The application of SGBA+ in support of mental health and psychological well-being in the workplace

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CIHR IRSC
Canadian Institutes of   Instituts de recherche
Health Research   en santé du Canada

Institute of Gender and Health
Institut de la santé des femmes et des hommes

Health   Santé
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CONNECTS YOU TO WHAT MATTERS

A CIHR/Health Canada SGBA Policy-Research Partnership Project

- Individuals' identities and the ways in which they are treated in the workplace, can adversely impact workers' well-being

- Systems and workplace processes can also disadvantage people based on their identities and contribute to significant stress, inequalities and inequity.

- There is little guidance on how to conduct SGBA.

- Research team provides consultation and support in partnership to raise awareness of SGBA considerations and develop capacity.

Program objectives & need

- The objectives of this project include developing capacity to apply SGBA to psychological H&S in the workplace.
- Building and sustaining psychologically healthy and safe workplaces is an emerging legal duty for employers.
  - Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) are integrally part of PH&S
- Both are major policy thrusts of the Government of Canada
- Efforts to promote the application of SGBA to mental health and psychological well-being in the workplace are new.

Psychological Support

Organizational Culture

Clear Leadership & Expectations

Civility & Respect

Psychological Competencies & Requirements

Growth & Development

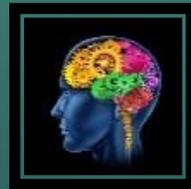**Recognition & Reward**

Involvement & Influence

Workload Management

Engagement

Balance

Psychological Protection from Violence, Bullying and Harassment

Protection of Physical Safety

-MHCC, CSA, & BNQ (2012)

Health Canada Partners

▶ **Stream A:** carried out in conjunction with the Centre for Mental Health, Wellness and Respect in the Workplace (CMHWRW) Is focused on capacity building in SGBA with an eventual target of education and training applying SGBA in support of mental and psychological health.

▶ **Stream B:** carried out with Employee Assistance Services, Specialized Health Services Directorate (SHSD) is focussed on building capacity in the application of a SG lens to an Employee Assistance Program.

Research Questions across Streams

➤ Two research questions developed to be applied to both streams of inquiry:

1) What are the SGBA+ issues & trends in Mental Health and Workplace Wellness?

2) How can Canadian workplaces use or leverage existing SGBA+ knowledge to inform future development of training, workplace wellness strategies and employee assistance services protocols?

Research Questions by Streams

▶ Additional research questions developed and applied independently to each Stream

  ➢ **Stream A**: How to apply SGBA+ based factors in the delivery of training, dissemination and uptake of mental health and workplace wellness related information?

  ➢ **Stream B:** How can an SGBA+ lens be integrated into EAS policies, procedures and services, as well as EAS performance measurement and evaluation activities?

Program methods and related activities – Literature search

- We conducted structured searches of both the academic and grey literature regarding the intersections of the following concepts:
  - sex/gender terms 2) workplace and 3) mental health (Stream A);
  - sex/gender and mental health 2) sex/ gender and counselling, and 3) sex/gender and EAP (Stream B).
- **Academic literature** – is complex and multi-disciplinary. Design of searches, selection of search terms and search methods determined by partners and librarian-assisted.
  - Databases searched: PsychInfo, Medline and Google Scholar
- **Grey literature** - from a variety of sources - governments, interest groups and unions and levels (micro-, meso- and macro-levels); included professional practice and occupational health and safety literature; employee and management guides; toolkits).
  - Searches performed mostly using Google as well targeted reviews of the websites of relevant organizations such as the Mental Health Commission of Canada, EAP Association, EASNA, etc.

Program methods and related activities cont.

➢ **Key informant interviews** * - using a structured approach to knowledge dissemination; identification of stakeholders (potential adopters); their awareness of SGBA/GBA+, attitudes, knowledge, concerns and current practice), barriers and facilitators to dissemination (the implementation of SGBA/GBA+ and a training and education programming); processes (e.g. procedures and protocols at governmental institutions; risks; and resources)

➢ **Focus groups** to determine awareness of SGBA and acceptability of a toolkit to build capacity in SGBA and mental and pscychological well-being in the workplace

➢ After interview and focus group findings analyzed, and **a toolkit** drafted – a second round of interviews with senior-level executive staff

Findings from the academic and grey literature

- Evidence of sex/gender-based differences:
  - with respect to sex/gender identities;
  - sex/gender differences in prevalence of mental and psychological health (including stress and stressors) (King et al., 2008; Chan & Hayashi, 2010; Oliffe et al., 2016)
  - Contextual/workplace impacts based on sex/gender (identities) and workplace systems/processes (Brewster et al., 2014; Thoroughgood et al., 2017)
  - Thematic/topic areas (e.g. gender-based violence, bullying and harassment; 'gendered' workplace design; worklife balance) (De Pasquale et al., 2017; ESDC, 2017; Dionisi et al., 2012)
- Development of an organizing framework of the literature with practical application (e.g. promising practices at different levels)
- Arising from the literature searches and partnership presentations - co-production of knowledge by academic and workplace teams
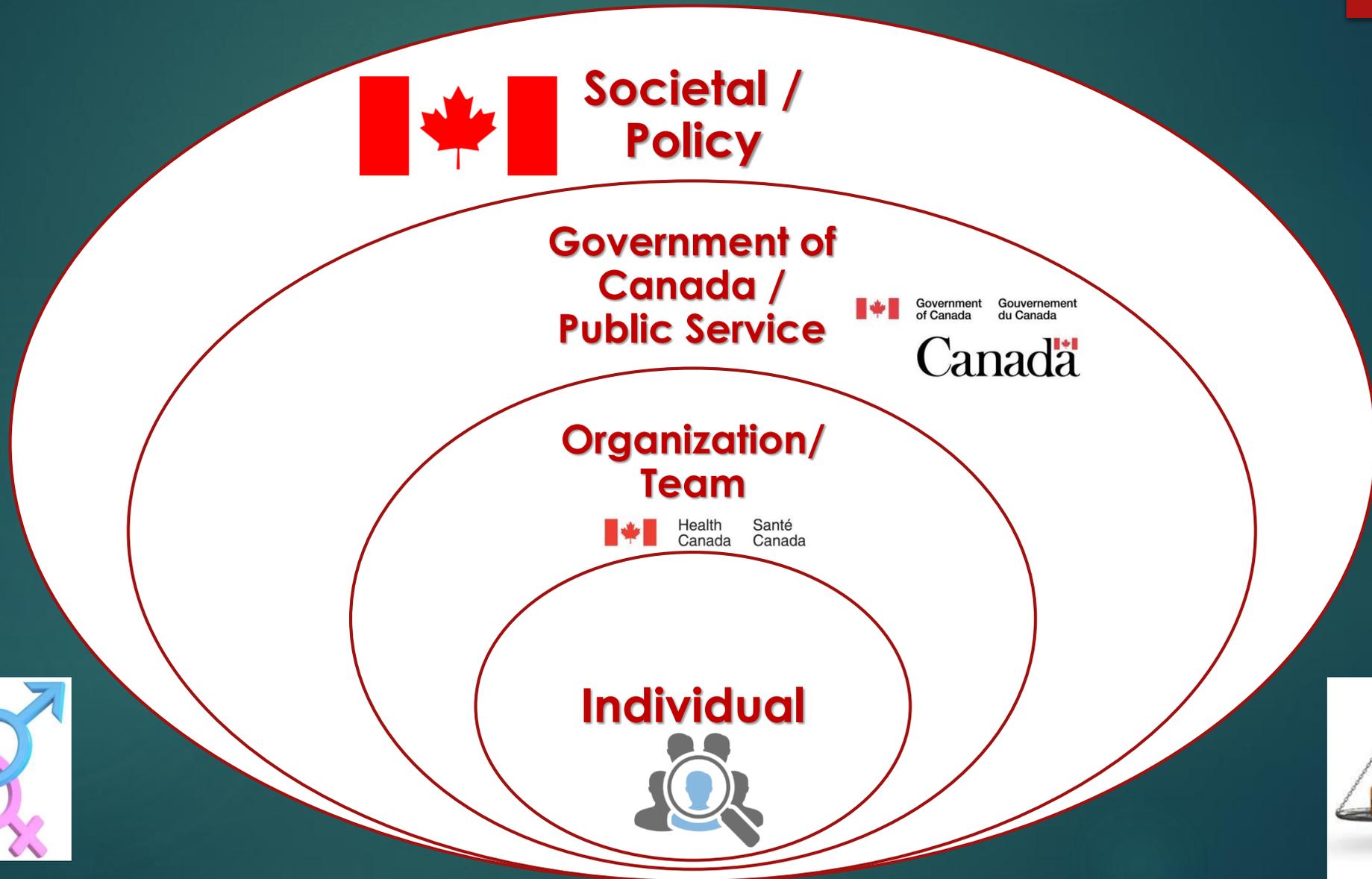
Program results or outcomes: Application of SGBA to mental health and psychological health and safety – Both streams

- **Women and LGBTQ+ are most at risk for various disorders/mental health issues (King et al., 2008; Reicher-Rosler, 2017; Seedat et al., 2009).**
  - …."the risk for depression and anxiety disorders (over a period of 12 months or a lifetime)… were at least 1.5 times higher in lesbian, gay and bisexual people and alcohol and other substance dependence over 12 months was also 1.5 times higher."(King et al., 2008).

- **Women and gender diverse individuals are more likely to experience workplace-based bullying, discrimination and harassment (Attell et al., 2017; Dispenza et al.,2012).**
  - One recent US study done with a sample of women of color has demonstrated that sexist and racist workplace discrimination was directly and indirectly (via the mediating role of self-esteem) associated with higher psychological distress (Velez et al., 2018).

- **Gender may act as a barrier for men to disclose MH issues and seek help (Chan & Hayashi, 2010; Oliffe et al., 2016).**
  - e.g.., Canadian statistics show that while 17.9% of women sought professional help in 2015 for mental and emotional problems, only 9.8% of men did the same (Statistics Canada, 2018)

Program results or outcomes: Application of SGBA to mental health and psychological health and safety – Both streams

- ► Utilization rates and preferences in terms of worksite mental health promotion programs, design and features vary according to participants' gender (Robroek et al., 2009; Rongen et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2016), **which signifies the need for the targeted outreach.**
  - ➢ e.g., women tend to have higher participation levels in worksite health promotion programs (Robroek et al., 2009).

- ► This disparity between female and male help-seeking has also been found in **EAP utilization data** (Azzone et al., 2009; Brodziaski & Goyer, 1987).
  - ➢ According to SHSD data, 68.5% of EAP clients were female in 2016-17 (Employee Assistance Services Consortium Report, 2017).
  - ➢ Low rates of help-seeking are prevalent among both women and men and are often linked to stigma and other barriers such as affordability (Sunderland & Findlay, 2013).

- ► Targeted EAP outreach is also needed for people identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or trans individuals (Eady, Dobinson, & Ross, 2011; King et al., 2008)

Program results or outcomes:

Application of SGBA to employee assistance programs – Stream B

- ▶ The literature findings in conjunction with a clear understanding of the EAP process have suggested the following recommendations as priorities for action.
  - ➤ Targeted outreach to men and other priority populations
  - ➤ Enhanced gender and diversity training for EAP counsellors
  - ➤ Development of online EAP services to meet service delivery preferences beyond face-to-face counselling
  - ➤ Performance assessment and quality improvement of both the EAP process and equity in the distribution of EAP outcomes

- ▶ **Actions already taken during the project – changes to data collection forms in terms of client identification – acknowledging diversity 'beyond the binary'**
- ▶ **A comprehensive report to Health Canada and an academic publication in process**

Recommendations and implications for practice

▶ Implement SGBA as an integrated practice throughout all organizational processes – continuous and open to improvement (e.g. Stream B recommended priorities for action based on the review of the organization's EAP process – linked to performance management and continuous improvement)

▶ Understand the implications and consequences of NOT implementing SGBA in practice

▶ Continue to build federal government workplace resources and employee support centres with expertise in SGBA and mental and psychological health in the workplace

▶ Continue to build employee and management capacity – through knowledge dissemination activities

Conclusion

Program outcomes include that employees have improved access to *gender-sensitive* training and education, and knowledge, skills and tools (capacity) to design SGBA+ training and education programs.

The project is *Raising awareness* of sex and gender and the usefulness of SGBA as a critical tool in the workplace - *steps towards building workplace capacity as well as support for the GoC's GBA+ work.*

The Research-based partnership approach is helping to ensure relevance, meaning and authenticity:

► Employee and management's acceptance, utilization and satisfaction with the means and tools being developed

► Skills and knowledge development with respect to SGBA and mental and psychological health and safety

► 'Solutions' to complex problems and providing evidence for change in the workplace: why women, men and gender-diverse people are more or less vulnerable, or face greater risk of being exposed to stress and illness; and how sex and gender intersect with other identities (intersectionality).

► Strategies developed for knowledge translation

Conclusion

"Real change in an organization's culture happens only when people understand: why it makes sense; how they can be proactively engaged as drivers of change when they are provided with adequate and timely support to make it happen" (Treasury Board Secretariat)

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Key words and citation

- Key words: sex/gender-based analysis; mental health; workplace

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Supplemental slide: Diversity and inclusion

- According to the Canadian centre on Diversity and Inclusion - **Diversity** is about the *individual*. It is about the variety of unique dimensions, qualities and characteristics we all possess. **Inclusion** is about the *collective*. It is about creating a culture that strives for equity and embraces, respects, accepts and values difference. **Diversity and inclusion** is about capturing the uniqueness of the individual; creating an environment that values and respects individuals for their talents, skills and abilities to the benefit of the collective. https://ccdi.ca/our-story/diversity-defined/

Next slide – top 20 frequently chosen words to describe an inclusive workforce – from a survey reported in **Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (2017) Building a Diverse and Inclusive Public Service: Final Report of the Joint Union/Management Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion**

Top 20 frequently chosen words to describe an inclusive workforce

Respect	1,701
Openness	1,038
Acceptance	693
Fairness	641
Welcoming	495
Equality	437
Accommodation	309
Understanding	287
Communication	266
Inclusion	231
Equity	223
Impartiality	223
Tolerance	222
Support	220
Flexibility	212
Transparency	191
Awareness	164
Teamwork	147
Collaboration	141
Opportunity	140