HR CONSULTANT WELLNESS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN WORKING
ENVIRONMENT

by

JASON BONEHILL

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on the positive and negative influences on wellness in the South African working environment, as well as three of the aspects that constitute today's modern definition of wellness, namely: psychological, social, and physical wellness, as perceived by HR consultants in the target organisation. The results of the study determine what the main positive and negative influences on the wellness of HR Consultants were as perceived by the study's participants. **Nature of the Job**, **State of Mind**, and **Relationships** are some of the most significant identified categories because they best reflect what is perceived to affect each aspect of HR Consultant wellness in the working environment.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree Mcom Industrial Psychology at the University of Pretoria, Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. This document represents my own opinion and interpretation of information received from the organisation concerned with this study and/or individuals belonging to that organisation.

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Jason Bonehill

Dated this day   of April 2012

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the organisation that allowed me to conduct my study as well as the study's individual participants. Without them, this study would not have been possible.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

The researcher is currently employed as an HR consultant in an organisation that implements software to assist clients in the running of their day-to-day HR activities. HR consultancy continually provides unique challenges and opportunities that make the occupation both stressful and highly rewarding. Unlike many other occupations in the organisation, it is constantly changing and thus requires a great deal of personal development and growth.

These conditions presented the researcher with a possible topic for a dissertation. Firstly, the study would investigate the factors of the ever-changing occupation of HR consultancy and how they affect HR consultants. Secondly, it would allow one to gain a greater understanding as to how individuals perceive those factors, both positively and negatively. This understanding could then help to explain how the wellness of certain consultants is affected either to a lesser or greater degree, based on their perceptions.

The researcher has been an HR consultant for over a year and in that time has gained valuable experience, working in many different organisations. As the researcher gained more experience, it became more apparent that every organisation is different.

This experience has informed the researcher that a topic that examines the aspects of the working environment that affect HR Consultants' wellness, positively or negatively, is a topic worth exploring. The abovementioned affects would be based entirely on the consultants' perceptions and opinions and would help to provide a more detailed understanding of what contributes to their wellness, positively or negatively, as a result of their working environment.

As the researcher has been working in the industry for over a year, he has his own perceptions of the environmental factors that may influence the wellness of HR consultants. These personal perceptions may differ from other HR consultants at the

organisation. It is this understanding that has prompted the researcher into further exploration of the matter. Due to the fact that the researcher is an HR Consultant himself, elements of bias and objectivity may be called into question when presenting the findings of the study. To resolve this, the researcher has included the following information that indicates his personal preferences and frame of reference.

The researcher's influences on his frame of reference include his:

- Employment in the occupation he is studying;
- Experience with environmental factors he perceives to affect HR Consultant wellness;
- Positive relationship with colleagues in the department; and
- Time spent at the organisation.

The elements that make up the researcher's frame of reference are his:
- Social constructivist nature;
- Continual search for deeper meaning;
- Fascination with perception; and
- Good understanding of human behaviour.

The study will seek to examine the filter mechanism of perception in terms of how participants perceive and interpret factors of their working environment that affect their wellness. The filter mechanism is believed to influence the way in which participants view what affects them within their environment as well as determine how significantly they are affected, whether it be positively or negatively

The study has been approved by the ethics committee of the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, University of Pretoria and complies with their requirements.

1.2 MOTIVATION

The individual's perception has always been a topic of great interest to the researcher, particularly the way in which individuals derive meaning from the world

around them. The researcher decided to combine this interest with his own knowledge of HR consultancy (derived from personal experience) to determine what it is within the working environment that affects HR consultant wellness.

Every individual experiences the phenomenon of perception in their own unique way. The researcher's interest lies in understanding the unique meaning associated with the world through the filter of perception. From the conversations we have with colleagues and clients to the way we interact with others in general, perception influences every aspect of our lives.

This influence is the primary motivation for the stud. The researcher seeks to gain a better understanding of how perception will influence what consultants believe affects their wellness in their working environment. This belief will determine what the findings of this study will be.

At present, much research has been done regarding employee wellness in relation to the effects of factors such as stress, alcohol, drug abuse, the physical environment and employee assistance programmes, to name but a few. Little research, however, has been done on how perception affects employee wellness. This study therefore seeks to shed some light in this regard.

It is only through understanding why people perceive things the way they do that we are able to ascribe meaning to a phenomenon or occurrence of an event. This meaning influences what we see and how we behave. It takes many forms and it originates in many places.

By gaining this understanding, a gap in research can be filled, providing information on a previously greatly unknown area of employee wellness, namely – the effects of perception. This information could then be useful in future studies and provide a framework for gathering information.

It is not merely enough to know the factors that affect wellness in terms of industry or organisational statistics in a working environment. It is essential to understand what consultants *believe* affects their wellness. The two approaches may differ significantly.

1.3 PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of the study is to examine employee wellness in HR consultant positions in the working environment at a consulting organisation, and to examine the positive and negative factors perceived within the environment that may have an influence on the overall wellness of HR consultants.

1.4 SPECIFIC RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The following research objectives will be the basis of the study. They are:

1. to determine the factors that influence employee wellness by interviewing consultants;
2. to identify the dominant themes by careful analysis of the respondents responses;
3. to determine the perceived positive factors present in the employee working environment;
4. to determine the perceived negative factors present in the employee working environment; and
5. to ascertain the effect that these factors have on consultant wellness.

1.5 IMPORTANCE AND BENEFITS OF THE PROPOSED STUDY

As noted earlier, the study will contribute theoretically to the understanding of the wellness of HR consultants in their working environment. Up to this point, little research has been done on the wellness of individuals working as consultants in South Africa, especially in the Payroll and HR services industry.

The practical importance of the study will be its contribution to the understanding of the perceived positive and negative factors present in the consultant's working environment that have an influence on their wellness. This can contribute to the employer's greater understanding of the reasons for a higher staff turnover in the industry. In addition, it may determine the relation between actual and perceived factors.

One of the main criticisms the researcher has with the research on employee wellness up to now is that nearly all research conducted focuses on physical wellness and employee assistance programs. The lack of information on other factors of wellness is one of the reasons the researcher believes the study will help to plug this gap in information and enhance knowledge on the subject.

The abovementioned gap in information was discovered when attempting to find information on psychological and social wellness. While researchers usually study a predetermined list of factors and then test them against the target organisation or institution, the proposed study will not include preconceived factors. It will rely on employee input with regard to their perception of those factors. In this way, the study will contribute meaningfully to the existing body of knowledge with research that conveys a focused understanding of the way employees in the field of consulting view and experience wellness.

1.6 DELIMITATIONS

The proposed study has a number of delimitations. The first delimitation is the fact that only one company will be the focus of the study. The organisation is a market leader in terms of Payroll and HR Services in Southern Africa and therefore presents the ideal environment in which to conduct the study.

The second delimitation is the fact that only factors that the HR consultants *perceive* to affect them will be included in the study. Additional factors that HR consultants do not perceive to affect their wellness during the course of the study will be excluded (Ripley, 2003). Including all the factors that influence HR consultant wellness within the working environment would render the study too broad. By limiting the scope the relationship between the factors and the wellness of HR consultants can be better determined.

The third delimitation is the target population of the study. Only consultants positioned at head office will be involved in the study. The organisation's other employees, as well as consultants positioned at other branches, will be excluded from the study. These exclusions will be made for two reasons:

1. Due to costs and scheduling conflicts, the logistics of interviewing consultants from other branches is impractical.
2. The working environment of consultants in the smaller branches differs significantly from the working environment at head office, which makes up the majority of the organisation's workforce.

1.7 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

The main concepts, which will be used in this research, are defined below:

Emotional intelligence: this study defines *Emotional Intelligence* as 'the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions' (Thorndike, 1920: 227).

Wellness: This study defines *Wellness* as 'a healthy balance of the mind, body and spirit that results in an overall feeling of well-being' (Wellness, 2010).

Psychological wellness/wellbeing: This study defines *Psychological wellness/wellbeing* as 'a generalized feeling of happiness' (Schmutte & Ryff, 1997: 551).

Social wellness: This study defines *Social wellness* as 'the quality of an individual's network of professional and personal relationships' (Farrell & Geist-Martin, 2005: 549).

Physical wellness: This study defines *Physical wellness* as 'The ability to meet life's demands and still have enough energy to respond to unplanned events' (Greenberg, Dintiman, & Oakes, 2004: 2).

Perceived wellness: This study defines *Perceived wellness* as 'that sense that one is living in a manner that permits the experience of consistent, balanced growth in the emotional, intellectual, physical, psychological, social and spiritual dimensions of human existence' (Adams, Bezner, Drabbs, Zambarano, & Steinhardt, 2000: 169).

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH DESIGN AND STRATEGY

2.1 RESEARCH PARADIGM / PHILOSOPHY

The research paradigm or philosophy that will be used to carry out the proposed study is that of Social Constructivism. According to Creswell (2009:8) social constructivists hold assumptions that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work.

As the definition demonstrates, the social constructivist approach to research is concerned with the individual and his/her understanding and experiences. Therefore it is an appropriate paradigm to use when conducting a study on employee wellness. The researcher believes that a better understanding of the proposed concept can be gained by utilising this particular paradigm.

Constructivism can best be described in relation to the elements of the following research philosophies: ontology, epistemology, axiology, rhetorical structure and methods. The following describes the areas of the above philosophies that relate to constructivism:

- Ontology indicates that reality and meaning of the world around us are subjective based on the perception of the participants.
- Epistemology is concerned with the interactive role between researcher and participant.
- Axiology highlights the inevitable interference of bias and how it should be acknowledged.
- Rhetorical structure indicates that regarding the research study, the researcher will rely heavily on the participants' input and information.

The method of constructivism is concerned with the naturalistic and highly interactive nature of the research and its attempts to uncover attempted meaning.

2.2 DESCRIPTION OF INQUIRY STRATEGY AND BROAD RESEARCH DESIGN

2.2.1 INQUIRY STRATEGY

The strategy of inquiry that will be used in this study is phenomenological research, which is defined by Creswell (2009:13) as a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher identifies the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by the participants. As it is the purpose of the study to ascertain the perception of HR Consultants regarding their working environment and its influence on their wellness, this type of research is well suited to the study. It focuses on the individual and how he/she experiences a phenomenon. In the case of this study, that phenomenon(s) is the factors that affect HR consultant wellness within the working environment.

There are two types of phenomenological research – hermeneutic and psychological. The hermeneutic type involves the interpretation of peoples lived experiences, while the psychological focuses on describing individual experiences of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). As the proposed study is focussed on the HR Consultants working at the organisation and their experience of wellness, the psychological aspect of phenomenological research design will be used.

The sought understanding could not be properly gained through statistical analysis because this type of analysis fails to consider the subjective experiences of participants.

The proposed strategy of inquiry has the following advantages:

- It allows the researcher to gain an understanding of the subjective meanings that the participants attach to specific phenomena.

- Through the use of qualitative interviews, more detailed information can be obtained than would be obtained using quantitative analysis or other forms of qualitative research.

- It allows the subjective experiences of participants to be formulated into central themes.

- Data is less likely to be deemed incorrect because it is based on perception, not fact.

2.2.2 BROAD RESEARCH DESIGN

The broad research design of the study is that of qualitative research, which seeks to understand the subjective meaning individuals ascribe to phenomenon and challenges. This design is therefore suited to the purposes of the proposed study and provides the vehicle through which information can be obtained and meaning derived.

For this study, the following research characteristics are relevant:

- Empirical – the study is empirical in nature as it concerns the analysis of primary data collected from participants.

- Explanatory – the study seeks to explain the relationship between the participants' wellness and their working environment.

- Cross sectional – interviews will be conducted with different participants in order to gather information which will represent their perceptions of the working environment.

- Verbal – the study will make use of the verbal answers of respondents.

- Applied – the study will use applied research in seeking to make a contribution to the understanding of the aspects affecting consultant wellness in the South African working environment.

- Textual – the study will be qualitative in nature relying on respondents' answers and subjective meaning.

- Non-experimental: The study will seek to understand participants' perceptions and will therefore not be experimental.

2.2.3 SAMPLING

For the purpose of this study, the sample population to be studied will comprise ten consultants from the organisation's Pretoria head office during the 2011-2012

financial year. These individuals work in a unique and ever-changing work environment and have a high degree of turnover. Having them participate in the study represents a unique opportunity to determine what consultants perceive as affecting their wellness in the working environment. HR Consultants will be the focus of the study because the researcher has experience with the unique day-to-day challenges that the occupation brings.

The consultants working at other branches of the organisation have not been included in the study as it was not feasible to conduct a one-on-one qualitative interview with them. The logistics and scheduling involved would have made the study impractical as the interviews would have had to be conducted during working hours.

The sample was selected at the discretion of the researcher and is therefore random in nature. It is the aim of the study to gain an understanding of HR consultants' perceptions and therefore all HR consultants in the HR services are eligible. Volunteers were requested and the strategy proved to be successful.

In order to provide a better description of the sample the demographics will be discussed. The age of the participants ranged from 24-32, with seven being female and three male. Nine of the participants are HR Consultants at the organisation while the tenth was a consultant who moved into a team leader position. Five of the participants are pursuing a Master's Degree in Industrial Psychology.

2.2.4 DATA COLLECTION

For the purpose of the study the wellness of consultants was investigated by examining the perceived positive and negative factors that affect their well-being.

With regard to accessing the units of analysis, there are several variables that could hamper the data collection process. They are:

- The participants' schedules;

- The researcher's schedule;

- The duration of interviews; and

- The overall workload.

In an effort to overcome these obstacles, it was decided that interviews would be conducted during the extended meetings that all the organisation's consultants attend on a monthly basis. This would ensure the availability of the participants and that adequate time was available for the interviews.

For the purpose of this study, semi-structure interviews were used to collect the data with open-ended questions that allowed the researcher to gather as much data as possible which, in turn, allowed for detailed subjective information to be acquired. This is believed to be the most appropriate method for acquiring data by the researcher.

Before the interviews were conducted, participants were sent a questionnaire, which they were to answer and return. The questionnaire is brief and focuses on the three areas of wellness that are the focus of this study – social, psychological and physical wellness.

The questionnaire consists of three open-ended questions that requires the participants to provide their views and opinions on what affects their social, psychological and physical wellness. The questionnaire was emailed to the participants. They were able complete the questionnaires in their own time, allowing them the opportunity to provide detailed answers before the interviews.

Once the interviews were conducted, the topic was discussed in a focus group. As part of this focus group participants gave their views and opinions regarding the factors that are believed to affect their wellness in the working environment.

Primary written and verbal data was collected from participants. The researcher collected the data himself to ensure its integrity, to ensure nothing was omitted and to ensure that confidentiality was maintained.

The data collection and analysis method used in this study is **qualitative interviewing,** following the phenomenological approach. This approach is conducted using the following steps (Creswell, 2009: 181):

1. Identify phenomenon;
2. Leave own world and assumptions behind;
3. Collect data – using qualitative interviews (interviews that use open-ended questioning to obtain information);
4. Analyse data – reduce data to themes;
5. Describe experiences/phenomena; and
6. Interpret meaning of experiences.

In order to ascertain if the formulated questions would acquire the required data, a pilot test was done with three participants. The information obtained from the pilot interviews was analysed to determine whether the questionnaires were detailed enough and whether they gave an accurate reflection of the candidates' perceptions.

The amount of time needed to collect data depended largely on the participants' answers to the interview questions which varied in length. Therefore no specific timeframe could be given for the data collection process. However, taking into consideration the limited time available to the participants, the researcher decided to restrict it to no more than one hour per participant.

2.2.5 DATA ANALYSIS

Once the interview data was collected it was stored on an excel spreadsheet for further analysis. The information was arranged in to themes using a coding process whereby participants' responses to the various questions were coded. The thematic information was then divided again into two categories – positive and negative. This allowed for a grouping of information that addressed the overall aim of the research.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study is HR Consultant wellness in the South African Working Environment. Wellness has been broadly defined as an overall sense of wellbeing and can be divided into four main elements, namely: psychological wellness, physical wellness, spiritual wellness and social wellness. These four elements combine to provide an overview of an individual's wellness (Farrell & Geist-Martin, 2005; Dintiman & Greenberg as cited Schaefer, King, & Bernard, 2007; Attridge , Maiden, & Herlihy, 2005).

In this study, wellness has incorporated three of the four elements that constitute the modern definition of wellness – social, physical and psychological wellness.

Each element described in the definition of wellness is influenced by a number of factors such as the working environment, the individual's personality, tolerance levels, conflict resolution style and organisational support. In recent years, research on employee wellness has focused mainly on areas like stress, alcoholism and drug abuse and employee assistance programmes. This study has sought to fill a gap in the research in terms of the other factors affecting employee wellness.

Factors such as those mentioned in the modern definition have often been given very little attention or even completely overlooked in studies aimed at gaining a greater understanding of employee wellness. Investigating other factors of employee wellness will contribute to a much greater understanding of the concept of wellness and what wellness means for the modern employee.

The elements of wellness mentioned above are what constitute the modern definition of wellness. The element that influences wellness more than anything else, however, is perception. Perception determines what individuals observe in their working environment and how it affects them (Parikh, 1983).

In their study Adams, Bezner, Drabbs, Zambarano, and Steinhardt, (2000: 169), define perceived wellness as "that sense that one is living in a manner that permits

the experience of consistent, balanced growth in the emotional, intellectual, physical, psychological, social and spiritual dimensions of human existence".

This definition provides a broad description of what wellness comprises but more importantly, it focuses on growth in each of the elements of wellness. The definition suggests that perceived wellness is more than merely the absence of disease or impairment but rather an individual's continual growth.

Psychological wellness, social wellness and physical wellness are elements common to both elements of the modern definition of wellness and the definition of perceived wellness and will be discussed within the study. Note that a review of the literature revealed that the Perceived Wellness Survey was one of the main instruments used to determine participant wellness in the various studies conducted..

3.2 PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLNESS

Psychological wellness is one of the four elements that constitute the modern definition of wellness. It is an integral part of any discussion of wellness as it focuses on that part of wellness which is difficult to measure but is essential for an individual not only to function effectively, but to enjoy a good quality of life.

At present there is no clear definition of psychological wellness; every definition put forward has focused on different elements. It is the researcher's opinion that the best definition of psychological wellness must be one that focuses on healthy functioning and not merely the absence of disease or disability.

As such the researcher has a positive view on psychological wellness and other forms of wellness. It is a primary feature of this study that the topic covers not only wellness but also the positive and negative factors affecting wellness. These factors have been analysed to determine the quality of participant wellness through the perception of the participants themselves.

Psychological wellness is a highly subjective concept and as of yet, few comprehensive definitions have been formulated. Therefore, upon review of the

available literature, a definition has been chosen which relates to the focus of the study and which is believed to provide the most holistic representation of wellness.

Psychological wellness is said to:

> encompass a breadth of wellness that includes positive evaluations of one's self and one's life, a sense of continued growth and development as a person, the belief that life is purposeful and meaningful, the possession of good relationships with other people, the capacity to manage one's life and the surrounding world effectively, and a sense of self-determination (Page & Vella-Brodrick, 2009: 445).

In accordance with the above definition, psychological well-being focuses on an individual's subjective method of attaching value in their lives (Hazler & Hermon; 1999; Page & Vella-Brodrick, 2009). This view of psychological wellbeing highlights its importance to an individual's overall wellness.

3.2.1 RELATIONSHIPS

In their study on life satisfaction and the dimensions of wellness, Schaefer *et al.* (2007) highlighted the importance of psychological wellness. The study dealt with 228 adults employed at a private business. Using a life satisfaction survey, the authors were able to ascertain the link between the two concepts of life satisfaction and the dimensions of wellness.

The study determined that regarding influence on life satisfaction, social wellness had the greatest influence, followed by psychological wellness (Schaefer *et al.*, 2007). The study determined that social activity has a large influence on both psychological wellness and life satisfaction.

By socializing with colleagues and friends, employees enhance their psychological wellness while engaging in conversation or blowing off steam (Hazler & Hermon, 1999; Schaefer *et al.* 2007; Adams *et al.*, 2000). Considering what occurs in today's

fast paced and ever-changing world, this is a highly important discovery as individuals employed in positions that require travel or long hours rarely have the time to socialize.

The quality of the relationships with colleagues and friends is also very important; employees that have healthy and supportive relationships with colleagues and people outside of work experience greater psychological wellness (Schaefer *et al.*, 2007). This finding is important for employees at any organisation. Relationships that an organisation has little control over could significantly affect the psychological wellness of employees.

The quality of relationships, rather than simply relationships themselves, has a substantial influence on psychological wellness. The way in which relationships are perceived determines their quality. In the study by Adams *et al.* (2000), the authors highlighted the importance of perception in relation to psychological wellness.

The findings of the study by Adams et al. (2000) supported the notion that the quality of the relationships employees have with colleagues and noncolleagues affects their psychological wellness.

Through an appropriate social network or support system, individuals can greatly enhance their psychological wellness. Before an individual can experience this enhancement, it is essential that social networks are present inside and outside the organisation and that they are of a high enough quality to provide effective support (Page & Vella-Brodrick, 2009).

3.2.2 PERCEPTION

In the researcher's opinion, perception is the single most important element when studying employee wellness. Perception is our private reality. It is an important determinant of what influences us and the way in which we act.

In this section perception, in relation to employee wellness, is briefly discussed in order to provide a better understanding of how it influences our state of well-being.

There have been many previous attempts to classify perception and determine how it affects us; the following model by Adams *et al.* (2000: 168) is one such attempt:

A model was proposed with perception as the key component and highlighted wellness and its opposing axis of illness.

Figure 1: The Wellness Model
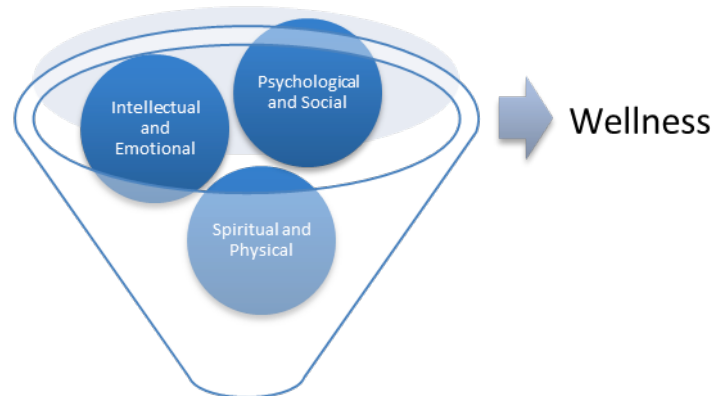
<u>Source:</u> Adams, Bezner, Drabbs, Zambarano, & Steinhardt (2000: 166)

Many of the factors mentioned in the model above are not new in terms of their influence on wellness. The difference lies in the influence of perception on the different aspects. Depending on the perception of the individual concerned, each of the different factors will have different influences on wellness. These components, and what they mean for an employee in the modern world of work, are discussed. Through this discussion the researcher believes that a greater understanding of what constitutes and affects psychological wellness can be learned.

Adams *et al.* (2000) investigated what constitutes psychological wellness and what influences it most significantly. The findings of their study have formed a key part of this literature study on psychological wellness.

One of the most important findings of the literature review was the following comment: '…that perceived support rather than received support has the most powerful influence on health. Furthermore, the stress literature suggests that

perceptions of internal resources enable individuals to survive and thrive under conditions of extreme stress' (Adams *et al.*, 2000: 164).

In their abovementioned comment, the authors speak of the discrepancy between perceived support and received support. This is important because of what it translates into for the individual within an organisation – the support structures, resources and personnel may be available, but it is the manner in which they are perceived that will determine if it assists with psychological wellness or reduces it.

Bartley (1969) and Parikh (1983) have both discussed perception. They agree that perception is largely based on an individual's past experiences. This is to say that an individual's perception, and therefore their wellness, psychological and otherwise are influenced by the good and bad experiences they have with organisations. Although the abovementioned sources are not recent, the researcher believes they are highly relevant to the study as they indicate what still forms the basic foundation of an individual's perception. They are able to provide a greater understanding as to what constitutes the vast field of perception.

To enable organisations to manage employee wellness on a psychological level, it is essential that the employees' perceptions are understood. In the study conducted by Bartley (1969), the relationship between sense organs and cognitive processes was analysed. The author determined that individuals derive meaning from a combination of their senses and their cognitive functions. This is particularly relevant to this study as it suggests that two individuals can each experience the same events or stimuli and still derive different meanings from them.

This simple but important point contributes to the understanding of;

1. the effect that perception has on the environment in which an employee works; and
2. the effect the environment has on perception.

The individual derives meaning through perception and views different stimuli in his/her unique ways. Therefore, in order for the researcher to better understand the nature of employee wellness, he needed to better understand how the employee viewed the world. The researcher sought to do this through studying environmental

stimuli as well as how these stimuli affect individuals' psychological and other forms of wellness.

3.2.3 SENSE OF COHERENCE AND OPTIMISM

3.2.3.1 Sense of coherence

An essential element of psychological wellness that has been discussed by a number of authors is what has been called a sense of control or coherence (Hazler & Hermon 1999). This element of psychological wellness has a substantial influence on individual wellness.

A sense of coherence was defined by Antonovsky (as cited in Adams *et al.* 2000: 167), as, "a global orientation that expresses the extent to which one has a pervasive, enduring though dynamic feeling of confidence that one's internal and external environments are predictable and that there is a high probability that things will work out as well as can reasonably be expected."

The studies of Hazler and Hermon (1999) and Adams *et al*. (2000) reviewed and analysed people in different walks of life and came to similar conclusions. They both viewed sense of control as a key element in an individual's psychological functioning.

Both studies described a sense of control using different terminology. The researcher views a sense of control as an individual's ability to control themselves and to control their emotions (Hazler & Hermon 1999). This ability has been highlighted as one of the essential components of psychological wellness.

If one looks closely at this aspect of psychological wellness, it becomes clear as to why it is important. For an individual to function effectively he/she needs to be able to feel in control of their world and be able to regulate themselves (Dolbier, Soderstrom & Steinhardt 2001). It is not always possible for individuals to continuously possess a sense of control and so their psychological wellness is at risk.

In the study conducted by Dolbier *et al.* (2001), the authors highlighted individual personality, or more accurately, the psyche of the individual. This bore a similarity to

Freud's ID, EGO and Super EGO. Dolbier *et al.* (2001) believe that only by allowing the appropriate aspect of an individual's personality to lead, will the individual function effectively and be psychologically well. They call this act self-leadership and explain how the process of self-leadership can be taught.

Self-leadership is the process of leading or controlling oneself with the appropriate aspect of one's personality (Dolbier *et al.* 2001). This element of psychological wellness relates to perceived wellness and work outcomes.

If employees learn to lead with the relevant aspect of their personality, they can improve their psychological wellness and the organisation will improve. This improvement will lead to an increase in the overall wellbeing of employees, as all of the previously discussed elements of wellness will become more balanced.

3.2.3.2 Optimism

Each of the discussed elements of psychological wellness has its own particular influence. This section deals with optimism as a component of psychological wellness, highlighted by Adams *et al.* (2000), in relation to a sense of coherence and the significant influence these two elements have on psychological and perceived wellness.

In the study by Adams *et al.* (2000) a model was proposed to explain the relationship between different concepts the findings of the study substantiated the proposed model. The model is displayed below in figure 2. It provides an excellent illustration of the moderating effects that optimism and sense of coherence have on life satisfaction. Life satisfaction, in turn, influences perceived wellness.

Figure 2: Spiritual and Psychological Dimensions of Wellness
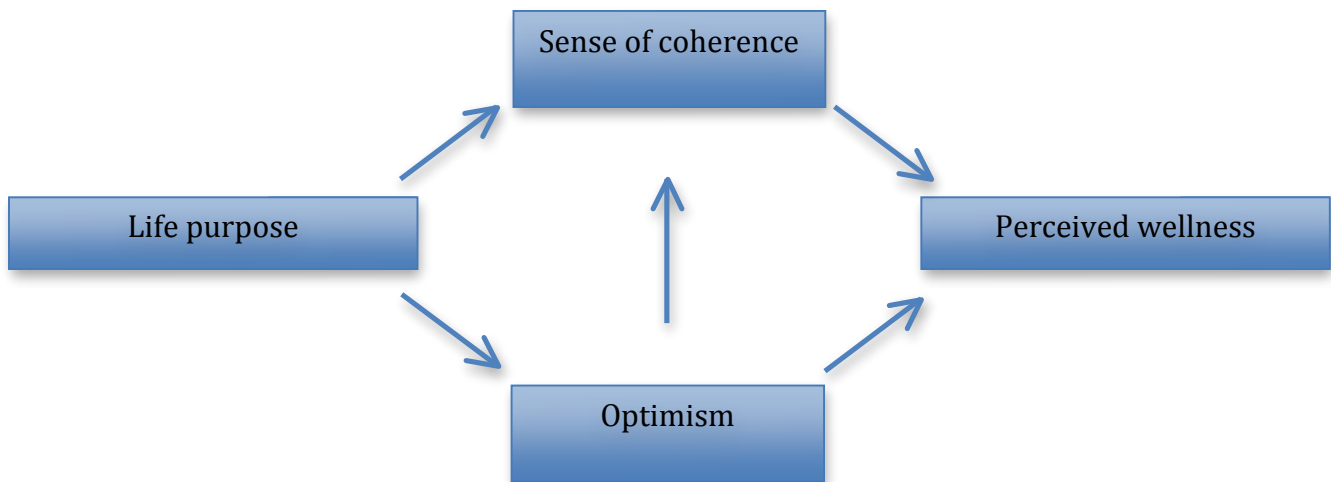
Source: Adams, Bezner, Drabbs, Zambarano & Steinhardt (2000:168)

Life purpose refers to the spiritual component of wellness. Through their study, Adams *et al.* (2000) determined that the effect life purpose has on perceived wellness is regulated by the psychological elements of optimism and a sense of coherence. An individual is optimistic when they have a positive outlook on life and believe they can deal with situations and circumstances effectively.

The main finding from the study and the model is that a life purpose – that which you want to achieve in life – is an element of spiritual wellness. The effect that this has on perceived wellness is mediated by the components of psychological wellness illustrated in the model. What has also been determined from the model is that optimism in turn influences whether or not an individual has a sense of coherence or control (Adams *et al.* 2000).

Therefore if an individual has a positive outlook, their belief that they can control not only their environment but also themselves will be stronger. This in turn will influence one's experience of having a life purpose that will, along with the components of psychological wellness, influence one's perceived wellness.

3.3 SOCIAL WELLNESS

Social wellness, as was mentioned in the discussion on psychological wellness, has been described as the most important aspect of an individual's overall wellness (Schaefer *et al.*, 2000). The relationship between social wellness and overall wellness will serve as the focus for this section. The study uses the following definition of social wellness: 'the quality of an individual's network of professional and personal relationships' (Farrell & Geist-Martin, 2005). This definition focuses on the relationships between individuals. The researcher believes it to be a good illustration of what social wellness entails.

In the study performed by Schaefer et al. (2007), the different aspects of wellness were investigated. They found that social wellness comes first in order of importance, followed by psychological, occupational, spiritual and physical wellness.

After reviewing the authors findings, it appeared logical that, as human beings can be classified as a group animals, social wellness would have the greatest influence on their overall wellness. In terms of the employee's perspective, this translates in to the need to feel part of the various groups at his/her organisation.

Relationships are the key element of social wellness and the quality of these relationships to a large extent affects the wellness of an individual (Schaefer *et al*., 2007; Farrell & Geist-Martin 2005; Myers, Willse & Villalba 2011; Hattie, Myers & Sweeney, 2004). Through detailed discussion of relationships, social wellness is better understood.

There are two main components of relationships, the first is friendship and the second is love (Myers *et al*. 2011, Hattie *et al*. 2004). These two components of social wellness are the focusof the next section of the literature review. This will assist in providing a greater understanding of what consitutes social wellness.

3.3.1 Friendship

Human beings are inherently social or group creatures. Most people thrive in environments where this inherent need for socialisation can be fulfilled. Employees in an organisation are no different. The element of interacting with others and the quality of these interactions has a large impact on an employee's social wellness (Hazler & Hermon 1999, Schaefer *et al*. 2007)

As has been previously discussed, relationships and their quality have a significant influence on many aspects of wellness. As was discussed in the section on psychological wellness, perception has a significant influence on how the quality of relationships is determined.

As friendship is an essential element of social wellness, it is important that the relationships employees experience in their working environment is of such a nature that they foster growth and sustain social wellness. If not, the social wellness of employees will be impeded (Schaefer *et al*. 2007).

In their study on university students, Schaefer *et al*. (2007) highlighted the importance of social activity. They determined that social activity had a large influence on students' social wellness.

This social activity consists of two main parts:

- being part of a group, and
- being positively connected to others.

 The first activity requires an individual to feel part of a group being accepted for who they are. The second part requires an individual to not only feel part of a group; but it requires a sense of companionship to be created by the relationships between the group members. Individuals then have the ability to rely on others for support and relaxation. These concepts apply as much to university students as they do to work colleagues.

These two parts of social activity contribute towards friendship between individuals and in so doing, increases their social wellness. The quality of friendships deeply affects social wellness.

3.3.2 Love and Support

Myers *et al*. (2011) discuss social support and what they consider to be its most influential components. They determined that social support is not only essential to an individual's social wellness but to their overall wellbeing aswell. In addition to this, the authours discovered that no other contributing factor of wellness had a greater influence on long term mental health.

The main component of social support was identified as family support. It has a significant influence on the perceived social support an individual receives (Myers *et al*. 2011). If an individual perceives the support they receive from their family as positive, it will improve their overall wellbeing.

According to the Myers *et al*. (2011) social support can be divided into two main parts. The first is friendship which concerns relationships with friends and colleagues. The second is love and concerns the feeling between individuals.

Human beings are inherently group animals; for most, life's main goal is to find someone to love and be loved by in return. This essential and basic need is what drives our interactions with others and allows the human race to grow and thrive.

3.4 PHYSICAL WELLNESS

As was mentioned earlier, physical wellness is one of the core elements of the modern definition of wellness. In the section to follow, physical wellness will be analysed and discussed in order to provide a better understanding of the topic, as well as as a better understanding of the influence it has on overall wellbeing. .

Physical wellness has been researched over a long period. Through a review of the literature, many elements of physical wellness as well as the applications of physical wellness have been highlighted.

These elements include, but are not limited to, increases in morale, productivity, longevity, reduced absenteeism, improvement in mental health, increased self-esteem, and improved perceived wellness (Bezner, Adams, & Whistler, 1999; Huta,Deci & Ryan 2008; Pelfrey & Hobson 1984; Kulinna, Warfield, Jonaitis, Dean & Corbin, 2009; Miller, Gilman & Martens 2008).

3.4.1 Perceived physical wellness

In the study conducted by Bezner *et al*. (1999) the Perceived Wellness Survey was used to ascertain the link between physical activity and perceived wellness. 243 participants took part in the survey. The authors determined that participation in moderate amounts of physical activity benefits overall wellbeing.

Exercise in leisure time was at the source of the study. The authors found that those that participated in moderate levels of activity such as cycling, walking and going to gym were found to have higher levels of perceived physical wellness. This correlation conveys the importance of regular physical exercise and how it creates a positive perception of physical health.

The findings of the study make sense. When individuals exercise they enhance their perception of their physical wellness and thereby contribute to their overall wellbeing. This effect can be attributed to perception (Bezner *et al*. 1999, Pelfrey & Hobson 1984).

Bezner *et al.* (1999) made a few important points regarding psychological wellbeing. The authors described the characteristics of perception as follows:

1.) 'perception precedes psychological or behavioural symptomatology'

2.) 'elements studied fail to discuss the wellness of the mind', and

3.) 'perceptual measures are inherently valid'

What this means in terms of individual perception, is that if someone perceives something to be true and valid, then it should be. It explains how individuals who perceive themselves to be physically well, believe that they are physically well.

There are, however, other elements that will form part of the literature review such as the cost benefit of a physically well workforce, as well as the correlation between physicall wellness and other benefits such as increased moral.

3.4.2 Cost benefits

In 1984 a study was conducted by Pelfrey and Hobson with regards to the benefits of a company having a physical wellness programme. The two main focus areas of study were employee longevity and absenteeism.

Althoug the study is dated, the researcher believes it is still relevant in the modern world of work where working hours and stress increase and free time decreases. The essence of Pelfrey and Hobson's study (1984) has maintained relevance because it focuses on the cost benefits of a physical wellnes programme. The authors provide managers with tangible benefits rather than only discussing psychological components.

The first of these tangible benefits is increased longevity. It is a primary advantage of implementing an employee physical wellness programme – through constant exercise employees can increase their longevity (Pelfrey and Hobson 1984).

In recent years longevity has become a regular occurence with employees dying of lifestyle related diseases such as heart attacks and high blood cholesterol. Organisations can increase employee lifespan through the implementation of a physical wellness programme. This then provides those organisations with a workforce that can work for longer and limits the costs associated with premature death.

The second benefit of implementing a physical wellness programme is a reduction in absenteeism. A reduction in absenteeism leads to greater productivity and a reduction in costs incurred by lost working hours (Attridge, Maiden & Herlihy 2005; Knill 1999). This is a substantial benefit indicating the value of the implementation of a physical wellness programme.

Pelfrey and Hobson (1984) discovered that the benefits of implementing a physical wellness programme were increased significantly if the programme was implemented on site, at the organisation. If the necessary exercise equipment and personnel is available on site, the need to travel away from work in order to exercise is eliminated. In this way, attendance is increased.On site physical exercise increasesthe intensity of the exercise which, in turn, improves perceived physical wellness.

Formulas developed to determine the actual return on investment were discussed by Attridge *et al. (2005)*. The initial costs of setting up the physical exercise facilities on site would eventually be returned by the long term benefits. (Pelfrey & Hobson 1984; Attridge *et al*. 2005).

The most important finding of the research by the authors discussed above was that benefits that are difficult to measure, such as increased motivation, stem from employees increased physical wellness (Pelfrey & Hobson 1984; Attridge, Maiden & Herlihy 2005). Thus, the modern organisation needs to weigh the associated costs of a physical wellness programme against the proposed benefits before deciding whether to implement such a programme.

Whatever an organisation may decide, there are now tangible, measurable benefits of implementing a physical wellness programme. Programmes such as the one reviewed have a powerful influence on employee physical wellness and employee perceived physical wellness.

3.4.3 Moral, goals and self-esteem

The following section includes factors that are more difficult to measure but have no less influence. They include autonomy and goals as discussed by Huta *et al.* (2008), and Miller *et al*. (2008), and hope and optimism as discussed by (Miller *et al*. 2008).

Hope and optimism are the most interesting of the elements that have an influence on perceived physical wellness. Both are subjective and difficult to measure, but their influence is nonetheless substantial.

Hope and optimism were the focus of a study conducted at a school aimed at increasing students' physical and mental wellness (Miller *et al.* 2008). The study found a number of ways in which this couldbe achieved and while a complete analysis of the findings is beyond the scope of this study, the findings that are most relative to wellness will be discussed. And although the findings were based on school students, they are still relevant to employee wellness.

Miller *et al.* (2008) found that hope and optimism were directly related to goals. Synder *et al.*, as cited in Miller *et al.* (2008), specified a number of steps that could be followed in order to enhance hope and optimism through goals. They advised that specific goals should first be set. These goals could then be broken down into smaller goals and sub goals, and finally the goals that are important to the individual could be selected.

By following these steps, an individual can set and achieve goals that are not only manageable but are also prioritised. This not only allows that individual to progress towards their end goal, but also enhances their hope and optimism as they obtain the psychological benefits of achieving their goals.

The study by Miller *et al.* (2008) suggested that if an individual was to achieve personal mile stones, no matter how small, many elements of that individual's life, such as hope and optimism and autonomy and self-esteem would be enhanced. This, in turn, would enhance that individual's physical wellness and ultimately their overall wellness.

The influence goals have on wellness was not the only discovery of the study. A number of other influences on wellness were observed. Of the other influential elements that were discovered in a school environment, the most important was structured extra curricular activities (Miller *et al*. 2008).

It was determined that these activites enhance wellness by teaching chidren the skills they need in order to perform the them. The activities therefore foster growth and teach the children new skills at ever increasing levels of difficulty. This, in turn, enhances their self-esteem and grants them a sense of autonomy at being able to accomplish activities on their own.

Although the study focused on children in a school environment, the researcher believes the findings also apply to employees in an organisation. By participating and completing extra curricular activities such as company sport days, on-site gym programmes, and company sponsored events, employees can enhance their physical wellness in the same way as the children in the abovementioned study.

It is essential to consider the bigger picture when focussing on wellness. Nothing happens in isolation for an employee of an organisation.

Many aspects of the working environment affect physical, psychological and social wellness. It is through a combination of these affects and our own views that shape wellness in the organisation.

Therefore, if an organisation is to effectively manage its employees' wellness, it must consider all of the elements that comprise wellness. Employees need to have their social, psychological and physical wellness addressed as a unified whole and not in isolation.

3.4.4 Ergonomics

Ergonomics is the 'science of matching people, machines, and environment' (Sherman, 1990: 58). This definition provides the platform from which the next section regarding physical wellness can be discussed.

Ergonomics has been an area of interest with regards to workplace health for a number of years and is a crucial aspect of any discussion on physical wellness. As the definition illustrates, ergonomics it is the matching ofpeople and the elements of work.

An ergonomical environment – one in which there is a match between people, the environment and machines – creates a workforce that can perform their duties optimally, without pain and discomfort. The threats of pain and discomfort are constant in an environment in which employees are constantly expected to use machines and their environment in performing their jobs.

Elements that influence ergonomics are, but not limited to (Rowan & Wright, 1994; Knill, 1999):

- lighting;
- space;
- noise;
- use of Colours;
- sitting place;
- tools needed for the job; and
- machines

Ergonomics influences how employees perform their day to day duties. Thus, as an organisation it is essential that there is a match between the employees, the machines they use and their environment (Smith 2003; Rowan & Wright 1994; Knill 1999).

This match is essential in terms of an employee's physical wellness. An environment designed with the purpose of assisting in the completion of work will enhance employee productivity. By establishing small measures such as installing proper ventilation, minimising noise and ensuring that tools needed for the job are available and accessible, far reaching improvements in employee productivity can be generated.

CHAPTER 4: PERSPECTIVES ON WELLNESS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Wellness has been discussed in the previous chapter's literature review. The most important points made in the review were that:

- Wellness has many elements, and
- Perception has a large influence on most elements of wellness.

According to the literature, of the study's three key elements of wellness – social, psychological and physical wellness – social wellness seems to have the most significant effect on overall employee wellness. Social wellness seems to be followed by psychological and physical wellness in order of importance.

This tendency is in line with views that human beings are inherently group beings and seek companionship. The quality of an individual's relationships also has a substantial influence on an individual's social and overall wellness.

Perception was the other key, reoccurring influence on wellness in the literature (Adams 2000). This subjective concept is the way we define reality and is in itself, defined by a number of elements.

This chapter will provide a better understanding of the perspectives of wellness both internationally and within South Africa. The researcher will then briefly discuss how organisations implement wellness and then conclude with the elements that the different perspectives (International and South African) have in common.

4.2 INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES OF WELLNESS

The World Health Organisation defines health as: "a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not simply the absence of disease or infirmity" (World Health Organisation, 2011). This definition is at the core of the modern understanding of wellness.

This understanding of wellness has not always been the accepted definition and has constantly evolved in the last few decades. This evolution has seen organisations change from viewing employees simply as a means of production and services that help them make a profit, to viewing employees as one of their most important assets - asset that not only contributes to the organisation's success but defines it (Roslender, Stevenson & Kahn 2006).

The concept of wellness was defined as early as 1947. It was given a comprehensive definition that provided a greater understanding of what constitutes wellness (Hattie *et al*. 2004). As our understanding of wellness is still constantly changing, the researcher believes it can potentially reach a point where it includes not only physical symptoms and reduction of stress, but also social and psychological elements.

While the modern definition has evolved to the one stated above, organisations still have a tendency to focus only on elements such as job satisfaction, stress and costs such as lost work days (Roslender *et al*. 2006). This study will attempt to provide a understanding of the other elements of employee wellness and how they affect employees in the organisation.

4.2.1 Tangible Benefits

4.2.1.1 Early view

Wellness has been a topic of interest for a number of years, and the understanding of wellness has improved over time. A modern organisation must address employee

wellness in terms of each of the wellness areas– psychological, social and physical –
in order to address employee wellness effectively.

Two of the most significant studies of recent decades are the studies performed by
Pelfrey and Hobson (1984) and Roslender *et al*. (2006) respectively. They examined
the more tangible benefits of employee wellness programmes and the overall
benefits of wellness to the organisation.

The paper written by Roslender *et al.* (2006) concerns the international perspectives
on wellness. The authors examined the costs implications of failing to manage
wellness within an organisation and how an employee's wellness can contribute to
intellectual capital.

During the 1960's already, employees were identified as being a valuable asset to an
organisation. Roslender *et* al. (2006) maintained that the employee's role in an
organisation was viewed differently than to what it is in recent times. A number of
approaches to quantifying an employee's value were put forward. These included
Human Asset Accounting and Human Resource Accounting, both of which focused
on specifying an employee's worth to the organisation. These approaches assist in
transferring what has always been deemed an intangible element to a tangible
element (Roslender *et al.* 2006).

The problem with these two approaches is that they still tried to take what was
viewed as subjective and attempted, without specific measurement to: "putting
people on the balance sheet" (Hekimian & Jones as cited in Roslender *et al*. 2006). It
requires a different approach to measure the true value that employees and their
wellness contribute to the organisation.

The abovementioned approaches show a gradual shift from the purely industrialist
view of the late 19th and early 20th centuries towards a view that recognises
employees as true assets to the organisation. This shift is ongoing and will
potentially reach a point where organisations recognise the true value of their
employees and the importance of effectively managing employee wellness.

4.2.1.2 Modern view

During the late 1990's views regarding employees and their value to the organisation began to change (Attridge *et al*. 2005). This change began with a new concept that started to spark the interest of academics, amongst others.

The concept was intellectual capital. It was argued that intellectual capital was an ever-increasing asset in terms of wealth creation (Roslender *et al*., 2006). Roslender *at* al. (2006) delved into the various components of intellectual capital and while the discussion is beyond the scope of this study, the most important components related to employee wellness will be discussed.

The most relevant of the research from Roslender *et al.* (2006) ideas is the advantage of ensuring that an employer has a combination of a healthy workforce and the needed intellectual capital (Roslender *et al*. 2006). An organisation's focus should be on assembling the best possible workforce and keeping them well so that they can perform optimally.

An organisation's senior management is responsible for keeping its workforce healthy (Attridge *et al*. 2005). It is their duty to ensure that the correct mechanisms are in place to address employees' psychological, physical and social wellness.

The result of neglecting any particular element of an employee's wellness may result in the employees not performing as well as they could and the occurrence of symptoms such as increased stress and fatigue, to name but a few. The wellbeing of its employees should therefore be one of an organisation's main focus areas.

Roslender *et* al. (2006) provided a guide to measuring intellectual capital. Regarding the impact of initiatives that promote and maintain employee wellness, there are a number of metrics in place that can be used to ascertain its success or failure. Such metrics include the number of sick days taken by employees and absenteeism measurement (Roslender *et al*. 2006).

Metrics that concern employee attendance, assistance programmes or wellness programmes, can provide a good overall indication of whether organisations are meeting the objective of maintaining a healthy and well-balanced workforce. The

researchers found that using the mentioned metrics in different ways can provide information for several different purposes, for example: by measuring the number of employees who took sick days and were absent over time, an organisation can determine whether overall wellness is improving as a result of the various tools utilised such as Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP's) (Roslender *et al*. 2006).

These measures, coupled with subjective measures that considered employees' perceptions of wellness initiatives, would provide a much greater understanding of wellness in the organisation. This would be a marriage of traditional measures and measures that obtain employees' true perceptions of organisational wellness (Roslender *et al*. 2006).

The researcher believes that the resulting approach can be an enormous asset to any organisation. It has the potential to transform the way in which wellness is viewed, transforming it from an intangible concept to a tangible asset that contributes to organisational success.

4.2.2 Strategic Human Resources

The transformation of Human Resources Management from an administrative employee management function into a strategic business partner has been happening internationally (Sieberhagen, Pienaar & Els 2011). This transformation is an on-going process, but organisations are beginning to realise that HRM is essential to enhancing and maintaining employee wellness, and therefore productivity.

4.2.3 Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP'S)

Of all the wellness initiatives and solutions, EAP's are the most commonly known. This concept was discussed in the literature review as a contributing factor to physical wellness but also influences other aspects of wellness.

Internationally, EAP's as well as many other programmes aimed at enhancing wellness form part of the current perspective on wellness. EAP's are discussed in more detail in the section 4.3: *The South African Perspective.*

EAP's offer organisations a means by which to assist employees regarding a number of issues. This assistance comes in many forms. The literature suggests that the preventative and proactive programmes yield the best results (Volpe 2004).

Taking the opinions of both employees and managers into account, is essential and this is happening more and more in organisations around the globe. This is an important point – having the relevant stakeholders' points of view enables one to determine whether a programme is doing what it should and whether it needs improvement (Volpe 2004).

Programmes that take these aspects into account boast higher attendance and greater effect. Employees and managers then know that these programmes are designed to provide assistance and are not merely for show (Volpe 2004).

4.2.4 Global perspective

Attridge *et al*. (2005), raised a very important point regarding wellness from a global perspective. What the authors explain is that in order to have a truly global perspective on wellness it is essential to analyse how organisations in other countries manage wellness.

Analysing foreign organisations then provides a business/company seeking success the ability to enhance wellness and productivity (as they regard their employees as their most important asset) and to investigate the aspects that affect their wellness. This change in perspective has the potential to enhance an organisation's ability to function and succeed in the modern world.

4.3 SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

Although international perspectives are important and provide ever-changing views and theories on wellness, it is essential that these are translated to suit the South

African working environment. The purpose of this section is to provide this translation, thus making it more applicable to the local working environment.

According to a study on wellness in South Africa, there was no clear definition of wellness amongst participants as each provided their own definitions (Sieberhagen *et al*. 2011).

The researcher believes that the lack of a coherent definition possibly represents a lack of common understanding of wellness in the South African working environment. This forms an integral part of the discussion of the South African perspectives on wellness.

The study conducted by Sieberhagen *et al* (2011) focused on wellness perspectives from the South African working environment. The study's participants included employers, service providers and trade unions.

The results of that study are beyond the scope of this study and only the most significant results will be discussed. These include the reasons for Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP's) being implemented.

One of the most important findings of recent studies such as that of Sieberhagen *et al* (2011) was that EAP's in South Africa have few substantial measurements with which to gauge whether they are successful or not. This inability to measure effectiveness is a problem for organisations. They cannot determine whether the programmes they are putting in place, aimed at assisting employees and therefore the company, are performing as desired.

Other studies found that most organisations implemented EAP's in an attempt to reduce absenteeism and sick leave (Volpe, 2004; Sieberhagen *et al.* 2011; Attridge *et al*. 2005). A focus on more tangible benefits is still the dominant perception amongst organisations.

The use of EAP's is a current trend in the South African working environment. The programmes are utilised to deal with a series of issues ranging from alcoholism to HIV/AIDS (Sieberhagen *et al.* 2011). EAP's are discussed below in an attempt to provide a better understanding on how they relate to wellness management in South Africa.

A definition of an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is provided by Attridge *et al* (2005:3): 'the work organization's resource that utilizes specific core technologies to enhance employee and workplace effectiveness through prevention, identification, and resolution of personal and productivity issues'. The researcher believes that this definition provides a good understanding of what an EAP is and a better understanding of why organisations implement them.

In a book called *Wellness at Work* EAP's (Employee Assistance Programmes) were discussed in the South African Environment (Volpe 2004). This source discussed the benefits of EAP's in the workplace and how EAP's could be used to assist with employee wellness and organisational success.

Of the most significant issues that were raised, the issue that EAP's constitute a people management technology which can be used to the benefit of individuals and companies at many levels is the most important (Volpe, 2004:293). In this reserachers opinion this idea reflects the changing views that not only international organisations are adopting but one that employees in South Africa are adopting as well.

Even though EAP's are not the focus of this study, their contribution to the wellness of employees should be mentioned. EAP's are aimed at assisting employees with problems such as HIV/AIDS and financial problems by assisting them in gaining the benefit of professional help.

Traditional benefits of an EAP are assistance with: stress, performance issues and addiction issues to name but a few. Other benefits that are not commonly associated with EAP's are: using technology to manage people, building human relationship skills and managing crises (Volpe 2004, Sieberhagen *et al*. 2011; Attridge *et al*. 2005).

Volpe (2004) discussed the 80/20 principle in relation to prevention. Volpe indicated that by reaching employees before they require EAP assistance, an organisation can enhance wellness and reduce costs. Following the 80/20 principle means focussing on the 20% that will give you a 80% output.

Using this 80/20 approach, employees can be taught particular skills and enhance their problem management knowledge; this enhances their sense of control and

ultimately their wellness (Hazler *et al.* 1999). Personal control and feeling that one can manage one's own world is one of the key elements of employee wellness (Dolbier, Soderstrom & Steinhardt 2001).

The 80/20 approach requires an organisation to put a substantial amount of capital up front without relying on only a reactive approach to manage employee wellness (Volpe, 2004; Attridge *et al*. 2005). This requirement makes this approach of reaching employees before they require an EAP difficult for many organisations to justify, as they would rather spend the money on something they can evaluate, such as products or infrastructure.

The researcher believes that often organisations fail to understand, their workforce is one of their greatest assets. Not taking the necessary action to take care of their workforce is to mismanage this resource (Attridge *et al*. 2005). The researcher believes that an organisation's mission must be to ensure it has a healthy, productive workforce in order to be able to meet its goals and objectives.

If organisations are willing to take responsibility for their employees' wellness even, before the need for an EAP intervention arises, they can significantly enhance wellness management. Every member of an organisation is important for success and through prevention organisations communicate this idea to their employees (Volpe, 2004).

4.3.1 HIV/AIDS

Another prominent influence on wellness in South Africa found in the literature is HIV/AIDS (Sieberhagen *et al*., 2011). This disease is at the heart of most studies and the focus of a significant amount of research.

This researcher believes that it will remain a major area of research and exploration as we move into a future where many individuals will die from the effects of AIDS. This researcher's opinion is that this scenario is already unfolding – Young and productive employees, as well as more experienced ones, are contracting and consequently dying from HIV/AIDS.

The effects this will have on the overall workforce, the economy, research, youth development and governance is at this stage still unclear. Apart from the obvious loss of productivity as suitable employees die or become incapacitated, the psychological or developmental effects will only truly be understood once the full consequences of the virus begin to take effect.

From a wellness perspective this means designing programmes and interventions that seek to assist HIV positive employees to remain productive. Such programmes and interventions should also assist HIV positive employees with the stresses they come across outside of work.

In the opinion of the researcher the result of these programmes should be:

- The provision of other employment for employees who cannot perform their normal jobs; and
- The education of the younger generation regarding prevention and how to live with the disease.

Education is something that is mentioned often but an alarming fact is that people still are continuing to be infected despite their knowledge of the disease and how to prevent contraction of the disease. This suggests that current programmes seemingly do not have the desired effect.

4.4 HOW ORGANISATIONS IMPLEMENT WELLNESS

The literature review has provided a greater understanding of how organisations in the modern world manage wellness. Some organisations view wellness as an area to avoid, while others view it as an integral part of their responsibility towards their employees.

This researchers opinion is that research seem to suggest that the most popular approaches organisations use to implement wellness are

- Employee assistance programmes (EAP's);
- Wellness initiatives such as on-site gyms; and
- Work-life balance interventions

The above approaches were often encountered often in the literature and create the understanding that organisations at present still view wellness predominantly in terms of its physical element. This view saw wellness management as contributing to organisational success in a measureable way (Roslender*et al*. 2006; Attridge *et al*. 2005).

The researcher believes that studies like these are slowly changing the way organisations view wellness. These views, however, are still developing and it will take time before they become the norm in terms of wellness management.

Most of the studies that the researcher came across focused on areas such as on-site gyms, the benefits of an EAP and various other various programmes (Attridge *et al*. 2005). They tend to focus predominantly on the physical aspects of wellness.

Social and psychological wellness seems to be neglected due to its subjective nature. This is a challenge that organisations need to address. Organisations often fail to realise that what cannot be seen and quantifiably measured often has the greatest impact on employee wellness.

Organisations still implement programmes to address the elements of wellness that they can easily measure. This leaves them vulnerable to a number of problems associated with the areas of wellness that are not easily measured. As discussed in the literature review, wellness is a combination of different elements. Addressing one element is not enough to impact an individual's holistic wellbeing.

Managing the wellness of employees is an intricate task for both local and international organisations. The researcher believes that once organisations stop viewing wellness as a so-called "soft issue", they will be better able to start improving the wellness of their employees and thus also the wellbeing of the organisation as such.

CHAPTER 5: OBSERVATION OF AND REFLECTION ON THE INTERVIEWS

Participants were given a concise questionnaire to complete, requesting that they provide their perceptions on the different parts of wellness. The areas of focus were psychological, social, and physical wellness.

The questionnaires were used to provide the researcher with a brief insight into what the participants believed to be the positive and negative factors present in their working environment that were affecting their wellness.

The questionnaires were emailed to the participants along with letters of consent to take part in the study. The questionnaire consisted of four questions which focused on the three areas of wellness. Most of the questionnaires were returned via email to the researcher while others were physically handed in. The consent letters were then stored on the researcher's laptop. The questionnaire data was typed into an excel workbook for ease of use and to ensure that all the data was in the same format and in the same place.

Once all the questionnaire data was captured, interviews were scheduled with each of the participants. This process was highly time-consuming, due to the busy nature of the participants' occupations. It was difficult to find time to interview each participant.

The interviews were conducted with ten participants. A qualitative, semi-structured interview approach was used. The candidates were presented with a series of open-ended questions that they could answer in any way they chose. The questions focused specifically on the information that the participants provided in their questionnaires. The main objective of the interviews was to ascertain the motivation behind the answers provided in the questionnaires.

A tape recorder as well as a BlackBerry® cellular phone was used to record the interviews. In the case of one participant, a telephone interview was conducted due to logistical constraints.

The interview times ranged from a maximum of 48 minutes to a minimum of 12 minutes, with the participants providing as much or as little detail as they deemed necessary. The researcher used probing questions to ascertain why certain answers were given to certain questions in the questionnaire. This was successful in most cases, but a number of the participants had very little to add to their original responses.

 The questioning process of each interview started with the researcher explaining the purpose of the interview, assuring the participant that it was not a formal process and explaining that they could respond in any way they chose.

Participants were able to provide answers for most of the questions asked but differed in the level of detail provided. Some difficulty was encountered with question number seven which dealt with the South African working environment and whether there were unique aspects of it that affected their wellness.

Regarding this particular question, several of the participants did not or could not provide an answer. The explanation for this could be that the participants in question had limited experience in the South African working environment, this being their first or second job. As one participant responded: '(they) did not have a sufficient frame of reference'.

Question number seven aside, participants had little difficulty providing answers. The answers allowed for a greater understanding regarding what is perceived to affect HR consultants' wellness in relation to psychological, physical and social wellness.

The participants were able to choose interview locations that suited them and that made them feel comfortable and able to express themselves freely. Most of the interviews were conducted at the organisation as it was deemed the easiest venue at which to meet. This arrangement offered ample room to conduct the interviews without disturbance.

The lighting, room temperature and noise level could be controlled in these venues. Venues at the participants' workplace allowed for interviews to be scheduled during working hours when the participants had some spare time.

The process of analysing the data is discussed in the next chapter, as well as the findings in relation to the study's main objectives. This culminates in the presentation of conclusions as to what affects the different elements of HR consultant wellness.

CHAPTER 6: NATURE OF THE DATA ANALYSIS

6.1 DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS

The process followed for the data analysis was that specified by Creswell (2009: 186), and was divided into these eight steps:

1.) Read all the transcripts carefully.
2.) Pick a single document and go through it, writing down thoughts.
3.) List all of the topics for the transcripts and cluster them into similar topics.
4.) Abbreviate the topics as codes and write them down next to the text to determine whether any new categories emerge.
5.) Use the most descriptive word for the topics and turn them into categories, looking for ways of reducing the total list of categories.
6.) Make a final decision on the abbreviation of the categories and alphabetise them.
7.) Assemble the data material for each category in one place and perform a preliminary analysis.
8.) If necessary recode the existing data.

This process was followed in the coding of information obtained from the participants in order to determine the main perceived factors of their working environment that influence each of the three parts of wellness. Coding the information assisted in its analysis.

The participants' answers to their interview questions were first read through in order to obtain a general feel for the information. A general overview of the responses to the questions was obtained and allowed the researcher to identify general topics. Each topic identified from the responses was then listed in a Microsoft Word document. Once all the topics had been listed, they were reviewed to determine how they could be clustered.

The clustering was performed and each category was given a name and a code that reflects the nature of the clustered topics. These codes were then checked with the corresponding recorded information in order to determine if there were any other categories that could be formulated.

6.2 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The interviews with participants consisted of eight open-ended questions that allowed the participants to answer the questions in any way they chose.

The questions asked during the interviews were:

1. How would you describe your wellness in the organisation at present?
2. What, in your opinion, are the positive factors contributing to your wellness? (psychological, social and physical)
3. What, in your opinion, are the negative factors impacting on your wellness? (psychological, social and physical)
4. What, in your opinion, are the most influential positive factors, in the order of effect that they have on your wellness?
5. What, in your opinion, are the most influential negative factors, in the order of effect that they have on your wellness?
6. Are there, in your opinion, unique factors to the organisation?
   a. If so what are they?
   b. What influence do they have on your wellness?
7. Are there, in your opinion, unique factors present in the South African working environment?
   a. If so what are they?
   b. What influence do they have on your wellness?
8. In your opinion, what improvements can be made in the environment that could improve your wellness?

6.3 ACTUAL DATA ANALYSIS

This section will discuss the actual analysis of the data obtained from the interviews with the participants. Each of the questions asked has been listed and the results of the data analysis and any relationship with the literature have been explained.

Question 1: How would you describe your wellness in the organisation at present?

The participants indicated during their interviews that at the time of the interview, wellness was between average and good. A number of participants indicated that their wellness was constantly moving between average to slightly above average.

This constant change was seen as primarily due to the nature of the job with the relevant working hours, as well as other factors such as support from management and relations with colleagues.

With all the participants' answers taken in to account, the overall wellness of consultants seems to be experienced as good. The different factors influencing wellness, both positive and negative, will be discussed in order to determine how the participants arrived at this conclusion.

Diagrams are provided, indicating the identified main and sub-categories related to the research questions.

Question 2: What, in your opinion, are the positive factors contributing to your wellness (psychological, social and physical)?

Diagram 1: Data analysis results - Positive factors contributing to wellness

Categories:

Psychological wellness:

Interaction (I01) ——Relationships with colleagues and friends

——Group interactions

State of Mind (S01) —— Stress management

—— Locus of control

—— Personality of individual

Learning and Growth (LG01) ——Personal improvement

——Organisation allowing for growth

Social wellness:

Office Structure (O01)—— Office layout

——Open plan environment

Interactions (I01) —— Friendships

—— Being part of a group

—— Feeling positively connected to others

State of Mind (S01) ——Managing stress

——Being happy at work

——Support

Organisational Culture and Values (O02)—— Unique culture

—— Value system

—— Recreational activities

—— Open door policy

—— Organisational flexibility

Relationships and Interactions (RI01) —— Being part of a group

—— Positively connected to others

Physical wellness:

Activities and Organisational Culture (AO01) —— Events and activities

Ergonomics and Working Environment (EW01)——Office layout

——Lighting

——Chairs

——Driving

State of Mind (S01) ——Work motivation

——Handling pressure

——Goals morals and self-esteem

This question covered each of the study's three parts of wellness. The results of the data analysis will be discussed in relation to each of these parts. The dominant categories, in alphabetical order, as well as the factors that fall under them, are then discussed. These categories were identified and formulated through an analysis of the responses provided by the participants. The researcher believes that they are an accurate description of the issues mentioned in the participants' responses.

Psychological Wellness:

The positive factors perceived to influence psychological wellness are discussed and categorised below. The relevant categories identified are:

• Interactions (I01)
• Learning and Growth (LG01)
• State of Mind (S01)

The results of the coding process yielded three dominant categories. Each of these categories of wellness will be discussed to provide a better understanding as to how they were formulated and why.

It became clear that some of the elements that were determined to affect psychological wellness earlier in the study were mentioned by participants. One of these elements is the **Interaction (I01)** aspect of psychological wellness that was formulated as a result of the data analysis.

The literature review indicated that this category – **Interaction (I01)** – is a very significant determinant of psychological wellness (Page & Vella-Brodrick, 2009; Hazler & Hermon, 1999; Schaefer *et al*. 2007). Interaction between colleagues and friends is not only a crucial influence on social wellness but also on psychological wellness.

After analysing the participants' responses, the researcher determined that State of Mind (S01) and Learning and Growth (LG01) were the categories that had the greatest influence on the psychological wellness of HR Consultants. The result is two factors perceived to contribute to the psychological wellness of HR Consultants, with the most influential being **State of Mind (S01)**

Stress was one of the significant factors that affected the category **State of Mind (S01).** Stress was an influence on psychological wellness in the working environment, as indicated by the participants' responses. It was described as both a positive and a negative influence. The distinction is in how an individual is able to cope with stress (Hazler & Hermon, 1999, *et al,* 2007, Adams *et al.* 2000).

The **Learning and Growth (LG01)** category was identified because participants mentioned factors affecting their wellness that relate to their ability to improve themselves and the organisation allowing for personal growth. These factors include but are not limited to improving skills and having the opportunity to learn and grow.

Regarding the results obtained for the positive section of what influences psychological wellness of HR Consultants, a similarity seems to exist between the participants' responses and the indication of the literature. **State of Mind (S01)** can be linked to the coherence, optimism and perception, all factors affect psychological wellness (Adams *et al.* 2000; Dolbier *et al.* 2001, Hazler & Hermon, 1999; Page & Vella-Brodrick, 2009).

This link between the literature and the participants' responses may exist due to the nature of the category and the topics it consists of, such as enjoying work, being happy, making choices, and dealing with stress. These topics correspond closely with sense of coherence and optimism, factors described in the literature as having a crucial influence on an individual's psychological wellness.

Sense of coherence is the level of control that an individual feels they have over their internal and external environment, optimism is a positive outlook on life and perception is the way in which we view the world. When comparing these three concepts with participants' responses, it is clear that the state of mind category has a close relation to the concepts discussed in the literature.

The last category deemed to positively influence psychological wellness is **Interactions (I01).** It refers to an individual's interactions with people during the course of their job. This category was indicated in the literature review as the most important aspect in determining psychological wellness (Schaefer *et al*. 2007, Hazler & Hermon, 1999, Page & Vella-Brodrick, 2009). After the participants' responses were reviewed, it seemed that this category does not hold the same influence on psychological wellness as indicated by previous research.

The reason for this is possibly the difficult and ever changing nature of the job. Therefore, more influential to psychological wellness is enjoying work and feeling in control of the working environment.

Social Wellness:

The positive factors perceived to influence social wellness are discussed and categorised below. The relevant categories are:

- Office Structure (O01)
- Relationships and interactions (RI01)
- State of Mind (S01)
- Organisational Culture and Values (O02)

Of the positive factors influencing the social wellness of HR consultants, the categories stated above were identified. These categories cover the response topics stated by the participants.

The first category identified in the data analysis was the **Office Structure (O01)**. This category was formulated because the participants mentioned their office layout as being a positive contributor to social wellness.

The layout of the office is open plan with no office environmental barriers between managers and consultants. It was important to make this a separate category. Although it is linked to the relationships and interactions category, **Office Structure (O01)** contributes to social wellness on other levels such as prohibiting gossip and allowing for the speedy resolution of problems.

The most significant contributor to the social wellness of HR Consultants was **Relationships and Interactions (RI01)**. This category corresponds directly to what was discussed in the literature regarding friendships and their contribution to social wellness (Hazler & Hermon, 1999, Schaefer *et al.* 2007; Hattie *et al.* 2004; MyersI *et al.* 2011).

It agrees particularly well with first and second aspects of friendship highlighted in the literature review. They were (Schaefer *et al.* 2007):

- Being part of a group and
- Feeling positively connected to others).

The possible reason that consultants perceived relationships with colleagues as being so important to their social wellness could be the need to achieve the two aspects of friendships and thereby ensure they had group support on which they can rely.

As one participant in the study pointed out, people have different types of friendship groups – HR consultants are no different. There are aspects of their work that make it easier to associate with other consultants who they feel they can provide them with the support they need to cope with the stresses of the job.

The third identified category of positive factors influencing social wellness is **State of Mind (S01)**. This category included various factors similar to the category by the same name under psychological wellness. Once again, this category highlighted managing stress, being happy at work, and received support.

Although there is not much in the literature regarding the contribution state of mind makes to social wellness, the participants perceived it to be important. This perceived importance is what the focus of this study is about, focussing on perception of aspects influencing wellness.

The last coded category, **Organisational Culture and Values (O02)** dealt specifically with the organisation. This category was created due to the particular references to the organisation's unique culture and the value system that underlies it.

Perceived positive influences on social wellness under this category were: the Friday-after-work drinks, the organisation's open-door policy and the organisation's flexibility. These influences are directly related to the **Relationships and Interactions (RI01)** category that was identified.

Friday-after-work drinks allow colleagues the time to chat and relax at end of the week. The organisation's open door policy promotes interaction between employees and their managers, which, in turn, helps to foster relationships.

Although there is a strong similarity between the Organisational Culture and Values category and the Relationship and Interaction category, it is possible for them to be separately categorised. This is so because the participants made specific reference to the organisation and the way it functions. It is important to include this as a separate category that displays its own influence on the social wellness of HR Consultants in the organisation.

The organisation's culture and values was perceived to enhance participants' social wellness. These perceived influences are the direct result of the organisation fostering the formation of relationships and allowing interactions to take place on all levels.

This kind of interaction was discussed in the literature review. It was determined that it enhanced social wellness by giving employees the opportunity to interact with fellow employees that are at a different level to them (Farrell & Geist-Martin, 2005). This cross level interaction allows management to gain a better understanding of their employees' wellness and allows employees a better chance to understand how their managers feel and what influences them.

Physical Wellness:

The positive factors perceived to influence social wellness are discussed and categorised below. The relevant categories are:

- Activities and Organisational Culture (AO01)

- Ergonomics and Work Environment (EW01)

- State of Mind (S01)

It is important to mention that the participants experienced difficulty in responding to the question relating to physical wellness. Of the three aspects of wellness, this aspect was the most difficult to formulate into different categories.

The factors perceived to positively influence physical wellness were categorised into the three areas listed above. Each of these categories was formulated for a particular reason and its relationship with perceived physical wellness will be discussed.

The first category formulated from the data analysis was **Activities and Organisational Culture (AO01)**. This category was formulated based on the participants' references to specific organisational events and activities that they believed contribute to their physical wellness.

Activities such as company relay races and walks were highlighted in this regard. The participants indicated that these activities and work-sponsored recreational days contributed to their physical wellness. They reasoned that such activities allowed them the opportunity for enjoyable exercise in a relaxed environment together with their colleagues.

Activities and organisational culture include but are not limited to: fun walks, company relays and charity events. It is important to note that in terms of overall influence, this category had the least significant influence on participants' perceived social wellness.

This category corresponds to the discussion of events and activities that contribute to physical wellness in the literature (Bezner*et al*., 1999; Pelfrey & Hobson, 1984; Miller, Gilman, & Martens; 2008). These events and activities included but are not limited to: on-site gyms and wellness programmes. The researcher believes these are in line with what was mentioned by the participants.

The second category pertaining to physical wellness, formulated from the data analysis was **Ergonomics and Working Environment (EW01).** This category included responses from participants that concerned the office layout, the physical

environment, such as lighting and chairs, as well as driving to and from clients in traffic.

The factor most indicated that was clustered in this category was the **office environment**. Participants cited the office environment as an important influence on physical wellness and referred particularly to the open plan office structure. Besides the social and psychological benefits of an open office plan other potential benefits include: free movement and allowing for ease of access to resources required to perform the job.

The chairs, the lighting and the layout of the desks and other furniture were highlighted as the main factors that relate to **Ergonomics and Work Environment (EW01)**. Participants highlighted these aspects as positive contributors to their physical wellness as they caused no physical discomfort and allowed for the adequate completion of their work related functions.

The formulated category directly corresponds to one of the aspects of wellness identified in the literature review on physical wellness, namely – ergonomics (Rowan & Wright, 1994; Smith, 2003; Knill, 1999). Ergonomics is concerned with the match between man, machine and the environment.

By ensuring that the employee is suited to the machine and the environment, an organisation ensures that its employees can perform their jobs with the necessary and applicable equipment. Laptops are examples of such equipment. When an employee uses his/her laptop in an environment that has, for example, appropriate lighting, comfortable furniture, and low noise levels, they are better able to positively contribute to organisational success and productivity.

The last category formulated from the data analysis was **State of Mind (S01)**. Like the categories formulated for the other aspects of wellness, this category was formulated in response to participants' answers regarding factors associated with their state of mind and general outlook on life.

The category incorporates factors such as work motivation and handling pressures of the job. The participants indicated that these factors relate directly to enjoying work and feeling energised and being motivated to wake up and come to work in the morning.

State of mind and the sections in the literature review are related regarding aspects such as goals, morals, and self-esteem (Miller *et al*. 2008).

This connection, however, is more one of difference than similarities. The literature focuses on goals that are formulated and accomplished, thereby enhancing self-esteem and optimism, whereas in the study, participants gave preference to factors like energy levels, motivation and dealing with stress as factors that impacted on their state of mind.

The participants made particular reference to their motivation for work as a source of energy and managing stress. They saw these factors as significant influences on their physical wellness. While setting and accomplishing goals may contribute to their physical wellness, participants did not emphasise this as most important.

This finding therefore did not support that of the literature review (Miller *et al*. 2008). It is therefore important to recognise the factors that participants themselves identify as significant influences on their wellness.

Question 3: What, in your opinion, are the negative factors influencing on your wellness (psychological, social and physical)?

Diagram 2: Data analysis results - Negative factors influencing wellness

Categories:

Psychological wellness:

Nature of Work (N01) ——— Work pressure

——— Lack of praise

——— Working hours

Stress (S01) ——— Stress management

Unique (U01) ——— Choice

Social wellness:

Interaction (I01) —— Office environment

—— Working hours

Nature of the Job (N01) —— Working hours

—— Stress

—— Travel

—— Client related issues

Unique (U01) —— Nothing

Physical wellness:

Ergonomic (E01) ——— Body posture

——— Lack of movement

Nature of Job (N01) —— Sleep deprivation

—— Stress

—— Long working hours

—— Lack of activity

—— Travel

This section focused on the factors present in the working environment that participants believed negatively affected their wellness. The results of the data analysis for this section will be discussed and comparisons with information from the literature review will be made.

Psychological Wellness:

The negative factors perceived to influence psychological wellness are discussed and categorised below. The relevant categories are:

• Nature of Work (N01).

- Stress (S01).
- Unique (U01).

The categories above were formulated through an analysis of the participants' responses. Each of the categories and their relation to psychological wellness will be discussed.

The first category to be formulated from the data analysis for question three is also the most important according to the participants. This category was named **Nature of Work (N01)** and consists of job-related factors.

 Work pressures, lack of praise and working hours were some of the factors listed by participants that fall under the umbrella term, nature of work. They refer to HR consultants' concerns about the day-to-day aspects of their job.

Nature of work directly corresponds with concepts discussed in the literature review – locus of control and optimism (Page & Vella-Brodrick, 2009; Hazler & Hermon, 1999; Dolbier, *et al*., 2001; Adams *et al.*, 2000). If an employee struggles to deal with job-related pressures such as workload and criticism, then their optimism and sense of control will most likely be negatively affected.

In other words, employees who are not coping with the demands of their job experience negative psychological wellness because they are not able to satisfactorily control themselves or their work environment. This loss of control has a negative influence on employee psychological wellness and relates to the concepts of locus of control, sense of coherence and optimism discussed in the literature (Page & Vella-Brodrick, 2009 *et al.*)

Employees become less optimistic about completing their daily tasks if they are overwhelmed by the responsibilities and stresses of their job. This then has a negative effect on their wellness. Optimism is a key aspect of psychological wellness (Adams, Bezner, Drabbs, Zambarano, & Steinhardt, 2000).

Stress was a reoccurring topic of conversation amongst the participants and so it was assigned its own category – **Stress (S01)**. It was assigned a category here, as

well as in question two, because the participants seemed to experience both positive and negative stress.

The participants indicated through their responses that they were experiencing negative stress. Stress is a perceived factor affecting psychological wellness. This stress, and the perception of it, is linked to the previous category, Nature of Work (N01). It is also linked to research findings regarding control and optimism and their relation to work stress (Adams *et al*., 2000).

If employees experience high stress levels, they feel less in control of themselves and their environment, and less optimistic about their occupations. This is likely to lead to negatively impact psychological wellness.

Unique (U01) is a category that includes factors such as choice. Choice relates specifically to how individuals view situations and circumstance, as well as the adjustment from student to full time employee.

Choice relates to sense of control and optimism. The choices employees make have the potential to enhance or reduce their sense of control. Choices that reduce sense of control impact negatively on psychological wellness (Hazler & Hermon 1999).

Choice has the potential to lower optimism. Employees may choose to not look on the bright side, not view the world in a positive light and not to engage positively with their work. If this happens there it can potentially have a negative effect on psychological wellness.

All the formulated categories in this section suggest that they correspond with the concepts sense of control and optimism that were discussed in the literature. (Adams *et al*., 2000).

What was significant when conducting the data analysis is that associations between concepts such as *psychological wellness* and *relationships with colleagues and friends* were not as prominent as the literature had suggested they would be (Hazler & Hermon, 1999; Schaefer *et al.* 2007; Adams *et al.* 2000).

The researcher believes this is due to the unique job pressures that affect HR consultants and the different type of working environments they find themselves in.

The findings suggest that nature of the job has a significant negative impact on the psychological wellness of HR Consultants.

Social Wellness:

The categorised negative factors perceived to influence social wellness are discussed below. The relevant categories are:

- Interaction (I01)
- Nature of the Job (N01)
- Unique (U01)

Interactions (I01) includes the factors relating to interactions with colleagues in the working environment. These interactions form the core of this particular category and according to the participants, they have a significant influence on their social wellness.

It appears that the interactions the participants referred to particularly involved those with colleagues. This would suggest that interactions with fellow colleagues are one of the most significant influences on the participants' social wellness. Participants indicated that factors like the office environment and working hours affected the nature of their workplace interactions. The category **Interactions (I01),** corresponds with the concept of *friendship and support* discussed in the literature review (Farrell & Geist-Martin, 2005; Hattie, *et al*., 2004; Myers*et al*. 2011). The researcher believes that the link exists due to the commonality between the interactions associated with *friendship and support* and the interactions discussed in the participants' responses.

The responses relevant to relationships and interactions indicated that participants experienced limited interactions with colleagues. This was perceived to be one of the reasons behind less satisfactory relationships that had a negative influence on their social wellness.

The researcher believes that this category also corresponds to the support that individuals receive as specified in the literature. Limited interactions or negative relationships will lead individuals to experience a lower quality of support (Farrell & Geist-Martin, 2005*.).* The researcher believes that the support that individuals receive, in terms of interatcions and relationships, is a factor that can significantly affect social wellness.

Nature of the Job (N01) is a category that includes factors such as working hours, stress, travel and client-related issues. This category was formulated according to participants' responses that covered the nature of the job as an HR consultant.

As highlighted by the participants, this category has significant influence on their social wellness. The primary reason for this is the way in which work as an HR consultant interferes with outside-work activities and personal time.

Participants found that their day-to-day work activities were limiting their ability to relax and deal with stress. This is a significant finding as participants see the nature of the job they perform as having a direct negative impact on their social wellness.

Although some factors in this category correspond with what has been indicated in the literature, the category as a whole does not correspond directly with any one element of social wellness as it is discussed in the literature. Thus, the category is relatively unique. It represents an element that impacts on social wellness not previously highlighted in the literature.

Unique (U01) is a category formulated in response to the responses of two participants who claimed that nothing was influencing their social wellness at the time.

The researcher believes that both these participants gave their responses based on differing points of view on the subject of social wellness. One participant stated that nothing affected her social wellness due to her perception that work was not a place to make friends or form close relationships. The other participant simply stated that her social wellness was good and not negatively affected.

Physical Wellness:

The negative factors perceived to influence physical wellness are discussed and categorised below. The relevant categories are:

- Ergonomics (E01)
- Nature of the Job (N01)

Ergonomics (E01) can be described as a match between people, machines and the environment. The category was formulated to include factors that relate to how participants are able to function in their working environment, utilising the equipment they have available to them.

From the analysis of the participants' responses, it was found that the main concerns mentioned relate to body posture and lack of movement. Participants stated that they do not have the opportunity to move around and that they have to perform nearly all work sitting and working on a computer. Participants attributed these factors to a significant negative influence on their physical wellness.

In terms of physical wellness, the literature study indicated that being active and having the opportunity to exercise could reduce negative physical symptoms and assist in enhancing perceived physical wellness (Knill *et al.* 1999). The participants stated they do not have the opportunity for such activities, as most of their work requires them to sit down and use a laptop. Using a laptop can lead to other problems such as eyestrain from staring at the screen.

The participants' responses clearly suggest that their physical wellness is negatively impacted by the indicated ergonomic factors of physical wellness.

Nature of the Job (N01) was formulated, as before, to include factors relating to HR consultancy as an occupation. Some of the factors within this category are: sleep deprivation, stress, long working hours, lack of activity, and travel.

Long working hours, stress and sleep deprivation were highlighted as having a significant influence on physical wellness. Participants stated that the nature of their work and the time it takes them to complete resulted in the factors above.

Due to the work that consultants do and the unpredictable nature of the occupation, there are many job factors that may influence physical wellness. Participants

perceived factors present in their working environment to have a negative influence on their physical wellness.

As stated previously, the literature study did not indicate that nature of the job had a significant influence on wellness. This category is significant to the study because it represents an element that, according to the participants, has an influence on physical wellness not yet previously mentioned in the literature. It therefore assists to enhance our understanding of what affects HR Consultant wellness.

Question 4: What, in your opinion, are the most influential positive factors, in the order of effect that they have on your wellness?

Diagram 3: Data analysis results - Most influential positive factors influencing wellness

Categories:

Interactions (I01) ———— Interactions between participants

———— Interactions between colleagues and clients

———— Relationships formed within these groups

Nature of the Job (N01) — Enjoying work

— Nature of the work being done

— Challenges and problem solving

State of mind (S01) ———— Stress

———— Enjoying work

———— Choice

Organisation Culture (O01) ——— Managerial support

—— Organisational culture

The next section in this study of HR Consultant wellness discusses the perceived positive factors affecting consultant wellness. This section is concerned with overall wellness.

Through data analysis the positive factors affecting overall wellness have been identified and placed in to the following categories:

- Interactions (I01)
- Nature of the Job (N01)
- Organisational Culture (O01)
- State of Mind (S01)

These categories were formulated using the factors provided by the participants. The descriptions given accurately depict the factors used to formulate the categories above. The categories are discussed in alphabetical order.

Interactions (I01) relates to interactions between the participants, their colleagues and their clients, as well as the relationships formed within these groups. The data analysis suggests that the factors in this category were perceived to have a significant positive influence on psychological and social wellness.

This category corresponds with what was discussed in the literature review regarding relationships and associated elements like feeling part of a group, being positively connected to others, receiving support and experiencing friendship (Schaefer *et al*., 2007).

Nature of the Job (N01) was indicated in question three's discussion of the three parts of wellness as a negative influence. In this question, however, participants highlighted positive factors such as enjoying work, nature of the work being done, and challenges and problems dealt with. The category is therefore both a positive and a negative one.

Participants indicated that they were enjoying what they were doing on a day-to-day basis. The factors enjoying work and actual nature of the job reinforce this conclusion.

This category was not identified in the literature review and seems to be somewhat unique to HR consultant work in the organisation. According to the participants it has a significant influence on their psychological, social and physical wellness.

In relation to the other categories, **Nature of the Job (N01)** is significant in terms of its perceived positive influence on the participants' wellness. The number of factors mentioned by participants clustered together to form the category was extensive.

There seems to be a significant correspondence between the categories, **Nature of the Job (N01)** and **State of Mind (S01)**. The difference between the categories lay in the way in which the participants phrased their responses and in the explanations given for them.

In the data analysis the category, **State of Mind (S01)**, was formulated to include factors such as stress, enjoying work and choice. The category **Nature of the Job (N01)** seems to be very similar as it shares various overlapping responses.

The two categories were separated because factors existed that could only fall under **Nature of the Job (N01).** Along with choice and enjoying work, other factors were mentioned such as working hours, travel for the job and dealing with clients. These topics relate to the actual day-to-day activities performed by the participants and not simply their state of mind.

The formulation of the category **Nature of the Job (N01)** was deemed necessary to accommodate the same elements of state of mind but with the added topics that relate specifically to day-to-day work.

Again, this category was not indicated by the literature review as positively affecting wellness. It is therefore a significant category in terms of the study.

Organisation culture (O01) was formulated to include the following factors mentioned by participants: managerial support and organisation culture.

Although not a major category in terms of the participants' responses, it is believed to be significant in terms of its influence on wellness. Management support and the general culture of the organisation do influence employees functioning.

Having a positive organisational culture and effective communication were highlighted in the literature as significant to wellness (Farrell & Geist-Martin 2005; Bezner*et al*. 1999; Pelfrey & Hobson, 1984; Miller, *et al*. 2008).

As previously mentioned, the category, **State of Mind (S01)** is significantly similar to the category **Nature of the Job (N01).** The most significant difference between the two is that **State of Mind (S01)** includes factors that focus on attitude and the way in which the environment is viewed, while **Nature of the Job (N01)** focuses on factors of the job itself that are perceived to influence wellness. Such factors include working hours, wanting to enhance oneself and maintaining a positive attitude. The findings suggest that state of mind is important in terms of perceived wellness and the influences on wellness. It relates to attitudes and perceptions as well as the choices individuals make and how they choose to act. This determines the way in which individuals view the world and this, in turn, determines how individuals experience the world.

Outside activities, like yoga and exercising at gym, were factors included in **State of mind (S01).** As determined from the literature review, activity can have a significant influence on perceived wellness (Bezner *et al*. 1999; Pelfrey & Hobson, 1984; Miller *et al*. 2008; Huta *et al*. 2008).

Question 5: What, in your opinion, are the most influential negative factors, in the order of the effect that they have on your wellness?

Diagram 4: Data analysis results - Most influential negative factors impacting wellness

Categories:

Relationship (R01) ⎯⎯ Relationships with colleagues

⎯⎯ Relationship with managers

Nature of the Job (N01) ⎯ Stress

⎯ Pressure

State of Mind (S01) ——— Sense of control

——— Choice

Unique (U01) ——— Organisational culture

——— Posture

The next section in this study of HR Consultant wellness discusses the perceived negative factors affecting consultant wellness. This section is concerned with overall wellness.

Through data analysis the negative factors affecting overall wellness have been and placed in to the following categories:

- Relationships (R01)
- Nature of the Job (N01)
- State of mind (S01)
- Unique (U01)

Each of these categories has been indicated as having an influence on wellness as perceived by the participants. Each has been formulated as a result of the aspects contained and will be discussed to provide a better understanding of how they negatively influence wellness.

Nature of the Job (N01) is a significant category and has been identified as a result of job specific factors being mentioned by participants. Factors such as stress and pressure form the core of this category.

As has been mentioned previously, the nature of the job was not indicated in the literature review as a specific factor affecting wellness. The findings suggest that due to the ever-changing nature of the job and its unique demands, participants have indicated this category to be a significant influence on wellness.

Relationships (R01) includes factors such as relationships with managers and relationships with colleagues. One participant made the observation that employees

did not want to leave the organisation for better opportunities because of the close relationships with colleagues holding them back.

The findings suggest that the relationships between colleagues combined with the relationships between HR consultants and managers while contributing positively to employees' wellness may influence wellness negatively when viewed from the perspective of leaving the organisation to further your career.

A significant amount of information is available in the literature regarding relationships and their influence on wellness (Page & Vella-Brodrick, 2009 *et al.*). Although formulated through the data analysis, **Relationships (R01)** is not a main category in terms of its negative influence and therefore differs in significance to its corresponding elements and factors in the literature review that suggest relationships to be one of the primary positive determinants of wellness.

Factors included in **State of mind (S01)** are: control and choice. Choice here relates to the choices people make regarding how they view situations and the work that is to be done.

This category focuses on being forced to make choices that affect wellness and not always having control over the environment. Both of the factors of control and choice have been identified in the literature as having an influence on wellness in relation to self-control and goal setting (Page & Vella-Brodrick, 2009; Hazler & Hermon, 1999; Dolbier *et al.*, 2001, Adams *et* al., 2000)

In the literature review, environmental mastery was identified as a significant factor relating to wellness (Page & Vella-Brodrick, 2009). The findings suggest that due to the ever-changing nature of the environment of HR Consultants, this factor has a negative impact on wellness.

Unique (U01) is concerned with the organisational culture and the posture that consultants have in their working environment. These factors were not included in any of the other categories as they represent perceptions that could not be classified in any of those categories. They constitute unique responses to this specific question.

Posture relates to the working environment and was indicated in the literature as a significant influence on physical wellness (Smith, 2003; Rowan & Wright, 1994; Knill, 1999). This relevance to the working environment is the reason why the researcher felt **Unique (U01)** needed specific mentioning.

The other factor included in the category is organisational culture. This aspect has been identified in the literature review as having a significant influence on wellness (Farrell & Geist-Martin, 2005).

Question 6: Are there, in your opinion, unique factors to the organisation?

a) If so, what are they?
b) What influence do they have on your wellness?

Diagram 5: Data analysis results - Unique factors to the organisation influencing wellness

Categories:

Organisation and Organisational Culture (OC01) ———— Open door policy

———— Informal setting

———— Organisations structure

This section discusses the unique factors present in the working environment that the participants perceived to influence their wellness, as well as the ways in which these factors were perceived to influence their wellness. The results from the data analysis led to only a single category being identified from the participants' responses to the question above. This category is:

• Organisation and Organisational Culture (OC01)

The most important factors indicated in this category are: an open door policy, an informal setting, and the organisation's structure.

The fact there this is the only category reflects the overall perception that the organisation's culture and general structure can possibly be described as unique.

In terms of the focus of this study this finding is significant. All the participants seemed to have the same perception. This helps provide a better insight into the way participants perceive the organisation and its effect on their wellness.

The overall indication was that this category has a positive influence on participant wellness.

There was one participant who, although citing this category as a positive one, also highlighted some negative factors that also, form part of the category. These factors include: the lack of role definition, change, lack of infrastructure and the focus on the individual rather than the team.

The literature review identified the aspect of organisational culture as having a significant influence on employee wellness (Farrell & Geist-Martin, 2005). By having an open door policy, two-way communication and the opportunity to interact with colleagues in higher levels of the organisation, employee wellness can be improved (Farrell & Geist-Martin, 2005). If, however, the above factors are not managed effectively they can have a negative influence on employee wellness.

Question 7: Are there, in your opinion, unique factors in the South African working environment?

a) **If so, what are they?**
b) **What influence do they have on your wellness?**

Diagram 6: Data analysis results - Unique factors to South Africa working environment influencing wellness

Categories:

Culture and Diversity (CD01) ——Cultural differences

——Diversity of people

Unsure (U01) ——— Did not have a response

Political and Organisational Structure (PO01) — Politics of South Africa

— BEE

— Structures of organisations and their management

This section addresses what participants perceived as unique factors affecting their wellness, present in the South African working environment. The responses were given to the two-part question stated above.

The categories identified from the data analysis for this section are as follows:

- Culture and Diversity (CD01)
- Political and Organisational Structure (PO01)
- Unsure (U01)

As was mentioned during the reflection on interviews, a number of participants were unsure of the answer to this question.

Unsure (U01) was formulated as a result of participants' responses and was included to highlight the fact that four participants were not able to answer the question. The researcher believes that the participants answered in this way because they had limited working experience and therefore were unable to construct a suitable frame of reference.

Cultural and Diversity (CD01) was another category identified as a result of the data analysis and deals specifically with South Africa's many cultures and the diversity experienced by participants. The result was a category that covers a range of factors combined to form this category.

The two factors that form the core of the category include the cultural differences within South Africa and the diversity of the people the participants had encountered.

One participant highlighted the South African work ethic and general way of doing business as culturally unique. This participant stated that work hours were roughly

nine hours each day from five to 8 o'clock, whereas in other countries they were longer.

Another participant highlighted cultural differences as both a positive and negative influence. The negative influence being that some people have difficulties in understanding different cultures and this may cause frustration and conflict. The positive influence being the fact that people are exposed to differences and thus have the opportunity to learn from them and about them, they therefore enhance their cultural intelligence.

Participants indicated that diversity of people and working environments was a positive influence. The negative influence came as a result of difference in race. One participant indicated that racial tension still exists between cultural groups.

Although both positive and negative factors are a part of this category, the participant's general perception of the category as a whole seemed to be positive. This supports the perception that Culture and Diversity has a positive influence on wellness.

In terms of the factors affecting wellness of HR Consultants in the South African working environment, this category was not discusses in the literature review. It is a perceived factor affecting wellness which little is known about, and it therefore enhances our current understanding of what is perceived to affect the wellness of HR Consultants.

Political and Organisational Structure (PO01) is a category identified as a result of the factors covered relating to South Africa's political environment and the way in which organisations are managed.

The nature of responses given by the participants suggests that the category is a significant one. The most important factors mentioned by the participants were politics and Black Economic Empowerment (BEE). They also spoke of the general structure of organisations and how they are managed. These will be discussed and explained to provide a better understanding of this particular category.

Participants indicated the current South African political situation, highlighting Black Economic Empowerment, the general political environment and being victimised due to race as having a negative influence on wellness.

The majority of the participants were female. One female participant indicated that her boyfriend not obtaining employment due to his race classification was an area of concern for her. This is significant as it negatively impacts on her wellness, but in a more indirect manner.

During a review of the literature, the influence of BEE and other political issues such as Employment Equity (EE) on the wellness of employees in the South African working environment was not discussed. The identification of this category during the data analysis therefore assists in enhancing our understanding on what is perceived to affect the wellness of HR Consultants.

The second aspect relating to South African organisations dealt specifically with how they are managed. One participant highlighted the lack of accredited companies for managing internships as a negative influence on her wellness.

Other negative factors that fall under this category include: tension in the work environment, laws on how organisations should be managed and having to prove worth to international companies.
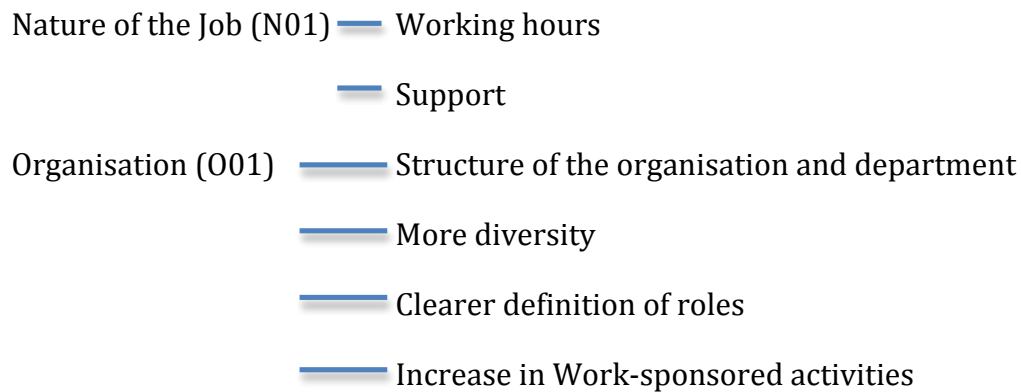
The positive factors in this category include: the desire to keep up with international standards, the unique treatment of clients and the nature of psychological support present in South Africa.

The participants indicated that the category has an overall negative influence on wellness despite having positive aspects. The literature review did not indicate that the category **Political and Organisational Structure (PO01)** has an influence on wellness. This category therefore assists in enhancing our understanding of what is perceived to influence the wellness of HR Consultants.

Question 8: In your opinion, what improvements can be made in the environment that could improve your wellness?

Diagram 7: Data analysis results - Improvements that could be made in the environment that could improve wellness

Categories:

Nature of the Job (N01) ━━ Working hours

━━ Support

Organisation (O01) ━━━ Structure of the organisation and department

━━━ More diversity

━━━ Clearer definition of roles

━━━ Increase in Work-sponsored activities

This last question dealt with what participants would change in their working environment in order to improve their wellness. The following categories were formulated from the data analysis:

- Nature of the Job (N01)
- Organisation (O01)

As previously indicated, **Nature of the Job (N01)** deals specifically with what the participants believed affects their day-to-day wellness as a result of the work they do.

The two main factors that comprise this category are: working hours and support. Each of these factors contributes to our understanding of what affects the participants' wellness.

Workings hours concerns the length of time worked and the monitoring of work done. This was a particular area that the participants said they would like to change, as the hours needed to complete work cuts into leisure and relaxing time and thus reduces their ability to reduce stress.

The second factor, support, concerns managerial support for consultants, as well as the focus of managers on the consultants in terms of their personal lives and how

they are feeling. Participants emphasised the way in which managers' treat consultants and the managers' ability to alter their managerial style as being significantly influential to their wellness.

These factors correspond closely to what was indicated by the literature review, namely that support has a significant influence on social and psychological wellness. If an individual has a good support structure, his/her wellness can be greatly enhanced (Myers *et al*. 2011).

Participants indicated that managers focussing on them as a person, on how they were doing in general and on their wellbeing in other areas of their life, such as their studies, had a significant influence on their wellness.

Major factors mentioned by the participants and placed in the category **Organisation (O01)** were the structure of the organisation as well as the department they worked in.

Other factors that participants mentioned are: adding more diversity to the organisation, a clearer definition of roles and more work-sponsored activities, such as fun days and walks. All of these factors contribute to the organisational category and provide a better understanding of what changes it is believed should be made to enhance wellness.

The main factor in this category related to both physical structure and roles. The office environment was cited as a potential area for improvement. Although there are advantages to having an open office, such as the ease of communication amongst staff and the good office atmosphere it fosters, there are also disadvantages.

These disadvantages included: the lack of privacy, the high noise levels and the exposure to the general mood of employees and the effect thereof on other employees. It is due to these disadvantages that several of the participants mentioned the office structure as something they would like to change.

The influence office structure and layout has on wellness corresponds to ergonomics and how it influences the wellness of employees, as discussed in the literature. This is an important factor and if it is not managed effectively it has the potential to

negatively influence employee wellness (Smith, 2003; Rowan & Wright, 1994; Knill, 1999).

The other factors of structure relates to one participant's response regarding a clearer definition of roles as something that could improve wellness. This factor related specifically to a desire to see the definition of manager, consultant and team leader roles throughout the organisation done in a more understandable and clear way thereby helping with decision making and functioning of individuals in those positions.

A clearer role definition of specific jobs at the organisation was not a factor discussed in the literature review as one that influenced wellness. Knowledge of this factor will provide a better understanding as to what may influence the wellness of HR Consultants within an organisation.

CHAPTER 7: SUMMARY, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 CONCLUDING SUMMARY

The data analysis specified the factors affecting wellness. In the previous chapter's discussion, relationships between different categories and the indications of the literature review were discussed.

The purpose of this chapter is to summarise the most important points of the previous chapters as well as to make recommendations for the future..

The researcher believes that each of the study's objectives have been realised. These objectives are listed below as a reminder:

1. to determine the factors that influence employee wellness by interviewing consultants;
2. to identify the dominant themes by careful analysis of the respondents responses;
3. to determine the perceived positive factors present in the employee working environment;
4. to determine the perceived negative factors present in the employee working environment; and
5. to ascertain the effect that these factors have on consultant wellness.

The first objective relates specifically to collecting information through the use of interviews in order to determine what affects consultant wellness. It is believed this has been addressed through the ten semi-structured qualitative interviews that were

conducted. Through these interviews, necessary information was obtained regarding what participants perceived as affecting their wellness.

Dominant themes were indicated using the data coding process and the captured data from participants' responses. By clustering responses into groups and describing the clusters as overall categories, the dominant themes of the study were identified and a better understanding obtained of what participants perceived to affect their wellness.

Objectives three and four were dealt with during the interviews and ultimately within the data analysis and discussion of results. Allowing participants to express their perceptions and views and then translating these into overall categories made it possible to understand what participants perceive to positively and negatively affect their wellness.

Objective five which was concerned with the affect that the overall categories (themes) had on the participants' wellness was also dealt with in the data analysis. Through the analysis of responses and by differentiating between the positive and negative aspects of wellness, a better understanding of what influences HR Consultant wellness, as well as the nature of these influences, has been gained

The most significant categories identified in data analysis were **state of mind**, **nature of the job**, **organisation** and **relationships and interactions.** These categories were formulated across different sections for a number of different reasons, but were all determined to have an influence on HR Consultants wellness.

Each of these categories was discussed during the results section and any associations to the literature were discussed. Associations such as the links between self-control, optimism, friendship, goals and perception from within the literature and formulated categories such as state of mind, nature of the job, relationships and interactions in the organisation were discussed.

The identified associations included the conclusion that many of the factors found in the literature were present in the participants' responses. The study seems to confirm much of what has been indicated by research on the importance of relationships in wellness, as well as the influence of personal control and having a sense of optimism.

From the responses provided, *a sense of control* and *optimism* were indicated by the participants to be the most significant influences on wellness. These two factors formed the core elements of the **state of mind** and **nature of the job** categories. The data analysis shows that participants believed that the most significant influence on their wellness originates from how they deal with what they do on a day-to-day basis. The influence of relationships on wellness as described in the literature was not found to be the same across the three parts of wellness - psychological, social and physical. In the part of the literature review regarding psychological wellness, relationships were indicated to have the primary influence on an individual's wellness (Pelfrey & Hobson, 1984).

This was not reflected in the participants' responses. The data analysis indicated that relationships did not have a significant influence on participants' wellness.

 As mentioned before the researcher believes that this finding results from the ever-changing nature of HR consultancy and the unique demands and stresses that it places on the consultants. This conclusion is supported by the nature of the responses of participants in the other sections of the study.

The study has contributed to the overall understanding of what HR Consultants perceive to affect their wellness. This information can assist in enhancing the wellness of consultants in an organisation and for other consultants in similar working environments.

7.2 LIMITATIONS

The study has contributed to the overall understanding of what affects the wellness of HR Consultants. There are a number of recommendations that could lead to studies in the future and contribute to a better understanding of wellness in an organisation.

The first recommendation to be made is increasing the sample size to include consultants from other departments. This would provide a greater understanding of the potential factors affecting the wellness of consultants at the organisation and provide a better understanding of factors unique to different jobs.

The second recommendation would be to change the data collection procedure. The questionnaire's used provided useful data about the participant's points of view, however, this data could also have been determined in the interviews that were conducted.

A third recommendation would be to interview and collect data from HR Consultants at other branches. This could have contributed to a broader understanding of what factors may affect HR Consultants' wellness at different locations.

It is believed the recommendations made above could contribute to a better understanding of the wellness of both HR Consultants and other consultants in the organisation, as well as assist in enhancing this study. This understanding could then be used to improve the wellness of consultants in all sections of an organisation.

7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The main objective of the study was to determine what affected HR Consultants' wellness. Through the collection and analysis of data this objective was achieved.

This section will provide recommendations on how to enhance HR Consultant wellness at the organisation based on the findings of the study. As was indicated in the discussion of the findings, **Nature of the Job**, **State of Mind, Organisations and Interactions** and **Relationships** were the main categories identified.

By implementing the following recommendations, the researcher believes that employee wellness could be enhanced:

- Closer monitoring of work done;
- Increased focus on consultants overall wellbeing;
- Organising activities and social gatherings; and
- Improving communication between managers and consultants;

Long hours of work were identified as negatively impacting on HR Consultant wellness during the interviews and data analysis. This factor, which falls under the category, **Nature of the Job,** reduces time for after-work activities and relaxation.

By altering the perception that it is that the norm to work after hours, more time can be made available for non-work related activities and for relaxation. This can be done through closer monitoring of work done as well as through communication at meetings and during one-on-one time with managers.

Another factor identified as negatively affecting wellness was the lack of focus on consultants personally, such as their general emotional state and their outside work activities. In order to ensure that consultants maintain overall wellbeing each of the parts of wellness need to be addressed. Some individuals will need more attention than others in this regard

It is therefore a recommendation that during one-on-one meetings, as well as at other kinds of meetings, managers ascertain how their consultants are coping emotionally inside and outside of work in order to better understand how to enhance their wellness. The above recommendation is directly linked to the next recommendation, namely an improved open two-way communication path between consultants and managers. This is recommended in order to allow for any departmental or other significant changes to be communicated openly and directly, preventing speculation and rumour mongering.

One of the most significant positive influences on HR Consultant wellness found in the study was the identification of **Organisational Culture**.. Within this category, after work drinks and social gatherings were identified as significant positive influences. It is therefore recommended that more social activities be organised for the department to specifically allow for consultants to socialise and relax and so obtain the support, empathy and advice of their colleagues.

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