteria as articulated by Hammarberg et al. (2016) and Berger (2015), namely credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, authenticity, and reflexivity.

Credibility refers to the link between the researcher's interpretations of data and the participant's voices. To enhance the credibility of the study, the researcher applied the following techniques:

- Throughout the study, the researcher retained a reflective journal to log the researcher's views, which assisted in identifying her own biases.
- Before completing the findings, each line manager was sent back the transcript of their response to confirm their representation of the phenomena during the interview.
- An interview technique was used, and the questions were reframed to check the consistency of the line manager's responses.
- The research findings were discussed with the supervisor to ensure that data analysis was performed correctly and adequately.
- Verbatim quotes were used as evidence of the participant's experiences (Hammarberg et al., 2016).

Transferability refers to the extent to which the study results can be applied in a similar research setting with other participants. This was achieved as follows:

- The researcher used purposive sampling to hand-pick line managers due to their lived experiences of the EWP and its influence on employee wellness and performance.

- A detailed description of the research setting, and the research method and process followed was provided so that other researchers can duplicate the study (Hammarberg et al., 2016).

Dependability refers to the extent to which the study's findings are consistent. If the research is repeated by other researchers in a similar setting and uses the same method, the conclusions will yield similar outcomes.

- Interview notes and any other relevant supporting data were shared with the supervisor for quality check.
- The research process was documented for ease of reference and traceability (Hammarberg et al., 2016).

Confirmability deals with the researcher's ability to explain to others how the results and findings of the study were attained.

The researcher kept all the records of the research activities, including raw data, reflexive journal, audio recordings, field notes, and verbatim transcripts. The records were shared with the supervisor to ensure data accuracy (Hammarberg et al., 2016).

Authenticity refers to the researcher's demonstration of fairness by presenting all the participant's voices, interpretations, perceptions, and experiences in the study. In this study authenticity was ensured by:

- Providing verbatim quotes of the participant voices and assigning them under each theme to support the interpretations made from the actual interviews.
- All participant responses were presented in the final report to ensure fairness (Hammarberg et al., 2016).

According to Berger (2015), reflexivity refers to a process where the researchers ask themselves questions continuously that might influence the research process and findings of the study. This was demonstrated from the beginning of the research process:

- First-person language was used in reporting the outcomes of the study.
- A detailed report was kept with regards to decisions taken throughout the research process.

Ethical considerations

The researcher operated within the key ethical principles and followed the following steps to ensure compliance with ethical research standards:

- Before applying for ethical clearance at Unisa, the researcher requested permission from the municipality to conduct the research. See Annexure A, gatekeeper's permission letter.
- Once granted, the research and ethics declaration were signed to commit to upholding ethical principles as per Unisa guidelines (Unisa, 2016) and the COVID-19 research protocol guidelines (Unisa, 2020).
- Thereafter, the ethical clearance was obtained from UNISA (see the Annexure D).
- The researcher informed senior management at the municipality and started to recruit and engage with willing participants by providing them with an information sheet and consent form, describing the research process to safeguard participants.
- The next step was to get the participants to sign the informed consent form, allowing the researcher to proceed with the project. Voluntary participation was encouraged, and confidentiality guaranteed.
- Finally, the semi-structured interviews were conducted using Microsoft Teams to avoid physical human interaction and ensure compliance with COVID-19 research regulations (Greeff, 2020).
- The researcher and her supervisor were the only people who had access to the data and the data was securely stored and password protected. Participant names were replaced with pseudonyms. Confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy were ensured (Arifin, 2018). This study adhered to all the Unisa Ethics Review committee guidelines.

Reporting

The findings of the study are reported in a manner which reflects the empirical aims of the study and to determine line managers' level of awareness and knowledge of the municipality EWP and its purpose. Then to investigate whether line managers face challenges in implementing the EWP, the study explored whether the line managers found the municipality EWP to be conducive to employee wellness, to investigate if line managers find that participating in the EWP improved employee performance. Lastly, recommendations for improvement would be made that could assist the municipality in enhancing the impact of the EWP on employee wellness and performance.

The research findings were reported in a narrative format using a qualitative writing style, providing a detailed description of the themes, sub-themes, and experiences of line managers. The discussion on the findings incorporated current literature and verbatim quotes to substantiate the findings (Creswell, 2014). Pseudonyms were used to specify participant's responses. For example, p1 up to p10 was assigned, where p stands for participants, and 1 is the number associated with the individual participant which would indicate that it was the first participant interview. The order was followed throughout the process.

FINDINGS

The main aim of this study was to gain insight into line managers' perceptions and experiences regarding the impact of an EWP on employee wellness and performance. The findings were framed by completing a thematic analysis process within the interpretivism paradigm. Five themes emerged from the data analysis with respective sub-themes and properties. Table 3.3 presents the themes, sub-themes, and related properties.

Table 3.3

Themes and sub-themes of the impact of EWP on employee wellness and performance

Themes	Sub-themes	Properties
Awareness of EWP	Knowledge of EWP's existence	Marketing
		Induction
		Activities
	Engagement experience	Participation
Purpose of EWP	Employee support	Work-life-balance
	Counselling and advising	Services
EWP challenges	Fear	Judgement, victimisation, stigmatisation
	Confidentiality and trust	Privacy and security
	Wellness officer competence	Skills
		Training
	Beliefs	Cultural
Gender		
Benefits	Employee wellness	Work coping
		Personal coping
		Emotional coping
	Employee performance	Increased performance
		Willingness to participate
Enhancing the EWP	Wellness officer	Availability
		Competence and skills
	Other stakeholders	Wellness champions
		Organised labour
		Line managers
	Increased awareness	Marketing
		Benefits
		Confidentiality

Awareness of EWP

Awareness of EWP as a theme provides participants with experiences regarding awareness and knowledge of the programme. It consists of two sub-themes, namely (1) knowledge of EWP existence and (2) engagement experience. This theme is vital to the research question and to determine a line manager's level of awareness and understanding of the Municipality EWP.

Knowledge of EWP's existence

The first sub-theme that emerged relating to the awareness of EWP is knowledge and existence of EWP. Most participants mentioned that they are aware of, and have knowledge of EWP, and reported that the programme is marketed widely and regularly through the company's email, posters, and intranet. They also mentioned that they became aware of the programme through attending HR induction and participating in the wellness activities, for example, annual wellness days.

'Line managers are aware because I'm also aware in terms of the Employee Wellness Programme that the organisation has got, and I think it has been publicised extensively in our organisation.' (Participant 1)

'They are aware of the Wellness Programmes because there's always communication around wellness. There's always communication throughout the city via what we call "INFO-INFO" where we notify employees about what is happening within the city. Also, there are posters that are always around the lifts in the buildings about wellness.' (Participant 2)

'Yes I am aware. Ah... at Ethekwini municipality we have a Employee Wellness Programme that is run by the Wellness department.' (Participant 3)

'Yes, I am aware aahhh I think I was made aware on my first or second day when I attended the induction. They made me aware of Careways I think it's a service provider for employee wellness programme. They came and did a presentation on the services that they offer to employees.' (Participant 7)

Participant 6 referred to her prior awareness and knowledge of the programme in her experience as HR officer and referring employees to the programme for various reasons, including financial challenges and performance issues.

'Yes I am aware of it, well.....mmm before I become a manager I used to work as an HR Practitioner so I used to refer a lot of employees to the actual programme when they had personal or financial problems or whatever problem they had that was affecting their work so that was my initial mmm.....introduction to the programme.'
(Participant 6)

Both Participant 4 and 5 referred to the awareness of the EWP through wellness activities that are hosted by the wellness office, such as annual wellness days.

'I'm aware of the events that have been held by the wellness section itself maybe when they are having wellness days.' (Participant 4)

'We were given information by programme manager her name is..... and through annual employee wellness and they have a table there, they tell us that there is this kind of programme they have. They are associated with Careways and the service offered.' (Participant 5)

Participant 9 and 10 stated that they are aware of EWP and that management discusses it at important meetings within HR such as HR strategy meetings and health and safety committees.

'Yes.... yes I'm very much aware. Okay... it was raised at HR strategy and Ops meeting. It is also advertised on the outlook programme and ThekUNET, internal communications that has update on wellness continually.' (Participant 9)

'Yes, I am..... I think because I am a chairperson of the health and safety committee. In the committee we also discuss wellness issues.' (Participant 10)

Participant 1, on the other hand, mentioned that there is a lack of awareness in some instances as a result of some employees not enjoying EWP benefits.

'But you will find that there are some employees who are not benefiting because they are not aware, or they are not using the benefits that comes with our Employee Wellness Programme.' (Participant 1)

Participant 4 knows about the EWP; however, she does not seem to know what the programme actually involves .

'Ehhhh.....I'm am not aware of the EWP in terms of what the programme encompasses like would assist me in referring my employees in assisting with wellness issues, I'm not fully appraised on those.' (Participant 4). She believes that there is a *'...gap in orientation no one is presenting on the offerings.'* She added that she is not aware of what wellness services are being offered at the onsite clinics.

'I do know that the municipality has the number of clinics I don't know what services are available there for employees as part of wellness, is family planning part of it, is testing part of it, is counselling part of apart from the EAP that is offered by the HR practitioners.' (Participant 4)

Most participants were aware of the existence of EWP, except for Participant 4 who raised the concern that EWP offerings are not known. However, it seems that some employees are yet to be reached.

From the sub theme knowledge of EWP's existence, it seems that the majority of participants are aware of the EWP.

Engagement experience

Engagement experience emerged as the second sub-theme. Participants indicated that they have sought assistance from the EWP for various reasons. P1 and P6 indicated that as line managers they participated in the programme due to work-related pressures and personal issues.

'I would talk about myself I have benefitted a lot as an HR practitioner you deal with a lot of eh... people walk ins, people who are coming in and telling you their own challenges that they are facing and some of those challenges are overwhelming eh... they will also find yourself you are now thinking about this person and what they are going through and you also need interventions yourself. So you also seek the same guidance obviously through counselling.' (Participant 1)

'I still know of the programme even now I'm still referring some people to the programme as a manager even myself actually mmm you know, I have used the programme.' (Participant 6)

Purpose of EWP

Participants were asked to explain their understanding of the purpose of the EWP in the municipality. In this theme, participants understood the purpose in different ways namely, (1) employee support towards promoting a healthier employee, and to attain work-life balance and (2) counselling and advice services.

Employee support

The first sub-theme identified was employee support. Most participants believed that the primary purpose of the EWP was to provide support to employees in promoting a healthier employee by attaining work-life balance. They regard EWP as a safe place to off-load personal issues which hinders employees from achieving their key performance areas.

'Okay my understanding the main objective is to look after the wellness of employees.' (Participant 5)

'Eh... my understanding is to help employees with everyday eh... challenges that they might come across.' (Participant 3)

'We experience different things mmm external forces will affect my performance at work so the whole concept is to assist me if I encounter any problems the employer is there for me and willing to assist me.' (Participant 5).

'Well in my understanding the purpose of employee wellness programme is to ensure that ahh employees ahhh they have work life balance, don't look at employees as just numbers.' (Participant 6)

'Employee wellness programme will have packages interventions that will assist line managers in dealing with different issues that will be faced by our employees so that we can better support them back to wellness and so that they come back to performance.' (Participant 4)

'Is to mediate between challenges that may occur outside the work environment and the challenges may be affecting employees in the workplace in order to resolve so that the performance of employee is not affected.' (Participant 8)

'It's just a programme to ensure that employees have the safe place to go where they can actual talk about issues that are impacting them in terms of meeting their goals or standard at work.' (Participant 6)

'The purpose is to ensure that the organisation has got healthy working force healthy workforce and to also minimise the mmm... the health hazards within the organisation, to ensure that there is always.... Healthy living workforce and also to ensure whatever objectives that the city has is able to achieve because of healthy workforce.' (Participant 2)

Counselling and advising

The second sub-theme in terms of what participants believed to be the purpose of EWP is to provide counselling and advisory service to employees who deal with finances, HIV, divorce, substance abuse, and psychological challenges.

'If you diagnosed with HIV you will need counselling ...aahh the programme assist employees to access counselling.' (Participant 7)

'Assist the employees to ensure that these underlying things, they are dealt with whether through counselling or psychology, psychologists. Whether you want legal advice they also guide us through that, when we are going through a hectic divorce.' (Participant 1)

'I know of one clinical psychologist that they work with by the name of ... also helps employees and families eh... teams as well branches whereby she will be called in eh.' (Participant 3)

'They do help with financial consultation, financial help, advice and all those things as well and maybe you might find that an employee has a problem with alcohol they do help.' (Participant 3)

'Aah deal with financial issues especial when come to garnishees.' (Participant 9)

'They help people in general like financial problems and abused at home.' (Participant 10)

'They even have trainings that they do, ah.... currently we have this pandemic which is Corona Virus.... They have arranged training now for staff ... so that they can understand what Corona Virus is, how can they protect themselves and others as well.' (Participant 3)

'They teach us how to treat people with disabilities and accommodate them at work.' (Participant 10)

Although the results show varying levels of understanding of the purpose of the EWP, most participants regard EWP as a tool to support employees in achieving work-balance and providing counselling and advise in the workplace.

EWP challenges

Participants were asked whether they faced any challenges in implementing the EWP. Most participants agreed that there are challenges which impact on the implementation of the programme such as (1) fear of judgement, victimisation, stigmatisation; (2) confidentiality and trust which could potential affect employee privacy and security; (3) wellness officer competence concerning skills and training; and (4) cultural and gender beliefs.

Fear

The first sub-theme identified by the participants was fear. Participants felt that employees are reluctant to report their personal and work-related issues to line managers because they fear being judged, stigmatised, and victimised. All of these seem to prevent employees from participating freely in the programme.

Participant 1 stated, *'People don't want to come to managers and report in terms of what they are suffering from because they fear to be judged.'* if they participate in the EWP.

Participant 2 also believes *'...employees might fear that if they disclose whatever issues or psychosocial issues that they might have at home or at work, they might be victimised for that.'*

Participant 5 seems to agree and stated, *'They will think that whatever they said there.... you as the employer will use it against them at a later stage.'*

Participant 3 reported stigmatisation as another challenge. He mentioned that there is a stigma attached to being referred to the programme both by colleagues as well as management.

'Another challenge is will be maybe stigmatisation eh... yes stigmatisation where an employee might feel if the divulge information that is too confidential, they might be

labelled something yes you see some people don't want to be judged or to be stigmatised by others.' (Participant 3)

'YesI think it's a stigmastigma around being referred to a psychologist it can contribute towards stopping employees in participating in the programme. If one is going through a divorce everybody will end up knowing.' (Participant 7)

Confidentiality and trust

Confidentiality and trust were experienced as a challenge by many of the participants. They further mentioned that they do not know whether the information is being shared with senior management.

'Other thing is a challenge, is confidentiality.' (Participant 1)

'First where the confidentiality of the information is guaranteed.' (Participant 2)

'I think the number one challenge is confidentiality.' (Participant 3)

'Issue of confidentiality is normal one of the biggest issue...you know....is the information divulging to the counsellor is it safe enough.' (Participant 6)

'Is the information divulged to the counsellor.....will it be given back to my line manager or they use it against me when I'm not performing.' (Participant 7)

'Another thing I heard is that services are being during working hours so you have to skip work so everybody will end up knowing.' (Participant 7)

Participant 9 disagreed with the views of the other participants, however, stating that there are no challenges, and the programme is designed with total confidentiality.

'It is highly confidential.....design with total confidential.' (Participant 9)"

Participants 1, 6, and 10 stated that trust is one of the challenges faced in contributing to EWP. They said that they were worried about the information shared with the counsellor which showed signs of distrust.

'One of the challenges is the trust issue mmm...' (Participant 1)

'Where is this information is going to go.' (Participant 6)

'We still don't have trust on management. For example, in my case I do have people sometimes I refer them to Careways. Then they will tell me straight that no I don't trust going to Careways because they are based in the same building and they are not sure if they will share the information.' (Participant 10)

Wellness officer competence

Participants 2 and 6 seem to believe that wellness officers do not have adequate skills and training to deal with the psychosocial issues that affect employees, such as gender-based violence and workplace bullying.

'There is a whole lot of psychosocial issues, you talk of your Gender Based Violence, you talk of your bullying... workplace bullying so you need to have people who are properly trained in dealing with those issues and people who can handle confidentiality around that because what you what you disclose, the perpetrator and the perpetrator might even get more violent with the victim.' (Participant 2)

'They must get competent counsellors that know exactly how to deal with employees who come with baggage and assist them.' (Participant 6)

Beliefs

Beliefs was identified as the fourth sub-theme. Participants 7 and 8 expressed that cultural and gender beliefs contribute to the challenges of contributing to EWP.

'Another issue would be that some people don't believe in the whole issue of the counsellors especially in different cultures people have different ways of dealing with issues some people say no if I have a problem I will pray about it.' (Participant 7)

'Sometimes you get a guy and the counsellor is a female and you will find that he is not real feeling free to divulge to this woman...I mean.' (Participant 7)

'I think eh cultural differences some other employees cannot be comfortable to open up to line manager about certain issues.' (Participant 8)

Benefits

This question aimed to explore if the line managers find the municipality EWP beneficial to employee wellness. Participants stated two major benefits, namely (1) employee wellness; and (2) employee performance.

Employee wellness

In this second sub-theme of employee wellness, participant experience speaks to EWP as a coping mechanism which helps employees cope (1) with numerous challenges they face at work; (2) on a personal (family, COVID-19) level; (3) and emotional level.

Participant 1 stated that he benefited a lot from the programme in being able to cope with his work as HR practitioner.

'If I would talk about myself I have benefited a lot as an HR practitioner you deal with a lot of eh... people walk-ins, people who are coming in and telling you their challenges that they are facing and some of those challenges are overwhelming eh... they will also find yourself you are now thinking about this person and what they are going through and you also need interventions yourself. So, you also seek the same guidance obviously through counselling.' (Participant 1)

Other participants mentioned that EWP assists employees on a personal level, as well as their families, with matters such as the adjustment required as a result of the

COVID-19 pandemic, and improved financial management. This seems to also happen through extending the programme offerings to family members and taking care of their health and wellness by providing them with needed information and involving them in counselling sessions. Overall, this contributes to the wellness of employees since their family is also looked after.

'We currently in the COVID-19 sphere mmm... or space so the infected employee has got members of his family or her family staying with him so the EWP comes in there as well to assist in dealing with the impact or the effects of the virus as well.' (Participant 2)

'They do extend to families as well because you might find that you think the problem is your own whereas if it extends to the family.' (Participant 3)

'Family's benefits, husband and spouse and kids you don't pay for it, if family is not happy obviously employee is not happy.' (Participant 7)

'The other employee had financial problems. She used to borrow the money every month. It did help her a lot. She managed to budget and have money for transport.' (Participant 10)

Participants furthermore seem to believe the EWP also assists employees on an emotional level, resulting in improved employee wellness. Participants note how the EWP assist in dealing with negative emotions and retaining coping mechanisms.

'Ahh main benefit is basic wellness for employee, it improves the manner in which they feel.' (Participant 9)

'Yes, I referred the employee to the psychologist and participated in the programme once a week and come back and said this has helped me, personally I know it works.' (Participant 5)

'Yes, I have two employees who benefited, one lost her child and she was referred to the programme, she used to cry after participating in the programme she was fine.' (Participant 10).

'Same thing at work as well you might find that one employee has a problem but only to find out that the problem has extended to the whole team, whole branch.' (Participant 3)

Employee performance

Employee performance was identified as the first sub-theme, and participants expressed that increased performance and willingness to participate contribute to improved employee performance. Improved employee performance could contribute to the municipality attaining its objectives. Participants also highlighted that EWP benefits them by (1) contributing to a positive work attitudes; (2) promoting a sense of harmony among colleagues; and (3) grounding employees.

'If employees go through the programme it helps in achieving company goals and the city vision by providing best service deliver y to our citizens.' (Participant 9)

'Yes there is an alignment of the programme and performance. If the EWP is well implemented it will respond to better organisational performance.' (Participant 8)

'Ensure that the health and safety and wellness of our employees is prioritised to ensure organisational performance.' (Participant 4)

'Employees become more positive and productivity increases. When they come back there is big change, there's harmony, they are able to work with others.' (Participant 3)

'I think it will definitely improve employee performance. I actually know people they have went through the programme. They come out positive, recover and become productive.' (Participant 7)

'Mmmm again as I said it is a 50/50 thing if the employee goes there and do exactly whatever the counsellors advise, they will come back and be more effective but if they don't take into account what was said and they feel like they are doing it because the manager has send me and nothing is going to change.' (Participant 6)

'Let's say the employee was obviously suffering from substance abuse which is probably alcohol mmm... that employee obviously if they are assisted properly you would see through their performance that something has changed.' (Participant 1)

'Ehhh performance improves because I believe that if an employee has problems they cannot function to their optimum ability.' (Participant 3)

'I believe it would definitely improve performance because a happy employee will definitely give out better that they would do if they stressed.' (Participant 9)

'Yes..... most definitely I do think that it does improves employee performance.'
(Participant 4)

'It will..... It can improve performance because the performance of employees depends on their personal problems, if you are personal disturbed or stressed it affects performance.' (Participant 10)

'They'll be able to be assisted by a professionalthis is how you deal with difficult situations so then the performance will be positive at the end of the day.'
(Participant 5)

'It improves performance of our employees because they are healthy, they are happy, they are grounded.' (Participant 2)

Enhancing the EWP

Participants were asked to suggest recommendations that can assist the municipality EWP to enhance the EWP. The participants shared different recommendations for improving the programme. Recommendations that emerged included (1) wellness officer availability and their competency and skills; (2) involvement of other

stakeholders like wellness champions, organised labour, and line managers; and lastly, (3) increased awareness to include rigorous marketing, enhanced benefits, and confidentiality.

Wellness officer

Participant 2, 7 and 10 felt that the current availability of wellness officers was not sufficient to cover the whole municipality. They would like to see heightened visibility of wellness officers which would require more wellness officers to be allocated to depots also and not just the main office. They believe that more employees can be reached this way.

'It starts with resourcing of the EWP office that are stationed all around the city, because you'll understand the city is very wide, you can't have one office being here in central town we need to spread across all the areas of the municipal jurisdiction.'
(Participant 2)

'Wellness office need to be more visible I do not think they are visible enough.... Only time I heard about them it was during the induction, but they need to be more visible in terms of coming or approaching the line managers and give employees a refresher.'
(Participant 7).

'They need to visit and come to people and advertise their offerings, come to each department, emails don't work, people are lazy to read, not to sit in one department and wait for employees to come to them.' (Participant 10)

Two participants spoke to the competence and skills of the wellness officers. They suggested that well trained and competent officers should run the EWP to ensure the effectiveness of the programme.

'If we had well trained wellness practitioners that are capable of dealing with difficult psychological cases... you talk of your Gender Based Violence, you talk of your bullying... workplace bullying so you need to have people who are properly trained in dealing with those issues and people who can handle confidentiality.' (Participant 2)

'They must get competent counsellors that know exactly how to deal with employees who come with baggage and assist them.' (Participant 6)

Other stakeholders

Two participants alluded to the need to involve other stakeholders, including wellness champions, organised labour, and line managers, in the successful implementation of an EWP.

'Appoint champions in different departments or sections whereby they are trained in employee wellness programme as social partners to wellness officers.' (Participant 8)

'Also, I think sometimes you do need buy in of organised labour they represent employees in different levels if they are involved it will be easier for programme implementation.' (Participant 8)

'So, line managers are the first to be taught about wellness how do they go about ensuring wellness at work.' (Participant 3)

Increased awareness

Participants expressed the need to extend the EWP's marketing and benefits, as well as to emphasise confidentiality and instil trust throughout the municipality. They suggested alternative methods that could be used to increase awareness of the programme, like conducting departmental presentations and utilising the latest technology.

'To ensure we make employees aware and we ensure they know what benefits.' (Participant 1)

'Employer can use it to advertise itself and attract talent.' (Participant 7)

'They need to approach departments or even if we have sport days they can come and advertise on all services that they got.' (Participant 7).

'They could have a recorded induction either in a form of a video or CD that can be emailed to employees or embedded in our website with the full offerings that employees can benefit from.' (Participant 4)

Participants further expressed the need to expand awareness campaigns and maintain the sustainability of the programme. They advised that there should be constant reminders, roadshows, and awareness campaigns focused on reaching both line managers and employees.

'I believe that the first thing is creating awareness, vigorous awareness for employees but not only for employees but for line managers as well.' (Participant 3)

'Awareness campaigns maybe roadshows can be made, also those wellness campaigns whereby people come in they get tested and people are made aware on how to go about all of things there.' (Participant 3)

'I think constant reminders and awareness of different challenges currently they are putting information on info for example how to deal with depression, it needs to be on your face for whole time.' (Participant 5)

Participants added that benefits of the programme should be enhanced to promote work-life balance. Two participants raised a valid point that wellness is also about promoting work-life balance, especially during times of crisis. They suggested the implementation of work-life balance strategies to support employees in dealing with the impact of pandemics and social media. Such strategies were also intended to assist employees in balancing work with family demands, especially those experienced by female employees, through the provision of child day-care facilities, among other things.

'Mmmm at the moment I think the main thing is how to deal with COVID-19, they can get them to start how to deal with social media, not to overuse social media and family especially, now we spend more time with family.' (Participant 9)

'If they can broaden the scope, not only looking at emotional issues employee wellness is also about work life balance, they can push the agenda like women have children they need to come to work early and leave late, you know, push the agenda of having a day care.' (Participant 6)

Participants also emphasised the protection of employees' confidentiality and showed employees that the programme values confidentiality.

'I think we just need to make sure that ah... an awareness campaign is made possible for the whole employees of the municipality so that they understand how exactly everything is kept confidential in the wellness department, how the information is treated.' (Participant 3)

'We need to have a certain etiquette on how we going to deal with that confidentiality of that of those employees.' (Participant 1)

'Aaaah gosh mmmm.... I'm not sure how can they do this if they can real drive this mmm this issue of ensuring people that whatever is done there remains there, the confidentiality part.' (Participant 6)

'If there is a way uhm... you can get their services without your manager knowing.' (Participant 7)

'If you are guaranteed that your information is secured, it is not going to be used for other purposes well employees openly participate.' (Participant 8)

DISCUSSION

Main objective of the study

The general aim of this research was to gain insight into the perceptions and experiences of the line managers regarding the impact of an EWP on an employee's wellness and their performance at a selected municipality in KwaZulu-Natal. Three specific literature review aims were to conceptualise wellness and employee wellness and their related constructs, conceptualise employee performance and its related constructs, and explore the impact of EWP's on employee wellness and performance.

The five specific aims relating to this empirical study were to determine line managers' level of awareness and knowledge of the municipality EWP and its purpose, investigate whether there are challenges faced by line managers in implementing the EWP, explore the impact of EWP's on employee wellness and performance, explore if line managers find that participating in the EWP improved employee performance. Lastly, to make recommendations for improvement that could assist the municipality in enhancing the impact of the EWP on employee wellness and performance.

Main contributions of the study

Limited qualitative studies have been conducted on the impact of EWP's on employee wellness and performance (Gubler et al., 2018; Ott-Holand, 2017). Employee wellness and performance in the workplace are adversely affected by many issues, including workload and poor employee relations with management, to name a few (Clack et al., 2019; Halloran, 2017). Yet, employees are expected to be well and function optimally in these environments (Dawad et al., 2016). Thus, organisations are implementing EWP's to assist employees in dealing with their wellness related problems, which could lead to improved employee wellness and performance (Clack et al., 2019; Halloran, 2017; Sieberhagen, 2011; Zhang 2018). Therefore, this study makes an important practical and scientific contribution by developing a framework (see Figure 3.1) for understanding the effectiveness of the municipality's EWP and its impact on employee wellness and performance in the workplace. It also gives IOP's and wellness specialists insight into the challenges experienced by line managers and proposes

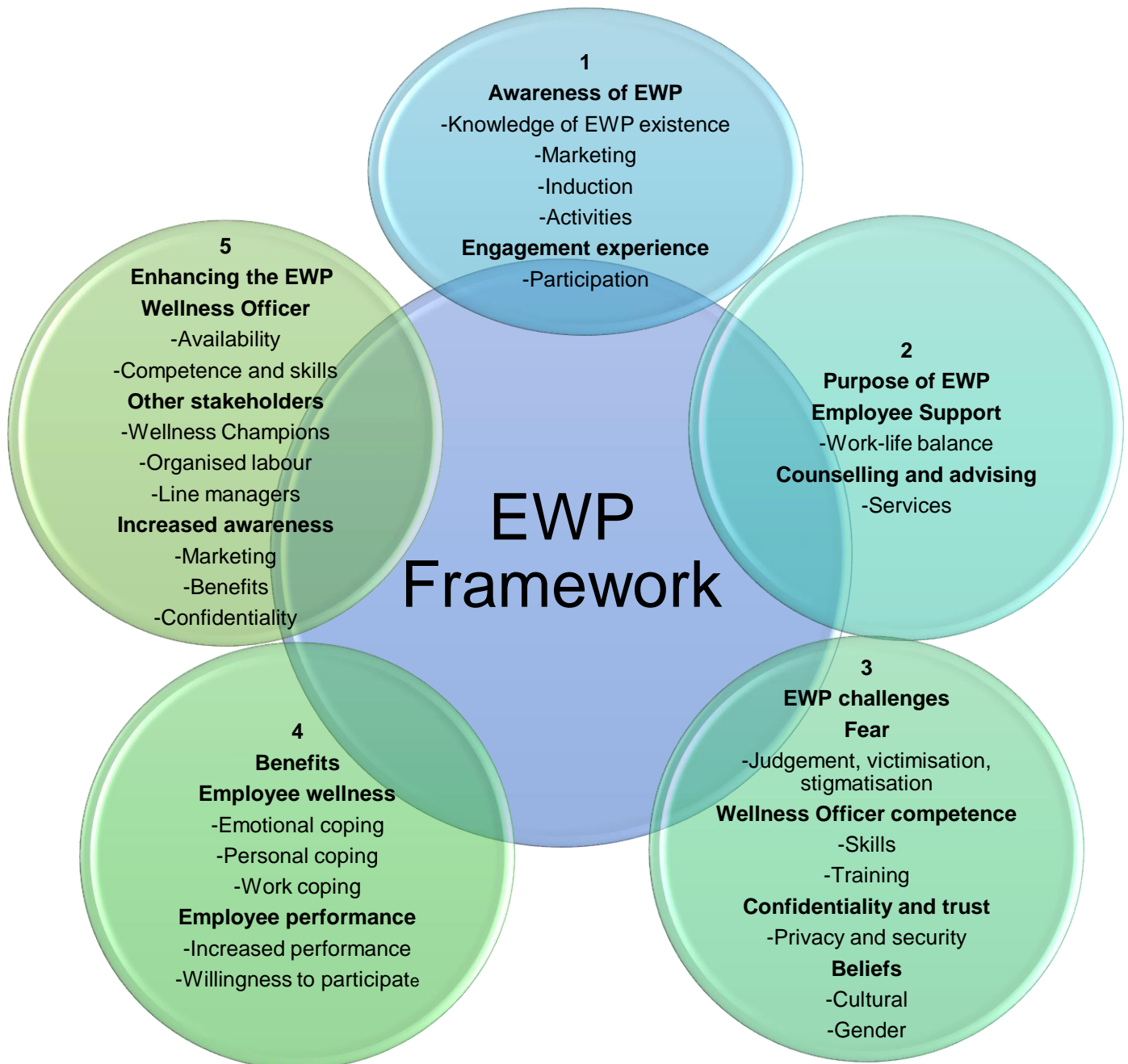
recommendations on how to improve the EWP further to ensure enhanced employee wellness and performance.

Integration of findings with literature

The following EWP framework was developed (Figure 3.1) based on the responses of the participants and represents their lived experiences regarding the impact of EWP on employee wellness and performance.

Figure 3.1

Framework of EWP elements impacting on employee wellness and performance



Theme 1: Awareness of EWP

The findings reveal that participants are aware of the existence of the EWP, and that there is a dedicated office and senior manager responsible for the management of the EWP. Most participants indicated the importance of putting more effort into marketing the programme using various platforms including technology to maximise its utilisation. They also alluded to how incorporating the EWP as part of the organisational induction programme and allowing employees to partake in activities arranged by the EWP, are critical contributing factors in expanding the knowledge of EWP's existence. The line manager's views are consistent with the study carried out by Dlamini (2015) in SA, where most participants were aware of EWP and its existence in the workplace. Dawad et al. (2016) maintained that EWP awareness can have an impact on EWP participation and that employees who are aware of the objectives of the programme are more likely to participate than employees who are not. EWP participation refers to "the extent to which employees behaviourally engage in a voluntary workplace health program" (Otto-Holand et al., 2017 p. 2). Participants in this study also indicated that they personally engaged with the EWP. They further manage employees from different cultural backgrounds who come to work with their own challenges, and this puts further strain on line managers. They are expected to deal with employees with care and participating in the EWP is a tool for rebuilding or creating personal resources to deal with job related stress (Otto-Holand et al., 2017). Line managers' confirmation of the EWP awareness and its value will influence their willingness to engage in the programme (Otto-Holand et al., 2017). Findings of this study is supported by Mabasa and Chelule (2019) who reported that those who participated in EWP in the mining industry had a favourable perception of the programme.

Theme 2: Purpose of EWP

The findings also indicate that most participants believed the primary purpose of the EWP to be employee support, counselling and advising, which assists employees in achieving work-life balance. The study found that employees who have attended the programme received support in the form of counselling and advising as one of the services offered by the programme. Counselling and advising services were extended to family members as well, which creates peace and harmony among individuals.

According to Maletzky (2017), Mungania et al. (2016) and Sieberhagen et al. (2011) some organisations introduce EWP's to contribute to a culture that is supportive of all employees and their well-being. Makgato (2016) further highlights that one of the focus areas of EWP is to manage stress, which promotes quality of life and contributes to work-life balance. Participants affirmed the value received by employees from attending counselling sessions with therapists. This research confirms the finding of Makgato (2016) which alludes to participants believing that sessions and getting professional advice and information assists employees in dealing with psycho-social issues.

Theme 3: EWP challenges

This study found that there are four significant challenges experienced by line managers in effectively implementing an EWP. Participants mentioned (1) fear of judgement, and victimisation, stigmatisation; (2) confidentiality and trust; (3) wellness officer competence with regards to skills and training; and (4) beliefs in relation to culture and gender.

The study found that employees fear participating in the programme freely because they feel if they divulge confidential information, they might be labelled or ostracized, or their information might be used against them by management at a later stage. Maletzky (2017) found that employees fear their health risk screening outcomes, for example for blood pressure tests, and being isolated due to unfavourable results.

The findings present participants' concerns about confidentiality and trust. Participants highlighted their strong view on confidentiality pertaining to the handling of their health information and cited that they are not sure what happens to the information shared with wellness officers, which makes them feel that their privacy and security is infringed upon. According to Spence (2015) trust is central to decision-making about whether to participate in the programme and relates to an employee's belief that management will treat them fairly. It is clear from the responses that trust was an issue for participants, as they experience issues of trust from employees who do not want to participate in the programme. This implies that although the programme is designed with confidentiality and trust in mind, employees attending the EWP doubt how their

information will be dealt with. Therefore, it is crucial going forward to ensure that confidentiality and trust are emphasised by creating awareness about how information is treated. The same findings emerged in a study conducted by Maletzky (2017) and Dawad et al. (2016) which seems to result in low levels of participation in such a programme. Studies also found that participants feared participating in the programme if such a programme was managed by an external service provider which made employees uncomfortable to share confidential information with unknown wellness specialists which created feelings of distrust (Makgato, 2016; Maletzky, 2017). Organisations should practice ethical wellness reduce fear among employees and gain confidence and trust (Ajunwa et al., 2016).

Additionally, a further sub-theme that was identified speaks to the challenges pertaining to wellness officer competence. Wellness officer competency seems to be doubted and participants alluded to their lack of training and skills. Participants mentioned that they do not believe that the current wellness officers can deal with complex cases, for example gender-based violence and workplace bullying cases. Lack of expertise is regarded as a challenge that would lead to feelings of doubt among participants and EWP failure. The finding is supported in a study conducted by Maletzky (2017) where participants also raised a concern regarding the expertise of wellness officers. From this study, it seems that wellness officer qualifications and competence may lead to lower participation rates. Hence, it is vital to appoint individuals that meet the competency requirements of registered wellness professionals. Maletzky (2017) further noted that employee wellness officers need to be trained and qualified registered professionals who are equipped to deal with the psycho-social needs of employees (Maletzky, 2017).

The findings also indicate that cultural and gender beliefs represent a significant challenge in the effective management of an EWP. Different cultural and gender perception are believed to exist, which makes some employees uncomfortable to participate and freely share information which impacts on their wellness. Participants in this study reflected that, due to their upbringing, men are less like to utilise EWP services than women. This supports literature purporting that women are generally the first ones to look for help, including attending psychological counselling and on-site clinic services (Dawad et al., 2016). The findings require wellness specialists to

become cultural and gender-sensitive when dealing with diverse people. In support of these findings, a study conducted by Gee (2017) and Sood et al. (2019) recommend that gender and cultural issues should be considered when designing and promoting EWP's to meet everybody's wellness needs in the workplace.

Theme 4: Benefits

The fourth finding relates to a variety of benefits that are provided when implementing EWP in the municipality. All participants indicated that EWP is adding value to their lives, as well as those of their families and colleagues, and the organisation at large. As stated by Hasijani and Sabale, (2018), Kocakulah and Powers (2015) and Soldano (2016), if an EWP is applied correctly, it adds value to the organisation and its employees. Participants alluded to two benefits that are derived from participating in the EWP, namely enhanced employee wellness and employee performance.

EWP's are now focusing on promoting employee wellness and employee performance (Rucker 2016, Surujlal & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2015). Participants explicitly mentioned that EWP's help them get coping mechanisms for dealing with negative emotional responses, personal challenges, and work-related issues. Buruck et al. (2016) acknowledged the importance of managing adverse emotional reactions in the workplace. Participants provided examples of where EWP assisted them, including taking necessary measures in solving family matters and making COVID-19 adjustments. The last employee benefit that participants experienced was work coping relating to dealing with work pressures stemming from managing complex employee issues as well as workload. These findings are in line with previous research which found that emotional, personal, and work coping are all part of employee wellness benefits (Makgato, 2016; Surujlal & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2015).

Employee performance was found to be the second subtheme. Employee performance is a state in which an employee can meet work standards as agreed with the manager. EWP provides many benefits, including helping employees get back to their normal duties, which results in increased performance (Dawad et al., 2016). It was evident from the responses that participants believe that EWP assist employees with positive motivation in their work, harmony among colleagues, and keeping employees

grounded. If employees are motivated and grounded, teamwork results, which improves performance. A study conducted by Mungania et al. (2016) in the banking industry indicated that performance in the banking industry increased when EWP's were provided to employees. In this study, participants also pointed to willingness to participate and encouragement to do better on tasks at work. These findings are no different from past studies conducted on EWP. Literature shows that EWP can be very useful in improving employee wellness and performance (Churchill et al., 2014; Gubler et al., 2018; Koruda, 2016; Makgato, 2016).

Theme 5: Enhancing the EWP

Line managers provided several recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of the EWP in the municipality. Wellness champions, organised labour, and line managers were recognised as critical players in facilitating the effective implementation and management of an EWP. It is therefore recommended that the programme manager look at establishing such relationships to discuss EWP impact on employee wellness and performance, and possibly design action plans to enhance the programme.

Participants suggested that wellness officer availability be reviewed and to place them at different depots to increase their availability and access by employees. Currently, they are mainly based at the HR head office. As a result, employees at various depots are not benefiting from the EWP services offered. This recommendation is similar to that of Mokgato (2016) who suggested that wellness coordinators should be made available at the district level as well so as to reach all employees.

Participants suggested that competent and skilled wellness officers are more than necessary, especially now, in dealing with gender-based violence and workplace bullying cases. Well-trained, skilled, and competent wellness officers can enhance the impact of an EWP and increase employee confidence, trust, and participation. The responsible person is fully competent to provide quality service (Maletzky, 2017). Findings also indicated that EWP should adopt a holistic approach and look at implementing work-life balance strategies to support employees in dealing with the impact of pandemics and social media. Gie (2017) recommended that a holistic EWP

should include work life balance initiatives to create a conducive environment for employees.

Burke et al. (2019) argued that EWP's should partner with, and involve internal stakeholders for successful implementation. Participants recommended that the programme manager should look at involving wellness champions from departments that will support and advocate for their colleagues' wellness. A wellness champion is an internal employee nominated by management or colleagues who has a passion to create awareness and support EWP strategy (Griggs, 2017). Amaya et al. (2017) highlighted the importance of wellness specialists and human resources to partner with wellness champions and attain EWP success. Their responsibility is to voluntarily provide wellness information to employees and facilitate wellness days (Amaya et al., 2017; Griggs, 2017). One of the five strategic elements proposed by Zula (2014) was partnerships for leveraging resources, and in this case wellness champions would serve as an effective partner to enhance EWP.

Other stakeholders that participants felt are vital in enhancing EWP are organised labour and line managers. Organised labour is a critical role player in the workplace and they normally support employer programmes (Sieberhage et al., 2011). On the other hand, line managers are the main contributors to successful EWP execution in the workplace and they should participate in the programme activities to show support. If they do not participate, employees can lose interest which will lead to the programme being ineffective (Griggs, 2017 ; Passey et al., 2018). These stakeholders have a close relationship with employees and they can assist in raising wellness issues on behalf of employees and motivating them to participate in the programme. Other researchers agree that organised labour and line managers are critical stakeholders in enhancing the programme (Dlamini, 2015; Mashaine, 2017; Spoonhein & Pronk, 2016).

The last recommendation provided by participants for enhancing EWP is to increase awareness of the programme. Participants proposed that the emphasis should be on improving marketing campaigns, highlighting EWP benefits, and assuring that confidentiality will be maintained at all cost, to promote trust and protection of personal information. This in turn will encourage more people to participate and ensure that they deal with the underlying issues that affect them. Dawad et al. (2017) recommended

that measures should be put in place to ensure confidentiality and it is crucial that wellness officers understand the level of confidentiality expected to enhance EWP.

Recommendations

The first recommendation is aimed at IOP's and more specifically employee wellness specialists recognising the nature and complexity of the impact of EWP on employee wellness and performance. This could assist in better understanding and developing tailor made policies, strategy, and EWP interventions that could address the challenges faced by employees participating in the programme. Wellness specialists should consider including the EWP framework in their EWP and designing a more comprehensive EWP model. In addition, wellness specialists should look at developing a thorough EWP marketing campaign to make sure that employees know what it can offer them.

A further recommendation is aimed at organisations. The municipality should improve the viewed integrity of the programme and how participants can trust that their personal information will be kept confidential. Lastly, the organisation is encouraged to appoint skilled, competent employee wellness officers to deal with challenging cases.

Lastly, it is recommended that further research also aims to gain insight into the lived experiences of wellness specialists and employees themselves, to obtain their perceptions and experiences, which will assist further in understanding and dealing with wellness related issues. Conducting other studies will assist in continually understanding the impact of EWP on employee wellness and performance on a broader scale.

Conclusion

The study presented detailed evidence of the data collected during the semi-structured interviews with line management to gain insight into their perceptions and experiences regarding the impact of EWP on employee's wellness and their performance. The qualitative nature of this study assisted the researcher to explore the lived experiences of participants in line with the research topic. Findings showed that participants were

aware of and knew about the EWP and its purpose through marketing, induction, and participation in wellness activities. It was found that line managers had personal engagement experience in the EWP through participation and seeking assistance in dealing with personal and work-related issues.

In addition, it was certain that the focus of EWP is to provide employee support and counselling and advice to employees in all matters which impact on employee wellness, including work, family and financial problems. It is evident that the programme faces a few challenges such as fear of being judged, victimised and stigmatised; wellness officer competence in relation to skills and training; lack of trust with regards to the confidential handling of personal information; and finally complex gender and cultural beliefs. Apart from these challenges, they also mentioned benefits of participating in the programme such as improved employee wellness. The programme assists employees in developing coping mechanisms to deal with emotional, personal, and work-related stress. It also assists them with increased performance, and the willingness to participate more. Finally, they suggested a few improvements such as increasing wellness officer availability to ensure that more employees are reached, also at the depots. Enhancing wellness officer competence could instil trust among employees and encourage participation, as well as ensure that more complex cases are resolved. Involvement of other stakeholders, for example organised labour, wellness champions, and line managers are crucial to support the programme. Increased awareness through marketing EWP benefits, and emphasising confidentiality, were identified as critical factors in enhancing EWP.

The framework was developed as illustrated in figure 3.1 to assist the municipality, wellness specialists, and IOP's to better understand the EWP's impact on employee wellness and performance. This empirical research aim was accomplished by interpreting the experiences of line managers into a practical EWP framework. The framework reflects the elements impacting on employee wellness and performance in the workplace.

Limitations of the study

A few limitations were noted. In view of the uniqueness and size of this study, the findings present the views and experiences of participants within the context of a KwaZulu-Natal municipality. The findings of the study can therefore not be generalised to other South African municipalities (Creswell, 2014). In this study, the researcher ensured that a detailed explanation of the research process and setting was provided to allow for transferability (Hammarberg, 2016).

The study only explored the experiences of line managers, and not wellness specialists and employees. Therefore, the EWP framework is limited to the lived experiences of line managers.

Researcher bias was also acknowledged as a potential limitation. The researcher is also a permanent employee in the municipality (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). The researcher's bias might have also been evident in employing purposive sampling. The researcher selected participants among colleagues (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). It is however believed that due to these relationships, participants felt comfortable to share more information in confidence which assisted the researcher to gain rich data. The researcher overcome her own bias by continuously referring to the data analysis steps, the researcher's journal, and the interview transcription, to ensure that the lived experiences of line managers are confirmed (Creswell,2014).

Future research

The findings of this qualitative study could be utilised to develop a quantitative study which will allow the findings to be generalised to other municipalities in South Africa. Further, the findings of the study could be used to expand and test the effectiveness of an EWP framework in terms of employee wellness and performance in different settings and to establish the relationships between the three constructs, namely EWP, employee wellness, and employee performance.

Finally, the study only explored line managers' experiences. Therefore, there is a need for future research to include wider participation in allowing employee wellness

specialists and employees to share their experiences and have their voices heard. Similar studies should also be conducted within other local government institutions.

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CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, CONTRIBUTIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter describes the conclusions, limitations, contributions, and recommendations drawn from the findings of this study. The chapter outlines the conclusions in line with the aims of the study. Limitations of the literature review and empirical study are discussed and the contributions towards improving the effectiveness of an EWP are outlined. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research, as well as recommendations to IOP's, employee wellness specialists, and organisations for enhancing the implementation of EWP's.

4.1 CONCLUSIONS

This section contains the conclusions in line with the empirical and literature review aims of this study. The general aim of the study was to gain insight into the perceptions and experiences of the line managers regarding the impact of an EWP on employees' wellness and their performance at a selected municipality in KwaZulu-Natal.

4.1.1 Conclusions drawn from the literature review

The researcher accomplished the following three specific literature aims:

Literature aim 1: To conceptualise wellness and employee wellness and their related constructs.

Wellness, employee wellness, and EWP were conceptualised. For this study, wellness was conceptualised as a multidimensional concept (Baldwin et al., 2017). Meiselman (2016) agrees that wellness is a multi-faceted and well-planned concept that has many practical implications and are healing in nature. Wellness refers to an individual process characterised by several wellness dimensions, namely occupational, physical, social, intellectual, spiritual, and emotional wellness (NWI, 2018). For this study, wellness was defined as the individual commitment to enhance a person's wellness and improve quality of life. This study concludes that EWP refers to organisational

intervention to assist employees in their wellness journey, achieve the above mentioned six dimensions, and contribute favourably to performance (Mungaria, 2016). Various significant models of wellness were also discussed including Dunn's High-Level Wellness Model (1959), the Holistic Wellness Model (2006), and the NWI Wellness Model (2018), which indicated similar and different perspectives regarding wellness.

Literature aim 2: To conceptualise employee performance and its related constructs.

The second literature aim was to conceptualise employee performance and its related constructs. For this study, it was concluded that employee performance relates to three dimensions of employee performance as outlined by Pradhan and Jena (2017), namely: task, contextual and adaptive performance which was demonstrated in a triarchy model of employee performance. Na-Nan et al. (2017) and DeNisi and Murphy (2017) maintained that performance management is a continuous process used by line managers to formulate, design, and manage employee performance following organisational policies, strategy, and procedures.

Literature aim 3: To explore the impact of EWP's on employee wellness and performance

The third literature aim was to explore the impact of EWP's on employee wellness and performance, as outlined in Chapter 2. Studies conducted by Mungania et al. (2016) found that EWP has a positive influence on employee wellness and performance, whereas Tuwai et al. (2015) found that EWP has a negative impact. It was unable to deal with work related challenges faced by employees in the workplace. On the other hand, according to Hochman and Cohen (2019), EWPs have been criticised for not adding value in organisations. Instead they have resulted in negative outcomes such as financial burdens on employees and poor employee performance (Brown, 2017; Ford & Scheinfeld, 2016; Madison, 2016). EWP's impact on employee wellness and ultimately employee performance through enhancing awareness and providing educational talks and implementing preventive wellness measures (Mungania et al., 2016).

4.1.2 Conclusions drawn from the empirical study

The study achieved its five specific empirical aims which are presented below:

Empirical aim 1: To determine line manager's level of awareness and knowledge of the municipality EWP and its purpose.

The first empirical aim was to determine line managers' level of awareness and knowledge of the municipality EWP and its purpose. From the findings, it was evident that most line managers are confident that good progress is being made in creating awareness and knowledge of EWP existence. However, it should also be highlighted that more should be done to market the programme. Participants cited their engagement experience. They were able to address personal issues due to their participation in counselling and advising services offered by the programme.

Empirical aim 2: To investigate whether there are challenges faced by line managers in implementing the EWP.

The second empirical aim was achieved as the challenges faced by line managers pertaining to the implementation of the EWP were investigated. Several challenges that the line manager's face in implementing EWP were identified. The challenges include fear of being judged, victimised, and stigmatised, confidentiality and trust, which impacts on privacy and security of employees, wellness officer competency concerning skills and training, and the impact of cultural and gender beliefs. Harrington (2017) and Zhang (2018) reported on similar challenges relating to trust, ethical issues, and the fear of losing jobs, and how these impacted on, and contributed to, programme failure.

Empirical aim 3: To explore if the line managers find the municipality EWP beneficial to employee wellness.

This third empirical aim focused on obtaining insight into whether line managers find the EWP to be beneficial to employee wellness. During the interviews, participants

responded that they find the EWP to be beneficial to employee wellness in different ways, including assisting employees in coping with emotional, personal, and work-related challenges. The findings are supported by Wein (2015) and Mazur-Malek (2017) who argued that EWP improves employee wellness, morale, health status, and job-related stress.

Empirical aim 4: To explore if line managers find that participating in the EWP improved employee performance.

The fourth empirical aim was achieved, as the results indicated that participants agreed that participating in the EWP improves performance. In this case, EWP had to do with increased performance and willingness to participate, which participants experienced by participating in the programme. Makgato (2016) concluded that participating in the EWP yields positive results for both the employer and the employee, and that this includes improved employee performance. Haddon (2018) agrees and states that the mental health and well-being of employees is crucial for team and organisational performance. The review of literature shows how vital EWP is to the success of an organisation.

Empirical aim 5: To make recommendations of improvement that can assist the municipality in enhancing the impact of the EWP on employee wellness and performance.

Finally, the fifth empirical aim was also achieved as the findings of the study yielded numerous recommendations. This study yielded recommendations for future research, IOP's and employee wellness specialists, as well as the organisation at large. Recommendations are included in the EWP framework that was developed and are outlined in more detail in section 4.4 below.

The study successfully achieved the five specific aims mentioned above. In-depth insight into the perceptions and experiences of the line managers regarding the impact of EWP on employee's wellness, and their performance, was attained through a detailed literature review and semi-structured interviews.

4.1.3 Hypothesis resulting from the empirical study

The thematic data analysis, and the development of the EWP framework, illustrates the themes, sub-themes, and properties of how EWP impacts on employee wellness and performance. The following hypothesis was derived from the study:

EWP has a definite impact on employee wellness and performance.

Acknowledging the need for help, such as is offered through an EWP, can be a barrier. Employees might perceive such an acknowledgement as a sign of dependency on the employer, which points to their own vulnerability and perhaps weakness. By participating in an EWP, employees might be portrayed as weak and even unstable, which leads to feelings of being unsafe, and results in employees not wanting to seek help. Such feelings seem to affect an employee's self-esteem.

Employees distrust participation in an EWP due to its perceived impact on future career progression.

Establishing interactive relationships between the employer and employee improves trust in an EWP. Interdependence can be established, and dependence decreased, by emphasising the importance of employee wellness and how it also leads to improved employee performance. This would imply that the system is trustworthy and will look after the best interests of all parties involved.

4.2 LIMITATIONS

Several limitations were identified while conducting the study:

4.2.1 Limitations of the literature review

Wellness, employee wellness, EWPs and employee performance constructs have been studied widely. However, existing research about the impact of EWP on employee wellness and performance in the municipalities in South Africa seems to be unavailable. Thus, the researcher has been limited in successfully integrating the

findings of this study with a broad range of literature within the South African municipal context.

4.2.2 Limitations of the empirical study

The first limitation of qualitative research, which is acknowledged, is that this study only focused on one organisation. Due to their unique contexts, it cannot be generalised to all municipalities in South Africa. However, the qualitative nature of the study and presenting a detailed account of the research design, allows for transferability.

The second limitation observed was the sample of the study. The study employed purposive sampling to explore the impact of EWP on employee wellness and performance. This study only consisted of line managers as participants, so the views of the employee wellness specialists and employees were not obtained. Therefore, a more diverse sample from other occupational levels will help assist in developing an in-depth approach for investigating the impact that an EWP has on employee wellness and performance.

Lastly, researcher bias is acknowledged as a possible limitation. The researcher is permanently employed and holds a management position in the municipality.

4.3 CONTRIBUTIONS

The contribution of this study to the researcher, IOP's, employee wellness specialists, and the organisation will be discussed next.

4.3.1 Contributions of the findings to the researcher

The study provided the researcher with knowledge and rich information that assisted her to gain insight into the perceptions and experiences of line managers regarding the impact of an EWP on employee wellness and their performance in a KwaZulu-Natal municipality. The researcher became aware of her own bias relating to understanding the perceptions and experiences of the line managers regarding the impact of an EWP on employee wellness and their performance.

The researcher further became aware of the importance of EWP's in the workplace in enhancing employee wellness and performance, and its impacts on her role as an emerging industrial and organisational psychologist. The findings also assisted the researcher in managing her personal wellness by ensuring that the six dimensions of wellness are balanced in her life (NWI, 2018). Her wellness and performance could be improved or hindered as a result of considering or not considering these findings. She also felt that it was important to look at how, as an employee wellness specialist, she can help the organisation enhance the impact of the EWP on employee wellness and performance.

4.3.2 Contributions of the findings for employee wellness specialists

The findings will assist employee wellness specialists, and IOP's, by providing insight into the perceptions and experiences of the line managers regarding the impact of EWP on employee wellness and performance. It will also assist them in identifying priority areas that should be incorporated into the wellness strategy to help improve the EWP's impact on employee wellness and performance in the municipality.

4.3.3 Contributions of the findings for the organisation

The findings and recommendations of the study could help the municipality roll out a well thought-through and researched EWP. The municipality may want to review systems, strategic plans, policies, and procedures to enhance the EWP.

4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were derived from the study.

4.4.1 Application of the findings within the organisation

The following recommendations can be made to the organisation to enhance the impact of the EWP:

- Management should consider increasing the number of wellness officers to ensure availability throughout the municipality.

- Wellness officers' competency profile should be reviewed, and relevant advanced training should be provided to enhance their competency and skills and manage the complexity of employee wellness cases.
- Wellness specialists should emphasise the importance placed on the protection of employee's confidentiality and make all parties involved sign a confidentiality agreement.
- The programme manager should involve other stakeholders, including wellness champions, organised labour, and line managers who can assist in the successful implementation of the programme. It is recommended that a partnership agreement be signed by all parties to support the programme.
- The programme manager should ensure that all employees are adequately informed of the availability of the programme and its benefits, by using various marketing platforms and confirming the importance placed upon confidentiality.
- The programme manager should review programme offerings to include work-life balance strategies such as day care facilities and gym for staff.

4.4.2 Recommendations for future research

The following recommendations apply for possible future research:

- Larger diverse sample size to be used and other geographical areas of the municipality to be included. This will enable a comprehensive understanding of the impact of EWP on employee wellness and performance in different contexts.
- It is recommended that employee wellness specialists and the beneficiaries in the sample be included so as to source their views and understand their experiences regarding the impact of EWP on employee wellness and performance.
- A longitudinal study could be employed to ensure that the impact of EWP in its totality is studied to give a complete perspective on EWP interventions.
- Another research project in the form of quantitative study in the municipality can be conducted to allow for a generalisation of the findings. This research project might assist the municipality in reviewing and developing the EWP consistently.

- Further, a qualitative study could also be employed which would aim to gain insight into the experiences of employee wellness specialists and employees who are beneficiaries of such a programme.

4.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this last chapter, the researcher discussed conclusions, hypothesis, limitations, contributions, and recommendations of the study in line with the literature review and empirical aims, as stated in chapter one. The contributions and recommendations of the study were also described by indicating how gaining insight into the perceptions and experiences of the line managers regarding the impact of an EWP on employee wellness and their performance at a selected municipality in KwaZulu-Natal, will assist organisations, and how it might guide future research.

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ANNEXURE A: GATE KEEPERS LETTER



POD 7, GROUND FLOOR, INTUTHUKO JUNCTION, 756 MARY THIPHE STREET, UMKHUMBANE, CATO MANOR, DURBAN 4001
TEL: 031 322 4513, FAX: 031 261 3405, FAX TO EMAIL: 086 265 7160, EMAIL: MILE@DURBAN.GOV.ZA, WEBSITE: WWW.MILE.ORG.ZA

For attention:
Chair of Higher Degrees Committee
College of Law and Management Studies
School of Management Sciences
University of South Africa
Pretoria
0001

13 January 2020

RE: LETTER OF SUPPORT TO B. MAKHANYA, STUDENT NUMBER 31511317 - GRANTING PERMISSION TO USE ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY AS A STUDY SITE

The Corporate and Human Resources Unit and eThekweni Municipal Academy (EMA) in eThekweni Municipality, have considered a request from Buhle Makhanya to use eThekweni Municipality as a research study site leading to the awarding of a Master of Commerce degree for the purposes of undertaking a research study entitled: "The Impact Of An Employee Wellness Programme On Employee Wellness And Performance: Case Study Of Kwazulu-Natal Municipality."

We wish to inform you of the acceptance of her request and hereby assure her of our utmost cooperation towards achieving her academic goals; the outcome which we believe will help the municipality improve its service delivery. The student is always reminded of the ethical considerations when conducting the research. In return, we stipulate as conditional that she, accompanied by her supervisor, presents the results and recommendations of this study to the related units on completion.

Wishing the student all the best in her studies.

Dr Serena Frank
Program Manager: Employee Wellness Program
eThekweni Municipality

pp Dr M.B Ngubane
Chief Learning Officer
eThekweni Municipality

I, Buhle Makhanya hereby accept as conditional that I will comply fully as per the conditions stipulated above.

Signed: Buhle Makhanya Date: 15/01/2020

COVER LETTER

Ethics clearance reference number: **MakhanyaB_2020_CEMS_IOP_007**

Research permission reference number (if applicable):

25 May 2020

Title: **The impact of an Employee Wellness Programme on Employee Wellness and Performance: A KwaZulu-Natal Municipality case study**

Dear Prospective Participant

My name is Buhle Makhanya and I am doing research with Dr Annelize van Niekerk, a Senior lecturer in the Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology towards a Masters Industrial and Organisational Psychology at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled “**The impact of an Employee Wellness Programme on employee wellness and performance: a KwaZulu-Natal municipality case study**”.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The aim of the study is to gain insight into the perceptions and experiences of line manager’s regarding the impact of an EWP on employee’s wellness and their performance at a selected municipality in KwaZulu-Natal.



WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

You have been chosen to participate in the study by means of semi- structured interview because you are a line manager in the municipality and refer employees to the EWP for wellness and performance related issues. Approximately 10 participants are selected to participate in the study. Being part of this population, your details were accessed via the HR administration system.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

The study involves audio taping and semi-structured interviews, the questions will focus on your narrative experience of being a line manager participating in EWP. Your role would be to respond to questions providing your experience and perception as a line manager participating in the EWP. Also, to respond to the semi-structured questions in an authentic and natural manner providing an account of your true experience and perception as a line manager. The interviews will take 60 minutes. The information gathered is expected to be useful to improve the understanding of the impact of EWP on employee wellness and performance.

CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?

Participation is voluntary and that there is no penalty or loss of benefit for non-participation. You are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

The eThekweni municipality community could benefit from greater levels of understanding and deeper insight of line managers experiences and perceptions regarding the impact of EWP on employee wellness and performance. Staff could be sensitised to provide appropriate support to employees based on the results of the

current research. Current and future line managers could also benefit by a better understanding of what may help to improve or hinder the employee wellness and performance. They will reap the benefit of improved understanding of the EWP. Ideally, society could benefit from line managers lived experiences, who in turn can apply knowledge and skills to the benefit of their fellow employees, employers and the broader society.

ARE THERE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?

There are no possible or reasonably foreseeable risks of harm or side-effects to the potential participants, except the inconvenience of participating in the interview process. Should you experience any other inconvenience feel free to contact the researcher using details provided below, confidentiality of such discussion is guaranteed, and it will not form part of the research scope.

WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER AND MY IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

Confidentiality of information will be maintained; your name will not be recorded anywhere, and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be given a code number, or a pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings.

Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including the supervisor and members of the Research Ethics Review Committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.

The findings may be used for other purposes, such as a research report, journal articles and/or conference presentations. Individual participants will not be identifiable in such a reports and publications. Participants will be required to sign

inform consent to give permission to the researcher to conduct interviews as a measure to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?

Hard copies of your answers will be stored both manual and electronically for a minimum period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet in the researcher's office for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. Hard copies will be shredded, and/or electronic copies will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer through the use of a relevant software programme.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

There is no payment or reward offered, financial or otherwise for participation in this study. The only foresee costs that may be incurred by yourself will be your time if you agree to participate in the individual interview process.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL?

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the CEMS RERC, Unisia. A copy of the clearance certificate can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact the researcher using the details below.

Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact: Buhle Makhanya on 0832801683 or buhlemakhanya1@gmail.com.

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Dr Annelize van Niekerk on 012 429 8231 or vnieka2@unisa.ac.za. Contact the research ethics chairperson of the IOP Research Ethics Review Committee, Dr Annelize van Niekerk on 012 429 8231 or vnieka2@unisa.ac.za if you have any ethical concerns.

Thank you for taking time to read this cover letter and for participating in this study.

Thank you.

Buhle Makhanya

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording of the semi –structured interviews.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name and Surname..... (please print)

Participant Signature.....(Date).....

Researcher's Name and Surname..... (please print)

Researcher's signature.....Date.....

ANNEXURE C: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Title: THE IMPACT OF AN EMPLOYEE WELLNESS PROGRAMME ON EMPLOYEE WELLNESS AND PERFORMANCE: A KWAZULU-NATAL MUNICIPALITY CASE STUDY

1. In your experience, are line managers aware of the EWP?
2. What is your understanding of the purpose of the EWP?
3. What are the main challenges you face towards contributing to the EWP?
4. In your experience, how do you find employees' wellness benefit from participation in the EWP?
5. In your experience, how do you find employees' performance improvement from participating in the EWP?
6. In your understanding, what recommendations can be made to improve and assist the municipality to enhance the impact of the EWP on employee wellness and performance?

ANNEXURE D: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



UNISA IOP ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

18 May 2020

Dear Ms Buhle Makhanya

NHREC Registration #: (if applicable)
ERC Reference : **2020_CEMS_TOP_007**
Name : Ms Buhle Makhanya
Student #: 31511317
Staff #: NA

**Decision: Ethics Approval from
18 May 2020 to 18 May 2023**

Researcher(s): Name: Ms Buhle Makhanya
Address: P O Box 356, Umkomaas, 4170
E-mail address, telephone: Buhlemakhanya1@gmail.com 0832801683

Supervisor (s): Name: Dr Annelize van Niekerk
E-mail address, telephone: vnieka2@unisa.ac.za, 0124298231

The impact of an employee wellness programme on employee wellness and performance: A KwaZulu-Natal municipality case study.

Qualification: Masters (MCom) – Postgraduate degree

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance to the Unisa IOP Ethics Review Committee for the above-mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for a period of **Three (3) years**.

The low risk application was reviewed by the IOP Research Ethics Review Committee on 5th May 2020 in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment. The Ethics Application was approved on 18th May 2020.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

- 1. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa COVID-19 Position Statement on research ethics dated 9 April 2020 which is attached.***



University of South Africa
Pretorius Street, Midrand, Johannesburg, City of Johannesburg
PO Box 392 UNISA 003 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Fax: +27 12 429 4150
www.unisa.ac.za

2. ***All data-gathering must adhere to and be aligned with restrictions applicable to the Government's current Lockdown Alert Levels.***
3. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
4. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the Unisa CEMS/IOP Research Ethics Review Committee.
5. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
6. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.
7. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
8. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
9. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date (05 May 2023). Submission of a complete research ethics progress report will constitute an application for the renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

*The reference number **MakhanyaB_2020_CEMS_IOP_007** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Yours sincerely,



Signature
Acting Chair of IOP ERC
E-mail: olivibh@unisa.ac.za
Tel: (012) 429-8801

Signature
Executive Dean : CEMS
E-mail: mogalm@unisa.ac.za
Tel: (012) 429-4805



University of South Africa
Pretorius Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0053 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150
www.unisa.ac.za

ANNEXURE E: TURN-IT-IN REPORT

THE IMPACT OF AN EMPLOYEE WELLNESS PROGRAMME ON EMPLOYEE WELLNESS AND PERFORMANCE: A KWAZULU-NATAL MUNICIPALITY CASE STUDY

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