

Strategies to develop occupational health and safety measures in small businesses employing immigrant workers in Montreal

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Objectives

1. To describe the arguments businesses use to explain their involvement in or withdrawal from OHS programs;
2. To determine employers' capacities to undertake prevention activities and to illuminate the relations between actors in implementing measures to prevent and protect against occupational injury (accident or illness);
3. To identify the main internal actors (managers, workers, OHS-committee members) and external actors (OHS professionals, advisors from joint sector-based associations, OHS consultants) who can effect change in the way workplace-health programs are implemented.

Methods & Sample

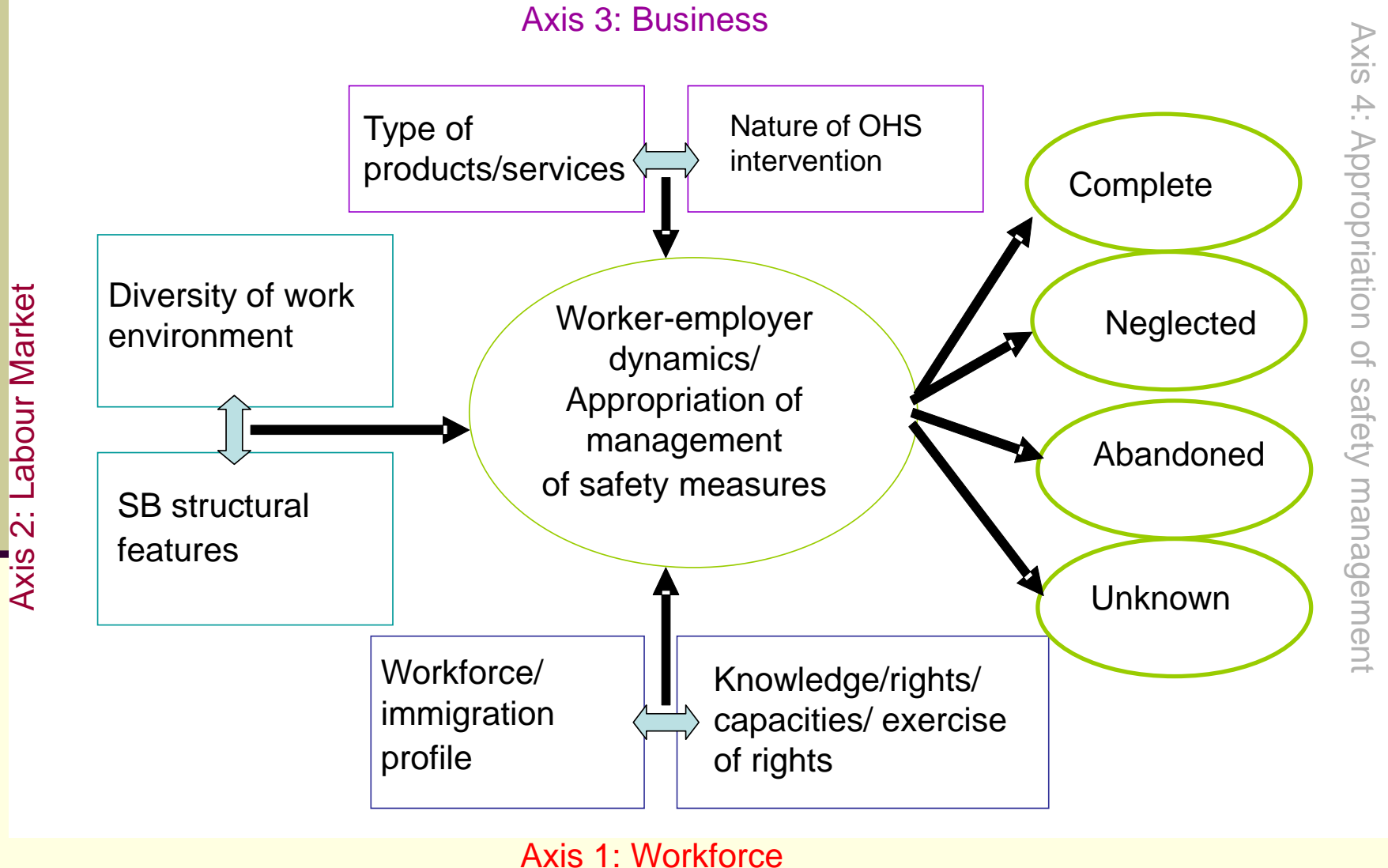
- Prospective design with comparison group
- Data collection: June 1, 2008– May 30, 2010
- Study population:
 - Unionized and nonunionized private-sector establishments with 10– 50 workers
- Sample:
 - Study group: 20 establishments with workforce > 25% immigrants (born outside Canada) of any status (citizen, landed immigrant, refugee, awaiting status)
 - Control Group: 10 establishments with > 75% workers born in Canada

Data Sources

- Face-to-face interviews by principal investigator with company employer or principal workplace-safety manager (often same person)
- Observations of public-service OHS professionals from the CSSS working with the company
- Administrative files from the same public services

Analytic framework

Managing diversity in the implementation of occupational health and safety measures in small businesses with an immigrant workforce



Results (06/2008- 04/2010)

Data Collection Completed to Date

- Face-to-face interviews: 21 of 30 companies
- Observations of public-service OHS professionals: 9 of 11 companies

Industries: metal (10/21), wood (4/21), food (1/21), electrical products (1/21), insulation products (1/21)

- **Problems** : chemical, ergonomic, heat, falls, cuts, deafness

Results

- **Size:** 70% of companies have 21– 50 workers
- **Unionization:** 29% of companies are unionized
- **OHS committee:** 71% have a health and safety committee, 50% are joint committees

- **Workers born outside Canada:**

- < 25% foreign-born workers => 25%
- 25 to 49 % foreign-born workers => 32%
- 50 to 90% foreign-born workers => 43%

- **Length of stay in Canada**

- <5 years => 18%
- 5– 10 years => 29%
- > 10 years => 53%

Results

- **Immigrant Foremen:** 37% of companies
- **Immigrant Manager:** 38% of companies
- **Mean length of service:**
 - <1 year: 6%
 - 1– 3 years: 20%
 - 4– 5 years: 17%
 - > 5 years: 48%
- **Annual salary:**
 - Full-time:** \$ 32,300 (\$23,000– \$35,000)
 - Seasonal (2):** \$10,000 / 6 months

Case Studies	Best Practices (#103)	Good Practices (# 46)	Worst Practices (#39)
Industry	Metal	Cutting board	Plastic
Existence of OHS committee	Yes. Meeting recorded day before research visit. Priority industry. Joint committee.	Yes. Joint committee. Not priority industry.	No. A person is mandated to fulfil needs.
Time OSH committee has existed	15 years	6 years	N/A 2 years / mandate of OHS Head
OHS Head	Dedicated full time to prevention	Human Resources Director, HRM (50%) and OHS (50%)	Production manager
OHS Qualifications	Worker promoted, holds certificate in OHS	Masters degree in HRM and OHS certification	High School Certificate in electronics

	Best Practices (#103)	Good Practices (# 46)	Worst Practices (#39)
Principal person responsible for OSH	Male, 25- 44 Y French Canadian	Male, 25- 44 Y French Canadian	Male, 45 Y French Canadian
Professionals and OHS inspectors / risk assessment	Many	Some	Many
Participation / problem solving: Owner-managers Supervisors Members OHS committee Workers Shop stewards	Always Always Often Often Occasionally	Often Often Always Occasionally N/A	Always Always N/A Always N/A
Arguments against	↑ production costs ↑ supervision time	↑ production costs ↓ production time	↑ production costs Required skills lacking ↑ constraints

	Best Practices (#103)	Good Practices (# 46)	Worst Practices (#39)
Knowledge: Law Contacts Evaluation methods Coordination/ solution	Good Excellent Good Good	Good Good Good Good	Limited Limited Limited Limited
Number of workers	40	44	35
Country of origin	100% Canada	34% Vietnam, Cambodia 100% > 10 years in Canada	93% Philippines 100% > 10 years in Canada
Language of work	French	French	French and English

Comments

- **Origin and culture do not seem to affect workers' perceptions of OHS, but date of immigration and concern to integrate economically into labour market do**
- **Origin of directors and supervisors affects their understanding of OHS, especially if trained and gained work experience abroad**
- In many companies, immigrants hired without education equivalency
- Diversity-management issues (toilets, food)

Comments

- OHS costs for small businesses disproportionate
- Difficulties complying with standards and regulations
- Workers have negative perception of OHS; productivity more important than safety
- **Official OHS board should educate employers about standards and laws**
- **Union involvement in OHS committees not wanted**
- Employees (especially older workers) resistant to following OHS rules,
- Risky industries employ more immigrants
- New employees often cause accidents