

Workplace Nutrition and Productivity

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Abstract

Nutrition and physical activity are very important to one's health. The purpose of this study was to examine workplace nutrition and physical activity taking into specific consideration the effects of these initiatives on employee productivity. Unhealthy eating habits among employees have steadily increased over the years. Hence, the need for physical activity and healthy nutrition has become crucial. This study was intended to determine the impact that healthy eating and physical activity has on employees and increase awareness on ways to manage a diet. Published articles were utilized to identify and examine ways in which employees who consume unhealthy foods and exercise minimally are less productive, while employees who consume healthy foods and exercise maximally are more productive. The published articles included mostly information on healthy and unhealthy eating, eating disorders, obesity, free fruit interventions and physical activity. Microsoft and Google Corporations were used for this study to identify the accomplishments of overall health and well-being of their employees. These findings may be used by workplace managers and health professionals to assist in planning or implementing a wellness program in their organization.

Introduction

Food choices are a common factor of unhealthy eating in the workplace, as they are influenced by your personal preference, the time of day, and social groups. Most people tend to pick what is easiest and fastest to consume during their workday. These choices are made quickly to satisfy their hunger, but without thought of whether the food choice will satisfy overall health and productivity. For instance, consuming a slice of pizza will tend to make someone tired and not give them any brain power, but it is easy and inexpensive, and is therefore chosen without prioritizing health. The food that is provided in workplace cafeterias also influences the food choices employees make. It is therefore essential to investigate how workplaces can contribute to healthier choices. Encouraging employees to consume a healthy diet should be taken into consideration by all corporations because a healthy diet will result in more productivity, energy, and motivation.

Zero hunger is the second Sustainable Development Goal of the United Nations, making nourishment crucial to promote the overall health of every human being. In order to live a healthy lifestyle, people have to purchase groceries from food service organizations, which in return leave these organizations with an income. Today, many countries in Africa are tremendously affected by hunger and poor nutrition. Two ways one can participate in civic engagement related to the Zero Hunger SDG is through voting on surveys or volunteering to help people learn to consume healthy foods that increase your overall health. Volunteering is most beneficial because people can learn from each other face-to-face and gain more experiences.

Literature Review

The following review of literature is relevant to the topic of workplace eating habits and seeks to examine the effect on employee productivity. The review will examine the importance of a well maintained, healthy diet for employees in the workplace.

The literature review will provide analysis on healthy diets as implemented in workplaces and studies indicating the results of eating habits and productivity. This will lead to findings on the importance of having a healthy diet in the workplace for increasing productivity of employees. Employers and employees will benefit substantially due to employees having high productivity and employer financially.

Overall, the literature review will provide confirmation of how a healthy diet increases productivity levels of employees. It will provide evidence to support the argument that a healthy diet in the workplace has a positive effect on employees and their productivity.

Healthy Eating Habits in the Workplace

Types of food provided (fruit/veggies vs. junk food)

People spend a lot of time at their workplace, typically 8 hours a day. Most people tend to choose to eat unplanned foods, which are foods they rely on buying during their work shift or foods that are brought in by their colleagues (Leung et al., 2018). Due to busy work schedules, people have engaged in unhealthy behaviors and failing to meet recommendations to improve

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diet. The majority of people are unaware of their weight status and need to change their health behaviors into healthier living that can result in actual behavior change.

Healthy eating habits in the work environment have been a growing concern for most organizations and employees. Unhealthy eating behaviors and physical inactivity have been linked to a substantial burden to the economy including low productivity. Studies have shown that lost productivity emanates from the following two sources: presenteeism (an individual experiences reduced productivity at work); and absenteeism (lost productivity because the employee spends time away from work due to disability or illness) (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, 2015). The workplace presents a perfect environment for promoting positive health behaviors as well as reaching the majority of people in society (Leung et al., 2018). The workplace makes it possible even to reach individuals that may have proven difficult to reach, for example, young people from lower socioeconomic status.

Fruit and vegetable intake have been addressed extensively in the literature. The programs that focus on increasing the intake of fruits and vegetables at work should address individual employees as well as their social networks for maximum effects and the programs should also consider a change in the food environment. The provision of fruits and vegetables at work ultimately increases their consumption at the worksite.

Effectiveness of Wellness Programs for Increasing Productivity

The effectiveness of a wellness program depends on the nature of the program and on how the organization defines success. Some scholars have argued that workplace

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health-promoting programs are a waste of money for organization and do not provide a return on investment (Langille, 2013). Also, workers must develop self-efficacy and knowledge of workplace nutrition and their wellbeing for there to be effectiveness of a health program.

Promoting positive and healthy nutritional behavior at work can initiate improvement of employee health and enhance business performance. Research shows that nutritional interventions and workplace physical activity entail education, counseling, and on-site group activities. Using these three components at work can significantly improve employee eating behavior and physical activity (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, 2015). Consequently, the three components improve mental and physical health and a positive return on investment – healthcare costs are reduced, and employee productivity increases (Lake et al., 2015).

Research has examined the effectiveness of different interventions on workplace nutrition. The studies reveal that there is a need for workplace nutrition interventions to alleviate their economic burden of poor nutrition and to improve employees' performance (Lake et al., 2015). Knowing the positive work-related and economic outcomes of different interventions for workplace health promotion will increase investment in nutritional strategies.

In recent years, mindfulness has become more known and a result of unhealthy eating behaviors made by people (O'Reilley et al., 2014). Mindfulness is a quality of consciousness that comprises of continuous attendance to one's instant-by-instant know-hows, views, and feelings with an open-minded tactic. There are ways to cope with mindfulness by incorporating meditations and exercises. Interventions for health issues ranging from anxiety to substance use

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relapse all that embrace mindfulness practices (O'Reilley et al., 2014). Different mindfulness approaches have been developed for clinical treatments. For example, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) for pain management and stress-related disorders, in addition to Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) for prevention of major depression related obesity (O'Reilley et al., 2014). Mindfulness training is a platform that offers individuals skills that permit them to mitigate maladaptive eating manners. Resultantly, persons can overcome obesity and overweight related maladies and, as such, develop a positive attitude with food.

How to create healthy eating at work

Effects of on-site café/lunchroom offering healthy foods

Workplace interventions have the capability to target a large proportion of the adult population and are an ideal strategy that promotes healthy lifestyles more so in today's era where economic times are tough, and people have to work extremely hard to have a comfortable life (Lake et al., 2016). Employment and the workplace surrounding are critical factors that contribute to food choice and eating modalities.

Studies have shown that employees would benefit incorporating desk-based eating would allow employees to eat pre-prepared foods rather than waste time on thinking of what to buy and if it is healthy or not (Lake et al., 2016). Another employee mentioned that instead of having a tea trolley, management should incorporate a fruit trolley (Lake et al., 2016). The implementation of offering pre-prepared foods and fruit trolleys to circulate throughout the offices of a workplace would assist employees in making healthful decisions on what they are going to eat. Studies have also shown that employees would significantly benefit from

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incorporating meals-to-go and on-site farmers' markets (Devine et al., 2007). The implementation of retaining an on-site café or lunchroom would allow employees to confide in healthy foods provided by chefs who are educated in the food they would provide. The availability of these features on the worksite would encourage employees to live a healthful life.

Effects of gyms, sports facilities, free workout classes, etc.

Studies using the socio-ecological model reveal that healthy behavior emerges when there is an interaction between the individual and the environment (Devine et al., 2007). Therefore, promoting changes in dietary behavior at work should entail changes in the organizational structure and changes in the physical environment of workplace. Positive nutritional behavior is facilitated when there is a significant change in the organizational structure of the business (for example, policies) and the physical environment of the workplace (like stocking vending machines at the workplace with healthy foods). However, there is insufficient or conflicting evidence about work-related outcomes of these organizational and environmental changes (Leung et al., 2018). Further some employee habits may jeopardize the objective of the health programs, for example, assuming too much, being selfish, believing that they can be productive without changing their eating habits and so forth (Goldsmith, 2007).

Businesses that have measured the health and wellbeing of their employees have revealed that most employees do not exercise enough, many employees are overweight, and many employees have risky health factors, such as high blood pressure or elevated cholesterol (Leung et al., 2018). These factors are linked to diseases like diabetes, heart disease, and other chronic illnesses (Leung et al., 2018). Most organizations are now increasingly investing in health

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promotion to improve their employees' health and curb healthcare costs. Organizations have introduced several programs and initiatives to encourage positive health behaviors such as eating healthy, exercising, reducing risk factors for chronic disease, and quitting smoking. Studies have shown that almost 50% of organizations with 50 or more workers have at least one health promotion initiative in place. Large organizations like Microsoft have wellness programs such as fighting obesity among employees (Sweeney, 2002).

To be successful, a program meant to alter the eating of workers should target different aspects, such as, the influence of coworkers, the availability of healthy food in the cafeteria and the availability of counseling (Leung et al., 2018). Counseling is necessary because most people resort to eating junk food because they are stressed (Leung et al., 2018). Work schedules should be arranged to discourage people from eating unplanned food at work and to provide enough time for people to seek healthy food.

Research stressed the significance and effectiveness of introducing workplace dietary programs. Several food types are targeted by organizations including fiber, red meat, fat, vegetables, and fruits.

Google and Microsoft have had a significant impact in changing one or two employee dietary behaviors. Google and Microsoft have health-promoting programs that focus on increasing vegetable and fruit intake, and these programs also address the social context of the workers.

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Research indicates that programs are effective when employees are encouraged to participate and address their health-related behavior (Devine et al., 2007). Therefore, the effectiveness of the health behavior-changing programs at work depends on the nature of the programs and on how well the workers participate in the programs. However, it was revealed that employees will have time to exercise if facilities are on the same property as their workstations. Research found that food and eating are affected by sociocultural aspects such as, stress-related eating, being enthusiastic about the health-promoting programs sponsored by the organization that protects workers' privacy, and the policies that dictate how one accesses food and the place of eating (Devine et al., 2007).

Healthy behaviors can be promoted or impeded by cultural norms of the workplace and, convenience to general foods at the place of work (Payne et al., 2013). Therefore, health programs must address these aspects for maximum success (Payne et al., 2013). Self-regulating can also play a significant role in promoting healthy behaviors in the workplace (Liu et al., 2017), but self-regulation can only happen if the individual is knowledgeable about the need for healthy behavior and good nutrition.

In conclusion, programs initiated and implemented by the organization for improved employee nutrition are meant to serve the interest of the organization and the employees. Therefore, these programs should be designed to make cafeterias accessible, bring healthful foods closer to employees, and to highlight healthful options.

Hypotheses

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H1: Healthy eating (fruits/veggies) will help increase productivity

Healthy nutrition in the workplace helps employees increase their productivity by benefiting from eating fruits and vegetables. A strategy was conducted to educate chefs and managers to create a healthier menu in the cafeteria to satisfy employee preferences and health concerns and make healthier options more available (Devine et al., 2007).

H2: Employees will have time to exercise if facilities are on same property

Many employees work hours are from nine o'clock in the morning to five o'clock in the evening sitting at their desk with little movement. After an employee is finished with their job, they typically go home, eat dinner, and go to sleep. A study was shown that eating healthy foods has increased employees' perceptions to exercise (Lake et al., 2016). Corporations including wellness programs with on-site exercise facilities would encourage employees to exercise before work, during their break, or after their shift.

Method

Subjects: Google and Microsoft focus on the healthiness of their employees

Research Design

The research adopts a descriptive study design. This design would be appropriate to identify the study objectives and adequately analyze them to acquire information about the factors that enhance the adoption of healthy lifestyle practices among employees. The focus of the research will be on Google and Microsoft, organizations that have made significant efforts to improve the health of their employees.

Sources of Data

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The research relies on published articles from a couple sources. One source that was used was OneSearch from the Wagner College Horrmann library. It included peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed articles. Another source was the United Nations website for Sustainable Development Goal. Lastly, official websites for Microsoft and Google were used.

Methods of Data collection

The terms searched in the database were as follows: “Workplace” AND “Productivity”; “Nutrition” AND “Productivity”; “Nutrition” AND “Workplace”; “Google” and “Productivity”; “Google” and “Nutrition”; “Microsoft” and “Productivity”; and “Microsoft” and “Nutrition.”

Measures: gym memberships, free sports facilities, free fruit, on-site café/lunchroom

Measures

Lunchrooms or on-site cafés, free fruits and vegetables, free sports facilities, and gym membership have been incorporated by Microsoft and Google.

Procedure: incorporating gyms and healthy food has improved effectiveness of productivity and overall health

Procedure

Gyms and healthy food have improved effectiveness of productivity and overall health in Microsoft and Google by having these procedures implemented.

Data Analysis

Employees who work for organizations such as Microsoft and Google have the benefits of on-site café’s and gyms. The on-site café’s offer healthy dining options that employees can take advantage of on a daily basis. Obesity has been a major factor of unhealthy diet. Microsoft

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and Google have incorporated wellness programs to try to prevent obesity and overweightness for employee's overall health (Sweeney, 2002). Microsoft set their target audience to employees who are forty to fifty pounds overweight (Sweeney, 2002). Employee health has increased when wellness programs were introduced. Microsoft and Google imply that living a nutritious lifestyle benefits their employee's overall health.

Results

H1: two successful companies incorporated healthy work environment

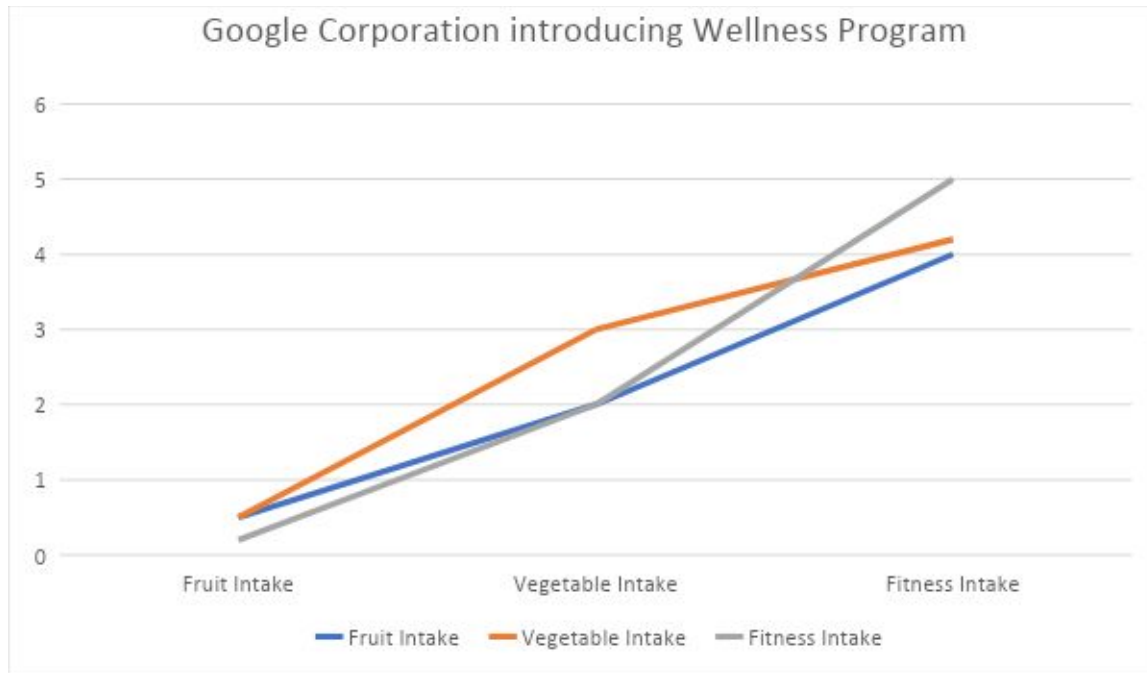


Figure 1: Theoretical line chart assessing Google’s fruit, vegetable, and fitness intake after incorporating a wellness program.

The line chart above indicates Google’s vast increase in fruit, vegetable, and fitness intake after introducing a wellness program to its employees. Based on a theoretical speculation, the fitness aspect of Google’s employees increased tremendously due to facilities being easily accessible. Vegetable and fruit intake increased due to accessibility also.

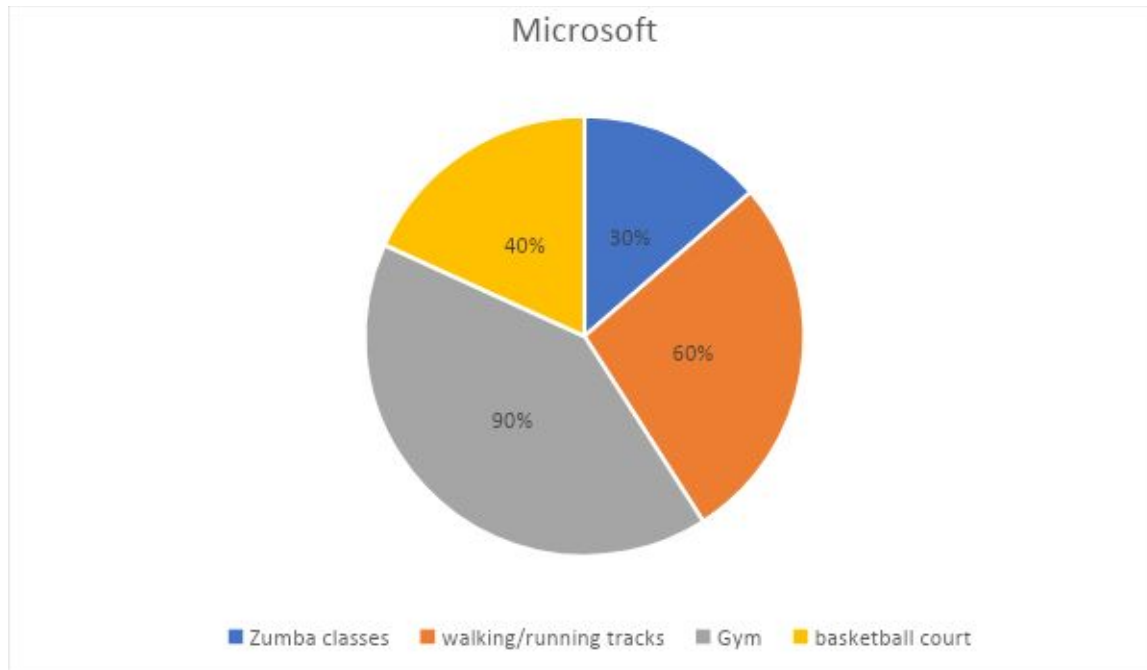


Figure 2: Theoretical pie chart indicating the use of Zumba classes, walking/running tracks, gym, and basketball courts by Microsoft's employees.

Microsoft has lots to offer in the physical activity component for its employees. Zumba classes, walking/running tracks, gym, and basketball court are some examples of what they have to offer. Based on a theoretical speculation, 90% of employees used the gym; 60% used walking/running tracks; 40% used basketball courts, and 30% used the offering of Zumba classes.

H2: free gym memberships on job sites are beneficial to employees due to easy access

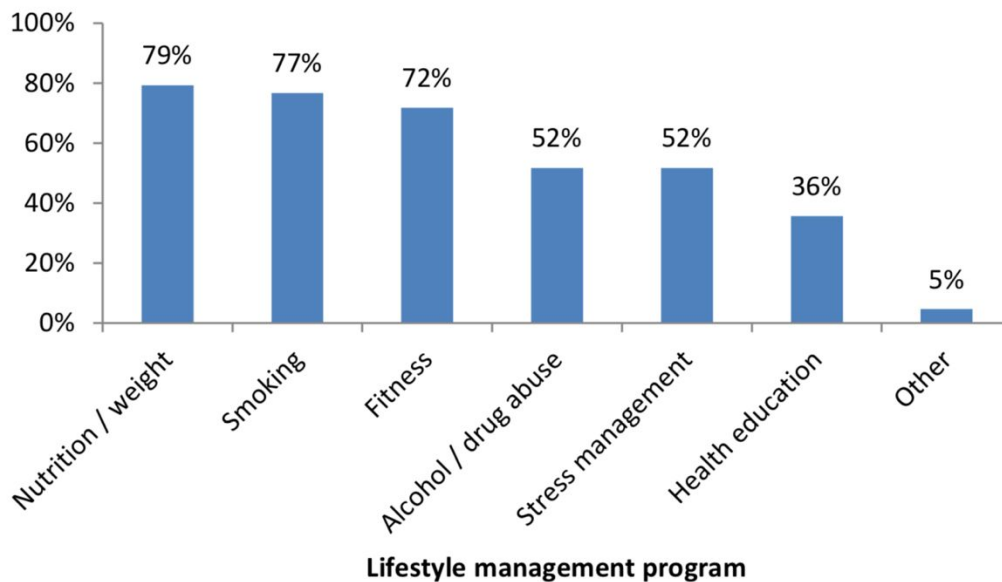


Figure 3: Graph indicating a lifestyle management component of a wellness program with importance offering from greatest to least including nutrition/weight, smoking, fitness, alcohol/drug abuse, stress management, health education, and other in a lifestyle management program (Mattke et al., 2013).

Nutrition/weight was ranked first, as the most important at 79%. Fitness was ranked third, as the third most important at 72%. Employees understanding the importance of a healthy diet and weight intake will provide better overall health. Free gym memberships will result in more fitness, weight loss, and healthier nutrition amongst employees. The graph is a representation of how results would look like in a research that involves incentives of encouraging one to go to the gym and practice healthy eating (Mattke et al., 2013).

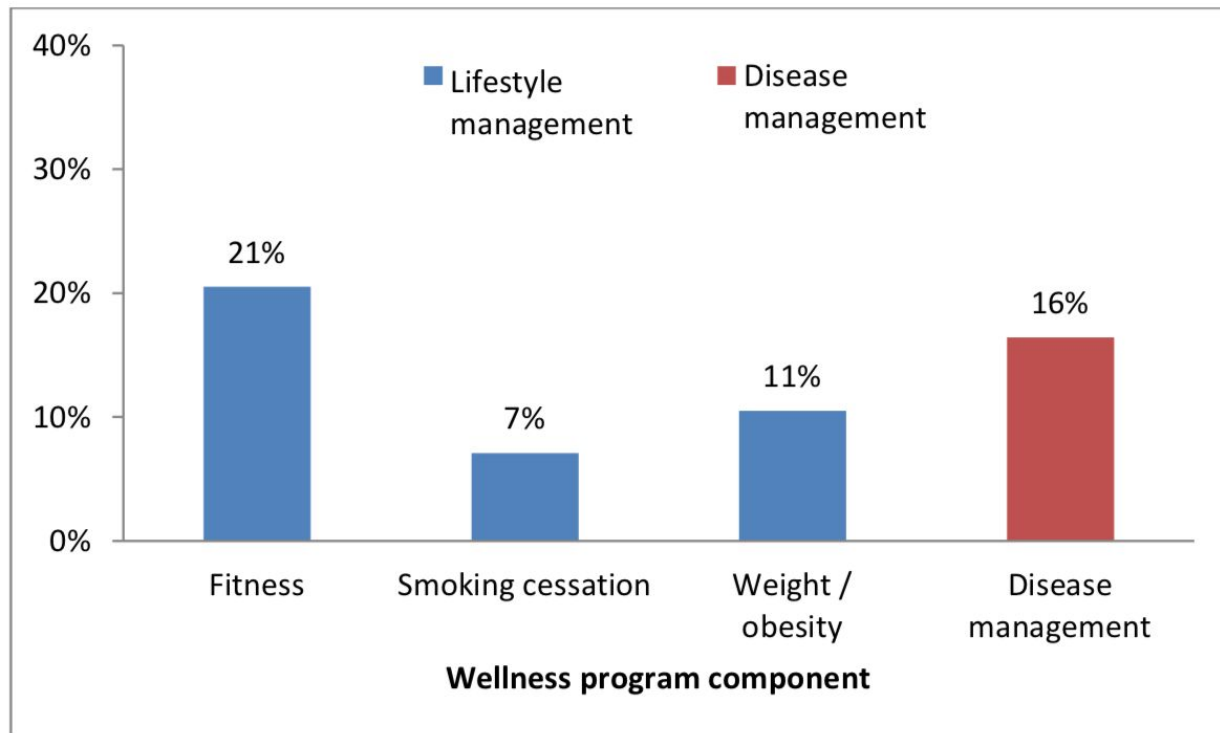


Figure 4: Graph indicating a wellness program component of lifestyle management and disease management (Mattke et al., 2013).

Fitness is very important in incorporating into a wellness program. The graph is a representation of how likely employees are willing to attend each wellness program component. It was ranked 21% as most attended program. Smoking cessation was ranked at 7% with least likely to attend. Weight/obesity were ranked second least likely to attend at 11%. Employees are more likely to attend a fitness program than a weight/obesity program because of personal issues and preferences.

H3: employees are more aware of their health and well being

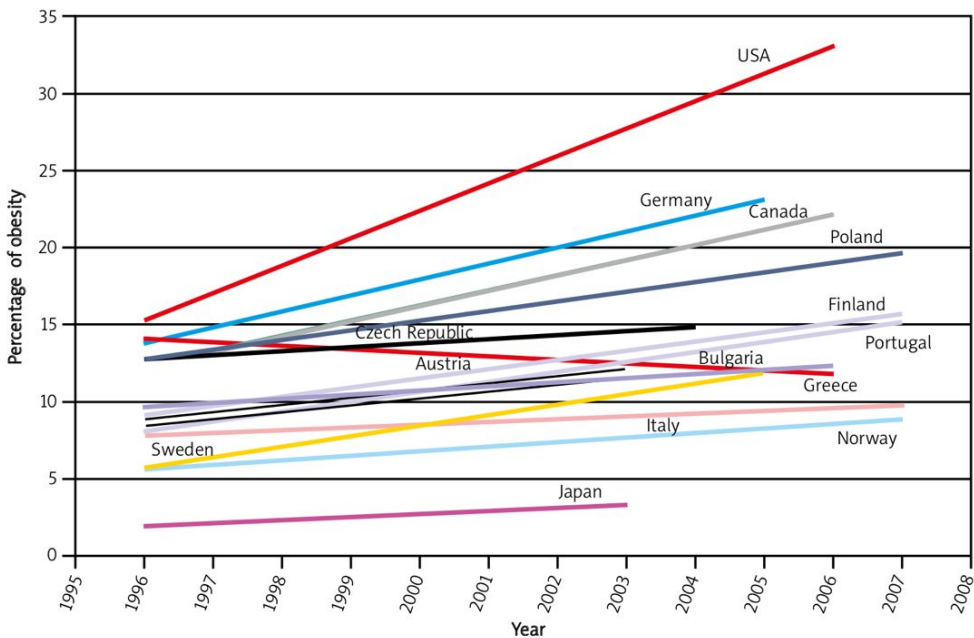


Figure 4: Linear regression lines with a predicted line for men in selected countries of Europe and the world (Krzysztozek et al., 2015).

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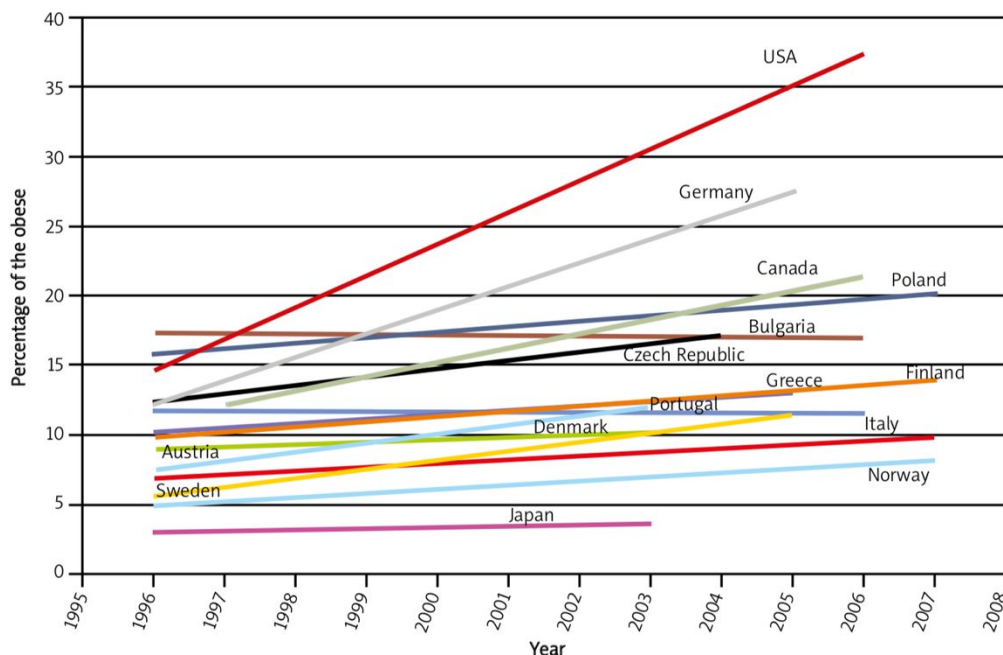


Figure 5: Linear regression lines with a predicted line for women in selected countries of Europe and the world (Krzysztozek et al., 2015).

The two figures above show an upward trend that characterizes an increase in obesity globally. In America, only obese men account for more than 40.8%, while women are more obese at 46.0%. Further, the increase in obesity prevalence in women over 60 years old has increased from 28.8% to 37.2%. This could be attributed to perimenopause period when weight gain is observed in 60% of women with a simultaneous redistribution of body fat (Krzysztozek et al., 2015). It is estimated that Americans will be 100% obese in 35 years to come.

Discussion

healthy eating habits in work environment

fruit/veggies vs junk food & effectiveness of productivity

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Based on the results, Google and Microsoft corporations have effectively incorporated healthy work environments. The corporate culture can help the employees to encourage each other to eat healthily and use training facilities provided within the organization premises. They can also encourage each other to eat fruits and vegetables rather than junk food. Nutritional facts can be displayed for all employees as well as healthy facts can be added by each shelf of food.

The availability of fruits within work premises are responsible for improving employee intake of vegetables. Inquiries on the adoption of healthy eating habits at home yield a positive impact with more employees acknowledging that the provision of healthy foods in the workplace influences them to adopt the practice at home. Also, an increase in fruit and vegetable intake among employees when an organization creates the provision of healthy food options in the in-house café.

Employees should have availability to fruits such as apples, oranges, and bananas to increase productivity throughout the day. Café's should offer vegetables such as avocados, broccoli, and kale to boost productivity while on your lunch break. Currently, many organizations do not offer wellness programs or at least fruits and vegetables to their employees. Employees go out of their way to eat unhealthy snacks that they bring from home or leave the office to buy lunch, which most likely is something quick from a fast food restaurant.

how to create healthy eating in work environment

on-site café/lunchrooms & having gyms, free workout classes, etc.

An organizations management has a pivotal role to play since they can encourage team members to take part in a workplace intervention. Management should educate their employees

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to understand the important of health and wellbeing. They should also inform their employees of advantages they have implemented and what they can use.

Most employees are not interested or find it hard to visit the gym or training center due to demanding work schedules that require them to prioritize other responsibilities over going to the gym. Healthy foods and training facilities can be Provision of a free membership would increase employee likelihood of joining the gym in the workplace. More people are willing to use the facilities provided by the organization when they know that it is free. Also, having a free gym membership for employees to join on-site gyms is beneficial to most employees.

Accessibility is also a factor that enhances the use of the gym on worksites. The ease of access was the motivation to use the facilities during their free time. Busy schedules and heavy workloads are significant barriers to making time for exercise. Furthermore, having the gym at worksites is significant in encouraging employees to adhere to joining the gym as a way of adhering to healthy lifestyles. Many employees could agree that joining the gym has a positive impact on their morale to work. After joining the gym, many employees can identify having increased productivity. Employees are able to encourage those around them to join the gym after experiencing increased productivity and overall health.

The efforts of having on-site lunchrooms or café's and gyms are essential in enhancing the health and wellbeing of employees. Most employees become more aware of their health compared to previous periods, due to incorporating these features in their workplace. The provision of some of the facilities has ignited a need to take their health more seriously.

The development of programs to encourage employees to have healthy lives has a positive impact on them and their families. Most employees transfer the knowledge to their

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families and friends hence increasing the level of awareness of healthy eating within the workplace. Also, awareness of what those around you eat and do in order to stay healthy has an influence on what you will eat. Mostly, employees are responsible for each other's health, and they can ensure that those around them are living healthy. Finally, most employees acknowledge that the health efforts made in organizations also increase the awareness of the community. Most workers share and discuss the efforts and knowledge gained from the workplace with members of society, which increases their level of awareness on the matter.

Conclusions

Implications for practice

A review of the literature has revealed limited sources on nutrition, physical activity, and productivity in the workplace. This study has provided an extraordinary opportunity to explore nutrition, physical activity, and productivity at job sites. The results of this study validated the assumption that fruit and vegetable intake is more beneficial than eating junk food. In addition, the results clearly showed that implementing a wellness program with features such as on-site cafes and fitness centers will increase employee productivity. Also, this study incorporated two corporations, Microsoft and Google, to clarify that implementing a wellness program is beneficial.

Implications for research

The research question focused on the overall health of employees in workplaces and how creating a healthy work environment benefits the employer and employee. Even though the study only focused on healthy eating and physical activity, it revealed a positive association between healthy eating, physical activity, and productivity in the workplace. Understanding the

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importance of fruit and vegetable intake and fitness facilities can help in developing a wellness program. Offering on-site cafes and fitness facilities will encourage employees to utilize them and become familiar with healthier choices. Finally, this study helped to clarify the importance of implementing a nutritious diet, on-site cafes, and fitness facilities.

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