WORKPLACE HEALTH PROMOTION
IN THE COMMERCIAL FISHING INDUSTRY

– A CASE STUDY OF PORT LINCOLN

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Abstract

Background

Commercial fishing is one of the most hazardous industries as evidenced by international injury data comparisons. Its workforce includes seasonal, self-employed and vulnerable people, often lacking supportive structures. Along with workplace injuries, mental health problems and chronic health conditions have been identified in the literature. Even though there have been calls for health promotion interventions, there is no strategic approach or conceptual framework addressing workers’ health and well-being within commercial fishing industries.

This research aimed to understand and describe the commercial fishing industry of Port Lincoln from multiple perspectives and to propose a framework for workplace health promotion interventions applicable to rural fishing industries. The central research question guiding this study was ‘How could a pragmatic framework for effective workplace health promotion be structured for use within commercial fishing industries?’ This question was addressed by surveying workers and exploring the perspectives of a variety of industry managers and stakeholders in the South Australian town of Port Lincoln, incorporating the sectors of wild-catch, aquaculture and seafood processing.

Methods

This study used a case study methodology that incorporated a mixed methods strategy of data collection and analysis. An integrative literature review of international literature was undertaken; a qualitative study investigated the views of industry managers, stakeholders and health providers; and a survey questionnaire explored the needs and perceptions of the industry’s workforce. This mix of different methods highlighted various viewpoints and strengthened the findings by enabling triangulation of data. A realistic and credible range of key factors for an effective workplace health promotion program was thereby identified and a framework created from these findings.
Abstract

Results
An integrative literature review of international literature on fishing industries pointed to high workloads, employment instability, as well as other pressures arising from uncertainties and unstable working conditions impacting on the health and well-being of the fishing industry’s workers. Even though these workers are a difficult population to approach with interventions, a need for health support and a call for preventive and health promoting strategies was found throughout the international literature. The systematic search strategy revealed that, to date, no health promotion approach has been developed and implemented within a fishing industry workforce.

Semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with twenty-seven industry managers, stakeholders and health providers gave in-depth insight into the phenomena under investigation. An unstructured approach of supporting workers’ health and well-being was identified and industry managers stated an interest in learning more about the possibilities of workplace health promotion. The culture of the industry was described as very competitive, with many psychosocial pressures resting on the workers, relating to low socio-economic background, isolation, the difficulty of maintaining stable relationships while out at sea and economic pressures. High rates of drug and alcohol use as well as mental health issues were described as problematic, with the interviews revealing the struggle of industry managers to deal with these issues. Due to workers migrating to other rural industries the participants also considered health and well-being interventions to be a valuable asset in contributing towards staff retention.

To further explore the workforce needs and from there develop a framework, a survey was undertaken among workers in the various industry subsectors, occupational groups and enterprises. For this purpose, a new data collection tool to survey the fishing industry’s workforce regarding their health and well-being at the workplace was created. The survey included 179 participants and revealed a large potential for utilising workplace health promotion programs. Even though the term ‘workplace health promotion’ was not recognised by workers, they were interested in offers of health promotion and pointed to an array of services they would like to see their workplace provide. Moreover, there were evident benefits to be gained by employers. The survey underlined the large potential of workplace health promotion in keeping staff connected and committed to the industry.
Discussion and Implications

Based on the evidence of the data, a framework of workplace health promotion for the commercial fishing industry was developed. The DOME Framework of Health Promotion aims at creating a healthy workplace for workers and employers and revolves around the respectful interaction of both. The framework addresses four domains (DO) that incorporate an active approach to educating and empowering workers, social and emotional support, modification of organisational arrangements to enable workers to adopt healthy behaviour and engagement with the surrounding community. These domains are guided by principal mechanisms that steer the utilisation and implementation of the framework. These mechanisms (ME) are defined as mutual trust, leadership, communication and participation.

It is recommended that this multifaceted approach be presented to regional development boards to support the building of workplace health promotion strategies from within the industry and in collaboration with the community. A culture of valuing and promoting a healthy, qualified and motivated workforce is the primary objective, thereby leading to the improved retention of workers and enhanced productivity. It is suggested that theoretical propositions arising from this research, relating to the application of health promotion principles, can be generalised and the framework transferred to other commercial fishing industries.
Declaration

I, Andrea Rona Barclay, certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and, where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

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________________________________________
Andrea Rona Barclay
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List of Abbreviations

ABSAustralian Bureau of Statistics
ASGCAustralian Standard Geographic Classification
AFMAAustralian Fisheries Management Authority
ASBTIAAustralian Southern Bluefin Tuna Industry Association
CWHPComprehensive Workplace Health Promotion
DigADiagnose gesundheitsförderlicher Arbeit (Diagnosis of Health-Promoting Work)
DOMEDomains / Mechanisms
EBSCOElton Bryson Stephens Company
EMBASEExcerpta Medica Database
ENWHEuropean Network of Workplace Health Promotion
FISHPFishing Industry Survey of Health Promotion
FRDCFisheries Research & Development Corporation
GPGeneral Practitioner
HN_HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT
HPHealth Provider
HRECHuman Research Ethics Committee
HW-HFHealthy Workers - Healthy Futures
IMIndustry Manager
LGA_Local Government Area
NSWNorth South Wales
OOH&SOccupational Health and Safety
PICoPopulation, Phenomenon of Interest, Context
PIRSPPrimary Industries and Regions South Australia
PubMedPublic Medline
RIRDRural Industries Research and Development Corporation Science
SA_South Australia
SAWIC_South Australian WorkCover Industrial Classification
SBTSouthern Bluefin Tuna
SCTSocial Cognitive Theory
SHStakeholder
SPSSStatistical Package for the Social Sciences
TAFETechnical and Further Education
THCUThe Health Communication Unit
TOOCType of Occurrence Classification System
UNUnited Nations
WHOWorld Health Organisation
WHPWorkplace Health Promotion
WHSWorkplace Health and Safety
WRCWorkers’ Rehabilitation and Compensation
WRISWork-Related Injuries Survey
### Glossary

<table>
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<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commercial Fishing Industry</strong></td>
<td>Overarching term comprising industry sectors of wild-catch and aquaculture, as well as industry businesses of seafood processing and wholesale. Any workplaces directly related to fishing, aquaculture and seafood industries are included and subsumed under the term of ‘commercial fishing industry’ for the purpose of this study. Supporting industrial sectors such as transport businesses are excluded. Moreover, recreational and indigenous fishing activities are excluded and not part of this research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Framework</strong></td>
<td>A supporting structure or a skeleton of interlinked items which may guide the creation and implementation of complex events or interventions, in this case of workplace health promotion. It serves as a guide that can be activated and modified as required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stakeholder</strong></td>
<td>Individuals who have an interest in the health and safety of fishing industry workers, including regulatory bodies; who represent the industry workers or enterprises on a higher level; or who have an interest in the development and sustainability of the industry; as well as experts on the industry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Worker</strong></td>
<td>A person undertaking work within the commercial fishing industry, including hired and seasonally contracted staff, as well as family members and people working for owner-operated businesses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Workplace Health Promotion</strong></td>
<td>According to the Luxembourg Declaration (European Network for Workplace Health Promotion 2007) the combined efforts of employers, employees and society to improve the health and well-being of people at work. This can be achieved by a combination of improving the work organisation and the working environment, promoting active participation and by encouraging personal development.</td>
</tr>
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Fishing in the Dark - What are we doing about Health Promotion for Fishermen? Poster presented at the 7th Annual Faculty of Health Sciences Postgraduate Research Conference, 29th August 2013, Adelaide, Australia.

Keeping it Real: The Paradigm of Realism. Oral presentation at the University of Adelaide, School of Nursing Research Conversazione 2013, ‘Beyond the Project’, 24th - 26th July 2013, Adelaide, Australia.


Health promotion strategies utilised in international commercial fishing industries - results of an integrative literature review. Oral presentation at the National Australian Health Promotion Association Conference, 17th - 19th June 2013, Sydney, Australia.

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International Postgraduate Research Scholarship (IPRS) (3 years), 11th June 2011.

¹ To the date of submission several journal articles were additionally prepared for publication.