Wellbeing in the Private Sector Report
About the National Programme for Happiness and Wellbeing

The National Programme for Happiness and Wellbeing was launched by the UAE’s Minister of State for Happiness and Wellbeing with the aim of inspiring people, the government, and broader community to cultivate wellbeing as a way of life, and to enrich the greater happiness of the nation. It seeks to fulfil the UAE Government’s commitment to enhancing happiness and wellbeing throughout the country. To date, the Programme has seen the launch of numerous initiatives across the emirates’ public and private sector entities, including the National Survey for Happiness and Wellbeing, the Happiness and Wellbeing Policy Bundle, Happiness and Positivity Talks, the Global Dialogue for Happiness and Wellbeing, and many more.

To find out more about the UAE’s mission to inspire happiness and wellbeing, visit www.hw.gov.ae.

About the Business for Wellbeing Council

Launched by the UAE’s National Programme for Happiness and Wellbeing, the Business for Wellbeing Council is a public-private partnership that aims to enhance workplace wellbeing in the private sector. The Council comprises Ten leading national and multinational enterprises, operating across several sectors within the UAE, including Majid Al Futtaim Group, Landmark Group, Emirates NBD, Etihad Airways, Aldar Properties, Emirates Airlines, Unilever, Cisco, Du Telecom and LinkedIn. Together, the Council member companies employ more than 250,000 employees and generate annual revenues in excess of AED200 billion.

About PSB

PSB is a full-service custom research and analytics consultancy that connects data-driven insights with human experience to solve clients’ most critical challenges. With a heritage in political polling, PSB brings the agility of campaign strategy to research and consulting across a range of industries, including technology, healthcare, financial services and entertainment. PSB is part of the BCW Group of companies, which is a part of WPP (NYSE, LON: WPP), the world leader in communications services.

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PSB Research conducted a quantitative online study with 1,017 employees working full-time in the UAE's private sector. The interviews were conducted 20th November – 3rd December, 2019. Respondents had the option of completing the survey in English or Arabic.
TOP FINDINGS

1. **JOB SATISFACTION**
   - Majority are satisfied with their jobs, pointing to non-financial factors.

2. **BURNOUT**
   - Burnout is a key issue for the private sector to address.

3. **MENTAL HEALTH**
   - Anxiety and depression are salient mental health issues in the private sector.
4 EMPLOYEE TURNOVER

POTENTIAL TURNOVER IS HIGH, BUT MOST SAY THEY WOULD STAY IN THE UAE

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FEMALE MANAGERS TEND TO PROVIDE MORE SUPPORT TO EMPLOYEES
Foreword

NATIONAL HAPPINESS BEGINS IN THE WORKPLACE

Her Excellency Ohood Al Roumi
Minister of State – Happiness and Wellbeing

His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE, Ruler of Dubai, set out a vision of a happy and positive nation when he stated that “Our target is to make happiness a lifestyle in the UAE community.” Happiness is a complex concept, impacted by numerous factors, and achieving this goal is what we are striving for as a government and as individuals.

The COVID-19 outbreak has suddenly changed the way we live, work, and interact with the outside world. Nevertheless, this novel coronavirus has not changed what makes us, as human beings, happy. The fundamentals of happiness are still in place, and likely more important today than ever before.

Considering the fact that many of us spend nearly a third of our lives working, workplace wellbeing is at the core of these fundamentals. And given that the private sector employs the majority of the UAE’s workforce, our country’s businesses – from large multinationals to local start-ups – are essential to realising HH Sheikh Mohammed’s vision. Incorporating wellbeing into the heart of the workplace is vital if we are to overcome the challenges brought on by COVID-19 and, ultimately, to realise our nation’s vision for happiness.

In the long-term, promoting workplace wellbeing has benefits for private sector organisations beyond simply keeping employees happy. Numerous studies have shown that companies are more likely to thrive when leaders invest in promoting happiness and wellbeing at work.

Happy employees are more productive, more engaged, and have higher morale. They are also more loyal to the company, keeping turnover rates lower. A stable and happy workforce is more likely to feel they have a stake in seeing their company succeed, leading to stronger business results.

This is why the UAE’s private sector leaders and the government came together to form the Business for Wellbeing Council in December 2019. The Council, which I have the honour of chairing, serves as a bridge between the private and public sectors to share best practices, identifying areas where we have room for improvement, and working collaboratively to enhance workplace wellbeing for employees across the UAE. This report is a step in that direction.

People want to work for a company that acts as a cohesive community, in which they and their colleagues are valued and supported. They seek an employer who cares about them and prioritises their wellbeing as much as employees value the success of the company they work for. There are companies in the UAE that already embrace these values and understand that the employer-employee relationship needs to go beyond transactional factors.

This was true before our lives were disrupted by COVID-19 and will remain so in the post-coronavirus world.
STATE OF WELLBEING IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Alyaa Al Mulla
Director of Wellbeing
National Program for Happiness and Wellbeing

To drive positive change, we must first understand where the wellbeing of the UAE’s private sector employees is at the moment, and what areas require our focus. This is why the Business for Wellbeing Council has launched the first annual Wellbeing in the Private Sector Report, surveying more than 1,000 full-time employees working for private companies across the UAE.

The report focuses on assessing how the country’s private sector is performing across the four fundamental pillars that lead to happiness and wellbeing in the workplace: finding purpose in one’s work, promoting the health of employees, building meaningful relationships, and adopting a growth mindset.

It is important to note that this research took place before our world was hit by a global pandemic, unlike anything we have ever seen in our lifetime. At the time of writing, many governments around the world are still grappling to contain the outbreak of COVID-19, urging physical distancing and implementing lockdowns, in a race to beat an invisible enemy.

Overnight, we found ourselves living in a new reality, navigating this unchartered space day by day as individuals and nations. This global health crisis, already dubbed ‘the Great Lockdown’, has brought into sharp focus vulnerabilities and the precariousness of our workplaces and societies.

Caring and investing in people’s wellbeing has never been more important. As these challenging times have shown, we can be infinitely more flexible and innovative in the way we work, and more compassionate and kinder in the way we live and relate to each other.

The Wellbeing in the Private Sector Report reveals a series of positive findings, showing that a majority of employees are satisfied with their current jobs, primarily citing non-financial factors such as a positive work environment and work that challenges them as individuals. The report also suggests that connections to the UAE as a home are strong, as most say they would prefer to stay in the country even if they change jobs. Furthermore, the report shows that many private sector employees feel they are able to fulfil their individual potential, build relationships with colleagues, and find purpose in their work.

At the same time, the report identifies employee health as a key area for the Council and the wider UAE business community to focus on. Approximately half of private sector employees report sleep deprivation, say they feel exhausted by the end of the day, and express a desire to get away to rest and recover.

Burnout leads to employees who are less engaged, less productive, and, as our report shows, more likely to look for a new job. Simply put, work exhaustion has a negative impact on employees and businesses alike, making it an area that employers should pay attention to and work collaboratively to improve.

Health, of course, is not limited to physical wellbeing. The connection between mind and body is strong, with one able to influence and determine the health of the other. While in the UAE a majority of private sector employees report good mental health, it is not an area to be ignored. Good mental health is integral to our overall wellbeing and how we perform our work and interact with others.
It is important that we are able to talk about mental health openly, practice self-care, and get the needed support when challenges arise.

The Wellbeing in the Private Sector Report also points out some potential solutions. Employees whose direct managers are women report higher levels of managerial support and recognition than those employees who have male managers. Yet only a quarter of employees say their direct manager is a woman. Addressing the gender balance has been a focus of the UAE for years now, with strong results; our country currently ranks first in the Arab World and 26th globally according to a report by the United Nations Development Programme.

This report establishes a benchmark for the Business for Wellbeing Council and the wider business community. However, on its own, it is just a set of thousands of data points – it is up to us to take the learnings and work collaboratively to spark dialogue and drive action, as wellbeing in our workplaces and societies is now even more urgent than ever.

The COVID-19 health crisis has amplified the need to humanize workplaces. We need to promote more compassion within organisations, and put the wellbeing vision to practice.

Everyone stands to benefit when workplace wellbeing is at optimal levels, leading to happier employees, thriving businesses, stronger communities, and a more prosperous nation.

This global pandemic has forced the whole world into deep introspection. It has opened our eyes and hearts as we appreciate work and workers who were formerly largely invisible or taken for granted. It is, perhaps, a valuable opportunity to reflect even more closely on our life’s purpose and values, and align our actions to serve the greater good.

Compassion, solidarity and cooperation can help us emerge from this crisis stronger and in better shape as a human collective.

**PRIVATE SECTOR WELLBEING INDEX**

**Wellbeing at work Indices**

- Work-life balance
- Satisfaction with life
- Satisfaction with work
- Work exhaustion
- Work engagement
- Work performance
- Positive emotions at work
- Satisfaction Index
- Engagement Index
- Wellbeing Index

![Wellbeing Index](image)

Satisfaction Index

Engagement Index

Wellbeing Index

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Wellbeing in the Private Sector Report 7
MAJORITY ARE SATISFIED WITH THEIR JOBS, POINTING TO NON-FINANCIAL FACTORS
The Wellbeing in the Private Sector Report reveals a majority of those working in the UAE private sector are satisfied with their jobs, pointing to factors that go beyond salary and reflecting a broader view of wellbeing in the workplace.

More specifically, job satisfaction among the UAE’s private sector employees is relatively high, with nearly three in five (58 per cent) saying they are satisfied with their jobs. Another 22 per cent say they feel neutral, while 20 per cent express dissatisfaction with their current job.

Some industries seem to lead on encouraging employee satisfaction. The strongest level of job satisfaction is reported by employees in the UAE’s telecommunications/IT sector, with nearly three in four (71 per cent) saying they are satisfied with their job. The telecommunications/IT sector is closely followed by retail (66 per cent satisfied), engineering (64 per cent), and education (63 per cent) where approximately two in three report job satisfaction.

The lowest levels of job satisfaction are among employees working in the construction and healthcare/pharmaceutical industries (both 49 per cent satisfied). In fact, more than a quarter (28 per cent) of employees in construction say they are dissatisfied.

The data further reveals differences across key demographic groups. For example, women (61 per cent) are more likely to express satisfaction with their job than their men counterparts (56 per cent).

Differences arise when employees are asked about the key things they like in their job. Those satisfied primarily point to non-financial factors. They cite the colleagues they work with, freedom and autonomy in the workplace, a challenging environment, and the opportunity to learn new things as key advantages of their job. Meanwhile, employees who are dissatisfied largely point to their salary as the thing they like the most about their job.

This suggests that salary alone is not enough to drive job satisfaction, emphasizing the need for businesses to build well-rounded workplaces that offer a supportive environment, engaging work, and opportunities for professional and personal development.
THOSE SATISFIED POINT TO NON-FINANCIAL FACTORS

What is the one thing you like the most about your job?

Among those satisfied with their jobs

THOSE DISSATISFIED SAY THEIR SALARY IS WHAT THEY LIKE MOST ABOUT THEIR JOBS

What is the one thing you like the most about your job?

Among those dissatisfied with their jobs
How satisfied are you with your job?

Satisfaction is highest among those working in telecommunications and IT.

- Telecommunications/IT: 71%
- Retail: 66%
- Engineering: 64%
- Education: 63%
- Hospitality: 59%
- Manufacturing: 57%
- Banking/Finance: 54%
- Healthcare/Pharmaceutical: 49%
- Construction: 49%
- Other: 56%
A good paycheque is important when it comes to attracting good talent, but it only goes so far in inspiring employees to be engaged. Whether it’s being seen as a valued employee, performing meaningful work, receiving relevant recognition, contributing to a greater mission or the opportunity to improve personal wellbeing – these are the things which most influence how engaged employees feel at work, making them essential areas for employers to focus on.

Engagement is the key to creating a work environment that energises employees by promoting their physical, emotional, financial, and social wellbeing.

Interestingly, my friend Tom Rath points out in his book Are You Fully Charged? that companies need to build on current analysis and find out if employees' lives are improving because they’re part of the organisation. This is important because not only employees in terms of the bottom line, they also benefit from sustainably improving employee wellbeing and satisfaction.

According to the Wellbeing in the Private Sector Report, three in five employees are satisfied with their jobs. Those who are satisfied point to non-financial factors like freedom, flexibility, learning, people, work environment, a good boss, and more. Many prioritise a good work environment, and non-financial benefits such as social events, opportunities for personal/ professional growth, and good colleagues.

Satisfied employees cite having supportive managers that advocate for them, provide feedback and recognise good work. They are also more likely to feel that they are treated with respect. Additionally, satisfied employees feel that they have the ability to gain new skills on the job, and that they regularly have new experiences and challenges... all factors that are non-financial in nature, and directly related to engagement.

Furthermore, the Wellbeing in the Private Sector Report shows that having autonomy and responsibility in identifying the projects they work on is key to employee engagement. Overall, satisfied employees are also more likely to feel that their work adds value to the world as a whole, and that their time in their job has been personally valuable to them.

This is consistent with the data we have at Etihad Aviation Group, and what we have identified as being important to sustain employee engagement. What needs to happen at the corporate level to elevate the culture of engagement is:

- Leadership: involvement in change efforts, open dialogue with leaders and having leaders who are role models
- Direction: having clear direction, providing meaning and supportive leadership
- Motivation: meaningful recognition, acknowledgement of what is working well and frequency in positive feedback/praise
• Work Environment: involvement in action planning, innovation and storytelling to increase communication.

Approximately two years ago, we decided to use our employees’ feedback to draft our own set of questions – designed by Etihad for Etihad, targeting issues that were truly pertinent to our workforce. By making the questions simple and straightforward, we were able to collect better data on the practical ways we could improve workplace culture at the team, department, and division levels.

Motivation, Leadership, Direction and Work Environment were the main categories of questions that we asked, and which we continue to measure.

For example, in Leadership, we understood the significance of the role managers play at work, so we concentrated on understanding the ecosystem of engagement and how our leaders inspire and energise their teams. We then launched initiatives to increase the capability of our leaders, helping them to understand how to better encourage their teams – and then we measured the success of these new initiatives.

This was more than just another corporate exercise; it was a cultural shift towards making engagement a way of life at Etihad. It was about increasing Pride (identifying with and recommending the company), Energy (excitement and enthusiasm), and Positivity (optimism and confidence in the future).

To make this cultural shift a reality, we had to get everyone involved in understanding the survey results and prioritising the areas to improve. We created an action plan that stimulated local conversations, leading to high impact team discussions and focused actions that improved engagement, with clear accountability and frequent tracking.

We also completely changed the way we recognise people, launching a peer-to-peer app, Shukran, that makes recognition more accessible and transparent for everyone.

Additionally, we made visible policy changes which had an immediate impact on the work environment.

Our recent engagement survey shows a significant rise in participation rates – a clear sign that our employees are actively getting more involved in our organisation’s transformation.

It hasn't been an easy journey, but it was the right one. If employees are engaged, the benefits are significant for them, as well as the company’s bottom line. Organisations have to focus their efforts on strengthening the foundations of the workplace and better understanding the basic drivers of what motivates their people, before getting caught up on financials. While money is important in a region where we have so many economic migrants, it’s important to remember that it isn’t a top of mind need for the most engaged employees.

“Engagement is the key to creating a work environment that energises employees by promoting their physical, emotional, financial and social wellbeing”
BURNOUT IS A KEY ISSUE FOR THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO ADDRESS
While the Wellbeing in the Private Sector Report reveals that the UAE private sector scores relatively highly on employees’ job performance, work satisfaction, work engagement and life satisfaction, it also highlights work exhaustion as a challenge for the sector.

The results show employee work-life balance is fairly robust, but it is an important area to keep an eye on moving forward, as it underperforms in comparison to other factors. Work exhaustion, on the other hand, is the lowest-scoring factor of workplace wellbeing, and is a key area for the private sector to address in the near future.

The relatively low score on work exhaustion is driven by the fact that approximately half of private sector employees say they feel exhausted by the end of working day (57 per cent), report not getting enough sleep (56 per cent), express a desire to escape to rest and recover (55 per cent), or are already feeling tired before they even get to work (47 per cent).

Workplace exhaustion is not limited to a particular sector and spans across both traditionally white- and blue-collar industries. For example, workplace exhaustion is just as prevalent among employees in the banking and engineering industries as those working in construction.

Over time, workplace exhaustion leads to lower productivity and engagement, ultimately leading to higher levels of turnover. The data confirms this trend as those employees who express higher levels of exhaustion are significantly more likely to say they plan on looking for a new job, when compared to those who report lower levels of work exhaustion.

### WELLBEING AT WORK FACTORS:
**BURNOUT IS THE MOST IMMEDIATE AREA TO ADDRESS**

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- Satisfaction with Work
- Satisfaction with Life
- Work Life Balance
- Exhaustion
- Job Performance
- Work Engagement
- Emotional Positivity at Work
EXHAUSTION AT WORK IS GREATEST IN THE HEALTHCARE AND PHARMACEUTICAL SECTOR

Work Exhaustion Index

Work Exhaustion (Higher numbers indicate less exhaustion)

- Hospitality: 3.55
- Manufacturing: 3.46
- Retail: 3.43
- Banking/Finance: 3.33
- Engineering: 3.31
- Construction: 3.23
- Education: 3.2
- Telecommunications/IT: 3.18
- Healthcare/Pharmaceutical: 3.02

EXHAUSTION IS WIDESPREAD AMONG PRIVATE SECTOR EMPLOYEES

Please evaluate how often you experience these feelings using a 7-point scale, where 1 means Never, and 7 means Always

- "I feel that I am not getting enough sleep": 56%
- "When I wake up in the morning and have to go to work, I feel tired": 47%
- "I would like to escape from everything and take some time to rest and recover": 55%
- "By the end of the working day, I feel completely exhausted": 57%
BURNOUT IS LIKELY DRIVING HIGHER EMPLOYEE TURNOVER

How likely are you to proactively look and change jobs over the next year?

(Showing % very likely)
GET THE BALANCE RIGHT, AND YOU’LL DO RIGHT BY YOUR EMPLOYEES

Mohammad A. Baker  
Deputy Chairman and Chief Executive Officer,  
Gulf Marketing Group

No matter how great your product or service is, there is one critical component to drive a company’s success: your employees. Their engagement and wellbeing determines how a business performs, and impacts employees’ lives beyond the office. It becomes imperative, therefore, that employers create an ecosystem of support that encourages personal time and wellbeing.

Workplace wellbeing is a result of how satisfied and engaged employees are at work. There are numerous factors to take into consideration, but they can be broadly categorised under the four pillars identified by the National Programme for Happiness and Wellbeing: Potential, Purpose, Relationships, and Health. These aren't just workplace essentials, but the basis to leading a fulfilled life. We all want to know that we have prospects and optimism for the future. We all want to have purpose in what we do, both at work and in life. Everyone seeks meaningful, reciprocal relationships with people who offer trust and support, and it goes without saying that physical and mental health is important.

Given the amount of time we spend at work, it is essential that places of employment actively ensure these basic human needs are met. By understanding that workplace wellbeing requires more than financial security, businesses can drive positivity, boost satisfaction, and increase engagement. These are three vital elements to promote better health amongst team members, as a lack of morale, high dissatisfaction, boredom, and other negative sentiments can lead to workplace burnout.

Burnout leaves people feeling cynical, irritable, and disillusioned with their jobs. It can cause absenteeism because those experiencing it sometimes simply can’t face going into the office. An employee experiencing burnout will find it hard to concentrate on their work, lowering productivity, and even potentially increasing the risk of accidents, especially in environments where focus is essential for safety purposes.

More than the detrimental impact on work, though, is the fact that burnout can have a negative effect on a person’s health. There are many global studies that detail the physical and psychological consequences of workplace burnout. Burnout has reached such significant levels around the world that the World Health Organisation (WHO) recognised it as an ‘occupational phenomenon’ in 2019. While it is not a medical condition, it is described as ‘factors influencing health status or contact with health services’, which result from chronic workplace stress.

Results from the Wellbeing in the Private Sector Report suggest that a number of employees
in the UAE are showing signs of burnout, expressing sentiments such as feeling exhausted by the end of the working day, not getting enough sleep, waking up feeling tired, or wanting to escape from everything to take some time to rest and recover. There is no blanket approach to improving corporate wellbeing, engagement or satisfaction. Employers should identify the key stressors in their organisation, and then work to rectify them. Simple things such as trust, showing appreciation, monitoring workload, assessing and streamlining internal processes, developing leadership and management skills, and creating a more attractive workspace can help. Managers should work one-on-one with members of their team who show signs of burnout, to create individual plans of action that can improve their situation.

It’s important to remember, too, that your employees have a life beyond the office. They want to be able to spend time with their family and friends, or doing things that they are passionate about.

Encouraging a healthy work-life balance is something that we focus on at GMG. A large segment of our business revolves around sport, and given that many of our colleagues are keen sports enthusiasts, as a company we do our best to promote an active lifestyle among our employees. This encourages stronger team spirit, increases engagement and satisfaction, and has a positive effect on personal health, too.

During the annual Dubai Fitness Challenge, for example, we launch our own complementary programmes that are open for everyone in the company to join. We provide the support needed for our employees to participate in marathons and other big sporting events that take place in the UAE, such as the Under Armour Dubai Fitness Challenge, by paying entrance fees, subsidising the cost of sports gear, and allowing time to train.

Our employees can also take advantage of special rates for joining our gym, Engine, as well as having the option to participate in exercise classes – and we’ve even incorporated a gym and running track into the design of our new offices. Keen runners are offered priority entry into the invitation-only Nike Run Club.

At the end of the day, you need to create balance – balance between work and life, balance between employer and employee. Every member of your team is giving their time to help your company thrive. The more you can enrich their work experience and their life, the more satisfied they will be. And that’s more than just good people sense, it’s good business sense.
WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH IS A SALIENT ISSUE IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR
The majority of private sector employees in the UAE feel positive at work. However, a minority report a less positive and more mixed sentiments, due to feeling anxious or depressed. While the overall feeling is positive, it is clear that this is an area that requires vigilance – especially within those sectors that report more negative responses, such as banking and telecommunications.

The results emphasise that a majority feel positive at work, with most reporting feeling active (77 per cent), confident (76 per cent), interested (72 per cent), or happy (64 per cent) in the week before the research. Yet, workplace mental health issues are still pervasive, affecting employees and organisations alike, making them important to consider when aiming for continued growth in the private sector.

However, over a third of employees report often feeling anxious (34 per cent) in the week before the research, which is only slightly less than those who report feeling relaxed (39 per cent), but significantly less than those who report feeling at ease (50 per cent). Additionally, a fifth say they have felt depressed (21 per cent) in the week before the research.

Workplace anxiety is highest among those working in banking (42 per cent) and engineering (41 per cent), as well as among those who earn higher salaries (41 per cent).

Not surprisingly, those who say they often feel anxious or depressed at work report lower levels of job satisfaction. While 58 per cent of all private sector employees say they are satisfied with their job, this number drops to 44 per cent among those often feeling anxious, and 39 per cent among those often feeling depressed at work.

Mental health issues can also lead to higher turnover rates, as 50 per cent of all employees who often feel depressed, and 45 per cent of employees who feel anxious, say they are likely to proactively look for a new job over the next year. Among those who do not often feel anxious or depressed, only 31 per cent say they are considering changing jobs.
WORKPLACE ANXIETY IS HIGHEST IN BANKING, ENGINEERING, AND AMONG THOSE EARNING MORE

Below you will find words expressing different emotions. For each word, please indicate to what extent you have felt this way at work during the past 7 days

(Showing % all the time/ very often/ often)
How likely are you to proactively look and change jobs over the next year?

(Showing % very likely)

- Among those who often feel anxious: 45%
- Among those who often feel depressed: 50%
- Among those who do not often feel anxious or depressed: 31%
The Middle East has reached an important juncture when it comes to addressing mental health. It’s encouraging to see greater understanding among public and private sectors on how to tackle mental health in a positive and constructive manner.

As demonstrated by the Wellbeing in the Private Sector Report, mental health is a salient issue amongst employees in the UAE, and therefore needs to be addressed. Increasing understanding while tackling these challenges will prove beneficial for not only for employees and their workplaces, but the community as a whole.

The issue of mental health is being brought to the fore across the region, and rightly so. According to the 2019 Arab Youth Survey, 29 per cent of young people in the GCC know someone who is suffering from mental health issues, such as anxiety or depression. The Survey also states that almost three in 10 young Arabs in the GCC believe that it is difficult to get quality medical care for mental illness.

As with many areas, the UAE Government is driving change by actively seeking to address mental health in the community. The UAE National Agenda, for example, considers mental health as a key performance indicator of its world-class healthcare pillar. Discussion and awareness is certainly growing in the country as result, as are the services available to help patients with their mental wellbeing.

These are fantastic steps towards abating the negativity associated with mental illness, and there is good reason to continue this momentum, especially throughout the private sector.

At Roche we understand that stress and anxiety can impact any employee, at any time, across all levels of our organisation. We therefore aim to ensure risk factors are mitigated, such as encouraging employees to look after their financial and legal health, as well as their physical wellbeing. When finances and legal worries start to impact a person’s health, offering support can be a small but powerful way to prevent problems from escalating and from compromising their wellbeing.

Beyond the clear benefits that good mental health has for people in the workplace and the community as a whole, the World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that depression and anxiety cost the global economy US$1 trillion a year in lost productivity.

According to the Wellbeing in the Private Sector Report, 84% of employees who are likely to change jobs over the next year feel depressed, and 72 per cent often feel anxious. Just over a third of people in the UAE feel anxious in their jobs, and men in particular are more likely to feel the strain than women. Interestingly, it would seem that a larger salary brings with it more stress, as 41 per cent of people who earn at least AED20,000 per month feel anxious, which is higher than those who earn a smaller wage.
Change represents critical moments in employees' lives. At Roche, we aim to make these moments easier to manage for our employees. For example, we are extending maternity leave up to six months to give mothers more time to nurture their newborns. Another major challenge we've identified in people of working age is when they have additional responsibilities as carers – either for children, a partner or elderly relatives. We've taken steps to help our staff look after their families by providing income-based financial support packages (including, for example, covering nursery fees) and reserving areas in our office to be exclusively for employees' children.

One thing is clear: employers must start to consider their employees' mental health as seriously as they do their physical wellbeing. As per the WHO, ‘workplaces that promote mental health and support people with mental disorders are more likely to reduce absenteeism, increase productivity and benefit from associated economic gains’. In short, businesses only stand to gain if they take care of their employees’ mental wellbeing.

Work-life balance and a manageable workload is a key component of this, but so is anti-bullying, policies that quell harassment, and stress management. All of these can lead to employee burnout, and therefore should be addressed with equal importance.

One way that we look after mental health at Roche is by supporting employees to open up about the issues they're facing. We offer training to help employees develop behaviours and skills to help them cope with stress. These trainings cover topics like communication skills and management skills, empowering employees to handle stressful circumstances. In addition, we have put in place wide-ranging support and health insurance programmes, and have signed up to a ‘live well, work well’ mantra which encourages empathy, inclusivity and positivity. We organize a global wellbeing week on an annual basis, dedicated to educating and promoting awareness of healthy lifestyles, nutrition and emotional wellbeing.

Being heard, respected and accepted for who you are and all that makes you unique are a few key areas which impact mental health. Embracing diversity and inclusion also goes a long way towards improving employees’ mental health. An open-minded and accepting workplace community is one that includes everyone. This reduces the potential of harassment and bullying, towards which every workplace should have a zero-tolerance policy. It also decreases stress, as an inclusive workplace is one in which everyone has the opportunity to thrive and is supported to do so.

At the end of the day, the old adage of ‘treat people how you want to be treated’ is applicable to the employer-employee relationship. I believe that we can go one step further: create a workplace that supports its people, and you'll have a happy, healthy, and loyal workforce.

"Businesses only stand to gain if they take care of their employees' mental wellbeing"
POTENTIAL EMPLOYEE TURNOVER IS HIGH, BUT MOST WOULD STAY IN THE UAE
The number of UAE private sector employees considering changing position in the next year is relatively high, with approximately one in three (36 per cent) saying they are likely to proactively look and change jobs over the next year.

Likelihood to look for new professional opportunities is correlated to one’s length of tenure with the current employer – employees who have been at the company between three and five years are nearly twice as likely to look for a new job than those who have been at the same job for more than 10 years (42 per cent vs. 23 per cent). Potential turnover level is highest among those who earn the least – nearly half (45 per cent) of those earning less than AED5,000 per month say they are likely to search for a new job over the next year. In comparison, among those earning AED20,000 or more per month, the number of potential job switchers drops to 29 per cent.

A THIRD OF EMPLOYEES ARE LIKELY TO LOOK FOR A NEW JOB OVER THE NEXT YEAR

How likely are you to proactively look and change jobs over the next year?

(Showing % very likely)
POTENTIAL TURNOVER IS HIGHEST IN CONSTRUCTION AND LOWEST IN EDUCATION

How likely are you to proactively look and change jobs over the next year?

(Showing % very likely)

TENURE AND SALARY ARE LINKED TO POTENTIAL TURNOVER

How likely are you to proactively look and change jobs over the next year?

(Showing % very likely)
WORKPLACE ENGAGEMENT IMPACTS
TURNOVER RATES

How likely are you to proactively look and change jobs over the next year?

(Showing % very likely)

- Those who often feel interested: 35%
- Those who often feel indifferent: 46%

MOST WANT TO STAY IN THE UAE EVEN IF THEY WERE TO CHANGE JOBS

Do you think your new job would most likely be in...

Among those who would actively look for a job in the next year

- UAE: 13%
- Another country: 18%
- Don’t know: 69%
Today's workplace is more transient than ever before. According to the Wellbeing in the Private Sector Report, approximately one out of every three private sector employees in the UAE would consider changing jobs in the next year to find a better work environment. This is understandable when you take into consideration the job-hopping habits of millennials and the strong expatriate representation in the UAE’s private sector – and it makes it clear that companies need to work harder than ever to retain their employees.

Employers need to fundamentally rethink how they attract and retain top talent. As the results of the report show, a good salary on its own simply does not cut it anymore. Employees are seeking greater fulfilment in their workplace. In order for businesses to succeed in this environment, employers realise that the relationship with employees must evolve into a real partnership that is built on a mutual belief in the same vision, values and a commitment to making an impact on people’s lives.

The foundation of building a long-lasting relationship with employees is hiring like-minded individuals, who share the same values and ethics that your company adheres to. This is something that we implement successfully at Snap; during our hiring process we look beyond what is written on someone’s CV to seek traits that will make someone a good fit in our company. While qualifications and experience are important in order for employees to be able to carry out the work they’re hired for, personality does play a big role in how successful someone will be within the company. A group of like-minded individuals will create a stronger, more cohesive team, which will contribute towards a healthy workplace environment that everyone is excited to be part of.

Values that we believe work best, and which we look for at Snap, include kindness, creativity, and being smart. Snap encourages our employees to have the courage to say what needs to be said and the empathy to recognise other points of view. We value trustworthiness, strategic thinking, eagerness to tackle new challenges, and most importantly an insatiable desire to learn.

Workplace engagement is, of course, one of the most important elements in encouraging employee loyalty. There are numerous global best practices that companies can draw inspiration from, but they all lead to the same conclusion: that an engaged workforce is one that is more productive and satisfied, one that is more innovative, which ultimately leads to a positive impact on the company’s bottom line.
Engagement is therefore not only good for people, but good for business, too – especially when, like Snap, you are part of a competitive and creative industry.

Diversity and inclusion practices are not only good for empower societies, and have a positive impact on workplace retention. Studies demonstrate that diverse workplaces have higher levels of satisfaction and productivity, all of which contribute towards creating a more welcoming environment that people want to stay in. A more diverse workforce has company benefits too, as people from different walks of life, of different ages, genders, and backgrounds, will each have a unique perspective to add to the business and its products.

Empowered employees feel as if they are truly valued members of the team. One way to empower them is by ensuring their voices are heard, and that they can have a tangible impact in the workplace when their opinions spark positive change. What we have found to be a successful method of encouraging and improving communication is an open platform that we call Snap Council. Everyone is invited to join Council meetings. The hour-long sessions prompt discussion, encourage creativity, and build connections between colleagues, which helps to improve collaboration and build relationships across teams.

It is also important to provide employees with support, information, and advice that will help them through their career with your company, as well as in their personal life. The latter is an added bonus that can contribute significantly to engagement levels. Providing meaningful support can range from helping to prepare for life’s expected (and unexpected) events, promoting physical wellbeing, or even providing generous maternity and paternity leave. Such actions have minimal effect on a business but can have a substantial impact on a person’s life, and will let your employees know that you value not only the time they give you at work, but their personal time, too.

Retaining talent requires a delicate balance of strategies. Take the time to understand what your employees expect, and conduct surveys to determine engagement and satisfaction levels. This data can then be used as a basis to develop a professional culture that inspires employees in a healthy, productive work environment that offers a genuine sense of belonging, support and commitment. When you create and foster a workplace community in which everyone has the opportunity to thrive, you see stronger returns on every level – from impassioned people through to a boosted bottom line.

“The relationship with employees must evolve into a real partnership that is built on a mutual belief in the same vision, values, and a commitment to making an impact on people’s lives”
FEMALE MANAGERS TEND TO PROVIDE MORE SUPPORT TO EMPLOYEES
There is a significant gender gap within the managerial level of the UAE’s private sector. Only one in four (24 per cent) of employees say they report to a woman, with 76 per cent saying their immediate manager is male.

Education is the only major industry within the private sector where a majority of employees (58 per cent) report to a woman. Engineering (87 per cent report to a male manager), construction (84 per cent), manufacturing (83 per cent), and telecommunications/IT (81 per cent) appear to be the most male-dominated industries on the managerial level.

Female managers appear to create more positive work environments for employees in the UAE’s private sector, presenting a clear opportunity for employers.

Employees with female managers are more likely to report receiving managerial feedback (65 per cent vs. 58 per cent), recognition (65 per cent vs. 56 per cent) and professional development support (56 per cent vs. 50 per cent) than employees who report to male managers.

Given the importance of managerial feedback and support for fostering workplace wellbeing, it is no surprise that employees reporting to a female manager are less likely to consider changing jobs than those reporting to male managers (29 per cent vs. 37 per cent).

**Only 1 in 4 Employees Report to a Female Manager**

Is your immediate manager [Male/Female]?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>24%</td>
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<td>Education</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>58%</td>
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<td>Hospitality</td>
<td>61%</td>
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<td>30%</td>
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<td>Banking/Finance</td>
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<td>21%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Telecommunications/IT</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>19%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>83%</td>
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<td>Construction</td>
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<td>Engineering</td>
<td>87%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>17%</td>
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FEMALE MANAGERS MAKE EMPLOYEES FEEL MORE SUPPORTED

(Showing those who say “My manager gives me feedback about my work”)

- Does your immediate manager give you feedback about your work?
  - 58% of those who report to a male manager
  - 65% of those who report to a female manager

(Showing those who say “My manager recognises and compliments me when I do good work”)

- Does your immediate manager recognise and compliment you when you do good work?
  - 56% of those who report to a male manager
  - 65% of those who report to a female manager

(Showing those who say “My manager supports my professional development”)

- Does your immediate manager support your professional development and career plans?
  - 50% of those who report to a male manager
  - 56% of those who report to a female manager

- Those who report to a male manager
- Those who report to female manager
MORE FEMALE MANAGERS COULD HELP WITH EMPLOYEE RETENTION

How likely are you to proactively look and change jobs over the next year?

(Showing % very likely)

Those who report to a male manager: 37%

Those who report to a female manager: 29%
‘Female managers tend to provide more support to employees’. This is a powerful statement from the Wellbeing in the Private Sector Report – and yet the report also cites that only one in four UAE private sector employees report to a female manager.

Given that we educate boys and girls equally throughout their scholastic years, and that women clearly have a lot to bring to the table in leadership roles, why in the working world do more men rush to the top of the ladder while women are often asked to be content with positions that may be below their aspirations?

Not uncommonly, arguments on this subject tend to factor in societal roles, such as women needing to prioritise families and children as, one of the reasons they find themselves losing out in the race to the top echelons. Regulators in many countries have successfully nudged for gender balance in an attempt to address this, seeking more equal representation on boards and in leadership roles, as well as equitable pay for men and women.

As an education professional, I am proud to be part of an industry identified by the Wellbeing in the Private Sector Report as leading the way in terms of women in leadership roles, with a majority (58 per cent) of education employees saying they report to a female manager.

That is more than any other private sector industry, so why is it that boys and girls, who start out on an even keel, with equal determination to excel, experience differences when it comes to career planning and advancement?

This is a question that I have focused on right through my career within the education sector. My goal is to create a level playing field that does not inhibit the freedom of any child to pursue her or his aspirations. It is important to instil confidence in every child, the understanding that she or he is a global citizen capable of achieving any goal they set their mind on, to think beyond stereotypical notions and build in oneself the ardent belief that ‘nothing is impossible’.

After all, our children do not need to look beyond the UAE to realise that anything is indeed possible, regardless of gender. Gender balance is taken seriously here, and the country has made impressive steps to provide an equal footing for young men and women to reach their potential.

As a result of this, the UAE has set impressive benchmarks in gender parity – the nation leads the UNDP Gender Equality Index in the region and ranks 26th globally; 77 per cent of Emirati women enrol in higher education after secondary school, and make up 70 per cent of all university graduates in the UAE;
56 per cent of UAE government university graduates in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) are women, and overall, the literacy rate of women in the UAE is 95.8 per cent.

It is especially important that gender balance is fully embraced within the UAE’s private sector, which is the backbone of the national economy – not just in terms of its contribution to gross domestic product, but in driving job creation and putting the substantial talent and potential in our society to good use, which is crucial for sustainable growth.

We need to work together to ensure that the country’s many highly skilled women working in the private sector have equitable access to the leadership roles they desire and are qualified for. The Wellbeing in the Private Sector Report clearly suggests that it is something that will in fact benefit organisations.

At a typical workplace, the primary considerations for any employee is to be listened to, to be appreciated and to be provided a pathway to progress. The report data shows that those who report to a female manager feel more supported in the workplace and are more likely to stay with their employer. This suggests that women managers contribute towards increased employee retention, and foster a more supportive environment for all employees.

The need for talent retention cannot be overstated. For organisations that invest in talent building, workforce erosion must be stemmed, and women managers, this survey says, are well equipped to do that.

In the education sector, which has a significant female representation in teaching and administrative roles, it will only be natural for more women to evolve in managerial roles, helping retain our professional talent. Of the 18,184 GEMS Education employees, 12,132 – over 66 per cent – are women, who represent the majority of our administrative, teaching, and senior leadership staff.

We have also established a Wellbeing Committee at GEMS Education, under the guidance of KHDA, to focus on supporting all employees – irrespective of gender, nationality, or their job responsibilities – to help unlock their true potential. As part of the Happiness Champion Programme at GEMS Education, I focus on initiating new projects that ensure the happiness of our employees as well as our parents and students.

If we prepare our students and young ones to think beyond gender stereotypes, reports on women’s empowerment will hardly be relevant as we will live in a world that recognises and prioritises talent over any other consideration.

“We need to work together to ensure that the country’s many highly skilled women working in the private sector have equitable access to the leadership roles they desire and are qualified for”
Business for Wellbeing Council