

Submitted question to the Help Desk of the OSMET on March 5th, 2025

Question: What evidence supports the importance of surveying employees to find out their opinions, which can then be considered when planning workplace health and wellness programs?

Methods: OSMET conducted a review of systematic reviews and meta-analyses published to date on the effectiveness of employee-participatory organizational interventions on health and wellbeing at work (methodological details can be found in Appendix 1). Participatory organizational intervention refers to interventions in which employees participate in the stages of the intervention, such as its planning, implementation and evaluation (Sakuraya et al., 2023). Such methods and include surveys (Ammendolia et al., 2016) and focus groups, which can take the form of regular meetings between employees and colleagues to design, implement, evaluate or reformulate action plans for addressing sources of stress in the workplace (Bes et al., 2023).

Answer: The results obtained indicate that the current state of the scientific literature is limited regarding the effectiveness of organizational interventions involving surveys or other types of direct employee participation in improving health and wellbeing at work, as evidenced by systematic reviews and meta-analyses. Only one systematic review and meta-analysis on the topic was found (Bes et al., 2023). This study indicated, based on nine other studies, that participatory interventions reduce burnout. Additionally, a research protocol for a systematic review and meta-analysis investigating the impacts of participatory organizational interventions on mental health and work performance was found, indicating that further evidence will soon be available (Iida et al., 2024).

The results are summarized in the table below:

Type of intervention/profession/country	Impact on health and wellbeing	Reference
Organizational employee participation / healthcare professional / Switzerland	Burnout (decrease)	(Bes et al., 2023)

Going further...

Many researchers emphasize the importance of involving employees in organizational intervention programs relating to the development, planning, implementation and evaluation, with the aim of improving employees' health and wellbeing (Iida et al., 2024; Nielsen and Noblet, 2018). Active employee participation is an essential component of organizational interventions aimed at improving occupational health and wellbeing. Involving employees in the intervention increases their sense of control, fairness, justice, and support. The intervention can also be adapted to suit the organization's culture and context (Iida et al., 2024). Below, you will find some key points and additional relevant references.

First, according to von Thiele Schwarz et al. (2021), one of the key elements in maximizing the effectiveness of organizational interventions is ensuring the commitment and active participation of key stakeholders, i.e. employees and managers at all levels of the organization, as the interventions sometimes affect several levels of the organization. This applies at all stages of the intervention. For instance, considering the expertise of employees during the design phase can enhance the alignment of the intervention. Participants are more likely to commit to an intervention during its implementation if they have had the opportunity to influence it. Similarly, participation in the evaluation process increases the likelihood that stakeholders will accept the validity of the results and commit to acting accordingly.

Furthermore, the results of the study by Dextras-Gauthier, Marchand, Durand and Blanc (2016), which examined management practices that reduce claim rates for mental health problems at work through case studies in Quebec companies, support the implementation of practices that protect employees' mental health. This is particularly true at the macro level, i.e. regarding the communication strategy implemented within organizations to inform workers about health and stress issues in the workplace. These practices relate to the expression and regulation of risks at work, such as surveys. According to these researchers, the survey enables organizations to identify stress factors in the workplace and address the problem areas raised by employees. The surveys enable the organization to identify workplace hazards that may pose a risk to employees' mental health. They also provide employees with an opportunity to make their voices heard. In this way, surveys become a valuable source of information about employee needs, enabling the organization to assess its needs and implement structures and practices address them (Dextras-Gauthier et al., 2016, p. 81).

Finally, Ammendolia et al.'s (2016) study is noteworthy. A workplace health and wellbeing promotion program was developed to improve presenteeism based on a partnership with a large organization in the financial services sector, as well as on data from systematic reviews and key articles on reducing presenteeism. The authors mainly recommend strategies to improve employee engagement, awareness, communication, and the sustainability of initiatives. According to the researchers, improving these areas is essential to facilitate positive changes in individual health behaviors. Through a workplace wellbeing survey, their study found that, although the organization claims to value a healthy workplace, current practices and policies, as well as the actions of supervisors and senior managers, suggest otherwise. The survey identified a perceived negative work culture, which may be associated with a higher risk of presenteeism. The researchers then proposed strategies aimed at aligning the message conveyed with the actions taken as part of the occupational health and wellbeing program.

In conclusion, many national and international researchers and political bodies currently recommend participatory approaches for managing psychosocial risks and organizational interventions.

Employee and manager participation at all levels of the organization must be considered at each stage of the intervention, not only in its design, but also in its implementation and evaluation, to maximize its positive impact on workers' health and wellbeing.

Références :

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Annexe 1

Méthodologie

OSMET carried out a systematic review of existing studies referenced by several databases, including Medline, Embase, EBM Reviews - Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, PsycInfo and Business Source Premier. The syntaxes used included several terms and keywords associated with the concepts of 1. health and wellbeing (e.g. 'Health/' or 'well-being'); 2. employee survey or active participation (e.g. 'survey*' or '(direct or intervention*) adj2 participat*'); 3. In the workplace (e.g. 'workplace*' or 'employee*'). The bibliographic search was limited to systematic reviews and meta-analyses written in French or English. In addition, a manual search was carried out. After removing duplicates, a total of 197 references were sorted. Based on titles and abstracts, 10 potential studies were selected. After reading these in full, one study that corresponded to the search criteria for answering the question was selected.