Safety Training of Migrant Workers in the Construction Sector: A Systematic Review


Abstract

Background: Safety and health at work is a key goal on the EU agenda. In spite of the progress made, there are still areas and target groups were important challenges remain. The construction industry has been identified as being at high risk for injuries and illnesses. This sector is heavily reliant on a migrant workforce, often low skilled and often with important linguistic barriers and limitations. Interventions in this field are critical to prevent accidents and promote safety and health for this rather large group of the construction workforce. Zhou et al. (2015) classified three main groups of construction safety research: the perspective of safety management process (safety assessment and safety programs), the impact of individual and group characteristics in relation to construction safety (worker behaviour, perception, and safety climate) and the analyses of accident/incident data to improve safety performance. None of them analyse, in depth, safety training interventions aimed at construction migrant workers to prevent injuries, accidents and incidents in different populations and countries. Hence, a systematic review of previous studies on this population is paramount to develop our understanding on how we can improve safety among this group of workers, who have higher accident rates than their native counterparts.

Training can be a powerful tool to increase hazard awareness and enhance safe work practices becoming a primary prevention instrument. However, a number of challenges appear when training has to be delivered to migrant workers in this sector. The present review aims to identify those challenges in design, implementation and/or evaluation of training activities for construction migrant workers.

Methods: Our literature review focused on papers published in scientific journals in the areas of psychology, medicine and engineering between 2000 and 2017. It comprised a search of Web of Science, Current Contents, Scopus, PsycARTICLES, PsycINFO, PubPsych, Psychology Database, MEDLINE, PubMed, Proquest Central, Scifinder Scholar, Connect, Database of CSIC, Psicodoc. 42 papers were identified related to safety in migrant construction workers and out of these 10 papers presented empirical studies on construction migrant workers training its design, implementation and evaluation. Some of the topics we explored inclucd: 1) Focus of the study on the different stages of training (design, implementation, evaluation), 2) content of the training (technical knowledge, skills, soft skills), and 3)
evaluation methods.

Results: We found that all 10 studies were conducted in the US and focused on hard skills only. Half of the studies adapted the 10-hour course developed by US Occupational safety and Health Administration. Evaluation was scarce but where knowledge tests had been conducted, they showed that workers remembered little of the course post-training. No studies evaluated whether training had been transferred to the work context post-training.

Conclusion: The results provide rich information, knowledge and guidelines for new developments in training of this high-risk target group in order to improve the effects and impact of safety training among migrant workers in construction. One major implication is the need to focus training on soft skills and to develop rigorous training transfer evaluation frameworks.

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