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UNCOVERING THE COMPLEXITY OF WORKPLACE WELLBEING USING A CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS APPROACH

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BACKGROUND

Workplace wellbeing has become an important public health priority, due to working days lost and the economic cost of ill-health. Evidence for effective workplace interventions, however, remains inconsistent. Plymouth City Council (Public Health) prioritised workplace wellbeing as the inaugural focus for their ten-year inequalities programme 'Thrive Plymouth' (Nnoaham, 2014).

AIM

An evaluation was commissioned to appraise this (Thrive Plymouth) as an exemplar to optimize workplace wellbeing – assessing organizational perspectives on, and employee engagement with, workplace wellbeing.

METHODS

Six workplaces were purposively recruited but two withdrew. A cross-case analysis approach was used, consisting of detail outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. Methods employed for workplace wellbeing evaluation	
Multiple case study approach consisting of:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentary analysis (wellbeing documents) • 6 employee focus groups (n=41) • HR Manager interviews (n=4)
Standardised questions were asked across cases, which considered:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. general wellbeing (in and outside work) ii. awareness of wellbeing campaigns iii. 'Thrive Plymouth' knowledge (deliberately delayed to eliminate bias).

Cases were analysed individually, using inductive content analysis, then cross-case analyses determined similarities and differences. Two researchers cross-checked thematic coding, for transparency.

RESULTS

Four cases were analysed: two large businesses and two third sector organisations. All had broad views of workplace wellbeing, including physical and mental health constructs. Reasoning for, and experience of wellbeing, varied between them and their employees. Barriers to engagement with campaigns (e.g. Thrive Plymouth) were identified as a balance between employer responsibility and employee agency, exacerbated by cultural requirements of an ageing workforce. Further themes affecting employees wellbeing in and outside of work, included; the nature of work, emotional labour, shift patterns and job (in)security.

CONCLUSIONS

This study shows that wellbeing is important to employers and 'Thrive Plymouth' was affirmed as a potential catalyst for engagement in lifestyle change. Barriers were highlighted by employees, however, that require further investigation. Recommendations are made for future intervention design and evaluation to be cognisant of workplace wellbeing complexities and external socio-cultural realities.

References:

Nnoaham, K. (2014) Framework for addressing health inequalities (4-4-54) (Cabinet Report 11 November 2014) Plymouth: Plymouth City Council

