

## WORK PLACE HEALTH PROMOTION PLUS INNOVATION IN WORK PLACE HEALTH PROMOTION

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### Abstract

*The paper examines workplace health promotion plus innovation in workplace health promotion. It looked at workplace health promotion, innovation in workplace, World Health Organization's (WHO's) approach to workplace health promotion, workplace health promotion key components, examples of health promotion activities, reasons health should be promoted at the workplace, how workplace should be promoted at the work place, how workplace health promotion can be maximally achieved, benefits of workplace health promotion to the employees and to the organization, innovation in workplace health promotion and ways to introduce innovation into workplace health promotion. It looked at workplace health promotion as the combined effort of employers, employees and society to improve health and wellbeing of workers at work and that it is a comprehensive approach and collaborative effort that should include employee education, health screening/ assessment, wellness programs, mental health support as the benefits are for both employers and their employees. Innovation in workplace health promotion is leveraging on technology to improve health initiatives including integrating health into company's culture. The paper concluded that workplace health promotion is key to productivity in every organization and creating/including new ideas (innovation) into workplace health promotion will optimally increase worker's wellbeing and lead to high productivity at the workplace. The paper recommended among others that organizations/institutions should leverage on technology, Artificial Intelligence (AI) based platforms to improve on its health initiatives for their workers.*

**Keywords:** Workplace, Health promotion, Organization, Innovation, Employees, Employers.

### Introduction

The workplace is a space or area where work is done or activities are carried out. It is an environment where work is being done by workmen and women to earn a living. The World Health Organization (WHO) sees the workplace as an important environment/space for health promotion in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Workplace is an environment where workman and women do their jobs or carry out their duties to earn a living. Work is meant to be a means of economic survival and source of satisfaction, happiness, social status and companionship but can also result in stress, dissatisfaction and threat to workers health and wellbeing (Achal, 2000 in

Amanze & Agu, 2014). It is a common belief that man is an embodiment of physical, spiritual, mental and social being interacting with his total environment and when all the components are working in harmony with each other the performance of the employee is guaranteed. The best way to position any occupation for efficiency is to create a healthy workplace and a healthy workforce. Unfortunately millions of workers all over the world suffer double or triple tragedies (Amanze & Agu, 2014). Apart from poor remuneration, their safety and health is in constant threat and danger as a result of hazards in the workplace. Reports of work related fatalities, injuries and loss of property as a result of hazards are common in both developed and developing countries (Amanze & Agu, 2014). Challenges in health at the workplace require a different approach and new working ideas to promote healthy and sustainable behaviours, optimize preventive strategies and to change positively lifestyle behaviours to positive results that will also minimize the increasing healthcare cost on the public and the Government.

Innovation is the act of innovating, the introduction of something new, a change effected by innovating something new and contrary to established customs, manners, or rites. (English Dictionary, 2024). Innovation is the act of bringing in something new, new ideas or introducing new methodologies, skills, ideas, strategies, against the usual or normal phenomenon. It is introducing new ways of doing things in a system, an organization or in an organization. To be innovative means to look forward to something new, to be ahead of current thinking, to create new ideas or things that fit into a system for growth and development.

Ahima-young, et. al (2002) reported that 20 workers in a factory in Lagos, Ikorodu were roasted to death in a night fire because the Chinese owners of the factory locked up the exit point in the factory. Amanze and Agu, (2014) also reported that four (4) employees of Nigeria Distilleries Limited (NDL) lost their lives on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2013, while twenty (20) others sustained various degrees of injuries as a result of the explosion of one of the boilers of the distilling company. There is no compromise that only those who are alive can work and receive wages, salaries or income hence there is a need for innovative workplace, health promotion so as to ensure the wellbeing and quality of life of work men and women in their various working environments.

### **Health promotion**

Health promotion is basically the process of improving the degree of health of individuals and community. It covers all those activities that are designed to improve the health status of individuals and the communities including health education plus other economic and political activities that help to promote health. Health promotion is mostly prevention-oriented. It begins with people who are healthy and want to stay healthy through the development of life styles that maintain and promote health. The concept of health promotion is based on the premise that individuals are responsible for their own health. The aim of health promotion is to promote good health by encouraging behaviours or actions conducive to health (Achal, 2019). Umeifekwem (2020) affirmed that health promotion essentially aims at helping people change to a more healthy lifestyle (behavior change) through public participation in various efforts to enhance awareness and create environments that support positive health practices that may

result in reducing health risks in a population. O'Donnell (2017) stated that health promotion is the art and science of helping people discover the synergies between their core passion and optimal health enhancing their motivation to strive for optimal health and supporting them in changing their lifestyle to move towards a state of optimal health. Achalu (2019) asserted that health promotion at the workplace is aimed at activities provided to promote the health and welfare of workers; in addition, the workplace is a convenient setting to educate workers on how to promote their health through the provision of related services such as accommodation/ housing, transportation, recreational/ fitness activities, proper nutrition, insurance/ pension schemes, payment of allowances, gratuities, social security and bonuses improving cooperation and better relationships among workers, employees and employers (managers), practicing and promotion of good personal hygiene, need for pre-employment and periodic medical examination to detect and treat health problems, need for adequate training and health education/ promotion provision of balanced diet and good health condition, adequate rest and relaxation and the need for increasing job satisfaction. According to Sparling (2010) workplace health promotion is work site wellness and/ or employee health and productivity program, health and wellbeing or health enhancement. Umeifekwem (2020) stated that employers have found that it makes financial sense to encourage and support employees' healthy practices and as a result, employers both on their initiative and sometimes because of federal regulations administered by the occupational safety and health administration, have been active in creating safe and drug-free workplaces.

Some organizations and industries who have discovered ways of promoting the health of their employees are having high productivity which in turn makes the company/ industry famous, attract clients, customers and patronage.

### **Health promotion**

World Health Organization (WHO) Western pacific region (2025) defines health promotion as a process of enabling people to increase control over and to improve their health. It moves beyond a focus on individual behavior towards a wide range of social and environmental intervention. European Agency for Safety and Health at Workplace (2012) acknowledged that workplace health promotion according to European Network for Workplace Health Promotion (ENWHP) is the combined efforts of employers, employees and society to improve the health and wellbeing of people at work. According to WHO (2025), workplace health promotion is the combined effort of employers, employees and society to improve the health and wellbeing of people at work. This definition emphasizes the importance of creating a safe and healthy physical and psychosocial work environment and encourages workers' participation in shaping the workplace. The breakdown of WHO's approach to workplace health promotion is as follows:

- Comprehensive approach- this include individual health behavior, social and environmental factors that influence health, such as working conditions, organization of work and policies.

- Collaborative effort: this involves the active participation of employers, and other stake holders in developing and implementing health promotion initiative.
- Focus on well-being: workplace health promotion aims to improve not only physical health but also mental health, social wellbeing and overall quality of life.
- Integration with occupational safety and health: health promotion activities are often integrated into occupational safety to prevent accidents and diseases.
- Promotion of personal skills and professional development: encouraging personal skills and professional development can also contribute to employee well-being.
- Importance of work environment: creating a safe and healthy work environment is crucial, and this includes addressing factors like ergonomics, noise levels and lighting.

WHO (2025) also posited the examples of work place health promotion activities as: providing healthy food options, promoting physical activity, offering stress management programs and addressing issues like work-life balance.

### **Health Promotion Programmes**

Health promotion programmes in a work place are activities/ programmes put together to improve the health of the workers for optimum productivity. Buck consultants (2018) reported that major priority issues driving health promotion programmes were stress and physical activity/exercise (95%), nutrition/healthy eating and work/life issues (92%). More so in Africa, stress ranked first infectious diseases, HIV/AIDS ranked second, work/ life issues, physical activity, depression and workplace safety ranked third, fourth, fifth and sixth in that order (Kristen, 2012 in Umeifekwem, 2020).

### **Workplace health promotion key components**

Center for disease control and prevention[CDCP](2024) outlined the key components of workplace health promotion as:

- Occupational Safety and Health (OSH): ensuring a safe work environment through policies, procedures and training.
- Employee education and awareness: providing information and resources to support healthy behaviours and choices.
- Health screening and assessments offering regular health screening and assessments to identify risk factors and promote early intervention.
- Wellness programs: implementing programs that encourage physical activity, stress management, healthy eating and other wellness-related behaviours
- Supportive environment: creating a workplace culture that values health and well-being, with policies and practices that promote employee health.

- Program evaluation and improvement: regularly assessing the effectiveness of health promotion programmes and making adjustments to improve outcomes
- Integration with other workplace programs: linking health promotion efforts with other workplace programs and work-life balance initiatives
- Mental health support: providing resources and support for employees experiencing mental health challenges
- Communication and engagement, effectively communicating information about health promotion programs and engaging employees in the process.
- Community engagement and collaboration: collaborating with local community organizations and resources to enhance health promotion efforts.

**Examples of health promotion activities include:**

- Fitness challenge and competitions
- Health education workshop: providing educational sessions on topics such as nutrition, stress management etc.
- Stress management programs
- Smoking cessation programs
- Health screenings for conditions like diabetes, cancer etc
- Healthy eating campaigns
- Ergonomic training
- Work-life balance initiatives
- Social connectedness activities like promoting social initiatives.

By implementing these components and activities, work places can create a healthier and more productive environment for their employees.

**Reasons we should promote health in the work place**

The work environment is a key determinant of employee health, since the majority of adult population spend more time at work, many employers have recognized that the workplace offers an ideal environment for promoting health and that healthy workers are more likely to be productive workers. Similarly, if neglected, the work environment can have extremely negative consequences on workers' health; causing stress, injury, illness, disability and death. (WHO, 1998). A workplace that practices health promotion will not only be free of hazards but also create an atmosphere for workers to become, fulfilled, productive or minimally satisfied.

## How workplace health promotion can be maximally achieved

Workplace health promotion in any organization or institution can be maximally achieved by creating a department for occupational health and safety professionals/ personnel to practice in that organization/ institution. These group of persons have the expertise of initiating health promotion programmes, counselling, supervision and making referrals where necessary on issues concerning health promotion of workers. WHO (1998) opines promoting health structures in the workplace (eg. Health and safety committees, occupational health and safety committees, occupational health and safety departments, health policies and programme implementation units.

### Benefits of workplace health promotion according to WHO (1998):

#### To the organization

- A well-managed health and safety programme
- A positive and caring image
- Improved staff morale
- Reduced staff turnover
- Reduced absenteeism
- Increased productivity
- Reduced healthcare /insurance costs
- Reduced risk of fines and litigations

#### To the employee

- A safe and healthy work environment
- Enhanced self-esteem
- Reduced stress
- Improved morale
- Increased job satisfaction and maturation
- Increased skills for health protection
- Improved health
- Improved sense of well-being

## Innovation in Workplace Health Promotion

Innovation in workplace health promotion means thinking digitally, culturally and locally. Combining technology with traditional knowledge; and community-driven approaches is major factor for sustainability. It requires addressing unique local challenges such as limited access to healthcare, cultural diversity, infrastructure gaps and low awareness while leveraging on emerging technologies, community practices and grass root solutions. Bringing innovation into workplace health promotion means combining creative technics, technology and worker-centered design to ensure that health initiatives are practiced, easily gotten and effective. Innovation in workplace health promotion is involving new ideas in improving the health of workers within the workplace.

### Ways to introduce innovation into workplace health promotion.

- Leverage technology: organizations should take advantage of technology to improve its health initiatives eg. Use AI-based platforms for personalized health recommendations,



encourage the use of fitness trackers or health app at work to promote physical activity and stress management

- Personalization: offer customizable health programs based on age, role, health condition or preferences; provide flexible options like meditation time, gym membership etc.
- Integrate health into company's culture: include wellness in leadership messaging and core values, make health promotion part of day-to-day operations (e.g walking meetings, mental health days, healthy snacks at meetings or occasions
- Physical wellness: promote regular initiatives like onsite physical activity through various gyms, group exercise classes or fitness challenges
- Diversity & inclusion in wellness: ensure wellness programs address diverse cultural, ability needs; provide mental health resources that respect culture
- Flexible wellness allowances: give employees a monthly or quarterly wellness stipends to spend on health related expenses- fitness classes, therapy, ergonomic equipment (as stress relief)
- Healthy work design: redesign the workplace and work schedule to promote movement and reduce stress
- Health literacy campaigns: use short videos, charts and pictures to improve understanding of topics like stress management, preventative health screenings, nutritional health.
- Government and NGO partnerships: work with nutritional health insurance scheme (NHIS) other health agencies and NGO's to offer subsidized workplace health screening, collaborate with government health institutions to get resource persons or local universities for public health students to deliver health awareness talks/ programs
- Celebrations and acknowledgements: acknowledging milestones- individuals and collective – within a workplace wellness program can serve as a powerful motivational tool. This create positive reinforcement loops offering tangible recognition for the effort and dedication employees invest in their health and the health culture of all organization
- Financial wellness: offers seminars on financial planning, debt management and saving for retirement to help alleviate the stress associated with financial issues (Chat GPT, 2025; Onsite Health, 2024)

## Conclusions

Workplace health promotion is key to employees and organization optimal productivity. To improve the health and wellbeing of workers, both the organization and employees have duties to perform. The organization has the duty of ensuring a safe work environment, employee education and awareness, health screenings, ergonomic training stress management programmes and so on while the employees are to support and encourage the organization. A

workplace that practices health promotion will be free of hazards and create a work- satisfying environment. Health structures in the workplace such as health & safety committees, occupational health and safety departments, health polices & implementation units help to make the organization achieve workplace health promotion.

Innovation in workplace health promotion is bringing in new ideas in addition to what is already in existence to better satisfy workers and promote the health and wellbeing of workers which include leveraging on technology e.g. fitness trackers, health apps and so on.

### **Recommendations:**

The following recommendations were made based on this paper review:

- The federal government should ensure that the policy of every organization or work environment having a health structure that promotes health is upheld through its monitoring agencies.
- Employees of labour should encourage their employers by showing support/ cooperation whenever their support or attention is needed in the workplace.
- Work organizations/ institutions should create awareness on health promotion packages and ensure that workers utilize or maximize the workplace health promotion programmes to better their lives
- The government through its health agencies should thoroughly assess workplace health promotion practices in different organizations to ensure health/ safety of workers.
- Companies/Organizations/ Institutions should take advantage of technology e.g. AI based platforms for personalized health recommendations to improve on the health initiatives for their workers.

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