

# **The Effect of Organisational Wellbeing Initiatives on Attracting Employees**

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to highlight and explore organisational wellbeing initiatives while investigating the effect of these initiatives on attracting employees to an organisation.

This research study discussed wellbeing and aimed to highlight how organisations can support their employees through the implementation of initiatives. The importance of these programme for employees and employers was also examined. Employer branding was discussed to emphasise the significance of including initiatives when presenting an organisation to prospective employees. The disclosure of employee wellbeing issues was reviewed along with how organisations can encourage employee disclosure.

A quantitative research analysis was undertaken through the means of a questionnaire. A sample of 102 participants were recruited using convenience sampling and snowball sample with the participants representing a sample population of employees in employment in Ireland. The purpose of the questionnaire was to understand the initiatives that are provided for employees by their current organisation and whether the presence of these have an impact on employees when choosing an employer. This provided an opportunity to highlight the priorities of employees as opposed to those from an organisational perspective. The data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics to highlight the findings of the research.

The study indicates that majority of organisations are not providing employees with wellbeing initiatives. The study also found that although wellbeing is important to employees, it does not have a major impact on attracting employees to an organisation as there are other aspects that are prioritised. It highlighted that employee opinions on their organisations commitment to and encouragement surrounding the area of wellbeing are a reflection on the level and amount of wellbeing initiatives that are available to them at their place of work.

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## Introduction

### *Background*

Zeno of Citium attests “well-being is attained by little and little, and nevertheless is no little thing itself” (Gretchen Rubin, 2010). The world is changing and individuals have become more aware of and open to the concept of wellbeing. This awareness has caused an increase in the level of understanding surrounding personal wellbeing and the wellbeing of others in recent years. In a survey of 850 adults conducted by St Patrick’s Mental Health Services, 57% believe that Irish people would not let an individual’s mental wellbeing difficulty effect their treatment of that person. This figure has increased from 28% in 2015 which highlights the rate of acceptance and understanding of mental wellbeing issues has gotten higher. Additionally, 51% of those surveyed have established new ways to care for their mental wellbeing in the last two years (St Patrick’s Mental Health Services, 2021). When analysing these statistics, it’s not unreasonable to assume that this increased awareness and acceptance of mental wellbeing issues in society transpires into the workplace but, unfortunately, this is not the case.

This is highlighted in a survey carried out by Laya Healthcare into employee and employer thoughts and opinions around mental wellbeing. 59% of HR professionals surveyed acknowledge that a stigma around mental wellbeing is present in the workplace while one in five employees would be very likely to move to an organisation that offers more sufficient mental wellbeing support (Laya Healthcare, 2021). Furthermore, Irish Life Health (2021) disclosed how poor mental wellbeing was the leading cause of long-term absenteeism in 2020 while 11 million days are lost annually due absenteeism in Ireland, costing the Irish economy €1.5 billion each year.

With mental wellbeing becoming more important to individuals, and therefore employees, it’s vital that organisations evolve with this to tackle the stigma and support their employees to reduce the level of absenteeism and ensure they are an employer of choice.

Like mental wellbeing, physical wellbeing has also become important to individuals. Ipsos MRBI conducted the Healthy Ireland 2021 survey on behalf of the Department of Health and found that the top changes that individuals would like to make all related to physical wellbeing. 43% of those surveyed would like to be more physically active, 30% want to sleep

better, 27% want to eat and drink more healthily and 24% would like to lose weight (Government of Ireland, 2021). These percentages highlight that there is a high level of awareness when it comes to being physically healthy as it shows that if individuals were to make changes to their lifestyle, they chose aspects that would improve their physical wellbeing.

Physical wellbeing does not seem to have the same stigma surrounding it when compared to mental wellbeing in the workplace. Aetna International (2020) carried out a survey of 1,000 employees across different nations and found that 31% of those surveyed said they had taken no sick days due to mental wellbeing reasons. On the other hand, only 4% said that had taken no sick days due for physical wellbeing reasons. This shows that almost all of the employees surveyed have taken time off work when they experienced a physical wellbeing issue which is higher than the percentage of those who have taken time off due to a mental wellbeing issue. This could suggest that employees may feel more comfortable and at ease taking time off work when they are physically unwell or it could be that those surveyed may not experience mental wellbeing issues but both possibilities need to be considered.

Many individuals have been aware of social wellbeing over the last two years which is most likely a direct result of Covid-19 restrictions. The Healthy Ireland 2021 survey asked questions regarding social wellbeing and found that 81% of those surveyed felt less socially connected due to the restrictions. 33% of those involved with clubs, social groups or community groups reported that the quality of that relationship had worsened, 27% said their relationship with friends had worsened and 21% reported a worsening of their relationships with co-workers (Government of Ireland, 2021). These statistics highlight that the social wellbeing of a large amount of individuals has been recently affected and it's vital that social connections are restored to improve overall social wellbeing.

As individuals reported that their relationships with their colleagues had worsened, it's clear that the social wellbeing of employees has been impacted. It's human nature to want to connect with others and it's vital that wellbeing becomes a central focus for organisations following on from the dissolution of Covid-19 restrictions. Social wellbeing in the workplace requires employees to feel strong connections to their team, leaders and to the organisation

itself which results in lower levels of employee stress and burnout and higher levels of employee engagement (O.C. Tanner, 2022).

Awareness and understanding of mental, physical and social wellbeing has increased and it's clear that organisations need to recognise the importance of all elements of wellbeing to employees and adapt to fulfil the needs of their employees.

### *Rationale for Research*

The year 2021 is known as The Great Resignation due to the large percentage of employees who left their employment. The Workhuman IQ Fall 2021 International Survey Report (2021) found that 42% of Irish workers are actively looking for a new job, meaning almost half of the Irish workforce is currently seeking employment elsewhere. This figure is surprising as less than two years ago many were fearful of losing their jobs due to the uncertainty and instability of many organisations as a result of Covid-19. In addition to this, Kemmy Business School WorkFutures Lab (2021) carried out a survey of 1,000 Irish employees and around 40% of respondents said they strongly agreed or agreed that their future career lies outside of their current organisation. This highlights that a large percentage of the Irish workforce is either actively seeking another role or already acknowledges that will seek another role in the future.

The latest ManpowerGroup Employment Outlook Survey (2022) found that 42% of Irish employers plan to hire employees to increase their workforce in a 3-month period from July to September 2022. However, the survey also highlighted that 79% of employers are struggling to recruit employees, the highest amount recorded in 12 years.

Based on these figures, it's logical to assume that given the large amount of individuals looking for jobs and the large amount of employers looking for employees, that the needs of both parties would be fulfilled. Yet, employers are still finding it difficult to recruit employees. It is evident that further research is required to identify what is causing this disconnect and whether organisational initiatives aimed at supporting employee mental, physical and social wellbeing can assist organisations in attracting employees, which is what this proposed research intends to achieve.

### *Research Objectives*

The objective of this research is to examine wellbeing initiatives that are either currently present within organisations or could be adapted by organisations and identify the effect these initiatives have, if any, on attracting employees. Research undertaken by Pfeffer and Williams (2020) highlight the economic benefits associated with adequate mental wellbeing care and explores a range of online services available in which organisations can collaborate with and provide their employees with. Attridge (2019) describes how the most important workplace context factor is the involvement of senior leadership in developing an organisational environment that is accepting and supportive of employees who require mental wellbeing assistance.

Rath and Harter (2010) state that many organisational leaders concentrate on the direct costs connected to paying for the medical care of their employees but employees with a low level of physical wellbeing could be having an even greater economic impact. They also explain that although organisations are aware of medical costs, such as doctor appointments and health insurance, the actual economic cost of low employee physical wellbeing may be greatly underestimated. Even when a worker who is struggling with their physical wellbeing is at work, it is improbable that they have the vitality to accomplish as much as an employee who is physically well. Employees with a high level of physical wellbeing are more energetic and achieve more. It's to be expected that they are also more joyful which in turns increases engagement with colleagues and the organisation as a whole.

Social wellbeing incorporates satisfaction with relationships amongst peers and leaders and employees who are socially well feel a sense of belonging to their organisation (De Simone, 2014). Employee Benefits (2020) further echo this by stating that social wellbeing in the workplace includes relationships, inclusion and feeling valued within the organisation. Employees with a high level of social wellbeing are more content which results in a happier work environment, happier customers/clients and, consequently, an effective and efficient organisation with high retention levels.

All that is highlighted in these articles is relevant to the areas of mental, physical and social wellbeing as it shows the importance of these in relation to employees. But none demonstrate or investigate the implementation of wellbeing initiatives in organisations and

the effect that these have. By utilizing a combination of the information provided by these articles, one could wonder whether senior management would be more inclined to create a supportive work environment if it was widely known that it assisted in attracting the right employees. Therefore, this research aims to provide organisations with details on initiatives aimed at employee mental, physical and social wellbeing that can be executed in the workplace. The importance of attracting the right talent will also be explored along with how the initiatives can have a direct impact on this.

### *Overall Structure*

The aim of this research is to present a study on the effects of wellbeing initiatives on attracting employees to an organisation.

The first section of this study is the introduction which provides insight into the background of mental, physical and social wellbeing. The rationale for this research and what it hopes to achieve are also explored as part of the introduction.

The second section of this research is the literature review which consists of four main components. The first will examine the topic of wellbeing including mental, physical and social wellbeing and organisational wellbeing initiatives. The second will highlight why it's important for employees to be in an organisation that supports wellbeing. The third will show how employers can create a working environment that promotes employee wellbeing and why they should. The fourth will discuss attracting employees to an organisation and how employer branding and promoting employee disclosure can assist in making an organisation more attractive.

The third section reaffirms the research question and outlines the aims and objectives of this research along with the hypotheses.

The fourth section of this study is the research methodology which highlights the research design, research instrument and sample. Ethical considerations pertaining to the study are also outlined along with insight into data collection and data analysis.

The fifth section explores the findings of the questionnaire. This provides information and statistics relating to the demographics of participants, the commitment to wellbeing in the participants current organisations, the wellbeing initiatives currently present in the

participants organisations and the effect of wellbeing initiatives on participants when finding, applying and accepting a job.

The sixth section consists of the discussion of the research which includes the findings as well as the research objectives and the hypotheses, in conjunction with one another. The limitations associated with the study and further recommendations are also outlined.

## Literature Review

### *Introduction*

This literature review provides relevant insight into the topic of organisational wellbeing initiatives and the investigation into whether they have an impact on employer attractiveness. This review delves into the separate topics of health and wellbeing and further highlights initiatives that are aimed at employee wellbeing, specifically mental, physical and social wellbeing. Additionally, the importance of promoting employee wellbeing will be outlined for both employees and employers. In relation to attracting employees to an organisation, the areas of employer branding and employee disclosure will be explored.

### *Health and Wellbeing*

Despite the fact that the awareness of wellbeing has evolved greatly over the years, the term remains frequently used but difficult to explain accurately. Cambridge Dictionary (2022) defines wellbeing as “the state of feeling healthy and happy”. This explanation highlights some of the problems in defining wellbeing. By including healthy in this definition, it shows that health is a key component of wellbeing. This overlap is also seen as the World Health Organization defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (World Health Organization, 2022). These two definitions show that health and wellbeing are often interchangeable as one cannot be defined without the other. It is important to note that health and wellbeing influence one another as poor health can damage a person’s wellbeing and an absence of wellbeing can have a negative effect on a person’s health (Thompson and Livingston, 2018).

In contrast, the Department of Health (2014) define wellbeing as feeling and functioning well and it also incorporates an individual’s experience of their life whereas What Works



Wellbeing (2022) defines it as how we are doing as individuals and as a society and how maintainable this is going forward. Wellbeing is also described as “when individuals have psychological, social and/or physical resources, they need to meet a particular psychological, social and/or physical challenge” (Dodge, Daly, Huyton and Sanders, 2012).

It’s clear that there is a need for a universal definition of wellbeing to provide clarity. For the purpose of this research, the term wellbeing will be used throughout with the proposed definition of wellbeing being a person’s positive physical, mental and social state (Robertson and Cooper, 2010).

### Mental Wellbeing

The World Health Organization (2018) defines mental wellbeing as a state of satisfaction in which an individual recognises what they’re capable of, can manage the stresses of everyday life, can work effectively and is capable of positively contributing to their community. This encouraging definition assumes that mental wellbeing is largely influenced by a person’s happiness and their ability to manage and function in a positive way.

However, Better Health Channel (2021) argues that emotions that are considered to be negative, such as sadness, anger and grief, are a common, normal aspect of everyone’s life, even those considered to be mentally well and are simply an element of living. Therefore, it is of vital importance to clearly communicate that each time an individual experiences these feelings it is not a certain indication of a mental illness.

Despite there being an increasing level of awareness surrounding individual, personal mental wellbeing, there is a lack of understanding among individuals in their role as an employee, particularly in relation to legislation. Research undertaken by See Change, a project of the prominent charity Shine, has revealed that 50% of those who participated in the research knew that mental wellbeing falls under the Health and Safety at Work Act with 60% of participants being unaware that mental wellbeing is covered under the nine grounds of discrimination as a disability. The research also found that by disclosing a mental illness to their employer, 71% feared they would be treated differently, 47% felt they would be passed over for promotions and 37% thought they would be excluded from talks and meetings (See Change, 2021). The combination of these figures highlights how employees expect that their mental wellbeing may negatively impact the treatment they receive in the workplace and, even more worrying, should it happen, they are unaware that they are

protected by legislation. It's abundantly apparent that there is a lack of clear information and understanding regarding mental wellbeing and the workplace as well the presence of a stigma surrounding this area.

Mental wellbeing is a combination of an individual's state of mind, feelings, self-assurance and their ability to manage (Laya Healthcare, 2019). NHS Inform (2021) disclose how maintaining contact with people, undertaking activity, acquiring new skills to instil a sense of accomplishment, giving to others and being mindful and aware of the present can all positively boost an individual's mental wellbeing. These five elements can transpire into the workplace as employers can utilise these aspects to create an environment that has a positive impact on employee mental wellbeing.

#### Physical Wellbeing

The Royal College of Physicians of Ireland (2022) refer to physical wellbeing as eating healthily, obtaining the proper quality and quantity of sleep and exercising regularly. The Workplace Health Report, published by Champion Health, found that 53% of the participants would like to focus on exercising, 46% would like to direct attention to their weight and 43% would like to concentrate on their sleep. However, 43% identified time as an obstacle to making changes in these areas and 29% highlighted work commitments as a barrier (Champion Health, 2022). These numbers point out the positive impact that organisations can have by assisting employees in their desire to concentrate on these areas of physical wellbeing.

#### Social Wellbeing

Social wellbeing refers to the ability to communicate with others and build meaningful relationships where you can freely be yourself (Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions, 2021). This means that individuals develop their social wellbeing through interacting with those around them. Employers can create an environment with open communication throughout the workplace where employees feel respected, accepted and appreciated. Supporting employee social wellbeing is vitally important but particularly so for organisations with employees working remotely. The Ibec Academy (2021) outline how employers need to encourage their employees to have informal, non-work-related conversations and allow them the time and opportunity to do so in order to ensure employees achieve a sense of belonging within the organisation. It is further explained that

when employers meet their employees' needs for social wellbeing, it results in higher levels of morale, commitment and productivity. This highlights the mutually beneficial nature of employee social wellbeing for both the employee and employer.

#### Wellbeing Initiatives

A number of organisations offer services for their employees to avail of which are aimed at promoting their personal mental wellbeing outside of the workplace, such as an Employee Assistant Programme (EAP) which is a helpline supplied by an external company but paid for by the employer. This helpline typically includes access to counselling as well as advice, support and information regarding health, finance, debt, legal issues, childcare and eldercare (Mercer, 2020). However, it is of vital importance that organisations also implement mental wellbeing initiatives that focus on improving the overall workplace environment. One such way is providing Mental Health First Aid training to any interested employees or, at the very least, to managers and HR personnel. Spectrum (2019) identify the importance of Mental Health First Aid through highlighting that 20% of employees in any organisation will encounter a mental wellbeing issue. The training equips the participants with the skills and knowledge to deliver immediate care to a person who may be distressed while at work. Trained Mental Health First Aiders can identify the signs and manage situations as they arise. This shows employees that their employers care about their mental wellbeing and view it as a priority by creating a safe environment where it is acknowledged, spoken about and supported. Accenture is one such company who is leading the charge in terms of prioritising employee mental wellbeing. The organisation has partnered with Thrive Global and Stanford Medicine to launch Thriving Mind, a self-directed learning experience for employees that prioritises mental wellbeing and targets the core causes of mental wellbeing issues before they develop into symptoms (Thrive, 2022). While all initiatives targeting employee mental wellbeing are worthwhile, this attitude is one to pay particular attention to as it takes on a preventative approach as opposed to providing the services to employees after the fact.

RocheMartin (2021) highlight how organisations can implement a range of initiatives that promote employee wellbeing which are specifically aimed at physical wellbeing such as daily stretches, gym membership allowance and walking meetings. For example, Facebook implements a bike share programme which provides employees with a fleet of bikes on-site

for recreational, sport or commuting purposes. The organisation also offers safe cycling workshops as well as discounts on bikes and gear and on-site bike repair and support (Bikes Make Life Better, 2022). It is important to note that a programme of this magnitude is not feasible or possible in all organisations but that does not imply that employee physical wellbeing should not be of importance as the previously outlined examples of daily stretches and walking can be implemented in almost all organisations.

It was previously outlined that social wellbeing can be enforced through an employee's sense of belonging to an organisation. There are a number of initiatives that employers can implement to ensure this happens, the simplest of which is providing employees with organisational merchandise such as branded water bottles, mugs, umbrellas and hats (Perkbox, 2021). An inexpensive and simple way to ensure the social aspect is present in the workplace can be to organise companywide meetings. This allows all employees to feel involved and included and enhances employee relationships regardless of positions, roles and titles. Furthermore, creating an environment where workplace camaraderie is welcome is an important element in maintaining employee social wellbeing. To promote positive working relationships, organisations can encourage cross functional teams, create mentoring opportunities and implement a buddy system for new employees (Great Place To Work, 2021).

In order to place employee wellbeing at the forefront of the organisation, initiatives aimed at supporting physical, mental and social wellbeing must be considered and implemented in the workplace.

### *Importance for Employees*

It is becoming increasingly important to employees that their employer offers and cultivates a culture which promotes and supports wellbeing in the workplace. Dickson-Swift, Fox, Marshall, Welch and Willis (2014) found that employees who are provided with an organisational wellbeing programme recounted improvements in happiness, job satisfaction, work ethic and healthy behaviours in relating to sleeping, eating and drinking. Furthermore, participants of the study stated that the products of their work are of an exceptional quality as a result of feeling motivated to uphold high standards by their

employer providing a wellbeing programme. A further participant explained how the programme created an environment where employees feel part of a family unit.

In a study undertaken by Chetty (2017), 58% of employees surveyed identified feeling happier at work as the most important factor in bettering their wellbeing in the workplace. This figure highlights how by simply creating a work environment in which employees feel content and satisfied, employers can positively impact employee wellbeing. This viewpoint is further reaffirmed by research piloted by Tov and Chan (2012) which found that the most important way employers can increase employee wellbeing is through daily interactions in the workplace rather than spending money and resources to send employees to wellbeing workshops and programmes. It's clear that the working environment employers create massively effects employee wellbeing.

Research conducted by Ipsos and commissioned by Teladoc Health found that 10% of participants believed that disclosing their poor mental wellbeing to a colleague could lead to them losing their job while 40% of participants have given a false explanation for mental wellbeing related absence. These figures suggest that a large percentage of employees do not feel that their work environment is one where they cannot honestly share and discuss their mental wellbeing. Furthermore, it's evident that greater access to the appropriate support is required as 38% of participants said they would be more productive at work if better mental wellbeing support was provided (Ipsos, 2019). This figure shows that improved organisational wellbeing support, specifically aimed at mental wellbeing given the stigma surrounding it previously discussed, is not only beneficial for employees, but also for employers.

### *Importance for Employers*

Wellbeing is an area which is becoming more prevalent within research. Research is strictly academic as awareness from an organisational perspective still remains low. Awareness and education amongst these players in the workplace is imperative when adopting a hierarchical approach to the implementation of wellbeing initiatives in the workplace. This approach includes the initiation of an open dialogue across all organisational levels to reduce the stigma, encourage involvement and unity across all levels and establish a wellbeing friendly workplace culture (Sikafi, 2019). Similarly, Dickson-Swift *et al.* (2014)

highlighted communication with management as a mitigating factor in the success of wellbeing programmes in the workplace, as well as support and commitment from management and personal working relationships. It's clear that management are the key to accomplishing a workplace that promotes employee wellbeing. In relation to mental wellbeing specifically, this is further echoed by Lockett (2010) when stating if managers understood more about mental unwellness, they could identify the signs and symptoms and acknowledge how to respond appropriately, which would promote a workplace culture that endorses acceptance and disclosure.

These recent studies highlight how employers can support employee wellbeing but the question remains, why should they or, more accurately, why would they? Of course they should support the wellbeing of their employees but, unfortunately, a case needs to be made for many employers to identify the potential benefits of implementing organisational initiatives aimed at employee wellbeing. The National Framework for Healthy Workplaces in Ireland 2021-2025 identify increased work performance, productivity, employee morale and engagement as well as improved corporate image and retention as benefits of positive workplace wellbeing (Government of Ireland, 2021). Enhanced return on training and development investment is also noted as a benefit which is further echoed by Laya Healthcare and their findings that highlight for every €1 an organisation spends on successfully implementing an appropriate action, approximately €2.30 is achieved in benefits (Laya Healthcare, 2017). Research undertaken by McKinsey and Company (2021) found that 46% of employers surveyed want to increase employee engagement but only 38% of those actually track engagement. Likewise, 37% stated that they wish to increase productivity yet only 46% of these actively measure it.

These figures, coupled with the benefits highlighted in The National Framework for Healthy Workplaces in Ireland 2021-2025, show that a large amount of employers want to achieve the advantages that come from having a workforce that is well but there is a low percentage of those who are actively measuring and tracking these benefits. This puts into question how serious employers are about not only attaining increased employee engagement and productivity but about supporting wellbeing in the workplace. There is a lack of representation of this in the research despite the fact that a work environment designed to

support the development of employee engagement will promote the wellbeing and productivity of its employees (Leiter and Maslach, 2003).

### *Attracting Employees*

#### Employer Branding

As a result of the large amount of employees actively seeking alternative employment, attracting the right talent has never been more vital for organisations to survive in this fiercely competitive environment. Story, Castanheira and Hartig (2016) acknowledge the difficulties organisations are currently faced with when attracting talent and investigated whether the addition of information about corporate social responsibility (CSR) procedures to a job advertisement results in the organisation becoming more attractive to potential employees. This study discovered that the inclusion of CSR information in a job advertisement largely increases the level of attractiveness of the job and the organisation for potential employees. In addition to this, prospective employees also want to learn about the employer brand through job advertisements (Leekha Chhabra and Sharma, 2014). This highlights the importance of communicating company culture and informing potential employees of what it means to be part of the organisation. Successful employer branding results in gaining the attention of potential employees, instilling interest in them, producing an aspiration to be part of the organisation and allowing them to take action by applying for a role within the organisation (Sharma and Prasad, 2018).

It's clear that the successful divulsion of organisational branding and culture plays an integral role in the choices prospective employees make when applying for a job or, in some cases, perhaps not applying. Organisational wellbeing initiatives are a major aspect of a company's culture and brand. This research will determine whether these initiatives impact how organisations attract employees by openly communicating their existence.

#### Employee Disclosure

Clearly communicating a workplace that accepts and supports wellbeing to prospective employees can aid organisations in their quest to attract employees. CIPD (2021) explain that potential employees may not disclose a mental wellbeing issue when applying for a job due to fear of discrimination. Research conducted by Opinium in partnership with the University of Warwick found that employees experiencing a mental illness did not tell their

employer for reasons such as feeling ashamed, thinking their employer could not help or fearing it would damage their career (People Management, 2019). This further echoes that there is still a stigma present around mental wellbeing, that is not present with physical and social wellbeing, which is especially present in a working environment. For this reason, organisations should make their dedication to cultivating a supportive, mentally well workplace clear. This can be done when designing job descriptions and person specifications by ensuring flexibility and care is required to allow for reasonable adjustments to assist people with a mental illness. In doing so it's important to distinguish between essential and desirable requirements for a role and for emphasis to be placed on what is to be accomplished as opposed to how. Employers should have a supportive conversation with employees to discuss if their mental wellbeing condition can impact their work and whether adjustments such as providing a mentor, job sharing and remote working can help and provide assistance.

Research conducted by Brohan, Henderson, Wheat, Malcolm, Clement, Barley, Slade and Thornicroft (2012) discovered that applicants with issues relating to their mental wellbeing were ranked as less employable than a candidate with a physical disability and a candidate with no disability. The research found this was the case in circumstances where applicants with back injury were rated more favourably in terms of expected job performance than those with a mental illness and applicants with depression were significantly less likely to be selected in contrast to an applicant with diabetes.

The information outlined above from CIPD coupled with the percentages and statistics defined throughout this review of the literature, shows that employees should be presented with the opportunity to disclose a mental illness should they wish to do so. Despite the fact that this research, which highlights that the knowledge of an employee's mental wellbeing issue leaves them at a distinct disadvantage, was conducted ten years ago, there still remains a large number of employees who fear they will be treated differently or lose their job should they disclose a mental wellbeing issue to their employer. Unfortunately, the evidence suggests that this concern is rational and they are right to feel this way.



## Research Question

The chosen title of this research proposal is 'The Effect of Organisational Wellbeing Initiatives on Attracting Employees' with the underlying research question being 'Does the presence of wellbeing initiatives have an impact on attracting employees to an organisation?'.

## *Aims and Objectives*

The aims of this research are:

1. To investigate whether wellbeing initiatives have an impact on attracting employees and if so, is it a positive or negative impact.
2. To highlight wellbeing initiatives that organisations can implement for their employees.
3. To show the volume of organisations currently offering wellbeing initiatives for employees.
4. To ascertain whether there is a correlation between the opinions of employees in relation to their organisation's commitment to wellbeing and the initiatives that their organisation provides.

The objectives of this research are:

1. Examine the influence of organisational wellbeing initiatives on the decision making of employees when finding, applying for and accepting a job.
2. Devise an account of a range of organisational initiatives which are aimed at the wellbeing of employees.
3. Measure the amount of organisations that provide employees with wellbeing support.
4. Examine the wellbeing initiatives that are provided by organisations and employee opinions on whether they believe their organisation is committed to wellbeing in conjunction with one another.

## *Hypotheses*

### Hypothesis 1

The presence of wellbeing initiatives has a positive effect on attracting employees to an organisation.

### Hypothesis 2

There is a high level of organisations providing employees with initiatives aimed at their wellbeing.

### Hypothesis 3

There is a strong connection between participants who state their organisations offer wellbeing initiatives and their opinions on whether their organisation is committed to employee wellbeing. This will identify what employees consider to be commitment from their organisations.

## **Research Methodology**

### *Research Design*

In order to achieve the aims and objectives outlined above, a quantitative research approach will be undertaken. This approach was chosen based on the literature previously reviewed above. As outlined by Leekha Chhabra and Sharma (2014) and Sharma and Prasad (2018), a combination of quantitative and qualitative research was utilised in their studies. A mixed approach such as this was considered but declined due to time constraints and accessibility issues. A quantitative approach was considered the most efficient and effective approach which is further validated as Story *et al.* (2016) implemented a wholly quantitative approach through the means of surveys. Zweber, Henning and Magley (2016) and Klimkiewicz and Oltra (2017) used quantitative research, respectively, as surveys were constructed and utilised for the purpose of both research studies. Based on this synopsis, quantitative research, specifically a questionnaire, was chosen for the purpose of this research study.

### *Research Instrument*

Through a quantitative approach, a questionnaire with single-answer multiple choice questions was designed and utilised through the platform Qualtrics. Questions relating to

the participants demographics were revised from the Innovative Human Resource Practice Scale to ascertain the participants age, gender and managerial level in current employment (Agarwala, 2003). Additional questions, such as sector and industry of employment and size of organisation, were added to gain further insight into the demographics of the participants.

To gain an understanding of the wellbeing culture present in the participants organisations and the participants perceptions of wellbeing in their organisations, statements were adapted from A Practical Scale for Multi-Faceted Organizational Health Climate Assessment (Zweber *et. al*, 2016). Zweber *et. al* (2016) used a 7-point Likert scale but the decision was made to use a 5-point Likert scale instead where 1 relates to strongly disagree and 5 relates to strongly agree to measure the results. There are a number of reasons for this, one of which was to ensure consistency for participants as a second 5-point Likert scale was included further on in the questionnaire. Additionally, Babakus and Mangold (1992) state that 5-point Likert scales reduce frustration levels of participants and increase response rates and quality. Dawes (2008) carried out a study to investigate the use of 5-point, 7-point or 10-point Likert scales and the impacts on the data that the scales generate in terms of mean scores. This study discovered that there is little difference between 5-point and 7-point scales. The reliability of this scale in the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach's Alpha which showed it is an effective measure for this study.

To identify the organisational wellbeing initiatives present in the participants organisations, questions were adapted from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Worker Well-being Questionnaire (Chari, Sauter, Petrun, Huang, Fisher and Chang, 2022). The NIOSH study asked the question "Are the following health and wellness programs or services available to you at the place where you work?". For the purpose of this research, this question was revised and separated into the following three questions: "Are the following **physical** health and wellness programs or services available to you at the place where you work?", "Are the following **mental** health and wellness programs or services available to you at the place where you work?" and "Are the following **social** health and wellness programs or services available to you at the place where you work?". As well as separating the original question into three standalone questions, the words 'physical', 'mental' and 'social' were bolded to maintain consistency in structuring the questions while

focusing participants' attention. The phrase 'health and wellness programs or services' was kept and built upon for the purpose of the questionnaire to maintain accuracy of the original question that was asked and adapted upon. Additional wellbeing initiatives were added as answers to each of the questions to gain a broader understanding of the initiatives currently offered to employees. Values for measures of scale internal consistency are strong in The NIOSH Worker Well-being Questionnaire with Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) values ranging from 0.93 to 1. Cronbach's Alpha values also exceeded 0.8 in most cases and fell below 0.7 for one scale. The one scale that fell below 0.7 was not the scale adapted for the purpose of this research. Due to the adaption of the original scale, Cronbach's Alpha was used to test the reliability of this scale which highlighted its success as a measure.

The final part of the questionnaire measures the extent that participants consider wellbeing when choosing an organisation to work for. The statements were adapted from Klimkiewicz and Oltra (2017) and their work in the area of CSR by replacing CSR with wellbeing. One such example is the amendment of the original statement "It is important for me to find a job in a company that I consider as socially responsible" to "It is important for me to find a job in an organisation that offers wellbeing initiatives". The decision was made to use the word 'organisation' as opposed to the word 'company' to ensure consistency for the participants as the word 'organisation' is used in the statements adapted from the work of Zweber *et. al* (2016). As previously explored, communicating an organisations culture and branding to prospective employees is of vital importance. As CSR and wellbeing are both elements of an organisations culture and branding, the area of CSR was identified as the best fit to adapt statements from. A 5-point Likert scale, where 1 corresponds to strongly disagree and 5 corresponds to strongly agree, was utilised to measure the results. The aim of these statements in the questionnaire is to identify the importance of wellbeing initiatives to individuals when choosing an employer. This scale was tested for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha which showed that it is a valuable measure for this study.

### *Sample*

Non-probability sampling was utilised for the purpose of this study. Both convenience sampling and snowball sampling were used and the self-administered questionnaire, which is noted as Appendix 2, was distributed to colleagues, family and friends who are currently

in employment in Ireland. The questionnaire was circulated using direct and indirect invitations on Facebook, LinkedIn and WhatsApp and 102 participants responded. In order to provide a general overview of all employees in Ireland, there were no restrictions relating to the participants of the questionnaire such as specific age, gender, occupation, industry or location.

### *Ethical Considerations*

The questionnaire was accompanied by a cover letter which informed the participants that partaking is entirely voluntary. The cover letter, which is noted as Appendix 1, also explained how the participants could withdraw from the questionnaire at any time. Participants were not asked to disclose their name or the name of their organisation to ensure the data gathered was anonymous and confidential. The data will only be used for the purpose of this research study and the author was the only individual with access to the data. An ethics form was completed and submitted to the NCI Ethics Committee and this research study was declared ethically sound and suitable.

### *Data Collection*

The questionnaire was created and designed using the online platform Qualtrics which collected the data. It was distributed electronically utilising the internet by sending the questionnaire via social media such as Facebook and LinkedIn and private messaging applications such as Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp. A consent form and instruction sheet accompanied all questionnaires that were distributed to provide the participant with all information relating to their involvement in the study.

### *Data Analysis*

In order to adequately and accurately analyse the data that has been collected, statistical analysis was carried out using SPSS. Descriptive statistics were used to test the questionnaire data. This method was chosen to present the data in a meaningful and understandable way to aid interpretation. Descriptive statistics allowed for the gathering of useful information regarding the population of interest.

## **Findings**

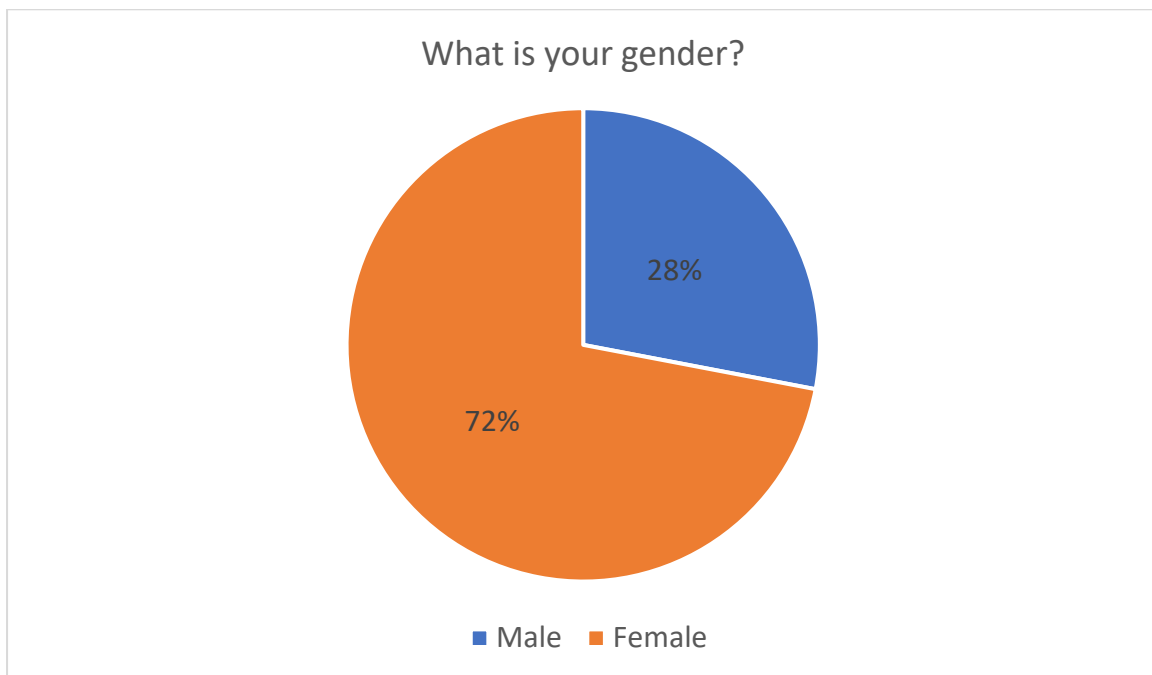
A total of 102 participants responded to and took part in the questionnaire. The participants were asked questions relating to demographics, their organisations commitment to

wellbeing, the wellbeing initiatives offered by their organisation and the importance of the presence of wellbeing initiatives when finding, applying and choosing employment.

### *Demographics*

#### Gender

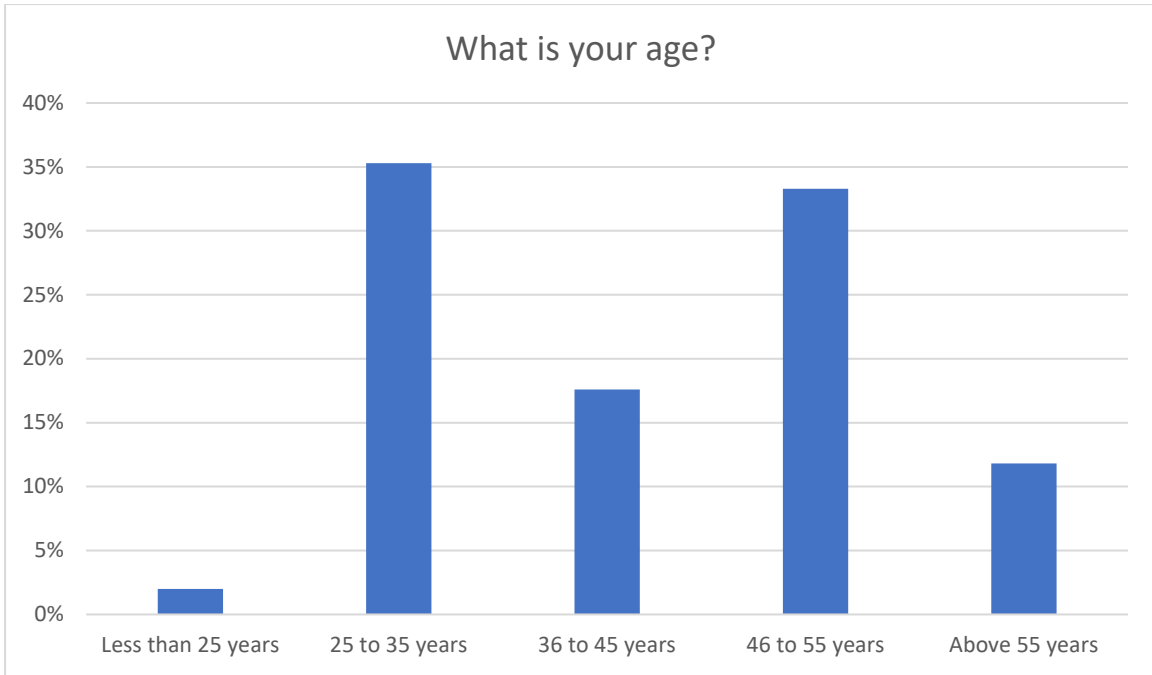
As shown in the below pie chart, 72% of participants were female and 28% were male, showing that the majority of participants were female. No participants chose the option of 'Prefer not to say' with all stating either male or female as their gender.



*Chart 1: Gender Demographics*

#### Age

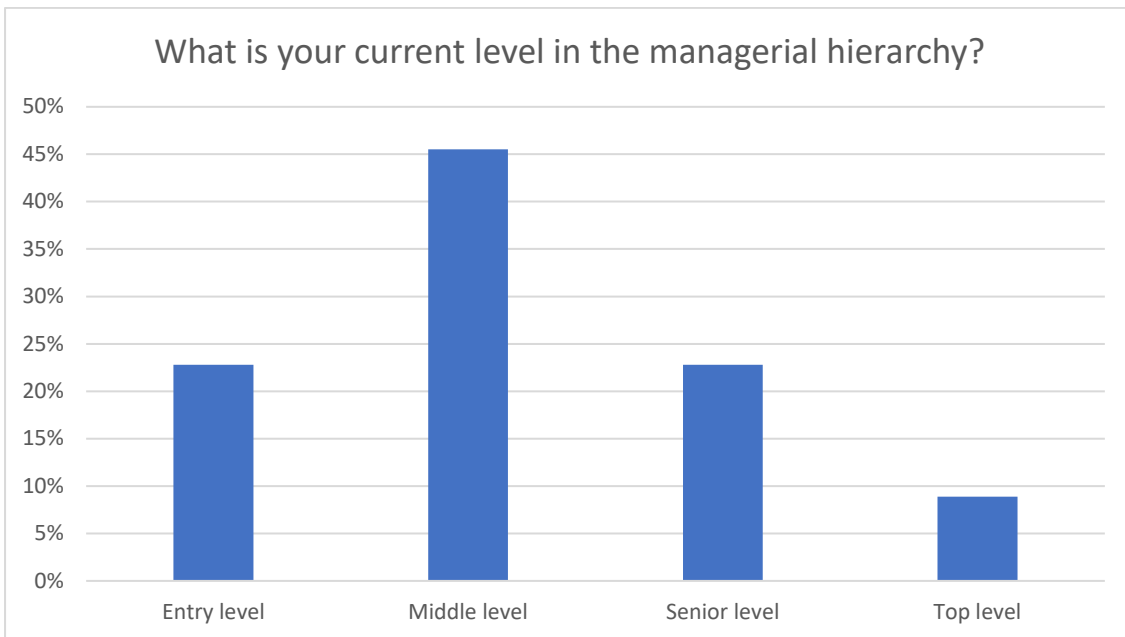
The participants were also asked to divulge their age to gain further insight into demographics. The below bar chart highlights how the largest proportion of the sample population were aged between 25 and 35 years as 35.3% fell into this age category. 33.3% of participants were aged between 46 to 55 years, 17.6% were aged between 35 to 45 years, 11.8% were over 55 years old and 2% were less than 25 years old.



*Chart 2: Age Demographics*

Managerial Level

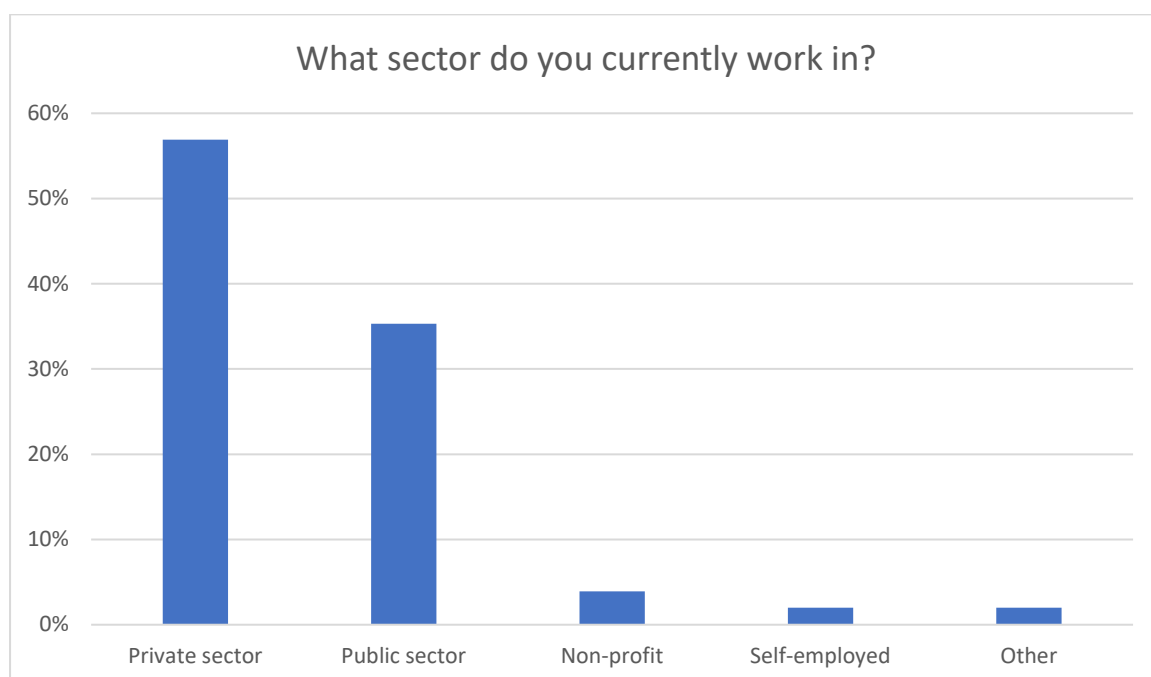
Participants were asked to indicate their managerial level in their current organisation. As shown in the below bar chart, 45.5% were at the middle level in the managerial hierarchy, making it the largest proportion of the sample population. Both entry level and senior level combined represent 45.6% of the sample population with each accounting for 22.8% respectively. 8.9% were working in the top level in their organisation.



*Chart 3: Managerial Level*

## Sector

Participants of the questionnaire were asked to specify the sector that they are working in, with the results highlighted in the below bar chart. The largest share of the sample population were employed in the private sector as 56.9% of participants fell into this category. 35.3% were working in public sector, 3.9% were working in a non-profit organisation and 2% were self-employed. A further option was given to participants titled 'Other' which was accompanied by a text box for answers to be inserted. 2% indicated 'Other' with semi state and retail noted in the text box respectively.



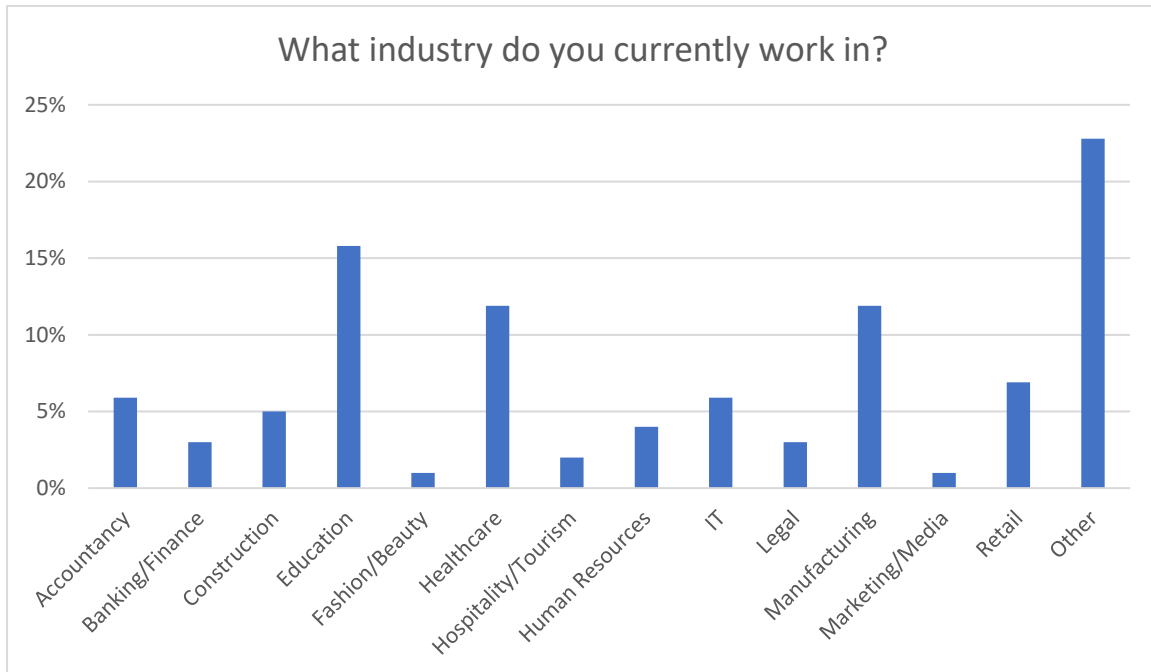
*Chart 4: Sector*

## Industry

Participants were asked to indicate the industry they are working in. There were a total of 14 options to choose from, one of which was 'Other' where participants could manually type answers into a text box. The below bar chart shows that 22.8% of participants selected 'Other' with a range of industries noted in the text boxes. These were Design, Logistics & Supply Chain, Agriculture, Energy, Charity, Recruitment, Property Management, Utility, Social Inclusion, Childcare, Garden Equipment Sales and Distribution, Civil Service and Telecom. 15.8% of participants were working in Education, 11.9% in Healthcare and Manufacturing, respectively, and 6.9% Retail. 5.9% were working in Accountancy and a further 5.9% were working in IT. 5% were working in Construction, 4% in Human Resources,



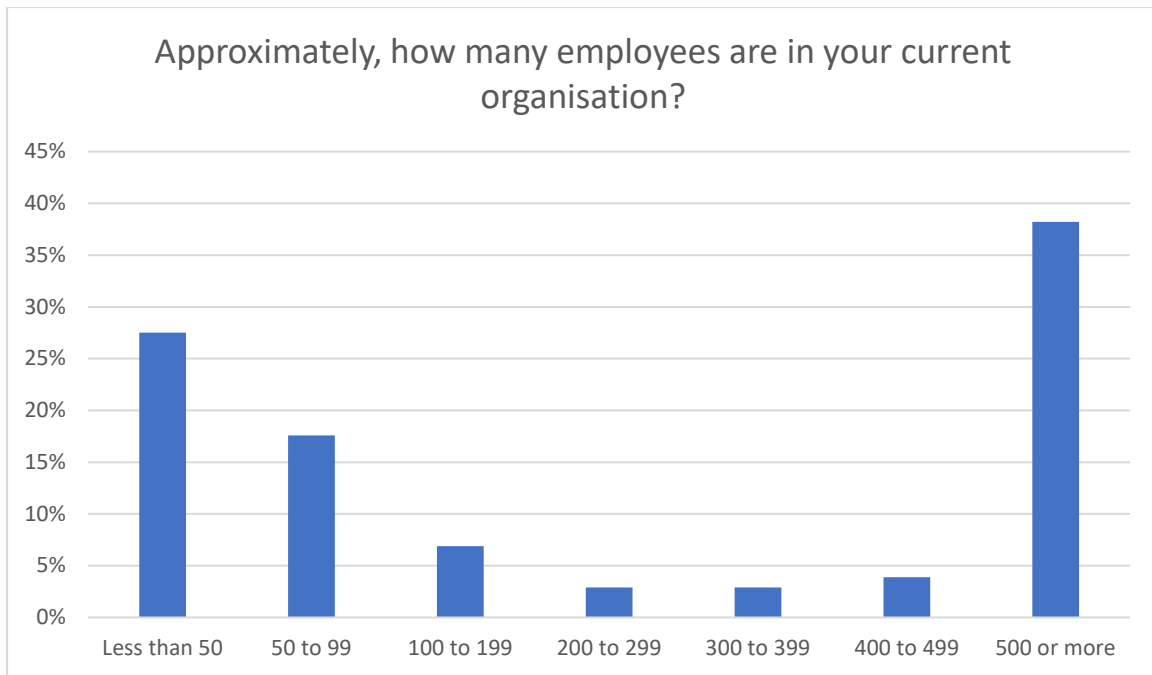
3% in Banking/Finance, a further 3% in Legal, 2% in Hospitality/Tourism and 1% Fashion/Beauty and Marketing/Media, consecutively. The large amount of participants choosing 'Other' highlights the need for more varied options to be given when providing a range of industries.



*Chart 5: Industry*

Organisation Size

Participants of the questionnaire were asked to highlight the size of their organisation by indicating the number of employees in their organisation. As shown in the below bar chart, 38.2% were in an organisation that employs 500 or more, the largest proportion of the sample population. 27.5% were in organisations with less than 50 employees, 17.6% in organisations with 50 to 99 employees, 6.9% in organisations with 100 to 199 employees, 3.9% in organisations with 400 to 499 employees and 2.9% in organisations with 200 to 299 employees and 300 to 399 employees, respectively.



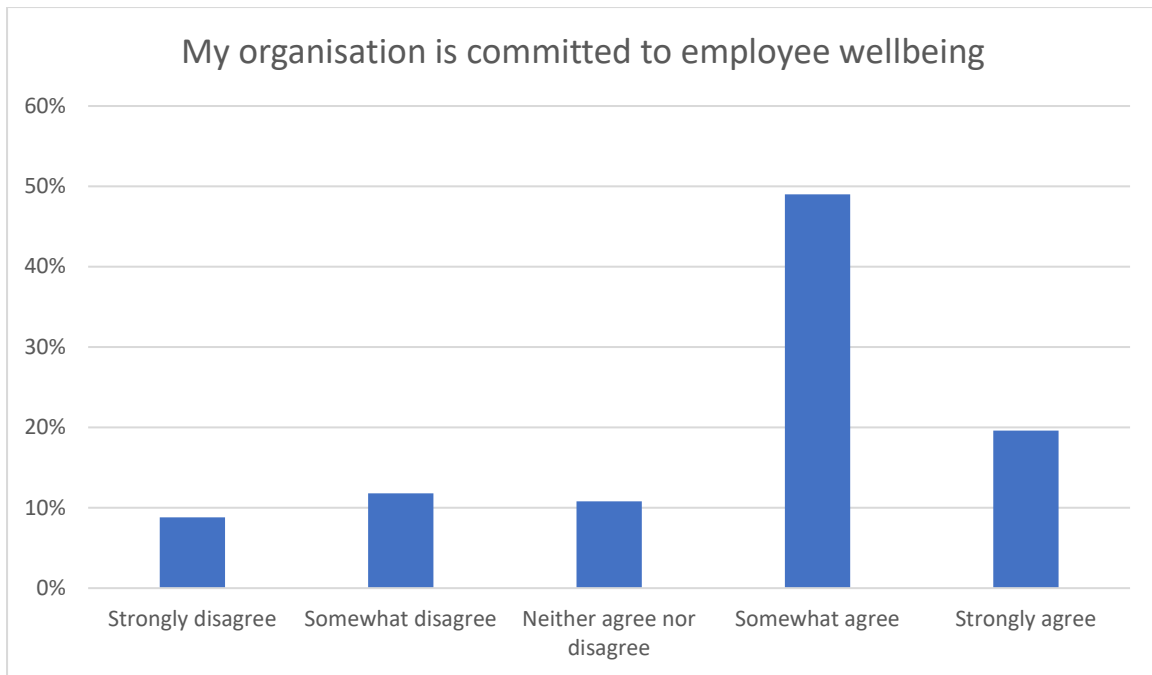
*Chart 6: Organisation Size*

As participants were employed in a range of sectors, industries and organisations of different sizes, this provided broader and varied sample population.

### *Organisational Commitment*

#### Organisation Commitment

Participants were presented with the statement ‘my organisation is committed to employee wellbeing’ and were asked whether they strongly disagreed, somewhat disagreed, neither agreed nor disagreed, somewhat agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. As highlighted in the below bar chart, 8.8% of participants strongly disagreed, 11.8% somewhat agreed and 10.8% neither agreed nor disagreed. 38%, the largest proportion of the sample population, somewhat agreed to the statement while 19.6% strongly agreed.



*Chart 7: Organisation Commitment*

Organisation and Healthy Behaviours

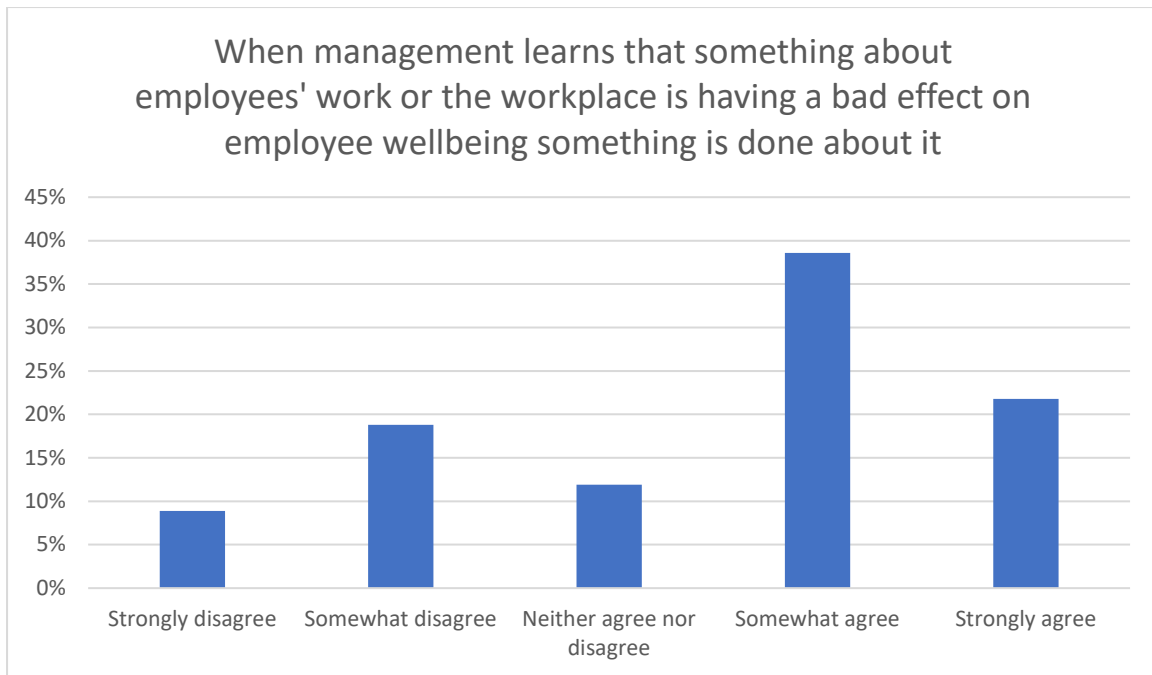
Participants were presented with the statement ‘my organisation encourages me and provides opportunities to engage in healthy behaviours such as being physically active, eating a healthy diet, living tobacco free and managing my stress’ and were asked whether they strongly disagreed, somewhat disagreed, neither agreed nor disagreed, somewhat agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. The below bar chart shows that 13.7% of participants strongly disagreed, 15.7% somewhat disagreed and 13.7% neither agreed nor disagreed. The largest share of the sample population somewhat agreed with the statement as 35.3% of participants chose this answer. A further 21.6% strongly agreed.



*Chart 8: Organisation and Healthy Behaviours*

#### Management and Wellbeing

Participants were presented with the statement ‘when management learns that something about employees’ work or the workplace is having a bad effect on employee wellbeing something is done about it’ and were asked whether they strongly disagreed, somewhat disagreed, neither agreed nor disagreed, somewhat agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. The below bar chart shows that 8.9% of participants strongly disagreed, 18.8% somewhat disagreed and 11.9% neither agreed nor disagreed. 38.6% somewhat agreed, the largest percentage of the sample population. Following this, 21.8% of participants strongly agreed to the statement.



*Chart 9: Management and Wellbeing*

Organisation Encouragement

Participants were presented with the statement ‘my organisation encourages me to speak up about issues and priorities regarding employee wellbeing’ and were asked whether they strongly disagreed, somewhat disagreed, neither agreed nor disagreed, somewhat agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. As outlined in the below bar chart, 7% strongly disagreed, 17% somewhat disagreed and 14% neither agreed nor disagreed. The largest share of the sample population somewhat agreed, with 36% choosing this answer. A further 26% of participants strongly agreed.



*Chart 10: Organisation Encouragement*

Internal consistency of this scale, which was composed of the above 4 questions relating to organisational commitment, was measured using Cronbach’s Alpha. The below table shows that a reliability value of .815 was reported. This is above the acceptable value of .7 which indicates a reliable scale with all 4 items correlating with one another.

<b><u>Reliability Statistics</u></b>	
<b>Cronbach’s Alpha</b>	<b>Number of Items</b>
.815	4

*Table 1: Organisation Commitment Reliability*

### *Organisational Wellbeing Initiatives*

#### Physical Wellbeing Initiatives

Participants were presented with a total of 17 physical wellbeing initiatives and were asked to state whether they are available to them at the place where they work. The table below provides a breakdown which outlines the percentage of participants who answered yes, stating the initiative was available to them, or no, the initiative was not available to them. A higher percentage of participants stated that they were offered 3 out of the 16 physical wellbeing initiatives than those who were not. These initiatives were lunchtime walks (available to 67% of participants), access to drinking water for all employees (available to

93% of participants) and on-site facilities for food (available to 88% of participants). This shows that a higher percentage of participants did not have 13 out of 16 physical wellbeing initiatives available to them. These initiatives included walking meetings (not available to 79% of participants), smoking cessation programmes (not available to 82% of participants), on-site exercise facilities/programmes (not available to 80% of participants) and team or individual 'eat well challenges' (not available to 85% of participants).

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Lunchtime walks</b>	67%	33%
<b>Active stretch breaks</b>	46%	54%
<b>Walking meetings</b>	21%	79%
<b>Recreational games or activities for employees at lunchtime or after work</b>	23%	77%
<b>Workplace challenges (e.g. couch to 5k, 10,000 steps a day)</b>	33%	67%
<b>Recipes and tips for healthy eating</b>	31%	69%
<b>Talks, presentations, and/or workshops on healthy eating by health professionals, dieticians/nutritionists</b>	33%	67%
<b>Access to health promotion materials such as leaflets and posters about healthy eating</b>	39%	61%
<b>Access to drinking water for all employees</b>	93%	7%
<b>Smoking cessations programmes</b>	18%	82%

<b>Health and fitness assessments and/or health screening</b>	28%	72%
<b>Health snack options (i.e. in the vending machines or kitchen)</b>	47%	53%
<b>On-site facilities for food (e.g. food preparation and storage areas for employees to use)</b>	88%	12%
<b>Team or individual ‘Eat well challenges’</b>	15%	85%
<b>On-site exercise facilities/programmes</b>	20%	80%
<b>Free, discounted or employer-subsidised memberships for off-site facilities (e.g. gym)</b>	27%	73%

*Table 2: Physical Wellbeing Initiatives*

Cronbach’s Alpha was used to measure the internal consistency of this scale. As outlined in the table below, a reliability value of .819 was achieved. This shows that this is a reliable scale with a relationship present between all items.

<b><u>Reliability Statistics</u></b>	
<b>Cronbach’s Alpha</b>	<b>Number of Items</b>
.819	16

*Table 3: Physical Wellbeing Initiatives Reliability*

#### Mental Wellbeing Initiatives

Participants were presented with a total of 9 mental wellbeing initiatives and were asked to say whether they are available to them at the place where they work. The below table shows the percentage of participants who answered yes, declaring the initiative was



available to them, or no, the initiative was not available to them. Out of the 9 initiatives, there were 3 initiatives that more participants had available to them than not to them. These were information provided to employees about mental wellbeing (available to 59% of participants), accessible information provided about local and national help agencies (available to 56% of participants) and information about the personal support services your organisation provides (available to 60% of participants). This highlights that a higher percentage of participants did not have 6 out of 9 mental wellbeing initiatives available to them. These initiatives included information about common stressors (not available to 74% of participants), employee mental wellbeing survey (not available to 73% of participants) and mental wellbeing training and awareness-raising for employees (not available to 53% of participants).

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Information provided to employees about mental wellbeing</b>	59%	41%
<b>Mental wellbeing training and awareness-raising for employees</b>	47%	53%
<b>Mental wellbeing training and awareness-raising for managers</b>	46%	54%
<b>Accessible information provided about local and national help agencies</b>	56%	44%
<b>Information about the personal support services your organisation provides (e.g. Employee Assistance Programme (EAP))</b>	60%	40%
<b>Stress-buster sessions before, during or after</b>	15%	85%

<b>work (e.g. yoga and massages)</b>		
<b>Information about common stressors such as debt, time management and relationships</b>	26%	74%
<b>Annual staff surveys which include some questions on workplace mental wellbeing</b>	44%	56%
<b>Employee mental wellbeing survey</b>	27%	73%

*Table 4: Mental Wellbeing Initiatives*

To measure the internal consistency of this scale, Cronbach’s Alpha was utilised. The below table highlights that a reliability value of .851 was conveyed which indicates a reliable scale with consistency throughout the items.

<b><u>Reliability Statistics</u></b>	
<b>Cronbach’s Alpha</b>	<b>Number of Items</b>
.851	9

*Table 5: Mental Wellbeing Initiatives Reliability*

#### Social Wellbeing Initiatives

Participants were presented with a total of 11 social wellbeing initiatives and were asked to state whether they are available to them at the place where they work. The table below shows the percentage of participants who answered yes, to say that the initiative was available to them or no, the initiative was not available to them. Out of the 11 initiatives, there were 4 initiatives that more participants had available to them than not to them. These were social events outside of normal working hours (available to 66% of participants), flexible working hours (available to 67% of participants), hybrid/remote working (available to 67% of participants) and free or subsidised personal development courses (available to 54% of participants). This shows that a higher percentage of participants did not have 7 out

of 11 social wellbeing initiatives available to them. These included mentoring programme/buddy system (not available to 62% of participants), teambuilding activities (not available to 53% of participants) and corporate social responsibility practices (not available to 62% of participants).

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Teambuilding activities</b>	47%	53%
<b>Social events during normal working hours</b>	35%	65%
<b>Social events outside of normal working hours</b>	66%	34%
<b>On-site recreational room (e.g. with pool table, table tennis etc.)</b>	19%	81%
<b>Mentoring programme/buddy system</b>	38%	62%
<b>Volunteering/charity work</b>	31%	69%
<b>Flexible working hours</b>	67%	33%
<b>Hybrid/remote working</b>	67%	33%
<b>Free or subsidised personal development courses</b>	54%	46%
<b>Corporate social responsibility practices</b>	38%	62%
<b>Seminars/talks on social wellbeing</b>	41%	59%

*Table 6: Social Wellbeing Initiatives*

The internal consistency of this scale was measured using Cronbach's Alpha. The table below shows that a reliability value of .801 was achieved which shows that this is a reliable scale with all items correlating with one another.

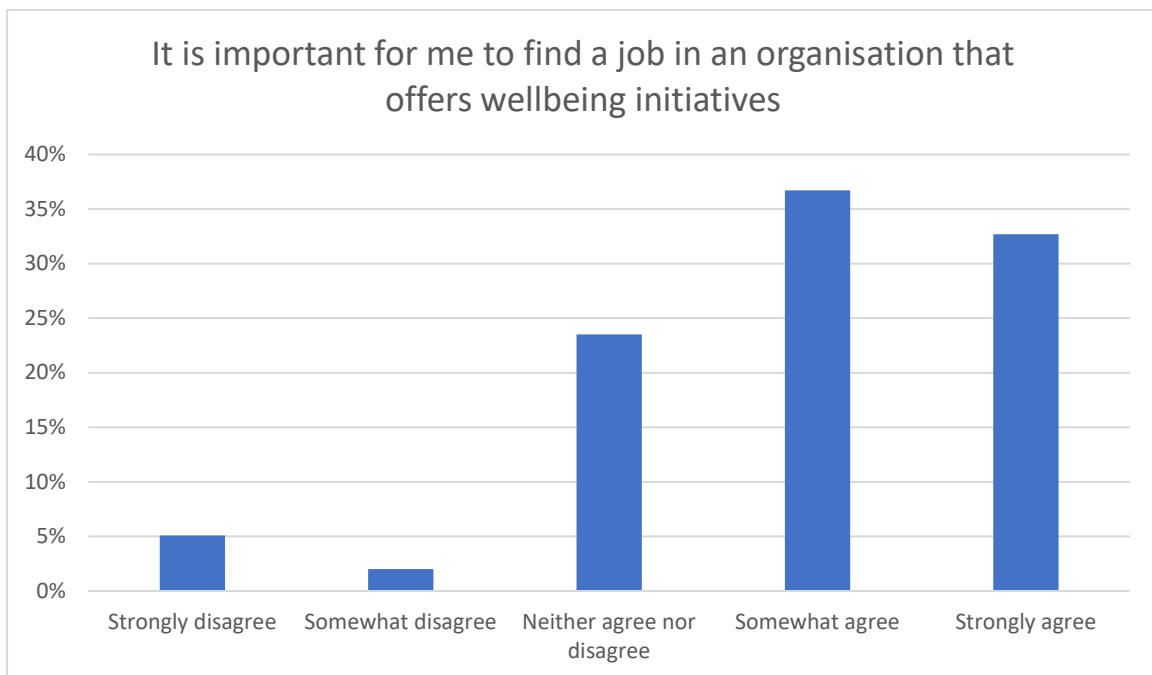
<b>Reliability Statistics</b>	
<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>Number of Items</b>
.801	11

*Table 7: Social Wellbeing Initiatives Reliability*

### *Wellbeing Initiatives and Employment*

#### Finding a Job and Wellbeing Initiatives

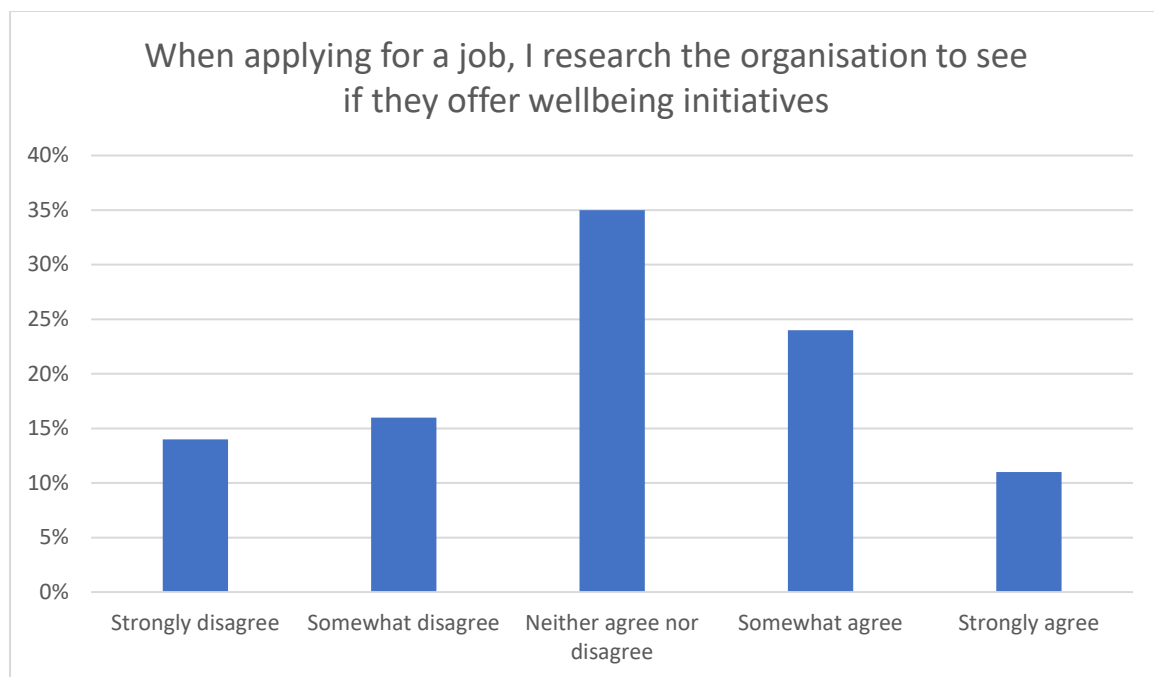
Participants were presented with the statement 'It is important for me to find a job in an organisation that offers wellbeing initiatives' and were asked whether they strongly disagreed, somewhat disagreed, neither agreed nor disagreed, somewhat agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. As highlighted in the below bar chart, 5.1% of participants strongly disagreed, 2% of participants somewhat disagreed and 23.5% of participants neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. 36.7%, the largest proportion of the sample population, somewhat agreed which was closely followed by 32.7% of participants strongly agreeing.



*Chart 11: Finding a Job and Wellbeing Initiatives*

### Researching Organisational Wellbeing Initiatives

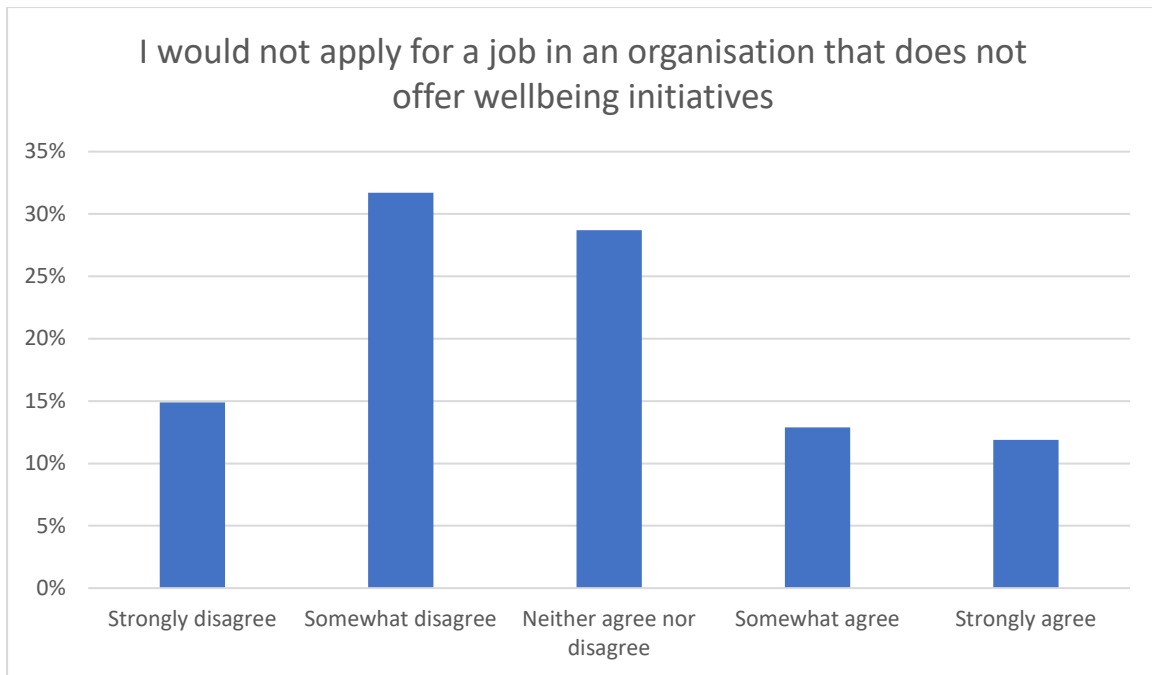
Participants were presented with the statement ‘When applying for a job, I research the organisation to see if they offer wellbeing initiatives’ and were asked whether they strongly disagreed, somewhat disagreed, neither agreed nor disagreed, somewhat agreed or strongly agreed to the statement. The below bar chart shows that 14% of participants strongly disagreed, 16% somewhat disagreed and 35% neither agreed nor disagreed, the largest share of the sample population. 24% of participants somewhat agreed and 11% strongly agreed.



*Chart 12: Researching Organisational Wellbeing Initiatives*

### Applying for a Job and Wellbeing Initiatives

Participants were presented with the statement ‘I would not apply for a job in an organisation that does not offer wellbeing initiatives’ and were asked whether they strongly disagreed, somewhat disagreed, neither agreed nor disagreed, somewhat agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. The below bar chart shows that 14.9% of participants strongly disagreed, 31.7% somewhat disagreed, the largest percentage of the sample population, and 28.7% neither agreed nor disagreed. A further 12.9% somewhat agreed and 11.9% strongly agreed.



*Chart 13: Applying for a Job and Wellbeing Initiatives*

Job Offers and Wellbeing Initiatives

Participants were presented with the statement ‘Between two job offers with similar benefits, I would choose the organisation that offers wellbeing initiatives’ and were asked whether they strongly disagreed, somewhat disagreed, neither agreed nor disagreed, somewhat agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. As outlined in the below bar chart, 5.9% of participants strongly disagreed, 2.9% somewhat disagreed and 23.5% neither agreed nor disagreed. A further 31.4% somewhat agreed and 36.3% strongly agreed with the statement, the largest proportion of the sample population.



*Chart 14: Job Offers and Wellbeing Initiatives*

To measure the internal consistency of this scale, which was comprised of the above 4 questions, Cronbach’s Alpha was used. The below table highlights that a reliability value of .817 was reported which indicates a reliable scale with all 4 items correlating with one another.

<b><u>Reliability Statistics</u></b>	
<b>Cronbach’s Alpha</b>	<b>Number of Items</b>
.817	4

*Table 8: Wellbeing Initiatives and Employment Reliability*

## Discussion

The first objective of this research was to ascertain whether the presence of wellbeing initiatives has a positive effect on attracting employees to an organisation. This objective ties in with hypothesis 1 which predicts that the presence of wellbeing initiatives has a positive effect on attracting employees. As previously outlined, research conducted by Story *et. al* (2016) showed that including CSR information in a job advertisement increases the level of attractiveness of the job and the organisation for potential employees. CSR and wellbeing are vital elements of employer branding which gains the attention of potential employees and aspires them to be part of an organisation (Sharma and Prasad, 2018). This is in line with what this research found as the largest proportions of the sample population indicated that they somewhat agreed or strongly agreed that it was important for them to find a job in an organisation that offers wellbeing initiatives. As outlined above, 69.4% of the participants placed importance on wellbeing in their jobs by agreeing to the statement.

On the other hand, 35% of participants neither agreed nor disagreed when asked if they research an organisation to see if they offer wellbeing initiatives when applying for a job. This was the largest proportion which was followed by 24% who somewhat agreed. Flexjobs (2022) discuss how jobseekers look for information on an organisation's reputation and stability, salary, benefits, flexibility and opportunities for growth and development when researching an employer of choice. This is reflected by what this research found as it is reasonable to assume that, although participants may research an organisation when applying for a job, they may not specifically be researching the wellbeing initiatives on offer.

This is further supported as 14.9% of participants strongly disagreed and 31.7% of participants somewhat disagreed to the statement that they would not apply for a job in an organisation that does not offer wellbeing initiatives. Business World (2022) discuss how The 2022 Attraction and Retention research, which was conducted by WTW, found that pay, job security and flexible working arrangements are the key factors to attracting and recruiting talent.

This is understandable as, naturally, salary will always be important as individuals need to be able to put food on the table, afford their rent or mortgage and their expenses. 67.7% of the sample population somewhat agreed or strongly agreed that if they had two job offers with



similar benefits, they would choose the organisation that offers wellbeing initiatives. From an employer perspective, this reveals that when a prospective employee is choosing between two jobs with similar offerings such as pay, bonus and benefits, the presence of wellbeing initiatives would be the difference in an organisation gaining or losing a potential employee. This shows that the first objective was completed and proved that hypothesis 1 is true, but only to a certain extent, as majority of participants expressed a neutral opinion when asked about researching an organisations wellbeing initiatives and stated that they would apply for a job in an organisation that does not offer wellbeing initiatives. This shows that the presence of organisational wellbeing initiatives may not aid attracting employees but, it does have an impact on ensuring that an organisation is an employer of choice. Although it is important to employees to find a job in an organisation that offers wellbeing initiatives, the literature points out that aspects such as pay, benefits, security and flexibility are high in the list of employee priorities. This research found that when competing organisations match pay and benefits, the one that offers wellbeing initiatives will come out triumphant and gain the employee. This reveals that the presence of organisational wellbeing initiatives may effect recruiting employees more so than attracting them.

The second objective of this research was to highlight the range of organisational wellbeing initiatives aimed the mental, physical and social wellbeing of employees. This was achieved through the literature review and the questionnaire by noting a number of initiatives and asking participants if they are available to them at the place where they work. The third objective, which was to measure the number of organisations that provided employees with wellbeing initiatives, further elevates this objective. Both objectives are closely connected to hypothesis 2 which predicts that there is a high amount of organisations providing employees with initiatives aimed at their wellbeing.

The research found that out of the 36 total wellbeing initiatives mentioned in the questionnaire, there were 10 initiatives that were available to more participants than not. This shows that 26 initiatives were not available to the majority of participants. Of these 26 initiatives, 13 were aimed at physical wellbeing. These included walking meetings, which were available to 21% of participants, and team or individual 'eat well challenges', which were only available to 15% of participants. 6 were aimed at mental wellbeing including information about common stressors such a debt, time management and relationships,

which was available to 26% of participants, and an employee mental wellbeing survey, which was available to 27% of participants. The final 7 were aimed at social wellbeing. These included a mentoring programme/buddy system, which was available to 38% of participants, and social events during normal working hours, which were available to 35% of participants. This is surprising when increased work performance, productivity, employee morale and engagement and improved corporate image and retention are benefits of positive workplace wellbeing (Government of Ireland, 2021).

This shows that both the second and third objectives were achieved through the research but that hypothesis 2 is false as a larger amount of organisations were not offering wellbeing initiatives compared to those that were.

Following on from this, the fourth objective of this research was to examine the wellbeing initiatives provided by organisations in conjunction with the opinions of participants relating to their organisation's commitment to wellbeing. This objective corresponds to hypothesis 3 which states that there is a strong connection between participants who stated that their organisation offers wellbeing initiatives and their opinions on whether their organisation was committed to employee wellbeing. This is in order to identify what employees consider to be commitment on their employers' behalf.

As previously discussed, out of the 36 wellbeing initiatives included in the questionnaire, 26 of them were not available to the majority of participants. 38% of participants somewhat agreed and 19.6% strongly agreed when asked if their organisation is committed to employee wellbeing. A similar pattern was seen when participants were asked if their organisation encourages them and provides opportunities to engage in healthy behaviours such as being physically active, eating a healthy diet, living tobacco free and managing their stress. 35.3% somewhat agreed and 21.6% strongly agreed to the statement. The largest proportion of the sample population somewhat agreed to both statements which shows that they felt their employer was committed to employee wellbeing and provided encouragement and opportunities to engage in healthy behaviour but, only to a certain extent. The literature supports this as CIPD (2021) found that three in five respondents to their HR Practices in Ireland Survey conveyed that employee wellbeing was increasingly part of the management agenda in their organisation but only 28% stated that progress had been made in relation to training line managers on how to handle wellbeing matters. This

highlights the fact that many organisations are noting employee wellbeing as an aim to achieve but a low percentage of these are making progress and attaining this.

This shows that the fourth objective was accomplished and hypothesis 3 was proven to be true. The largest number of participants of the questionnaire somewhat agreed to both statements highlighting that they believed their organisation could have been more committed to employee wellbeing and could have done more to encourage employees and provide opportunities to be healthier. This is reflected through the number of wellbeing initiatives that were offered to participants as 26 of them were not available to majority of participants.

## Limitations

The main limitation of this research study was time. Based on previous literature in the area, a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods, through the means of a questionnaire and interviews, was considered but ultimately declined due to time constraints. Therefore, an entirely quantitative research approach was regarded as the most suitable and efficient. A mixed method approach may have added more insight into the research and findings of this area.

A further limitation was the lack of existing academic papers with relevant questionnaires. There are many questionnaires covering wellbeing in general and many facets of wellbeing. As no previously validated academic questionnaires had investigated the wellbeing initiatives present in organisations, NIOSH were contacted to provide information on the reliability and validity of their Worker Well-Being Questionnaire. This shortage also resulted in the adaptation of existing questionnaires in other areas, specifically CSR, and were modified for the purpose of this research study.

## Conclusion

The aim of this research study was to ascertain whether the presence of wellbeing initiatives has an effect on attracting employees to an organisation.

In order to investigate this, wellbeing initiatives and attracting employees were explored as separate topics. This research study began with an examination of health and wellbeing as they are both complex areas that interconnect and are often confused with one another.

Wellbeing was further broken down to specifically look at mental wellbeing, physical wellbeing and social wellbeing. An understanding of these subjects allowed for a thorough discussion of wellbeing initiatives, specifically those aimed at employee mental, physical and social wellbeing. This highlighted the wellbeing initiatives that employers can provide and the positive effect these can have. The reasons why employees place importance on finding an organisation that offers and cultivates a culture which promotes and supports wellbeing in the workplace were explored to further cement the need for this research study. The benefits for an employer to do this were also discussed as this research study investigated whether attracting employees can be added as one of these benefits. In order to show how organisations can attract employees, the inclusion of wellbeing in employer branding and creating an environment that's open and welcoming to employee disclosure of wellbeing issues were outlined.

A quantitative research method was undertaken by administering questionnaires to gather the data. A total of 102 participants, who were employees in Ireland, took part in the questionnaire. To gain a general overview of all employees in Ireland, there were no restrictions pertaining to the participants age, gender, occupation or industry. The data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics with the findings of each question and scale outlined in this research study.

The first major finding of this research is that it was important to most participants that they find a job in an organisation that offers wellbeing initiatives. This finding supports the literature as previous research suggests that employees who are provided with organisational wellbeing initiatives experience improvements in happiness, job satisfaction, work ethic and healthy behaviours specifically sleeping, eating and drinking (Dickson-Swift *et. al*, 2014). The largest amount of participants expressed a neutral opinion when asked if they research an organisation to see if they offer wellbeing initiatives when applying for a job. The expression of a neutral opinion may indicate that participants research an organisation when applying for a job but they may not specifically research the wellbeing initiatives offered. This finding is supported by the literature as previous research found that jobseekers look for information on salary, benefits and flexibility, which is understandable given the current high cost of living (SHRM, 2022). This is further exemplified as the majority of participants expressed that they would apply for a job in an organisation that does not

offer wellbeing initiatives. This reaffirms that pay, benefits and flexibility are of high importance. As the majority of participants stated that it was important that they find a job in an organisation that offers wellbeing initiatives, this shows that it was on their list of priorities but pay, benefits and flexibility were most likely higher on that list.

The largest percentage of participants agreed that if they had two job offers with similar offerings in terms of pay and benefits, they would choose the organisation that provides wellbeing initiatives. This confirms that it was important that participants find a job in an organisation with wellbeing initiatives and those initiatives could be the difference in a prospective employee accepting or rejecting a job offer. Organisational wellbeing initiatives may not have a high impact when attracting employees but, it does effect whether or not an organisation is an employer of choice when an individual is faced with two similar job offers.

This is particularly important for employers to note as 79% of employers currently hiring stressed that they are struggling to recruit employees, the highest amount recorded in 12 years (Manpower Group, 2022). Although this research shows that other aspects, such as pay, benefits and flexibility, attract them to a role, the presence of wellbeing initiatives may aid in recruiting employees.

The second major finding was a large amount of organisations were not offering wellbeing initiatives. Out of the 36 initiatives mentioned in the questionnaire, 26 initiatives were not available to the majority of participants. 13 of these were aimed at physical wellbeing, 6 were aimed at mental wellbeing and 7 were aimed at social wellbeing. This is incompatible with the literature as previous research found that employers who focus on employee wellbeing reported a high level of morale, a more inclusive culture and a healthier workforce (CIPD, 2021). All of these benefits are closely linked to physical, mental and social wellbeing. With this in mind, it is surprising that organisations are not focusing on the benefits of offering wellbeing initiatives. As some of the aforementioned 36 initiatives have no costs associated with them, many employers are overlooking a vital opportunity.

The third major finding was that participants' opinions regarding their organisation's commitment and support towards wellbeing closely mirrored the initiatives that were available to participants. When presented with statements regarding their organisation's commitment and the encouragement provided by their organisation to be healthier, the

majority of participants somewhat agreed to both statements. This shows that they believed their organisation could have been more committed to employee wellbeing and could have done more to encourage employees and provide opportunities to be healthier. This is consistent as 26 initiatives were not available to the majority of participants.

The aim of this research study was to ascertain whether the presence of wellbeing initiatives has an effect on attracting employees to an organisation. Although the research carried out points more towards the fact that it may have an effect on recruiting employees as opposed to attracting them, the importance of wellbeing to employees was highlighted. As well as this, wellbeing initiatives and the benefits of implementing them were presented. This research study provided the opportunity to gain the employees' perspective which showed that many organisations can and should do more to achieve a high level of workplace wellbeing as even a small change is a step in the right direction. Organisations should take the viewpoint of Zeno of Citium when he expressed that "well-being is attained by little and little, and nevertheless is no little thing itself" (Gretchen Rubin, 2010).

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research study, the primary recommendation proposed is for organisations to implement initiatives aimed at employee mental, physical and social wellbeing. The literature review highlights the organisational benefits of workplace wellbeing and the questionnaire found that employees place importance on wellbeing when finding and accepting a job. This provides a win-win situation for any organisation offering wellbeing initiatives.

There are a range of wellbeing initiatives that organisations can implement, many of which were outlined in the literature review and in the questionnaire. These initiatives vary as some are free and will not cost an organisation to implement them and others have costs associated with them. Such examples of free wellbeing initiatives are lunchtime walks, wellbeing surveys, active stretch breaks, flexible working hours, walking meetings and workplace challenges such as couch to 5k and eat well challenges. Initiatives such as lunchtime walks, active stretch breaks and walking meetings can be implemented relatively quick as once the decision has been made, management can contact employees and inform them. This can be done by letting them know that these initiatives will take place at a

certain time and date for all those that are interested. Initiatives such as flexible working hours can take days or weeks to introduce as, depending on the organisation, there may be certain aspects that need to be considered in advance such as number of days a week each employee must be in the office, number of employees in the office at one time and the times available to those utilising the flexible working hours option. An initiative like creating a wellbeing survey involves research to ensure the questions asked are suitable.

Undertaking research for this purpose can take up to one working day. Following this, employees should be notified in advance that a wellbeing survey will be distributed and provided with a timeframe to complete the survey, which can be approximately 5 days. There are some initiatives that are free but will require the employer to partake in research and preparation. This can be done by researching a number of areas such as recipes and tips for healthy eating, mental wellbeing, local and national help agencies, personal support services, such as EAP, and common stressors and compiling leaflets, posters and emails so employees are provided with and aware of this information. Carrying out research and creating leaflets, posters and emails would take approximately one working day to complete but in order to keep the information up to date and constantly new, the recommendation is for research to be undertaken once a month along with the relevant creation of leaflets, posters and emails. Executing workplace challenges such as couch to 5k and eat well challenges can take approximately one working week to implement. This involves making employees aware of such challenges to recruit participants. Once employees have expressed interest, a separate communication channel, such as an email group or WhatsApp group, can be created for those taking part. A brainstorming session can then take place to discuss when the group will meet. For couch to 5k, this can be meeting for a run before work, during lunchtime or after work on certain days and for eat well challenges, this can be doing a healthy potluck on a certain day of the week where participants bring in a healthy, homemade lunch to share.

Examples of initiatives that will cost an organisation include seminars/talks on healthy eating, mental wellbeing and social wellbeing. Aware (2022) offer corporate talks to employees and management regarding mental wellbeing. The talk aimed at employees is €500 and the talk for management is €1,750. Similarly, Wellbeing Workshops Ireland (2015) offer talks on exercise, relationships and sleep for €295. The length of time it would take to

implement these initiatives varies greatly as it is dependent on the availability of the organisations and individuals providing the talks. Another example is providing health snack options. Office Fruit (2022) provide a box of 45 pieces of fruit for €20. The timeline for providing this box of fruit to employees is relatively short as orders must be placed before 12pm to ensure delivery the next day.

Organisations can also offer employees free, discounted or subsidised memberships for off-site gym facilities and decide at their discretion how much money they wish to contribute towards this. This would involve collaborating with a specific gym and meeting with them to organise the memberships for employees. Dependent on the gym, this could take approximately one day to set up. It's clear that money should not impact the implementation of wellbeing initiatives as, although there are costs associated with some, there are many that can be put into effect for free.

As this study focused on and was aimed at employees, the secondary recommendation is for further research to be carried out concentrating on employers. This would gain an insight into employer opinions and attitudes surrounding wellbeing and would identify any similarities and differences between the views of both employees and employers.

A further recommendation is for research to be carried out to confirm if the presence of organisational wellbeing initiatives has an effect on recruiting employees. As this research study may indicate that, formal research in the area would provide confirmation.



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## Appendices

### *Appendix 1: Cover Letter for Questionnaire*

Researcher: Danielle Carney

Email: X20139667@student.ncirl.ie

You are invited to take part in a research study to find out if the presence of wellbeing initiatives has an impact on attracting employees to an organisation. This questionnaire should take no longer than 7 minutes to complete and participation is voluntary.

The research is being undertaken as part of the Master of Arts in Human Resource Management programme at the National College of Ireland. The information you provide will be analysed with that of the other participants. Your name and the name of your organisation will not be collected as part of this research study and all data gathered will be anonymous and confidential and will only be used for the purpose of this research study. You can withdraw from the questionnaire at any time.

By participating in this questionnaire you are confirming that you have read and understood the above information.

If you have any queries or require clarification on the questions asked, please get in touch with me. A copy of the results can be provided so please let me know if you would like to receive this.

Please continue on to the next page to start the questionnaire.

Thank you very much for your time.

Kind regards,

Danielle Carney



## *Appendix 2: Questionnaire*

1. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

2. What is your age?

- Less than 25 years
- 25 to 35 years
- 36 to 45 years
- 46 to 55 years
- Above 55 years

3. What is your current level in the managerial hierarchy?

- Entry level
- Middle level
- Senior level
- Top level

4. What sector do you currently work in?

- Private sector
- Public sector
- Non-profit
- Self employed
- Other:



5. What industry do you currently work in?

- Accountancy
- Banking/Finance
- Construction
- Education
- Fashion/Beauty
- Healthcare
- Hospitality/Tourism
- Human Resources
- IT
- Legal
- Manufacturing
- Marketing/Media
- Retail
- Sport/Fitness
- Other:

6. Approximately, how many employees are in your current organisation?

- Less than 50
- 50 - 99
- 100 - 199
- 200 - 299
- 300 - 399
- 400 - 499
- 500 or more



7. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
My organisation is committed to employee wellbeing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My organisation encourages me and provides opportunities to engage in healthy behaviours such as being physically active, eating a healthy diet, living tobacco free and managing my stress	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When management learns that something about employees' work or the workplace is having a bad effect on employee wellbeing something is done about it	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My organisation encourages me to speak up about issues and priorities regarding employee wellbeing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. Are the following **physical** health and wellness programs or services available to you at the place where you work?

	Yes	No
Lunchtime walks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Active stretch breaks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Walking meetings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recreational games or activities for employees at lunchtime or after work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Workplace challenges (e.g. couch to 5k, 10,000 steps a day)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recipes and tips for healthy eating	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Talks, presentations and/or workshops on healthy eating by health professionals, dietitians/nutritionists	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Access to health promotion materials such as leaflets and posters about healthy eating	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Yes	No
Access to drinking water for all employees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Smoking cessation programmes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Health and fitness assessments and/or health screening	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Health snack options (i.e. in the vending machines or kitchen)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
On-site facilities for food (e.g. food preparation and storage areas for employees to use)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Team or individual 'Eat well challenges'	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
On-site exercise facilities/programmes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Free, discounted or employer-subsidised memberships for off-site facilities (e.g. gym)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. Are the following **mental** health and wellness programs or services available to you at the place where you work?

	Yes	No
Information provided to employees about mental wellbeing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mental wellbeing training and awareness-raising for employees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mental wellbeing training and awareness-raising for managers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Accessible information provided about local and national help agencies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Information about the personal support services your organisation provides (e.g. Employee Assistance Programme (EAP))	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stress-buster sessions before, during or after work (e.g. yoga and massages)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



	Yes	No
Information about common stressors such as debt, time management and relationships	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Annual staff surveys which include some questions on workplace mental wellbeing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Employee mental wellbeing survey	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. Are the following **social** health and wellness programs or services available to you at the place where you work?

	Yes	No
Teambuilding activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social events during normal working hours	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social events outside of normal working hours	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
On-site recreational room (e.g. with pool table, table tennis etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Yes	No
Mentoring programme/buddy system	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Volunteering/charity work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Flexible working hours	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hybrid/remote working	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Free or subsidised personal development courses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Corporate social responsibility practices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Seminars/talks on social wellbeing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
It is important for me to find a job in an organisation that offers wellbeing initiatives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When applying for a job, I research the organisation to see if they offer wellbeing initiatives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would not apply for a job in an organisation that does not offer wellbeing initiatives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Between two job offers with similar benefits, I would choose the organisation that offers wellbeing initiatives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## CIPD: Personal Learning and Reflective Statement

Undertaking this dissertation was an equally challenging and rewarding experience. I was fortunate to be given the opportunity to choose and research the topic of wellbeing, which is an area of interest and importance to me.

I gained invaluable exposure to research through the gathering of relevant information relating to wellbeing. I thoroughly enjoyed this process and it also enhanced my skills in the area. Through quantitative research methods, I acquired first-hand experience of data collection. This experience was further developed by analysing the data using SPSS. As I had not previously used this software, it gave me the chance to learn and use it to the fullest extent. This provided me with an improved skillset that can be utilised going forward in future professional and educational settings.

As I was working full-time while completing this dissertation, my proficiency in time management, self-motivation, organisation and prioritisation has significantly improved. The refining of these transferable skills has adequately prepared me to embark on my career in the area of Human Resources.

Overall, the completion of this dissertation is a great achievement which has instilled a high level of satisfaction and pride. I now have an abundant amount of ideas regarding wellbeing and organisational wellbeing initiatives which I can utilise in all employment settings going forward. It has equipped me with the knowledge and understanding of wellbeing which will have a profound impact on both my personal and professional life.