

Poster – #EIE2021

Facilitators of mental health interventions' implementation and effectiveness in healthcare: A bottom-up, participatory perspective

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Research aim

To investigate healthcare professionals' perspectives on circumstances facilitating the implementation and effectiveness of occupational mental health interventions in healthcare organisations.

Methods

Semi-structured individual interviews with 21 managers (senior and middle) and 4 focus groups with 27 professionals (doctors, nurses, healthcare assistants) from three departments (Department of Emergency, Department of Medicine, Research Institute of Neuroscience) of a large Northern Italian healthcare institution. Participants were asked:

- whether they were aware of any meaningful mental health policies and practices in place in their organisation;
- whether initiatives (e.g., policies and practices) were currently in place on mental health at their workplace and what could be improved (e.g., how they thought such policies and practices work, anything missing, something they would like to add);
- which resources would be needed to create mentally healthy workplaces and what could be the barriers for dealing with occupational mental health;
- whether any mental health initiatives had been implemented at their workplace previously, whether they thought these initiatives were successful, what worked well and what did not;
- if mental health initiatives were to be implemented, what they perceived would be essential for a successful implementation, and what they perceived as barriers.

Key findings

Thematic analysis revealed four main themes - with sub-themes - concerning facilitators of the implementation and effectiveness of participative workplace mental health initiatives:

- *Scope*: changing working conditions, and not only developing individual resources.
- *Bottom-up engagement*: motivating through active involvement and empowerment rather than money; ensuring voluntary participation; tailoring to contextual needs; granting continuity and accessibility; covering all occupational categories.
- *Sponsorship*: exploiting middle managers' knowledge of the psychosocial work environment; leveraging on senior managers' support and steering champions' influence on colleagues; promoting high attendance and positive attitudes towards interventions.
- *Organisation*: avoiding interference with work schedules and additional workloads; being delivered by expert providers; taking place in physical presence rather than virtual presence.

Discussion

Healthcare professionals' mental health is a major concern worldwide, which COVID-19 has exacerbated. Implementation of effective interventions is needed. However, healthcare professionals may be unable or reluctant to participate in such initiatives, thus undermining their potential impact. Therefore, it is crucial to understand interventions' working mechanisms that should be leveraged upon to ensure their effectiveness.

A bottom-up, participatory contribution is provided to advance knowledge about the facilitators of mental health interventions' implementation and effectiveness in healthcare settings. Findings may inform intervention design and implementation principles to be adopted by occupational mental health practitioners.