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Working conditions in selected groups of immigrants living in the Czech Republic

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research was to confirm connections between work characteristics in selected groups of immigrants living in the Czech Republic and their nationality. As a part of the aim, gender differences in working conditions for the selected immigrants were also investigated.

Methods: Research was conducted using the quantitative method of questioning. Data were collected from 1014 immigrants, but due to non-complete answers concerning nationality and gender “only” 994 questionnaires were used, which consisted of Ukrainians, Vietnamese, Russians, Poles and Slovaks.

Results: This research has confirmed the existence of statistically significant differences between the type of work and corresponding working conditions within the selected immigrant groups. Ukrainian respondents are most frequently employed in manual labour, which also corresponds to a higher physical strain, and a noisy and dusty working environment. Respondents of Vietnamese origin most often work in the service sector, which involves a combination of manual and intellectual work. The Polish, Slovak and also Russian respondents are much more frequently engaged in intellectual work, and therefore stated an increased satisfaction with their financial situation. Almost half of the Vietnamese respondents worry about work insecurity. Gender differences are also significant; Slovak men work manually significantly more often than women. Vietnamese, Ukrainian, Slovak and Polish men have a significantly higher income, but also less favourable working conditions than women. On the other hand, women state significantly higher stress at work.

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Introduction

Type of work, duration of working time, working conditions as well as certainty or uncertainty of employment significantly influences the health of every individual. The concept of the ten social determinants of health published by Wilkinson and Marmot in 2003 [1] points out the influence of social environment on the health of individuals and the whole society. A significant social determinant of health is work [2]. According to Wilkinson and Marmot [1], bad working conditions, such as an autocratic style of leadership, negative social relations in the workplace, false work organization, inadequate reward or little control over one's own work, cause negative health effects. According to Pořízková [3], the labour market can be classified into primary and secondary ones. The primary labour market is represented by so-called "good jobs". These are full-value positions for an indeterminate duration, with an adequate financial reward. The secondary labour market is represented by "bad jobs" and "precarious jobs". A precarious job means the replacement of full-value employment with fixed term temporary employment, characterized by low job stability, small staff advantages and a lower wage. In general terms, these jobs are connected with a higher occurrence of cardiovascular and tumours [4]. According to Benach et al. [5], people employed for a definite period feel job uncertainty and the stress that is related to it is at the same level as the unemployed. According to the research by Conway et al. [6], the duration of working time means a worse subjective feeling of health in employees. Bad working conditions worsen the health of the employees [7]. Therefore, a strategic aim of government institutions should be to legislate the provision of fair and equal jobs for everybody [8]. Inequalities concerning work as well as health significantly endanger socially deprived groups of a population, such as members of ethnic minorities, the elderly, and employees with lower socioeconomic status or immigrants. It is proven that employees in lower socioeconomic positions are exposed to a higher uncertainty of work and safety risks than employees in higher positions. Bad working conditions, outsourced jobs or part-time jobs negatively influence the health of employees [9].

In 2015, 461,000 foreigners lived in the Czech Republic. They were mostly Ukrainian, Slovak, Vietnamese, Russian and Polish. Most of these are economic migrants who came to the Czech Republic in order to get a new job [10]. Finding adequate employment is fundamental to the good integration of immigrants into the majority society. The ability to get a job that conforms to the achieved qualifications of an immigrant is affected by many factors. These specific factors include nationality, knowledge of the majority language, social connections, and sex of the immigrants.

Massey et al. [11] point out the tertiary working sector is associated with international migration. These are unattractive working positions that are not interesting for the majority population. They are primarily physically demanding, exhausting and (from the injury aspect) dangerous jobs in civil engineering, heavy industry, agriculture or forestry. Immigrants from less developed countries often get these jobs that do not correspond to their achieved education. In a Swedish survey by Pendakur et al. [12], both work and residential segregation of immigrants were confirmed.

According to Grönqvist [13], this segregation negatively influences the education of children of the immigrants. According to Marfleet and Blustein [14], the employment of primarily illegal immigrants in the tertiary labour market brings a risk of abuse of immigrants by an employer. According to Diaz Fuentes et al. [15], the immigrants receive working positions as unskilled workers. They often have an illegal status, low education and low income. According to Mousaid et al. [16], both men and women coming to the European Union from peripheral countries of the European community secure employment with low quality and high safety risks. Also, according to Brabcová et al. [17], the immigrants from less developed countries, such as Vietnam, Ukraine and Mongolia, face more unfavourable working circumstances than the Czech population. The survey by Kaushal et al. [18] examined the development of employment, duration of working time and the real wage in immigrants coming to Canada and the U.S.A in 1996–2008. No set aspect increased in male immigrants coming to Canada in the monitored period. On the contrary, this increase occurred with the American immigrants, and the highest difference was established in the immigrants with lower education. A survey by Ahonen and Benavides [19] analyzed the working conditions of foreign and home employees in Spain. The results showed that the foreign employees had a higher risk of work injury (in each age group) than the employees of the majority Spanish population. The difference was most significant in women and the elderly.

The aim of the survey was to evaluate the relationship between the working conditions in the selected groups of immigrants and their nationality. A partial aim was the description of gender difference in working conditions of the addressed respondents in relation to their nationality.

Materials and methods

The research was realized through a quantitative method (interview technique). A research tool was a questionnaire resulting from the research by Vacková et al. [20]. The questionnaire was translated into the native languages of all five examined minorities: Vietnamese, Slovak, Russian, Ukrainian and Polish. To ensure accuracy of understanding and subsequent interpretation of the used terms in the questionnaire questions, a double translation was provided. The data were collected in 2013–2014 with the informed consent of the respondents whose anonymity was secured.

Our selection criteria characterized by the working conditions of respondents were:

- type of work (a question: What do you do? Responses: manual; combination of intellectual and manual; intellectual);
- how was the employment negotiated (responses: I arranged the work by myself; through my family; through a friend for a fee; through labour exchange; or other);
- satisfaction with working conditions (responses: very satisfied; satisfied; moderately satisfied; unsatisfied; very unsatisfied);
- chemical, radiation and toxic load (responses: yes; no; I do not know);
- physically demanding work (responses: yes; rather yes; neither yes nor no; more no; no);

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