

Safety Awareness: Efforts to Increase the Work Productivity of Indonesian Migrant Workers

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Abstract

Unbalanced population growth caused by high birth rates, low mortality, and uneven population distribution poses various challenges. One of the impacts is the increasing number of workers who choose to work abroad. In 2024, there will be 297,434 Indonesian Citizens working as Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI), with the most placements in Hong Kong (99,773), Taiwan (84,581), and Malaysia (51,732). PMI contributes significantly to the national economy through foreign exchange reserves. However, some of them also face various unfair treatment, such as low wages, violence, confiscation of documents, excessive working hours, and an inadequate work environment, in addition to many complaints related to illness, work accidents, and death. The literature review results related to PMI in Hong Kong show that PMIs still face problems related to Occupational Safety and Health (OSH). With a lack of awareness about OSH rights, this condition will worsen. Therefore, there is a need for intervention in safety awareness training to increase workers' understanding and awareness of OSH. This training aims to improve workers' knowledge to reduce the number of work accidents and increase productivity. The results of the qualitative analysis showed that training increased participants' knowledge; therefore, PMI needed to conduct refresher training regularly to improve their safety awareness.

Keywords: Indonesian Migrant Workers, safety, safety awareness, work accidents, work productivity

INTRODUCTION

Global population growth shows an imbalance between high birth and relatively low mortality rates, and uneven population distributions pose challenges in various sectors. In addition, differences in access to education and technology are widening the gap, especially in developing countries that experience limited employment. As a result, many people with low levels of education choose to work abroad as a form of international immigration in search of a more decent livelihood (Setiawan. S, 2020).

Based on Law Number 18 of 2017 concerning the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers, Article 1, Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI) are any Indonesian Citizens who come, are doing, or have done work by receiving wages outside the territory of the Republic of Indonesia (Lestari et al., 2023). In 2024, the number of Indonesians working as Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI) will be recorded at 297,434 people. The three countries with the most migrant workers are Hong Kong with 99,773 people, followed by Taiwan (84,581 people) and Malaysia with 51,732 people (BP2MI, 2025). Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI) are generally concentrated in the positions of housemaid, caregiver, worker, plantation worker, and domestic worker, which reaches 67.1% of all placements (BP2MI, 2024).

Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI) have an important role in the national economy by significantly contributing to the country's foreign exchange reserves and economic growth. Based on data from Bank Indonesia, PMI contributes around USD 14.22 billion per year, making it the second largest foreign exchange contributor after the oil and gas sector. This large income not only helps to meet the needs of workers and their families but also contributes to increasing the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and strengthening Indonesia's economic stability (Isiwanto, 2024).

Despite their large contribution, Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI) still face various forms of unfair treatment, such as workers often still receiving low wages, experiencing violence both physically and verbally, confiscation of essential documents such as passports by employers, excessive working hours, and poor working environment conditions (Safitri & Wibisono, 2023). This is evidenced by the high number of PMI

complaints to the Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Agency (BP2MI) throughout 2024, which reached 1,500 complaints from various placement countries (BP2MI, 2024).

In addition, throughout 2020-2022, BP2MI also received various complaints, such as sick workers, accidents, and even deaths (Inayati et al., 2023). Data from BP2MI shows several cases, such as those experienced by Sigit Aliyando in South Korea, who was in a coma due to a work accident, and three migrant workers from West Nusa Tenggara who died due to an incident at a Malaysian mining company (KemenP2MI, 2025; BP2MI NTB, 2022). This incident not only reflects high occupational risks but also shows that there is still a weak awareness of occupational safety among both workers and employers.

Work accidents occur due to the physical conditions of the work environment and individual behaviour. Still, several studies show that about 60–90% of incidents are caused by human behavioral factors (Khoshakhlagh et al., 2023). Work accidents have severe impacts, such as endangering the safety and health of the workforce, which is at risk of causing serious injuries and even death. In addition, the company's productivity is disrupted due to the loss of working days and the increased burden of compensation that must be paid. This causes economic losses and damages the company's reputation and lowers public trust in applicable occupational safety standards (Hakim & Maulidia, 2024).

In addition to work accidents, workers are also prone to mental disorders that can cause decreased work productivity. This is because mental health is essential for workers because it can encourage work morale, develop individual potential, and increase company productivity (Ompusunggu et al., 2023). This situation is also reflected in Hong Kong, the largest destination country for migrant workers, where there are still workers who face problems related to inconsistencies in employment contracts, labor agents, low wages, mistreatment from employers, and so on. Nevertheless, workers still choose to survive amid these conditions due to the encouragement of urgent economic needs (Kinasih, 2023). This incident makes migrant workers vulnerable to psychological distress (Noor & Shaker, 2017). It was recorded that several workers even had to be treated in mental hospitals, with the majority not married. In addition, workers are more likely to experience health problems after working for two years in Hong Kong (Leung et al., 2009).

Based on the results of a literature review conducted on Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI) in Hong Kong, it was found that there are still migrant workers experiencing various problems related to Occupational Safety and Health (OSH), both related to work norms, physical and psychosocial violence, as well as unsafe working conditions with long working hours and heavy workloads. In addition, they often lack adequate legal protection, face stigma and discrimination, and have limited time to seek health care. The lack of awareness about OSH rights is also a problem, which shows the need for more attention from the government, non-governmental organizations, universities, and the community to increase *awareness*, especially regarding the OSH aspect for migrant workers. Therefore, intervention in the form of *safety awareness* training is needed to improve workers' understanding and awareness. This effort aims to reduce the number of work accidents and work-related diseases and contribute to increasing worker productivity.

METHOD

This service was held in Hong Kong. The method used in this community service activity is participatory outreach, which is carried out through 3 stages, namely:

Training Methods

Providing education, understanding, and knowledge to PMIs related to Occupational Safety and Health (OSH), especially in implementing work norms and identifying potential OSH hazards related to work productivity.

Participatory Methods

Providing training and skills to PMIs to identify OSH hazards in the workplace quickly and simply, including conducting OSH hazard assessments and determining control measures to prevent work accidents and Occupational Diseases (PAK), to increase their work productivity.

Implementation Methods

The stages in this implementation include three stages, namely:

1. Preparation Stage

At this stage, needs analysis is carried out, and coordination with partners is related to the activity implementation plan's details, including time, place, and facilities required for implementation. Meanwhile, the service team's internal coordination is carried out to prepare educational materials and media.

2. Implementation Stage

At this stage, training activities are carried out to improve the knowledge and skills of PMIs in

identifying OSH hazards in the workplace, conducting OSH hazard assessments, and determining control measures to prevent work accidents and Occupational Diseases (PAK) to increase their work productivity.

3. Evaluation Stage

The evaluation in this activity is a discussion, question, and answer with PMI regarding the training process provided to assess the extent of PMI's enthusiasm and understanding regarding the role of OSH in the workplace to increase their work productivity.

This activity has received ethical approval through a certificate of ethical feasibility from the Health Research Ethics Commission of the Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Negeri Semarang, with No. 889/KEPK/FK/KLE/2025.

The respondents for this activity were 10 Indonesian migrant workers currently working abroad (specifically in Hong Kong), using an incidental sampling technique. This activity was not used to generalize the existing conditions of Indonesian migrant workers, but rather to provide an intervention to increase knowledge regarding Occupational Safety and Health, obtained qualitatively through group discussions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This activity involved the participation of Indonesian Immigrant Workers (PMI) in Hong Kong. As a follow-up step to the problems that have been identified, a training program is carried out that is focused on strengthening understanding and knowledge of PMIs related to Occupational Safety and Health (OSH), as well as debriefing PMI skills in identifying potential hazards in the work environment. This assistance is carried out through a participatory approach tailored to workers' needs (PMI).

The capacity building program for Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI) is comprehensively designed to cover two aspects: increasing understanding and strengthening skills. In the aspect of experience, the training is focused on education about the principles of OSH, the application of safe work norms, and the explanation of various potential dangers in the work environment that can affect work productivity. Meanwhile, for the skill aspect, workers were trained to identify and assess the risk of OSH hazards in the work environment and risk control strategies.

This training was carried out in Hong Kong with 10 participants from Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI). The material provided includes introduction (identification of hazards in the workplace), which includes physical, chemical, biological, ergonomic, and psychosocial hazards along with their control, namely following the hierarchy of hazard control (elimination, substitution, engineering, administrative, and the use of Personal Protective Equipment/PPE) for the prevention of work accidents and increasing work productivity. In addition, material was also given on the urgency of implementing OSH in work and its rights and responsibilities in the context of Occupational Safety and Health.

Based on the results of the training that has been carried out, it can be concluded that overall, there is an increase in the knowledge of Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI). This increase is reflected in the discussion process between the service team and PMI, where PMI shows the development of participants' understanding of the material provided.

In addition, PMI's enthusiasm was also seen during the training and discussion process, as seen in Figure 1. They discussed the conditions of their workplaces, the potential dangers that existed, and the control and social security programs in their respective workplaces. Among them, they already have special insurance provided by their employers, especially health insurance.



Figure 1. Occupational Safety and Health Training with PMI Hong Kong.

The discussion revealed that the Indonesian migrant workers had a basic understanding of Occupational Safety and Health, its objectives, and examples of programs such as the types of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) used at work, the importance of health insurance, and the types of hazards they face from natural disasters. However, they did not appear to have a comprehensive understanding of employment regulations and the threat of exposure to other potential hazards (such as physical hazards, chemical hazards, psychosocial hazards, ergonomic hazards, and biological hazards).

Workers' knowledge of Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) significantly impacts the quality of work and worker welfare, where there is a close relationship between the level of OSH knowledge and worker behavior, especially in the application of safety practices in the workplace. The higher the employee's understanding of the principles of OSH, the better the safety behavior they show. Workers with good knowledge of OSH tend to be more disciplined in following standard operating procedures, more aware of potential hazards, and more careful in carrying out their duties (Basahel, 2021; Saraswati & Putra, 2023).

In addition, knowledge about OSH can guide workers in dealing with various risks and potential dangers in the workplace. Sufficient understanding related to OSH encourages workers to implement work accident prevention measures, such as using PPE, identifying potential hazards in the workplace, and taking necessary control measures. In addition, OSH knowledge also equips workers with the ability to respond to emergency situations and work accident events correctly and effectively, so that they can reduce the impact caused, both for themselves and others around them (Saragih et al., 2023).

A safe and comfortable work environment also plays a role in improving work results because it creates a sense of comfort and flexibility in work, so that it can contribute to the achievement of the company's targets optimally (Achmad & Pramukty, 2022). This condition can be achieved if workers can properly apply the principles of OSH. Therefore, applying OSH principles is also part of the three main pillars of productivity: quantity, quality, and safety (Patradhiani et al., 2022). In this case, productivity is defined as the ability to create or improve the results of goods and services efficiently, so that it becomes an indicator of the progress of the company/workplace (Mulyapradana et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

This training was conducted in Hong Kong with the participants of Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI) with introductory material (identification of hazards in the workplace) which includes physical, chemical, biological, ergonomic and psychosocial hazards along with their control methods, namely following the hierarchy of hazard control (elimination, substitution, engineering, administrative and the use of personal protective equipment) for the prevention of work accidents and increasing work productivity. In addition, material was also given on the urgency of implementing OSH in work, along with their rights and responsibilities in the context of work safety.

Based on the results of the training that has been carried out, it can be concluded that overall, there is an increase in the knowledge of Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI) on the material provided. Therefore, the advice given to PMIs includes, before departure, making sure they have participated in training or education related to Occupational Safety and Health, including on the aspects of *labor* (employment contracts), insurance and social security, as well as the reporting system in case of an emergency. Meanwhile, the suggestion for companies to provide specific training on Occupational Safety and Health tailored to the type of work, implementing a safety induction program upon arrival at the workplace, providing occupational safety and health guarantees, insurance and social security, providing education on how to claim in the event of a work accident, providing medical check-ups, and other welfare facilities.

Additionally, recommendations include: implementing a safety culture campaign among migrant workers (PMI) through migrant worker communities, collaborating with the Indonesian Embassy (BP2MI), the Indonesian Embassy/Consulate General (KBRI), and user to ensure safety standards are implemented.

Limitations to this activity included the limited number of respondents and the limited time available. The activity took place on a PMI workday, meaning only PMI with a day off could attend.

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