

Stress management classes and wellbeing coaching no help at improving workers' mental health, study says

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Employers' initiatives to help workers cope with their jobs are no help at reducing stress, a new study has found.

Classes for [stress management](#), relaxation and mindfulness are "not satisfactory" for solving issues of worker wellbeing, the research says.

William Fleming, of the University of Cambridge, analyzed data on

26,471 employees in 128 UK organizations, including NHS trusts, to reveal the effects of various management initiatives on their employees' mental health.

He told a British Sociological Association online conference on work that "the primary finding from this research is that, across the board, there is no effect on employee wellbeing."

"These types of interventions appear to be a convenient option for employers concerned with mental health, including the government, which as an employer implements various wellbeing programs throughout the civil service and NHS."

"Merely offering short-term programs or classes is not satisfactory for solving long-standing problems of worker wellbeing."

Mr Fleming, who analyzed [survey data](#) from 2018 for his Ph.D., looked at time management training, mindfulness classes, resilience and stress management classes, relaxation classes, mental health and wellbeing coaching, financial wellbeing courses, volunteering and charity work, wellbeing apps, and events promoting healthy sleep.

Only initiatives to encourage staff to carry out volunteering or charity work improved their mental health, and stress management classes worsened staff wellbeing. The other initiatives had no effect.

"These results are counter to much of the prevailing narrative around mental health interventions in governmental policy and within HR management and public health literature," Mr Fleming said.

"In [government policy](#), mental [health](#) at work has become an explicit focus. Throughout the coalition and Conservative governments of the last 10 years, it has become embedded within recommendations from the

Department for Work and Pensions and the Department of Health and Social Care."

"This research shows that these initiatives are not helpful for the average worker. The argument that these programs are merely an attempt to ameliorate the worst of workplace alienation without altering fundamental labor systems is supported."

"Intervention must be at a management level and not an employee level. It should not be the role of employees to persistently address their own [mental health](#), but that of management to comprehensively consider and address the structures of work which cause harm through stress, trauma and uncertainty."

Mr Fleming used data for the Britain's Healthiest Workplace survey for his research, comparing staff [wellbeing](#) between workers who participated in various initiatives against those who did not, to see their effect, to see their effect. He adjusted the data to control for factors including gender, age, ethnicity, [health conditions](#), caring responsibilities and job characteristics such as occupational level, contract type and working hours. This allowed him to study the effects of the initiatives in isolation.

More information: Britain's Healthiest Workplace findings: www.vitality.co.uk/business/healthiest-workplace/findings/

Provided by British Sociological Association

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