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Abstract Title: Transforming Workplace Learning: Implementing Mental Health First Aid Programmes at Work

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Traditional conceptualisations of workplace learning focus on enhancing professional skills and knowledge related to job performance. However, considering the increased prevalence and impact of mental health challenges in the workplace, it is imperative to broaden this perspective and transform workplace learning initiatives. Organisations must acknowledge that workplace learning extends beyond technical proficiencies; it also encompasses acquisition of competencies needed to support employee mental wellbeing and reduce mental health stigma. This area of workplace learning is important because one in every six employees experience mental health challenges in the workplace, with an overwhelming majority (89%) of these indicating that such issues negatively impact their working life. Yet only 13% of employees feel comfortable talking about mental illness at work, and only 30% of workers actually seek mental health support. These figures shed light on the current disparity between the prevalence of mental health challenges in the workplace and employees' comfort in openly discussing and addressing it. Such difficulties are exacerbated by the presence of mental health stigma, as this can create unsupportive work climates. Growing recognition of the importance of cultivating supportive and inclusive work environments has resulted in an increased prevalence of mental health literacy training to improve employee understanding and awareness. There is a pressing need for interventions aimed at empowering employees to discuss mental health issues and supporting those struggling with their mental health. Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) programmes hold immense promise as an educational tool to contribute to workplace learning and growth by enhancing workers' mental health literacies, competencies and response capabilities. Research supports the effectiveness of MHFA in equipping employees with the knowledge and skills necessary to recognise signs and symptoms of mental distress and improve their confidence to respond to such issues. However, there is a lack of evidence showing its benefits for the recipients of aid. To make a meaningful impact on employee development, organisational culture and workplace learning at large, it is crucial to investigate the best methods of implementing these programmes to maximise the benefits for both trainees and aid recipients. We present a narrative review

of the literature, the findings of which will be used to guide the strategic design and implementation of MHFA programmes within the workplace. Currently, there is a consensus that MHFA programmes must prioritise providing trainees with practical experiences, in addition to relevant knowledge and skills. This approach enables them to effectively translate their mental health competencies into actionable behaviours. By adopting a more comprehensive approach to the design and implementation of MHFA, employers can better cultivate a culture of learning and support where employees' mental wellbeing is prioritised and valued. The implications of this extend beyond the workplace setting and hold relevance for training and education across diverse contexts. This includes the need to improve mental health literacy, break stigma and create learning and supportive cultures where students and employees alike practice supportive behaviours.