

Occupational health through gender analysis: what challenges and interventions to promote health and equality at work?

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Summary The new “Gender equity in occupational health” (“SAGE”) team is leading innovative research aimed at reducing gender and other social inequalities in occupational health. The presentation will show how the team builds on the previous work of its members to propose research methods and courses of action to respond to the contemporary realities of the world of work.

1. Relevance

Over the past several years, work has undergone profound changes in its organization, in employment relationships and in the socio-demographic diversification of the workforce. These transformations have created new risks to the health of workers who are not always taken into account legally. This context, combined with a representation of occupational health and safety focusing on workplace accidents and other traditional hazards (noise, chemicals), has contributed to the fact that the predominantly female employment sectors (eg health, education), involving other types of risks, particularly musculoskeletal and psychological, have been neglected with regard to prevention. Current research and intervention methods are not always effective in revealing or reducing inequalities. Moreover, although gender analysis can reveal inequality in workplaces, previous work by team members has shown that it is difficult use these results to transform workplaces.

2. Aim & Objectives

The SAGE team works to (1) document and analyze the organizational and regulatory mechanisms underlying the persistence of social and health inequalities in workplaces; (2) analyze how the practices and relationships of actors in the workplace contribute to the persistence of inequalities; and (3) develop new methods for the design and evaluation of interventions that can reduce inequalities.

3. Approach

The team uses an ecosystemic approach to occupational health where gender is central and other sources of inequality such as social class, racialization and migratory status are taken into account. This approach integrates the economic, social, political and legal contexts of society, the physical and organizational dimensions of the workplace, and the relational practices and dynamics of people in relation to their psychological and discursive processes. In addition, the team advocates a co-construction of knowledge, which consists in carrying out research projects, oriented towards action, in collaboration with organizations representing disadvantaged communities (trade unions, women's groups, immigrant groups).

4. Implications

The ecosystemic approach and the team's interdisciplinary composition (ergonomics, law, psychology, economics, communication, epidemiology, industrial relations) favour an integrated and in-depth understanding of the mechanisms at work at all levels (micro, meso and macro). The work of the team will also contribute to the development and evaluation of interventions that promote the development of healthy and equitable practices in workplaces. More broadly, they will support the development of legislative frameworks, public and organizational policies in the workplace to counter the persistence of social and occupational inequalities.

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