Final Project Report

Evaluating Wellbeing SA's Healthy Workplace Check Tool

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a summary of the development and validation of a new tool, the Healthy Workplace Check (HWC), for assessing the best practices for establishing healthy workplaces in South Australia (SA). While existing tools have been used to measure individual health issues, the instruments tracking health, safety and wellbeing at the organisational level have not been properly validated and/or feature contextual differences imperfect for an Australian setting. Therefore, the HWC tool was created as a robust indicator to check whether workplaces are implementing the best practices that integrate multi-strategy approaches to workplace health and wellbeing in SA.

Research background

Workplace tools are beneficial for measuring evidence-based indicators of worker health, safety, and wellbeing, allowing workplaces to benchmark and highlight areas for improvement. Moreover, at a state level, data obtained from these tools can inform solutions, resources, policy, and legislation to best support the translation of workplace health, safety and wellbeing into practice. To support decisions on policy and practice changes with confidence, it is important to ensure that the tools being used have been well-developed, validated and are proven to accurately capture workplace conditions. Consequently, the HWC was developed through a collaboration between Wellbeing SA officials and research staff from the Centre for Workplace Excellence (CWeX) at the University of South Australia (UniSA). A two-stage study was conducted, that involved both academics and industry experts, to validate the HWC and to verify key domains relating to the promotion and protection of workplace health, safety and wellbeing.

The HWC was developed via the following steps:

- Identify existing tools globally that are used to assess health, safety, and wellbeing outcomes to justify the lead domains included in the HWC tool and to choose appropriate scale and measurement items.
- Conduct a rapid review of the literature to identify lead indicators for building healthy, safe and thriving workplaces.
- Consult with subject matter experts to confirm the lead domains and individual items to be included in the tool – subject matter experts included several Wellbeing SA officials, four CWeX experts in organisational psychology and human resource management, and eighteen industry practitioners who held positions as business owners, CEOs, human resource managers, and occupational health and safety managers.

The HWC was subsequently validated through the following processes:

- We conducted eighteen interviews with SA business leaders to assess whether the tool represented important aspects of health, safety, and wellbeing (i.e., content validity).
- We disseminated the tool to workers from over 200 SA businesses to gather data to assess the tool's psychometric properties. The tool was assessed using exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, reliability testing, and convergent and criterion validity testing - the processes assessed whether the questions asked in the tool meaningfully captured workplace health conditions and were not redundant or statistically irrelevant.

Key findings

- Interview findings indicated that the HWC is a useful and suitable tool and that items related to each domain are clear and concise but may require minor modifications, such as addressing mental health, disabilities, and workplace culture.
- Based on this feedback, four additional items were included in the tool, alongside an option for respondents to write additional comments.
- Psychometric analyses of the tool suggest that most items are appropriate (except for three). The tool demonstrates strong internal reliability, and high criteria validity with its associations with similar constructs and key health outcomes.
- Overall, preliminary results indicate that the HWC demonstrates adequate psychometric properties, establishing the tool as a reliable and valid indication of workplace health, safety, and wellbeing.

Recommendations

Based on preliminary data analysis of responses from SA organisations, we recommend some modifications and further testing of the tool as more data becomes available.

Special notes:

- The statistical validation of the tool was limited by sampling limitations, such as the small sample sizes, preventing data being matched between managers and non-managers within organisations. Data analysis was also based on cross-sectional data (i.e., at a single moment), preventing the investigation of causal relationships over time.
- Further testing should be conducted with larger matched longitudinal samples (i.e., studies over time) to confirm the preliminary psychometric testing results and further verify the efficacy of the tool as a measure of workplace health, safety and wellbeing.
- It is important to ensure that relevant approvals are obtained for all items used in the tool, including licencing arrangements with publishers as required.

Conclusion

This report presents an overview of the justification for, and subsequent development of, a specific tool that will allow SA businesses and organisations to identify the best practices and areas for improvement to protect and promote workplace health, safety, and wellbeing. Our preliminary findings suggest that the HWC demonstrates sufficient psychometric properties that allow it to be used as a key resource by organisations for intervention and prevention purposes to best support their workers' health and wellbeing. It is recommended that prior to disseminating the HWC widely, modifications are made to several items and additional psychometric testing be conducted as more data becomes available to further establish its suitability for the SA business context.

Centre for Workplace Excellence (CWeX) Research Team

Disclaimer:

The views presented in this Executive Summary and subsequent project final report are those of CWeX researchers, not in any way representing the propositions of Wellbeing SA. Please direct any queries to A/Prof. Connie Zheng via Connie.Zheng@unisa.edu.au, or phone: 08-8302 7228