

Poster – #EIE2021

The adaptation of Citizen Science in an occupational setting: A qualitative study

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Research aim

The aim of this study is to adapt a citizen science approach to a workplace setting and particularly to fit the needs of blue-collar workers.

Health interventions often do not reach blue-collar workers due to a poor fit with their specific needs. Therefore, this study was conducted among blue-collar workers from two companies in the construction and the transport and logistics sector. To fit with the needs of this target group, a participatory approach, called citizen science, was used. The citizen science approach actively engages the target group in the study design, including the design of interventions and data collection. To date, the citizen science approach has not been applied at the workplace. The citizen science approach was adapted to the workplace setting and to fit the needs of blue-collar workers.

Methods

Semi-structured interviews and focus groups were performed to identify useful elements of the citizen science approach and identify barriers and facilitators for a citizen science approach in a workplace setting. Expert meetings were performed to further develop the elements and additional materials based on the information from interviews and focus groups. Subsequently, the adapted citizen science approach was pilot tested among interviewed and additional employees to test its feasibility and ensure the approach fitted with their needs.

Key findings

In both companies, work pressure was perceived as a barrier, and social support and company culture were considered as both barriers and facilitators for the implementation of a citizen science approach in a workplace setting. Working at temporary worksites was mentioned as important barrier for those in the construction company. For the terminal company, shift work was mentioned to play a role in the application of the citizen science approach. Besides the contextual factors, attention should be paid to mental models, i.e., attitude, a lack of risk perception, and openness towards health and health improvement. Based on these barriers and facilitators, improvement of skills and knowledge, use of social support, creation of awareness on lifestyle behaviour proved to be important elements in the citizen science approach for blue-collar workers.

Discussion

How could we motivate blue-collar workers to actively collaborate (e.g., as a health ambassador) in health promotion programs? How can we convince employers to implement a participatory approach to design and implement health promotion at the workplace?