



Research Project Title:

Immigrant worker, service provider and employer perspectives on the occupational safety and work conditions of immigrant workers and their return-to-work experiences after occupational injury or illness



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Background & Context of the Research Problem

- In Canada there is an over-representation of immigrant employees in unsafe or harmful jobs and work environments that increases their risk of occupational morbidity and mortality compared to Canadian-born employees.
- These employees experience more barriers when returning to work after an occupational injury or illness, compared to Canadian-born workers in similar positions.
- Occupational injury and illness exact a tremendous toll on employees' families and the economy making it an essential research topic with both social and economic significance.
- In 2013, there were 902 work-related fatalities in Canada, with construction and manufacturing industries accounting for 47% of fatalities, and health and social service industries accounting for the highest number of occupational injuries and loss of time on the job.
- It is estimated that between \$2.97- \$11 billion can be saved annually by discretionary organizational and work management modifications, to reduce risks to employee mental health.

Research Questions

- 1) What are recent immigrant employees' perspectives, compared to Canadian-born employees, on occupational safety and work conditions affecting well-being and leading to injury or illness?
- 2) What are immigrant employees' perspectives, compared to Canadian-born employees, on employer or supervisor attitudes' and reactions concerning occupational safety and injury or illness?
- 3) What are immigrant employees' experiences of supports available to return to work, including access barriers and aspects helpful for promoting occupational safety and successful work integration?
- 4) In what ways are immigrant employees' perspectives and experiences influenced by their socioeconomic and cultural contexts?
- 5) What are the perspectives of employers on issues related to occupational safety faced by immigrant employees?
- 6) What are service providers' perspectives on the difficulties experienced by injured immigrant employees, the ways in which these can be addressed, and the kinds of broader supports needed to reduce the impact of injury and improve their labor market productivity?

Study Area: Edmonton & Calgary, Alberta

- Edmonton and Calgary - the two cities in Alberta that receive the largest number of immigrants.
- No study in Alberta (to our knowledge) has focused on immigrant workers' perspectives on occupational safety and return to work.
- Alberta is currently experiencing a downturn in its economy and a stronger focus on safety and well-being in the workplace has the potential to 'stem the tide' of immigrant workers leaving the province.

Knowledge Gaps

- Lack of systematic knowledge on immigrant employees' understandings of occupational safety and workplace conditions leading to injury or illness, their perspectives on employers' attitudes towards their safety at work and how their experiences and perspectives compare with those of Canadian-born employees in comparable work conditions.
- Lack of research examining immigration-related socioeconomic and cultural factors in shaping immigrant employees' perspectives on occupational safety, interactions with employers, injury support service use, and return to work.
- Paucity of information on service provider and employer perspectives on occupational safety issues facing immigrant employees.

Research Methodology

Research Design: The study will use qualitative methods informed by constructivist grounded theory:

Source of Data: This study will be conducted in Edmonton and Calgary and the study data will be collected through individual interviews with employees, and focus groups with service providers, and employers.

Research Participant Recruitment Criteria

A) Sample Size: A total 100 employees will be recruited for interviews.

B) Sampling Four Target Employee Groups : 1) immigrant employees who have experienced occupational injury or illness, 2) immigrant employees who are in occupationally harmful work environments and have not experienced occupational injury or illness, 3) Canadian-born employees who have experienced occupational injury or illness, and 4) Canadian-born employees who are in occupationally harmful work environments and have not experienced occupational injury or illness.

C) Service provider and employer focus groups: Focus group participants will include: 1) service providers who work closely with immigrant employees who have experienced occupational injury or illness, and 2) who are able to speak to employees' workplace difficulties, occupational injury, compensation, and return-to-work experiences.

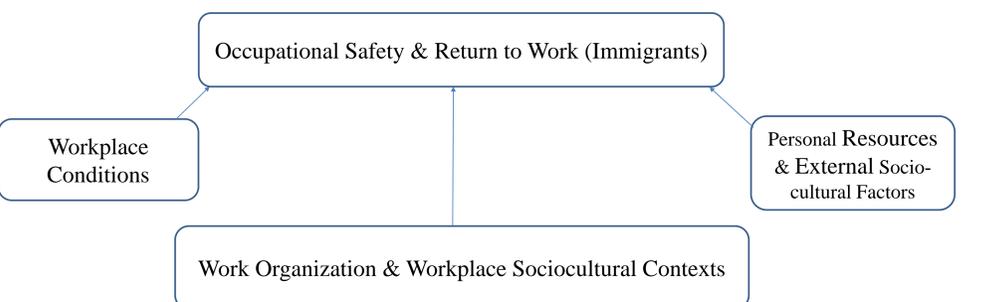
Expected Outcomes & Significance of the Study

- The study will contribute to potential support interventions for vulnerable workers.
- The study will help to unfold processes through which factors related to employees' racial and ethnic diversity and immigrant status influence their wellbeing.
- The research outcomes should inform development of culturally appropriate, individualized interventions to support immigrant employees' occupational safety and return to work after injury or illness and thus contribute to their overall labor market productivity and integration.
- The study should contribute to improved occupational safety and wellness of workers; prevention of occupational injuries and illness; and workplace reintegration post injury or illness.
- The information collected through this study will be of critical importance for employers and service providers, such as settlement workers and employment and labor market counsellors.

Research Objectives

- To examine occupational safety, prevention, and post-injury workplace integration issues, from the perspective of immigrant employees, service providers, and employers;
- To identify strategies, approaches and potential interventions, informed by immigrant employees' needs, sociocultural contexts and preferences, and other stakeholders' inputs
- To examine the factors influencing immigrant employees' occupational injury or illness experiences as well as potential support interventions for vulnerable workers.

A Tentative Conceptual Guide Map



Research Team Members

- Principal Investigator:**
Dr. Janki Shankar Associate Professor, Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary Email: jshankar@ucalgary.ca
- Co-Investigators:**
1. Dr. Daniel Lai, Professor, University of Calgary
 2. Dr. Julie Drolet, Associate Professor, University of Calgary
 3. Dr. Lili Liu, Professor, University of Alberta
 4. Dr. Richard Enns, Associate Professor, University of Calgary
 5. Dr. Shaniff Esmail, Professor, University of Alberta
 6. Dr. H M Ashraf Ali, Sessional Instructor, MacEwan University.

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2. Department of Labor, Government of Alberta.