RESEARCH ARTICLE

What matters for 'good work'? Shared perspectives from Work Integration Social Enterprises

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With the positive effects of 'good work', and the adverse effects of poor work becoming increasingly well documented, innovative approaches to providing employment for those who are excluded from work continues to be a salient topic. Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISEs) are organizations that pursue employment creation for those often excluded from the wider labour market. Yet WISEs have faced criticism for prioritizing market-based approaches to addressing social problems, posing implications for good work. Since 'good work' is highly subjective we employ Q methodology to answer the question: What are the perspectives of workers in WISEs regarding what 'good work' means to them? The findings of our study indicate that three broad perspectives on good work emerge from workers within WISEs. The nuances of these perspectives could help to guide WISEs to balance the provision of good work alongside social and commercial tensions.

Keywords good work • job quality • social enterprise • Q methodology • work integration

Introduction

With the positive effects of 'good work', and the adverse effects of both poor work and unemployment being well documented (Marmot and Wilkinson, 2005; McKee-Ryan et al, 2005; Cole et al, 2009), innovative approaches to providing employment for those who are regularly excluded from work continues to be a salient topic of

research interest (Perales and Tomaszewski, 2016; Maxwell and Rotz, 2017). There has been a greater emphasis and attention paid to job quality in recent years, not least because of the significant rise of, and attention given over to, issues such as job insecurity (Egdell and Beck, 2020), underemployment (Heyes et al, 2017), precarity (Standing, 2014; Runciman and Hlungwani, 2022), and the rise of so-called 'bullshit jobs' (Graeber, 2013; 2018). At a policy level, for example, the EU has been concerned enough about such issues to label job quality a key concern, alongside labour market competitiveness (Gallie et al, 2012).

A focus on job quality regularly emphasizes the social dimension of work which goes beyond a means of remuneration and, instead, emphasizes 'what connects people to each other and the social fabric of society' (Bolton and Laaser, 2013: 508). Still, discussions concerning what 'good work' entails are perceived to be instinctively subjective and, therefore, complex. For example, there are groups of people who are regularly excluded from the benefits of work, with a range of different disadvantages to overcome (Lanctôt et al, 2012), which may impact upon their conceptions of what makes work 'good' to them. While research has focused primarily on better understanding what 'good work' means in the mainstream labour market (for example, Coats and Lehki, 2008; Sengupta et al, 2009; Taylor, 2017), similar research has not been undertaken in sectors that provide employment provision for those distanced from, or excluded from, mainstream employment. Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISEs), which are the focus of this article, are organizations that seek to help (generally poorly qualified) unemployed people who are at risk of permanent exclusion from the labour market to engage with society through productive activity (Vidal, 2005). It is important to understand conceptions of 'good work' in this context, because designing work in an environment where social and commercial goals act in tension requires scrutiny (Belte et al, 2023), especially alongside the variety and combination of challenges that people face. These challenges, including homelessness, substance addiction, learning disabilities, psychological illnesses, significant physical disabilities, among others, are less likely to be encountered in the wider labour market. We ask therefore: what matters to people experiencing these challenges with regards to good work?

In this study we use 'Q methodology', an approach and set of techniques for the scientific study of subjectivity, to explore the nature of 'good work' among workers from a variety of different WISEs. The aim of our article is to explore whether WISEs workers – that is, service users who face different challenges in their working lives – have different conceptions of 'good work', and to what extent there may be areas of shared understanding of what 'good work' entails. This is important because tailoring work in a way that accommodates for different types of challenges can strain resource use within organizations. This strain may be particularly important in social enterprises where there is already tension between achieving social goals while balancing commercial aims. In the following part of this article, we outline in more detail what is meant by a WISE, where it has come from, and the relevance to contemporary debates on job quality and 'good work'. We then set out our methodology and present the results of our analysis. Finally, we show how our findings could inform practice, and also what our findings mean for both policy and future academic inquiry.

Background

Work Integration Social Enterprise

Definitions of social enterprise vary widely depending upon a range of contextual factors, including culture, geography, and history (Kerlin, 2006; Teasdale, 2010; 2012). In specific conceptualizations, social enterprise can be thought of as trading on a not–for–profit basis, in the space of the 'third sector' (Laville and Nyssens, 2001): the 'intermediate space' between the market and the state (Evers and Laville, 2004; Salamon and Sokolowski, 2016). WISEs are a particular form of social enterprise that provides employability related opportunities for those disadvantaged within, or excluded from, full access to the labour market. WISEs can trace their roots to the transformation of mental healthcare in Italy during the 1970s (Dell'Acqua and Dezza, 1985; Jeffery, 2005). The transformation resulted in the discharge of mentally ill patients from secure hospitals into an early form of work integration social enterprise known as a 'social cooperative' (Savio and Righetti, 1993; Borzaga and Santuari, 2001). Spreading internationally, WISEs have come to provide employment and training opportunities for a wide variety of disadvantaged groups, including those experiencing social exclusion; intellectual and physical disabilities (Vilà et al, 2007); long-term unemployment; lack of qualifications; substance abuse/addiction; criminal convictions; and living in economically deprived or rural areas (Hulgård and Bisballe, 2004; O'Shaughnessy, 2008).

A stream of research has emerged exploring the impact of WISEs (Jeffery, 2005; Gidron, 2014), such as on the wellbeing of workers (see Blake, 2019; Elmes, 2019). Indeed, a systematic review by (Roy et al, 2013) found that WISEs can impact positively on the health and wellbeing of participants through enhancing skills and employability; increasing self–reliance and self–esteem; reducing stigmatization; building social capital; and changing health behaviours. However, it should also be recognized that WISEs are not without their critics. Garrow and Hasenfeld (2014), for instance, dismiss the organizations as simply an 'embodiment of a neoliberal welfare logic' since, in the inevitable process of trying to balance social and commercial goals, vulnerable people can end up being treated as commodities, particularly if market–based activity is privileged over social outcomes. However, to our knowledge, there has been no research undertaken to date in connection with how 'good work' is conceptualized within WISEs. This conception is important because individuals who are already in vulnerable positions through the challenges they face in life may appreciate aspects of good work that are not normally considered within a more general conception of good work. This could ultimately impact upon their levels of wellbeing through altered ideas of meaningful work, and their appreciation of day-to-day living and working.

The importance of good job quality

The quality and type of work one does is important not only for health and wellbeing (Strong, 1998), but also as a source of meaning and identity (Sayer, 2009; Yeoman, 2013). Those that are disadvantaged within, or excluded from, good quality work face unique barriers, inhibiting their access to the potential 'latent and manifest' (Jahoda, 1981) benefits of work, and potentially exposing them to detrimental conditions

such as stress, burnout, unemployment and worklessness. Importantly, some studies suggest that being in poor quality work is often worse for health, both physical and mental, than actually being unemployed (Kasl, 1998; Murphy and Athanasou, 1999; Chandola and Zhang, 2018). Evidence such as this shows that merely focusing on getting people into employment is not necessarily the most important factor when considering policy outcomes such as improvements to societal or individual wellbeing, and that employment policies should be aligned with a social and health policy landscape.

Classifications of job quality have been developed by Karasek and Theorell (1990), Holman (2013), Overell et al (2010), Rosso et al (2010) and Vidal (2013). Some of the most common factors thought to affect the quality of jobs include pay (including relative income levels); skill; levels of control over work; diversity of tasks at work; intensity of work; the duration of the working day and week; job security; training and development opportunities; and flexibility of working arrangements. There are those who suggest job quality should focus purely on objective measurements, while others suggest there should be a mix between the objective and subjective aspects (Jones et al, 2024). Laaser and Karlsson (2022: 798) argue, however, that this dichotomy hampers our understanding of how meaningful work emerges 'in relation to the interplay of workplace, managerial, societal, and individual relations', and that we can learn from the agential experience of meaningful work, which is shaped by dynamics at the structural level. Ensuring that work is designed in a way which delivers in a context where both the social mission and commercial goals of the organization are paramount requires scrutiny of working processes in an objective sense, and the quality of the work, with regards to subjective experience, offered to those who are in precarious situations and experiencing disadvantages. In many ways, the same factors are just as relevant to WISEs.

There are, however, relatively few studies which focus explicitly on the quality of work within WISEs, particularly for those considered 'service users' (or 'workers') instead of managers or other employees (we use the term 'staff' throughout to distinguish between those entering as 'service users' and those that are managing those users). Williams et al (2012) use a job satisfaction and work environment impact scale alongside qualitative interviews to explore how employees within WISEs believe work has impacted them. While they focus on the sustainability of employment, rather than an explicit focus on work quality, several essential factors of work quality required for job satisfaction were identified, including rewards at work and the scheduling of work, as well as interactions with colleagues and managers. Qualitative research focusing on the quality of work of people living with mental illnesses and working in WISEs identified a range of factors that were important to workers, grouped into two main themes: 'interpersonal and intrapersonal aspects' (including having a sense of belonging to the enterprise, having the feeling of being a good worker, establishing relationships with co-workers and supervisors); and 'structural and physical aspects' (namely working tasks, conditions, environment, and organizational management) (Lanctôt et al, 2012). However, relationships between these themes, and whether some of these (sub-) themes were more or less important for different individuals, were not explored. Quantitative research, meanwhile, has shown that people with psychiatric disabilities working in WISEs (Williams et al, 2010; 2012) appreciate a regular structure, achievable tasks, and having a supportive and cooperative team.

The admittedly sparse literature focusing on job quality within WISEs leads us to consider that not only is it important to understand the different perspectives of workers within WISEs, but also the extent to which the different challenges that people face influence what they find important, since this may help WISEs to provide a supportive environment in more effective ways. With this in mind, we utilised Q methodology to explore different shared perspectives among workers in WISEs on the meaning of 'good work', and it is to our methodology that we next turn attention.

Methodology

Q methodology is a collection of theoretical and methodological concepts that draws on both qualitative and quantitative techniques to study subjectivity, such as values, opinions, and beliefs (Stephenson, 1953). In practice, study participants rank order items, typically a set of statements, onto a grid. The statement set refers to a collection of statements that represent the full conversation, or 'concourse' on any given topic (Baker et al, 2006). It is important that the statement set developed from the concourse is balanced and representative of the real–life conversation in order for a participant to accurately form their subjectivity (Brown, 1980). Factor analysis is used to uncover patterns of similarity between different completed sorts. Factors are identified using quantitative and qualitative techniques with an idealized card sort representing each factor. This forms the basis of interpretation alongside qualitative explanations from participants about their sorts (Brown, 1996). A description is produced for each factor representing a shared point of view on the topic under consideration.

Q methodology is used to study subjective questions, making it well suited to exploring what makes work 'good'. The structured process to collecting data also means it is well suited when gathering data from individuals facing mild cognitive impairments (Combes et al, 2004; Westbrook et al, 2013; Hill et al, 2017) as participants are presented with, and asked to respond to, a stimulus (that is, the statement set), rather than providing immediate responses to questions which they may not have previously discussed or thought about in depth.

Why Q methodology?

Q methodology was chosen for two main reasons. First, understanding what good work is can be framed as a subjective question, or perhaps more accurately an intersubjective question. Intersubjectivity refers to, in essence, 'the interaction between two subjects: myself and another person, or self and other' (Frie and Reis, 2001: 297), as well as the variety of different possible relations between viewpoints or perspectives (Gillespie and Cornish, 2010). In the setting of work, intersubjectivity is crucial because it aids in the meaning–making process. Indeed, work requires encounters with others, even if those relationships are not friendly or considered social. Yeoman (2014: 88) highlights that work demands the 'marshalling of one's subjectivity through reflecting with others upon meanings of values interior to the content of work', and that intersubjectivity is thus 'intrinsic to the work process itself'. In the context of uncovering perspectives on 'good work' within WISEs, it is crucial to consider the intersubjective dimension because on the face of it, using a methodology to gather subjective opinions on a topic could seem individualistic in a way which it is difficult to make meaning from.

Existing research often separates objective measures of job quality from subjective experiences of meaningful work (Laaser and Karlsson, 2022). Laaser and Karlsson emphasize the need for more studies exploring how these two perspectives intersect in diverse work environments. Our Q methodology approach offers a unique lens to examine subjective interpretations of objective job criteria within an atypical workplace, contributing to a better understanding of this understudied relationship.

Secondly, Q methodology has advantages for working with a group facing several cognitive and physical disadvantages. Unlike qualitative interviews, participants do not have to formulate and articulate responses on the spot to questions which they may not have thought of before (McHugh et al, 2019). Alternatively, Q studies present participants with a representative sample of statements on a topic, increasing the likelihood of gaining new insights. Additionally, the Q sorting process offers scope for adaption by, for example, having smaller Q sets, rotating the Q grid, using visual aids, reading statements allowed, and having statements with fewer words to make it easier for participants with cognitive disadvantages to take part (Combes et al, 2004; Cramm et al, 2009; Gane et al, 2010; Westbrook et al, 2013; Hill et al, 2017). These features of Q methodology mean it is possible to gain insight into the views of hard-to-reach groups.

Accessing the concourse and Q-set development

As is usual in Q studies (Watts and Stenner, 2012), a variety of methods were employed to access the 'concourse' of statements. The latter involved: qualitative interviews with managers in WISEs; reviewing relevant reports of 'good work', such as the Taylor report on Good Work (Taylor, 2017) and the Oxfam Decent Work Report (Stuart et al, 2016); and academic publications (for example, Cramm et al, 2009). An initial longlist of 417 statements were extracted from these sources.

Following the coding of all 417 statements against all themes and sub-themes of the QuInnE indicators (for example, working conditions, education and training, and their subdivisions) to ensure a coverage of all parts, duplicate statements were removed and similar statements merged. Following Westbrook et al (2013), Gane et al (2010), and Combes et al (2004), statements were also made as simple as possible to aid with understanding for those with cognitive difficulties, while retaining full concourse coverage. This resulted in a statement set of 37 statements for piloting.

Three tranches of piloting were undertaken. Pilot 1 was with two supervisors at a community organization similar to those involved in the data collection. Pilot 2 was carried out with five service users, one manager, and one support worker at Sangar Employment. Pilot 3 was carried out with one supervisor, one CEO, and one service user at Yesnaby Initiative. As well as focusing on the coverage of the Q set, pilots explicitly explored ways to make the card sort suitable for participants with a range of disadvantages, such as changing the colour and size of the statements, the feel of the card for ease of placement for people with dexterity issues, as well as comments on the number of statements. The first round of piloting led to a number of changes, including reducing the size of the statement set to 25 statements, colouring the grid and cards to help those with visual impairments, changing the size and feel of the cards to help those with dexterity issues, and streamlining the instructions provided to participants. After the piloting process, the final statement set included 24 statements (see Table 1 for the final statement set).

Table 1: Statement set and factor scores

Statement No.	Statement	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
1	Having a say in what I do	0	−1*	2
2	Earning enough money	−3*	2	2
3	Job security	−2*	1*	−1*
4	Proving myself to others	−1	0	−4*
5	Future job prospects	−2	1*	−2
6	People that are supportive	4	3	3
7	Flexible hours	−2	−4	1*
8	Learning new skills	1	3*	0
9	Giving back to my community	2	1	2
10	Developing an identity for myself	−1*	−1*	−3*
11	Work that is meaningful	3*	0*	4*
12	Work that is fun	3*	−3*	1*
13	*Respect for my rights*	*2*	*2*	*0*
14	Being treated fairly by others	0	4	0
15	Not stressful	1	−2*	0
16	Work that is varied	0	−4*	1
17	Paid leave	−4*	−2	−2
18	*Paid overtime available if I want it*	*−4*	*−2**	*−4*
19	Help organizing other aspects of my life	0*	−1	−2
20	A suitable work environment	4	2	4
21	Building friendships	2	0	−1*
22	Being responsible for others	−1	0	−3
23	Feeling safe	1	4	3
24	Predictable hours	−3	−3	−1*

Notes: *statements that are distinguishing. *Italics* shows consensus statements.

Data collection

Q methodology utilizes purposive sampling techniques to identify individuals with different and rich views on the topic (Mason, 2002). This study focused on eight different WISEs (see Table 2 – synonyms used). These WISEs were chosen because they were representative of typical WISEs across Scotland – the setting for our research – with regards to their age, location, and the types of employment or training provided for people.

There is no predefined sample size in Q studies. Instead, recruitment closes when new card sorts only confirm existing factors. Concurrent data analysis was carried out alongside the recruitment of participants so that the confirmation of existing factors could be observed. Thirty participants were recruited across eight different WISEs. Participants were purposively chosen to represent individuals experiencing a range of disadvantages in the labour market. Participants were initially recruited during site visits and by advertising in WISEs. Following each Q sort, snowballing sampling techniques were used to identify individuals perceived as having contrasting views. Data were collected face-to-face by one member of the research team, but the development of the statements and analysis were conducted by the full research team. The list of participants and the type of disadvantages they were facing is shown in Table 3.

Table 2: Organization descriptions

Organisation	Description
Willowburn Enterprise	Landscaping and gardening services to local authorities, housing associations, businesses as well as private homes.
Sangar Employment	Provides employability training, furniture provision and housing support. They also provide removal services and house clearances.
Pierowall Recycling	Refuse collection and recycling. Cover over 4500 households. Sell the recycling onwards after sorting and baling. Looking to expand their business with new premises.
Langskaill Food Sharing	Take food waste from supermarkets and distribute it to soup kitchens and other charities.
Birsay International	Provide a social and learning space for community members to develop their skills for employment, as well as physical activity.
Holm Wood Ltd.	By reusing timber, they provide opportunities for people facing unemployment and social exclusion to create furniture and other products.
Yesnaby Initiative	Support people facing barriers to inclusion so that they can contribute to their community through landscape gardening, crafts, horticulture, and joinery.
Cleat Recycling	Recycling and upcycling of computers. 80% of their revenue is from commercial activity. Have around 20 full-time staff and around 40 service users with disadvantages.

Table 3: Factor loadings

QSORT	Disadvantage	Gender	F1	F2	F3
WE1	Early school leaver, learning difficulties, no qualifications	M	0.3284	0.4373	0.2203
WE2	Early school leaver, no qualifications	M	0.1199	**0.702X**	0.3116
SE3	Mental health issues and learning difficulties	F	0.4833	0.5263	**0.5411**
SE4	Ex-alcoholic, depression, and anxiety	F	0.509	0.062	**0.7071X**
SE5	Long-term unemployed	M	**0.5566X**	0.1335	0.4649
SE6	PTSD, severe mental health issues, no qualifications	F	**0.6292X**	0.2883	0.074
SE7	Young carer, mental health issues and learning difficulties	M	0.0093	**0.5307X**	0.0206
SE8	Early school leaver, no qualifications, mental health issues	M	−0.2251	0.4344	**0.5386X**
SE9	Learning difficulties, no qualifications, health issues	M	0.1386	0.5256	−0.0425
SE10	Asperger's syndrome, early school leaver	M	**0.8014X**	0.1306	0.1403
PR11	Severe learning difficulties, long-term unemployed	M	−0.1277	0.2947	0.3982
PR12	Long-term unemployed, older age	M	−0.0115	0.4853	−0.0306

(Continued)

Table 3: Continued

QSORT	Disadvantage	Gender	F1	F2	F3
PR13	Mental health issues, early school leaver	M	0.3684	0.0245	0.3252
PR14	Asperger's syndrome and learning difficulties	M	**0.6618X**	–0.0343	0.1538
LFS15	PTSD and anxiety	F	**0.7427X**	–0.086	0.0477
LFS16	Bipolar disorder	M	**0.7669X**	–0.0568	0.1838
LFS17	Depression, long-term unemployed	M	**0.675X**	0.173	0.0401
BI18	Learning difficulties, early school leaver	M	0.3189	**0.5552X**	0.2763
BI19	Learning difficulties	M	0.4049	0.5231	0.0186
BI20	Down syndrome and learning difficulties	M	0.0148	**0.534X**	0.0561
BI21	Learning difficulties	M	0.3376	0.1573	0.2985
BI22	Long-term health issues, learning difficulties	M	0.4394	0.127	0.1169
HW23	Long-term physical health issues, learning difficulties	M	–0.0976	0.3244	0.4375
HW24	Visually impaired, mental health issues	F	**0.6806X**	0.2299	–0.0884
YI25	PTSD and long-term illness	F	0.4026	–0.1073	**0.7364X**
YI26	Learning difficulties and mental health issues	M	0.0238	–0.0644	0.5081
YI27	Early school leaver	F	0.5089	–0.0637	**0.5344X**
CR28	Learning difficulty and long-term health issues	M	0.448	**0.6646X**	0.0296
CR29	Long-term unemployed	F	**0.5361**	0.3247	0.5248
CR30	Long-term unemployed, mental health issues	M	0.3444	0.1618	–0.106
% Explained variance			21	13	12
Eigenvalues			8.6648	2.9037	2.0812

Notes: Significant sorts are shown in bold. Defining sorts are marked with 'X'. Significant level at 1% = 2.58 × (1 ÷√24) = 2.58 × (1÷4.8989) = 2.58 ×0.2041 = 0.5266 rounded up to 0.53. Humphreys rule was also used: 1÷(√24) = 1 ÷4.898 = 0.204 (rounded down to 0.20).

Participants were first asked to sort the cards into three piles: most important; somewhat important; and least important. Respondents were then guided through a rank-ordering of statements onto a quasi normal-shaped grid (see Figure 1 for example Q-sort and grid).

Commonly, participants in Q studies are asked to sort statements from 'most' to 'most' (for example, most like my point of view to most unlike my point of view) using a horizontal grid. In this study 'most' to 'least' was used with a vertical grid and rows labelled from 1 ('most important') to 9 ('least important') (see Figure 1). This setup was developed in discussion with WISE managers during piloting to make the card sort as easy and understandable as possible for individuals with cognitive disadvantages. Once the card sort was completed, the participant was given the opportunity to change the position of any of their cards. Once happy with their card sort, a post-sort interview

Figure 1: Q-set and grid shape
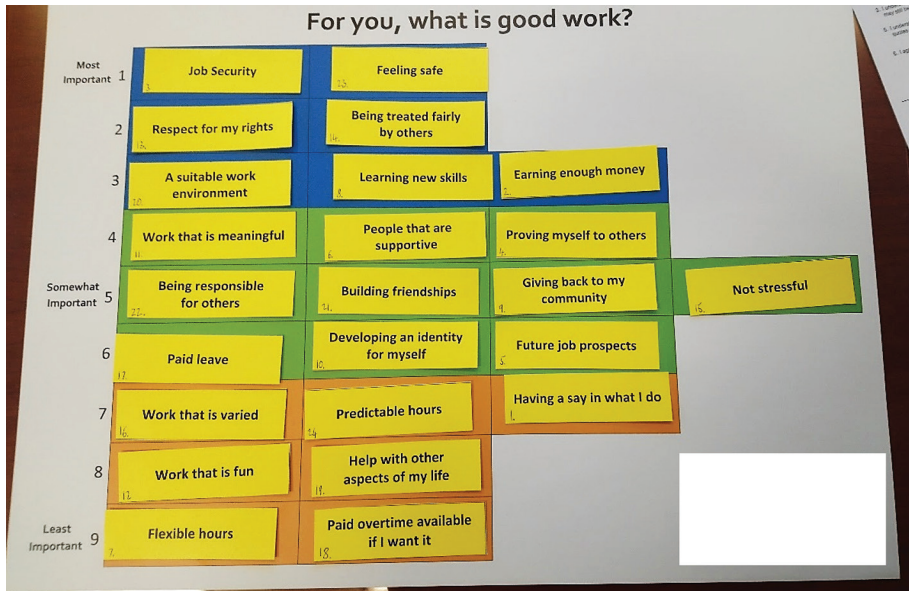
was conducted (all participants were interviewed). Open-ended questions were asked about the participant's general views on 'good work' and on specific statements. The interview was audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim and used to aid the selection of the factor solution and interpretation of factors. Ethical approval for the study was applied for and provided by the ethical committee of the Glasgow School for Business and Society at Glasgow Caledonian University. All files were anonymized after transcription and stored in secure confidential storage, both physical and digital within the university buildings and the secure university digital infrastructure.

Analysis

Data from the card sorts were entered into a dedicated software package, Ken-Q online software (Banasick, 2018), and Centroid factor analysis was followed by Varimax rotation. The selection of a factor solution in Q methodology involves considering both quantitative and qualitative criteria (Brown, 1996). After an initial correlation matrix was calculated between each sort (see Online Appendix 1), further quantitative analysis was based on the following statistical criteria: (1) eigenvalue > 1; (2) at least two 'defining' card sorts, that is, a card sort was statistically significantly associated with a factor (p<0.01) and accounted for the majority of common variance. A number of factor solutions were statistically supported. Following the interpretation of factors and discussion of the factor solutions by the research team, the factor solution that was most interpretable and coherent was retained.

Interpretation

Factor interpretation involves the holistic interpretation of the idealized card sorts representing each factor, with attention given to the relative position of statements

within each factor. Both quantitative and qualitative data is utilized. The former focused on: salient statements (that is, those at the extreme ends of the sorting grid); distinguishing statements (that is, those that are placed statistically significantly differently in one factor when compared across all other factors); and consensus statements (that is, those that are *not* placed statistically significantly differently across all factors). The latter involved thematically analyzing qualitative data from the post–sort interviews of flagged participants for each factor, to gain insight into how the interpretation of statements and the reasons underlying their card sorts. Quotes from these participants were woven into the factor descriptions.

Results

Table 3 shows that a three–factor solution was supported and yielded interpretable results consistent with qualitative data. Table 1 shows the idealized card sorts for the three factors; '+4' indicates the statements positioned in the top row of the grid ('most important'), '–4' indicates the statements positioned in the bottom row of the grid ('least important'), consensus statements are in *italics* and the symbol '*' corresponds to distinguishing statements. Nineteen participants in **bold** text are considered significant (at 1% = 0.53) for the factor. Seventeen of these participants are considered defining sorts, which is indicated by an 'X' in Table 3; two participants were mixed loaders (that is, individual card sorts that load significantly on two or more factors); and ten were null loaders (that is, those that do not load on any factor). Table 4 shows the correlation between the factors.

Table 4: Factor correlations

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Factor 1	1	0.3662	0.5366
Factor 2	0.3662	1	0.3129
Factor 3	0.5366	0.3129	1

In the following section, the three factors are described with reference to the qualitative post–sort data. The notation used is # to indicate the statement number alongside a symbol and number indicating the position of the statement on the grid. For example, (#20, +2) means that statement number 20 can be found in the +2 row of the grid for the factor being described.

Factor one: pay me with support

In this account, 'good work' meant doing something meaningful around supportive people in a fun environment to help workers to overcome challenges in their lives; remuneration was not a priority. Support in a considerate environment where service users are not going to be interrogated by staff or other volunteers or must demonstrate to anyone, except themselves, the capability to do their job is necessary for 'good' work (#20, +4; #13, +2; #14, 0; #4, –1). Many service users of WISEs have difficult backgrounds, including suffering from PTSD because of abusive relationships, which means 'it counts for a lot the way people treat you' (SE6). As others in WISEs could be 'aggressive or mentally unwell' (LFS16), safe spaces in WISEs are needed so

individuals can work away from others who may trigger negative emotions. Likewise, supportive environments could be created through group work which gives people the opportunity to get to know each other through chat and 'banter' (HW24), and to turn working relationships into friendships (#12, +3; #21, +2).

The purpose of 'good' work related to doing something that gives individuals a reason to get out of bed and out of the house, and to help workers develop as individuals as well as to provide a needed service to the wider community (#11, +3; #8, +1; #9, +2). Examples included delivering food to homeless people (LFS16), making pieces of woodwork to sell to the public (HW24), or teaching someone a new skill (SE5).

For individuals who have 'lost so much' (SE6), emotional safety and recovery rather than remuneration was paramount (#2, –1; #17, –4; #18, –4). While there was a recognition that a basic level of income was important to pay bills and other living costs, this could be accessed through other sources, such as welfare benefits (that is, disability allowance or housing support) or families. For those with a financial safety net the importance of the remuneration and long-term job stability is reduced (#3, –2). To the fore is the fact that the organization can provide a place where a worker can feel 'everyone has got my back and I'm never in a position where I'm going in head first' (SE10). This feeling of safety is coupled with a sense that '… it's probably more the emotional side for me … nobody's going to interrogate you unless you want to give information out or whatever so I think that's probably for me at this point a very important thing' (SE15).

Factor two: any work is 'good work'

This factor represents a perspective where the focus is on developing skills and demonstrating a work ethic to secure future employment. WISEs treat service users fairly by giving them an opportunity to work when other organizations will not (#14, +4). This enables service users to satisfy their employment needs with little attention being paid if the job is monotonous or requires coming into work at short notice without much autonomy over what they do (#16, –4; #24, –3; #7, –4; #1, –1) – 'if it's no varied then it's no varied, it's just whatever work is coming in … you're just gonna do whatever work's coming in' (WE2). Being able to take on reasonable amounts of pressure (#15, –2) from employers means service users can show that they cope with everyday tasks in the workplace, and ultimately 'stand on their own two feet' (WE2) in the role and the wider labour market. The main concern is gaining experience to secure their future in the labour market (#5, +1). While this particular statement is only placed in column +1, it is a distinguishing statement (see Table 3), and the surrounding statements all drive towards this idea that work is about building skills and sacrificing aspects of work quality so individuals can show they have a work ethic. There is a fear that rejecting an offer of work, in whatever form, might result in the employer thinking their 'work ethic is lacking' (CR28). This is the same reason that work, from this perspective, is not about fun or meaning to any great extent (#12, –3; #11, 0). However, service users in WISEs are still in vulnerable positions and as such require support from those they work with (#6, +3; #20, +2). For example, those that have experienced forms of bullying require emotional support to help them build trust with other people again (#23, +4; #21, 0).

Remuneration and job stability are key to enable service users to pay rent, save for their future or give time to others that have helped them in the past (#2, +2; #3, +1; #9, +1). The availability of overtime, even if unpaid (#18, –2), illustrates how service users view work in WISEs. Paid overtime enables service users to earn extra money; alternatively, and if unpaid, employees show they are 'keen to work more and that it would be good on my CV if I go for another job' (SE7). Similarly, paid leave was not considered important as it did not matter whether this was offered or not; employees would work when they could.

Factor three: nothing to prove, everything to gain

'Good work' in this account is work that can be adapted to individual needs, including what tasks to carry out, when to carry them out, with whom, and having the necessary support to do so. A strong sense of self is present in this perspective. It is not considered important that work capability is demonstrated (#4, –4). Instead, work should be highly personalized to fit with the identity of the person via the provision of work which gives meaning to individuals (#10, –3; #11, +4). In other words, it is important to find work 'that fits your identity rather than your identity fitting your work' (SE4). Meaningfulness at work corresponds to solitary creative work that, in some way, benefits those in the wider community (#16, +1; #9, +2). The latter can include, for example, reusing materials which would otherwise be put into landfill, building furniture for customers, or making soap to sell. Adapting work to suit workers' needs provides a feeling of control (#7, +1; #1, +2; #19, –2; #18, –4).

This strong element of self also dominates the social aspects of work, as there should be 'boundaries' (YI25) between the self and other people (#21, –1; #22, –3). This is vital to a secure feeling of wellbeing and breaks with past experiences where looking after others was a detriment to individual physical and psychological health. This solitary focus is a day-to-day way of living (#5, –2). Additionally, a supportive workplace, that recognizes service users' desire for independence and will not put them in a situation where they could suffer harm, is required (#6, +3; #20, +4; #23, +3). However, having a job which was able to provide some remunerative benefits (#2, +2) would provide a financial safety net for them to build their lives again, perhaps in a new direction or in a new role that incorporates the meaning they have found within the WISE.

Discussion

We find three shared perspectives among workers in WISEs on the meaning of 'good work'. In this section, we will discuss these findings in relation to the literature on WISEs and conceptions of 'good work', highlighting how this study extends and develops notions of 'good work'. Then we will outline the implications of this work for practice and note the study's limitations.

Firstly, our findings extend and lend nuance to the preexisting literature focused on what is important to workers in WISEs from the perspective of people with severe mental disorders (Lanctôt et al, 2012) and mental illnesses (Williams et al, 2010; 2012). Factor one ('pay me with support') emphasizes the importance of social interaction, building confidence, emotional recovery and rehabilitation for 'good work' in WISEs. Similar to findings observed in Canadian WISEs (Chan et al, 2017) where even very

low amounts of pay can lead to quite large improvements in 'financial wellbeing', this perspective also highlights that remuneration is not necessarily a concern for some. The issue of pay within WISEs is often complex, with very different wage structures, even within different WISEs (Lysaght et al, 2018). Some WISEs would pay individuals salaries, whereas others are paid by the hour for the work they do, or based on how much they produce.

However, the fact that some service users might view 'any work' as being 'good' (Factor two) is potentially problematic, or even dangerous, as those vulnerable people could potentially be exploited and commodified (Garrow and Hasenfeld, 2014). Indeed, this is something that should be of concern to policy makers and practitioners as under the social enterprise label, WISEs could be used as a tool to source cheap labour.

Lastly, Factor three ('nothing to prove, everything to gain') suggests that a sizeable proportion of people working in WISEs have a strong sense of self. The highly individualized work customization required by this group, in terms of their expectations and specific needs, is likely to present challenges to the process of continuously balancing social and commercial goals. Indeed, social enterprises can potentially fold under such pressures (for example, see Tracey and Jarvis, 2006), and/or experience 'mission drift' (Cornforth, 2014).

There were two consensus statements across the three factors. Statement number 13 ('respect for my rights') was placed towards the middle of the grid across the three-factor solution, indicating there were other statements which were deemed more or less important with regards to 'good work'. One explanation for this may have been that the statement topic was regarded as a given in a place of work. It is something that is protected by law with regards to exploitation or slavery, abuse, and other areas of work, which may be so rare that there is no option but for them to be important. When applying for a job, for example, it could be unlikely that the first consideration is whether or not the organization abides by human rights laws; instead, one might question what the pay is, or whether they would be provided with opportunities for growth, and so forth. In Factor two, participant EX2 'assumed that it would be guaranteed' for rights to be made important by an organization; therefore, it was not necessarily important to him when he thinks about and explains 'good work'. It seems this statement is trapped between being something very important which, as EX5 describes it 'makes the world go round', but it is not a consideration when thinking about work that is good because people may not have experienced it firsthand.

The second consensus statement is number 18: 'Paid overtime available if I want it'. This statement was, across all factors, considered less important than most other statements. Some WISEs did not pay extra if they were offering overtime to people; instead, they would offer a fixed rate for regular working hours and any hours over the usual. People might have regarded this statement as less important if there was no difference between regular working pay and overtime pay. The consensus here related to how unimportant overtime pay was for 'good work', often because the WISE did not offer this as an organization, but also because the important part of 'good work' for individuals was about what it could provide them in terms of emotional support, recovery, and training, as opposed to a way to make excess amounts of money.

While generalizations cannot be made about the characteristics of participants associated with each factor (a feature of all Q methodology studies; [Brown, 1980]), examining participants' characteristics provides interesting insights. All individuals loading onto Factor one were financially supported in their lives either through

state social support, their parents, or personal savings, which helps explain why remuneration was less of a concern. All individuals associated with Factor two were young men and teenagers (ages 16–23) from a background of leaving education aged 16 or 17, which helps our understanding of why WISEs were viewed as a place to become more employable. Clear patterns with participants loading onto Factor three were difficult to identify. Exploring the extent to which these accounts are held, and the relationship with socioeconomic characteristics within a larger sample of WISEs, requires the development of Q-based survey research (Lysaght et al, 2018).

This research reinforces the concept of intersubjectivity at work and provides evidence that WISEs should be recognized as a supportive environment for allowing intersubjectivity to flourish for those disadvantaged in the labour market. We show the applicability of the Q methodology when exploring the intersubjectivity among workers in a systematic way. Importantly, the methodology assists in a better understanding of what these different subjective perspectives actually *mean* (Sayer, 1992) and, therefore, contributes to the underdeveloped methodological considerations of intersubjectivity (Gillespie and Cornish, 2010; Yeoman, 2013).

WISEs acted as the environment in which service users can discover what matters to them at work. In some cases, the opportunity to work in the WISE has provided a new appreciation of what is perceived as 'good work'. This was particularly the case for those who had been through traumatic situations prior to entering the WISE. For example, one worker explained how seeking promotions and ongoing career development can lead to an increased level of stress and have a negative impact on mental and physical health. The interview explained that the WISE had shown that meaningful work did not have to come from managing a large group of people and measuring success from salary and performance; instead, it came from being creative in the performed tasks.

Considering aspects of 'meaningful work', those associated with Factor one valued work which would help other people. They cared about helping others because they know how it feels to be in a position of needing help. Whereas for those associated with Factor two, meaningful work meant being challenged into becoming the 'real you' (CR28). For those associated with Factor three, on the other hand, meaningful work was explained as work that was 'in tune with my own ethics and values' (SE4). What matters to these individuals regarding 'good work' is different across the factors but these 'matterings' make it clear that while something can be meaningful, why that meaningfulness *matters* to them can be very different.

Implications for research

This research represents the first study of WISEs to explore subjective opinions of those experiencing a wide range of disadvantages in the labour market in a systematic way. There are several aspects of this study which are considered to be contributions to knowledge.

Firstly, the uncovering of the impacts of WISEs and how these impacts are realized in practice is an area of the social enterprise literature which has not previously been explored. The processes through which the impact is created, including the aspects of day-to-day work in WISEs, have been captured in this study. This information contributes to a more developed understanding of how WISEs work in our society and how the work processes of the WISE impact job quality.

Secondly, this research represents, as far as is known, the first study of WISEs to include those experiencing a wide range of disadvantages in the labour market. Current research focuses mainly on those experiencing mental health issues, as they are often the most extensive group working in WISEs. Collecting information with this broad range of individuals is unique in the WISE literature, and it presents a more realistic picture of the current workforce within WISEs, at least in the Scottish context in the organizations that were sampled.

Thirdly, this research is considered to have contributed towards the development of some adaptations that can be used in Q methodology for individuals experiencing cognitive issues. There are few previous Q methodology studies involving people experiencing disadvantages, yet it requires particular adaptations and developments to be able to collect data involving these individuals effectively. Learning from the adaptation of these elements can contribute to the creation of future Q methodology studies with individuals experiencing disadvantages.

Implications for practice and policy

There are implications for different WISE stakeholders that can be drawn from the findings of this study. Firstly, the findings provide a stimulus for the managers of WISEs to reflect on their perceptions of 'real work' or 'work ethic', and the extent to which these perceptions guide the work carried out in the organization. Managers may also be able to assess and make necessary changes to their job quality procedures. For example, the provision of employee-led meetings, improving short-notice procedures for working hours, or showing more explicitly to funders their flexibility to adapt to individuals with different support needs. Similarly, funding agencies may find this element of flexibility in the organizations attractive because of how WISEs can tailor their services not only to have an impact on the outcome for the individual, but also in being able to change their perceptions of working in the labour market more widely. This may increase the potential for impact of the WISE when compared to organizations that cannot provide such levels of flexibility. Policy makers, on the other hand, need to be aware of a variety of motivations to work, and create legislation that enables but also protects those most vulnerable so that they are not exposed to potential exploitation.

Limitations

This work has some limitations. First, following discussions with gatekeepers and after piloting, a conscious decision was made to limit the number and length of statements as some participants, due to their cognitive disadvantage, would have struggled to sort a larger statement set or read longer statements. Thus, this study used a limited number of 24 statements. Second, depending on personal experiences, individuals could align more or less with the different shared perspectives at different points in time, and/or a new shared perspective could also be identified if there was a significant event or paradigm shift. This research was undertaken prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected working practices and how people feel about being in their place of work (for example, office buildings); it is possible that a new perspective now exists on 'good work' in relation to WISEs. This research provides a way to study whether this is the case by providing a baseline

of shared perspectives pre–COVID-19. Finally, while 17 participants from across all WISEs were defining sorts, 10 participants were 'null–loaders', in that they did not load significantly on any of the factors. While this could suggest the presence of another viewpoint, the fact that they were spread across all WISEs signals that this may have been due to the range of difficulties experienced by some of the individuals in the sample.

Conclusion

We set out to explore different shared perspectives among workers in WISEs on the meaning of 'good work'. While there is no single definition of 'good work', what this study uncovers is the way in which intersubjectivity plays a role in creating a space of 'good work' that matters to the individuals in the workplace. In the situation of WISEs, this is developed by individuals who face different challenges in their working and daily lives that are not always catered for in a more traditional workplace; this inevitably impacts upon their conceptions of what makes work good for them. WISEs can deliver these different conceptions in ways that other organizations may not be able to, or at least to the same extent. While there are inherent challenges with delivering these different conceptions of good work, WISEs are uniquely placed to be able to provide meaningful work to those who need it most.

Our study has advanced the understanding of what good work means in the context of WISEs for those with a variety of challenges in the labour market. We have also shown how different WISEs operationalize their conception of good work, as understood by those working in the WISE. These two contributions to knowledge can help guide WISEs in addressing the different challenges they face in providing good work for people, while also balancing their commercial tensions.

In closing, we consider that future research should focus on the changing nature of work in relation to those experiencing challenges within the labour market, especially within WISEs. New pressures such as the cost of living increase, post–Brexit industry changes, and a post–COVID society, may all have influenced the nature of work as we know it. Further research is required to ensure that those who are most severely impacted by these events can continue to find work that provides them not only with a fair wage but with an opportunity to discover and support what matters to them in their working lives.

Conflict of interest
The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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