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Regular Article

The *HEartS Professional* Model: A conceptual model for arts professionals' work and wellbeing

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ABSTRACT

In recent years there has been a surge of research on arts professionals' livelihoods, with particular focus on experiences of work and wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, using the *HEartS Professional* multi-strategy survey, we collected data in three phases in the United Kingdom (UK): initially during the first national lockdown (Phase 1, April–June 2020; Spiro, Perkins et al., 2021), and then annually for two years; Phase 2 (April–May 2021; Spiro, Shaughnessy et al., 2023), and Phase 3 (May–July 2022). In this article, we focus on Phase 3. Our first goal is to explore which factors are important in the context of mental and social wellbeing (measured using the Mental Health Continuum-Short Form, Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale, the 15-item Social Connectedness Scale-Revised, and the Three-Item Loneliness Scale). Our second goal is to consider how work and wellbeing are associated with job satisfaction. Physical activity, social activity, financial stability, and health are significantly associated with mental and social wellbeing for the 564 professional artists in the UK who responded to our survey, and there are links between mental wellbeing and job satisfaction. As the creative industries emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic and tackle ongoing challenges, a longer-term approach in this area is needed: one that allows a more holistic understanding of the contributors to arts professionals' work and wellbeing. Informed by the data collected in Phases 1 to 3, where we see consistent trends, we propose a conceptual model – the *HEartS Professional* Model – for understanding the drivers that are associated with arts professionals' wellbeing and job satisfaction. Within this model, the variables can be seen as part of wider domains: broad thematic groups including *community* (including perceived social connection and living situation), *healthy living* (including self-rated health and physical activity), *finance* (including financial hardship and household income), and *demographics* (including gender and age). The *HEartS Professional* Model has the potential to inform development of support, policy, and infrastructure in the creative industries that are fit for purpose and respond to creative professionals' needs. Furthermore, it has the potential to be the basis for the long-term tracking and understanding of work, wellbeing, and job-satisfaction in the arts.

1. Introduction

Interest in professional artists' livelihoods is increasing, with growing focus on artists' mental health, physical wellbeing, and injury prevention. In the United Kingdom (UK), for example, during the economic turmoil of the 2008 financial crash and subsequent recession, focus on artists' finances and the impact of the "gig" economy as well as freelance working received attention (Banks, 2018; Comunian & Conor, 2019; Pratt, 2015). These factors were scrutinized further during the COVID-19 pandemic, which sparked a wealth of research both in the arts sector and in academia. The focus during the first few months of the pandemic emphasised the financial vulnerability of the sector (Brabin, 2020), alongside growing concerns regarding issues of retention, entry pathways, and wellbeing among arts professionals (Comunian &

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England, 2020; Eikhof, 2020). Research over the subsequent three years highlighted that these concerns were warranted, with uneven recovery across different sub-sectors (Siepel et al., 2021) and among different demographic groups, raising significant concerns about the state of the industry's recovery after years of disruption (Siepel et al., 2021; Walmsley et al., 2022).

In our previous work, we presented two snapshots regarding the work and wellbeing of arts professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic: one during the first national lockdown April–June 2020, Phase 1, (Spiro et al., 2021), and the second a year later (Spiro et al., 2023). The results of the two surveys indicated that a consistent set of factors was associated with mental and social wellbeing outcomes. These included factors relating to community, healthy living, finance, and demographics. In this article, our first goal is to explore whether the same factors continued to be important in 2022. Our second goal is to consider how work and wellbeing are associated with job satisfaction. We close by proposing a conceptual model – the *HEartS Professional* Model – for understanding the drivers that are associated with arts professionals' wellbeing and job satisfaction.

2. Background and literature review

2.1. Work in the arts during and since the COVID-19 pandemic

Arts professionals have complex portfolio careers that can differ across professions and career stages. Different sub-sectors have different patterns of work and income that include contracted work (full-time, part-time, fixed term, and zero hours), as well as freelancing, and/or consultancy. For example, 97% of illustrators are freelance (DCMS, 2020), whereas those working in TV and Film see a larger proportion of their work on payroll through fixed-term contracts on Pay As You Earn (BECTU, n.d.). In music and the performing arts, it is also common for teaching to make up a significant proportion of an individual's income. This teaching work can be self-employed and/or contracted through an institution (Musicians' Union, 2012). For those working in literature, the average income from writing of only £7000 per year means that alternative sources of income, through teaching or work in other sectors, is essential for most authors (Thomas et al., 2022). Despite the variability across arts professions, certain characteristics including long working hours, low pay, unpredictable freelancing, limited protections, and short-term projects are common in most creative careers (Banks, 2018; see also Eurofound, 2014 for a European perspective). This precarity can have particularly adverse implications for arts professionals' wellbeing, an aspect that the pandemic foregrounded and exacerbated. As others have noted, COVID-19 acted as "a worst-case scenario where the full effects of this precarity were suddenly brought home to workers en masse" (Bunting & Cannizzo, 2020, p. 9).

While many have pointed to the financial difficulties of the industry, the accompanying challenges facing arts professionals' mental and social wellbeing were substantial (Spiro et al., 2021), and continued to persist (Spiro et al., 2023). The exploration of artists' professional landscapes during the pandemic has simultaneously highlighted other drivers that are associated with positive mental and social wellbeing for arts professionals, including provision of (and access to) community, physical activity, and employment characteristics such as income and freelance as opposed to employed work (Shaughnessy et al., 2023; Spiro et al., 2021; Steiner & Schneider, 2013). As witnessed at the outset of the pandemic, the support structures for the creative workforce are often poorly understood by policy makers and key decision makers (Jones, 2022). Across arts professions, the experiences of the pandemic have emphasised both the relationships between arts professionals' mental and social wellbeing and their working lives, and the need for models to understand how to support creative workers in the future.

2.2. Work and wellbeing for arts professionals

Common within the subsectors of the creative industries is a recognition that job satisfaction is not only tied to the work itself (Kenny et al., 2016) but to the opportunities, relationships, and fulfilment that an arts career can provide (Flore et al., 2021). Factors include the importance of community such as the development of enduring friendships and opportunities for travel that are highly valued among Irish dancers (Cahalan & O'Sullivan, 2013) or community support structures for early career artists (Campbell, 2020). Greater professional autonomy through self-employed working has also been observed as associated with job satisfaction in performing and visual artists (Steiner & Schneider, 2013). Other motivators that contribute to wider wellbeing have also been identified as important for staying in the profession, such as "passion" for musicians (Bonneville-Roussy et al., 2011). Negative factors include physical strains of performing, emotional labour of creative work (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2010), questions of perceived value (Flore et al., 2021), as well as travelling and time away from home (Wills & Cooper, 1987). Problematic practices in management and communication can also fuel tensions in leadership and create conflict (Kammerhoff et al., 2019). Wider challenges that impact wellbeing, including long working hours, job, and financial insecurity (BECTU, 2017; Spiro et al., 2021) have been seen in other vocational professions (such as nursing and early years education) which identify the tensions between the fulfilment of the work and the socio-economic and familial pressures (Finn, 2001; House of Commons, 2023).

2.3. Research questions

Our first goal is to explore whether the same factors identified in Phases 1 and 2 (Spiro et al., 2023; Spiro et al., 2021) continue to be important for mental and social wellbeing two years after the first lockdown of COVID-19 with a different sample of respondents. We do so through our first research question:

RQ1. *What are the contributors to arts professionals' mental and social wellbeing two years after the first lockdown of COVID-19 in UK?*

Our second goal is to understand levels of job satisfaction among arts professionals, and how these related to their mental and social wellbeing outcomes as well as the factors within community, healthy living, finances, and demographics. We do so through our second research question:

RQ2. *What predicts arts professionals' job satisfaction?*

While this work took place during a particularly unusual and difficult time for those in the arts, and was documenting snapshots from a pandemic, it became clear that the challenges faced and opportunities seen reflect longer term, deep-seated issues that have only been magnified during recent years (Comunian & England, 2020). We therefore use the data collected at Phase 3, as well as being informed by our results from previous phases during the pandemic and other literature, to propose a wider conceptual model – the *HEartS Professional* Model – to understand the key variables associated with arts professionals' wellbeing and job satisfaction.

3. Methods

3.1. Respondents

3.1.1. Demographics

The *HEartS Professional* Phase 3 survey was open to any professionals who worked in the arts in any capacity and who lived in the UK. 564 respondents completed the survey. As detailed in Appendix B, visual arts (including fine art, graphic design, animation, film, and photography) were highly represented with over half of respondents working in these areas (n = 330, 59%). A quarter of the respondents (n = 133, 24%)

worked in music and sound arts, with a similar number working in performing arts ($n = 149$, 26%). A smaller proportion worked in literature ($n = 89$, 16%). One third of respondents reported working in more than one area ($n = 176$, 31%), a situation which is typical of portfolios in the creative sector. The mean age of respondents was 37.84 years (SD = 13.35), 64% identified as Women, 78% identified as White, 21% of respondents lived in London, and 73% earned less than £52,000. Over half reported having had COVID-19 or symptoms similar to COVID-19 (55%) and nearly ten percent ($n = 51$, 9%) reported having persisting symptoms or Long COVID. Most reported otherwise being in good health ($n = 370$, 66%, Appendix C), but over half reported feeling lonelier ($n = 303$, 54%) and over two thirds feeling more anxious ($n = 390$, 70%) in the last year (Appendix D.5).

3.1.2. Working profiles of respondents

Respondents reported a range of work activities including creating/writing/composing ($n = 301$), performing ($n = 122$), teaching ($n = 111$), editing/curating ($n = 178$), managing/promoting ($n = 129$), appraising/reviewing ($n = 90$), and researching ($n = 117$). Composing/creating and researching were mainly conducted online (50% and 68% respectively) while performing and teaching had returned to mostly in person activities (58% and 41%). Appraising/reviewing and conducting/directing were a mix of in person and online (see Appendix D). Half ($n = 292$, 52%) considered themselves to still be experiencing financial hardship as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (see Appendix D).

3.2. Procedure

Data were collected using *HEartS Professional* Phase 3, a survey for professionals working in the arts and cultural sectors (Appendix A). This phase includes some adaptations of the Phase 2 survey. These adaptations include the addition of a measure of job satisfaction (Thompson & Phua, 2012) and open questions to explore issues beyond the pandemic that were facing arts professionals. The *HEartS Professional* surveys were initially adapted from the *HEartS Survey* which charts the Health, Economic, and Social impacts of the ARTs (Tymoszuk, Spiro et al., 2021).

The *HEartS Professional* surveys were designed as multi-strategy data collection tools and here we report on the following areas: (1) demographics; (2) information on illness or self-isolation related to COVID-19; (3) work profiles and income; (4) job satisfaction; and (5) validated measures of mental wellbeing and social connectedness (Spiro et al., 2021).[2]

Approval was granted by the Conservatoires UK Research Ethics Committee. Informed consent was obtained at the beginning of the survey. Following the recruitment criteria and processes in Phase 2 (Spiro et al., 2023), the survey was open to individuals currently living in the UK and employed in the arts sector. Eligible respondents were contacted through the online survey platform Prolific (https://app.prolific.co/). Respondents were paid the equivalent of £8.97 (GBP) per hour on survey completion. The Phase 3 survey was open from 5.5.2022 to 15.6.2022. Due to missing questions in the survey, it was reopened to existing respondents on 29.6.2022 to 15.07.2022 for respondents to complete three questions on loneliness. Of the 586 people who completed the consent section of the survey, 564 reached the final question, with 22 incomplete responses. Data collection through the Prolific platform enables a high level of survey completion and data quality, due to continuous checks on participators (https://app.prolific.co/). A copy of the dataset is publicly available (Williamon et al., 2024).

[2] As in our reporting in on Phase 2 (Spiro, Shaughnessy et al., 2023) we report here on the closed questions of the survey, leaving consideration of open-response questions about how the pandemic had changed their professional expectations to one side.

3.3. Outcome measures

In addition to the four scales presented in Spiro et al. (2021) and Spiro et al. (2023) – the 14-item Mental Health Continuum – Short Form (MHC-SF, Keyes, 2002, 2005) for mental health, the eight-item Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D, Karim et al., 2015) for depression, the 15-item Social Connectedness Scale (Lee et al., 2008) for social wellbeing, and the Three-Item Loneliness Scale (Hughes et al., 2004; Russell et al., 1980) for loneliness – we also analysed responses to the Inclusion of Other in the Self scale (Aron et al., 1992) to assess how connected the respondents felt to (1) other people and (2) others who worked in the arts and cultural sectors. The Inclusion of Other in the Self scale consists of seven images of increasingly overlapping circles that represents perceptions of connection to others, from least connected (separate circles) to most connected (almost entirely overlapping circles). The surveys thus included positive and symptom-led aspects of mental and social wellbeing (Seligman, 2008). We measured job satisfaction using the four-item Brief Index of Affective Job Satisfaction (Thompson and Phua, 2012).

3.4. Analysis

As described in Spiro et al. (2021) and Spiro et al. (2023) to model mental and social wellbeing (Research Question 1), we ran hierarchical multiple linear regression models using jamovi (2.2.5.0; The jamovi project, 2021) to explore the relationships between the outcome measures of levels of mental wellbeing, depression, social connectedness, and loneliness on one hand, and time or context sensitive variables (activity levels, socialisation, and financial hardship), and demographic and arts work variables on the other.

- Model 1 included variables that were more time or context sensitive, meaning more likely to see change during shorter time periods or be affected by factors related to individual control. This included four time or context sensitive variables: recent physical activity change (Activity change), current physical activity (Physical activity), perceptions of financial hardship (Financial hardship), and changes in socialising with others, both online and in-person (Socialising change).
- Model 2 included variables we see as driven by societal and environmental contexts and that can have longer-term implications, and therefore adjusted for covariates related to demographic and work characteristics. Variables associated with demographic factors and arts work were: gender, age, ethnicity, living situation (Living alone), self-rated health (Health), educational attainment (Ed. Attainment), work activities, household income (Household income, which includes all earnings including for example, from pensions), percentage of time spent freelancing (% freelance), individual contribution to household income (% Cont. income), and the percentage of one's individual contribution to household income generated from arts work specifically (% Cont. art).

To explore contributors to performing artists' job satisfaction ratings (Research Question 2), one linear regression was run. Building on our approach to Research Question 1, three models were developed.

- Model 1 adjusted for social, mental, and professional wellbeing variables using the outcome variables from the first regression (mental wellbeing (MHC-SF), social connectedness (Social Connectedness), loneliness (UCLA-3), depression (CES-D)) alongside specific factors identified as relevant to job satisfaction in previous research (perceptions of financial hardship (Financial hardship) and household income (Household income)).
- Model 2 adjusted for other time or context sensitive variables: recent physical activity change (Activity change), current physical activity

(Physical activity), and changes in socialising with others, both online and in-person (Socialising change).
- Model 3 adjusted for covariates related to demographic and work characteristics. Variables associated with demographic factors and arts work were: gender, age, ethnicity, living situation (Living alone), self-rated health (Health), educational attainment (Ed. Attainment), work activities, percentage of time spent freelancing (% freelance), and the percentage of one's individual contribution to household income generated from arts work specifically (% Cont. art).

Ordinary least squares regression assumptions were checked (Appendices F and G provide full desciption of results and outlier checks, as in Spiro et al., 2023).

4. Results

4.1. Mental and social wellbeing outcome measures

Across the sample, 51% ($n = 290$) of respondents reported 'moderate' levels of mental wellbeing, with 34% ($n = 194$) scoring as 'flourishing', and 14% ($n = 80$) scoring as 'languishing', according to the MHC-SF scale (Keyes, 2002, 2005), (mean = 37.53, SD = 13.35) (Appendix E). For depression (measured using the CES-D, where a higher score indicates higher depressive symptomatology), the mean score was 3.44, SD = 2.13.[3] For social connectedness, the mean score was 41.95 (using the Social Connectedness Scale-Revised). On the loneliness measure, 45% of the respondents could be described as lonely (scoring 6 or higher out of a possible 9 on the Three-Item Loneliness Scale) and the mean score was 5.67, SD = 1.75. Responses to the Inclusion of Other in the Self scale indicated that respondents felt equally connected to others (mean = 2.98, SD = 1.39), and to other professionals working in the arts (mean = 2.97, SD = 1.55).

4.2. Predictors of mental and social wellbeing outcomes

To address the first research question we ran regression models to examine what indicators were predictive of the four outcome measures (Mental Wellbeing, Social Wellbeing, Loneliness, and Depression). For each outcome measure, Model 1, adjusting for individualised, time-sensitive related factors only, significantly predicted between 5 and 14% ($p < .001$) of the variance in outcome measures. Model 2 significantly explained a further variance in all models. For wellbeing, Model 2 predicted a further 8% (adjusted $R^2 = .08$, $F_{10,548} = 5.70$, $p < .001$), for depression, it predicted a further 11% (adjusted $R^2 = .11$, $F_{10,548} = 7.86$, $p < .001$), for social connectedness, it predicted a further 9% of the variance (adjusted $R^2 = .09$, $F_{10,548} = 6.2$, $p < .001$), and for loneliness it predicted a further 9% (adjusted $R^2 = .09$, $F_{10,395} = 4.29$, $p < .001$). Overall, the fully adjusted model, which included wider demographic and work characteristics (Model 2), explained 22% of the variance for wellbeing (MHC-SF, adjusted $R^2 = .22$, $F_{14,548} = 12.30$, $p < .001$), 20% of the variance for depression (CES-D, adjusted $R^2 = .20$, $F_{14,548} = 10.9$, $p < .001$), 17% of the variance for social connectedness (Social Connectedness; adjusted $R^2 = .17$, $F_{14,548} = 9.00$, $p < .001$), and 12% of the variance for loneliness (UCLA; adjusted $R^2 = .12$, $F_{14,395} = 4.88$, $p < .001$) (Appendix F).

In the fully adjusted model for mental wellbeing (MHC-SF, Appendix F.1), we saw that not being in financial hardship, recently changing the amount of physical activity, increasing amounts of socialisation, being male, being older, and being in good general health, were significant factors associated with positive mental wellbeing. In the fully adjusted model for depression (CES-D, Appendix F.2), we saw that not being in financial hardship, recently changing your level of physical activity, increasing socialisation, being older, and being in good general health were significant factors associated with a smaller number of depressive symptoms. In terms of social connectedness (Appendix F.3), the fully adjusted model highlighted that not being in financial hardship, increasing socialisation, being male, not living alone, undertaking performance, teaching, or conducting work, being older, having a higher proportion of income from the arts, and being in good general health were significant factors associated with greater social connectedness. In terms of loneliness (Appendix F.4), the fully-adjusted model suggested that not being in financial hardship, recent changes in socialisation, not living alone, being older, and being in good general health were significant factors associated with less loneliness.

To address the second research question, we ran one regression model to examine what indicators were predictive of the job satisfaction outcome measure. Model 1, adjusting for social, mental, and professional wellbeing variables factors, significantly predicted 21% of the variance in outcome measures (Appendix G). Model 2, adjusting for context specific variables, did not explain any further variance ($p = .374$). Model 3 explained a further 6% of the variance (adjusted $R^2 = .06$, $F_{9,391} = 3.88$, $p < .001$). Overall, Model 3, adjusting for wider demographic and work characteristics, explained 26% of the variance (adjusted $R^2 = .26$, $F_{18,391} = 8.78$, $p < .001$). Only two variables showed a significant contribution to greater job satisfaction; greater mental wellbeing, and greater percent of freelance working.

5. Discussion

5.1. Work and wellbeing of arts professionals in May–July 2022

The results highlight that factors related to community, such as living alone, were associated with lower social connectedness and increased loneliness. Recently increased levels of social activity were associated with more positive wellbeing, less likelihood of depression, more feelings of social connection, and less loneliness. For factors relating to health, better self-rated health was linked to greater wellbeing, less likelihood of depression, more social connectedness, and less loneliness. Physical activity also played a role, with either recent changes in physical activity or the amount of physical activity positively associated with wellbeing, less depression, and greater social connectedness. For finances, those who were in financial hardship were more depressed, less socially connected, lonelier, and had lower wellbeing. Greater percent of income from the arts also contributed to people being more socially connected. Wider demographic factors also had an impact, with older age consistently associated with positive mental and social wellbeing, with women most at risk from poor mental and social wellbeing. Two variables – mental wellbeing and percent of freelancing work – were associatedmo with job satisfaction.

5.2. Comparisons between three annual samples (Phases 1, 2, and 3)

Demographically, the sample in this study was broadly comparable to our previous two phases, but with slightly more diversity across age,[4] ethnicity,[5] income,[6] and geography.[7] The results from this phase of the

[3] For a case measure, 65% could be described as depressed (selecting three depressive symptoms or more, out of a possible 8 on the CES-D), however this cut off has been noted to have low sensitivity.

[4] The mean age of respondents was 37.84 ($SD = 13.35$) which is in line with the mean age of 37.87 ($SD = 13.35$) in Phase 2 and younger than the mean age 44.08 ($SD = 13.9$) in Phase 1.

[5] The sample was more ethnically varied (with 78% identifying as white, in comparison with 93% in Phase 1 and 89% in Phase 2).

[6] 73% earned less than £52,000 (in comparison with 58% in Phase 1 and 64% in Phase 2).

[7] Only 21% of respondents lived in London (compared with 42% in Phase 1 and 31% in Phase 2).

HEartS Professional survey, alongside the results from Phases 1 and 2, highlight that the contributing factors to arts professionals' wellbeing have remained consistent across the last three years. Indeed, the consistency of indicators over three years with a younger and more diverse sample, further strengthens their validity and suggests models are replicable even under different circumstances and as pandemic restrictions ebbed and flowed. As the strength of the regression models have increased over the three phases,[8] in the context of a period when most pandemic-related restrictions had been lifted, this suggests that the model is relevant in non-pandemic contexts, capturing stable contributors to arts professionals' wellbeing.

While many of the factors within the four areas are not specific to arts professionals (e.g., links with gender, the role of physical activity, and the impact of financial hardship on mental wellbeing have been observed elsewhere (Butterworth et al., 2009; McHugh & Lawlor, 2012; Steptoe et al., 2013)), it is important to understand and highlight the risk factors and stressors specific to working in the arts. Understanding the variables within wider domains can help to target policies and enable evaluation of those policies to improve wider working practices.

5.3. Understanding professional artists' work and wellbeing through conceptual models

The process of development for the *HEartS Professional* survey included a wide variety of variables drawn from areas including demographics, professional considerations, and wellbeing factors. Our analysis over the last three phases has suggested that there are a number of indicators that are consistently associated with mental and social wellbeing for arts professionals such as engaging in physical and social activity, having good health, and financial stability. Rather than understanding these factors in isolation, it is clear from qualitative accounts from arts professionals (Shaughnessy et al., 2023; Warran et al., 2022) and wider research in quality of life and wellbeing (Ruggeri et al., 2020), that these factors are interrelated and may be better understood as part of wider thematic groups (Roy et al., 2018). We therefore propose a conceptual model[9] (Brady et al., 2020) based on our interpretation of the data we collected in these three phases and wider literature as well as being informed by our own qualitative work (Shaughnessy et al., 2023; Spiro et al., 2021; Steiner & Schneider, 2013).

Our model is useful for a number of reasons. Banks has argued that post-pandemic economic challenges highlight the limitations of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) focussed creative economy policies, and "it seems there is no better time for exponents of the creative economy to be thinking about more genuinely different and sustainable models of organising and producing" (Banks, 2022, p. 217). Central to "re-futuring" (Banks, 2022) of the creative industries is to build working environments and policies that can support livelihoods that nurture artists' wellbeing. This idea of improved environments and policies that nurture artists' wellbeing has been echoed in wider research that has emphasised the importance of non-economic indicators of population wellbeing, going beyond growth and GDP and towards a more holistic measure of social capital, democratic governance, and human rights (Diener & Seligman, 2004). Initial work in this area includes the Healthy Conservatoires' Wellbeing Framework (Healthy Conservatoires), which was created to support institutions and individuals in building literacy in the wide-ranging areas of health and wellbeing, relevant to performing artists' health: Emotional, Environmental, Financial, Intellectual, Occupational, Physical, Social, and Spiritual.

More widely, the approach of clustering variables into thematic groups is particularly relevant for developing policies to support wellbeing. For example, the Office of National Statistics (ONS) now provides a summary of 10 domains of national wellbeing that are relevant to government policy making: personal wellbeing, relationships, health, what we do, where we live, personal finance, economy, education and skills, governance, and the environment (Office for National Statistics, 2023). However, in the approach taken by the ONS, connections between the domains have not yet been explored. Elsewhere, Roy et al. (2018) have highlighted how determinants of wellbeing can be grouped according to community characteristics: environment, psychosocial, systems, and economic. These community characteristics can, according to Roy et al. (2018), in turn influence collective wellbeing through five domains (connectedness, contribution, inspiration, vitality, and opportunity). Models such as this can provide clearer "actionable leavers", and a "common framework for action", whereby policy makers, local organisational leaders, and community members can use their respective influence to shape policies and programmes (Roy et al., 2018).

To understand how policy levers may be used to achieve change for arts professionals, it may be helpful to tailor these previously developed models by considering community and individual factors regarding work and wellbeing within the creative industries. Specific frameworks for work and wellbeing have been developed for arts professionals with the aim of helping organisations to decide on how to assign resources. One of these – The Artists Livelihood Framework (ALF) – builds upon an existing model – The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (Serrat, 2017). Originally developed with emphasis on what they called "poor communities" (Serrat, 2017), it addresses the connections between contextual vulnerability, societal structure, institutional processes, livelihood strategies, and community outcomes. In turn, the ALF has been adapted specifically for visual artists (those based in a studio or working in design), to understand how stresses and livelihood strategies impact physical and psychological experiences that, in turn, impact art practice outcomes. Coming from the perspective of a visual arts organisation (ACME, 2021), the ALF model highlights how frameworks can help to identify areas of support and policy. However, the ALF's focus on visual artists, and the consideration of only work-specific contexts and pressures, means that it is limited in terms of considerations of holistic wellbeing as well as work stressors for creative professionals more widely.

5.4. The HEartS Professional Model

The *HEartS Professional* study results provide a useful starting point for a model for arts professionals' wellbeing. Informed by the literature reviewed above and our own findings, we propose a model through which arts professionals' wellbeing and job satisfaction may be represented and understood. This focus paves the way for arts policy makers, cultural organisations, educators, and practitioners to develop infrastructure and implement support more effectively.

The *HEartS Professional* Model conceptualises how key individual variables that are associated with arts professionals' wellbeing and job satisfaction (as measured in Phases 1–3 of the *HEartS Professional* survey) may be understood as part of broader thematic domains.

As illustrated in Fig. 1, the *HEartS Professional* Model represents individual and contextual factors of community provision, healthy living, financial stability, and demographic determinants as the four domains which are key contributors to – and perhaps thus drivers for – creative professionals' wellbeing. Four aspects of wellbeing are measured in our work: mental wellbeing, social connectedness, loneliness, and depression. Job satisfaction is, in turn, connected to both a domain (finances) and an aspect of wellbeing (as measured using the Mental Health Continuum – Short Form). We therefore place job satisfaction between the

[8] As described above, in the current phase, models predicted between 12 and 22% of the variance. In Phase 2 models predicted between 9 and 14% of the variance and in Phase 1 models explained 12–15% of the variance (Spiro, al., 2021).

[9] This area includes multiple terms to describe the conceptualisations of relationships between factors and outcomes. While some use "framework", here we follow Brady et al. (2020) and use the term conceptual model which refers to the aspects that "a team has prioritized and chosen to study and is intentionally focused in scope" (p. 3).

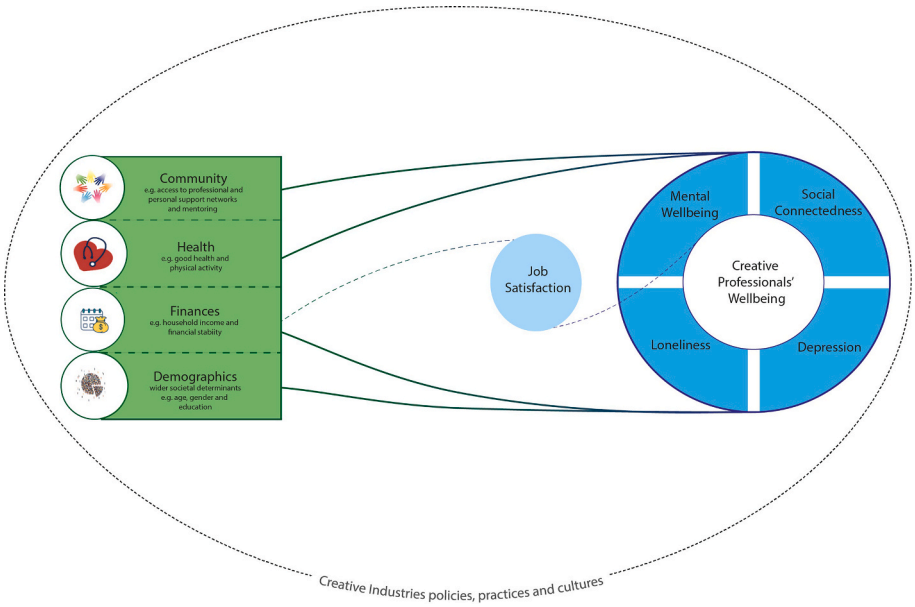

Fig. 1. The *HEartS Professional* Model qualitatively conceptualises the connection between domains (green), creative professionals' wellbeing (dark blue), and job satisfaction (light blue) within the context of policies, practices, and cultural contexts of the creative industries. The data from the *HEartS Professional* surveys indicate that all four of the domains are relevant to the mental and social wellbeing outcomes (indicated by solid outer circle around the four creative professionals' wellbeing measures), and finances and mental wellbeing connect to job satisfaction. There is a longer track record of *HEartS Professional* data for mental and social wellbeing than for job satisfaction (indicated by the dotted lines). (For interpretation of the references to colour in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the Web version of this article.)

domains and the other outcome measures. The model is thus dynamic; personal or contextual factors can influence or be influenced by wellbeing and job satisfaction. As represented by the dotted circle encompassing the rest of the model, these are seen as occurring within – and therefore interacting with – the policies, practices, and cultures of the creative industries. The data from the *HEartS Professional* surveys indicate that all four of the domains are relevant to the mental and social wellbeing outcomes while only finances and mental wellbeing connect to job satisfaction. The model aims to go beyond understanding the variables and their individual linear relationships to singular outcome measures and instead proposes a higher-level view of the relationship between factors (such as access to community or health living) that may drive or contribute to creative professionals' wellbeing.

The domains include the 15 variables that played a role most consistently in the regression analyses of the three phases of the *HEartS Professional* project. These variables were grouped qualitatively in a process that was informed by similar models of community wellbeing discussed above (Roy et al., 2018). Having followed this process, we are then inspired by Roy et al.'s model in the visual representation of the domains and outcomes. These domains take into account the variegated picture of the different factors that contribute to mental and social wellbeing for arts professionals, and separately offer areas in which indicators can be developed and tracked.

As seen in Table 1, the variables include those that describe perceptions (e.g., of social connection in the case of the perceived closeness to others) and others that are situational (e.g., household income). The community domain brings together factors of social connection as well as living situation and work activities (distinguished according to whether they are primarily social or solo ones). The finances domain brings together the factors of perceived financial hardship and income. Healthy living concerns self-rated health and physical activity. Demographic determinants include gender, age, and level of education. Future research is needed to test the extent to which the individual variables have different importance in different contexts (e.g., arts domain, professional circumstance, or geographic region) or whether additional variables are needed. Indeed, the data available about job satisfaction is from Phase 3 only. The dotted lines and lighter colours in the diagram represent the more tentative nature of this part of the model.

Table 1
Domains with their constituent variables explored in *HEartS Professional*.

Domains in the *HEartS Professional* Model	Variables in *HEartS Professional* Surveys
Community	Change in socialisation
	Living alone
	Perceived closeness to other people
	Perceived closeness to other arts professionals
	Work activity
Healthy living	Self-rated health
	Levels of physical activity
	Changes in physical activity
Finances	Financial hardship
	Percentage arts income
	Household income
	Percentage freelance working
Demographics	Gender
	Age
	Level of education

5.5. Limitations and future research

There are limitations connected to the way the survey was carried out. For example, the survey invited people working in the arts at the time of the survey. It did thus not consider people who had left jobs working in the arts. It also did not set out to sample respondents according to nationally representative distributions of arts professionals.

Nevertheless, we see this model as an early step in an iterative process during which links between components of the model are tested and refined through further research (Brady et al., 2020). Approaches could include a systematic literature review, newly collected survey data analysed using structural equation modelling, or interview data analysed through grounded theory as well as stakeholder engagement processes. In addition, the *HEartS Professional* Model is one that requires

evaluation within different professional and practice-based contexts. Specific research questions and methods flow from the model. Some of these will need to take more context specific views. For example, this could include an exploration of whether it is helpful to delve more deeply into the broader variables in the model (such as household income or geographic region) in more fine-grained terms such as seeing income in the context of family arrangements, or taking account of urban compared with rural location. Other research questions relate to specific variables or even thematic domains. For example, we can envisage a more detailed view of variables connected with job satisfaction, including importance of artistic quality of the work, stress, work-life balance, and bullying. Research is also urgently needed on the contribution of established and new stressors. This research should include understanding and addressing uncertainties around generative artificial intelligence in this sector. More broadly, future research could also include the exploration of whether it is helpful to prioritise different aspects of the model for different arts professions (e.g., physical health for dancers, or typical income streams for authors).

Further evaluation of the model should explore its relevance to specific perspectives of those most vulnerable. For example, this work was conducted with those professionals who are still working and practicing in the creative sector not those who have decided to leave. Even though our sample was increasingly diverse over the three phases, given concerns about the heightened inequality in the sector, focus on the voices of those who have recently left, or faced barriers to entry, would be important (Walmsley et al., 2022). Similarly, the data collection work that underlies this model was conducted entirely in the UK. Though a similar study carried out in China in August 2020 and October 2021 points to similar trends (Spiro et al., 2023), further research is needed to ascertain whether and how the model would be applicable in different geographic and cultural contexts. Indeed, detailed longitudinal research is needed to better understand arts professionals' experiences of work and wellbeing. This information could, in turn, strengthen the voices of, and supports for, arts professionals within policy and decision-making processes. Taking all these observations together, the *HEartS Professional* Model lends itself to systematically identifying the key drivers of wellbeing and job satisfaction in the many variations of this area of work.

6. Conclusion

Overall, the results from the third phase of the *HEartS Professional* survey highlight how the same factors for work and wellbeing, including the role of physical activity, increased social activity, physical health, and financial stability, remain consistent a year after the Phase 2 survey (April–May 2021), and two years on from the first survey at the outset of the first national lockdown (Phase 1, April–June 2020). In addition, our research in this phase has identified further links between mental wellbeing, levels of freelance working, and job satisfaction.

To understand how the variables measured consistently over these three years might be connected and represented in a more a holistic model of professional artists' wellbeing, we propose The *HEartS Professional* Model. The model represents four domains – community, healthy living, finance, and demographics – as being relevant to professional artists' wellbeing. The model also highlights how the mental and social wellbeing of professional artists is multi-faceted, tied in part to determinant factors within creative industries and society at large. The model can be used as the basis for steps that cultural institutions, educators, and businesses can take, including better regulation and guidance for payment, establishing place-based networks and mentorship, and improved guidance and resources for supporting physical health. Finally, the model provides a starting point for more systematic, long-term tracking of work, wellbeing, and job-satisfaction in the arts.

Ethical statement

We confirm that the research adheres to the Declaration of Helsinki and that informed consent was obtained from all participants. Ethical approval was granted by the Conservatoires UK Research Ethics Committee.

Informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all respondents.

Data availability

The data files for this project are available from on the Dryad database (Williamon et al., 2024), with some data redacted to follow Dryad's protocols.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Neta Spiro: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Methodology, Project administration, Supervision, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Caitlin Shaughnessy:** Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Methodology, Software, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Rosie Perkins:** Conceptualization, Funding acquisition, Methodology, Writing – review & editing. **George Waddell:** Conceptualization, Funding acquisition, Methodology, Writing – review & editing. **Aifric Campbell:** Conceptualization, Funding acquisition, Writing – review & editing. **Aaron Williamon:** Conceptualization, Funding acquisition, Methodology, Project administration, Supervision, Writing – review & editing.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare no competing interests.

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Appendices. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2024.101092.

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